

# WALK ← WEST



*A selection  
of thirty  
west country  
walks  
all within  
easy reach  
of Bristol  
and chosen for  
their variety  
and interest*



Middle Hope (walk 16)

Geoff Mullett

PDF file

This e-book has been laid out so that each walk starts on a left hand-page, to make printing the individual walks easier. When viewing on-screen, clicking on a walk below will take you to that walk in the book (pity it can't take you straight to the start point of the walk itself!)

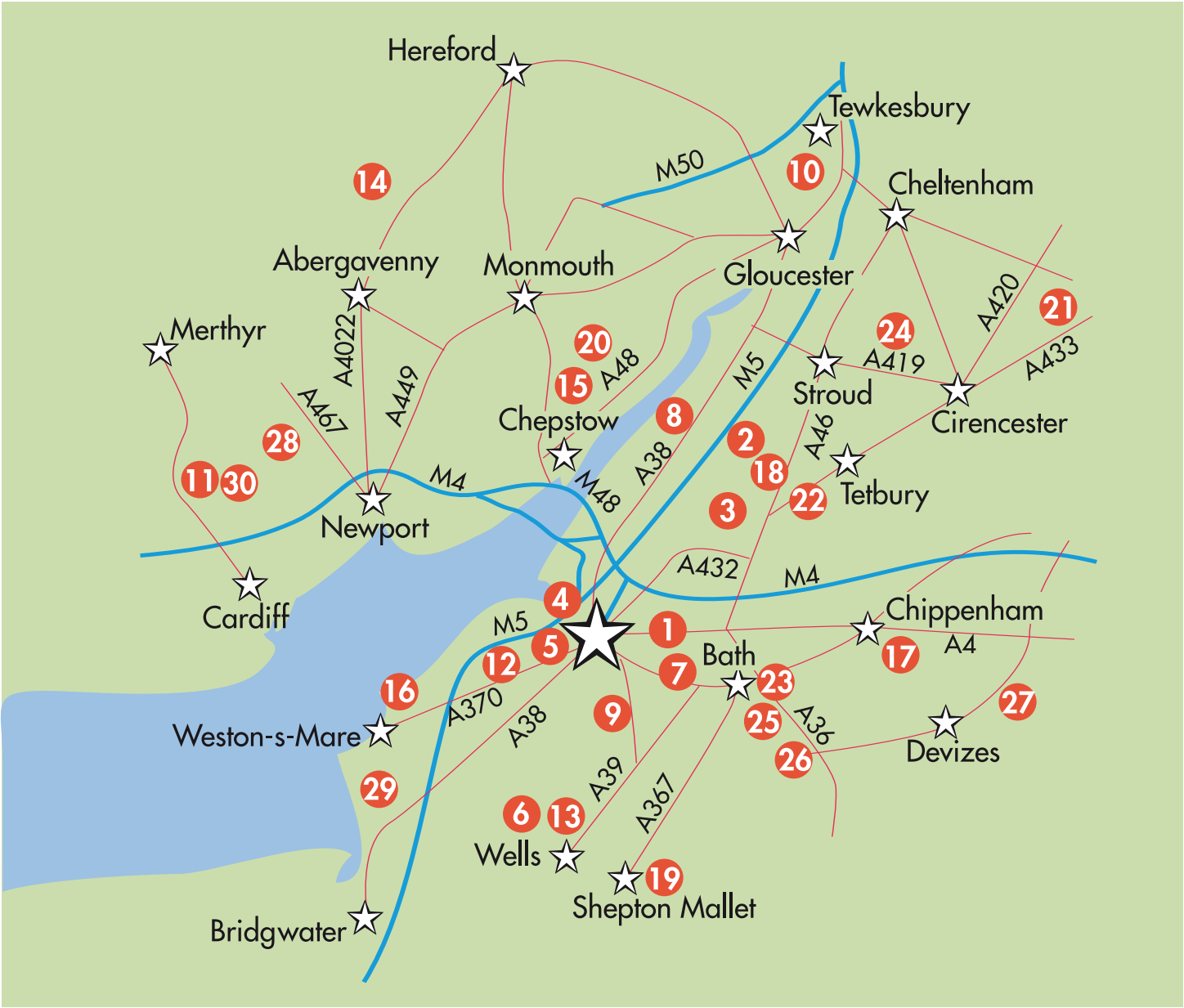
As always, I'd be pleased to hear of any errors in the text or changes to the walks themselves.  
*Happy walking!*

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The contents of this e-book are believed correct at the time of printing and the author has tried to ensure the accuracy of the maps and route descriptions; nevertheless, the author cannot be held responsible for any errors or omissions or for changes in the details given in this e-book or for the consequences of any reliance on the information provided by the same. So there!





## Walk 1 – East Bristol Pucklechurch

**Start** 'Rose & Crown' Parkfield Road, Pucklechurch (ST 696768).

**Distance** 4 miles / 6.5km.

**Refreshments** Pub at end of walk, nothing en-route.

**Getting there** B4465 runs east from Fishponds through Pucklechurch. Turn left opposite the church into Parkfield Road. Park near the pub.

*A walk steeped in the industrial past – the remains of a busy railway line, coal mines and a brick-works. Now, nature is fighting back with a profusion of wild flowers in spring and summer, bird-song, and rabbits in the woodland banks. There is a welcoming hostelry after a walk taking no more than 2 hours with one gentle climb. Note that in summer some stiles and stretches of foot-path may be overgrown.*

Pucklechurch stands on a formerly important route from Bristol to London and acquired its wealth from the many coal mines – small bell-pits in the 17th century and larger mines in the 18th century that were scattered around the locality. The village was also known for the manufacture of felt hats and for the quarries producing coarse, black marble used for gravestones and chimney-pieces.

From your starting point at the Rose & Crown, walk back towards the village along Parkfield Road, crossing to the right side when prudent. Behind the high stone wall

on your right, you get glimpses of the 17th century Moat Farm (and the housing estate that has sprung up around it). The wall continues as you take the first turning on the right, Kings Lane, the monotony of the stonework being broken by the wall pennywort and ivy-leaved toadflax that add a touch of colour to the grey stone. Keep to the metalled lane as it bears right, still with the wall on your right, then when you pass The Coach House on the left **A** continue ahead on a crumbling surfaced track, this is still Kings Lane! As the lane degenerates into a path, it becomes muddy and narrow in places, but you finally leave it when it turns sharp left in front of a stile and old field gate **B**.

Climb the stile to the field beyond, which is usually ploughed or knee-high with crops. The landowner rarely restores the footpaths in these fields so a little care is required now. Cross the field half-left, passing under power lines and keeping to the right of the supporting pole. As you approach the far hedge, look for a yellow waymark arrow on the remains of an overgrown old stile; cross and turn right. In a few metres, you will reach a further stile at the corner of the field, climb this to reach a lane on a bend. Go right for 100 metres to where the lane turns right and here, ignore the footpath ahead through metal gates, but climb the stile on the left into a field. Once again, there is no path to guide you so be brave and head across the crops for the high ground and the vista of Emerson's Green opening out before you. Continue as the field drops away to hedges in the far corner and here, well hidden in the undergrowth is a stile **C**.

Climb the stile and descend earth steps to a path that you follow into a thicket, with a barbed-wire fence on the right. The path bears left through the trees, then meanders before bearing left again to cross a low earth bank. Continue 30 metres further, going left, to climb a stile, emerging from the woodland to be confronted by a landfill site **D**. head left and climb a stile onto path alongside the landfill site. Keeping the landfill on your right, walk down a wide gravelled path to a metalled lane, now with a bund hiding further excavations ahead.

Turn right and follow the lane, bearing left after 100 metres, then continue to metal barriers and a cross-path where you turn right onto the Bristol to Bath Railway Path.

*The Bristol to Bath Railway Path was constructed in stages from east to west over the period 1979-86. It runs along the trackbed used by the former Midland Railway until its closure in 1966. This short section running north towards Westerleigh is in fact the main line from Birmingham to Bath Green Park. The 'Pines Express' thundered past this spot on its way to Bournemouth.*

Where the route forks, keep right on the tarmac surface (the trackbed follows the left, parallel path). Immediately on your right is an old colliery tip, now reverting to

nature. The concrete fence posts on your left are the boundary of the railway which at this point is veering away to the left. Continue along the path, passing derelict colliery buildings and chimney **E**.

*This is the site of Brandy Bottom Colliery which was owned by Lord Radnor. It opened in the early 1800s and along with Parkfield Colliery, closed in 1936. As well as the brick built chimney, there are the remains of the engine house and the shell of the horizontal winding house. The colliery winding wheel, over 5 metres in diameter, can be seen a little further along the path. It is now in two halves on either side of the path but is easy to miss when hidden in the overgrowth of summer.*

Continue onward and just beyond the winding wheel, your path merges with the trackbed on the left. Go ahead now past farm buildings on the left, then when the broad path splits, take the unsurfaced path on the left to cross the railway bridge (the railway path drops down to the right and ends at the road). Continue on the ballast path for 275 metres with meadows to your right and farm buildings on the left. After passing a more open area, the bushes and trees close in from both sides and here, look carefully for a footpath crossing the track **F** and take it, going right to climb a stile into a wood. Now go half-left along the clear path to the boundary

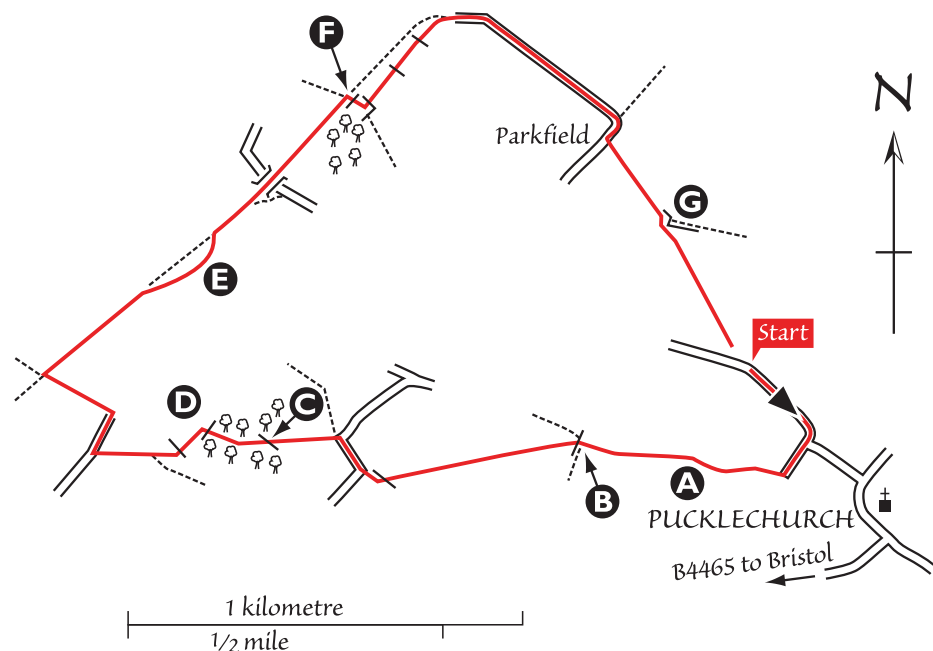
corner where there are two stiles; climb the one on the left and follow the path, dropping down to leave the wood.

*You are now standing on the site of the railway sidings that served Parkfield Colliery. Opened in 1851, the shafts were sunk to a depth of 250 metres and 4 seams of coal were worked. By 1936, the coalface was 8 kilometres from the shaft and practically exhausted. With increasing pumping costs, the colliery became uneconomic and was closed in August of that year. Only the chimney remains standing.*

Cross a more open area with the rusting hulk of a van on the right, pass a redundant stile and go ahead with the boundary of a house on your right and the railway fence to the left. When you reach the driveway to the house, keep on the grass by the left boundary, climbing a stile to leave the property. Now go ahead along the drive, passing the chimney of Parkfield Colliery on the left, and a small reservoir opposite. Continue to the top of the lane where it makes a sharp right turn to Parkfield.

*Ahead, the row of fifty cottages, Parkfield Rank, were built by the owners of colliery to house their employees. The colliery yard is now the kiddies playground on the bend of the lane and a wheel from one of the coal trucks now adorns the wall of a house opposite.*

As you reach the row of cottages on the right, cross a stile on your left into a field. Follow the field boundary on your left, ignoring a stile after 250 metres **G**. Where the fence goes left, continue along a well-used path across the centre of the field and climb the stile at the far side to reach the road by the Rose & Crown.





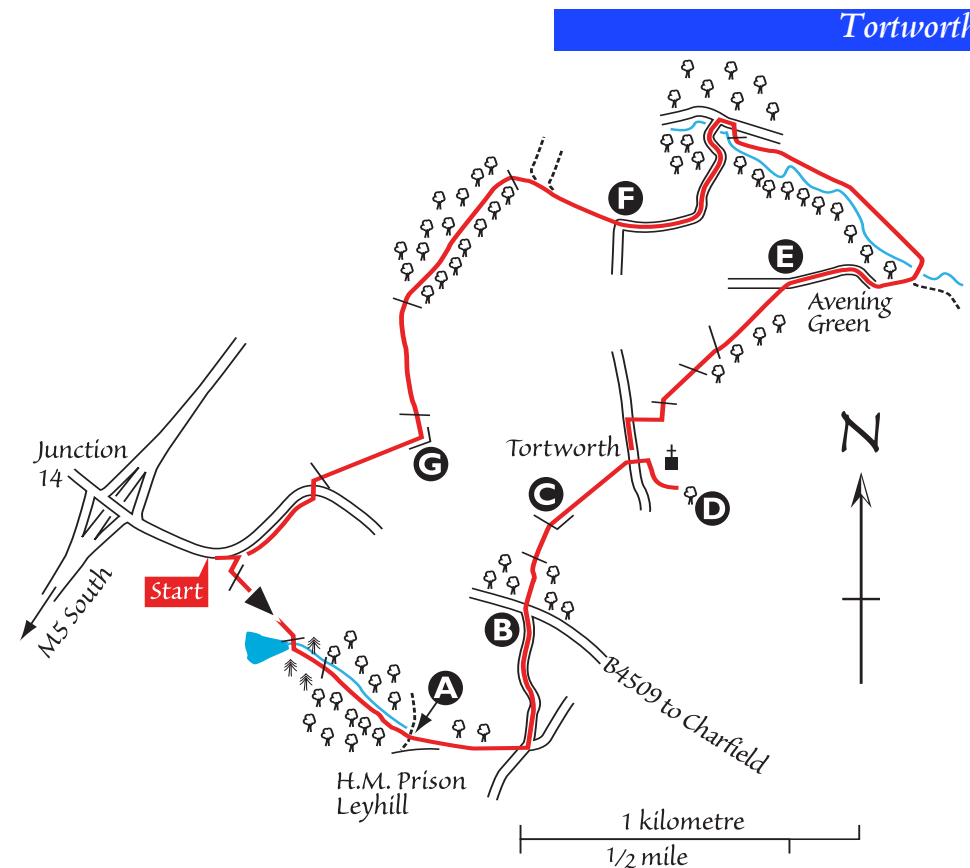


## Walk 2 – North Bristol The Tortworth Chestnut

**Start** Layby on B4509, east of motorway junction (ST 691930).  
**Distance** 4 miles / 6.5km.  
**Refreshments** None.  
**Getting there** A38 or M5 north from Bristol to junction 14, then right on B4509 sign-posted Wotton-Under-Edge. Layby on right, 500 metres from motorway.

*A lovely stroll through woods, along lanes and river banks to visit quiet Gloucestershire hamlets. Although an undulating walk, there is only one short steep climb. An ideal morning or after-lunch walk, or go on a spring evening when the low sun illuminates the church, spring flowers are underfoot, and bird song fills the air. The walk should take a little under 2 hours.*

A rough lane runs off to the right from the lay-by at the bend of the road; take this and after 50 metres climb the stile on the left into a field. In summer, the path through the crops is obvious, at other times climb the slight rise ahead until the remainder of the field can be seen. Your route lies ahead, slightly to the right but keeping your present height. Before long, the far corner of the field appears, aim for it, descending to a wooden kissing gate with a lake to your right. Go through the gate and across the stream. Ignore the 'Private Woods Keep Out' signs, but go ahead,



turning left in a few metres to walk underneath, then parallel to, power lines with conifer plantations right and left. Continue up the grassy path, then over a metal stile into an arboretum; now you have a pleasant stroll ahead between specimen trees, with daffodils and primroses underfoot in springtime. Keep to the main path with the stream always to your left until you reach the tarmac driveway at the top of the park **A**. Here, cross the drive and go ahead over the grass to pick up the driveway with the high prison fence on your right. Keep on the tarmac until you pass the lodge to emerge onto the road where you turn left.

Follow this road until it meets the Falfield-Charfield road **B** that you cross with care, then walk down the entrance drive to Tortworth Primary School. You now have two options! There is a new driveway off to the left, which, if followed, soon bears right along the edge of a field. At its end, bear right to meet the footpath at a kissing gate. Alternatively, the Public Right of Way continues along the main drive, and where that bears right to the car park, go ahead on a path left of the school

house. Pass through a kissing gate and go ahead to further one ㉔ where Tortworth church can be seen over to the right. This is your next objective, so go down the field, keeping the fence on your right, and through a gate onto the road. Head towards the church, then go through the wooden field gate on the right, skirting the churchyard on the left. Ahead, a white gate in a wooden picket fence affords access to the Tortworth chestnut tree ㉕.

*The Tortworth sweet chestnut may well be the oldest specimen in the country. So knotted and distorted, the shape and limits of the tree defy all but the experts' eye. Inside its man-made compound, new growth shares space with fallen and dying limbs, and with three crowns, its trunk separates at ground level to radiate outward like spokes of a wheel, before turning upward to the sky. The arrival of the sweet chestnut in this country is accredited to the Romans, the nuts of the tree were brought to Britain as part of their food provisions and were either planted deliberately or grew as a result of careless storage or spillage. This tree is thought to have been a boundary marker in the reign of Stephen, King of England from 1135 to 1154, which would have made it a tree of some magnitude as far back as the 12th century. Now, in the 21st century, it is still a landmark and is one of very few trees shown on the Ordnance Survey map. The fine church with its 15th century tower and 13th century font is also worth a visit. Inside is the vault of the Ducie family, who have owned Tortworth and its 400 acres of parkland for generations. Their coat of arms can be seen on many of the buildings around the hamlet.*

Now retrace your steps to the road and turn right. Pass the first driveway on the right



The famous 'Tortworth Chestnut'

(leading to the village hall), but take the second, way-marked, that sweeps through a gateway into a yard. Pass by garages on the left and continue to the bottom of the track where it turns left; here go ahead onto a grassy path with a cottage to your left and vegetable gardens to the right. Climb a stile into a field and follow a well-defined path to the far side leaving by a further stile. Cross the ditch beyond by way of a wooden rail sleep-

er, then go ahead keeping to the right, over another ditch with sleeper bridge followed by stile. Now aim for the cottages ahead, crossing two fields to climb a stile onto a lane ㉖. Turn right to walk past the cottages of Avening Green until the lane deteriorates to a cart track, dropping downhill round to the left, passing a scout hut on the right. The track leads to a stone bridge over the Little Avon River which you cross, turning left at the far side. Walk across three fields with the river your left boundary, until you finally reach a road via a stile and metal gate. Go ahead, immediately taking the turning on the left signposted Tortworth. You have 600 metres of road walking now, the first half uphill, so cross the river and climb the lane where the banks either side are rich with primroses and wild garlic in spring. After the lane bears round to the right, the gradient eases; continue to a sharp left turn ㉗ and here, go ahead down a farm track, initially under an avenue of Lombardy poplars.

Where the drive turns right, go ahead down a rough track. When this too makes a right turn, go ahead keeping to the hedge on the left and going through a metal gate into woodland. 400 metres away to your right but mercifully hidden from view, the intrusive roar of traffic on the M5 competes unsuccessfully with the bird song in the trees. The track drops gently downhill, then climbs slightly to where you exit the wood through a farm gate. Go along the field edge with the hedge to your left, then through a gate into a second field. A few metres further, turn right before the gate ㉘ to walk with the fence to your left, eventually passing through a pair of gates by a cottage to emerge onto the road. Take great care here, you are on a blind bend, so cross to the grass verge opposite, then walk to the right, along the road, keeping to the verge until it ends and you are forced to the road for the final fifty metres, where the lay-by and your starting point is reached.





### Walk 3 – North Bristol Wetmoor Wood

**Start** The northern end of Wickwar High Street (ST 724885).

**Distance** 4.25 miles / 6.75km.

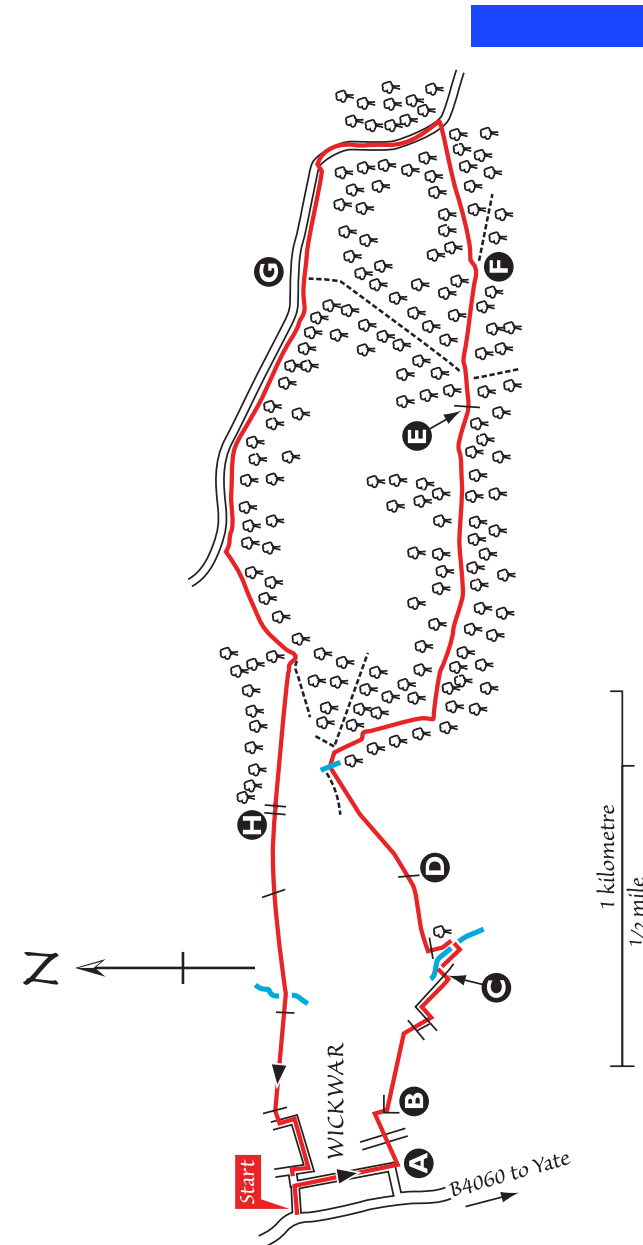
**Refreshments** Pub in Wickwar, nothing en route.

**Getting there** A432 from Bristol to Yate, then north on the B4060.

*A short walk, ideal for a summer's evening stroll (or early morning) to hear the songs of the birds that populate this ancient woodland. The route takes you across downland, over a few fields, and along woodland tracks with two short climbs. Note that the woodland stretch is usually very wet underfoot, even in summer; in winter and spring it may be worth taking wellies. Be brave!*

The Buthay public house is situated at the northern end of Wickwar High Street by the traffic lights. Dating from 1760 it takes its name from archery practice. The archers used a target that looked like a butt which was placed on bales of hay – hence the name Buthay. They pronounce the name a little differently, almost like Buttay.

A few metres before the pub, North Street leads off the High Street. Take this road, turning first right into Back Lane. Walk the length of this lane to the point where it bends right towards the High Street; here, go ahead onto a footpath running between the backs of houses **A**. Continue to the end of the path where you have a vista of



downland with the Cotswolds as a backdrop. The footpath turns right and in a few metres you cross a stile into a meadow **B**. At this point, you are at the corner of school playing fields. Go diagonally across the meadow towards trees, eventually crossing a

stile in the far corner. In this second field, keep to the right boundary initially for the short walk to the third, where you turn left to skirt the hillock. Follow the field boundary round to the right to a stile in the bottom of the field ㉔. Climb over and go right, along this narrow corridor of land and through an opening where a field gate has been removed. Ignore the stile in the corner immediately on the left, but go ahead for a few metres until you come to a wooden gate which gives access to the Little Avon River.

