

Charleton and Frogmore Creek

The Salcombe- Kingsbridge Estuary is a glittering jewel in South Devon's crown. This walk explores one of its loveliest creeks, teeming with wildlife, along with some of the areas ancient green lanes.

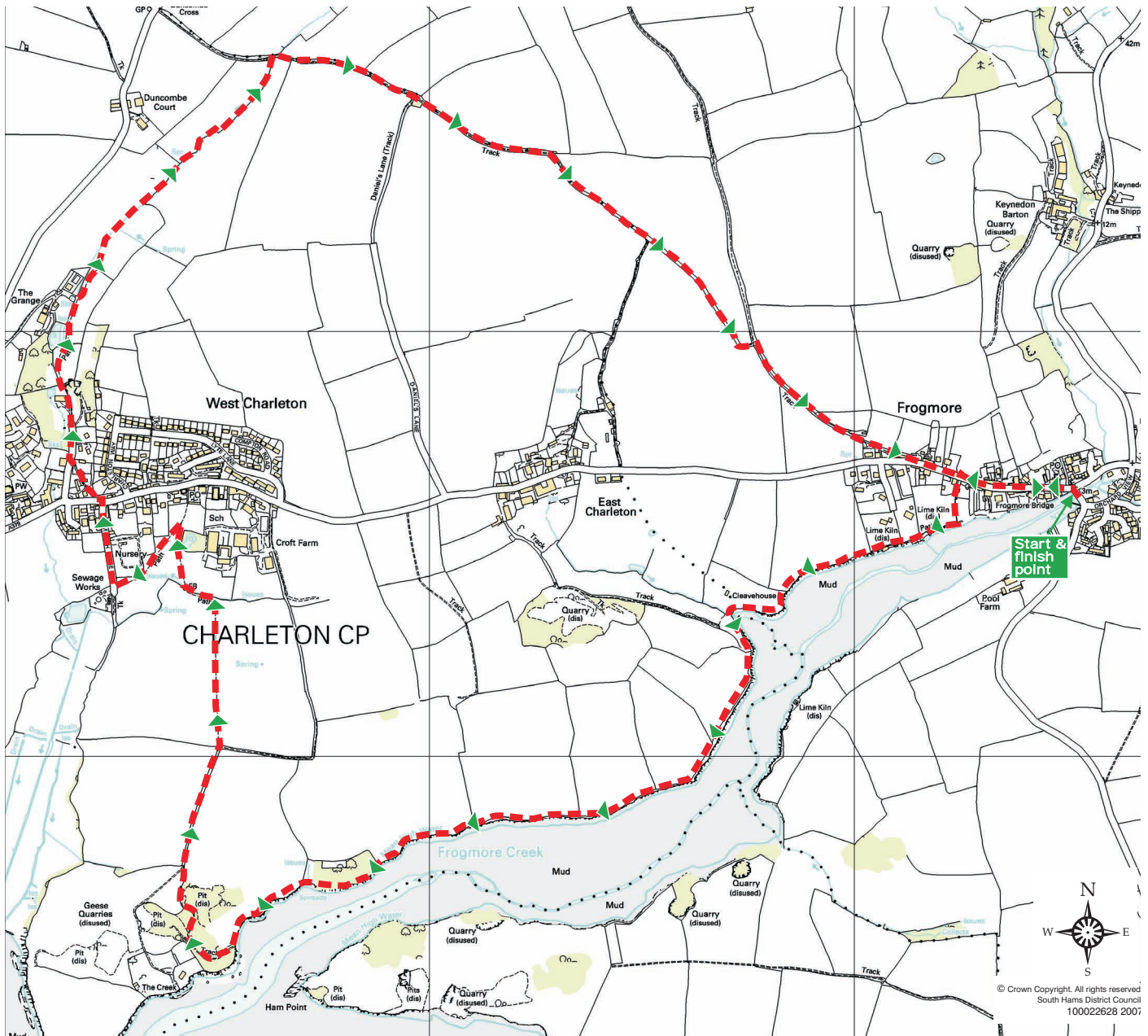
Start:	Frogmore Bridge
Distance:	4.5 miles.
Circular Walk:	Yes
Grade:	Easy to Moderate
Terrain:	Estuary foreshore, sometimes slippery underfoot; field footpath; green lane, with some soggy and muddy sections in wet weather; surfaced road
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	13 stiles. This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs
Public transport:	Bus service 93 to Frogmore from Dartmouth, Kingsbridge, and Plymouth
Refreshment stops:	Globe Inn, Frogmore 01548 531351
Toilets:	Nearest public toilets at the Quay in Kingsbridge.
Parking:	On- street parking in Frogmore; avoid main road. Alternatively, park and ride from Kingsbridge via Number 93 bus.
Accommodation:	Please contact Kingsbridge Tourist Information Centre 01548 853195 www.kingsbridgeinfo.co.uk
Other facilities:	Post office and village store, Frogmore. Public payphone by village store, Frogmore.
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX 776426



