

## 7. T for three. . . and John Musgrave

The countryside between Torquay and Totnes in South Devon comprises a landscape of attractive valleys with a quiet and away-from-it-all atmosphere. A perfect way of exploring this scenic area is to use the footpaths and tracks which are followed by two of Devon's promoted walking routes. These two routes, the Totnes-Torquay Trail (or 3T's for short) and the John Musgrave Heritage Trail coincide between Marlton, on the edge of Torquay, and Totnes, and this is the route followed here. This walk is a one-way length from Marlton to Totnes, using the regular and relatively frequent bus service between the two to take you from Totnes to the starting point at Marlton, a pleasant ride in its own right.

Totnes is the starting point, from where the bus to Marlton is taken. The bus stop is almost next to the Tourist Information Centre, opposite the Seven Stars in Coronation Road. Alight from the bus in Vicarage Hill in Marlton, outside the Bungalow Stores.

**Walk back down the hill and take the first left, Meadow Park. Take the next right, still called Meadow Park, and continue to the end, where the road becomes Love Lane Close. Go past the bollards at the end to a lane and turn left here. At the crossroads by the Village Hall go straight across and up the hill opposite.**

To the right is the Church House Inn; as its name suggests, this was originally the house for the church and dates from the 15th or 16th century.

**Climb past the Old School House and the Church.**

The oldest part of the church is the tower, built around 1400. Most of the building dates from the 15th and 16th century, and is well situated on its hillside overlooking the village.

**At the top of the short but steep hill bear right onto the wider lane. At the brow of the next hill take the public footpath on the left, up some stone steps, through a gate and then along a field edge. Keep to the clear fenced path until it reaches a stone stile to an unfenced field edge.**

As Marlton is now left behind, attractive views open up to the left over a valley to Beacon Hill. The distinctive hill, the highest point in Marlton parish at 195m/643 feet, has now changed its use from the site of a beacon fire to the location of television relay masts.

**At the end of the field go through a kissing-gate and down a flight of steps to the entrance to Strainytor.**

**Go down to the lane and turn right then almost immediately turn left and follow the field edge ahead on the public footpath. Follow this field edge round to the right at the end.**

Over to the right can be seen the prominent farmstead of Aptor, its name possibly an alteration of up-tor, from its position above Marlton.

**Go through the gate at the end and turn left along another field edge. Again follow the field edge round to the right then at the bottom of the dip go through the gate on the left.**

Over to the right on a clear day the views will stretch to Dartmoor.

**Continue along the next field edge. In the far bottom corner go through a gate onto a track and follow this to a junction. Turn left here.**

This is Loventor Lane, one of the many historic green lanes in this part of Devon which offer a superb means of exploring the countryside.

**Follow Loventor Lane down to cross a stream, then up the other side. Past some houses, fork left onto a surfaced lane.**

Looking back to the right can be seen Loventor Manor. This is an ancient settlement location, with its name deriving from Leofwynne, the Saxon founder. The current house is late 16th century, with later wings.

**Follow the pleasant lane through an attractive valley to arrive at a junction. Turn left here.**

Ahead on the right can be seen the rather skeletal outline of Berry Pomeroy Castle on the hillside, part hidden in the trees.

**At the next junction turn right, past the "No Through Road" sign.**

If you wish to visit Berry Pomeroy Castle, and its café, both open seasonally, bear left up the public footpath through the woods.

**Keep to the lane as it passes a pond and then beneath the castle, high up on its shelf of rock.**

The castle looks very impressive from here, with its gaunt outline and empty windows, these being the remains of the Elizabethan house built into the castle. Given its appearance it is perhaps not surprising that it has the reputation of being the most haunted castle in England!

Berry Pomeroy derives the last part of its name from the Norman family of de la Pomerai, who acquired the land in 1066. The castle appears to have been built in the late 1300s or 1400s. In 1547 the de la Pomerai sold the estate to Edward Seymour, Duke of Somerset, and the same family still owns this land. The castle had become a ruin by 1700.

**Continue along the lane to pass Castle Mill Farm. At the fork just past the Mill Farm bear left.**

The ruined building a little way along is the remains of the estate's saw mill.

**Follow the track along the edge of the wood through the picturesque Gatcombe Brook Valley. At the couple of forks keep to the main track, generally staying level. Go through the gate at the end of the wood, follow the path down to the right and through the remnants of an old orchard.**

Every settlement in South Devon would once have had its own orchard, but over the years most have been lost, or reduced to one or two trees, such as this one.

**Go through the gate at the end and turn right past the hamlet of Netherton. Cross the stream and then turn left at the junction by Netherton Cottage. This lane leads to Gatcombe Mill.**

The old mill itself was on the left, under where the yard now is, although the mill house and cottage still exist on the opposite side of the lane. This was a corn mill for the castle estate. It was used until the 1920s.

**At the junction just beyond Gatcombe Mill turn left. Watch out for the traffic on this short stretch. Continue up the road and then take the next lane on the right, signed to Coombe Park Equestrian Centre. Pass this centre and continue uphill on the green lane ahead.**

This is Bourton Lane, another of the lovely old green lanes which criss-cross the South Hams of Devon. It was once quite an important road to and from Totnes.

**Keep following the green lane uphill to the brow, then start descending. Continue to descend Bourton Lane, Totnes seen clear ahead. The long descent is followed by a climb past Bourton and then another short descent to arrive at the Totnes-Paignton road.**

Bourton is a very old settlement with a Saxon name meaning settlement of the farmers. At the Totnes end, the lane becomes known as Bourton Road and is lined with some large 19th century villas, dating from when this was still a relatively important road.

**Use the pedestrian lights to cross the road and continue down the hill to the right. At the junction at the bottom continue straight ahead.**



This part of Totnes is known as Bridgetown. It was first developed in medieval times by the de la Pomerai family to try and attract some of the trade of Totnes, but soon became a virtual suburb. It became part of the municipality in 1835. Most of the existing buildings are 19th century, including the church, but there is one 16th century building - no. 5 on the left. The bridge joining the suburb to Totnes was built in 1826-8 by Charles Fowler, a Devon architect who was also responsible for Covent Garden in London.

**Cross the bridge to return to the start at the Seven Stars.**

## Facts & Features

**Walk Length:** 5.5 miles/9 km; one stile; one short sharp climb of 30m/100 feet and two longer more gentle climbs also of 30m/100 feet. It is generally well waymarked.

**Facilities:** Marldon has a village shop and a pub; there is a seasonal café at Berry Pomeroy Castle; Totnes has all facilities.



**OS maps for this walk:**

Landranger (1:50,000 scale):

No. 202 Torbay and South Dartmoor;

Explorer (1:25,000 scale):

No. OL20 South Devon

Totnes is well served by buses from Torquay, Paignton, Exeter and Plymouth. It is also on the national rail network, with direct links to and from London Paddington, the Midlands, the North of England and Cornwall, as well as Exeter and Plymouth. There is a regular bus service between Totnes and Marldon (the Dartmouth - Torbay Hospital route) which will take you to the start at Marldon.

**For information on the John Musgrave Heritage Trail, see page 7. To order a leaflet on this trail, see pages 32 and 33.**

**Alternatively, visit [www.visitdevon.co.uk](http://www.visitdevon.co.uk), which has all the information and an order form.**