

# An Easy Circular Walk From Broadclyst

**Distance:** 2km or 1.3 miles

**Time:** Approximately 45 minutes

**Summary:** A largely level route, most of it on well surfaced paths and tracks. One gentle hill. A few sections can be muddy following wet weather, so stout footwear advised. One section prone to winter flooding. Some gates, no stiles. Much to see including: nature and wildlife, history and archaeology.

**Getting There:** Bus Stop at Victory Hall/RedLion, Broadclyst, on the Exeter to Cullumpton route  
Car parking in small free car park off Hellings Gardens, Broadclyst adjacent to Victory Hall.

**Starting point** - the green square at Hellings Gardens, on the South side of the B3181, behind Victory Hall next to the Broadclyst Surgery. Marked on the map as number 1.



**Activity: Tree Seeds:** Note the lovely range of trees here. You could pick up acorns from the oak tree and plant them in pots or the garden. In two years they would be ready to be planted out in the countryside. There is also a large fir tree, can you see any cones on the ground? These contain seeds that could also be planted to grow your own fir tree!

**2.** OFF we go! Walk up towards the bus shelter on the main road, the B3181, and turn left along the pavement.

Where the village store is now, was the site of Barton Farm, which was destroyed in a great fire which swept through this part of the village in 1870, destroying a number of houses and cottages.

**3.** Cross the pedestrian crossing and turn right towards the Red Lion Inn. The beautiful spreading tree over the wall on your left hand side is a conker tree, or Horse Chestnut. In the spring it is covered in beautiful flowers. If you are here in the autumn you may find conkers to pick up. You could plant them to grow new trees. These trees are not native to England but are considered endangered across Europe as their numbers are declining.

**4.** The Red Lion Inn is a marvellous old pub, the building dates from the 17<sup>th</sup>-18<sup>th</sup> Century and in late spring to summer its front wall is covered in glorious wisteria flowers. If you are here at dusk in the summer months you will likely see bats flying to and fro. You will pass here again near the end of your walk. If you want to stop for refreshment on your way back, it is best to check online in advance for their opening hours.

Bear left pass the front of the pub and towards the church.



**5.** Enter the Churchyard.



If you want to be a history detective a churchyard is a good place to start. This fine church, dedicated to St John The Baptist largely dates from the late 15<sup>th</sup> century although it was substantially restored in the Victorian era. In front of you is the stepped stone base of a medieval cross. In the medieval period a regular market was held right here in the churchyard. Off to your right, see if you can find strange looking low arches in the churchyard wall.

These arches are the tops of the vaulted ceiling of an undercroft or cellar, the only surviving part of the now vanished medieval manor house of Broadclyst home of the Nonant family from c1100 to 1340 CE. In the churchyard you could also hunt for memorials dedicated to members of the Veitch family. They were famous horticulturalists who designed the gardens at Killerton house and established nurseries in Exeter. They introduced many new plants to England, right here in the Clyst Valley, including the majestic Wellingtonia or Giant Redwood tree.

**Activity: History Detectives:** Can you find the remains of the arches of the cellars, or undercroft, of long vanished medieval Broadclyst manor house? They are visible in the wall of the churchyard, far to the right of where we came into the churchyard

Take the path to the left of where we entered the churchyard, keeping the church on your right hand side. Leave the churchyard via the small gate and continue along the lane.

**6.** You will pass by Broadclyst House on your right. This was originally the medieval rectory for the church, but was remodelled as a mansion in later centuries.

**7.** At a junction with a small road (beware there may be occasional cars!) keep straight on. The long stone buildings to your left just at this point are almshouses, constructed in 1605.

**8.** Take the first right turn into a lane, signposted Public Footpath, Clyston Mill and Killerton house. As this is a cycle route, beware of bicycles!



**9.** At the bend follow the track round to the right, ignoring the

footpath that heads across the fields.