*Sturt Bridge is a packhorse bridge of great antiquity and is thought to date from Roman times.*

Cross the bridge then go over a stile into pasture. Turn right to climb the hill, aiming to the right of the crest. As you reach level ground, look for a farm gate in the hedge ahead ㉕; once through this, walk half-left to the far corner of the field, passing close to the electricity pole. In the field corner, go through a gap in the hedge to enter a narrow field and continue in the same direction to pick up the fence boundary ahead on the left. In the far left corner of the field, enter woodland via a gate.

In 25 metres, you come to cross paths, turn right and walk for 300 metres until a clearing is reached with a ruined shed ahead. Here, follow the broad track to the left taking care as the first part of this track is usually extremely muddy at most times of the year, although clearances in the winter of 2001–2 give the walker a chance of avoiding the worst sections.

*Wetmoor, an appropriately named stretch of woodland with its heavy clay soils, is rarely dry underfoot although this walk avoids the muddiest sections! The area is a nature reserve of over 300 hectares – one of the most extensive areas of ancient woodland in south west England, with boundaries unchanged for over 200 years. Much of the woodland predates the Norman conquest and is scheduled as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The reserve is subdivided into individual woods, separated by grass ‘trenches’ (a Norman term); at this point of the walk, you are in Plumber’s Trench. Much of the woodland has been coppiced over hundreds of years, producing flexible hazel for wattle hurdles, walls and fences, bark for leather production and firewood and timber for charcoal burning (there are charcoal pits still to be seen in the wood). In fact, until the invention of modern materials, woodland such as this provided nearly all that was needed for homes, farming and a limited industry. You will see low earth banks either side of the trenches, these are woodbanks, originally topped with fencing to define the woodland boundaries and to protect the young shoots of the newly coppiced trees from the attention of cattle, sheep and deer. Wetmoor is home to a host of birds, including that fabulous songster the nightingale, whose liquid trills are heard from the low*

*bushes in the more open areas during May. Underfoot, early purple orchids can be seen from April, together with bluebells, anemone and violets.*

Continue along this ‘trench’, ignoring turnings left and right, to eventually pass through a wooden gate by Lower Wood Lodge ㉖.

*The spindly poplar trees on the right were planted to supply the now defunct Morelands match factory in Gloucester. It is intended to fell these trees as they don’t fit into this traditional woodland landscape.*

You are now at a junction of tracks. The exit for vehicles is along the driveway following the fence on the left. If you want to shorten the walk by half a mile, follow this driveway to the road, emerging by Inglestone Farm ㉗ where you turn left. Otherwise, your route is half-right, across the grass to the right of the exit route, into Green Trench, and passing a gated path on your right. Again, this is likely to be very wet underfoot. When you reach a large wooden gate on the right ㉘ take the left fork and follow the broad, newly cleared trench. After initial mud, you will find yourself on a grassy path which you follow until almost without warning, the way narrows and you find yourself out onto a road. Turn left to walk along the road verge.

You have almost 1600 metres of road walking now, but you will soon have grass common land upon which to tread. You are travelling generally westward, passing the entrance to the Reserve on the left, with Inglestone Farm to the right ㉙. Continue following the road until you reach a cattle grid. Take the tarmac drive to the left before the grid and follow it, crossing a cattle grid, until it makes an obvious kink where a small stream is crossed. On the right of the driveway beyond the stream there is a field (likely to be cropped in summer), cross it diagonally aiming to the right of a fallen tree in the centre of the field. By the time you have drawn abreast of the tree, now on your left, you should be able to see the stile in the hedge ahead. When you reach this ㉚ cross into the next field via two stiles and a plank bridge (ignore the wooden gate down to the right in the field corner), then walk ahead across the field, through a gate into a meadow. Keeping in the same direction, drop down to a sturdy footbridge over the Little Avon River, then climb the stile on the far side and ascend the hill in front of you. As you reach the crest, you will see the houses of Wickwar ahead; continue on, soon with a hedge on your right, to climb a stile onto a lane between the houses. Proceed a few paces to a road.

At the road, turn left, then follow it round to the right. A further right turn then first left takes you past Back Lane on the left and onto Wickwar High Street. If you are in need of refreshment, The Buthay pub is on your right!





## Walk 4 – West Bristol The Bluebells of Prior's Wood

**Start** Lay-by on A369 at Portbury High Street turning. (ST 507753).

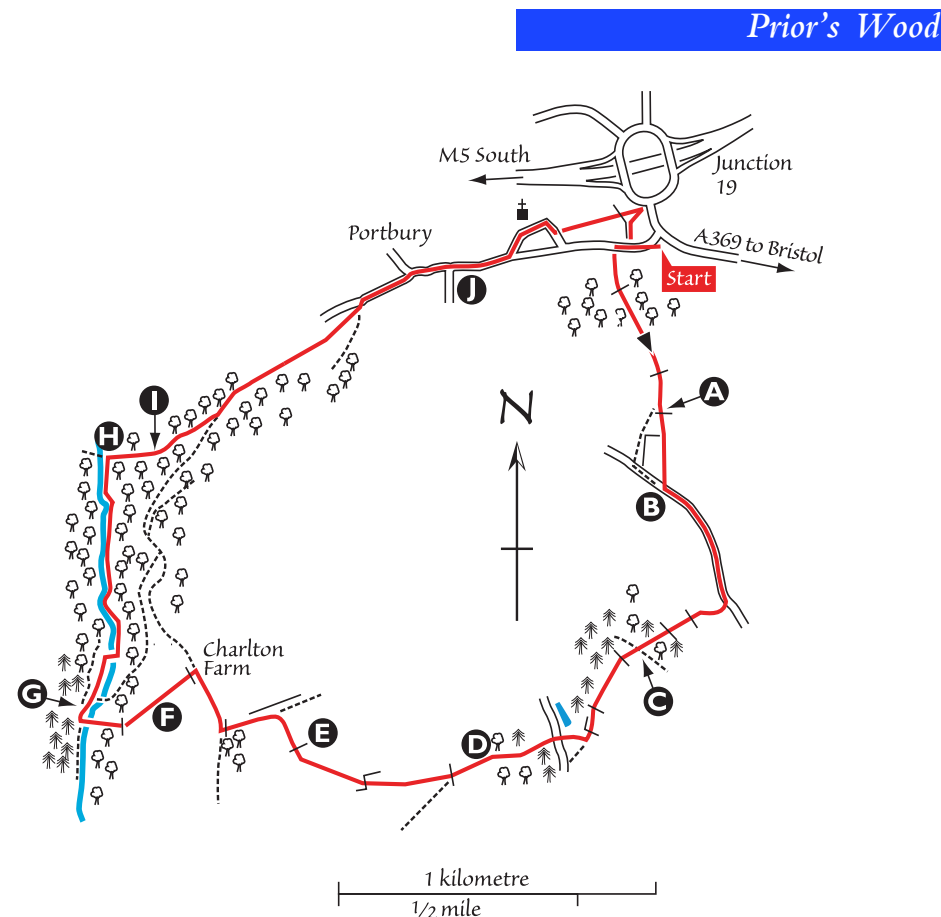
**Distance** 4.5 miles / 7.25km.

**Refreshments** Pub in Portbury near end of walk.

**Getting there** Either M5 junction 19, left onto A369 then immediately right signposted Portbury, or A369 from Bristol turning left to Portbury just before motorway. Lay-by immediately on left.

*A short, undulating ramble on the outskirts of Bristol passing through mixed woodland carpeted with bluebells which makes springtime the best for this walk although it is lovely at any time of the year. Take a camera and allow a couple of hours.*

From the lay-by, walk with care along the lane towards Portbury for 100 metres, then climb the first field gate on the left by the footpath sign. Go ahead up the pasture towards the trees and a radio mast, meeting a fence with woodland. Cross two double stiles, keeping to the fence on the left as you head over the fields to reach another stile which gives access to a tree-lined footpath **A**; follow this for 400 metres as it loses height to meet a high-banked lane where you turn left. (This path can be overgrown in summer, in which case don't cross the stile at **A** but go slightly right to skirt the boundary of a house on your left, climbing a metal gate to reach



the lane. Turn left to rejoin the main route at **B**.) At the lane, turn left and walk for 450 metres, climbing gently. *The banks of the lane can be a riot of colour in spring and summer – blues, pinks, yellows and whites, together with the restful green of several varieties of fern.* This lane can be surprisingly busy at times, so be alert! now look for an old, ivy-covered stone wall on the right and immediately after, a stile. Climb over and walk up a tree-lined sunken track; at the far end, climb a stile and cross the field to another stile directly ahead. Enter the woodland, carpeted with bluebells in springtime, and follow the path ahead, over cross-paths **C** to exit the wood via a further stile. Walk down the field keeping to the fence on the right, whilst in the distance on the left, the spire of Failand church can be glimpsed. Climb a double stile into the next field then continue to the metal field gate, where you can cross a stile to your right and continue down the concrete drive for 30 metres before turning right at the footpath sign. Go over the grass, with a small reservoir

to the right, to reach the road which you cross to the stony track opposite; deer may be seen in the woodland here if you're quiet (and lucky).

Follow the track past a ruined farmhouse **D** from where it degenerates into a footpath. Continue to a stile which you cross into a field, usually cropped although the paths should be kept clear. Go half-right, gradually climbing the hillside to meet the hedge. In the far corner of the field another stile gives access to a school playing field, go diagonally across, aiming for the flag pole and the gate in the far corner **E**. Go through, then follow the driveway, bearing left around the school buildings to reach a metalled drive. Turn right here and walk for 200 metres to a stile and field gate on the left, opposite the entrance to Charlton Farm.

*The once derelict farm belonged to Charlton House, now the Downs School, which you passed a few minutes ago. The farm been restored and is now Charlton Farm Childrens' Hospice. Notice the 19th century octagonal buttery by the farm. Inside, it is fully tiled with marble-topped tables where the butter was made and a centrally placed fountain to keep the room cool. Considered by the National Trust to be one of the finest of its kind in the country it has now had a complete overhaul, with a new roof and a full and complete rebuild of the extensive stained glass. It will eventually hold a project archive and serve as the florist's workshop.*

Go over the stile and walk half-left, aiming for the lone tree in the field which when you get closer, you will see is growing beside an old sheep-dip **F**. Pass to the right of this, keeping in the same direction and skirting the left end of a line of bushes, the remains of a field boundary and still shown as such on recently revised maps. Continue to the fence at the far side of the field by a clump of tall trees where you will find a stile by a gate. Cross into woodland and go left for just a few paces then turn right to follow a narrow path that snakes downhill, steeply in places, to cross a stream in the bottom of the valley. There is no bridge and a fallen tree has blocked the easiest crossing point but the stream is just a trickle for most of the year. Climb the far bank for a few metres to a track where stretching up the hill before you, and to the left and right, you will see a blue carpet beneath the conifers. If you are not walking in late April or May, come back here again, as the bluebells growing here are a sight to behold. Turn right and take the track for a few metres to a fork **G** where you bear right to drop downhill. When you reach the stream, don't cross the bridge but go left (with the stream on your right). Another fallen tree blocks the path here so climb up to the left to bypass it then drop down to pick up the obvious path alongside the brook. Walk for 150 metres to a narrow footbridge, cross and turn left to continue, now with the stream on the left. Your route is now a winding path, sometimes overgrown, which loses height as it shadows the brook through idyllic woodland for nearly 800 metres.

*With birdsong all around, bluebells or the strong aroma of wild garlic underfoot, and rhododendrons from behind which a deer may bound away at the first whiff of your scent, you can be forgiven for thinking that you have reached your heaven ahead of time; only the distant drone of traffic on the motorway intrudes.*



Eventually, you reach the edge of the woods at cross - paths **H** with meadows ahead and the motorway beyond; turn right here and climb uphill, steeply at first, along a clear path. When you reach fallen trees blocking the path, veer off left to circumvent them, then bear right to rejoin the main path. Almost immediately, you must duck down to pass beneath the bough of another tree then follow the path as it runs left and right, twisting and turning through the woodland. The route may become indistinct in places but the occasional clear stretch confirms it. As the path levels out **I** it becomes broader and more obvious; carry on for about 200 metres (through patches of overgrowth in late summer), eventually arriving, perhaps with relief, at an unmistakable stony track. Turn left for an easy downhill walk with fine views across the Severn estuary as you emerge from the trees. At the end of the track, go through a metal gate onto Caswell Lane and turn right towards the village of Portbury; you are on the last leg of your walk now.

*The tall building on your left just before the road junction was a priory, dating from the 12th century. Now much altered, the existing structure is 15th century and served as a school from the 19th century until 1972.*

At the road junction, go ahead (although the welcoming Priory Inn can be seen a few metres along Station Road to the left). Pass Mill Lane on the right **J** then turn left into Church Road, pausing as it bends right to look at the Portbury Standing Stone and test your vision by trying to read the text on the brass plaque! Follow the lane as it passes the church, then go over the stile directly ahead and through the pasture to a stile on the opposite side. Cross this and continue to the road ahead where you double back on yourself to find a further stile (many walkers turn right after crossing the second stile) directly opposite the entrance to the layby and your starting point.





## Walk 5 – Bristol Abbots Leigh

**Start** Ashton Court Estate car park (ST 556718).

**Distance** 4.5 miles / 7.5km.

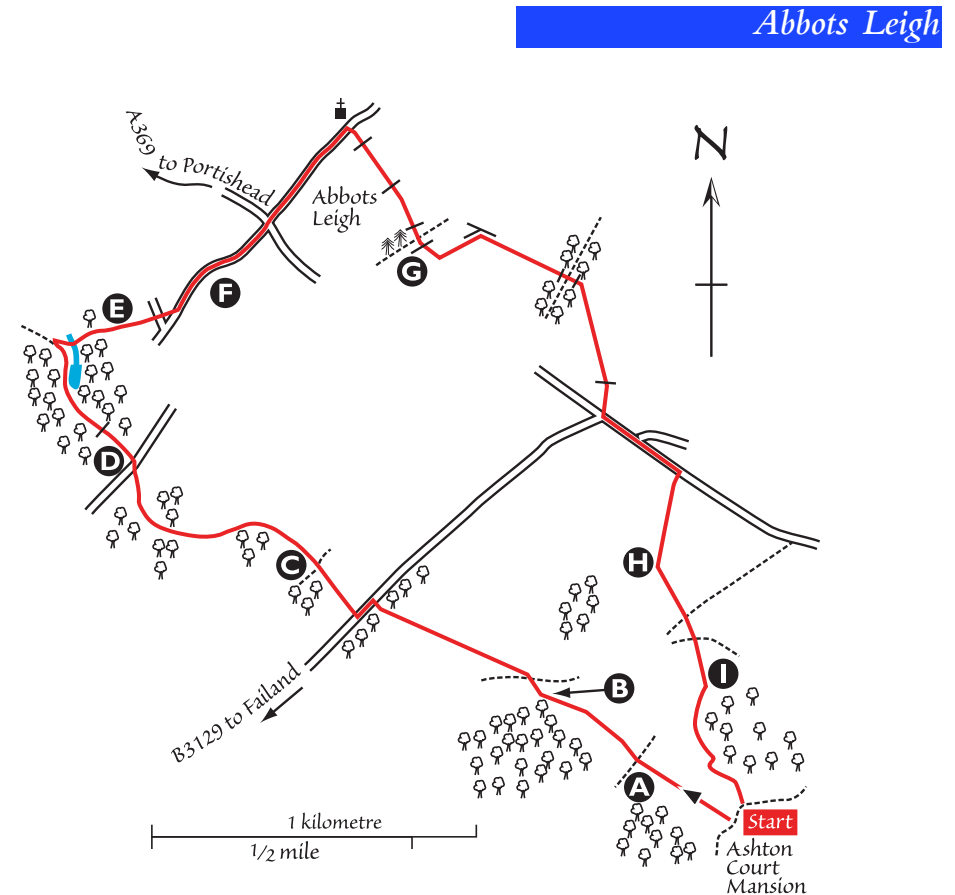
**Refreshments** Pub at Abbots Leigh, café at Ashton Court near walk's end.

**Getting there** Ashton Court Estate has several entrances, the main one being off the A369 from Ashton Gate at Bower Ashton.

*An easy, short stroll on home turf, within walking distance of central Bristol. Taking about 2 hours, it's ideal for a summer's evening or perhaps an early morning walk in spring to hear the birdsong, and there are a number of walks within the Ashton Court Estate which could be combined with this one. One climb at the start of the walk, otherwise generally level and dry underfoot.*

From the car park, walk up the broad sweep of grassland away from the mansion, aiming for the keepers cottage at the top of the rise.

*On the left, near the top of the climb, is a carved sandstone head toward which a detour should be made to read the attached information plaque. The head is that of Philip Smyth, who inherited Ashton Court in 1852. For four centuries the Smyth family of Ashton Court were a major force in the social and economic life of Bristol and North Somerset. From their fine house set in its impressive, walled deer park overlooking the*



*city, the family dominated the surrounding area as landowners, members of Parliament, Justices of the Peace, distributors of charity and major employers of labour. During the 20th century, the twin problems of heavy death duties and lack of male heirs gradually brought the Smyth empire to an end, and when the last Smyth died in 1946, the contents of the house were sold and the grounds were acquired by Bristol Corporation.*

When you reach the driveway **A** cross over and continue up the hill keeping the boundary of the cottage to your left. A short, steep climb brings you out onto the edge of a golf course; continue upward, not so steeply now, with an old, ivy-covered wall on the left. At the wall corner, go ahead to the far corner of the woodland to your left **B** and from there, climb a few metres further past a wooden signboard until you have a clear view of the trees on the park's north-west boundary, where a small gate in the wall will be your exit.



This gate can be tricky to locate, so from your present position head across the golf course, keeping well to the left of a small thicket. In winter, a farm house can be seen beyond the trees and this makes an excellent marker towards which you should aim. Pass some distance to the left of another thicket to reach the rough grass on the far side of the park in front of the belt of trees. Look for the grassy horse-ride and a short, white wooden post. There are two of these, about 100 metres apart. The exit gate is beyond the left-hand post. The right-hand post has a wooden notice next to it requesting horse riders to keep to the trail. If you reach this notice, go left to the other white post then look right to see the gap in the wall!

When you find the park exit, turn left along the road and after a few metres go right down a lane, signposted Cotham Rugby ground. Where the lane turns left ❸ with a track to the right, go straight on along a broad path. The path eventually becomes a track, descending through trees to a lane, which you cross to continue along a further track with orchards either side ❹. As you enter woodland, you pass a car park on the right; your track goes ahead through a metal gate with a stream to your right which eventually issues forth into a lake known as the Abbots Pool.

*The estate of the Manor of Leigh once belonged to St Augustine's Abbey in Bristol, subsequently to become Bristol Cathedral. A rest house for the monks was built in the village which was thereafter known as Abbots Leigh. Abbots Pool was one of several in the area used for the supply of the canons' fish. In 1538, the time of the Dissolution of the Monasteries, it was said that the treasure from the abbey was thrown into the pool.*

The track takes you around the lake passing the dam on the right then bearing left. A short distance further, you reach the corner of a property on the right and a metal barrier in the middle of the path; here, take the path which descends steeply back to the right, keeping the garden fence on the left. Cross the stream, then climb the stone-stepped path alongside a wall to emerge on a gravel drive ❺.

Follow the drive with a meadow on the right for 150 metres until it bends right, go straight ahead here on a path through trees. Cross a narrow lane and follow the footpath, soon reaching the stone wall of a house on the left; go ahead to join the lane and proceed in the same direction. The large building on the right ❻ was the manor house, now converted for use as a nursing home. When you reach houses on the left, look for the priory (details below), then continue to the busy main road by the George Inn.

*The Priory, though not a particularly old house, is nevertheless a very unusual one. It was home to the Fry family for over 50 years; they were an old Quaker family, but*

*better known as the makers of fine chocolate. The George Inn, named after George III, was first licensed in 1790, but like many public houses, it was once ecclesiastical property and known as the Church House. It had stables for the horses of those visiting the church and the church ales were brewed there.*

Church Road opposite is best reached via the light-controlled crossing a few metres to the right. Follow this quiet road as far as the church, noting once again the views over Avonmouth docks and across the Severn to Gwent. Opposite the church, beyond the last, fine house on the right, pass through a wooden gate and walk down the meadow with the stone wall on your right. Cross a stile and descend to cross another stile on the far side of the field. Climb the field for a few metres to the boundary corner, then go ahead keeping the boundary on your left to a stile by a wooden field gate. Beyond this a short track leads you to a tarmac farm drive which you cross to a stile ahead ❷. Go over the stile into a field, then follow the boundary on your left, keeping to it as it turns left, then right. Continue across a second field, keeping to the fence and reaching a stile by a metal field gate. Go ahead, crossing the tree-lined driveway to Leigh Woods and climb another stile into a field to the left of a modern bungalow. Go half-right across this pasture aiming for the houses on the far side. Your exit point is a stile to the left of the first house on the right, this will become visible as you approach. Climb the stile and follow the driveway down to the road.

You are on the busy Bristol to Portishead road again; walk left along the road, crossing over as soon as it is safe to do so and continue with the wall of Ashton Court to your right. After about 275 metres, you will pass a bus lay-by and immediately after, look for a locked gateway to the park. Pass through the pedestrian access, cross the boundary cycle track with care and continue to a beech hedge on the left, which screens a model railway that operates occasionally during the summer months for charity. Pick up the path here, heading towards the golf course café and car park ❸.

A tarmac drive leads from the café to the main road through the estate from Clifton Lodge, cross here to walk downhill over grassland, then up to a tall stand of trees ahead, known as Summerhouse Plantation ❶. Skirt the edge of the woodland, keeping it to your left, then drop steeply downhill to the right, meeting a well-worn track. Look here for the low, moss-covered headstones of a pets' cemetery, one of two on the estate. The poignant messages are becoming difficult to read now, but owners of cats and dogs will visualise their personal inscriptions. The track guides you back to the parking area in front of the mansion, where on most days an ice-cream van is in attendance!



## Walk 6 – The Mendips Industrial Archaeology of Charterhouse

**Start** Lay-by on B3134 at entrance to Ubley Warren Farm, (ST 515558).

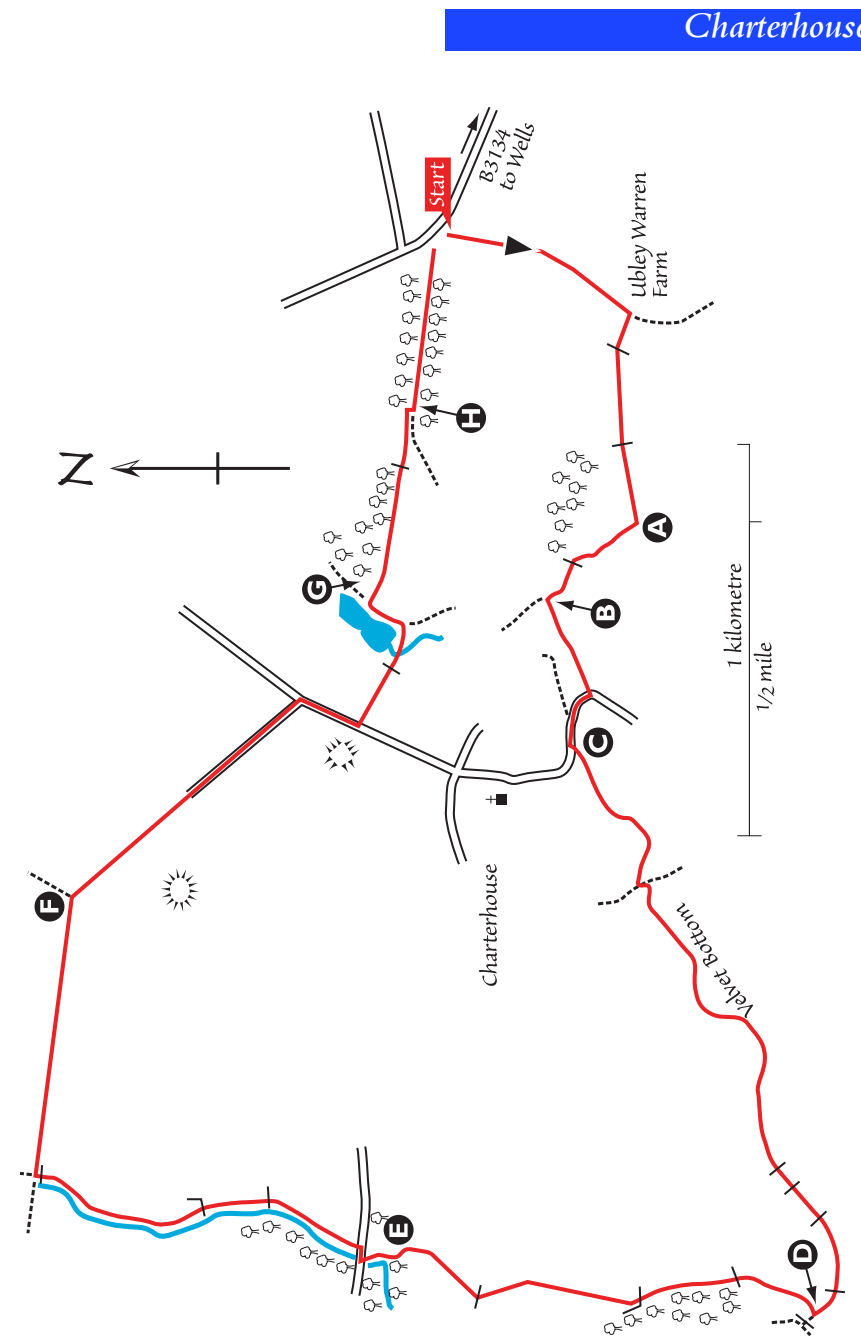
**Distance** 5.5 miles / 9km.

