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Chagford to Fingle Bridge

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Chagford – Pay and display car park (SX 702874)
Ordnance Survey map	Ordnance Survey OL 28 - Dartmoor
Distance	9.3 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Chagford explores part of the Teign River valley along very easy to follow paths/tracks. The majority is fairly level, apart from a relatively moderate climb to Cranbrook Castle, if you decide to investigate this, and some steep steps around a rocky bluff – see penultimate paragraph. Cranbrook Castle ramparts are fairly clearly visible although bracken was starting to grow when I visited, obscuring the outlines.

Chagford itself is a lovely and ancient “Stannary” town - meaning it was the administrative and judicial centre of the local tin mining area. It is well worth a look round.

The initial riverside part of this walk is very attractive and then you climb gently to a higher level path looking down on what looks like an impenetrable valley although, as you will subsequently discover, there are two well used paths alongside the river. From the higher level paths are superb views along the valley and over Chagford in the distance. This stretch of the walk crosses the delightfully named Piddledown Common.

A bonus is an opportunity to lunch at the Fingle Bridge Inn, not surprisingly, by Fingle Bridge. The Inn has some very scenically positioned outside tables next to the river. If you picnic instead, there are numerous benches along the route.

There is a chance of seeing various wildlife including trout, various butterflies and fallow deer.

Although I include GPS routes, much of this walk is under trees so GPS receivers are largely useless, at least when the trees are in leaf. However, the paths are so easy to follow, use of GPS is hardly needed.

As an alternative to starting from Chagford, you could start this circular walk from Fingle Bridge, where there is free parking. However the roads to this spot are very narrow and single track.

The walk starts from the modestly priced pay and display car park just off the High Street near Chagford Church. It is signposted and try not to overshoot/miss it, as the roads beyond are very narrow and quite congested with parked cars near the town.

To get to Chagford, take the B3206 off the A382 between Whiddon Down (just off the A30) and Moretonhampstead.

Start: From the car park, walk back along the High Street and turn right at The Square and walk north east along the B3206 for about a quarter of a mile. Turn left on a country lane signposted for Swimming Pool (SX 704880).

After just over another quarter of a mile, turn right at Rushford Mill Farm (SX 706885) and through the farmyard, following the fingerpost for Drewsteighnton and Fingle. Follow the right hand field boundary next to the river until you reach an old stone gatepost at which point the path veers slightly left to cut off the corner.

At a three way fingerpost, where the left fork goes to Sandy Park, keep straight ahead on the riverside path following the fingerpost for "Road at Dogmarsh Bridge".

On reaching the road (SX 713894), cross straight over to enter the National Trust land "Castle Drogo Estate" and continue to follow the river. At a footbridge (do not cross), there is a three way fingerpost (SX 722896). Turn left for "Hunters Path" and "Road Near Castle Drogo".

The path climbs through the trees and comes out on the drive to Gib House. Turn right following the public footpath fingerpost. Shortly after that, turn right on a tarmac drive again following a public footpath fingerpost.

Continue along this drive and look out for a three way fingerpost on the right (SX 720900). Turn right to follow the path for "Hunters Path Public Bridleway". Nearer the gate is another fingerpost for "Castle Drogo 0.5 mile" and "Fingle Bridge 1.5 miles".

Stay on the main path for Fingle Bridge ignoring various left turns taking you to Castle Drogo (unless you want to see this National Trust property).

At SX 728899 is a dramatic viewpoint of the Teign Valley.

At a junction by a bench "Ronnie's Seat" turn right for "Fingle Bridge Public Bridlepath". At the road (SX 743910) turn right and walk down to the bridge.

Here you have the option to visit Cranbrook Castle, an Iron Age hill fort. My directions assume you will but otherwise at the bridge, turn right to follow the river. There are paths on both sides. For no particular reason, I chose the right hand (north) path.

To visit Cranbrook Castle, cross Fingle Bridge and enter the National Trust land; Charles and Hannicombe Woods. Turn left at this sign and after a few yards, turn right following the fingerpost "Public Byeway for Cranbrook Down" (SX 743899). The broad stony byeway is an easy route to follow if a little steep. Stay on it, ignoring any turns off, in particular on the right the Lower Deerstalkers Path and later the Upper Deerstalkers Path. Point of interest - opposite the Lower Deerstalkers Path is a large

stone with a cross carved in its side. I am not sure of its significance but I have seen similar stones before which purport to have been used as a resting place for coffins, on the journey to burial.

The track starts to level out. Continue until you reach a fingerpost on the right “Public Footpath to “Cranbrook Castle (Iron Age Ramparts)” (SX 742889). Turn right. The ramparts are visible although when I visited, in early summer, bracken was growing well and beginning to obscure the outlines.

After visiting Cranbrook Castle, retrace your steps to Fingle Bridge, cross it and turn left along the right hand (north) riverbank, following the fingerpost for “Fishermans Path” and “Dogmarsh Bridge, Chagford, Castle Drogo Shop and Café”

At one point, you have to climb then descend some steep steps to pass a rocky outcrop but there is a handrail to assist (if you think this might be a problem, take the left (south bank) path from Fingle Bridge).

Shortly after passing a weir with a fish ladder arrangement, you reach the footbridge where you turned off on the outward journey. Retrace your steps to Chagford.