Occasionally in the winter and spring months following very heavy rainfall, the river Clyst ahead may burst its banks. If the track is flooded, you will need to turn back and retrace your steps

Along this stretch of track notice the fine large oak trees on your left. If you are here in the autumn you may find acorns on the ground that you could plant

in pots or direct in the soil. We need more trees to be planted because trees are good for wildlife and people.

**10.** When you get to the junction we will be heading off to the left, signposted as a cycle trail. Pause for a moment and look to the right. You will see a lovely old orchard. Orchards not only provide fruit but are great habitats for wildlife. Beyond the Orchard you will be able to see Clyston Mill, a working watermill owned by the National Trust (Limited opening hours: check the National Trust Killerton website for details). The mill standing is an 18<sup>th</sup>-19<sup>th</sup> century building but is perhaps built upon the site of a medieval mill, first mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1086.

**11.** Head along the cycle path bridging over the River Clyst. Looking across the flat fields of the floodplain here. Note the fine old oak trees in hedgerows. You may notice that some of them have



craggy or jagged looking dead branches. These are common on older oaks and are known as “stag horns”. The presence of dead branches does not harm the tree and is an important part of the tree’s natural life cycle, and provides important habitat for many small creatures and fungi.

**12.** When you get to a sharp right turn pause to look back with fine views of Broadclyst church on the high ground in the middle of the village. If you look carefully you will see in the low lying fields of the floodplain many humps and bumps. Such features are most visible when the sun is low in morning or evening, and casting long shadows. This is archaeology! These irregularities are traces of long vanished channels which were created to divert water from the river across the fields. These would have been regulated by sluices and were designed to create water meadows to produce abundant summer hay crops.



**13.** Continuing around the corner on the cycle path and onwards you will soon come close to some electricity pylons. Beyond these you can see two tall trees on the hilltop. These trees are Wellingtonias, or Giant Redwoods. The Wellingtonia, native of California is the largest tree in the world, and was brought to Devon in 1853 by the Veitch nursery in Exeter. These particular specimens were are believed to have been planted for Queen

Victoria’s diamond Jubilee in 1897.

**14.** If you were to follow this cycle path onwards you would in ten minutes come to Martinsfeld farm, and continue on a footpath, or follow the cycle trail eventually to Killerton House (National Trust). But that is an adventure for another day, because here we turn off the cycle path to the right. Thanks to National Trust Killerton for replacing a rickety stile here with this new gate. Pass through the gate and cross the field by a well-worn footpath back towards Broadclyst. If the field ahead is flooded following heavy rainfall, you will need to turn back and retrace your route.



**15.** At the far side of the field cross a footbridge back over the River Clyst once more. Notice on your left a large knobbly-barked tree on the riverside. This is an Aspen, a fast growing type of native poplar tree that particularly thrives in waterside locations. Follow the path around to the right. The variety of trees on either side here, including coppiced hazel, and fallen wood left on the ground to rot, is great wildlife habitat.

**Activity: Wildlife detectives:** This riverbank with all these trees is great wildlife habitat. Listen: how many different kinds of bird song can you hear? Look: how many different kinds of tree leaves can you see? Can you see a rotting log? This is great habitat for bugs and fungi!



**16.** Rounding another corner, you will see the path going uphill. With trees overhead it almost has the appearance of a tunnel. Where a path or lane like this becomes set between banks and its surface is eroded by feet and water it becomes deeper and deeper over the years. Such routes are often very old, and are known as “hollow ways”.

**17.** At the top of the hollow way you will find yourself back in Broadclyst, Go ahead and cross the gravel drives passing houses on either side and take a left turn. This will bring you back to the Red Lion Inn.



**18.** Ahead of you lies the main road the B3181. If you cross via the pedestrian crossing you will be back at your starting point adjacent to Victory Hall, the bus stops, and the car park in Hellings Gardens.

We hope you have enjoyed this walk, brought to you by the #RoutesForRoots project as part of the Clyst Valley Regional Park. You can follow us on social media @ClystValleyPark. Why not sign up to our email list for updates on project news and events?





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