

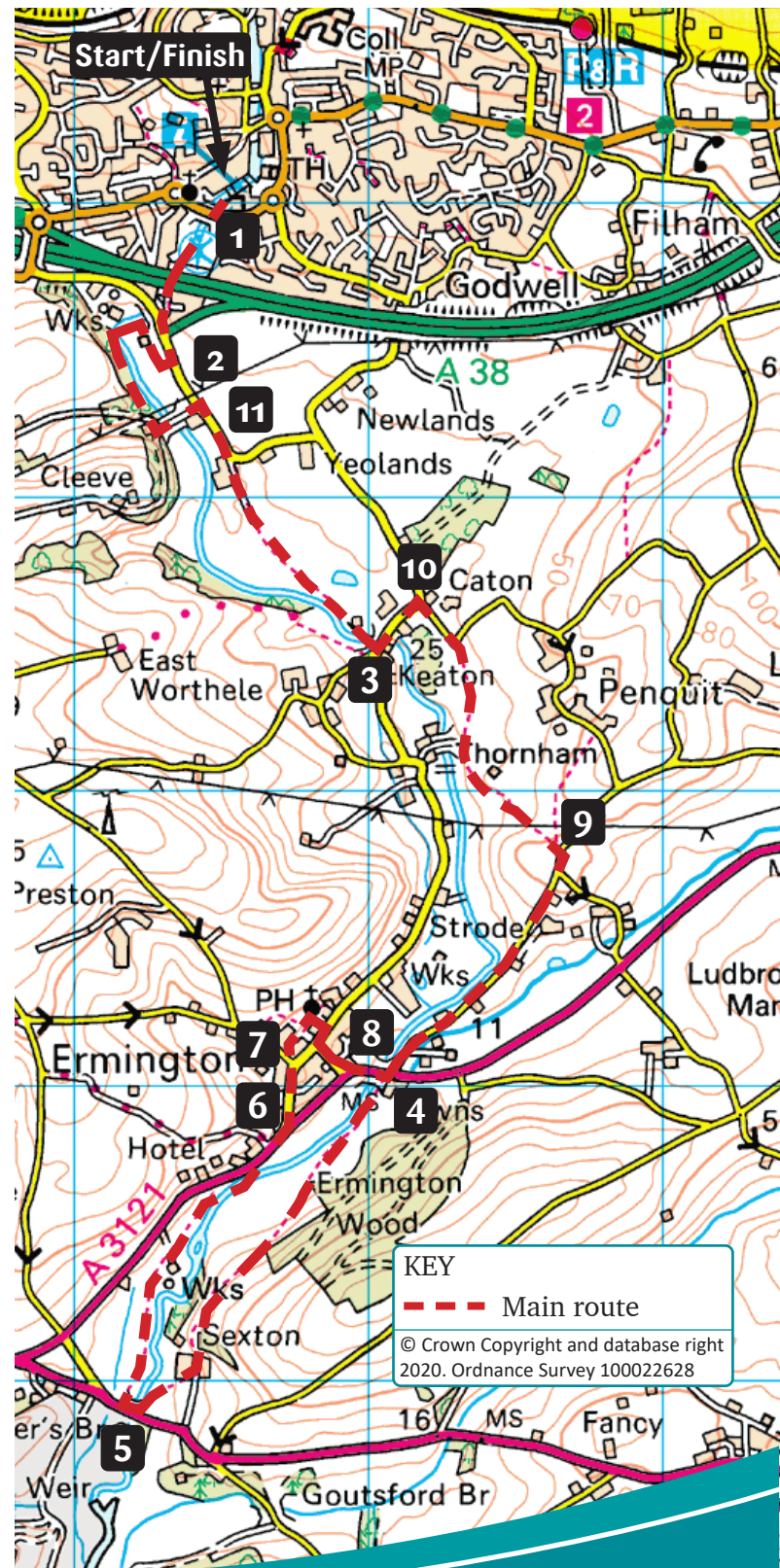
The River Erme - Ivybridge to Ermington



The edge of the moors

A lovely wander following the valley of the River Erme, in an area where the wild beauty of the moor and the mellow delights of rolling South Devon meet and merge.

