

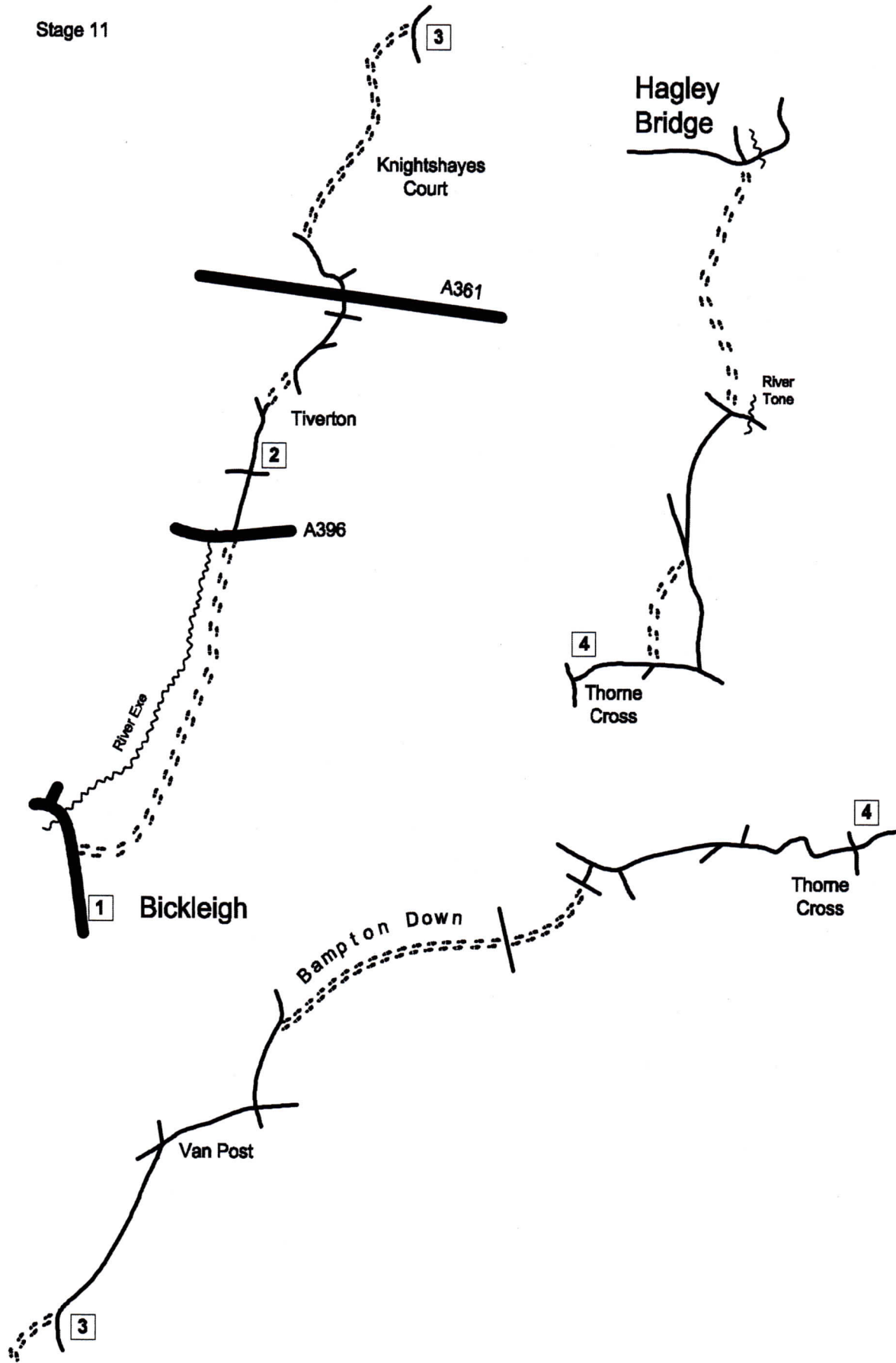
Stage 11

Bickleigh to Hagley Bridge

VIA: Exe Valley Way, Knightshayes Court and Bampton Down
DISTANCE: 16.1m [168.4m]
ASCENT: 1950ft **DESCENT:** 1700ft
EXPLORER: 114 (Exeter & Exe Valley), 128 (Taunton)
LANDRANGER: 192 (Exeter), 181 (Minehead)