**Refreshments** None.

**Getting there** A37 then A368 through West Harptree to Harptree Hill. Go left to Wellsway Inn, then right after the Inn. Keep on this road until T-junction with B3134. Turn left, lay-by immediately on right by entrance to Ubley Warren Farm.

*An easy walk, mostly on good paths with a couple of gentle climbs. To see the industrial archaeology and earthworks more clearly, the walk may be better on a sunny winter's day, when the grass is short and the low sun casts long shadows. Allow about 3 hours.*

From the lay-by, proceed down the metalled driveway signposted Ubley Warren Farm. After about 600 metres the first of the farm buildings is reached; turn right at the footpath sign and continue over rough ground towards a metal gate, where you pass through the adjacent kissing gate into a field. Continue ahead with field boundary and trees a little distance to your right, and as you approach the far side of the field veer slightly to the left, aiming for a stile next to a metal farm gate. Once over the stile, you are in Ubley Warren Wildlife Reserve.



*The reserve covers 86 acres and is about 250 metres above sea level. It is made up of acidic grassland overlying Carboniferous limestone and is one of the largest Mendip areas of 19th century lead mining. The Reserve supports a population of rabbit, fox, badger, adder, slow worm and common lizard, with bats using the mine shafts. Stop and read the interesting information board before proceeding. If you are walking in summer, observe the contrast between the field in which you are now standing and that just crossed. Free of chemicals and pesticides, wildflowers grow in profusion and as a result, the area teems with insect life.*

Now walk half left towards the high ground **A** which when reached, will reveal trenches and mounds created by the early open-cast lead miners.

*Almost all of the land in this area has been affected by the mining and processing of lead ore, resulting in pits, trenches and deep mine shafts. Lead was probably mined in prehistoric times but it was the Romans who began large-scale work here in about 50AD; the pits now before you probably date from this time but were reworked in the 19th century. The trenches were given the term 'Rakes' as a miner was given the right to excavate for the distance he could throw his shovel or rake.*

Don't cross the rakes, walk along them keeping them to your left and taking care to stay on the well-used path until field boundaries close in from both sides, these guide you to a gate in the field wall. Cross and follow the narrow path downhill for a short distance until the path and land open out. Where the path bears round to the right **B** take a less-used route to the left and aim for a wire-fenced enclosure ahead.

*This is Stainsby's Shaft, sunk in 1848 and one of the deepest shafts in the area.*

Continue past the shaft keeping the field boundary on your left and noticing in the valley to your right the heavily disturbed ground, the result of further mining activity. Like many of the sites on this walk, the features are better seen in winter when the grass is shorter.

*You are passing the site of a row of Buddle Pits, circular, stone-lined depressions where newly-mined ore was washed prior to smelting. The ore was carried by water along a system of leats into the buddles where it was stirred by wooden paddles attached to a central pivot, the whole mechanism worked by donkey power. Heavy, lead-rich ore would settle in the bottom of the pit, while the finer ore was flushed further down the system, eventually arriving at the settling ponds.*

Ahead, a modern earth bank carries a road over the valley. Turn right here and cross the embankment, pausing to look at the earthworks left and right. As the road starts

to climb the hill, you reach an information board on the left **C**. Go through the kissing gate and follow the broad path for some distance, noting the 'gruffy ground' (the trenches or grooves were called gruffs), with further buddles on your left.

*Much of the disturbance you can see in the valley was created between 1844 and 1855 when debris left by earlier mining was refined and re-smelted to extract any remaining lead. New mine shafts were also sunk but were not economic. Because of its great interest, much of the area is notified as a Site of Special Scientific Interest while the whole Reserve and areas beyond have been scheduled as an ancient monument of national importance.*

After about 400 metres, you pass an outdoor adventure centre for youngsters. This is easy walking on a good path – the black, jet-like material underfoot is the slag from the smelting process. The earthworks are now to your right as the path takes you over compacted slag tips from a nearby smelter, now vanished. The ground all around is heavily contaminated with lead and zinc, creating a hostile environment but some rare plants have developed a sufficient level of tolerance to cope with the conditions. Rabbits abound here, the lead levels in their body making them unsuitable for food.

Eventually, the rough ground is left behind and you enter a flat, open area. A little further, the ground takes a barely perceptible step down, this is the first of the dams that created the settling ponds of Velvet Bottom where the fine ore from the buddles came to rest. The second step down is more noticeable, the third step even more so. As you drop down for the fourth time, the hills on either side start to close in with frequent rocky outcrops of limestone. Finally you cross a crumbling stone wall, then 40 metres further a path goes off to the right **D**. (If you miss this turning you will come to an information board and gate, and must retrace your steps.) Climb the path, go over a stile and continue up between hawthorn trees.

Climb the path between hawthorn trees and out into a pasture then continue on upward to a gate and stile at the top of the field. Go ahead across the next field keeping the boundary and woodland to your left, then over wooden stile into a further field. Here, go half-right, aiming for the left end of the hedge at the far side of the field. When the hedge is reached, walk with the wall to your right, going gradually downhill to the field corner where you cross a stone stile. Now go half-right again across the field, using the twin radio masts on the skyline as a marker. When you reach the hedge, follow it downhill towards the trees until the field abruptly drops away to rough grass, bushes then trees **E**. Through the trees, a whitewashed bungalow can be seen and your route takes you past the left edge of the property. As you reach the bushes, follow the path to a wooden stile, beyond which the path bears left to an open area, often overgrown with bracken and long grass in summer. Past the



corner boundary of the bungalow, you come to a waymark sign on a wooden post. Follow the arrow to the right until you meet a brook on your left side. Shortly after, cross over a railway sleeper footbridge then follow the path to a stone stile in a wall. Cross onto the lane, turn right then look for a wooden stile on the left, opposite the bungalow.

Once over the stile, you start a long, gentle climb following the left boundary of two fields. At the end of the first field, cross a wooden stile by a metal gate; go ahead, making sure you keep to the fence on your left. The ground here can be very muddy in winter since a new fence on the right has restricted cattle using the gate to this narrow strip of land.

*As you near the top left corner of the second field, notice the stream whose water issues from the field on your left; it has cut a channel in the Old Red Sandstone which in this part of the Mendips has replaced the grey limestone.*

At the head of the field, climb the stile onto a bridleway; turn right and head toward the radio masts. When you reach them ❸ the track becomes a metalled lane and free of puddles and gullies, you can now stride downhill for 800 metres to a road junction. There are good views ahead and down to the right where the hamlet of Charterhouse lies resting, its industrial past now just a memory.

*In the 12th century, local monks were granted a charter by Henry II, giving grazing and mining rights in the area and the house they built gave rise to the name Charterhouse. Long before, the Romans mined the area for silver and lead – the baths at Bath are lined with Charterhouse lead and some Roman remains are still visible. In the first field on the right as you walk down the lane from the masts, a circular earthwork can be clearly seen if the sun is casting long shadows; this is thought to be a Roman stockyard. Further down the road on the same side, beyond a bungalow, a square-shaped enclosure marks the site of a sizeable Roman settlement of 2000 years ago. A Roman road from Old Sarum (Salisbury) ran to Charterhouse and there are also remains of a Roman fort, though being obscured by trees and with no public access, nothing is to be seen by the walker.*

So, to continue! When you reach the end of the lane, turn right and walk with care along the narrow road for 200 metres, then look for a stile on the left. Cross this and set off down the side of the field with a stone wall to your right. Go over a wooden stile then a footbridge which leads you onto a dam at the head of an old settling pond on your left, now a haven for insects and birds that find shelter amongst the tall stems of the greater reedmace choking the pool. When you reach the far side of the dam, turn left and you will find yourself walking on the spoil tips

of another smelting furnace, whilst ahead, soon to appear on the right ❹ are the most dramatic remains of the whole walk.

*Here are the horizontal condenser flues that extracted the toxic gasses from the smelting furnace. These had a twofold purpose, the poisonous fumes were drawn away from the workers, and as the hot gas cooled on the chimney walls, traces of lead were deposited. Boys of eight to ten years of age were employed to crawl through the flues and retrieve the precious metal.*

When your explorations are complete, take the broad path that runs down the side of the fenced-off flues, keeping them to your left. You soon enter an attractive avenue of beech trees, follow these until you leave the Reserve via a wooden stile in a stone wall. Continue ahead, rejoining the row of beeches where you will see an old iron gate in the wall on the right ❺. There is a squeezer stile in the gate which you pass through to access a lane; turn left to continue in the same direction and after a few minutes walk, you will find yourself back at your starting point.

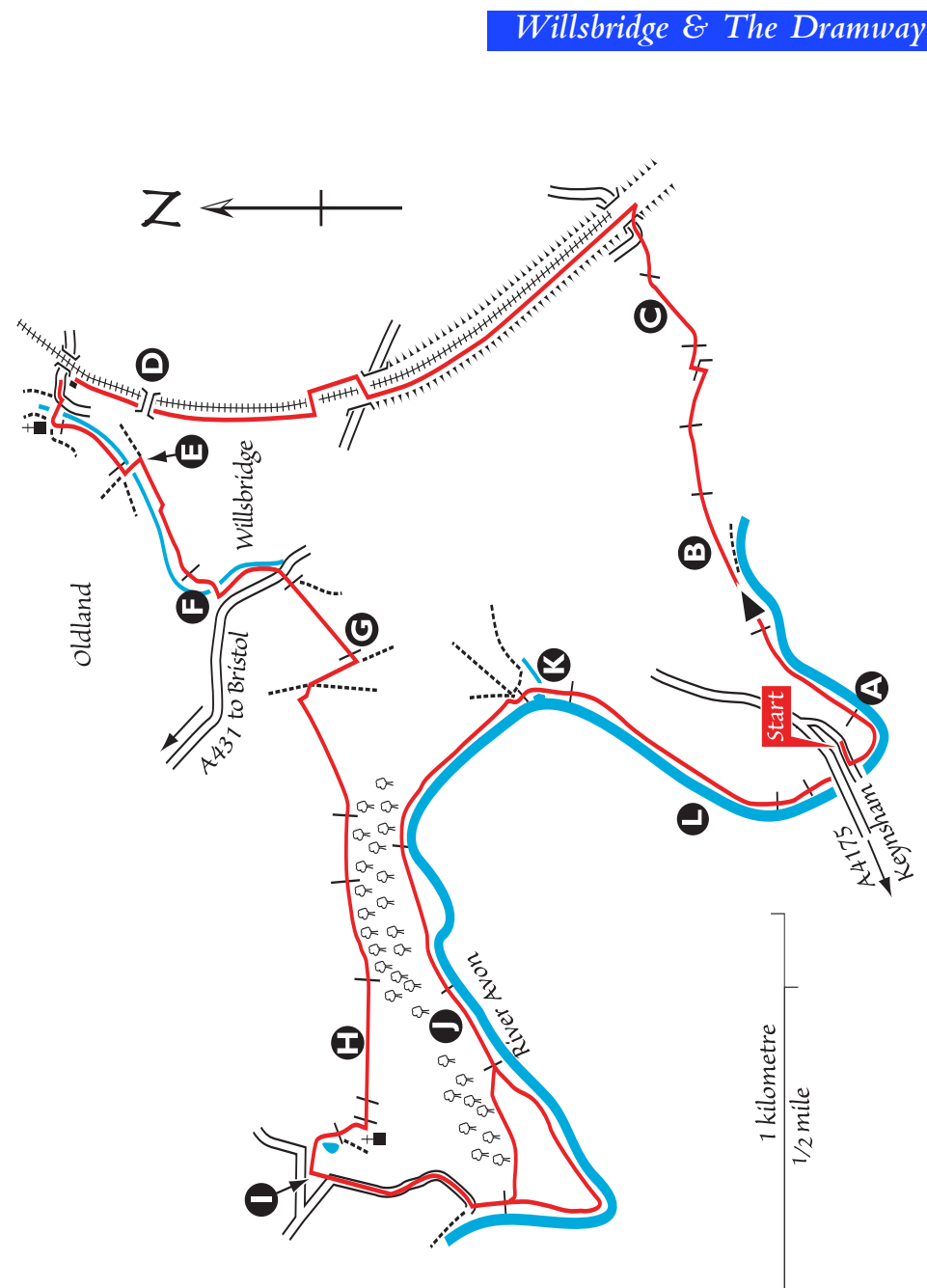


## Walk 7 – East Bristol Willsbridge & The Dramway

- Start** Public car park off A4175 by Keynsham Lock, (ST 660690).  
**Distance** 6 miles / 9.5km.  
**Refreshments** Pubs near walk end, plus café at Bitton Station and Willsbridge Mill (restricted opening).  
**Getting there** A431 Bristol to Bath road then right onto A4175 to Keynsham. Car park in slip road on left before crossing the River Avon.

*A fascinating local walk, mostly on good paths and tracks following sections of the old horse tramway to its termini on the banks of the Avon. Allow 2.5 to 3 hours, but you could stop at the Avon Valley Railway for train rides (check times) and again, with young children, at Willsbridge Mill (restricted opening). One easy climb, but note the very busy road crossing between points (F) and (G).*

From the car park near the Lock Keeper pub walk towards the pub and climb the stile in the gate on the left, signposted Swineford. Follow the footpath with the River Avon on the right and a marina to the left. Cross a metal footbridge, then through a kissing gate **A** to reach a part-surfaced track where you turn right. Walk with the river on your right, through another kissing gate by a cattle grid into a meadow and continuing for 300 metres to reach a fine Georgian house on the left **B**.



*This is Avondale (formerly Avonside) House, now a listed building and formerly the headquarters of the Avon & Gloucestershire Railway, owners of the horse-drawn tramway known locally as the Dramway. The Dramway, ran downhill for a distance of 5 miles from the Coalpit Heath collieries north east of Bristol, to the River Avon where barges transported the coal to Bristol, Bath and beyond. The line was completed by 1831 and operated for 30 years until the coal traffic died out. In 1876, a section was reopened to serve the recently revived California Colliery above Willsbridge and an incline was built across the valley to link with the Dramway. By 1904, flooding contributed to the mine's closure and the subsequent demise of the railway.*

*The tranquil area around you is the site of Avon Wharf, constructed in 1831 as the southern terminus of the Dramway. The stone-built weigh house stands forlornly in the middle of the meadow but the stables, carpenters' and blacksmiths' workshops have long gone. It is possible to trace the route of the railway as it runs past the weigh house down to the river where turntables gave access to a short stretch of line parallel with the bank. The track you have just walked was the route of a siding that ran to the quarry where stone for the sleepers was extracted. The short, stone-built wharf with steps leading to the water's edge is just visible beneath the trees by the river bank.*

From the weigh house, go ahead to the top left corner of the field and through a pedestrian gate in the metal field gate. Proceed along the edge of this field and into the next via a kissing gate (in summer, these are fine hay meadows), and look for a further gate in the hedge on the left in the corner of the second field. Beyond, follow the path with a fence to your left to reach a footbridge and gate, beyond which is a further meadow. Go ahead aiming for the stone barn and passing a venerable oak tree to your right. As you pass the building ❶ look back at the entrance, obviously not a barn, was it a chapel? Now look right for another kissing gate and footbridge which you cross, then turn left, following the fence to the field corner where a pair of gates gives access to a lane by a railway arch.

Opposite the gate and to the right of the arch a set of steps leads you onto the railway embankment; set foot on the tarmac with care, this is a route for walkers and cyclists but the latter, free from the concerns of the motor car, rule the roost here! Walk left along the path for 800 metres, crossing the rails when Bitton station is reached.

*The Bristol to Bath Railway Path was completed in 1986 and runs for 13 miles from the poignantly named Midland Road, close to the site of the old St.Philips goods station in Bristol, to an industrial estate on the outskirts of Bath. The Avon Valley Railway, based at Bitton station, resurrected a stretch of the original Midland Railway line which closed in 1966 and are relaying the track as funds permit.*

Your route continues across the car park where the path runs with the station yard on the left, re-crossing the rails in a short distance. Walk now with the railway on the right for about 400 metres, passing beneath Cherry Gardens Lane bridge ❷. Look 200 metres further on for the 'Dramway Footpath' sign on the left and pass between metal barriers onto a surfaced path. Go immediately right, descending concrete steps to a lane. Turn left along the lane and continue to a broad wooden footbridge on the right. Cross this, then take the path left, climbing a stile by a metal gate on the left, signposted Willsbridge Mill. You are now walking along a narrow path parallel with Siston Brook down to your left and after a short distance a path forks off left to the water's edge; don't be tempted, but continue on your present course to go through a metal gate onto a tarmac path. Turn left and follow the path as it zig-zags downhill.

*This is the incline constructed to link the California Colliery with the Dramway. It was operated by gravity, the weight of the laden trucks descending being sufficient to pull the empty wagons back up the slope.*

When you reach a path junction ❸ turn right and walk along the course of the Dramway until you are confronted with a set of metal gates.

*This area is known as 'Little Cheddar' and here, the Dramway ran along the cutting and through a 150 metre tunnel. This expensive piece of engineering was required when a local landowner objected to the line being visible from his property. The tunnel was used as an air raid shelter in the Second World War and later became a mushroom farm. It is now owned by Bristol Water who have laid a water pipe along the trackbed and is home to several colonies of bats.*

Follow the path as it jinks around the fence and continue on a good surface with meadows up to your left and the Willsbridge Valley on the right. Pass through a wooden gate and continue down left past cottages to reach Willsbridge Mill ❹.

*The mill started life in 1712. Powered by the water from the fast flowing Siston Brook, it worked iron imported from Russia. By 1811, the owners had patented and manufactured a type of iron hoop used for roof supports, but in 1813 after the collapse of a warehouse roof in London, the company went bankrupt and the mill was sold in 1816. The building was demolished in 1820 and rebuilt as a corn mill which stands today. Flour milling continued on and off until 1968 when heavy rain burst the dam further up the valley, causing irreparable damage. After remaining derelict for a number of years, the mill was renovated by the Wildlife Trust and reopened as an education and visitors' centre in 1986.*



Leave the Mill, walking through the wildlife garden with the brook down to the left, soon to reach the busy A431 Bristol to Bath road opposite the Queen's Head pub (currently closed).

*Notice the coping-stones along the garden wall of the big house to the right of the pub; these are a by-product of the iron industry prevalent in this area in the 19th century. Rather than dump the slag from the smelting process, it was poured into moulds designed for the purpose and the resulting 'stone' was then sold for a good price, being greatly sought after!*

Turn left and walk for a few metres, then cross the road with care into the pub car park and follow the left boundary to climb a stile into a meadow. Aim for the electricity pylon, keeping to its right then climbing the hill ahead and passing a circular concrete manhole. On the hilltop, carry on in the same direction to the far side of the field where you climb a stile by a metal gate ㉔.

Turn right and walk along the edge of the meadow with the wall on your right, though a kissing gate and continuing to the field corner. Go left along the top edge of the field to the next corner where you take the path right and in a few metres pass through a kissing gate. Now follow the narrow path between trees on the left and a fence on the right to another kissing gate. Pass through and continue with the trees on the left, eventually reaching a substantial stone stile. Cross over and follow a clear path across the centre of the field. From the crest of the hill ㉕ the tower of Hanham Court can be seen above the trees, carry on downhill to reach a kissing gate. The path beyond leads you on a narrow route to a further metal gate and a driveway. A brief detour left is recommended here to reach the church, usually locked, and also to get a closer view of the Court and its magnificent barns.

*Hanham Court is mainly of 16th century origin, built for a wealthy Bristol clothier, John Lacey, although there are 18th century extensions and the tower you saw from the hilltop is 19th century. King James II was entertained here in 1686, supposedly feasting on the last remaining stag in Kingswood Forest. The barn is 15th century and was part of a grange belonging to Keynsham Abbey.*

Retrace your steps along the drive and pass through a kissing gate where the driveway from Hanham Court comes in from the left. A few metres further a pond is passed on the left, after which, turn left by a misplaced foundation stone and walk across the grass aiming for the arched gateway in the wall ahead. Beyond the gate, turn left ㉖ to join a lane that runs down to the river. To avoid walking on the road, climb the bank on the right and take the parallel path for a short distance with good views of Hanham Court on the left. Before long, you are forced back onto

the metalled surface where you are at the mercy of the cars heading for the two hostelrys on the river bank, or worse, cars heading for home after closing time!

At the lane end, you reach 'The Chequers' pub with the river beyond. Go left through the riverside car park and into a meadow. Now, you can either follow the river bank as it traces a broad arc around to the left, or go directly left, following a path with woodland up to your left. Both routes converge at the water's edge, where you go ahead, passing through a kissing gate. Continue on, keeping the river on the right, walking beneath an electricity pylon ㉗ and passing a number of kissing gates, some standing alone waiting for fence connections. You eventually reach a path junction at a metal gate with tracks left and ahead. Continue beside the river to a metal kissing gate and beyond this, cross an old stone bridge ㉘.

*This is the site of Londonderry Wharf. It was built a few years after Avon Wharf, allowing Bristol-bound traffic to avoid paying tolls at Keynsham lock. Hidden in the trees by the bridge are the steps leading down to the water's edge. The coal storage shed, crane and coal chute have now gone, but the square stone building nearby was the weighbridge house and one of the limestone sleepers blocks from the railway can be seen near the entrance; the ramshackle structure beside it provided stabling for the horses. A number of iron rails can be seen in the vicinity, now serving as fencing; these are not Dramway rails but are thought to come from the local iron works of William Champion, whose products were transported on trolleys in the late 19th century.*

Continue with the river on your right to climb a metal stile, then walk along the river bank, passing the red brick building of the now defunct Cadbury's chocolate factory on the far bank ㉙. The approach to Keynsham Lock and the end of your jaunt is via two metal kissing gates. Pass alongside the lock and under the new and unattractive road bridge, then climb up to the old bridge. The bus stop and car park are to your left, but it makes much more sense to walk a few paces right to investigate the internal architecture of the hostelry and a pint of Youngs!

