

During the English Civil War, in 1645, the Parliamentarians who were established on the east bank of the Exe set their sights on capturing Powderham. This was in order to stop provisions travelling up the river and reaching the Royalists, under siege in Exeter. On approaching the castle, they found it far better defended than they had been expecting and they holed up overnight in the church, setting about fortifying it the next day. The Royalists in Exeter sent down 500 men to reinforce the 200 already in the castle, and it was the Roundheads who found themselves under siege, in the church, although the castle fell to them the following month.

8. When the path splits take the left-hand fork onto a short footpath leading to Slittercombe Lane. Cross the road and follow the footpath besides the stream into Kenton. When the path meets the main road in the middle of Kenton cross the pedestrian crossing. Turn right then immediately left along Fore Street towards the church. Keep left down Church Street before turning left at the signpost to Mamhead. Follow Mamhead Road as it bends to the right.

The history of the village of Kenton can be traced back to the Domesday Survey of 1086. Salt making, fuelwood extraction and flour milling were recorded as local activities. During medieval times, as well as farming, Kenton had strong connections with seafaring and river estuary activities. As in other Devon villages, cider orchards survived here well into the 20th century.

The centre of the village is located around the parish church, and the 'Triangle' with its Celtic Cross and war memorial. The 120 foot church tower is said to be the second tallest in Devon.

After the Great Fire of Kenton in 1856 destroyed about 30 of the village's traditional cottages, it was necessary to extensively rebuild. Many of Kenton's houses, therefore, are brick-built in finely detailed Victorian styles

9. Take the left hand turn up Butts Hill. Follow this road as it climbs past the woodland of Warborough Plantation on your left. Continue on the road downhill past Vennbridge Farm.

10. At the t-junction carefully cross the Mamhead to Starcross road and take the footpath directly in front of you. This path leads down towards Cofford Farm. At the lane keep heading forwards past the garage until you meet the A379, the Dawlish to Exeter road. Carefully cross this road back into Cofton.

Cofton Holidays is a four star family holiday park Devon, 20 minutes from the M5 Exeter, ideal for an Easter holiday break or summer holiday with all the family. Cofton will be your perfect caravan park for exploring Devon in a Motorhome or Touring Caravan, and for camping and self catering holidays. There is a wide selection of Self Catering Accommodation, Holiday Homes, Cottages and Luxury Self-Catering Apartments.

Tourist Information:

Dawlish Tourist Information Centre, The Lawn
Dawlish, Devon, EX7 9PW. Tel: 01626 215665

Other websites:

Powderham Castle www.powderham.co.uk
Kenton village website www.kentondevon.org.uk

Powderham Park & Kenton

On this circular walk you can follow the Exe Estuary trail up to Powderham, passing by the deer park and Powderham Castle before heading inland to Kenton. Walk back to Cofton through quiet undulating countryside along a country lane and footpath.



Distance:	7 miles (11¼ km)
Estimated Time:	3 hours
Difficulty:	Moderate
Starting point:	Cofton Holidays
OS Explorer map:	110 Torquay & Dawlish

Directions

1. From Reception walk along Cofton Lane to St Mary's Church. Take the footpath on your right alongside the church. Follow it up through the fir plantation. Follow the path through a field, over a stile until you meet the road.

2. Turn left and follow Cofton Hill down into the village of Cockwood. The road loops round in a semicircle, passing the primary school built in 1872.

Cockwood is a charming olde-worlde waterfront community, separated from the River Exe estuary by the South Devon Riviera Line. The village, with some 17th century character cottages, is built around a small tidal harbour (known as Cockwood Sod). The Sod, being tidal, is fed from the Exe under two historic railway arches, built by Isambard Kingdom Brunel.

3. Coming out at the Ship Inn turn right passing Cofton Parish Hall before turning left at the harbour. Follow Church Road out to the A379, the main Dawlish - Exeter road. This road can be very busy so take care. Cross at the pedestrian lights and with the golf course on your left follow the railway, river, coast path and road northwards into Starcross.

Sstarcross offers great views across the Exe Estuary, an internationally important site designated for its special birdlife. In the past Starcross was known for its "cockles and oysters". During the 19th century it was said "many persons resort to it (Starcross) who cannot bear the stronger sea air of the coast". When the railway station opened in 1846, Starcross was one of the villages along Brunel's famously ill-fated 'Atmospheric Railway'.

The redbrick church-like building by the ferry stance is the last remaining pumping house from Isambard Kingdom Brunel's railway. Numerous technical issues plagued Brunel's ingenious scheme to drive trains using vacuum power to 'suck' them along the rails, instead of the traditional steam engine. The trains failed to run on time - in fact a lot of the time they failed to run at all. A shame-faced Brunel refused his salary for the year's work and the line was soon turned over to steam trains.

4. From the railway station footbridge leading to the ferry, walk past the toilets to the footpath alongside the railway, on the grassy area. Inscriptions in the burial plot are for Nora Lilian Augusta Awdry, related to Rev. W Awdry, of Thomas the Tank Engine fame.

5. Take the minor road which forks right, back towards the railway and estuary. Continue north. This is a shared road with no pavement and is populated with cars, bikes and walkers

The mud and sand of the Exe estuary's riverbed, swept here from the source of the Exe high up on Exmoor, are rich in nutrients for invertebrates such as cockles and lugworms, which in turn provide a valuable food source for birds. The estuary is a traditional stop-off point for migratory birds, including Brent geese travelling from as far away as Siberia. In the middle of winter there may be as many as 25,000 birds in the middle of the river, thousands of them having flown from Northern Europe to join the native wildfowl and waders roosting and feeding in this habitat. Birds to be seen in large numbers include the avocet, with its long spindly legs and its upward-curving black beak, once rare but now increasing in number and seen in their hundreds on the Exe Estuary. Other species regularly spotted include godwits, dunlins, black-tailed wigeons, long-legged curlews with their down-turned beaks and black-and-white lapwings with twitching legs designed to disturb the invertebrates in the soil.

6. Turn left as Church Road bends around the church and houses keeping Powderham deer park on your left.

7. As the road veers sharply to the right leave the road to carry on along the footpath, heading steeply uphill through parkland into the woodland at the top. Over the crest of the hill the path drops down through the parkland and into the valley below.

Powderham Castle was the home of the Courtenay family for 600 years. Built by Sir Philip Courtenay in 1391, it was added to in later years and is a fortified manor rather than a castle. The walk travels through its deer park, where herds of several hundred fallow deer can sometimes be seen grazing among its mature trees.

Powderham is the site of the main heronry on the Exe, and grey herons can often be seen standing in the marshland bordering the river, or flying to and from the nests they build in high trees in the spring. Look out for buzzards wheeling overhead.

