

# Directions

- 1 Cross the cattle grid across the road at Brendon Two Gates and make for the **Maclaren Memorial** on the horizon to your right. Just before you reach the memorial you will walk past **two standing stones**.
- 2 At the memorial, turn back to face the direction you have come and head to the plantation slightly to your left on the far ridge in front of you.
- 3 Walk downhill until you reach the track. Turn left along it and continue until you reach a gate through a field boundary.
- 4 Do not go through the gate but turn right at the field boundary and follow it downhill as it dips down to Hoccombe Water, until you reach the stone foundations of a **small ruined building** just above the bottom of the valley.
- 5 Continue down to a small gate straight ahead by the stream. Go through this gate and immediately turn left alongside Hoccombe Water. Follow the stone wall (**the boundary of the former Royal Forest of Exmoor**) beside the stream until you reach a gate. Go through the gate and turn to the right, walking diagonally up the hill to meet a track. Turn right onto this track and then left uphill where it meets a further track (a bridleway).
- 6 When the bridleway meets a broad track crossing it from left to right near the top of the hill, go straight



ahead, taking the left hand of three tracks (the main one). A **circular enclosure** will be visible to your right.

Follow the path down into Hoccombe Combe, around to the left and down to a gate beside the stream.

- 7 Go through this gate and cross the stream. Continue up the hillside to the right to the footings of a stone building, turn right at the ruined building (**Badgworthy Cottage**) and continue down the valley. At a fork, continue straight on (signposted Tom's Hill) immediately passing through **Badgworthy deserted**

fork uphill shortly after. Follow the path round to the right up the valley.

- 9 After about half a mile, you will see a gate, ford and footbridge over the stream on your left. Ignore this and continue on the path as it climbs the hillside, a stony path at first, becoming a broad grassy track along the top of the valley of Hoccombe Water.

When you come to a junction of tracks (a junction that you crossed earlier, at 6) continue straight ahead, still on the broad grassy track. This will take you all the way back to the car park.

**medieval village** where you may be able to make out the square foundations of houses, covered in grass and ferns, to either side of the track. After about 50 metres turn right at another fork and head for the gate.

- 8 Go through the gate, cross the footbridge over a stream and turn left, ignoring a right

## Further Reading:

The following contain further information on the historic landscape of Badgworthy.

Roger A. Burton, *The Heritage of Exmoor*, 1989, Maslands Ltd. Tiverton

Hazel Eardley-Wilmot, *Yesterday's Exmoor*, 1990, Exmoor Books

Hazel Riley & Robert Wilson-North, *The Field Archaeology of Exmoor*, 2001, English Heritage

Mary Siraut, *Exmoor: The making of an English Upland*, 2009, Phillimore & Co Ltd



**Toilets & refreshments:** None on route. Nearest at Simonsbath or Lynmouth.

**Dogs:** Dogs should be kept under control at all times and, between 1 March - 31 July, should be kept on a short lead to minimise disturbance to livestock and ground nesting birds.

**Access land:** This walk is on access land which means that you can visit any part of it on foot, unless otherwise informed.

[www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk)  
[www.heartofexmoor.org.uk](http://www.heartofexmoor.org.uk)



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## Exmoor Moorland Archaeology Walks Series No.2: Badgworthy



Start point: Parking beside the road at Brendon Two Gates on B3223 from Simonsbath to Lynmouth. Parking is on the Simonsbath (south) side of cattle grid

Start Grid Reference: SS 7651 4325

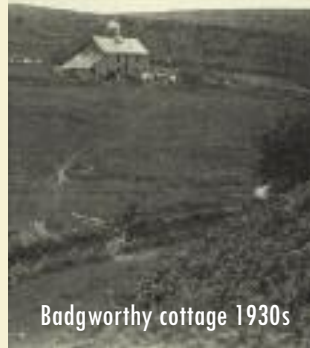
Distance: 6 miles (9 kilometres)

Level of difficulty: Moderate. Initial parts of the walk are across open moorland, so sturdy walking boots should be worn and this walk should not be attempted in poor weather.

Map: Ordnance Survey Explorer Map OL9 must be used in conjunction with this leaflet.