*Originally called the White Hart, the Lock Keeper began its life as a private house whose occupier started brewing using water from the river and nearby well. Then it opened up its kitchen & fireside to drinkers and became an alehouse. By 1719 The White Hart was a licensed house.*



## Walk 8 – The Vale of Berkeley Ham & Stone

**Start** Stone village green, (ST 684954).

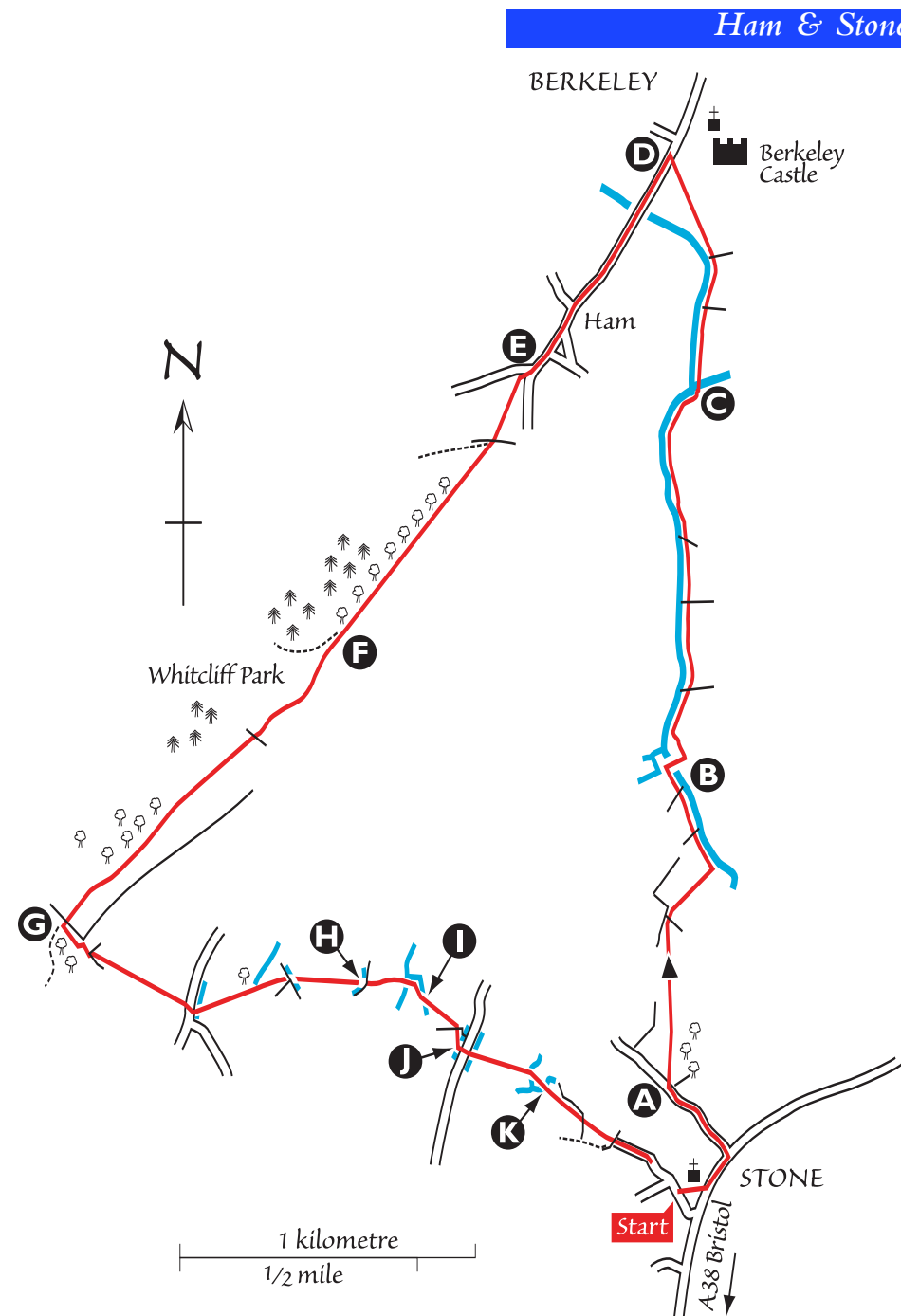
**Distance** 6 miles / 9.5km.

**Refreshments** Pubs at Stone and Ham.

**Getting there** Stone is situated on the A38, just north of Falfield. It is less than 2 miles from M5 junction 14.

*An easy ramble along the Little Avon River to historic Berkeley Castle, thence through a medieval deer park and back across meadows. One short, gentle climb which affords elevated views westward to the Severn and eastward to the Cotswolds. The low-lying fields may become very wet in winter with mud around field gates. Allow 2.5–3 hours.*

The village green at Stone, though just a few metres from the busy A38 road, is a haven of tranquillity and the ideal starting place for this easy ramble around this quiet corner of Gloucestershire. The 13th century All Saints Church could well be your first port of call as you leave the green and walk through the church yard and out onto the main road opposite the Berkeley Vale Inn. Turn left along the main road, then after about 150 metres left again down a minor road past Stone Primary School. Look for a footpath sign on the right after 275 metres and pass through a



gate opening into a field<sup>A</sup>. In case the finger post pointing to the field is not visible, note that the field entrance is the first one on the right after passing a pair of road signs, also on the right.

Walk diagonally across the field keeping a stand of trees close to your right and continue to a gate-sized gap in the far left corner of the field. Once through, the hedge is on your left for a few metres but you soon part company with it as your route lies straight ahead, crossing the centre of the field (which may, or may not be cropped, in which case blaze a path over the crops please). Towards the far side, the land drops down and you get your first glimpse of the Little Avon River, which will escort you for the next mile or so.

Turn left at the river bank and walk along the field edge with the river on your right. Go over a low fence into the next field, and continue on to Matford Bridge<sup>B</sup> which you cross, proceeding now with the Little Avon on your left. As you enter the next field, Berkeley Castle appears ahead in the distance, partly obscured by trees. Easy walking now, keeping to the river bank and crossing a succession of meadows via new metal gates. The whitewashed Tanhouse farm is passed on the far bank then soon after, Brownsmill Farm<sup>C</sup> closer to the river. Here, a drainage ditch comes in from your right and you walk between this and the river, continuing in the same direction as before. With the castle looming large, you reach the final meadow, passing a concrete farm bridge on your left. Now leave the river bank and strike out diagonally towards the left of the castle which from here appears as some great fortress roughly hewn out of natural rock. Keeping the castle well to your right, look for a white painted gate and climb its built-in stile to access the road<sup>D</sup>.

*The castle has been the historic seat of the Berkeley Family since the 11th century, its massive walls constructed with blocks of sandstone taken from the nearby Severn. King Edward II was imprisoned and eventually murdered here by his jailers Sir John Maltravers and Sir Thomas Gurney in 1327, but visitors are treated with more courtesy these days and if you have time to spare, a visit is most worthwhile. The village of Berkeley itself is worth a detour from your route. Turn right along the road and five minutes walk will find you in its centre. The detached tower of the Parish Church dating from 1753 is a rarity in the West Country. Edward Jenner, who introduced vaccination, lived and died in the nearby Chantry and is buried in the church. A museum of his life and work is to be found on the right as you walk to the village.*

Your walk continues by turning left along the road which crosses the Little Avon River in 200 metres.

*The 18th century buildings to your left are the stables and kennels of the Berkeley Hunt. In the 18th century, the Berkeleys hunted from Berkeley Castle to Berkeley Square in London and had kennels along the route. The season would start in Berkeley and progress to each of their kennels to London, and then in stages back again to Gloucestershire. This was apparently too complicated so part of the hunt was kept at Gerrard's Cross to hunt the 'London country' and until 1970 was called the 'Old Berkeley', then the 'Vale of Aylesbury' and now the Kimblewick Hunt. Both they and the Berkeley Hunt differ from other hunts in that members wear yellow coats rather than the more familiar red.*

Continue along the road into the village of Ham, (more of a hamlet really), and pass the Salutation Inn, an agreeable refreshment stop.

*Notice the crests on many of the cottages here that each day, must remind their inhabitants of the true owners of their land.*

A pleasant village green is then passed and 100 metres further, a road turns to the right, signposted Clapton, Bevington and Hill; look for a gate and stile on the right just after the turn<sup>E</sup>. Climb the stile then turn left, heading up the hill towards the walled park. Cross the wall by way of wooden steps and a little gate, and you are in Whitcliff Park. Follow the track (this is the only ascent on the walk), to a broad ride.

*Finishing the climb, you have views west to the River Severn, the concrete blot on the landscape by the river is of course Berkeley Power Station, now decommissioned but destined to be a feature on maps for many years to come. To the north are the grain stores of Sharpness Docks and 4 miles away to the east, Nibley Knoll and the Tyndale Monument. The monument was erected in 1866 in memory of William Tyndale, translator of the New Testament into English. He went to Germany to prepare his translation, published it in 1535 and received payment the following year by being burned at the stake for heresy.*

*Whitcliff Park is the last remaining medieval deer park in the Severn Vale. It was first enclosed as a private hunting park towards the end of the 13th century when venison was a luxury food and deer hunting was the sport reserved for royalty and the wealthy, such as the Earls of Berkeley. The wall that surrounds the park was begun in 1770 and took seven years to complete.*

You now have a mile of easy walking on this level ride, keeping a line of chestnut trees to your right. From time to time, the ground drops away on your left affording glimpses of the boundary wall. As the trees peter out, keep on in the same direction ignoring another broad ride veering off to the right<sup>F</sup> unless you want to make a



detour to inspect at close quarters Park House, a 19th century folly. Finally, pass through a deer fence and head for a stand of holm oaks.

*The holm oak or evergreen oak, a handsome tree reaching 30 feet or more, is native in the Mediterranean region and up the Atlantic coast of Europe northward to Brittany, although it has been commonly planted all over the British Isles. The Romans called this tree the 'Ilex'. This group have been well-grazed by the deer to head-height, thus affording a sheltered path for the next few hundred metres.*

The grassy ride bears right where the boundary wall unexpectedly comes up to meet you on the left. Continue on the obvious path, aiming for the house ahead, where wooden steps and a stile take you over the wall and out of the park ㉔. Climb the stile immediately to your left and take a narrow, overgrown path with the boundary wall on your left. After a short distance, climb another stile and continue alongside the wall until the corner of the park boundary is reached. The path, often slippery after rain, now drops down through bushes for a few metres to the top of a meadow. Continue straight down the meadow to the hedge ahead and look for a double stile just past the corner of the boundary. Go over and walk down the gently sloping field with the hedge on your right. Cross another double stile to gain access to a road.

Much of the remainder of the walk is across meadows bounded by streams or ditches, which you cross by way of stiles, footbridges or a combination of both; some are interesting when wet so take care! Cross the road to the footpath sign just to your right and enter the next field by way of a footbridge and stile. Now head half-left across the field, aiming for a clump of trees and bushes; pass to the right of these and continue to a footbridge in the field corner. Cross over, then walk half-right to the far corner of the field, passing under power lines and keeping to the right of the left-hand support. Cross a combination of stiles and footbridge ㉕ and go ahead with the hedge on your left until you come to a more substantial footbridge. Cross this and follow the field boundary closely to your left. Beyond a pond on the left (possibly now filled in), the field boundary bears round to the right, and a further footbridge is soon reached on the left ㉖. Cross this, then bear right towards the white bungalow ahead. When you reach the property boundary, turn right over a stile by a metal gate and proceed with the boundary on your left. You will soon hear, if not see, that these buildings are boarding kennels! Continue straight ahead towards a metal gate, and cross the adjoining stile and footbridge to reach a road ㉗.

Cross the road, then another bridge/stile combination into the field. Walk ahead, keeping the field boundary to your right, eventually crossing a stream by the grandest footbridge so far encountered. Now walk diagonally half right for a short distance to a gate ㉘ pass through and continue ahead, picking up the field bound-

ary on your left until another stile is reached. Climb this last obstacle and walk through an apple orchard to join the driveway of Westend Farm, then proceed through the gate. Follow the drive which will lead you back to your starting point on Stone village green.



## Walk 9 – South Bristol Pensford & Stanton Drew

**Start** Car park in Pensford Village, (ST 618637).

**Distance** 6.5 miles / 10.25km.

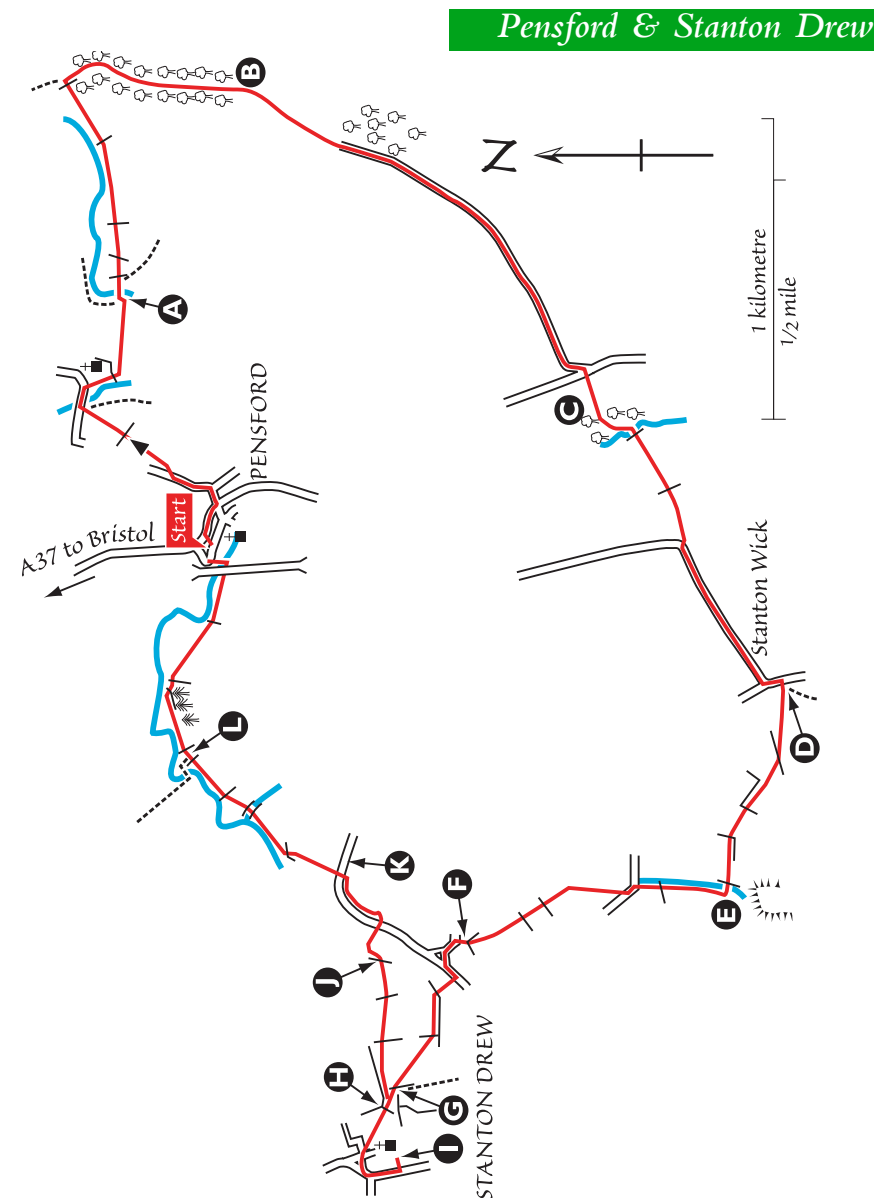
**Refreshments** Pubs at Pensford, Stanton Wick and Stanton Drew.

**Getting there** Pensford lies on the A37 south of Bristol. For the car park, turn right after the pedestrian traffic lights, then follow the lane round to the right. The car park is on the left, opposite the pub.

*An interesting ramble over fields, meadows, river banks and quiet lanes with only one short climb. Archaeology both ancient and modern is investigated and although an admittance fee is payable to get close to the standing stones at Stanton Drew, (no dogs allowed) they can be seen adequately from the field edge. The walk should take about 3.5 hours.*

Pensford is a fascinating little village straddling the delightful River Chew and the less attractive A37 Bristol to Wells road. In 1968 the inhabitants thought the river less than delightful when it burst its banks, destroying a number of homes and businesses. The Miners' Institute gives a clue to Pensford's industrial past, remnants of which will be seen during the walk.

Concrete steps lead up from the car park to the new road bridge spanning the river. Cross the A37 at the pedestrian lights and turn right, over the bridge then first left up



High Street to a road junction where ahead, you will see an 18th century dome-roofed lock-up, known locally as The Round House. Follow the road left into Publow lane, walking on the right and passing a string of modern houses. At the end of the row, the footpath, now with a white hand-rail, climbs to a kissing gate affording access to a field. Pass through and cross the field aiming to the left of Publow church whose

tower can be seen though the trees ahead. Midway across the field, go through the kissing gate then continue to exit the field onto a road by the River Chew.

A bridge carries the road over the Chew and beyond lies All Saints Church. Look for a stone footpath on the right and walk between the churchyard and the river, through a wooden kissing gate and out into fields where you bear left following the churchyard boundary. Continue ahead across the field towards another kissing gate in the far boundary, which leads you onto a farm drive **A**. Cross the bridge and go ahead, ignoring the first stile on the right and passing through the kissing gate by the metal farm gate. Walk along the field edge with the farm drive on your left, crossing a wooden footbridge then through a kissing gate onto the farm track. Proceed in the same direction, the track soon petering out into pasture. Go ahead with the River Chew on your left through a further kissing gate situated near the left corner of the field near the river, and cross the middle of the next field keeping the electricity poles just to your right. At the far side, a gate brings you onto a byway where you turn right.

This track can be very muddy in winter, although where it runs between high banks you can walk along the top of the bank. Keep on this route for about 700 metres as it climbs the hillside, eventually passing a house on the left **B** where mercifully, mud gives way to a grassy area, then a metalled drive which you now follow. Easy walking now, generally downhill, passing Lord's Wood then South Leigh Farm on the left. After passing farm buildings and a bungalow on the right, you have a short climb to a left bend in the lane, which then drops down to meet the main road. Cross with care to Pensford House, the large red stone dwelling in front of you, and take the narrow footpath running down the right-hand boundary wall of the property. You soon pass a tall conifer hedge on the left, at the bottom of which, the path crosses the track of an old railway **C**. Notice the iron rails used as fence supports at the far side of the track.

*This is the route of the Great Western Railway's line from Bristol to Radstock which was latterly used to transport coal from Writhlington and Kilmerston collieries to the docks at Portishead. There was also an incline a little further north of here connecting Pensford colliery to the main line. A landslide north of Pensford in 1968 sealed the fate of the line.*

Beyond the railway you enter woodland and the path drops downhill, soon veering left. Continue to reach a brook which you cross via a railway sleeper footbridge and on the far side, climb up into a field where on the right, the waste tips of Pensford colliery can be seen through the trees. Go through the gate ahead, then climb the next two fields with the hedge on your right until a cattle pen is reached where a gate gives access to the road. Continue left along the road (unless you want to detour 400 metres back, around the bend to the site of Pensford colliery where the engine house has undergone a recent conversion to a dwelling). After 400 metres,

the Carpenter's Arms is passed on the right and a little further, the road bears left by a telephone box. Beyond a row of houses on the right, take a driveway that gives access to a line of cottages **D**. *This is the site of a factory that produced Bristol's blue glass in the late 17th-18th century.*

At the end of the drive, go through a gate into a field then walk half-right, passing a cottage on the right and as the ground drops away, look for a gate in the right-hand hedge. Cross into next field, continuing downhill to pick up the boundary on the right. At the bottom of the field, go through a gate and cross this third field to another gate ahead.

*Halfway across this field, although nothing can be recognised, lies the route of a tramway linking the old Bromley pit, whose waste tip can be seen to your left, with Pensford colliery and the Radstock railway line you crossed earlier. The tramway was a 2-foot gauge with a rope haulage system. A few rotting sleepers and lengths of the haulage rope can still be found in the hedges. Bromley colliery was functioning around 1893; the cost of working the coal was always high – they were still using pit ponies in 1955, but the colliery struggled on until finally closing in May 1957. Pensford colliery was begun in 1909 but technical difficulties meant regular production didn't start until 1917. Closure came in December 1958.*

Go through the gate and follow the hedge as it runs downhill to the bottom of the field, where you pass through a further gate and cross a stream by way of a pair of railway sleepers **E**. To your left, the coal tip dominates the landscape, but your route is to the right, along the field edge, keeping the stream on your right. This is a real coal-field, with the black, carbonised lumps readily seen on the brown earth. Go through a gate in the hedge and continue in the same direction to a narrow lane. Walk left down the lane for 20 metres then go through a gate in the hedge on the right. Keep to the right boundary of the field for a short distance until the hedge bears right to a farm track and pair of metal gates. At this point, continue straight ahead, passing the waymark sign on a wooden post. As the ground rises, a stile comes into view which you pass, aiming for a gate at the left of the hedge ahead. From here, the next gate is visible in the fence across the pasture and the houses of Upper Stanton Drew come into sight. Go through and head down the right boundary of the field passing to the right of the duckpond, aiming for the field corner ahead where there is a gate, obscured from your view at present. An interesting array of animals may greet you here – often dogs, but also llamas and geese! Beyond the gate is an alleyway **F** between houses which in turn exits to the residential road of Old Tarnwell.

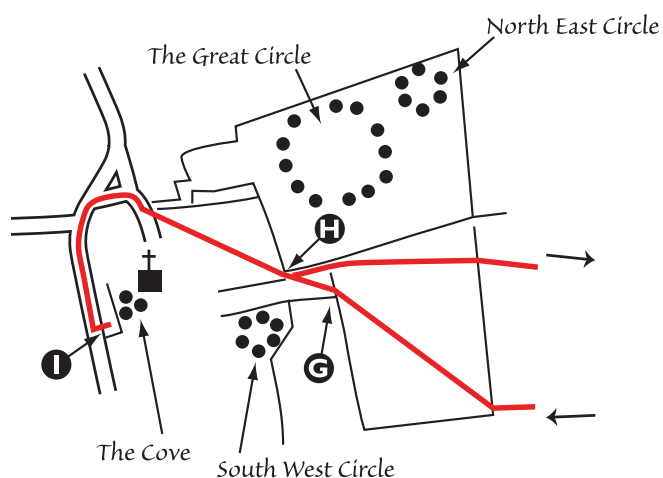
Turn left down the road, bearing left at a fork, to join Pensford Lane, which you cross to take the raised pavement with white handrails. Before you reach the row of cot-



tages however, you take the footpath running alongside the first cottage. Go through the gate, then follow the right-hand boundary to another at the corner of the field; beyond, walk left keeping the hedge to your left. Pass through the next gate, then go half right towards a metal farm gate in the furthest corner of the field. 50 metres before the gate, look for stone steps in the hedge on the left leading to a stile which you climb **G**. In the field that you now find yourself, you have a choice! Up the field on your left is a wooden kissing gate which gives access to the smallest of Stanton Drew's stone circles, the South West Circle. Across the farm drive on your right is a similar barrier, the exit for those who have paid the fee to see the stones at close quarters. There are no public rights of way in either field! The Great Circle and North East Circle can be seen from outside the gate however, where a public footpath does exist.

For those wishing to explore further, pass through the gate **H** and proceed to the end of the farm drive. Go through the kissing gate and double back to your right following the signs for a short distance to gain entry to the aforementioned field. To visit The Cove, another group of stones, go ahead from the farm drive around the side of the whitewashed cottage keeping its walls to the left. Follow the lane round to the left, passing the The Druid's Arms on the left. Entrance to the Cove is gained via a flight of stone steps rising from the pub car park **I**.

*The name Stanton Drew is derived from 'stan' (stones) and 'tun' (farm or village); 'Drew' is the name of a family who were local landowners in the 13th century. The standing stones of Stanton Drew are not as celebrated as those of Avebury and Stonehenge but are considered by some to be nearly as important; indeed, the Great*



*Circle is one of the largest henges in the country. There have been no excavations here, but recent geophysical surveys have revealed that an elaborate pattern of buried pits, arranged in nine concentric rings lie hidden under the pasture within the great Circle. The great Circle itself is contained within a buried enclosing ditch approximately 137 metres in diameter and 7 metres wide, with a broad entrance*

*facing to the north-east. The Cove consists of three massive stones, positioned about the same time as the nearby circles and was a ritual centre of the late Neolithic and early Bronze Ages, around 4000 years ago.*

From the village, retrace your steps back to the farm drive, then through the gate **H**. Now continue parallel with the farm drive to a further gate, beyond which, head toward the right-hand side of the water treatment works. Go through a gate in the far boundary then go ahead passing close to an electricity pole and through another gate in the far hedge **I**. You now find yourself in a market garden, so go left, skirting the bottom edge of the cropped area to meet a grassy path which runs through the remains of a fence. Pass a small orchard on your right, then crops on both sides and head towards a line of upended railway sleepers which provide support for the wires of raspberry plants. The path brings you to a lane which you cross half-left into another field of vegetables, turning left to run parallel with the lane around the field edge until the first available exit is reached on the left just before a house. Your route now crosses the lane into the field opposite, but first, walk a few metres to the right to view a fine little mediaeval footbridge with Gothic arch **K**.

Continue on your way, through a gate into the field which you cross keeping toward the left-hand boundary. Climb a stile by a cattle pen into a meadow with the River Chew on its left margin. Cross this, and two further meadows via stiles and footbridges until, as the river runs over a weir on your left, a gate gives access to a green lane. Proceed down the side of an attractive old house **L** then via a kissing gate to a meadow. Cross this, the river coming and going on the left, until it converges with the fence on the right, leaving you with a further kissing gate as the only exit. The path now climbs for a short distance to another gate through which you pass to enter a further meadow. You will not have walked more than a few metres before the impressive Pensford railway viaduct comes into view.