Directions

1. From the bridge at Frogmore follow the main road up past the post office and Globe Inn; take care on this busy main road.
2. After 300m turn left onto public footpath signed for Frogmore Creek and West Charleton. Follow path around field edge and along above creek.
3. Bear left at next fingerpost signed 'Geese Quarries 1m'.
4. Eventually the path drops down onto the foreshore. After 200m follow the 'Public Footpath' sign inland.
5. When you meet the lane go straight on.
6. On the corner by the fire beacon basket turn left through metal gate and down public footpath through field.
7. At the bottom the path follows the field edge left, then turns right through the hedge bank.
8. Walk up field to next waymarker, then sharp left onto public footpath following farmer's track through field.
9. At the lane turn right.
10. At the main road in West Charleton take the public footpath opposite and to the left.
11. After 100m bear right up track. At bottom of drive for Fernrose join public footpath following yellow waymarkers up valley.
12. Where path crosses stone stile to t- junction with green lane, turn right.
13. After ¾ mile, at t- junction turn right down green lane.
14. Turn left at the main road and walk with care down through Frogmore back to the bridge.





Further Interest

Heritage

Frogmore, like many of the villages around the Salcombe-Kingsbridge Estuary, is a very old settlement. Its name is a Saxon one and means 'the frog's pool'. This sleepy backwater once functioned as a bustling quay, and the spring tides would bring quite large sailing ships right up the creek. Coal and corn were landed loaded on the wharves here until well into the 1800s.

A limekiln stands down by the foreshore near Frogmore. Like many others it was situated close to the water because the limestone burnt in it was brought in by boat from Torbay and Plymouth. There are 27 of these kilns dotted around the shore of the estuary.

The long green lane along which you walk towards Frogmore was once the main turnpike road from Kingsbridge to Frogmore. The turnpikes were toll roads, and unpopular among many. These routes often had a soldier's pike set as a barrier across the road by the toll house, which is how they got their name. The lane here would almost certainly have been a packhorse route well before the turnpike was built in 1824.

Landscape

You may notice the greyish stone along the back of the foreshore. This rock is called Meadfoot Slate. Where the route leaves the foreshore to head inland, you pass the old Geese Quarries. The stone which built the tower at Dartmouth Castle was hewn here in the 15th century, and this quarry also provided the raw material for West Charleton church and many other local buildings.

Wildlife

The mud exposed at low tide along the creek may not always look particularly appealing, but it contains a greater density of life than a tropical rainforest! There are so many organisms that they use up all the oxygen in the mud within the top few millimetres.

This mud is a 24- hour restaurant for wildlife. Fish feed on the organisms on and near the mud's surface when the tide is in. When it goes out, wading birds come in to pick and probe for edible goodies.

The rocky foreshore is rich in seaweeds. There are less of them down on the mud, as most seaweeds need something – a stone or pebble – to hold on to.

You may be able to spot Egg Wrack, which has large bladders along its olive- green fronds, and reproductive bodies that look a bit like pale raisins on stalks. This seaweed produces a bladder each year, so you can work out its age – some plants in the estuary are reckoned to be over 100 years old!

Ospreys divide their time between Africa and Scotland. In spring, and particularly in autumn though, you might spy one having a few days' break by the estuary during its migration. They are large birds of prey with broad wingspans, and are almost always seen near water. Ospreys feed on fish, which they catch in their large, strong talons.

The bleached- looking shells of cockles are often sprinkled along the shore of the creek. They have a classic shell shape – curved, with 'ribs' spreading out and round from a tucked- in point at the bottom, and a serrated top edge. If you're lucky you may find two still joined together to form the case in which the soft- bodied animal once lived.



The estuary is a Mecca for birdlife. Wildfowl overwinter here – you might see the brown- headed, red- eyed Pochard, or a Goldeneye, with its glossy green head, white patch by the beak and yellow eye.

You're unlikely to get through a walk along the shore without seeing a wading bird or several. Frogmore Creek is a great place to see a Greenshank in particular. This graceful bird has elegant grey- green legs and a long, slightly upturned bill.

The Shelduck is another ever- present around the creek. It is a beautiful and bold sight, with a red bill and black head on a bright white body with black and orange stripes and bands. Unusually, shelduck often nest in holes in the ground, and here they make their nests in old rabbit warrens along the creek banks.