- Start:** | Glanvilles Mill/Leonards Road Car Park, Ivybridge. PL21 0SL
- Distance:** | 8.5 miles
- Difficulty:** | Moderate. Many stiles (3 can be bypassed); 1 flight of steps.
Busy main road
- Terrain:** | Footpaths, often through fields; fairly even underfoot, occasional mud after rain; surfaced roads.
- Parking:** | Glanvilles Mill/Leonards Road Car Park, Ivybridge. PL21 0SL
- OS map:** | Explorer OL20
- Grid Ref:** | SX 636 561
- Public transport:** | Buses and trains to Ivybridge – www.travelinesw.com;
- Refreshments:** | In Ivybridge and Ermington
- Toilets:** | Glanvilles Mill/Leonards Road Car Park



This walk is available in the following formats from www.southdevonaonb.org.uk/walks



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South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Walks

Directions

For much of its length, the walk follows the green and white Erme–Plym Trail / Coast to Coast waymarkers.

- 1** From the Leisure Centre in Ivybridge, take the riverside path downstream. Walk along the main road then turn right opposite the recycling centre and follow path around edge of playing fields.
- 2** Turn right along the road, then right again onto a footpath front of Yeo Bungalow, across fields and along river.
- 3** Turn left at road, and then first right at Caton Cross. After 200m bear right through a metal gate, and across fields. Bear left, walking uphill to get top next gate when crossing an open field via the telegraph pole, and follow the next field edge to the road. Turn right. At main road, take footpath opposite and to left, signed 'Sequer's Bridge'.
- 4** Follow yellow waymarker arrows across fields, following the river before looping up the hill. Cross a wooden stile, passing through a farm towards the main road
- 5** At the main road turn right then right again to follow the riverside path back up towards Ermington.
- 6** Cross the main road and after 220m turn left up Town Hill into Ermington. Walk up to the village pub at the top.
- 7** Take cobbled path to right of pub and cross fields to the church. Drop straight down from church to road and turn right. Turn first left down road past the school.
- 8** At main road turn left over bridge, then left again up lane signed for Penquit and Strode. From here you are retracing your earlier steps.
- 9** Turn left beyond brow of hill onto public footpath and follow yellow waymarkers back through fields.
- 10** Bear left at the road. Turn left at Caton Cross. Turn right just before Keaton Bridge onto riverside footpath. Where path enters field, fork away from river along remains of green lane and field edge.



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- 11** Turn left onto footpath alongside road. After 200m, turn left and follow path around back of playing fields alongside river. Turn left opposite recycling centre and follow river back to car park.

Further Interest

Heritage

The name 'Ivy Bridge' was originally reference to the crossing on the River Erme as opposed to any settlement. The 17th Century chronicles of Sir William Pole, a Devon historian and antiquarian records that 'Ivy brigge' took its name from 'ye bridge which lieth over ye Erme, being much inclined to ivy'. The old 'Ivy Bridge' has proved to be a popular landmark over the years. It has been the subject for many paintings by artists such as John Inigo Richards, Francis Towne and William Payne. The most famous artist arguably was the English watercolourist Joseph Mallord William Turner, who visited Ivybridge in 1811 and 1814 making sketches which formed the basis for his watercolour of the bridge. The bridge carries Blatchford road over the river.

Ivybridge owed its past prosperity to the River Erme which runs through the town centre. The river once powered a corn mill and paper mill, along with a fulling and tucking mill to prepare and 'felt' or thicken fleeces. The mills are largely silent now, but the population of Ivybridge has shot up from 477 in 1817 to around 12,000 today. Many of its inhabitants now commute to Plymouth for work.

From Sequer's Bridge the castellated form of Flete House can be seen across the field. Built on the edge of the Erme floodplain, its name comes from the Saxon word 'fleot' meaning 'flood'. Flete House was requisitioned as the maternity hospital for Plymouth during the second world war, when Freedom Fields Hospital was bombed– 10,000 babies have been born there!

