

# The Coleridge Way

In the Footsteps of the Romantic Poets

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*A guide for journalists and tourism providers*



[www.coleridge-way.co.uk](http://www.coleridge-way.co.uk)

## Introduction

This guide has been compiled to provide some background information and resources to those wishing to promote or provide information regarding the Coleridge Way such as journalists, local businesses, walking holiday guides etc. You can take the information from here to help write copy for articles, blogs, websites, leaflets etc as you wish.

## [www.coleridgeway.co.uk](http://www.coleridgeway.co.uk) & [www.visit-exmoor.co.uk](http://www.visit-exmoor.co.uk)

This guide primarily highlights contextual and background information. The Coleridge Way website is home to all the practical information required by those wishing to walk the route such as local accommodation, transport links, route guides, equipment advice and much more.

General visitor information relating to Exmoor (including the National Park, Quantock Hills and coast) can be found on the visit Exmoor site.

*N.B: the current Coleridge Way and Visit Exmoor websites are being redeveloped this year and launched later this summer.*

## Contacts

For specific **press enquiries** please contact Jane Adkins, A Head for PR, [Jane@aheadforpr.co.uk](mailto:Jane@aheadforpr.co.uk) or Clare O'Connor, External Relations Manager, Exmoor National Park Authority [CKOConnor@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk](mailto:CKOConnor@exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk).

For **general information** contact:

- Porlock visitor centre – [www.porlock.co.uk](http://www.porlock.co.uk) / 01643 863150
- Lynton Tourist Information Centre – [www.lynton-lynmouth-tourism.co.uk](http://www.lynton-lynmouth-tourism.co.uk) / 0845 4583775
- Or contact one of the Exmoor National Park Centres [/www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/visiting/national-park-centres](http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/visiting/national-park-centres).

Other contact details are provided throughout this guide.

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## Background

The Coleridge Way and Coleridge Bridleway are promoted routes between Quantock Hills AONB in Somerset and Exmoor National Park on the Somerset / Devon border. Both routes begin at Nether Stowey, where Samuel Taylor Coleridge lived from 1797 to 1799 and link together a number of places visited by Coleridge and other Romantic Poets.

The Coleridge Way was formulated as a viable project during 2002. It brought together a diverse range of partners, all of whom saw the value in creating a new visitor experience that would enhance the identity of this part of Somerset, generate new business opportunities (especially following the devastating effect of the Foot and Mouth outbreak in 2001), and also protect sensitive and over-visited parts of the countryside by taking walkers and riders along different routes intersecting with the smaller villages along the route.

The Coleridge Way was an immediate and phenomenal success. It attracted national and international press interest when it was launched in April 2005, bringing new visitors into the area and helping to identify this part of the country with a pivotal moment in the work of the Romantic Poets. The combination of this cultural link with a well-thought-out and spectacular route really caught people's imaginations.

An economic impact study of the project 18 months after its launch showed that:

- 72% of businesses along the route had received some significant benefit as a direct result of the Coleridge Way
- 65% of accommodation providers in the small villages had repeat visitors as a direct result of the Coleridge Way – in 3 cases in excess of 20 bed nights
- 84% of accommodation providers were providing some form of additional services for walkers – 80% packed lunches; 60% baggage transfer; other services included transport, and boot room and drying facilities
- 72% had information on the Coleridge Way on their premises
- 85% of responders thought the Coleridge Way was good for the local economy

Unlike many promoted routes, including National Trails, there is no one organisation with sole responsibility for the Coleridge Way. Most of the land over which it passes is in private ownership and responsibility for the maintenance of the trail lies with Somerset County Council, working with the Quantock Hills AONB, and Exmoor National Park Authority. A steering group co-ordinates actions to develop and promote the path and includes those with responsibility for managing the rights of Way, those involved in marketing and promoting tourism in the area and those involved with the creative arts as well as user representatives.

## Coleridge Way walk

The original route opened in 2007 running a total of 36 miles from Nether Stowey to Porlock. In 2014 an extension was added to make a walk 51 miles in total length running between Nether Stowey and Lynmouth.

The concept of the route is to link several of the smaller villages and settlements in the area, as opposed to sticking to high ridges all the way. This helps to spread economic benefits throughout the area as well as introducing walkers to the diverse landscapes found within Exmoor and the Quantocks including wild open moorland, sweeping coastal views, tranquil wooded combs, gentle rolling farmland and charming river valleys.

