



## Walk No. 11 – Chudleigh to Northwood Farm circular

*This is walk number eleven in a series of historical walks around Chudleigh and the surrounding countryside compiled by Alan Brunton for the Chudleigh History Group. Most walks commence from the Town Hall. The historical content of the walks is mainly brief, but further information can be found on our website and in The Chudleigh Book, available in the library.*

**Walk 11:** Distance approx. 2 miles. Time 2–2.5 hours. Roads and footpaths.

This walk starts at the Town Hall but can be shortened by parking on the corner opposite the cattle sheds before Chudleigh Woods. This will save about half an hour time-wise and half a mile in distance.

Walk up Woodway Street and pass over the A38. Carry on for a further 250 yards to the track leading off left to Chudleigh Woods. Take this direction which at first is a good surface but soon becomes a grassy lane. This offers lovely views across the Teign Valley up to Hennock and Dartmoor. Soon you arrive at a footpath sign on the right. Pass through the gate onto a well-defined downhill track which can be muddy underfoot due to the cattle grazing these pastures. Cross a small watercourse and bear right until another gate takes you down through woodland to **Northwood Farm**. Pass in front of the farmhouse and follow the footpath sign on the gate. Keep the barn close to your right and another gate opens into a large field in which an oak tree stands in the middle. Your exit of this field is at the left-hand corner of the hedgerow in front of you at a position of eleven o'clock using the tree as twelve o'clock. You will notice a large motor works to your left which lies off the Teign Valley road.

In our church there is a mural tablet high on the south wall which was erected by William Splatt to the memory of his mother, Elizabeth Splatt, born 1784 and died 1850. For many years she resided at Northwood in an earlier farm house. In our archives we have a file on the Splatt family. John Splatt was a yeoman farmer, born in Kenton in 1780. He farmed at Powderham and married Fanny Stokes in 1805. They had a daughter, born 1806, but sadly Fanny died in 1807. John then took on the freehold of Northwood Farm. He met a young widow, Elizabeth Yeo, whom he married in our church in 1810. They had six children, the eldest being William, born 1811. William schooled in Chudleigh and Exeter. He married Elizabeth Pinsent in 1840 and they emigrated to Australia. Over time they encouraged his parents and four unmarried sisters to join them in Australia. In June 1850, with their passage booked to depart from Glasgow, John, his wife and their daughters left Devon for Scotland. The first part of their journey to Liverpool went without a hitch but the second leg was to be aboard the ill-fated steam vessel "Orion".

En route to Glasgow the ship ran aground on rocks close to the harbour entrance of Portpatrick in Dumfriesshire and quickly broke up, leading to the loss of 130 lives, including John's family members. He returned to Devon. In 1855 William and Elizabeth returned to England and lived the rest of their days in Torquay.

Incidentally, the farm of seventy-five plus acres and farmhouse, which was built in 1913, were advertised for sale in the Mid Devon Advertiser of May 2013 for £830,000.



Having exited the field walk down to another gate and the road alongside the River Teign and soon reach Farley Mill which has an interesting history as a flour and grist mill. Research shows that it was originally powered by the River Teign which means the mill buildings were many yards away from what is now signed as Farley Mill. These were destroyed by flood water and plans from 1820 and a press notice of 1835 show the water supply was from a leat taken off the Bramble Brook which itself flows into the River Teign.

This brook flows through the valley below Trusham having risen on Haldon. From your stand point and through the hedgerow this leat, which is now a dried up ditch, apart from in the wet months, can be seen across the field coming towards the mill before veering right and taking excess water back to the river. A much smaller leat was cut off this to take water to the mill and likewise a tailrace to the river.

From the mill walk on to the junction. If you wish to see where the Bramble Brook flows into the River Teign alongside the old Trusham railway station and station master's house, turn left here. You can also just make out where the leat was cut off the Bramble Brook. The station is now a small private residence. It closed in 1961 when the Teign Valley line closed to passengers. This will add half a mile to your walk and nearly thirty minutes time-wise.

Turn right at the aforementioned junction; this is a fairly quiet road but is steeply uphill for much of the way. The house of Deer Park Farm is in the valley and out of sight, but from the gateway you can look across to Trusham. From here Farley farms are off to the right, although one looks very run down.

A very small left-hand turn to Ruggadon is reached. Since Northwood Farm this is the route of our Beating the Bounds, a tradition Chudleigh undertakes once every seven years. But this is not our route today. However, if you wish to see another fine example of a limekiln one exists just fifty yards down this little road on the left. This kiln has a small oven opening on the left where the lime burner would place his pasty to warm up. Not an unknown feature but the only one I know of locally. If you can manage it, scramble down and look through to the back kiln. The opening to allow you to do this is much larger now. This used to be where the powdered burnt stone was drawn out. The stonework in the rear kiln shows the skill required to build this hundreds of years ago. Before returning to the Combeshead road look across to the tiny hamlet of Ruggadon.

