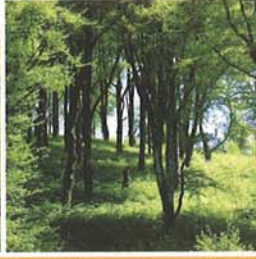
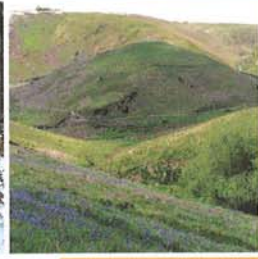


## Barle Valley from Simonsbath



Flowing through the heart of Exmoor's former Royal Forest, the River Barle is one of England's least spoilt moorland streams. The surrounding grass moorland shows evidence of 19th century agricultural improvements and industry.



## POINTS OF INTEREST

### Simonsbath Sawmill [SS 772392](#)

When built in the 1850s this had a large overshot waterwheel of at least 30ft diameter. The building was renovated and the wheel replaced by a turbine in the 1890s. The turbine supplied electricity for the village until the disastrous flood of 1952. In 1996 the National Park Authority purchased the sawmill and meadows surrounding the leat. The turbine was restored to drive the machinery and an electricity generator. By 2003 restoration was complete and the building opened for cutting timber from the Authority's woodlands.

### Wheal Eliza [SS 785382](#)

Trial adits for copper ore, possibly dating back to the 16th century, can be found along the valley side. This one started in 1846 but ended as an iron mine. It closed within eleven years after attempts by three owners and six mine captains to make it economic. The ruins beside the path are of the mine workshop and store, later becoming a shepherd's cottage, last occupied in 1952. In 1858 murderer William Burgess hid the body of his daughter Anna here.

### Cow Castle [SS 793373](#)

This prehistoric, probably Iron Age, hill fort occupies a three acre site on a natural hillock. It is surrounded by a bank up to 3 metres high,

with an outer ditch that has silted up in places or missing where the slope renders it unnecessary. The site of a possible building has been identified inside the bank.

### Birchcleave Wood [SS 775395](#)

At an altitude of up to 1200 ft (365 metres), this is reputed to be the highest beech wood in the country. Planted for John Knight before 1840, the original trees are reaching the end of their lifespan. The National Park Authority purchased the wood in 1973 and has since been creating clearings to plant and encourage the growth of new trees. The woods are sustainably managed for both conservation and the production of timber.

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK

Exmoor became Britain's eighth National Park in 1954 and these walks were designed to celebrate its Golden Anniversary.

The National Park covers 267 square miles of Somerset and Devon. It is a landscape of great variety: from rugged, towering cliffs to gently rounded hills, wooded valleys, colourful heaths, wild grass moors and farming hamlets and it is home to nearly 11,000 people.

For further information contact Exmoor National Park Dulverton Visitor Centre: Tel 01398 323841  
E-mail: [NPCCdulverton@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:NPCCdulverton@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)  
Website: [www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)