*Constructed in 1873, the viaduct remains a fine feat of engineering, the more so as you approach it along the broad, green path across the meadow. The 16 arches have a 15 metre span, the total length being 303 metres with a height of 29 metres.*

Reach the viaduct across a sturdy wooden footbridge and one final meadow, then walk under one of its mighty arches. Keep the river to your left and beyond the viaduct, cross an ancient stone footbridge with metal handrails which brings you to a pub car park. If you have timed your walk well, this is a pleasant spot for refreshment before your journey home. Leave the car park, following the lane right, then cross the road to your starting point.



## Walk 10 – The Vale of Gloucester Deerhurst & the Severn Way

**Start** Village Hall car park, Apperley, (SO 867285).

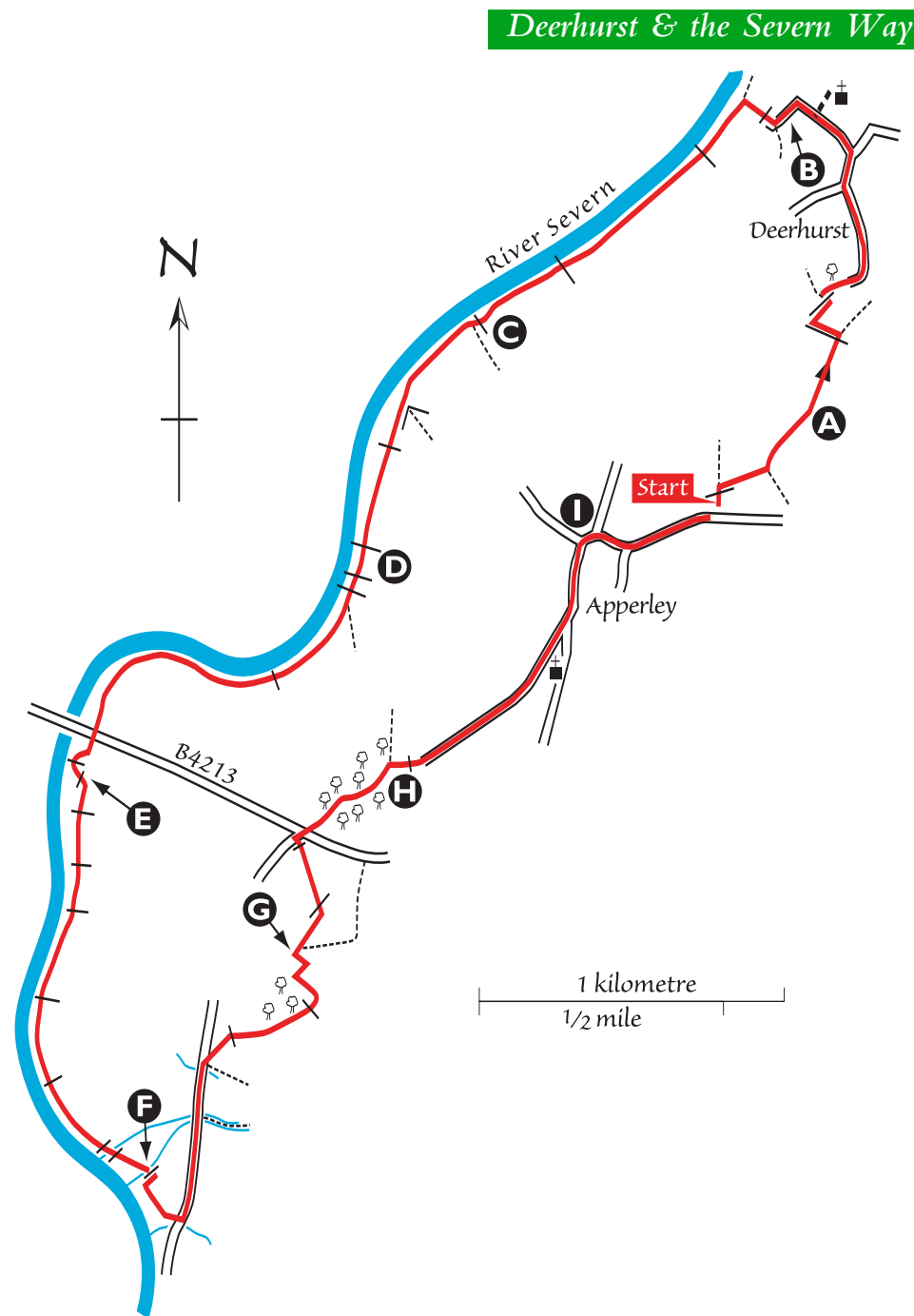
**Distance** 7 miles / 11km.

**Refreshments** Riverside pub at Apperley, 3 pubs just off route.

**Getting there** M5 north to Junction 11 then left onto A40 to A38. North on A38 for 6 miles then left at lights onto B4213, taking right turn to Apperley in 1.5 miles. Car park a short distance on right.

*An easy ramble through timeless countryside, calling at the Saxon church and chapel of Deerhurst. The River Severn is followed for part of the walk which is mainly flat, though with a number of stiles and short muddy stretches in the woodland. For clearer views of the river, avoid walking in late summer when the overgrowth obscures the river bank. Allow about 3 hours plus stops.*

With your back to the car park entrance walk across the grass to a squeezer stile in the fence ahead to enter a cornfield. Turn right and walk with the fence on your right, passing an electricity pole on your left and a grey corrugated barn across the field to your right. When you reach a farm track, turn left and walk now with the hedge on your right for 200 metres to a concrete track at a junction of field corners **A**. Here, continue ahead into the left-hand field and follow the hedge on your right to the end of the field where you pass a gatepost with two waymark signs into a further field.



(Though there are reports that the gatepost has been removed.) Turn immediately left to walk along the edge of the pasture with the hedge on your left, going right at the corner. Halfway along this side of the field look for a stile in the hedge on your left by an electricity pole; climb over and go immediately right, ignoring the path ahead. This sheltered walkway brings you onto a lane with a large house on your left. Continue down the lane which bears round to the left where a track comes in from the right, soon passing Abbot's Court Farm. A few metres further at a road junction, turn right then take the first turning left signposted Odda's Chapel and Deerhurst Church. Walk down the road and enter the white gates of the churchyard.

*Deerhurst is a site of some significance; it was an early frontier of Roman Britain and in 1016 was the place where the English King Edmund Ironside and the Danish Canute, son of King Sweyn Forkbeard of Denmark, carved up England between them. Canute did rather well out of the deal as Edmund died later that year leaving Canute to rule the entire country. There is much of interest in the Saxon church, founded in the 7th century, including a 9th century font and a 14th century brass of Sir John Cassy, Baron of the Exchequer and his wife together with her pet dog, Terri; the only existing example of a named pet on an old brass. A little further along the road stands Odda's Chapel, a small Saxon building erected by Duke Odda in memory of his*



The Priory church, Deerhurst

*brother Aelfric and dedicated in 1056. For many centuries this chapel was part of a farmhouse to which it had become attached and it was only in 1885 when the house was being repaired that the real identity of the building became known.*

Return to the road and follow the signs to Odda's Chapel **B**. Just beyond the chapel the lane swings right to a gate which you pass through following the track ahead through parkland to the River Severn. Turn left and follow the path which runs along a low dyke with the river on your right.

*The Severn Way footpath runs for 338km from Plynlimon in Powys to Severn Beach. The Severn Trow, the footpath symbol, is a typical sailing barge that plied the river from the 15th century until as late as the 1930's. The last remaining trow, the Spry, was made seaworthy again for the Festival of the Sea held in Bristol in 1996, but is now in storage at the Ironbridge Museum in Shropshire. An illustration of the vessel, produced by the author of this book, can be seen at Gloucester's National Waterways Museum.*

Cross a couple of stiles then beyond the third **C** ignore the path going left and continue ahead passing a property on the left sheltered by a row of conifers. When you reach the next stile, don't cross, but keep right with the river bank, walking with the hedge on your left. Cross a further two stiles to reach the Coal House Inn **D**.

*Originally a coal wharf, it is now a welcoming inn, an excellent place for lunch!*

Leaving the pub with the river on your right, pass through the wooden gate into a caravan park then follow the waymarks directing you ahead to leave the park via a stile. Follow the river path now for about 1100 metres to reach the road by Haw Bridge. Climb to the road and cross over with care, (there are two pubs by the far end of the bridge which you may want to visit), otherwise continue the walk by taking the path ahead down through a small gate.



*Notice the large walnut tree on your right here, walnuts were widely grown in Southern England and there was usually a tree to be found on every old farm.*

Walk ahead along a grassy path towards the cottage, Bridge House, and pass to the right of the building. Cross the stile ahead then look immediately for a stile in the hedge on your left **E**. Climb this and walk along the field edge with the hedge now on your right for about 1300 metres, crossing sluice gates to enter another meadow with venerable oak trees. Go half-left, keeping just to the right of the electricity pylon and cross a stile by a metal gate; at this point you are crossing a disused canal and looking down to your right, the brickwork of a lock is visible **F**.




*Coomo Hill Canal is the shortest (at 4.5 km) of a number of canals constructed in the County. It was opened in 1802 and ran from Coomo Hill Basin near the A38 road, to the Severn here at Wainlode. The idea was to aid the transport of coal from mines in the Forest of Dean to Cheltenham, which at that time was a difficult journey by road. The canal fared well until the arrival of the railways and it finally closed in 1876.*

Turn left to pick up the dyke again which goes left in a few metres with the river on your right and continue to reach a further set of sluice gates by a brick bridge, where you climb a stile to reach the road. Turn left here and walk for 350 metres to cross the canal again, then a further 200 metres, where just before a cattle grid, leave the road to metal gates and stile on the right. Ignore the stile but go through the (unwaymarked) gate furthest to the left and climb the roughly surfaced path with the hedge on your left. Pass through a further gate, following the track along the edge of a cornfield and still with the hedge, continue to a farmyard.

Typically devoid of obvious waymarks, proceed with care; opposite the barn on the left, turn right and pass a brick building on the left. Follow the drive left to reach the brick-built farmhouse ahead . Go right here, across the well-tended grass passing the front of the house on your left, (the track runs away down to the right), and pick up the hedge on the left of the field ahead. In summer, crops and a lack of clear path make the going difficult, but look for a gap in the hedge up to your left after 100 metres, where you will find a stile next to an electricity pole. The waymarks begin again here and with your back to the stile, go half-right skirting the brow of the hill to reach a pair of stiles in the far corner of the field by a road junction. Beyond the cattle grid, cross the main road to a lay-by on the far side and walk straight ahead passing white-painted gateposts to pick up a path through the wood. This is a disused entrance to the Apperley Court estate, which explains the brick-lined path and the ornamental shrubs planted at intervals along your route. The path climbs between increasingly steep banks then suddenly, you emerge on the lawn of Apperley Court with the white house ahead .

*This was for many generations the home of the Strickland family, descended from William Strykeland who accompanied Sebastian Cabot, son of John Cabot, on his exploratory voyage along the coast of North America. William Strykeland was granted arms in 1550 which include a turkey-cock crest, the bird being first imported into England from America with Strykeland and Cabot. There are several memorials to the Strickland family to be seen in Deerhurst church.*

Walk around the rear of the house keeping it on your right, then pass through white gates onto a lane with a farm yard on the right and barn on the left. Follow the lane for 500 metres to pass The Lodge on your left; you are now leaving the Apperley

Estate. Continue along the road passing the duck pond and village green on your right and on through the village, a mixture of old and new buildings, to reach the post office at Box Tree Farm on the left . At the road junction opposite, take the road down to the right, Sawpit Lane, signposted Village Hall. Follow this round to the left for 300 metres to the car park and the completion of your walk.



## Walk 11 – South Glamorgan Castell Coch

**Start** Tongwynlais, (ST 134826).

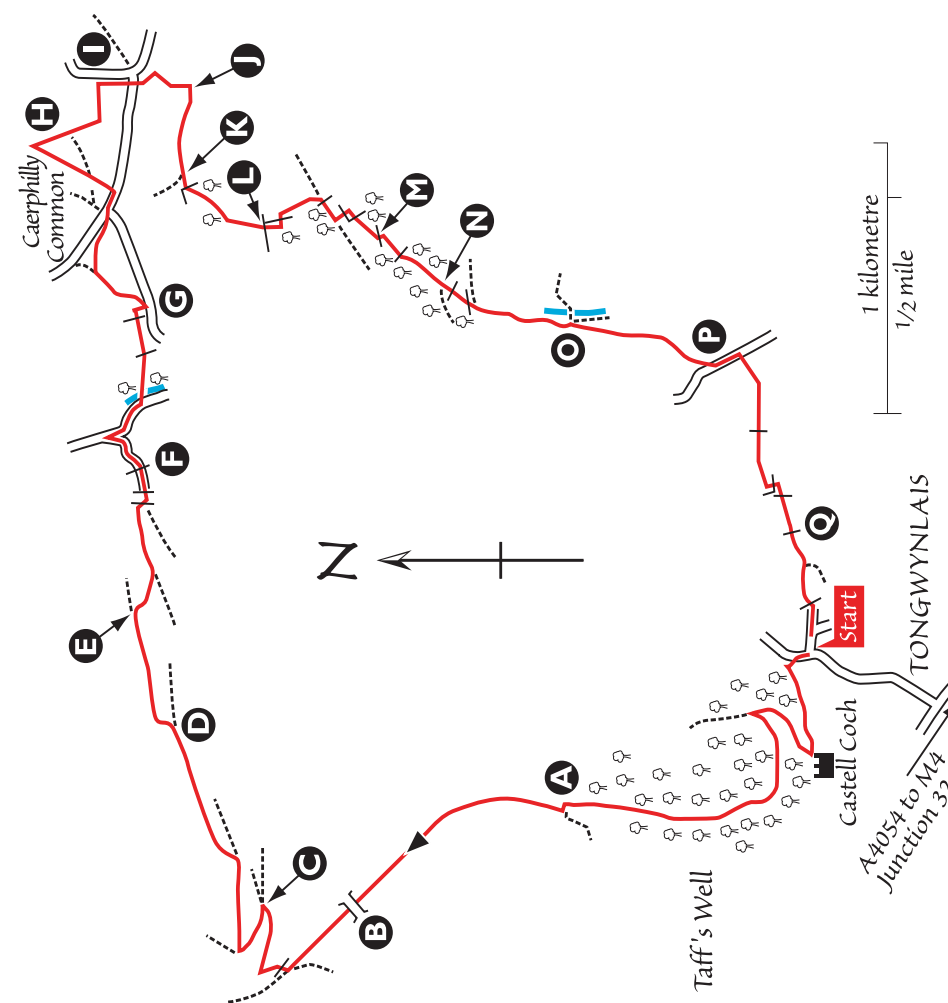
**Distance** 7.5 miles / 12km. (Or 14.5 miles / 23.25km with Walk 30.)

**Refreshments** Pub at Tongwynlais, roadside snack bar at Caerphilly Common.

**Getting there** M4 west to junction 32, then follow signs for Tongwynlais on A4054. In village centre, turn right at the Lewis Arms pub into Mill Road. Take 2nd turning right, Catherine Drive, and park at roadside.

*A walk of hills and valleys – well-worn paths with fine vistas, and wooded hollows with little used paths together with easy progress on a disused railway. Add to this forests and a fairy-tale castle and you have the making of a memorable walk. A couple of climbs and some overgrown and indistinct paths between points (B-C) and around (N) – shorts not recommended! Allow about 4 hours. (Note that you can extend this walk between points (I) and (O) by combining it with Walk 30.)*

From Catherine Drive, go back to Mill Road and turn right, away from the village. In a short distance, you'll reach the entrance to Castell Coch on the left. Go through the gateway and up the drive that bears left, noticing the splendid beech trees on the right as you pass the car park. Beyond the top car park the drive forks, go right into the coach park and take the clearly defined footpath on the right signposted 'Taff Trail', into the trees. The path climbs the wooded slopes of Fforest-fawr (great



forest), passing a viewing platform on the left then wooden barriers. A few metres further, you come to a path junction where you turn sharp left onto a broad track.

*Little is known of the original Castell Coch or Red Castle, except that it was destroyed sometime in the 15th century. In the 1870's the ivy-covered ruin with its crumbling, red sandstone walls formed the base of a fairy-tale creation when the Marquess of Bute commissioned an architect to rebuild the castle in 13th century style. Apart from the conical turrets, a flight of fantasy by the architect William Burges, the castle has the look of a serious fortress with a dry moat, portcullis and drawbridge, while the surprisingly small interior is lavishly decorated in Victorian Gothic style. It is interesting to note that Cardiff Castle, another home of the Bute family, was also remodelled by William Burges. The land on which the castle stands is owned by Forest Enterprise; it contains the remains of lime pits and old iron workings and the northern part of the forest was used during the First War as a training ground for tank drivers.*

The track runs gently downhill for a kilometre to reach a disused railway whose route you will be following for the next 1200 metres. Don't cross the bridge over the trackbed, but go right, passing through the barrier and dropping down to the old line **A**.

*You are now on the trackbed of the Barry Railway's branch line to Rhymney. This line opened in 1901, cashing in on the wealth of coal being mined in the Rhymney Valley. At its peak, between 80 and 90 coal trains passed this spot each day so few passenger trains ran, although for 50 years until 1964, summer excursions from the Rhymney Valley to Barry Island proved popular. However, with the withdrawal of regular freight services in 1963, the line's fate was sealed though coal traffic lasted until December 1967.*

*Below you is the village of Ty Rhiw whose old terraced houses were built for the miners who worked the collieries of Nantgarw and Rockwood. The latter was a drift mine whose horizontal shaft entrance has lain abandoned on the hillside to your right since the early 1960s. Beyond Ty Rhiw lies Taff's Well, a small but popular spa town in the 19th century, its waters having the same properties as those in the more famous Bath, although its pea-green waters were cooler and the surface was in constant motion from bubbles of nitrogen and carbonic acid.*

Walk for about 900 metres with views left over Taff's Well to Garth Hill and ahead to the ridge of Craig yr Allt, passing under a bridge **B**. After another 250 metres, look out for wooden kissing gates on the right, go through and follow the path as it climbs left, then doubles back right, still climbing through oak woods. The gradient eases as

you emerge from the woodland to continue on a narrow path, invaded by bracken in summer.

When you reach a junction of paths with a stile and gate ahead **C** take the path that doubles back sharply to the left and climb the hillside with good views over the River Taff on your left. When you reach a waymark post with radio mast ahead, the path swings round to the right, and becomes broader. At a further waymark, take the narrow path climbing up left to reach the ridge. There are fine views from here with Cardiff Bay away to the south and Nantgarw to the north.

*Older Ordnance Survey maps show a colliery at Nantgarw. Completed in 1910, the shafts reached a depth of almost 265 metres. The mine was worked until 1927 then remained idle until 1946 when it gained a new lease of life and was productive until its final closure in 1986. The town also had a pottery here, producing porcelain until 1822. Reopened ten years later, it stayed in business until 1920 producing clay tobacco pipes.*

*The old Rhymney Railway is also shown on the older maps; this opened in 1858 carrying passengers and freight between Rhymney and Cardiff. Competition with other railway companies (there were six in the area) forced the Rhymney Railway to look for another route to Cardiff – a tunnel beneath Caerphilly Common which opened in 1871. The original route was still used for coal traffic into the 1980s but closed with the decline in the Welsh coal industry.*

You have easy walking now to a fork in the path **D** where you take a broad, grassy path to reach the summit ridge. Continue along the ridge past the hardly noticeable high-point at 273 metres, then when you start to lose height, look for a path going downhill to the right **E**. Follow this, going left where you meet a broad path, losing height rapidly and passing close to an electricity pole. Carry on down the hill, picking up a wire fence on the left and following it round to the right to reach a broad track by a metal field gate. Climb the adjoining stile and walk down the track, passing through another gate to reach a lane **F**. Turn left along the lane and continue for about 400 metres to a junction where you turn sharp right.

Walk along this lane for 200 metres, passing the entrance to Blackbrook House on the left, then 'Uplands' on the right. Directly opposite this grand entrance, look for a footpath on the left, just beyond a black-painted gate. Go through the kissing gate and drop down to cross the brook, then climb to the meadow on the far side. Walk ahead up the centre of the field, passing by the electricity pole then aiming for a stile in the hedge towards the right corner of the field. (Both the entrance and exit to this grassland can be surprisingly wet!) In the following field, walk ahead with trees to your right, towards a kissing gate by stables. Pass through and turn right



down the driveway to reach the road ㉔. Here, take the waymarked path running back up to the left with the backs of properties to your left.

The stony path takes you beneath power lines and when you reach the pylon, you double back right, still gaining height. As the path level out, you reach a junction, follow the waymarks right, walking parallel with the road down to your left. At the next waymark, drop down left to cross the road diagonally right to a signpost marked Taff Ely Ridgeway Walk. Continue along the road for about 10 metres and then turn left at the waymarker to see in front of you a sign for Caerphilly Common. Take this path, which almost immediately forks, take the lower left path, ignoring the path up to the right. Your route soon climbs steeply to Caerphilly Common and when you reach the summit trig-point ㉕ take note of your route off the hill; this is to the right, down a gravel path with a radio mast on a hill-top 2 kilometres distant.

*From this 271 metre summit, there are good views north to Caerphilly and its 13th century castle, the largest medieval fortress in Wales. and famous for its leaning tower.*

Leaving the summit, take the aforementioned path down to a waymark post, then left for 250 metres to reach another road with a snack bar opposite ㉖ a handy point for refreshment. (Walkers who are just getting warmed up will want to extend this hike by reading on to Walk 30.)

Only cross this main road for refreshment or to extend the walk, otherwise walk right, along the verge to the road junction. Cross to the side road with care and take the roughly surfaced track opposite, soon climbing up to the right. When you reach a house with white gates, go left along the front of the property, then go right ㉗ with the path still keeping the property to your right. Climb towards an electricity pylon which is passed to your left, then continue beneath the wires to a waymark post ㉘. The waymarks offer a route down to the right, but you ignore this option and take the narrow path to the left which in a short distance brings you to a gate and stile which you cross. In the field, go half-left, crossing some boggy ground to reach a stand of beech trees on the ridge, then continue in the same direction downhill towards a redundant stile. From here, go more to the left crossing another boggy patch between clumps of rushes to an obvious stile in the fence ㉙. In the field beyond, follow the fence on your left as you climb to reach a row of hawthorn trees that once marked a field boundary. Here, climb the stile on the left, then drop downhill with the fence now to your right. At the bottom of the field ahead of you is a farm gate and stile.

Go right, over the stile and walk along the track passing derelict farm buildings. Immediately beyond the building on the left, turn left and pass a waymark post. The path descends to a further ruin where you climb a stile, then follow the (frequently overgrown) path to the right, with the building on your right, to gain access to a field. Go diagonally downhill aiming for the electricity pylon a few fields away and when you reach the fence by the trees, follow it to the right to locate a stile ㉚. Cross over and take an indistinct and heavily overgrown path down to a stile in the valley bottom. Climb this and continue onward, crossing a tiny stream. This narrow path, which may be wet in places, leads you through dense woodland to arrive at the foot of an electricity pylon. Pass this on your left, then plunge back momentarily into the trees to a fork in the path ㉛ where you go down to the left towards the power lines, reaching a gate in a few metres. Climb the adjoining stile and walk ahead parallel with the power lines overhead, to a further gate and stile which you cross to a broad track. Go right, again with the power lines and follow this track, a veritable motorway after the last stretch of path, passing a field gate and stile on the left ㉜. (The extended Walk 30 rejoins at this point). Continue for about 600 metres to reach the road ㉝.

Turn left and walk with care for 100 metres to to double farm gates on the right by a telegraph pole where you enter a field. Follow the hedge on the left for about 150 metres, at which point you should be able to see your exit, a stile by a gate in centre of the far hedge, below the quarry on the skyline; bear right to reach it. Continue straight down the centre of the next field, picking up the hedge on the left after 100 metres which you follow towards a gate in the bottom corner. On the left just before the gate is a stile that you cross, then continue in your original direction, now with the hedge on the right, to pass through a field gate. Carry on with the hedge still on the right, through a further gate ㉞ then down a track to a U-shaped junction. Take the lower track down to the right through woodland to a equestrian complex, usually to be greeted by barking dogs. Take the left hand waymarked path bypassing the equestrian complex and at the top of the path keep to the righthand hedge and over the stile, follow the footpath down and through two small gates to reach some steps down to a lane. Here turn right and then left, and walk down the lane behind the houses to Catherine Drive and your starting point.