It is a walk that is relatively accessible to many average walkers and spread over 5-6 days means average walking of less than 10 miles a day. Of course there are some who like to challenge

themselves. Before the extension was added a number of people had sought to complete the entire route in 1 very long, tough day. It remains to be seen what kind of records might be set for the new route!

## Walking links

For those wishing to extend their route, or to follow a circular route there are lots of options as the Coleridge Way links with many other walking trails.

The **South West Coast Path** is the country's longest footpath at 630 miles. Starting in Minehead the path traverses the coastline of the South West peninsula all the way Poole Harbour on the south coast, via Lands End, the most Westerly point in England. [www.southwestcoastpath.com](http://www.southwestcoastpath.com).

There are two options for circular routes. The first is to follow the Coleridge Way extension from Porlock to Lynmouth (15 miles) where you can join the South West Coast Path to Porlock Weir (11.5 miles) and link back to Porlock. This provides users with an opportunity to experience the best of both worlds incorporating the stunning inland landscapes of Exmoor with the dramatic coastline.

For those wanting something more of a challenge you can follow the Coleridge Way all the way from Nether Stowey to Lynmouth before heading back east on the South West Coast Path to its start at Minehead. Here you can continue to traverse the coast using the **West Somerset Coastal Path** to Watchet before heading inland to rejoin the Coleridge Way retracing the last few miles back to Nether Stowey. A formal link between Watchet and the Coleridge Way is currently under development.

If taking in two protected landscapes isn't enough then the last two options allow you to explore further. Having followed the Coleridge Way to Lynmouth you can start the **Two Moors Way** heading inland across Exmoor and Mid Devon before entering and crossing Dartmoor National Park all the way to Ivybridge. The Two Moors Way is 103 miles.

[www.devon.gov.uk/walking/two\\_moors\\_way](http://www.devon.gov.uk/walking/two_moors_way).

Also from Lynmouth is the opportunity to pick up the **Tarka Trail** a 163 mile figure of eight route through North Devon taking in parts of the North Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty as well as Exmoor National Park and the North Devon Biosphere Reserve.

[www.devon.gov.uk/tarkatrail](http://www.devon.gov.uk/tarkatrail).

## Coleridge Way Bridleway

The Coleridge Way Bridleway is a route open to horse riders and cyclists as well as walkers. Much of it follows the same route as the walking route, other than a short section on the Brendon Hills and the final route from Wheddon Cross which instead of skirting the east side of Dunkery Beacon follows the southern slopes and finishes in the village of Exford which is a traditional centre for riding within Exmoor.

The bridleway route is 33 miles and is described as a challenging ride suitable for experienced riders only.

## The route

The route is fully way marked in both directions using the distinctive quill symbol. There is also a comprehensive guide providing full route directions available to download free of charge from [www.coleridgeway.co.uk](http://www.coleridgeway.co.uk).

The walking guide breaks the route down into 12 short sections of up to 5 miles in length. Every other section finishes at an area where overnight accommodation can be used and so provides an easy way to complete the walk over 6 relatively leisurely days. At 51 miles in length it is possible to complete the route in less time and it is up to individuals how they wish to split the route. Indeed utilising public transport and or local support services users need not be bound by the route guide sections and can walk the route in as many or as few stages as they wish.

Route section	Description
<b>SECTION A</b>	<b>NETHER STOWEY TO ALFOXTON – 4.65 miles, 205m ascent (moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION B</b>	<b>ALFOXTON TO BICKNOLLER – 4.99 miles, 230m ascent (moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION C</b>	<b>BICKNOLLER TO MONKSILVER – 4.84 miles, 113m ascent (easy)</b>
<b>SECTION D</b>	<b>MONKSILVER TO ROADWATER – 4.3 miles, 206m ascent (easy/moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION E</b>	<b>ROADWATER TO LUXBOROUGH – 3.35 miles, 199m ascent (easy)</b>
<b>SECTION F</b>	<b>LUXBOROUGH TO CUTCOMBE – 4.72 miles, 248m ascent (easy/moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION G</b>	<b>CUTCOMBE TO HIGHER BROCKWELL – 4.09 miles, 201m ascent (easy/moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION H</b>	<b>HIGHER BROCKWELL TO PORLOCK – 4.35 miles, 90m ascent (easy/moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION I</b>	<b>PORLOCK TO ASH FARM – 4.89 miles, 473m ascent (challenging)</b>
<b>SECTION J</b>	<b>ASH FARM TO OARE – 4.12 miles, 225m ascent (easy/moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION K</b>	<b>OARE TO WATERSMEET – 5.41 miles, 195m ascent (moderate)</b>
<b>SECTION L</b>	<b>WATERSMEET TO LYNMOUTH – 2.09 miles, 35m ascent (easy)</b>