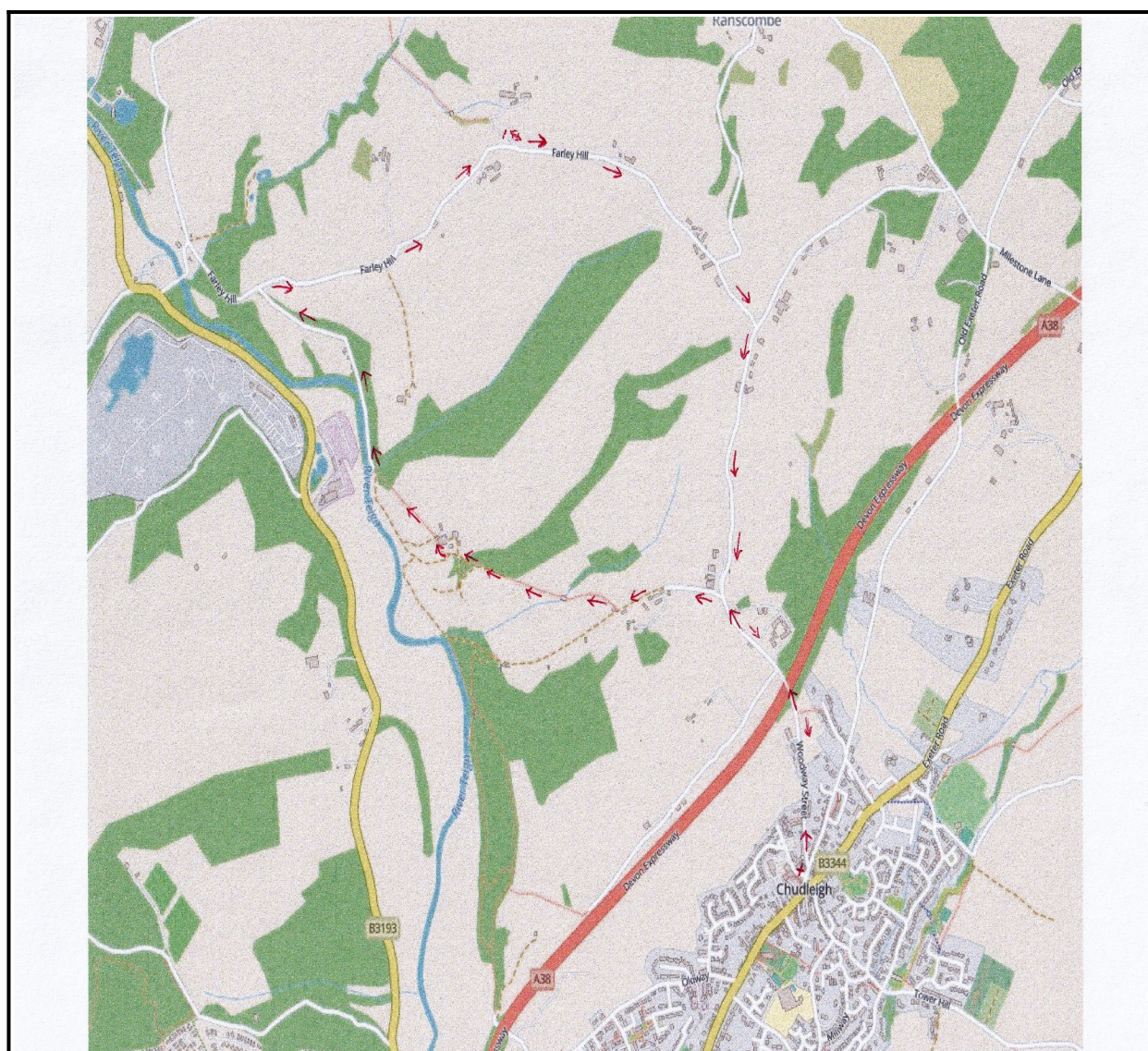
On the way to Combeshead notice the ornate gates to Twig Farm and as the road runs a little downhill when reaching a gateway on the left with a "beware of the bull" sign you can see about a mile distant the grand mansion of Whiteway House.

Whiteway is mentioned in the Domesday Book 1086–87 and is full of history. Witewei and in the 13<sup>th</sup> century Whiteweye, the Whiteway spelling came into being sometime from then to the 16<sup>th</sup> century when records show Julyan Whiteway married Richard Bennett of local nobility. The estate adopted the Whiteway name as future owners of an extensively renovated house had various surnames, far too many to detail here.

During the 20<sup>th</sup> century the farms within the estate were sold, mainly to their tenant farmers and the house to the Knapp family in 1967. They were the first of several owners over the next few years. In 2000 it changed hands again, the purchaser being Raine De Chambrun, better known as Raine, Countess Spencer (the step-mother of Princess Diana) with her son, Lord Dartmouth.



Soon Combeshead Farm and Larkhill Farm are reached at the junction of a road coming up from Bramble Bridge and Ranscombe. Walk on to Combeshead Cross, turn right and walk back to either your parking space at Chudleigh Woods or the town centre, distances of half a mile or nearly a mile to the latter.



*Route of Walk No.11 (map source: OpenStreetMap)*