## MAP

Scale 1: 50000 SHEET Nos SS

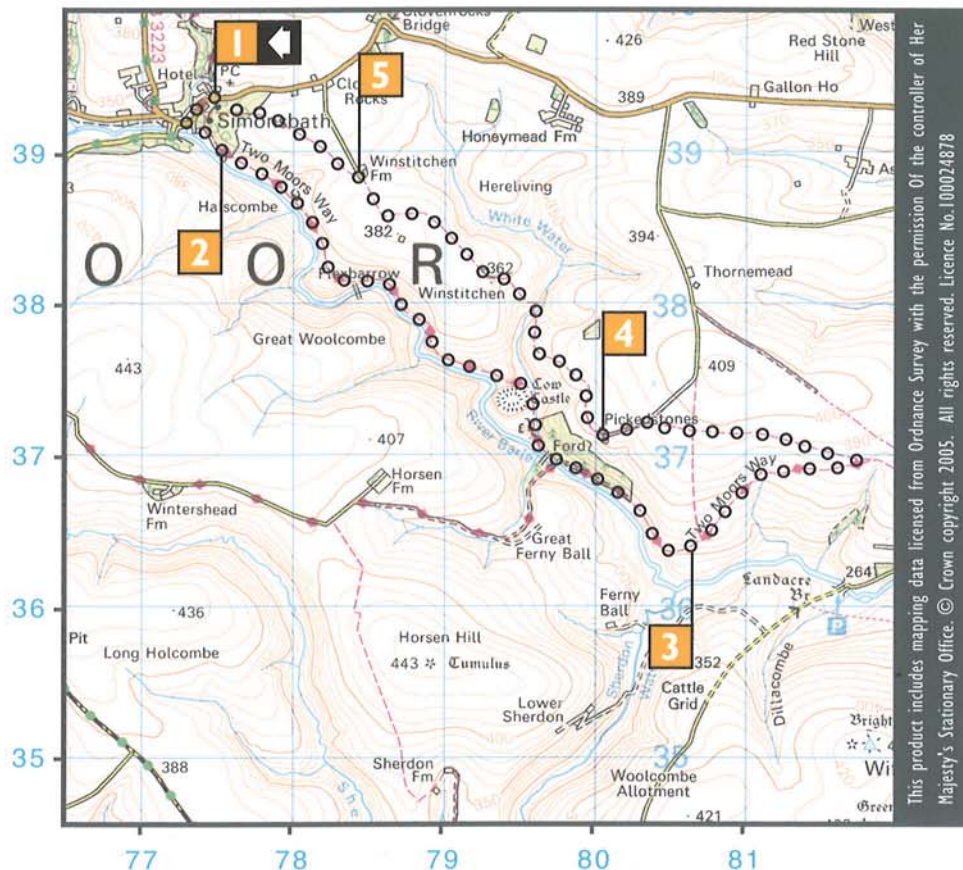
The map section below is taken from the Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL9

The area is also covered by the Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 180 and 181.

1 Kilometre

1 Mile

## EXMOOR NATIONAL PARK



7 miles (12 kilometres). 3 1/2 hours. Start Point: National Park car park at Ashcombe, Simonsbath on the B3223 between the pub and church. Moderate to strenuous. Easy to follow. None on route. Nearest buses are to Withypool, over 2 miles from part of this route on the Two Moors Way. Pub and café at Simonsbath. **WC** At Ashcombe car park. On a lead.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

The route follows Public Rights of Way, plus open access over the National Park Authority's Barle meadows at Simonsbath. The walk starts at the Authority's car park, signposted from the B3223 opposite Birchcleave Wood.

**1** Walk back to the main road and turn right, down through the village. At the first road junction turn left down the road, passing the National Park Authority's **sawmill**. Just before the bridge, take the gate into the meadow on the left. Follow the riverbank downstream. About half way down the meadow the path moves towards the woodland and, at a choice of gaps through the far wall, joins a track. Turn right down the track and through the gate.

**2** Follow the blue waymarks for a mile to **Wheal Eliza** mine ruins, keeping the hillock of Flexbarrow to your right. Continue past the ruins and through a gate. The path drops gradually to the edge of the river and then turns left through a beech hedgebank. In half a mile it goes through another gate by the hillock on which **Cow Castle** stands. Keep the hillock, then the smaller hillock known as the Calf, to your right. Continue across a small footbridge over White Water. Pass the bigger footbridge at Horsen Ford, continuing along the track through the conifer plantation. After the plantation, it passes through a gate, then another one onto the open moorland of Bradymoor.

**3** Here you can make a short cut by following the bank straight upwards to the left. However, this is steep and by following the more gentle track ahead there are views downstream to Landacre bridge. A mile onwards the latter track meets another. Turn left and follow this along the contour to the hedgebank. Go through the gate and straight across the field to a farm drive. Turn left and follow the Simonsbath signs around to the left of the farm, avoiding the farmyard.

**4** The track rounds the farm and the head of a small combe, with a good view down to Cow Castle. Continue down into the combe of White Water and straight on up the other side. The track bears to the left at the top, through a gap in the bank, then right, keeping to the hedgebank through two fields. In the next field it bends right, down to the drive at Winstitchen.

**5** Just before the house, fork left across to the end of the field. Follow the blue waymarks straight ahead along the edges of four small fields. There may be extra gates to pass through at lambing time. Eventually you will pass through a gate into **Birchcleave Wood**. Here there are several tracks. Keep straight ahead as much as the tracks will allow, dropping downhill. You should emerge through a gate onto the main road at a point just below the turn for Ashcombe car park.