This stage promises an enticing day's walking starting with a walk northwards following the River Exe on the Exe Valley Way as far as Tiverton. The route continues north to join a Sustrans cycle route to, through and beyond the grounds of the National Trust's Knightshayes Court and onto a bridle track across the ridge of Bampton Down. Beyond, Dark Lane is followed eastwards over an unmarked entry into Somerset where the West Deane Way is joined. This Way is followed northwards by the River Tone to a B&B at Hagley Bridge. On the day we undertook this, it was such a miserable day with wall to wall heavy rain that only one of our hosts walked with us to Tiverton, the other opted for the breakfast washing up! Refreshments can be had at both Tiverton and Knightshayes Court. We opted for very welcome tea and soup at the latter, and it has to be said that being inside in the dry for a short period, was the highlight of the day as there weren't many distant views in the prevailing conditions.

Stage 11



1: Continue on the lane to just past Bickleigh Mill (SS 938 075) and take the signed path off left on the Exe Valley Way. The low level, well-marked path generally keeps close to the River Exe. The only uncertainty in the path comes just after passing through a walkers' gate where the way goes left briefly towards the Exe before turning right. Eventually the path passes to the right of a sewage plant. Beyond, follow the concrete farm track which eventually becomes a lane. After the River Exe splits on the southern edge of Tiverton, follow the Exe Valley Way sign left over the 'side' stream and follow the street up to a footbridge over the A396. Beyond, continue following St Andrew Street to Tiverton's main shopping street (3.7m).

2: Go left for a few yards then leave the Exe Valley Way by turning right into St Peter Street (do not cross the Exe!). On reaching a road junction, turn left so as to keep to the right of the parish church's grounds. Shortly after passing a sign to the Castle, branch right on an ascending surfaced lane named Park Hill which leads into a park. Follow the path through Peoples Park and out onto Park Road. Turn left and ignoring turn-offs, particularly a turn-off right down Carew Road, reach a T-junction. Turn right for a few yards, then left on a road to Chettiscombe. Follow the lane over the A361 (960 142) and immediately beyond ignore a turn-off right by going straight on towards Knightshayes Court (5m). After 1/4 mile turn off right along Knightshayes drive following Sustrans Cycle Route 3. This passes left of the Court buildings and continues towards The Stables where there is a café and toilets. Follow the cycle route signs which turn left just before the café. Continue to follow the cycle signs keeping straight ahead, northwards, on the track which becomes unsurfaced. The track ascends gently to a track T-junction. Go right as directed to shortly meet a lane (963 169) (6.9m).

3: Turn left for 1.5 miles to the Van Post Hill cross-road (974 190) (8.4m). Turn right for just over 1/3 mile to the next cross-road. Turn left and after 700 yds when the lane bends left, go straight on along a good unsigned, unsurfaced track. Follow this east-of-North and north-of-East along Bampton Down, ignoring a track turn-off left. Cross a lane and continue to a lane junction (ST 006 214) (11.3m). Take the lane opposite (signed Clayhanger) and follow it as it swings right after 270 yds (signed Clayhanger). After a further 350 yds, turn off left along an unpromising lane called Dark Lane which is more like a farm track than a minor road. The surface improves after the entrance to Hearne

Farm. Keep heading eastwards on the lane. When the main lane swings left to Clayhanger (018 217), keep straight on signed to Thorne Cross. On reaching the cross-road at Thorne Cross, go straight across leaving Devon for Somerset (032 214) (13.2m).

4: Continue eastwards on the lane for a further 2/3 mile to where there's a lane off right (042 213) and here turn off left on a signed track which is the continuation of Dark Lane. Follow this to meet a lane junction. Go straight across for a few yards to meet a further lane and turn left joining the West Deane Way. The lane descends to the River Tone (15.1m). Don't cross the river bridge, but instead turn left briefly on the lane to Clayhanger and then take a signed restricted byway off it right. Follow this parallel to the river using a footbridge to cross a side stream and reach a track junction. Take the bridleway track opposite, signed West Deane Way, and ascend a short distance to a directional sign off right leading via a gate into a field. The right of way follows the right boundary and becomes a cattle track along this boundary leading to a gate. However, if it's ankle deep in mud, as it was on the day, you can reach the gate by following the hedge to the left of the track on the field side. Having passed through the gate into the next field, follow the right boundary to a waymark onto a track along a left boundary. This is followed by a short stretch by the River Tone to the lane at Hagley Bridge (056 238). The route continues by turning right, but Hagley Bridge's B&B is a very short distance to the left and an evening meal can be had at Waterrow a mile away.