## Walk 12 – Clevedon Tickenham Moor & Court Wood

**Start** B3130 between Clevedon and Tickenham. (ST 424715).

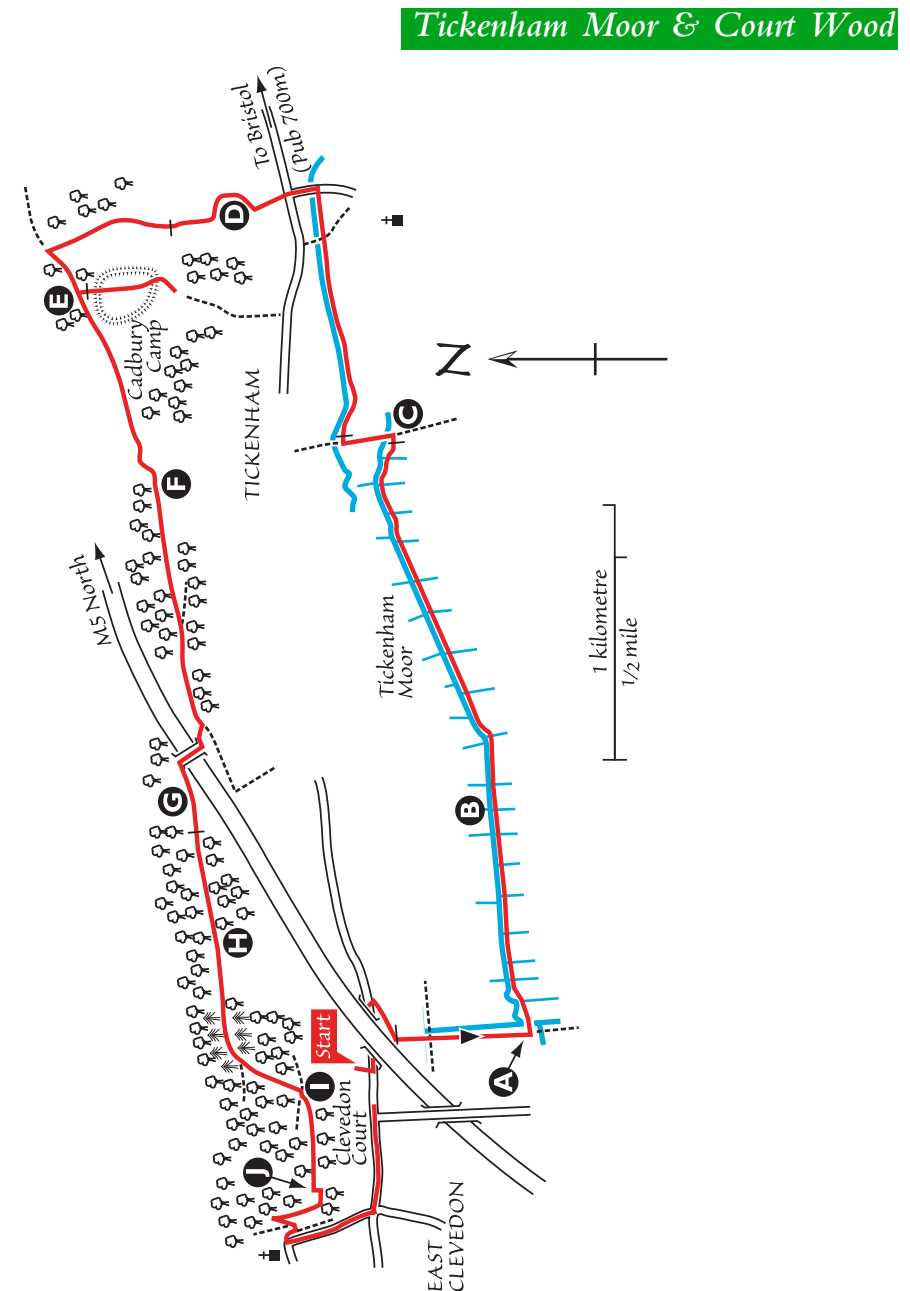
**Distance** 7.5 miles / 12km.

**Refreshments** Pub east of Tickenham, 700 metres off route.

**Getting there** M5 Junction 20 then follow signs for Clevedon Court. From Bristol, B3128 and B3130 to Clevedon. Park in slip road west of motorway bridge.

*Effortless, flat walking over meadows to start, although there are numerous stiles and some very muddy areas in winter. One gentle climb on a good path to Cadbury Camp, from where there are fine views over the Somerset Levels. Easy walking back to Clevedon, latterly through pretty woodland, with an interesting crossing of the motorway by footbridge. Allow about 3.5 hours.*

From your starting point, head towards the bridge carrying the M5 over the Tickenham Road. Just beyond the bridge on the right, climb a stile into pasture and walk parallel to the motorway to another stile. Once over, leave the motorway and go slightly left towards a lone bush where you will find a double stile and footbridge to take you over one of the many rhynes or drainage channels that separate the water-meadows. Cross over, ignore the metal footbridge on the left and continue in the same direction with a rhyne on your left, crossing a further stile to reach a metal gate on the left by a pumping station and sluice (A). Go left over the concrete bridge then cross the field keeping close to the rhyne on your left to enter



the next meadow where you go half-left to pick up the rhyne again and to cross a double stile and footbridge.

You now have a series of fields to traverse, each divided by a narrow ditch feeding the rhyne on your left. Keep close to this as you cross the ditches by a selection of stiles, gates and bridges, including a new one at ❸ where you cross a sluice. Keep on in the same direction, passing two old, stone bridges on the left; after the second, there is a hedge of trees beyond the rhyne and as these come to an end, you can see Cadbury Camp away to the left and Tickenham church ahead. A short distance further, one final stile brings you to an old drove road running from Tickenham onto the moor ❹. Turn left and walk for 200 metres to a footpath sign and stile on the right which you climb. You once again follow the edge of a number of fields, now mostly cropped, with the houses of Tickenham beyond the rhyne on your left. Pass a whitewashed cottage and sluice – who said the sound of running water was restful – and continue past a footbridge on the left to reach a road. Turn left and walk with care along this surprisingly busy stretch of tarmac to Tickenham Road; wait for a gap in the traffic and nip across.

Take the old driveway ahead to the farm, climbing gently to the stone wall ❺ where your route takes you to the right, skirting the farm on your left with a golf course to the right. This track takes you on a steady ascent of the valley with Cadbury Camp Hill to your left and the golf course and woodland to your right, eventually meeting the metalled Cadbury Camp Lane. Go left here, the tarmac soon peters out, but continue for about 200 metres where you will see a National Trust sign and a stile on the left ❻. Climb the stile and make the short, steep ascent to the Camp. If you stroll across the hilltop to the far side, you will get spectacular views south over the Somerset Levels on a fine day; here is a great picnic spot.

*Cadbury is a common name meaning fortified hill. Cadbury Camp is a large Iron Age fortified camp, the ramparts enclosing roughly 2.5 hectares. The lower slopes of the hill were used at this time to rear cattle and grow crops, as Tickenham Moor was then an uninhabitable marsh; now drained, the moor is valuable agricultural land. As you have witnessed on this walk, most of the field boundaries are waterways which serve to keep the land reasonably dry. There is a 'pecking order' for the names of these channels, the largest are drains, then rhyne (various spellings), then ditches. In this narrative, I've used 'rhyne' indiscriminately!*

To continue the walk, you must return to Cadbury Camp Lane ❷ turn left and follow the tree-lined track for a few metres to where the vista opens out to the north and south. From here, you have a generally downhill walk heading for woodland ❸. The track through the woods can be muddy at all times of the year as it is well-used by motor vehicles, but after about 700 metres you meet a tarmac drive joining from the left. Continue in the same direction with a tall wooden fence on your left, eventually passing the wrought-iron gates of the property, after which the woodland margin on

the left is replaced by horse gallops. Watch now for the driveway bearing slightly to the left; just beyond here, but before reaching twin wooden gateposts either side of the drive, take the path that veers off to the right past a fallen tree-trunk. The rumble from the motorway increases in volume as you cross a patch of open scrubland to meet a stretch of tarmac coming in from the left. Pass a metal gate to reach the footbridge over the M5.

At the far side of the bridge, follow the driveway round to the left and climb to the radio mast ❹. Cross the stile ahead to enter woodland. The path leads you over an open area then back into the wood; don't deviate from this path and when you reach the ivy-covered remains of a stone wall, keep to the right of it for almost 400 metres, eventually emerging into a broad, open area with a cottage down on the left ❺. Carry on in the same direction keeping to the right of the cleared area with a plantation of young trees on the left, then with conifers on both sides. Here, where the path forks, take the grassy path to the left and keep on this as it bears left, ignoring paths to the right. Soon, as you enter a tree-lined area, the path starts to lose height and when you come to a cross path ❻ turn right then immediately take the left, lower fork.

After about 150 metres, as you walk under the dense canopy of trees that is Court Wood, you will see a roughly hewn stone seat to the right of the path and a few metres further, a second one; beyond here, the path narrows to lead you beneath magnificent holm oaks, and through the trees to your left you can glimpse the sprawl of the 'newer' Clevedon. Continue on this route until you come to a wooden barrier guarding a slippery slope on the left ❼; a few steps further, turn left for a short, steep descent to a lower path where you turn right. Follow the path, soon turning sharp right around an outcrop of rock and continue, losing height, with the remains of iron railings to your left. Ignore a rising path forking right and go on, doubling back left as the path starts to zig-zag down to a fence. Continue down the steps, then follow the path bearing right downhill with the backs of stone cottages to your left, emerging onto All Saints Lane by the church.

Turn left with East Clevedon Primary School to your right, and walk along the lane passing Court Farm on the left to reach Tickenham Road. Go left here walking on the pavement, passing the entrance to Clevedon Court in 500 metres where beyond, your transport comes into view.

*Clevedon Court was built around 1320 and was bought by a Bristol merchant, Sir Abraham Elton, in 1709. It is now in the care of the National Trust and houses a fine collection of local Nailsea glass and Eltonware pottery. There are terraced gardens to the rear which extend into Court Wood, where you walked earlier.*





## Walk 13 – The Mendips Ebbor Gorge

**Start** Priddy village green, (ST 526509).

**Distance** 7.75 miles / 12.5km.

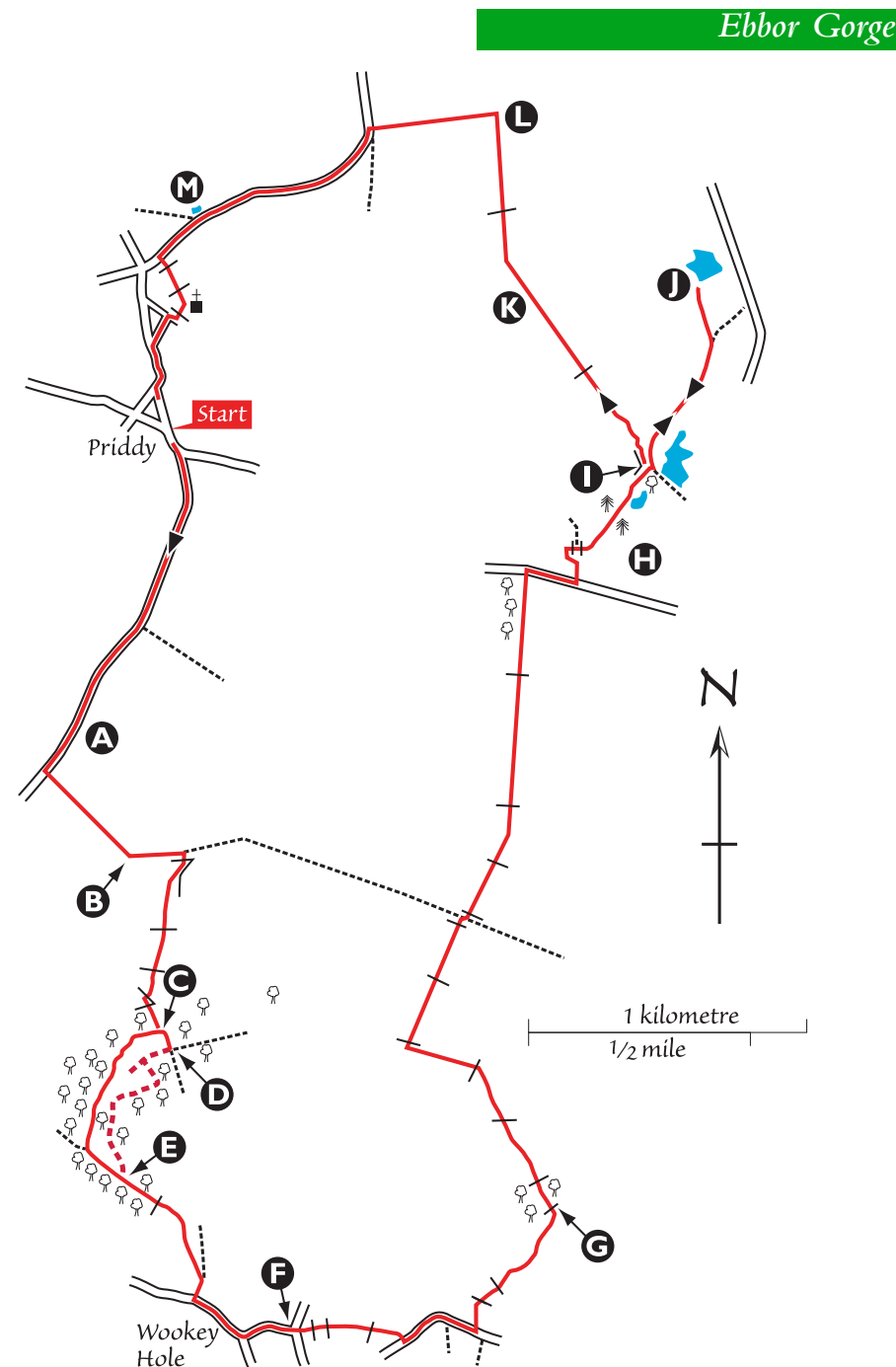
**Refreshments** Pubs in Priddy, café at Wookey Hole.

**Getting there** A37 then A39 towards Wells. After traffic lights at Green Ore, take first turning right signposted Priddy. Park around the green.

*Limestone Mendips at their best. A varied walk of quiet lanes, drove roads and field paths with a dramatic descent of Ebbor Gorge (easier alternative given). The walk passes the famous Wookey Hole caves and the remains of less well-known lead works near the unspoilt village of Priddy. One fairly energetic climb rewarded with fine views over the Somerset Levels. Allow yourself up to 4 hours.*

Leave the village green passing the New Inn and the phone box on your right, pausing to read the inscribed stone on the wall of the whitewashed cottage on the left – what a fine fellow Thomas Reeves must have been! At the road junction turn right and walk past the Victoria Inn.

*This is Pelting Drove, an ancient route used for transporting livestock. Nowadays, most drove roads are tracks or green lanes but as the southerly route out of the village, this has the luxury of a metalled surface.*



Continue on for 1400 metres, passing a 'West Mendip Way' sign post on the left after 700 metres and eventually reaching a substantial stone wall on the left **A** with a stand of tall beech trees beyond. A little further, take the next turning on the left to Ebbor Grove Farm and walk down the track, Durston Drove, beyond the farm to where the route bears left with a pair of metal field gates on your right **B**. Continue for a further 200 metres, looking for a stile in the fence on your right, climb into the field and walk ahead with the field boundary on your left. As the field drops away on the left, keep your course to cross a stone stile in the wall ahead. Continue in the same direction passing another stile in a tumbledown wall then climb a stile in the fence. Now turn left and in a few paces enter the Ebbor Gorge Nature Reserve where you will find an information board. Follow a descending path through the trees to reach a path junction **C**. Here, you have a choice! Up ahead is a dramatic view, to the right is a dramatic descent!

The path going right will take you on an exciting descent of the gorge over rocks and boulders (very slippery when wet) and through a narrow pass, known as the Split. Descend to a path junction. Go left, and in about 100 metres the alternative route comes in from the left **E**. Now continue, leaving the Reserve via a stile.

Alternatively, make the short, steep climb ahead to reach cross-paths **D**. Turn right and follow the path, ignoring a left turn, to reach the cliff edge where you can take in the splendid view over the tree tops.

*Look also underfoot in mid-summer for the pretty yellow rock rose that thrives on these lime-rich soils. Archaeologists think that the gorge was once a mighty cave, formed during the Ice Age whose roof has worn off over aeons of time and there is evidence that animals such as reindeer used the caves in the gorge to shelter from the extreme cold at that time.*

Now retrace your steps to the last turning (which is now on the right) and take this to arrive via sets of steps at the bottom of the gorge meeting the alternative route coming in from the right **E**. From here, go left to leave the Reserve via a stile, then follow a grassy path which joins another path coming down from the left. Continue, passing to the right of a bungalow and going through a metal gate onto a road. Turn left and walk down to Wookey Hole, passing the path to the caves on the left and the pay booth on the right, to reach a right bend in the road with School Hill up to the left **F**.

*Wookey Hole needs little introduction; the famous caves formed by the River Axe have given evidence of human occupation from 250BC to 450AD and has been a tourist attraction since at least the 15th century. Water from the Axe has been used to make*

*paper from the 17th century although the present paper mills were erected two centuries later.*

On the left, just past School Hill, climb steps to a tarmac path that leads to a kissing gate then a stone stile with cottages to your left. Beyond the stile, cross the field alongside the hedge on the right, climbing a metal stile into a further field where you follow a track up ahead passing houses on the right. At the top of the rise, go right, through a metal gate and down steps to a lane. Turn left here, passing Myrtle Farm on the left, beyond which the lane bears right. Continue, ignoring a driveway down to the right, then a few metres further, pass an ivy-covered ruined cottage on the left. Beyond what used to be the garden, you will come to a pair of metal field gates, go through the first one and walk up the field keeping the hedge on your right and (initially), the old garden wall on your left.

At the top right corner of the field, pass through a gate to pick up a track which climbs the hill with the hedge now to your left. Go through another gate following the track with a radio transmitter coming into view over the horizon. The track soon drifts round to the left, running parallel with the hedge to reach the top of the field where you pass through a further gate **G** and continue on a stony track through yet another gate into a field. Carry on ahead keeping the hedge and trees to your right, the track becoming a path between bracken and affording fine views to your left over the Somerset Levels. At the next gate, note the direction indicated by the waymark arrow and cross the field appropriately (left-ish!). As the hedge ahead comes into view towards the top left corner of the field, look for a metal field gate and beside it a stile which you climb to a further field, pausing to get your breath and admire the view again! Walk now along the top of the field with the intermittent hedge and tumbledown wall to your right, as far as the field corner, marked by an even more dilapidated wall crossing your path. Climb the metal stile on the right and walk up the field with the wall to your left, crossing a second stile and field to reach a track (Durston Drove again) via a refurbished stile in the wall. Here, turn right and immediately left through a wooden gate in the opposite field. Keep to the left boundary crossing this, and a further three fields to reach a road.

Walk right along the road passing three cottages on the left. At the side of the third, go left along the drive to Underbarrow Farm and at the fork, bear left following the footpath sign to Priddy Pool. Enter the yard of a caving centre and follow the clear signs to a metal stile in the wall on the right. Cross the drive to a further stile then follow an overgrown grassy path leading you beneath pine trees with the slag tips of St. Cuthbert's lead works across the shallow valley on the right **H**; there are a number of derelict buildings there which you may care to explore. On your left, pass industrial waste of another kind – abandoned cars and farm implements. The

path crosses a (usually) dry stream bed before continuing on in the same direction with the wall a little distance to your left and following an old mine leat to your right. Beneath a pair of beech trees with the wall corner on your left ❶ the path splits although the left turn is hardly noticeable in summer. Go right here to a well-worn path then left, to read the informative signboard for the Priddy Mineries Reserve.

This next section is optional – you will need to return to this point and it will add almost a mile to your jaunt. Follow the clear path passing a pool on the right, a haven for warblers, then more evidence of mining activity with the horizontal flues from the lead smelters of Chewton Minery in the hillside to your left. (See Walk 6 for an explanation of the lead workings on the Mendips.) Before reaching the road, an easy-to-miss path forks left, follow this undulating route to reach Waldergrave Pool in 250 metres ❷.

*St. Cuthbert's, earlier known as Priddy Mineries existed mainly by reprocessing the slag from previously smelted ore although some lead was extracted from small opencast workings nearby. Leats carried water from the ponds passed on your walk for use in washing the ore, so there was some rivalry with Chewton Minery further up the valley as they used the water from Waldergrave Pool and were taken to court by the Priddy Mines for monopolising the supply. Priddy Mines won their case but were then in turn prosecuted for polluting the water which eventually ran below ground, emerging at Wookey Hole as the water supply for the village. St. Cuthbert's took over but the prohibitive cost of keeping the water clean and the falling value of lead meant the mine was doomed to closure, which came in 1908, ending lead mining on the Mendips.*

Retrace your steps now to point ❶ and look for the waymarked path beyond the beech trees near the wall corner. In the long grass of summer, the start of the path can be tricky to locate but keep on up the hill with the wall to your left and you will soon find the route which becomes clearer the further you progress. Leave the Reserve via a stile which gives access to a field and walk alongside the wall and fence on your left to the top of the hill ❸ where you first pass the concrete cap of an underground reservoir, then the earthen cap of a Bronze Age barrow. There is a row of seven tumuli here with a further two down the hill to the west; these are the 'Priddy Nine Barrows' shown on the Ordnance Survey map. Being on private land there is no access, but look half-right to see another row of eight barrows in the next field.

Follow the Right of Way down the field keeping to the left boundary for 100 metres to reach a waymark post in the wall and from here, go half-right across the field aiming for the stile in the fence. The path now leads you to the centre of the

row of tumuli ❹ and from the nearest summit, you will see your exit, a kissing gate in the boundary away to the left. So go left from the tumuli keeping them on the right, and walk down the hill aiming slightly left to reach the gate located in the right-hand end of a row of trees.

Beyond the gate, the unsurfaced Nine Barrows Lane runs left, ignore it and go left along the tarmac lane, following it to Priddy Pool on your right ❺. Continue for a further 200 metres, looking for a track on the left (opposite the first house on the right), which leads to a field gate. Through the gate, cross the field ahead to a further wooden gate which gives access to Priddy churchyard. The exit is via a stone stile in the low wall on the far side, cross the strip of meadow ahead to a further stone stile and a lane, with the school and village hall to your left. Turn right then immediately left downhill with a stone wall on your left and passing a house on your right. This lane meets a road coming in from the right; carry on towards the village green, noticing on the left the water pipe which supplied Priddy's first drinking water in 1865.

*Priddy, once the centre of the Mendip mining industry is home to an annual sheep fair that moved from Wells in 1348 when the Black Death was rife in the city. At this medieval market on the village green, Mendip sheep are bought and sold and the thatched shelter with its hurdles has now become a feature of the village.*





## Walk 14 – Herefordshire The Cat's Back

**Start** Black Hill picnic site, north of Longtown (SO 288328).

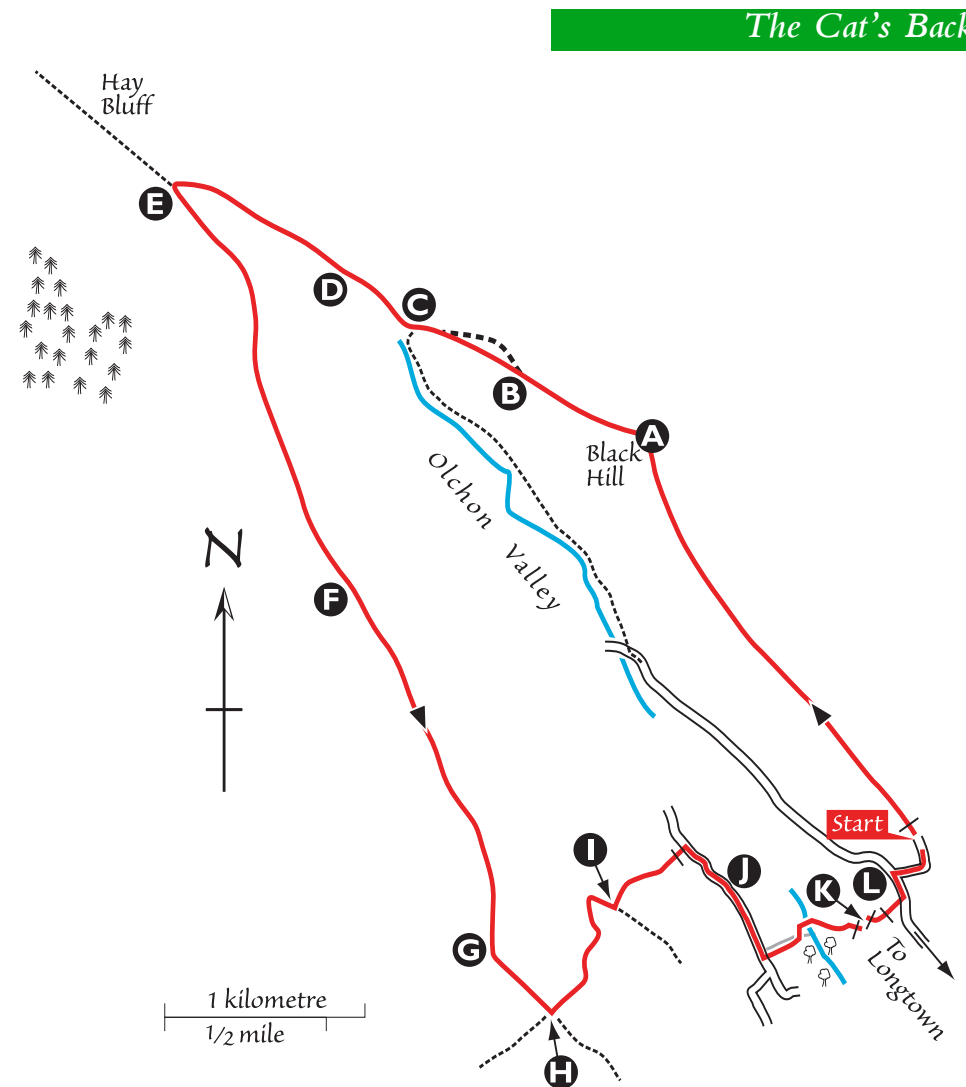
**Distance** 8 miles / 13km.