## Walkers are Welcome



Porlock and Lynton and Lynmouth, the towns at either end of the new extension, are both affiliated to Walkers are Welcome. This association exists to promote walking as a healthy recreation and has grown rapidly until it now has over 100 members. Accreditation is provided to those towns that can:

- Demonstrate community support for the concept alongside formal endorsement from the Local Authority;
- Indicate a commitment to ensure that the local footpath network will be maintained in good condition
- Ensure adequate marketing of Walkers are Welcome status
- Show how use of public transport will be encouraged
- Demonstrate how status will be maintained in the future.

The common membership of our two towns was a critical factor in initiating and gaining approval for the extension to the path in 2014.

For more information about **Walkers are Welcome** please visit [www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk](http://www.walkersarewelcome.org.uk).

**Lynton and Lynmouth** Walkers are Welcome: [www.lyntonwalks.co.uk](http://www.lyntonwalks.co.uk)

**Porlock** Walkers are Welcome: [www.porlock.co.uk](http://www.porlock.co.uk)

## Literary links

The Coleridge Way follows in the footsteps of the Romantic poets. Coleridge and Wordsworth both spent time in the area together. Whilst only being based here together for a year these were formative times and inspired some of their greatest works. Coleridge, Wordsworth, Byron, Shelley and other poets of the “Romantic Movement” wrote about the beauty of the ‘untamed’ countryside and saw wildness as a metaphor for the human heart. This began a shift in public consciousness towards valuing nature and natural beauty. During their time in the area Wordsworth and Coleridge often walked from Nether Stowey to Lynmouth.

The area also has attracted a number of personalities who have been inspired by the landscapes of the area. For detailed information visit: <http://www.exmoor-nationalpark.gov.uk/environment/culture/exmoors-literary-links>

**Samuel Taylor Coleridge** (1772-1834) lived on the Quantocks and visited Exmoor, drawing his literary friends to the area, including Wordsworth, Southey, Hazlitt and essayist Charles Lamb (1775-1834). 'Kubla Khan' was conceived in a laudanum-induced sleep whilst staying near Culbone. Here he also wrote part of 'The Rime of the Ancient Mariner', conceived during a walk to Dulverton with the Wordsworths.

**William Wordsworth** (1770-1850) and his sister Dorothy moved to the Quantocks in 1797 to be near Coleridge, staying for a year. The three shared a passion for poetry, discussion and hillwalking. 'They were', as Coleridge wrote, 'as three persons with one soul'. Dorothy recorded the walks in her journals, including one in 1797 to Lynton and the Valley of Rocks, which they planned as the setting for a 'prose-tale'. This did not come to fruition, but 'Lyrical Ballads', regarded as a landmark of English Romantic poetry, resulted from their collaboration during this period.

**Robert Southey** (1774-1843) was poet laureate but best known for his prose, particularly his descriptions of people and places in his journals. His wife and Coleridge's wife were sisters. He toured Exmoor twice, each time visiting Lynton, Lynmouth and the Valley of Rocks. His likening of the area to Switzerland led to it being marketed as 'The English Switzerland' and to guest houses being built in Swiss style. His visits were later published in his 'Commonplace Book' (1851).

Essayist **William Hazlitt** (1778-1830) was a friend of Coleridge and walked the Exmoor coast to Lynton with him in 1798. He gave vivid descriptions of the area, including the Valley of Rocks, in his diary.

**Percy Bysshe Shelley** (1792-1822) One of the major English Romantic poets, stayed at Lynmouth during the summer of 1812, a time of revolution and unrest in Europe. He had radical political views and a passionate belief in personal and sexual freedom. He had eloped there with his teenage wife, Harriet. Whilst there he worked on 'Queen Mab' but mainly wrote political pamphlets. His second wife, Mary Shelley was the author of Frankenstein.

