



Walk No. 8 – Circular Milestone Cross

This is walk number eight in a series of historical walks around Chudleigh and the surrounding countryside compiled by Alan Brunton for the Chudleigh History Group. Each walk commences from the Town Hall. The historical content of the walks is mainly brief, but further information can be found on our website and in The Chudleigh Book, available in the library.

Walk 8: Distance approx. 2.5 miles. Time 1.5 hours. Roads, some quiet, some pavements

From the town hall walk immediately left into Woodway Street and pass the rear entrance/exit of the Woodway Room. The first row of houses was built in the 1950s, but as you progress the cottages are much earlier. You then come to a group of properties where years ago stood a slaughterhouse, and then a large barn which used to be an indoor riding school. Cross over and above the A38, pass Parrs Lane, Croft Barn and Rivendell Court. In the late 20th century Rivendell was the site of homes for the mentally handicapped for the Home Farm Trust Ltd. It has since been redeveloped and is now private housing. When reaching the corner bear right in front of the cattle sheds.

This is a fairly quiet road but take care as there are no pavements. After half a mile you come to Combeshead Cross and a signpost pointing left to Trusham and Hennock. Ignore this and walk straight on for half a mile passing two entrances to Oaklands, and further on two entrances to Westwoods, the second a much grander driveway. Now a private dwelling which was probably built in the late 18th or early 19th century, we know a little of its history. Mary Jones in her History of Chudleigh published in 1852 wrote that it was built by a Major Mills and our research records that in 1873 a Major General Charles Buchanan and his wife lived there. They died in the early 1900s and in 1910 the house was being used by St Joseph's Ursulines Roman Catholic Sisters, an order founded in Italy in 1535 for nursing the sick and for teaching girls. They left around 1920 and Herman Cramer, who lived at Kerswell, purchased it and named it Westwoods. His occupancy only lasted a few years since when it has changed ownership several times. I think it is more than coincidence that further along the road is Crammers Cross. This for some reason must surely be so named after Herman Cramer.

Before reaching Milestone Cross you pass a reservoir which is supplied by water from the Kennick Reservoir above Hennock. This was connected in 1967/68 and when then connected to our town's supply caused much disruption to the road layout.

When reaching Milestone Cross walk straight on down and over the A38 to Crammers Cross and turn right. You now follow this pavement back into Chudleigh. The first point of interest is what used to be the Highwayman's Haunt. This property is full of interest. Previously a licensed restaurant, a dwelling has stood here since Saxon Times. Rough Hill in those days, it then became Row Hill and then in the 19th century Rowells when it was owned by the Cobley family; no relation to Uncle Tom from Widecombe in the Moor. It became a highwayman's haunt because in the 17th century it was used as a hiding place by Jack Witherington and his cohorts in what was then a farmhouse. He was known to have robbed passengers on the Exeter to Plymouth coaching route as well as those

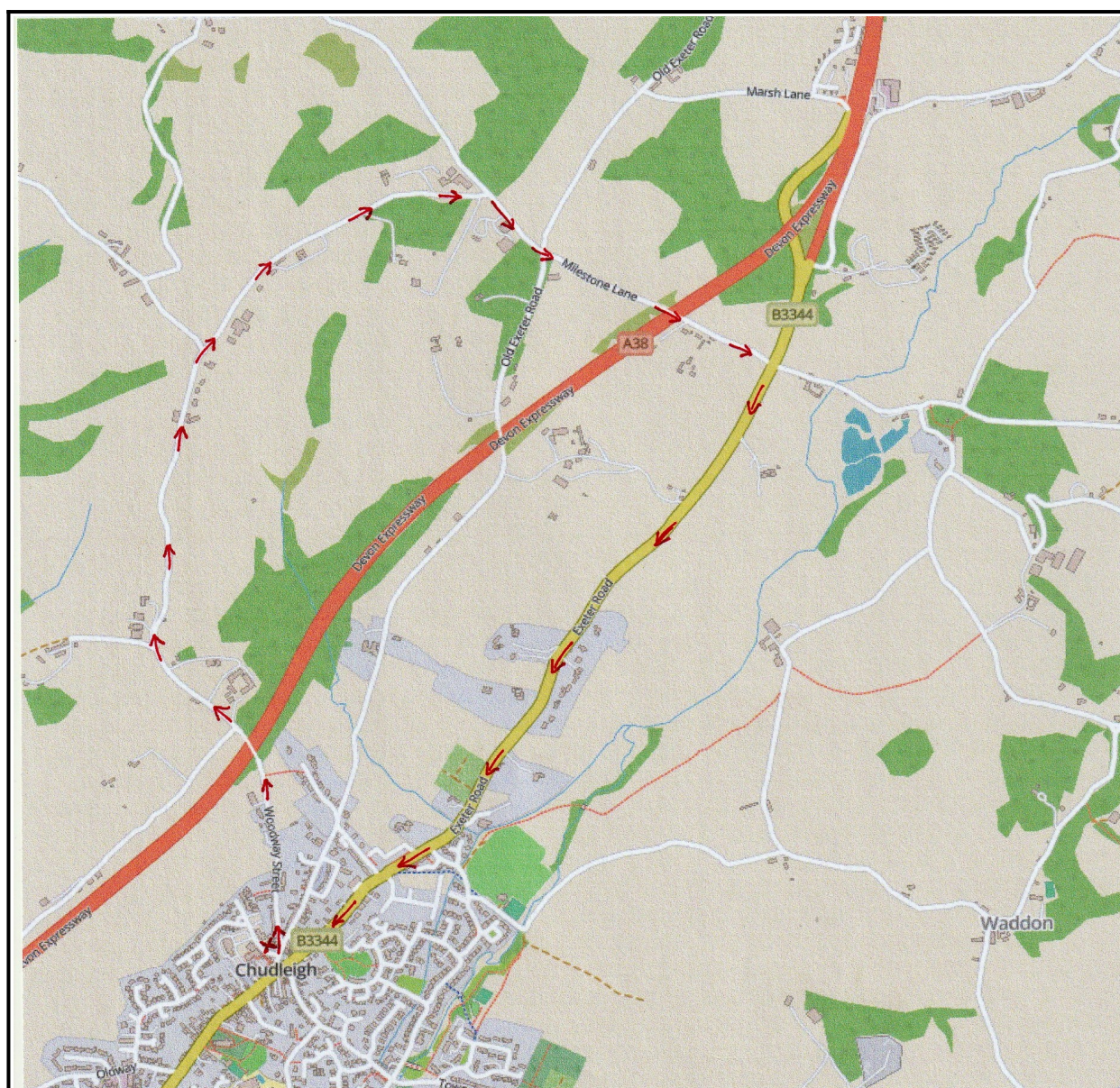


further afield. He was hanged at Tyburn along with others in 1691. When asked if he had a last wish he replied 'he would like someone to take his place'.

A little further on is Filleigh. David James, an ex-England international football goalkeeper, lived here for two years or so around 2000 when playing for Portsmouth in the latter days of his career.

Before reaching the Exeter Road allotments you pass several large properties on the right and various ones on the left. Chudleigh Council owns two allotment sites. The one above the cemetery was acquired from Lord Clifford in 1920. The aforementioned Exeter Road site took much negotiation with the landowners as it was owned by the Brigittine Convent and Syon Abbey. It took two years before a rental agreement between the Lady Abbess and the Council was agreed in the early 1920s. This site is now owned by our council.

Walk eight concludes by walking back to the town passing Brookfield Court, noting the school bell in the wall below the entrance sign, this site once being the Baptist School and later chapel as described in walk seven.



Route of Walk No.8 (map source: OpenStreetMap)