**Refreshments** None.

**Getting there** M4 west to junction 24. A449 north for 13 miles then A40 towards Abergavenny. North on A465 signposted Hereford for about 7 miles to Pandy. Turn left at the 'Pandy Inn', signposted Longtown. From Longtown, follow red picnic symbols for 3 miles to Black Hill and through gate to car park.

*A superb ridge walk along the easternmost hills of the Black Mountains, carpeted in heather during late summer and with stunning view in all directions in good weather. There are a couple of climbs, one of them steep, but for the most part this is a fairly easy walk on good paths usually dry underfoot. Save this walk for a clear day (don't attempt it in poor visibility), and allow about 4.5 hours.*

**Please Note:** this walk takes you onto exposed upland areas and whilst not an arduous trek, you should be aware that conditions can deteriorate surprisingly quickly. The highest point is 677 metres, over 2200 feet, and winds at this height can be very strong and very cold, even in summer. Carry a warm sweater and waterproofs, plus plenty of food and drink. Don't walk in poor visibility and take the escape route described in the narrative if the weather becomes unfavourable. The Ordnance Survey's Explorer Map 13 will add to your enjoyment, and safety.



Climb the stile at the car park and follow the steep, grassy path towards the high point ahead where you reach a narrow rocky ridge. Follow the well-defined path as the gradient eases for about a kilometre, with fine views to the valley bottoms left and right, eventually reaching a broadening ridge. From here, the path follows the right, eastern flank of Black Hill to the summit trig point **A**.

*At 640 metres or 2100 feet, Black Hill is the highest point in Herefordshire. Down to the left is the attractive Olchon Valley, whilst to the east, the vista on a clear day*

*stretches beyond the Malvern Hills, over 30 miles distant. Your companions on this windy hill top are usually ravens, and the ubiquitous meadow pipit recognised by its accelerating trill during its parachute-like descent into the heather.*

In relation to your arrival at the trig point, you now head half-left passing an area of peat bog with the well-used path acting as your guide; where the path splits ❸ choose either branch as they rejoin in a short distance. As you progress, you will notice that the ground away to your left is levelling out as the head of the Olchon Valley is reached. When your path descends slightly ❹ it is time to make a decision!

If you are tired or if the weather has deteriorated, this is where you bid farewell to the hills for today at least, and aim towards the declivity to your left to a path (reached before the stream) which runs down the valley for 2 kilometres, eventually meeting a road where you turn left and continue to point ❶. (This path, although clearly marked on Ordnance Survey maps, is not easy to locate initially, but there is a stream that accompanies it down the valley and you should reach the path before the water-course.) There is nothing to be gained from groping your way through mist and rain when the cloudbase descends obliterating your view; far better to cut the walk short and repair to the Pand y Inn (open all day in summer) where the affable locals will nod knowingly as you relate your “wise decision to take the escape route off the hill”. If all is well however, carry on along the clear path, now climbing gently on the right flank of the hill and passing a cairn to your left ❺.

Eventually, the path makes an obvious bend to the left contouring the hill and the tip of a conifer plantation comes into view some distance ahead. A few metres further, you meet a path running downhill from the left ❻ while away half-right, the trig point on Hay Bluff is visible. It takes about 30 minutes for the walk to the trig point and back to this spot, well worth the extra half-mile or so if the weather is favourable.

Your route now requires a short, steep climb up to the left (or ahead if returning from Hay Bluff), after which you can enjoy generally level walking on a heavily used path, this being part of the Offa's Dyke Path which means your left leg is in England, your right in Wales! You will find the boggier sections of this route paved with limestone ‘stepping stones’, a regrettable necessity but not a detraction from the fine ridge walking ahead of you. At ❷ you pass a pile of stones on the right marking the path, and the vista opens out before you with fine views south. To the left is the Cat's Back or more correctly Crib y Garth, your outward route; the summit away to the right is Waun Fach.

Eventually, you cross an area of desolation where neither grass nor heather grows, but a parade of stone cairns directs you to where the path can be picked up again.

Continue on a generally level route for almost 2 kilometres until ahead, the brow of a low hill becomes noticeable. This is worth a mention as your way off the hill is located a short distance beyond. Make the easy ascent to the summit ❸ where there are superb views from east to south to west, then follow the path on a gentle descent for 300 metres to a stone marker set in the ground next to a pile of stones ❹. At this point, a path crosses the ridge from the Olchon Valley down to your left, to Capel-y-ffin, in the valley away to the right. Take the left path, losing height gradually at first, then more rapidly on a steepening course veering left and contouring the side of the hill past limestone outcrops.

*This is a place to sit for a while and drain the thermos; the valley bottom away below with its neat field boundaries of trees, appearing as small green eruptions, from which birdsong drifts upwards on the breeze... The chances are of course that it will be pouring with rain, blowing a gale, you'll have emptied your flask on Hay Bluff and all you want to do is get back to the car!*

The path sweeps back to the right and after about 100 metres you reach a waymark post ❶ where you take the path down to the left. Pass through two metal field gates to reach a lane. Turn right along the tarmac passing the medieval Olchon Court ❶ then continue downhill past a wooden field gate on the left, beyond which, overhanging beech trees create a verdant tunnel in summer. The entrance to Beilli Bach is next on the left, then 100 metres further, you climb a stile on the left by a field gate to enter a pasture. Here, follow the waymarks, walking alongside the stream to your left which you eventually cross, then go ahead to a wooden footbridge, ignoring the ford down to your right.

Beyond the brook, climb the path into a field where you keep to the right boundary, aiming for the electricity pole with a waymark arrow. Climb out of the valley, keeping to the trees on your right and passing by a waymark post which directs you to cross a stream with farm buildings up ahead. Keep to the right of the tree house and cross a watery track to reach a stile. Go over and walk up to the right of the buildings, ignoring a small gate to a field on the right. Pass by the front door of the house ❷ before coming to another gate on the right with a waymark; go through and take the path uphill alongside a stream and a wire fence. Climb a stile then follow the waymark uphill to the left through a wooded hollow, to emerge onto a lane.

Go left and walk for about 100 metres to a right turn ❶. (This is the meeting point for those who cut short the walk at point ❸.) Take this turn and follow the lane up and round to the left, passing through the gate across the road to return to the picnic spot.



## Walk 15 – The Wye Valley Brockweir and St.Briavels

**Start** Brockweir village. (SO 540012).

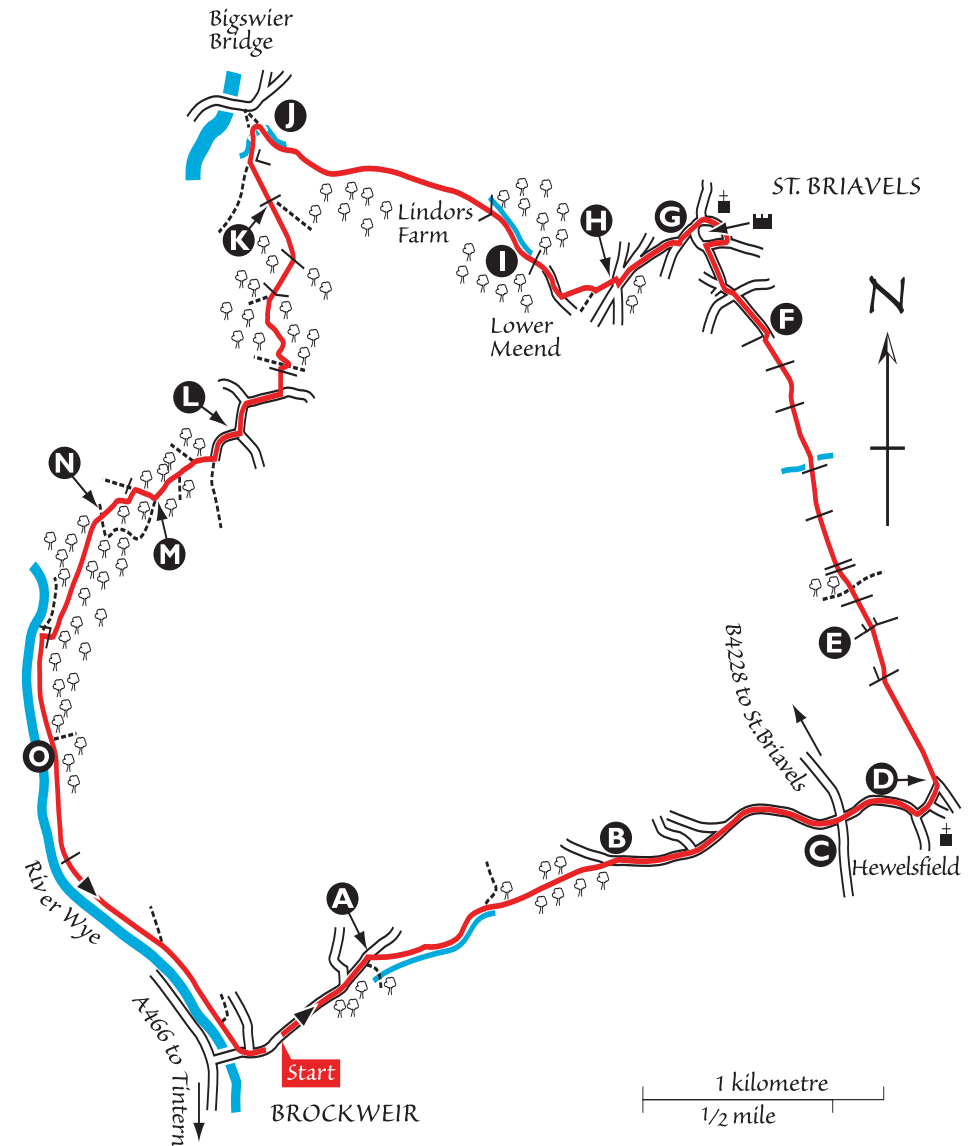
**Distance** 8 miles / 13km.

**Refreshments** Pubs at Brockweir and St.Briavels.

**Getting there** M4/M48 Junction 2 A466 signposted Tintern. Brockweir turning is on the right, 1.5 miles past Tintern Abbey.

*The first walk I devised – and panned by the 'lady' who tested it (you know who you are)! Generally straightforward walking along field and woodland paths. There are two climbs, a long, gentle one at the start of the walk and a short, steep one later. There are fine views from a number of points around the circuit, plus the historical interest of St.Briavels Castle, medieval churches at Hewelsfield and St.Briavels, and of course the remains of Offa's Dyke. Allow about 4 hours plus stops.*

Parking is available just past Brockweir on grass verges on the right side of the road. It doesn't matter exactly where you park as the walk is circular! Walk up the road away from the village. Eventually, 150 metres after passing a turning to Coldharbour on the left, the village Hall, (Mackenzie Hall) comes into view on the right. Take the driveway leading off to the right of the hall's car park **A** soon descending to join a stream on the right. Continue on this clear route without deviation until the drive swings to the left towards houses. Here, go ahead on a tree-lined footpath gradually





gaining height. After 600 metres, the path joins a quiet lane<sup>ⓑ</sup> continue to climb in the same direction on the right side of the road until another road, Hewelsfield Common, comes in from the left. A few hundred metres further on, the road levels out and you reach crossroads<sup>Ⓒ</sup>. Cross with care, the drivers here on this Coleford to Chepstow road show no mercy, and walk along Church Road towards Hewelsfield. Ahead, the church of St Mary Magdalene comes into view.

*Hewelsfield church has Saxon origins, though has been extended and modified from time to time until the 16th century. It stands within a roughly circular churchyard where a 1300 year old Yew tree affords the visitor shade from sun and shelter from rain.*

On reaching the gateway to the church, go left along the road keeping the church on your right. After a few metres, the road bears round to the right and here take the left fork. Soon, when this lane bears round to the right, take a footpath on the left<sup>Ⓓ</sup> passing in front of a barn conversion. Continue ahead, crossing a grassed area between fields and into a sunken lane, which can be muddy in winter. Climb a stile into a field and continue ahead keeping to the field's left edge. At the far side<sup>Ⓔ</sup> follow waymarks directing you to a stile next to a metal gate. Beyond, you are now following a tree-lined path, often overgrown in summer, with field boundaries to left and right; climb a stile and go ahead to cross a farm drive with the farm on your right. Continue in the same direction, soon climbing a pair of stiles, the second one taking you into a field.

Now follows easy walking along the right-hand edge of five fields, with fine views right towards the lower reaches of the Forest of Dean. At the far end of the second field, two ponds are seen on your right, tastefully protected with barbed wire. Climb the following stile and cross a stream by way of stone slabs, then carry on in the same direction. In the fifth field, the houses of St Briavels come into view. Look for a stile in the hedge on the right, immediately beyond the second house; climb down to the lane and follow it left<sup>Ⓕ</sup>. Cross the Coleford to Chepstow road (again) with care and continue ahead to Pystol Lane. Turn right here, passing the Crown Inn on the right, then when the lane goes left, walk ahead along a walled path until the castle comes into view.

*The village is dominated by the restored castle, dating from the 13th century. In Norman times, this was the administrative centre of the Forest of Dean but now it houses a fine Youth Hostel. The castle moat, restored and maintained by the local 'Moat Society' makes a good place for a picnic on a fine day; in inclement weather when you have plenty of time on your hands retreat to the adjacent hostelry and warm yourself by the log fire, having left your boots and rucksack by the door! Beyond the castle, the 11th century church commands superb views over the Wye Valley.*

Leave St Briavels at the far side of the castle<sup>Ⓖ</sup> down Cinder Hill, signposted to Lower Meend. (There are fine views on your right looking out towards the Welsh bank of the River Wye.) Pass a minor road to the left, then at a junction of roads, follow the road to the right downhill (ignoring road doubling back uphill and lane running up to the left). Look now on the left for a narrow footpath<sup>Ⓗ</sup> signposted 'Restricted By-Way' and take this, rapidly losing height. When small brick building is reached on the left, follow the path as it jinks right then left down a few steps with a house on your right. Turn right into a lane by Cherry Tree Cottage and continue down the hill ignoring a turning to the right. Just before the gates of a sewage plant, fork left to climb stile into a field<sup>Ⓘ</sup> and walk downhill following the boundary on your right. At the bottom of the field, pick up the farm track and passing Lindors Farm on your left. You now have nearly a kilometre of easy walking where you can appreciate views on three sides.


As Bigsweir Bridge comes into view, cross a small stream (Mork Brook), and turn left<sup>Ⓛ</sup> to follow a wide track under an avenue of oak trees. The track recrosses the stream, then a few metres further you turn half-left into a field, waymarked 'Offa's Dyke Path'. Pass under power line with the electricity pole just to your left.

*Offa, a King of ancient Mercia in the 8th century, colonised the land along the Rivers Severn and Wye. The dyke, a massive 100 mile earthwork stretching from the mouth*



St Briavels Castle – now a Youth Hostel





*of the Wye, northward to Prestatyn, was constructed in about 784 and marked the frontier between Saxon and Celt communities.*

Just before you go through a metal gate, look for the rough ground to your right; you are actually crossing part of the original Dyke – be imaginative! Once through the gate  bear half-right, aiming for the highest corner of the field; at most times of the year, a worn path shows the route of backpacking ‘Offa’s Dykers’. On reaching the top of the field, veer to the right going through a gate in a wall to enter a second field.

*Notice the avenue of fine old chestnut trees under which you have just passed; you have now had your second close encounter with the Dyke.*

Now start the walk straight ahead up the slope, making for a gate and woodland ahead. On reaching the gate, turn and admire the view northward (an excuse to get your breath back before the real climb ahead).

Follow the Offa’s Dyke waymarking with the acorn symbol as it directs you first to the left as the path forks, then, when moss-covered rocks come into view, climb ahead looking out for faded yellow markers and white acorn signs. The path may appear indistinct, particularly after the Autumn leaves have fallen, but you will instinctively follow the correct route, a feeling of triumph as each route marker is spotted on trees and rocks. Bear slightly left to climb wooden steps with a hand-rail, to reach a T-junction of paths. Follow the Offa’s Dyke symbol to the right, then up to the left to climb a narrow, walled path to the road.

Turn right at the road, then at a fork, left up the hill. Take the next turning on the right, a narrow lane with a ‘No Through Road’ sign. Follow the lane bearing left with a house on the right. At a fork  take the right-hand track (the Offa’s Dyke Path continues up ahead) and continue to reach the gates of a house, ‘Megs Folly’; keep right with the track as it starts to descend (ignoring a righthand path immediately passed). In a short distance, ignore a path running off left but a little further, watch for a path leaving the track and following the course of the moss-covered stone wall on the right . Take this path and walk now with walls on either side as far as a stone stile; don’t cross, but go left before it, descending through woodland to emerge onto the track again. Continue, crossing the zig-zag track with a cottage to your right  and on, down a wooded descent. After about 500 metres, with the river visible through the trees, the path swings right and after a short, steep section you emerge from the trees to climb a stile in a fence. Ahead is the River Wye, at this point at its tidal limit. Go left and walk with the river on your right for about 2 kilometres, passing a grand boathouse on the right  then paddocks to your left.

The white, girder bridge at Brockweir now comes into view and when you reach a surfaced driveway at ‘Brockweir House’, continue into the village, passing the Brockweir Country Inn and returning to your transport.

*Brockweir had a thriving boat building industry that reached its peak in the 19th century – thirteen ships were launched in 1824 alone. Vessels up to 90 tonnes could reach this point, which near the limit of the Wye’s tidal range and here, their cargoes were transferred to flat-bottomed sailing barges called trows for carriage further up-river. In the early 19th century, Brockweir was regarded as one of the most lawless places in the country, with sixteen public houses catering for the stevedores who worked at the quayside. With the opening in 1876 of the Wye Valley Railway that ran along the opposite bank of the river, Brockweir’s industry went into terminal decline.*



## Walk 16 – North Somerset Kewstoke & Woodspring Priory

**Start** Worlebury Hill Road, Worlebury, (ST 332627).

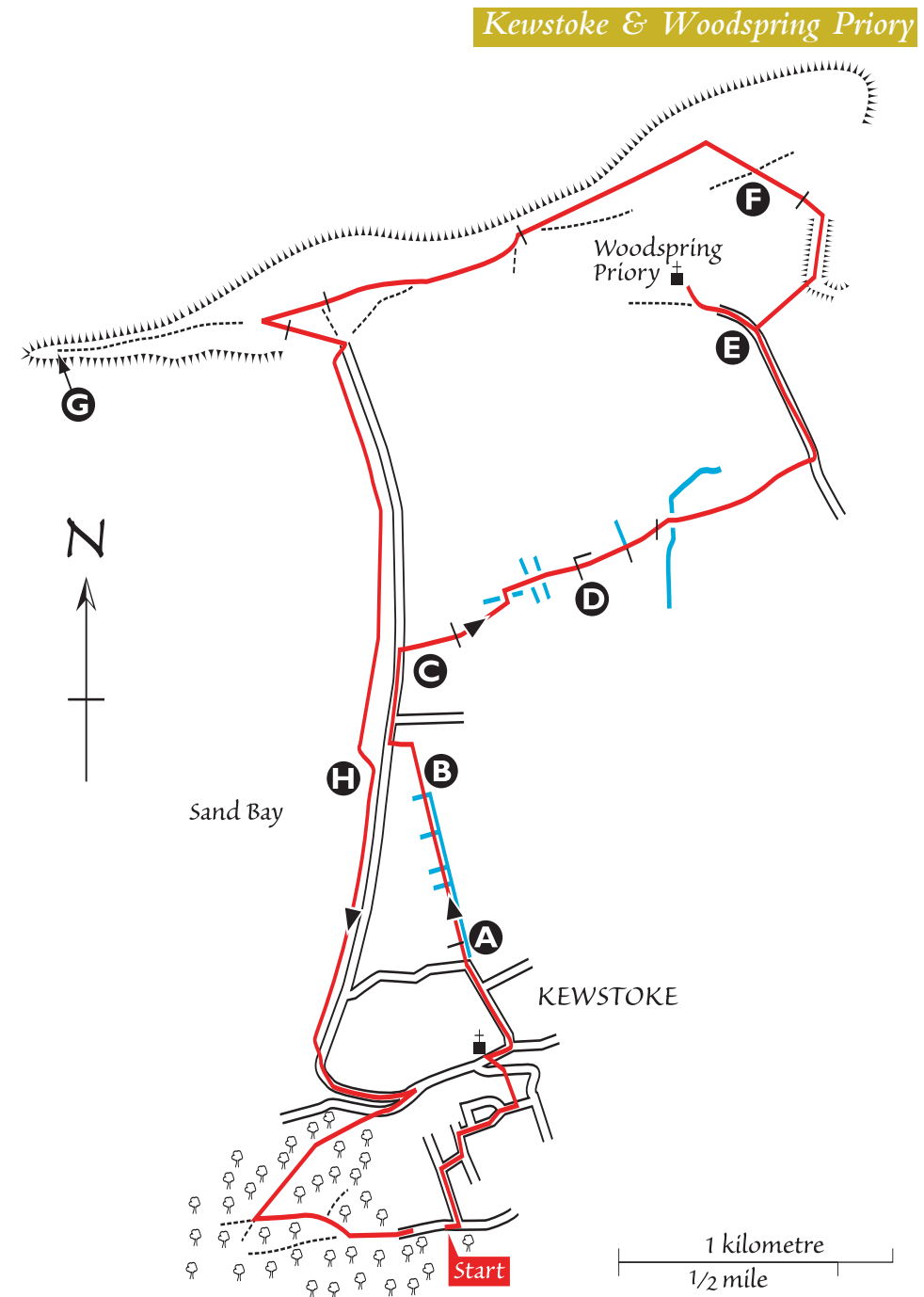
**Distance** 8.25 miles / 13.2km.

**Refreshments** Several pubs and cafés near start and end of the walk.

**Getting there** M5 south to junction 21 or A370, then B3440 through Worle to Milton. Right into Baytree Road then Milton Hill. Turn left by golf club into Worlebury Hill Road.

*A walk of great variety through woodland and meadows with a splendid section over undulating cliff-tops. Historical interest at Woodspring Priory where postcards and guide books can be purchased. Some road walking, mostly residential and a couple of climbs although there is a steep descent over uneven steps, these can be avoided by extra road walking. One muddy track in winter. Allow 3 hours plus time for the priory.*

The walk starts at the far end of Worlebury Hill Road where there is ample parking. Walk back along the road turning left into Worlebury Park Road, crossing one of the more interesting traffic islands where bluebells, daffodils, buttercups and wood anemone all take their turn to flower beneath the trees. Turn right into Furze Road and follow it round to the left, then take Woodspring Avenue on the right. Pass Worlebury Close on the right and Woodspring Crescent (twice) on the left, then look for a set of steps running downhill on the left; you are standing at the top of Monks Steps.