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Ermington is a small community nestled within the rolling landscape of the South Hams in South Devon. The history of Ermington can be traced back 3000 years, although the strongest evidence of an early settlement here is the bronze age 2300 to 600 years BC.

Ermington as we know it today was probably founded around 700 AD, the site of the village being chosen for its rich farmland, plentiful water supply from hillside springs and sheltered location.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul in Ermington is famous for its crooked spire. The use of unseasoned wood in the construction may have been the cause of the kink. However, local yarns suggest that the steeple craned its neck too far in trying to catch a glimpse of a particularly beautiful bride. The spire was damaged by lightning in the late 1870s, the £70 repair costs were raised by public subscription.

Inside the church you can see the wood carvings of Violet Pinwill. Violet, born in Lincolnshire in 1874, was a wood carver specializing in ecclesiastical carvings. Her work was known throughout Devon and Cornwall.

In 1880 the Pinwill family moved to the parish of Ermington. Violet's father, the vicar of Ermington was able to secure funds for the restoration of the church. During the restoration, her mother hired an instructor to teach the seven daughters woodworking; three of them Mary Rashleigh, Annie Ethel and Violet Alice became woodworkers and formed their own company.

The oak pulpit at Ermington church was one of their first large commissions and was installed in 1893, when Violet was just 17. The faces of the angels at the base of the pulpit at Ermington are said to be based on the faces of the Pinwill sisters. Examples of their work, can be found across Devon and Cornwall. Violet Pinwill's last piece of woodcarving is also in this church: a second-world-war memorial plaque carved in 1945, when she was 71 years old. By the time she died on 1st January 1957, over 185 churches in Devon and Cornwall and several in other counties contained at least one item made by her company.



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Landscape

The river Erme rises high on Dartmoor, where many prehistoric settlements can still be seen along its banks. Below Sequer's bridge, the river Erme flows over a weir and becomes the tidal estuary.

It runs to the sea at Wonwell and Mothecombe, and its relatively undisturbed estuary plays host to many wading birds and wildfowl. Hedgebanks are the norm in lowland South Devon, so the area you walk through just south of Ivybridge is unusual in that the field boundaries are mostly dry stone walls – more commonly found on the moor. These walls, encrusted with lichen, provide safe havens for all sorts of creatures, including small mammals, toads, snakes, and a variety of insects.

Of particular interest in the area above Ivybridge is a large boulder outwash fan which extends south from the mouth of the Erme Gorge, cutting down from the high moor. These boulders were probably deposited during a torrential flash flood during the Ice Age. Part of Ivybridge is built on this fan, and its presence can be witnessed by the use of the boulders as building material in the lower parts of the town, as well as in old field banks in the surrounding countryside.

The old apple trees in a large field just south of Keaton are the remains of an orchard. In times past most South Hams farms kept a large orchard to produce cider, which was once the staple drink of the people of these parts. The brew also formed part of a farm labourer's pay.

Wildlife

The woodland part of the path between Yeolands and Keaton is rich in wild garlic in the spring. This pungent plant, with its clusters of brilliant white star-shaped flowers, has edible leaves with a mild garlic flavour.

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As you walk down the lane past Strode and Ermecot towards Erme Bridge, the hedge to the right contains field maples. A compact and elegant tree most often found in hedgerows, the field maple has delicate and smooth lobed leaves which turn bright yellow in the autumn. Its wood is prized for carving and turning, and has been used throughout history for the making of harps.

The heron - majestic and surprisingly graceful for its size – is a frequent visitor to the riverbanks in the fields by Sequer's Bridge. Gangly, greyish-white, and with a long dagger for a beak, the heron waits motionless on the riverbank waiting for fish. Protected today, all herons were once the property of the crown, and were eaten at court feasts.

Buzzards were once persecuted to the brink of extinction. Nowadays the brown, barred plumage and broad, 'fingered' wings of this bird of prey are a familiar sight on this walk, wheeling overhead on the thermal air currents.

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The European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development Europe investing in rural areas has supported Explore South Devon to promote circular walks within the South Devon Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.