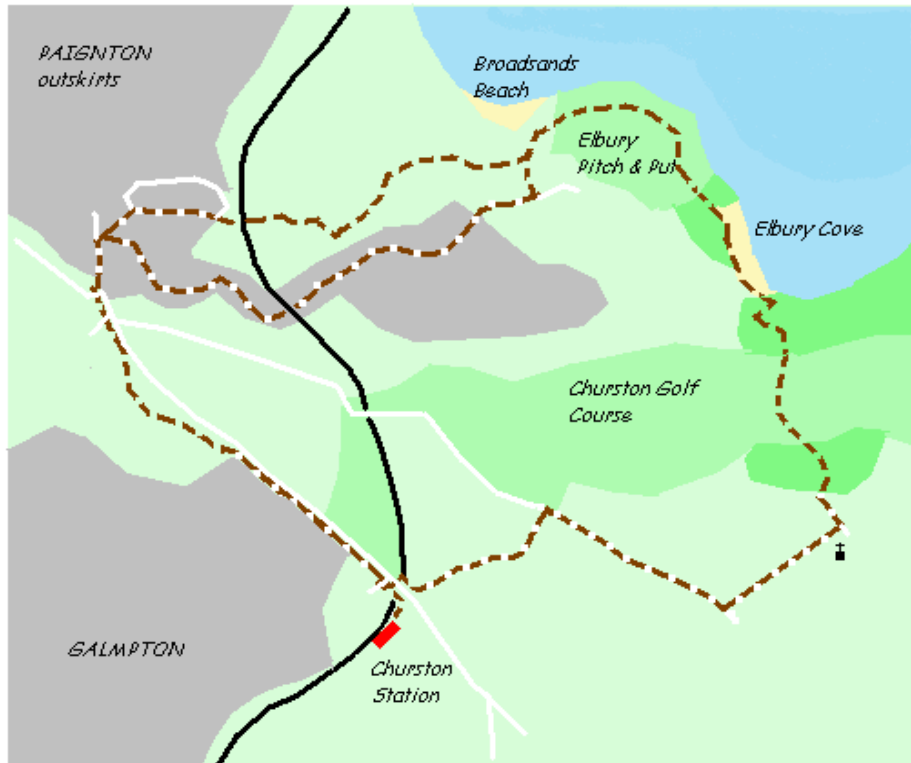


The ABC Murders Walk, approximately 60 – 90 minutes

OS Reference: Churston Station SX 894 562 GB



The great crime writer, Agatha Christie, lived close to this station and was a regular user. In her books she described many local places in which to base her incidents but normally changed the names. In *The ABC Murders*, however, place names were not altered and Churston Station and some of the places on the following walk appeared as themselves.

The rough plot is that Mr Archer was murdered at Andover, Betty Barnard at Bexhill, and Sir Carmichael Clark at Churston. On arrival at Churston Station after catching the overnight train from Paddington, Hercule Poirot was met by a Police Inspector and would have taken the following walk.

Upon leaving the station building turn left towards the main road and up to the bridge over the railway. You need to go straight across down Bridge Road, but there is a subway to your left which is the safest way to cross this busy road. Bridge Road is fairly quiet but has no pavement so please walk with care. At the end of this road you will cross a bridge which went over the old branch line to Brixham. Looking over the right hand side you will see how overgrown the track bed has become since closure in the 1960's. Also on the bridge is a painted stone with 225 22 stencilled on it. This identifies the bridge and is the distance in miles and chains from Paddington via Bristol. (A chain is 22 yards, or the length of a cricket pitch. There are 80 chains in a mile.)

Immediately after the bridge is Bascombe Road. This is the only other road after the main road to Brixham and can be fairly busy – take care. Upon entering this road turn right.

In the book, Poirot went to a house called Combeside which overlooked the Golf Course. This course will have been seen from the end of Bridge Road, but we will let you choose which house in Bascombe Road Agatha Christie was referring to.

After about 300 yards, turn left along Green Lane. Fields are on the right, but after a while can be seen the church tower of St Mary the Virgin, the local church for the village of Churston Ferrers and where Agatha Christie worshipped regularly. The road turns sharp right after a while and you can turn this way if you wish to see the church. This route, though, turns left along a narrow road which is signposted for a footpath to Broadsands and then Elbury Cove. You will soon cross the Golf Course where you will need to keep to the marked path.

Returning to the book, Poirot, and his assistant Hastings, crossed the Course and then "passed over a stile into a steep winding path. 'This leads to Elbury Cove'" they were told and is now the path to be taken although the stile is no longer there. However, after a short while, turn right over another stile and keep on this path through the woods until another path turns left down a flight of steps and onto Elbury Cove. This is a pebbled beach and now well known for its water skiing. Cross over the beach and leave by steps up through bushes. You will then have a view overlooking Torbay that Agatha Christie described as follows:

"Suddenly, we came out on a grassy ridge overlooking the sea and a beach of glistening white stones. All round dark green trees ran down to the sea. It was an enchanting spot – white, deep green and sapphire blue.

'How beautiful', said Hastings.

Isn't it? Why people want to go abroad..... when they've got this!
I've wandered all over the world in my time and I've never seen
Anything as beautiful."



You are now roughly half way round the walk. Take any path across the open space as all lead to Broadsands Beach. Upon leaving here it is mostly uphill and two choices of walks are given.

If it has been wet recently, then it is suggested that you walk up the main road under the viaduct to the line of shops at Churston Broadway. To access this, walk through the main car park at Broadsands and take the main exit to the left and turn right along the road.

If it has been dry though, again walk through the main car park but turn tight into a smaller car park opposite the main exit. Cross this smaller car park diagonally to the back corner where there is a gap in the hedge which is the start of a footpath. Walk along this path going through the gate and then turn right when facing some houses through another gate remembering to close it behind you. Follow the path uphill and then cross the field on the authorised path. This field is sometimes occupied by friendly cows. Across the field you will see a high, narrow bridge under the railway line; go through this bridge and join North Rocks Road. Continue up the road until you see the main Paignton to Brixham road at Churston Broadway shops.

Turn left at the main road towards the traffic lights where you need to cross over and continue over Churston Common in the direction of Brixham. Within a few minutes of level walking you will be back at Churston Station for a well earned rest.

*Quotes from 'The ABC Murders' by Agatha Christie with kind permission of Agatha Christie Limited.
Neither The Dart Valley Railway Plc nor the Churston Station Volunteer Group accept any responsibility for any loss, damage, or injury howsoever caused, nor responsibility for any delay caused to or by any person following this suggested walk.*