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Selworthy Circuit and Selworthy Beacon

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Selworthy Church – honesty box car park across the road from the church (SS920468)
Ordnance Survey map	OL9 - Exmoor
Distance	8.9 miles
Date of Walk	28 June 2018
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: This walk from Selworthy takes you to some glorious viewpoints including Selworthy Beacon, Bossington Hill and over Hurlstone Point, although does not descend to the latter. There are great views across the Bristol Channel to the Welsh coast and inland to Dunkery Beacon (although I had hazy conditions!)

Unless you have an up to date Ordnance Survey map, all the paths will not appear on it but they do exist on the ground. Rather confusingly, there are now two routes marked as Coast Path and my route utilises parts of both.

Please note there is a section of about three miles along the coast which is “isolated”, in the sense that, as notices make clear, there is no way to shortcut across farmland, so once started, you either have to complete the circuit or turn back, e.g. if the weather turned inclement.

The terrain is pretty straightforward, although there are a few ups and downs at the head of combes (valleys), hence the amber markings but I may have been negatively influenced by the blisteringly hot weather on the day I did the walk! There are also quite a lot of “random” paths across this Access Land, where you are free to wander.

All that said, it is a lovely walk, which starts at the spectacular All Saints church at Selworthy, dating from the 15th century. It is Grade I listed by English Heritage and stands out for miles around, by reason of its white paint coating made from lime and tallow. Internally it is quite unusual in being more or less square with impressive “wagon” roofing.

Selworthy Beacon rises behind the church to 1011ft (308 metres). Some 500 metres east of the summit are a number of cairns scheduled as ancient monuments, supposedly quite prominent although I did not visit them.

The walk starts from the car park opposite Selworthy Church (honesty box). To get to Selworthy, turn north east off the A39 at Holnicote, about three and a half miles west of Minehead. It is signposted.

Start: Exit the church and turn right (or left from the car park), for the few yards to the bend in the road (SS 919468). Turn right here following the public bridleway fingerpost for “Selworthy Beacon and “Bury Castle”.

When the track splits, go right, again following a “Selworthy Beacon” fingerpost.

When it splits again, this time go left in the direction of a small red arrow on a post (SS 920473).

You emerge at the road passing a wooden barrier. The route continues to the Beacon, immediately across the road, passing a similar barrier but before continuing, a few yards before the road, divert briefly to see the shelter, a nice monument to one Sir Thomas Dyke Acland and the War Memorial.

The beacon is marked with a large stone cairn and trig. point where you meet a broad track. To continue the walk, turn left along this.

Continue along this track, as it is joined from the left by another. Shortly after this, the track splits. Keep right, following a blue marked (bridleway) fingerpost with also a white acorn sign indicating a coast path.

At SS 905487, the path splits again at a three way fingerpost. The right one points to the “Rugged Coast Path” (which is the one you will be taking. It is not as bad as the name suggests!) but to reach Bossington Hill, for a few yards, take the Bossington direction. You quickly arrive at a crossroads of broad tracks. Turn left here.

After about two hundred and fifty yards, at SS 905485), turn right to the cairn on Bossington Hill. You are likely to have spotted the cairn earlier. From the cairn are good views to Porlock and Porlock Weir.

Retrace your steps to the crossroads of tracks and turn left, passing the bench. (SS 904487. This path leads ultimately to Hurlstone Point. How far you want to go is up to you but I only went as far as a curved recess in the rocks (less than a quarter of a mile), from where you get another fine view.

Return to the bench and keep hard left around this to join the following the fingerpost for “Coast Path” and “Minehead 5 miles”.

At SS 905488, meet another junction and turn left.

At SS 907488, just before a combe, the path splits. Take the right fork.

It is now a case of following the coast path for some time, passing various other combes.

After climbing out of the last combe, the largest and marked on the map as Grexy Combe, come to a kissing gate (SS 941480). You will know when you have arrived here because there is a fingerpost pointing back the way you have come which says “Rugged Path Only 3 Miles” and “No Access to Farmland”. A few yards beyond the gate, turn right on to a permitted path across Access Land. This is shown on the map as a dotted black line (if you look closely!) but on the ground, at first, is not easy to spot. However it will soon become clear as you progress, in parallel with the fence on the right.

You come to a walkers' gate and a National Trust sign for Holnicote Estate. Through the gate, follow the path alongside the hedge.

Follow this path, ignoring any turns off, for a mile to a tarmac track (SS 925483), where you turn left. At the road, go straight across (slightly left), down a broad stony track.

Ignore the first right turn marked with blue bridledway fingerposts and continue along the track. Soon, turn right at a bridledway fingerpost for "Selworthy ¾ mile" (SS 926476).

When the main track starts to bend left, there is a fainter path off to the right, on the bend. This is marked a few yards further on with a blue topped post. Follow this route downhill back to Selworthy.

