



Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty

This leaflet is part of a series of themed trails in Devon's Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB); helping you get out there, enjoy, and learn more about the landscape around you.

Trail themes include

- Coast in Conflict,
- Man and the Landscape,
- Trade and Settlement and
- A Colourful Landscape.

Have a look at these websites for further leaflets in the series, and ideas for other ways of enjoying yourself out and about!

See www.northdevon-aonb.org.uk,
www.southdevonaonb.org.uk and
www.discoverdevon.com

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is the Government's designation for Britain's finest landscapes; there are 40 in England and Wales. Together with Dartmoor and Exmoor National Parks, Devon's 5 AONBs cover 35% of the county. AONBs share a common commitment to secure sustainable living landscapes. Each AONB has been designated for special attention because of the quality of their flora, fauna, cultural and historical heritage, as well as beautiful scenery. Their care has been entrusted to local authorities, organisations, community groups, individuals who live and work in them and those who value them.

Please recycle this leaflet by passing it onto a friend when you have finished with it. Don't let Devon go to waste.

Hillsborough

- **Start/Finish:** Hillsborough Car Park, Hillsborough Rd, Ilfracombe
- **Distance:** 1.5 miles (2.5km)
- **Circular walk:** Yes ■ **Grade:** Moderate
- **Terrain:** Coast path and public footpath. Some rocky, uneven, slippery and muddy patches
- **Obstacles and steep gradients:** 10 flights of steps; 1 steep descent
- **Accessibility:** Route is unsuitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
- **Public transport:** Bus service 3 and 3a from Ilfracombe and Barnstaple stops on Hillsborough Rd 100m downhill from walk start point. For further details contact Devon Traveline 0871 200 22 33 or www.traveline.info
- **Toilets:** Public toilets at Hillsborough Car Park; also at Hele Beach
- **Parking:** Hillsborough Car Park, Hillsborough Rd, Ilfracombe. Pay and Display
- **Other Facilities:** Public payphone 150m down Hillsborough road from car park, on left.
- **Accommodation:** Please contact Ilfracombe Tourist Information Centre 01271 863001 or www.ilfracombe-tourism.co.uk or www.discoverdevon.com
- **OS map:** Explorer 139 ■ **Grid ref:** SS 529473
- **Countryside Code:** When walking in the AONB always follow the Countryside Code, which is dedicated to helping members of the public respect, protect and enjoy the countryside. Follow the link for more information www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk



Coast in Conflict

As part of the frontline of an island kingdom, Devon's coast has for centuries been a scene of confrontation and combat. Along with the fruits of the sea, the county's two long coastlines have also brought the constant threat and reality of attack and invasion.



Well over a thousand years ago, coastal dwellers here lived in dread of the swift longships bearing Viking raiders. A millennium later, Devonfolk still could not sleep soundly in their beds, as corsair pirates from North Africa scoured the county's coast seeking booty and slaves. Throughout ages, the seas you look upon were a treacherous and lawless place.

These cliffs, beaches, and bays have witnessed centuries of tension and clashes. Spain, Holland, and of course France have all threatened these shores, while during the Civil War, the English fought each other along this coast.

More recently, the sea's rim bristled with armaments, as both the first line of defence and the launchpad for attack through two world wars.

Meanwhile another fierce and age-old conflict continues to rage along the Devon coast. Day in, day out, the titanic forces of sea and land meet in a mighty clash. The breathtaking Devon coastline we see today is the result of this relentless battle between pounding waves and enduring rock.

The vast power of the ocean, and the jagged rocks of the land have claimed other lives, in the form of the shipwrecks that litter the coast, each telling a vivid tale of heroism and tragedy, of lives, times, and treasures.