Exmoor's historic landscapes are a very rare survival, both within England and also across the British Isles. They contain many archaeological sites, ranging in date from early prehistory (some 8,000 years ago) to the 20th century. Together they offer a unique insight into our human past.



Badgworthy cottage 1930s

In the 1860s, John Knight's son Frederic, brought in Scottish shepherds to graze sheep on the former Royal Forest. One of these shepherds and his family lived at **Badgworthy Cottage** which was built using stones from the deserted village nearby. The cottage was lived in until 1930.

## Exmoor in the Second World War

In the Second World War large areas of Exmoor were requisitioned by the army. Brendon Common and Hoccombe Hill were used for training and weapons testing as part of the Exmoor Firing Range and a number of buildings and sites reflect this use. Disused farm buildings, such as the shepherd's cottage at Badgworthy, were used for target practice, resulting in their destruction, whilst the surrounding area is pockmarked with small impact craters. The now destroyed concrete building and the concrete posts that surround it, near to the **Maclaren Memorial**, are thought to be associated with the testing of weapons.

The concrete memorial post commemorates Colonel RH MacLaren, who commanded the Chemical Weapons troops of the Royal Engineers and who died on 20th May 1941 whilst demonstrating the prototype 5" rocket.



Memorial to Colonel RH MacLaren

## The Prehistoric landscape

Around 8,000 years ago, when Mesolithic hunter gatherers roamed across Exmoor, mixed woodland covered the area. Evidence for these people, in the form of pieces of worked flint, has been found on the track next to Hoccombe Water, suggesting they made flint arrowheads and blades for hunting here.

Around 4,000 years later Bronze Age people farmed the uplands. They lived in roundhouses and constructed burial mounds and erected standing stones. The landscape was still wooded but it was starting to take on the more open aspect that we see today.

The burial mounds, or barrows, are round mounds of earth and stone, and were put up to mark the site of a burial or cremation. They are often in prominent locations. Some monuments are more complex, such as two **circular enclosures** on Badgworthy Hill whose purpose is uncertain.

Also around this time the communities that lived here erected groups of **standing stones**, several of which can still be found on Brendon Common. They have been placed in geometric shapes or seemingly random patterns across the moorland, but no-one yet knows why they were built.

## The Medieval landscape

The wall which runs down the centre of the valley of Hoccombe Water marks the **boundary of the former Royal Forest of Exmoor**, though in the medieval period river valleys, boundary stones and Bronze Age barrows marked the boundary, rather than a continuous wall. At this time farming did not take place in the Royal Forest, with the exception of one farm at Simonsbath.

At **Badgworthy deserted medieval village**, famous for RD Blackmore's fictional account of the Doone Village in Lorna Doone, 14 medieval buildings survive as low stony banks, rectangular in shape. On the surrounding hillside are traces of the fields worked by the villagers. The terraced fields close to the village were 'in-fields' and probably part of a communal arable system. Those further away on what is now moorland were 'out-fields' primarily used for grazing but ploughed up from time to time. Beyond, the open moor would have provided summer grazing and fuel from furze and peat. The village was abandoned sometime in the 15th century, but one of the houses on the edge of the village remained occupied until 1814, when local tradition has it that an old man and his grand-daughter who lived there died

in a terrible snowstorm.

About 1 km to the south west of Badgworthy are the remains of a rectangular medieval long house. It lies above Hoccombe Water, together with faint traces of its field banks and ridge and furrow. It may be the farmstead mentioned in the Domesday Book as Lacoma (Lank Combe) where Edwin farmed in isolation.

## The 19th century landscape

The Royal Forest was sold in 1818 to John Knight, a Midlands industrialist, who began a process of 'reclamation', attempting to turn moorland into productive farmland. One of the first things he did was to enclose the entire area of the old Royal Forest by a wall of stone and earth some 30 miles long. The section of wall running along the bottom of Hoccombe Water and up to Brendon Two Gates is part of this. Many of the field boundaries date from this time, including that at **4** which was part of John Knight's enclosure of common land outside the former Forest. Brendon commoners (i.e. those who had rights to use the common land) objected to the enclosure of this common land and were said to have destroyed its walls and banks. The **ruined building** found along this boundary was probably built for Knight's workers, stationed there to keep an eye on the commoners.



Remains of 19th century stockman's cottage by Hoccombe Water



Stone setting above Hoccombe Water