**Ada Lovelace** (1815-1852), daughter of poet Lord Byron, married William King, Earl of Lovelace. She was long associated with computer pioneer Charles Babbage and in modern times had a computer language, ADA, named after her. She contributed to many of his scientific papers. The Lovelaces were known for their house parties at Ashley Combe, near Porlock Weir, which attracted many famous writers and artists of the day. Ada's granddaughter, Judith, married into the Lynton family. The Lords of Lynton have had a long association with Exmoor, owning an estate in the Culbone area. (1803-1873) was a very popular poet in his time and **Robert, Earl of Lynton** (1831-1891) was a well-known poet, novelist and translator.

**Richard Doddridge Blackmore** (1825-1900) came from a North Devon family. His novel 'Lorna Doone', published in 1869, was based on local legends. The story was centred around Oare and Badworthy Water but much of Exmoor was included. He wrote a sequel as a short story in a book



of short stories published in the USA as '*Slain by the Doones*' and in the UK as '*Tales from the Telling House*'. Another short story was '*Jennifried's Story*', based on Lee Abbey near Lynton. His novel '*Maid of Sker*' was set in North Devon and South Wales and featured Exmoor and legends surrounding the wicked Rev Froude of Knowstone.

**Henry Williamson** (1895-1977) lived in North Devon for much of his life. He is best known for his nature stories, including '*Tarka the Otter*'. In the story Tarka wanders across Exmoor and is chased down the West Lyn by otter hounds into the sea at Lynmouth. He wrote other stories and notes about Exmoor, including '*The Old Stag*' and '*The Wild Red Deer of Exmoor*'. He emulated country writer Richard Jefferies (1848-1887), who wrote '*Red Deer*' (1884), which has recently been re-published. Williamson wrote a series of novels chronicling the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and ending with '*The Gale of the World*', based on the Lynmouth flood disaster.

**Berta Lawrence** (1906-2003) lived near Bridgwater. She was a teacher who wrote several books about her part of Somerset, such as '*A Somerset Journal*' (1951) and '*Quantock Country*' (1952). These include sections about Exmoor and she contributed to the '*Exmoor Review*' some of the best poems that have been written about Exmoor.

**R F Delderfield** (1912-1972) was brought up in Devon and several of his novels were given local settings, including '*To Serve them all my Days*', based on his schooldays at West Buckland School. His brother, Eric Delderfield, (d.1996) wrote several local histories and guides, including '*The Lynmouth Flood Disaster*', which has run into many editions.

Country writer **John Peel** (1913-1983) lived at Hunter's Inn and at Charles. He is best known for his columns about country life in the national press. His best known book '*Country Talk*' (1970) includes reminiscences of Exmoor and he wrote a guide: '*A Portrait of Exmoor*'. There is a memorial to him at County Gate.

## Protected landscapes

The route connects two protected landscapes – the Quantock Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and Exmoor National Park. In addition to offering some fabulous scenery our landscapes are important as a means of linking culture with nature and the past with the present. Over 8,000 years of human history can be found within the Quantocks and Exmoor. Protected areas such as National Parks and Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty are protected through legislation first drawn up following the Second World War through the National Parks and Access to the Countryside Act 1949.

However the idea of protecting nationally significant areas was not new, and was first raised by the Romantic Poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge and Byron. Their writing spoke about the inspirational beauty of the ‘untamed’ countryside and Wordsworth famously claimed the Lake District as a “sort of national property, in which every man has a right and interest who has an eye to perceive and a heart to enjoy”.

### Quantock Hills AONB



The Quantock Hills comprise of a 19km long ridge offering an area of wilderness and tranquillity with panoramic views that lead you through coast, heath and combe.



Explore and you will find rocky Jurassic coastline, exposed heathland summits, deep wooded combes, undulating farmland and attractive villages. The Quantocks are a wonderful place to go for wildlife, Buzzards can regularly be seen circling in the thermals, and nightjars and pied flycatchers can be seen in the summer months. The Quantocks are known for the herds of red deer, as well as the Exmoor Pony herd at Cothelstone Hill.

The Quantock Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), in 1956 – the first such designation in England. This precious and ancient place with its distinct cultural heritage and village communities is hugely valued locally as a native or adopted homeland and workplace, as well as a favoured educational, recreational and even spiritual resource. These hills, which are largely privately owned, accommodate up to half a million visits a year, mainly from people who live within sight of them.

[www.quantockhills.com](http://www.quantockhills.com).

### Exmoor National Park



Exmoor is a truly diverse National Park. A dramatic coastline, with some of the highest cliffs in the country, backed by wild moorlands, incised with steep wooded valleys and combes. Small villages are scattered across the landscape offering a warm welcome to all.