Directions

1. From car park follow tarmac path up along left hand side of swimming pool, climbing gradually.
2. At path junction by hedgebank and Hillsborough information panel, go straight on, signed 'Coast Path to Hele Beach' **(1,2)**.
3. Follow well used path up to the top of the hill **(3)**. Near the top there is a short diversion on the left to a viewpoint, signed 'Path to Viewpoint' **(4,5)**.
4. Back on the main path, continue over the brow of the hill and down to a fenced viewpoint by the Voluntary Marine Conservation Area information panel **(6)**. Turn sharp right to follow zigzag path down the hill.
5. At footpath T-junction at the bottom of a short flight of steps, turn left following yellow waymarker arrow.
6. At fingerpost signed 'Public Footpath to Ilfracombe' turn right. (Alternatively, to visit Hele Beach continue straight on **(7)**, then retrace your steps and turn left here).
7. Follow path up hill, and along the contour, ignoring all paths joining to the right.
8. Fork right just after the phone mast. Continue straight on to path junction by information panel. Turn left here and retrace your steps past swimming pool and back to car park



Points of Interest

1. The name Ilfracombe comes from the Anglo-Saxon word Alfreincoma or Alfred's Combe meaning, in Devon, a small wooded valley. However, the town's roots go back much further. Evidence of both Stone Age and Bronze Age life have been found on Hillsborough. Earlier called 'Hele's Barrow', suggesting a link with former times its named has changed through 'Helesborough', in 1809, to its present day name.

In the 13th Century Ilfracombe was an important naval port, and King John's troops set sail from here, bound for battle in Ireland. 300 years later, more were heading the same way. Up to 800 troops at a time embarked from the harbour below, this time sent by Elizabeth I to put



down an Irish rebellion. When the siege of Calais took place in 1346, Ilfracombe contributed six ships to the flight, compared with just one from Liverpool.

- In 1797, four French vessels, with 1400 men aboard, approached Ilfracombe harbour, apparently intending to invade. The story is told that the townswomen assembled on the hillside, with their red petticoats slung over their shoulders. The would-be attackers took them for a formidable force of redcoat soldiers, and swiftly retreated.
- The commanding heights of Hillsborough are the site of the remains of a prehistoric hillfort. (300BC - 50AD). This commanding location drew the Dumnonii, a Celtic tribe which occupied much of the Westcountry during the Iron Age. The great banked earthworks still very much visible today were thrown up by this anarchic but friendly tribe.



- Ilfracombe is a dangerous harbour for shipping to try and enter in a storm, and this stretch of coast has claimed many vessels. They include the *London*, a transport ship which

in 1796 was carrying prisoners from the West Indies, along with gold and silver. Not only did many of the crew and prisoners perish in the wreck at Rapparee Cove, but so did 16 local people in trying to save them.

- Rapparee Cove was also the scene for a famous "fight" between the German Kaiser Wilhelm and local boatman Alfred Price, when in 1878 the Crown Prince was on holiday. Local legend has it, that the altercation occurred after Wilhelm was caught damaging the bathing huts on the beach and many in Ilfracombe reckon that this was the cause of the First World War!
- The North Devon Voluntary Marine Conservation Area (VMCA) was set up in 1994 and is now managed through Devon Wildlife Trust, to raise awareness of the importance of the sea and the wildlife that supports it. Stretching from Combe Martin to Croyde and to an offshore depth of 20 metres the VMCA includes a range of valuable marine habitats from rocky shores and muddy harbours to sandy beaches and coves. They support a great diversity of wildlife including



rare and unusual creatures such as cold water corals, porpoises and seals.

- Beacon Point became the site of a Gun Battery in 1876, manned by a local force of volunteers. However, despite their vigilance, the heavy artillery guns were never fired in anger. At the beginning of World War One, they were removed, to avoid the town being classed as fortified and thus open to enemy attack.



- Hele and Ilfracombe were once hotbeds of smuggling. For over 200 years this coast saw a nightly battle of wits and muscle between 'free traders' and the Revenue men. In those days, almost everyone living by the coast was involved in smuggling in some way, which made it hugely difficult to catch and convict any culprits.

In 1783 it was reported that every single pilot boat in Ilfracombe was suspected of smuggling. The last boat caught in the act in these parts was a

smack called *Lively*, seized with 300 'tubs' of brandy aboard in 1831. It suffered the standard fate of the time, being sawn up into 3 pieces.

Refreshments

There are no refreshments available directly on the route. However, there are many cafes, pubs and restaurants in Ilfracombe. A small selection, who use local produce, are noted below:

Combe Cottage Restaurant & café

63 High St, Ilfracombe

01271 862605

www.combecottage.co.uk

Menu ranges from cream teas to Sunday roasts. Committed to using fresh, local produce, and serving fair trade tea and coffee.

