



NEWTON POPPLEFORD AND RIVER OTTER CIRCULAR

Route Summary

Starting and finishing in Newton Poppleford, this walk takes you on a journey through the rich and varied agricultural landscapes of the area from apple orchards to grassland, arable and water meadows. You will follow footpaths, quiet roads and ancient green lanes to the hamlet of Southerton and the historic villages of Venn Ottery and Tipton St John before returning alongside the River Otter.

Start/End: Newton Poppleford village car park (free)

Distance: 5.4 miles/8.7km

Estimated time: 2 hours 24 minutes

Difficulty: Category 3

Nearest postcode: EX10 0EG **What Three Words:** ///sideburns.jots.reshaping

Accessibility information:

Access: Category 3 - contains some very rough sections through green lanes with tree roots, natural steps and mud. Some sections are not accessible to mobility vehicles and buggies/pushchairs due to kissing gates and three 2 in 1 gates with a stepover bar, steps and narrow bridges.

Terrain: Tarmac, rough stony tracks, grass, tree roots and mud.

Field furniture: 8 gates (including three 2 in 1 gates), 4 kissing gates, 1 step over barrier, 3 footbridges, 1 boardwalk and 30 steps.

Total ascent: 394ft (120m)

Maximum gradient: 1 in 8 (12.5%). This route includes a steady climb out of Newton Poppleford and a short rough 1 in 9 (13.3%) descent into Metcombe.

Narrowest path width: 30cm

Map: OS Explorer 115 Exmouth & Sidmouth

Other useful information:

Dogs: Welcome under close control.

Refreshments: Newton Poppleford has several shops and places to eat, Tipton St John has a village stores and a pub.

Highlights: A chance to explore a diverse range of agriculture in an area rich in market gardening history and visit one of the older churches in Devon. In spring you may even see the famous King Alfred daffodil growing around Newton Poppleford.

A landscape of history

Newton Poppleford's claim to fame is the King Alfred daffodil which was bred by the Hill family and received an RHS Gold Medal in 1899. The original daffodil field has now been built over, but groups of bulbs were planted around the village and can be seen flowering every March.

St Gregory's Church at Venn Ottery is one of the older churches in Devon, with the Saxon church tower dating back to about 1095.

The old mill at Tipton is a Grade II listed building that has two wheels at right angles to each other. It was originally a simple mill grinding corn for the local farming community. However in the early 20th century steel rollers were installed to produce white flour and the mill became known as Tipton Roller Mills. Upstream of the mill there is an Archimedes screw turbine which supplies power to the Roller Mill.

Important wildlife

St Gregory's church is an important habitat for wildlife. Tawny owls roost in the tower and can be heard calling at night and the tower has its own colony of bees that have been in residence for 20 years. Listen on a warm day and you may hear them humming. The church also has a bat colony roosting in the porch, the tower and the main church.

There is a wealth of birdlife on the River Otter. Look out for moorhens, mallards, kingfishers and grey herons all the year round, while in summer you may be lucky enough to see sand martins swooping low over the water.

Directions:

- 1. Start from the free public car park** in Newton Poppleford behind St Luke's Church. Take the footpath from the car park to the left of the church out to the main road. Turn left (west) along the pavement, then when the pavement ends head straight on along the minor road in front of a row of cottages dropping down to reach the Cannon Inn.
- 2. Go straight across the main road in front of the Inn** and onto a footpath between houses. Cross the brook via a footbridge and continue to a path T-junction and turn right.
- 3. Take the first footpath on the left and follow it to a road.** Cross the road onto another footpath between houses coming shortly to another road.

4. **Cross diagonally to your right onto a footpath.** Follow the path uphill and through a kissing gate. You will eventually come out in an orchard. Follow the hedge on your right until you come to a junction of paths.
 5. **Turn left along the East Devon Way** and follow the path uphill, with a row of poplars on your right, to a kissing gate. Go through the gate and continue along the path beside the hedge on your left. Heading downhill to a gate out onto a minor road.
 6. **Go diagonally left across the road** and take the road (west) to Southerton.
 7. **After a lone house on the left, turn right onto a footpath,** go through a kissing gate and follow the path through fields bearing left and then right through a gate to another road.
 8. **Turn left along the road.**
 9. **At the road junction turn right** and then right again at the next road junction (east).
 10. **Just before the farm buildings turn left** onto a track (signed - Unmetalled Road).
 11. **Ignoring the footpath on the right** continue along the track (which can be muddy at times) until you come to a T-junction.
 12. **Turn right past the houses** and look for a gate on your left onto a small green.
 13. **Go through the gate and cross the green** towards Venn Ottery Church. Cross the footbridge and take the path to the left of the church that comes out at a minor road.
- St Gregory's Church is one of the older churches in Devon, with the Saxon church tower dating back to 1095.**
14. **Turn right along the road.** Just before the next road junction turn left (north) up a stony track.
 15. **At the T-junction of tracks at the top of the hill** turn right. Take the first bridleway on your left and follow it downhill to the next path junction. It can be muddy and rough in places. There is also a stepover barrier part way along.
 16. **At the path junction turn left to reach a minor road.**
 17. **Turn right along the road and follow it to Tipton Vale.**
 18. **At the T-junction turn left** and then at the end of the houses turn right onto a footpath.
 19. **Go through a gate and follow the footpath over a bridge** and around to the left. Go through a 2 in 1 gate and continue to follow the path alongside the River Otter on your right to a disused railway.
 20. **Go under the stone railway bridge** and continue alongside the river to a wooden footbridge on your right by Tipton Mill.

21. **Cross the River Otter via the footbridge** and turn right (south) along a footpath that runs through fields and trees parallel with a water course until you reach a road at Tipton St John village.
 22. **Turn right and follow the road over a bridge.**
 23. **Turn left along a footpath heading south** alongside the river and ignoring a footbridge on your left to reach a junction of footpaths.
 24. **Go straight across and continue along the riverside footpath** to a minor road on the edge of Newton Poppleford.
 25. **Turn left along the road and pass the tennis courts.**
 26. **Turn right along a footpath with a brook on your left.** When you reach the houses stay on the grass alongside the brook until you come to a road.
 27. **Turn left along the road and walk out to the main road.**
 28. **Turn left and follow the pavement to a pedestrian crossing.** Cross the road and turn right, then left up a path to the right of the church to return to the car park.
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This route was originally developed by James Baldwin and checked by Ted Swan. It was reviewed and updated in 2025.