The varied landscape of Exmoor provides some great habitats for wildlife. The famous Exmoor ponies roam freely across the open moorland alongside the largest herds of red deer in England. Salmon and trout and even otters can be found in the streams of Exmoor whilst dippers, owls, bats, birds of prey and rare butterflies can be spotted in the skies above. The skies of Exmoor are famous too, being some of the darkest around affording superb opportunities for stargazing. In 2011 the National Park became the very first area in Europe to be designated an International Dark Sky Reserve and only the second in the world!

The historic and archaeological heritage of Exmoor is both rich and varied, with sites and monuments dating back over 8000 years. Bronze Age burial mounds and stone circles, Iron Age hillforts, Roman fortlets, medieval castles, distinctive stone bridges, farmsteads and unique rural industrial sites are preserved within the agricultural and moorland landscape.

Designated a National Park in 1954 Exmoor later became one of the first National Parks in the country to gain the 'European Charter for Sustainable Tourism in Protected Areas' which demonstrates how tourism is managed for the benefit of the area; its environment, economy and communities.

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



## Landscape Art

ARTlife is enhancing the Coleridge Way as part of a Landscape Art project, working with creatives on projects and products that will encourage new visitors to the area and help local communities to value their natural and cultural heritage. The projects will raise the profile of the Coleridge Way and explore how we can all respond to changes in the landscape around us.

The aim is to offer something new for visitors and local walkers and families to enjoy, to add to their experience of the area and to encourage more people to visit and learn about the cultural heritage of West Somerset.

Follow the different projects at [www.coleridge-way.blogspot.co.uk](http://www.coleridge-way.blogspot.co.uk)

**Christopher Jelley** is creating a series of digital as well as 'low tech' school and community artworks that will encourage people to learn more about their cultural heritage and be creative in the landscape that also inspired the Romantic poets:

**QR Code poetry** - Outdoor 'poetry harvesting' workshops with schools along the route have produced short poems that the children have turned into QR codes. Etched onto slate tiles, the QR codes are placed back in the locations the children were inspired by. Walkers who come across the slates will be able to decode the poetry with their smartphone. Read some of the poems at <http://www.coleridge-way.blogspot.co.uk>.



**Storyboxes** - Journals containing stories begun by local and well known authors will be hidden along the route this summer, for walkers to find and to add their own story lines. See <http://www.storywalks.info>.



**Flycatchers** – a GPS-triggered artwork based on images of Coleridge's original handwritten poems and notebooks, that encourages users to explore and celebrate the unique landscapes that inspired the poet. See <http://www.storywalks.info>



On Exmoor, ARTlife is working with artist and storyteller **Frances Harrison** on **Dark Starry Skies**, a year of community arts activity celebrating the National Park's **International Dark Skies Reserve** status and the legacy of the Romantic Movement. The project draws on the wealth of myth and legend of the night sky and our relationship to the night-time landscape, through storytelling, poetry and film-making. See <http://www.darkstarryskies.com> (with funding support from Exmoor National Park Authority and The Exmoor Trust)



Poet **Ralph Hoyte** and digital company Satsymph are working on an audio app – a **Romantic Litscape** – creating a series of GPS-triggered soundpools where you can listen in on imagined conversations between the poets and hear excerpts of their journal entries and poetry, as you explore the landscape they walked in. Follow Ralph's work as it develops - <http://romanticlitscape.blogspot.co.uk>



**Poetry Pin** is another Landscape Art project that links with the Coleridge Way through its medium of poetry and the magical landscape that meets the sea at Shurton Bars, a place that inspired Coleridge to write 'Ode to Sarah'.

Join **Chris Jelley** on monthly walks along the new coastal path that has been redirected around the Hinkley Point C development site or visit <http://poetrypin.info> Geo-locate your poetry on the Poetry Pin map and it will be visible on location only at that point on the footpath.

Most of the funding for this work has come from EDF Energy through the planning agreement for Hinkley Point C and provides an opportunity to develop new community work over the next 12 months, to work with local creative businesses and to generate mutually beneficial links with the tourism sector.

If you'd like to know more or get involved, contact ARTlife Coordinator Tracey Roberts – [info@artlife-somerset.co.uk](mailto:info@artlife-somerset.co.uk) . Or find us on facebook at [www.facebook.com/ARTlifeSomerset](http://www.facebook.com/ARTlifeSomerset)