Grassroots café

97 High St, Ilfracombe

01271 865238

Friendly café serving fair trade tea and coffee. Vegetarian meals and snacks, with an emphasis on local and organic produce. Children are especially welcome, and the cafe has a soft play area for little ones.

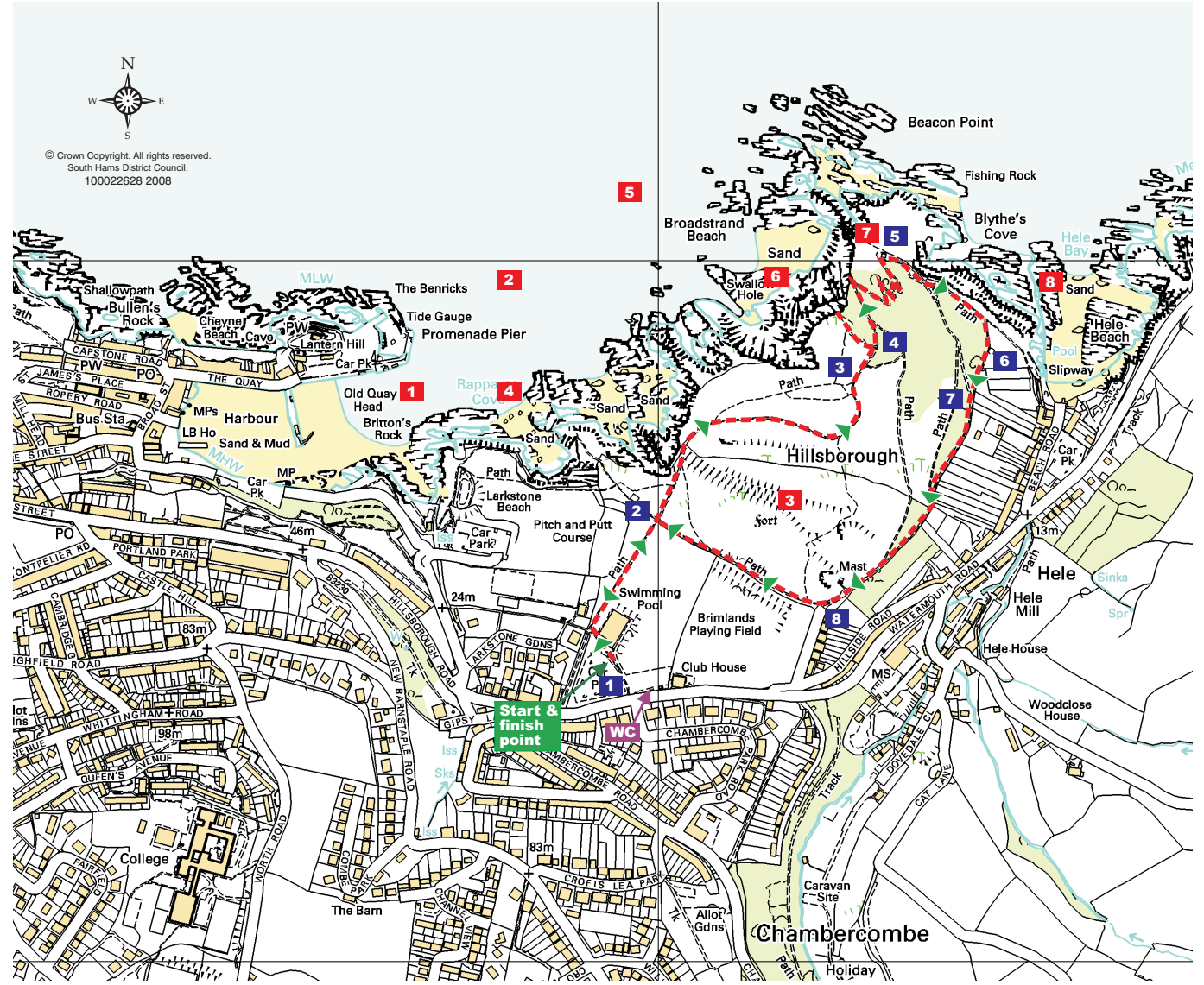
Café Jardin

3, St James Place, Ilfracombe

01271 855777

Homemade cakes and cream teas, along with light bites and snacks. Local seafood features during the evening.





Key

- walk route
- suggested walk direction
- No. refers to directions
- No. refers to Points of Interest