*The Domesday name Chewstock became Kewstock in the time of Edward I. Local thought is that the name was taken from Saint Kew, a hermit that lived in a cell next to the Monks steps, which were constructed in medieval times. They lead from Worlebury Hill to Kewstoke church.*

There are supposed to be 150 steps, I counted 200, all uneven so descend with care! If you prefer to avoid Monks Steps, continue to the end of the road, turn left, and follow the road steeply downhill to the foot of the steps. At the bottom, cross the road to a stone stile in the wall a little to the left then carefully climb down the steps on the far side. Follow the footpath which leads you steeply downward skirting an attractive private garden on your left, to reach the road and St Paul's church opposite. Turn right, then first left into Crooke's Lane, passing the New Inn on the left. Continue until you reach a caravan park on the left and here, where the road bears left, cross and go ahead on a footpath running down the side of a long front garden. Pass through a kissing gate<sup>A</sup> and follow the path over meadows, bright with buttercups in summer, to your left, and a drainage ditch on the right. You cross several footbridges and stiles eventually passing through another kissing gate giving access to a tree-lined footpath.

The path leads you into the car park of Pontin's holiday camp<sup>B</sup> go ahead, crossing the main drive and walking across the lawn. Aim for the far left corner where a gap in the fence affords access to a lane then go left to reach Beach Road. Turn right here, walk for 400 metres then turn right again into Sand Farm Lane<sup>C</sup>. Follow this unsurfaced road to its end where you climb a stile into Sand Farm, passing close to the old grain silos on the right and over a stile into the first of a succession of meadows which in summer are a sea of buttercups.

The meadows are separated by drainage ditches lined with hawthorn hedges which quickly become overgrown in summer, obscuring the narrow footbridges that connect the fields. You are given an easy introduction however, as a wooden fence to your right is soon matched by one on the left and thus you are guided across the field and over a splendid footbridge. Make the most of it! Now go right and follow the hedge until it makes a right turn where you continue ahead and very slightly left to the next bridge. Cross the following strip of field and over another bridge, then go slightly right, across this L-shaped field to join an indistinct track taking you through a metal farm gate<sup>D</sup>. Straight on now with the hedge on the your left, passing beneath power lines and making for a metal field gate ahead, beside which is a further stile and bridge combination. In the next meadow, go ahead again with the hedge on your left and when this falls away to the left, continue on a few metres to exit this last field through a metal gate. Bear half-left now

to a new concrete bridge which allows you to cross Kewstoke Rhyne then go ahead along a rutted farm track (very muddy in winter).

The track eventually leads you onto a lane, turn left and walk down towards Woodspring Priory whose tower can now be seen in the distance. As you approach the cottages in front of the Priory, note the drive bearing right<sup>E</sup> by a National Trust car park sign; this will be your return route. The path to the Priory is clearly signposted; when visiting, kindly observe the notice about walking boots and the request for payment.


*Woodspring Priory was founded in the early 13th century by William de Courtney for Augustinian canons of the Order of St. Victor de Paris. William de Courtney was a descendant of one of the assassins of Saint Thomas Becket and his martyrdom is depicted on the Priory seal. Lack of funds meant that construction dragged on until the 15th century, by which time the original building had been replaced by a completely new one. Construction continued until 1536 when the priory was dissolved by King Henry VIII, after which time it fell into disrepair. Much of the edifice, including the chancel has since been destroyed but the tower and western portion of the church were retained for use as a private residence. As you approach the building, you pass the infirmary on your left; this, the nave and the crossing – the first part of the building you enter – are 15th century, the north aisle being 16th century. The interior of the nave has been restored to a condition similar to its residential use in the 16th and 17th centuries.*




Woodspring Priory


Now retrace your steps, turning left onto the drive and passing a pig farm on the left. Continue to the sea dyke where you climb the steps, turn left at the top and walk the length of the embankment, ignoring the signposted path down left.

*The creek on the right is a favourite feeding station for wading birds at low tide. Beyond is Woodspring Bay with Clevedon in the distance.*

Where the dyke ends with a pond on your right, go left through a wooden field gate onto downland. Climb ahead, veering away from the wire fence on the left and picking up the course of a grassy path that will lead you to the top of the rise. The route doesn't have to be exact, you will soon cross a metalled track  with a wall to your right, (built by prisoners from the Napoleonic Wars) from where you continue until the ground drops away revealing gorse bushes and cliffs beyond. Here, there are fine views on a clear day across the mouth of the Severn toward South Wales.

*The high ground of Middle Hope has had many uses over the years. There are traces of bowl and disc barrows, medieval field systems, and a motte and bailey, all more clearly recognisable from the air. Lead mining was carried out here and there a mine shaft on the far side of the ridge, now filled in, while some of the tracks here may have been tram roads used to transport the ore. In more recent times during Second World War, secret experiments were carried out in Middle Hope Cove where high-speed catapult tracks were laid down for the testing of missiles.*

Walk westward now along this high ridge and from this vantage point, you can often gaze down upon kestrels who in turn are scouring the grass for prey. You can choose your own route over this green sward as you are ultimately constrained by the cliff on the right and a track and wall on the left. When you reach a cross-wall, climb the ladder stile then continue, keeping to the right of the track and aiming for the high ground ahead. After about 800 metres of pleasant walking over gently rising ground, you will come to a stone wall crossing your route, go through the gate and walk ahead to the trig point. Although barely 50 metres, this is the highest point on these downs and from here, you can continue to the their western point 800 metres distant .

You start the return route by doubling back to pick up a stony path that drops down the hillside with fine views of Sand Bay to your right. Pass through a wooden gate and follow the path down to the National Trust car park, toilets and (at weekends) the ubiquitous ice-cream van! You are now going to walk south for the full length of Sand Bay and the lack of a suitable pavement alongside the road make it worthwhile walking along the foreshore where sand-loving plants such as the sea spurge can be seen. Eventually, you can join a tarmac path above the road  where

amidst the indifferent post-war development, you will be able to select a café for refreshments! The mud of Sand Bay stretches out a mile distant to the low-water mark and on clear days Birnbeck pier and the island of Steep Holm can be seen to the south.

Where the path above the dunes ends, join the road as it swings away from the coast by the Commodore Hotel and follow it uphill for about 300 metres to a point where it joins Kewstoke Road. Double back right here passing a restaurant on the left then taking a broad path up through Weston Woods, a popular dog toilet. This path climbs for about 600 metres, penetrating lovely mixed woodland where jay, nuthatch and green woodpecker are regularly heard and occasionally seen. When you reach a way-marked cross-path at the top of the climb, turn left and walk on a level route ignoring a path to the left, to reach a broad stone drive on Worlebury Hill. Turn left and walk for 200 metres to reach Worlebury Hill Road, and the end of your walk.



## Walk 17 – Chippenham Maud Heath's Causeway

**Start** Kellaways Bridge (ST 946758). Restricted parking on roadside.

**Distance** 8.25 miles / 13.2km.

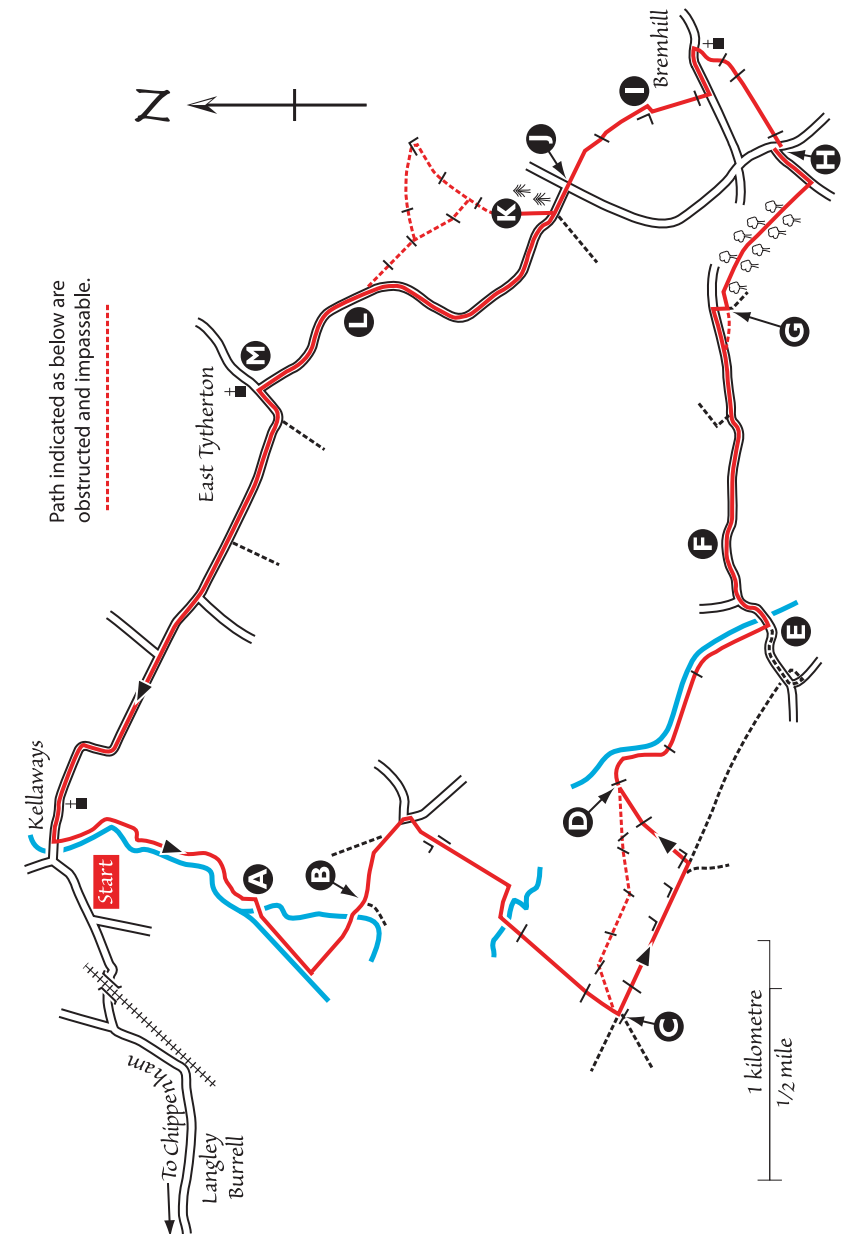
**Refreshments** Pub near Bremhill (about half distance).

**Getting there** From Chippenham town centre, north-east on B4069 for 1.5 miles then right to Langley Burrell (easy to miss). Drive through village and under railway to look for parking spot by raised causeway.

*An unusual walk as almost half of the distance is along country lanes, although for the most part paved. The reason is that you will be following an historic 'pavement' through villages and hamlets little altered over the past century. Generally flat walking with just a couple of climbs; some wet meadows in winter. Allow 3 hours.*

The starting point for this walk can be anywhere along the road – Maud Heath's Causeway – from Langley Burrell to East Tytherton. The roadside offers few spaces except at Kellaways Bridge where cars belonging to those fishing along the river bank soon fill the available space. East Tytherton may be your best bet, in which case you can do the last bit of the walk from point M first, then continue the circuit from Kellaways bridge. It's worth noting that this walk was planned to be about 11 miles in length but many of the paths shown on the map have been obstructed for decades, Wiltshire County Council having ignored their legal responsibility to clear them. Some of the obstructions have been recorded in the narrative.

## Maud Heath's Causeway





*Maud Heath was a market woman from Langley Burrell near Chippenham, who died in 1474. Indignant with the state of the roads she encountered on her way to market, she bequeathed her life savings in perpetuity for a dry pathway to be constructed and maintained from Wick Hill to Chippenham, a distance of about 7km. This walk starts at the most spectacular part of the path where a raised causeway spans the low ground around the River Avon. Being prone to flooding, the path is carried over 45 arches to the east of the river and 17 on the west. A monument with sundials on three faces was erected here in 1698 to commemorate the event.*

Take the stone steps by the bridge and follow the river on your right along the edge of two meadows until you reach a footbridge over the River Avon **A**. Cross over and go ahead with the boundary to your right until you reach three trees crossing the field on the left; cross the field here to another footbridge, beyond which, turn right to follow the river bank for a short distance to reach a farm drive **B**. Go left and continue to the road where the fine facade of Manor Farm can be seen on the left.

Turn right at the road and almost immediately right again through metal farm gates, then follow the field boundary on your right, entering a second field ahead and walking now with the boundary on the left. At the bottom of the field go right and in a short distance cross a footbridge then a narrow field beyond to reach a further field. This is usually cropped with maize in summer but a path of sorts is normally left for the public. For most of the year, cross the field aiming left of the electricity pole on the rise ahead. One way or another you will reach a stile in the hedge, with a bungalow a short distance to the right. Walk ahead now to meet a metalled farm drive which crosses a cattle grid **C**; don't go over, but turn left and walk along the track between the fences.

*This is the route of the former Chippenham to Calne railway. The Right of Way should take you diagonally left to cross back into the field through which you have just passed, then over four further fields to point **D**; this path has been obstructed for many years at each boundary, so what follows is the nearest legal alternative.*

Follow the track ( now the Caln - Chippenham cycleway) for about 650 metres to where another track joins from the right. (It is the first junction that you meet but if you miss it, continue on the track for another 800 metres to reach a road. Turn right, then right again at the junction (signed Bremhill) and rejoin the walk at **E**.) A few paces further, climb the gate on your left into a field and go ahead with the boundary on your right to a gate at the top of the field (ignoring a gate on the right). Continue in the same direction passing an electricity pole to a further gate **D**; this is where the Right of Way joins from the left. Beyond the gate, go ahead a few metres

to a gap in the hedge where you cross a stream, then follow a just discernible path through grass with a stream to the left. You are directed by waterways left and right to the corner of the meadow where you turn right at the river bank to follow the River Marden (a tributary of the River Avon), across three meadows to finally reach a road via a locked gate **E**. Turn left along the road and cross the river bridge; this road is narrow in places so care is required. Pass a disused chapel on your right, beyond which the road starts to climb to Stanley Bridge Farm on your left **F**.

*Notice the white railings on the roadside here, this is all you can see of the Wilts & Berks Canal, now at best little more than an overgrown ditch since its closure almost 80 years ago.*

The road climbs the hill now, bending first left then back to the right as you reach the top. Opposite Bencroft farm, a footpath should leave the road on the right, across the property. This has been reported as obstructed in July 2010, so for now, continue about 400 yards along the road to woodland on the right. At a footpath sign, turn right and follow the path downhill until you reach a cross path by the remains of a wall **G**. Turn left and follow the just discernible path crossing a ditch (watch the soft ground on either side) and carry on, keeping the boundary fence in view to your right to reach an overgrown pond on your left. This area becomes like a jungle in summer, but continue in the same direction keeping to the right boundary. You will pass an open area with a bungalow up to your left, then more woodland, then another open space that looks like someone's back garden — which it is, then past a small stable block on the left. Continue over the grass in front of a house to emerge onto a lane. Turn left and climb the hill to a road junction with the Dumb Post Inn on your right **H**.

*A hostelry on this site appeared on maps as early as the 1660s, being on the old coach route from Bath to Calne. The Inn was part of the Bowood Estate until its sale in 1950 and the dining area on the left of the bar was at that time a separate room, used on rent days when the tenants would come in to pay their rent to the Estate manager. The origin of the inn's name is uncertain; a few aged residents can recall being told of a post at the road junction with holes in it to take mail or messages left there by passing horse and cart before the days of the penny post.*

*In 1770, a Friendly Society was formed in the nearby village of Bremhill. It was restricted to 75 members, each contributing a shilling a week so should a member become sick and unable to work, the Society would pay him six shillings per week after 3 days incapacity. The money was kept in a strong box with four locks and each of the trustees held a key. A manuscript listing the names of the subscribers is on display at the Inn though sadly, the box has been lost.*

From the junction, go right then immediately left at a footpath sign, passing through a squeezer stile beside a thatched cottage and matching garage. Walk along the top of the field, looking right to see the Lansdowne monument and the White Horse on Cherhill Down, 8km distant (visited on walk 29 WalkWest Again). Cross a further meadow then climb a stile with a Georgian farmhouse to your left and continue to the church. Enter the churchyard and go left, the path leading you to the centre of Bremhill.

*The village, with its stepped medieval cross is a quiet backwater; if you are hoping for refreshment you are too late, the curiously named Bell & Organ pub closed its doors in the 1800s. Even the buses will take you out of the village but a note on the timetable apologises for not bringing you back!*

Turn left and walk through the village passing on the right a row of high gabled cottages, owned by the Bowood Estate, then Lodowicks (an ancient field name), then further old cottages, eventually reaching a footpath sign. Go right here along a short track to an overgrown and broken stile by a field gate; clamber over and cross the meadow going slightly right towards the lower ground where you cross a brook. Climb now to the top right corner of the meadow where an unfriendly sign warns you that no footpath exists beyond the barbed wire! No matter, your route goes right then immediately left ❶ so you are continuing in roughly the same direction, with the hedge and forbidden field on the left. Walk ahead to the top of the field where you climb a stile. Now cross the field using the electricity pole as your first target, then on, to an overgrown stile by wooden field gates at the far side, with a road junction beyond ❷.

Proceed ahead on the road towards the pine trees with a farm on the right and before the road begins its descent, stop to read the inscribed stone in the hedge on the left which marks the start of Maud Heath's Causeway. Now cross the stile opposite and walk to the monument ❸ erected in 1838. Locals say that from here, it is possible to see the twin Severn bridges!

The map shows two footpaths running down the hill to the road at Wick Bridge but both are blocked so you must retrace your steps to the road and turn right, to follow the Causeway down the hill bearing right, then left. Look now on the left for the 'Old Canal Cottage' ❹ this is the only indication that you are about to recross the Wilts & Berks Canal. 600 metres further along the road, you enter the village of East Tytherton ❺ where a rather unattractive stone sundial marks the quincentenary of Maud's death and the founding of her path.

*By the road junction is the Maud Heath school, a Victorian building, whilst to the right is a Moravian church, dating from 1792. Moravia, a historic region of Central Europe, today forms the eastern part of the Czech Republic. The Moravian Church is a Protestant communion closely linked to Lutheranism and with its roots in the Czech Reformation. The settlement was founded in the village in the 1740s. There was also a Moravian school but it is now a private residence.*

Follow the stone-lined path out of the village with the school on your right and walk for another 2 kilometres passing a variety of cottages and farms, eventually to reach the tiny church at Kellaways with the raised section of causeway beyond, and the end of your walk.



## Walk 18 – The Cotswolds Ozleworth Bottom

**Start** Grass verge east of the village of Tresham (ST 794912).

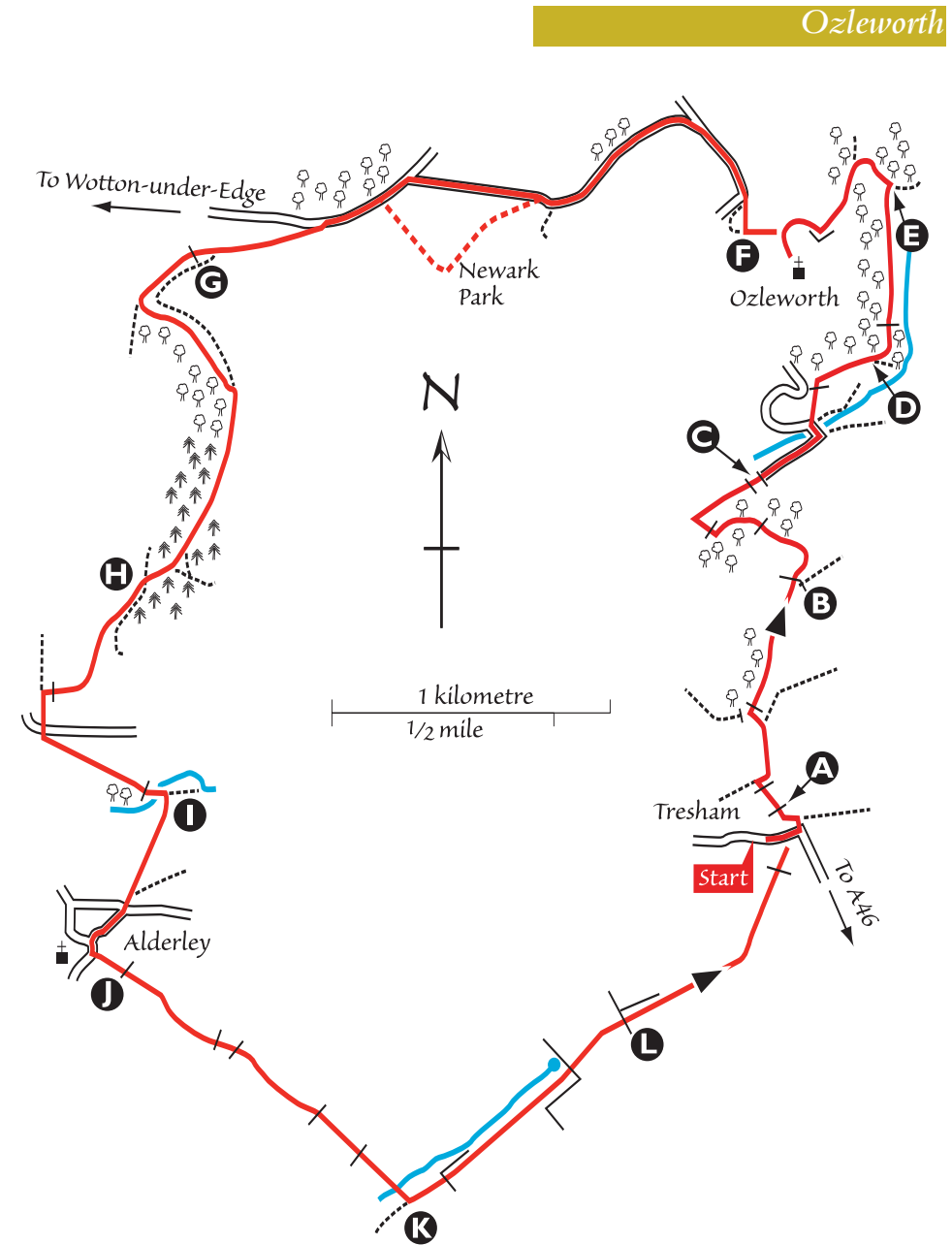
**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.6km.

**Refreshments** None.

**Getting there** M4 Junction 18 then north on A46. After about 7 miles, take minor road left signposted Tresham. In just under 1 mile, road bends sharp left, park on verge beyond.

*Quintessential Cotswolds; steep-sided valleys with meandering streams, fine houses built on the wealth of the woollen trade and pretty stone cottages. This undulating walk is mostly along tracks and quiet lanes with several easy climbs. It may be muddy just after point (K). A walk to savour, allow 4 hours plus stops.*

This delightful walk begins in Tresham, where the road makes a sharp turn at the head of a valley. On this corner are the signs for two public footpaths, take the one along a drive to the side of Burdon Court Cottage then go left, behind the house. There are no waymarks here, but cross the lawn aiming for a gap in the far top corner, beyond which a path leads you to a stone stile (A). Go over into a pasture which you cross to a farm gate then turn right onto a drive which soon bears left. Ignore a footpath sign on the right but continue for 100 metres to a point where the drive curves left. Waymarks here also tempt you left, but your route is now to the right, through a red painted gate.





As you walk along the track, there are fine views over the valley to the left with the house of Newark Park on the hilltop beyond. Ignore gates left then right, but when you reach a pair of gates **B** take the one on the left and follow the track downhill. The track runs with the field boundary, bearing left and passing through a gate, beyond which, trees line your route and the scent of wild garlic fills the air in springtime. The track narrows to a path between high banks, with the soft Cotswold stone underfoot eroded by the water running off the hillside above. Continue your descent to another farm gate then follow the path right, to a pair of wooden gates **C** enclosing the frontage of a fine farm house. Continue on to a metalled lane and follow this downhill, turning left to cross the brook and passing cottages on the right.

*The demands of the cloth trade in the 16th and 17th centuries gave rise to intensive industry throughout these scarp valleys, which were lined with cloth mills powered by the waters of these Little Avon tributaries. Several hundred people once lived here at Ozleworth Bottom, many working at the woollen mill, now long gone; these cottages are all that remain.*

Just beyond the cottages, ignore a bridleway to the right, but cross a stile ahead and clamber up right into the field. Climb towards the woods ahead and look for a gate in the black-painted railings, then go right, along the track with the woodland up to your left resplendent with wild garlic and bluebells in springtime. When the track forks **D** go left and start to climb gently through a beech coppice ignoring a track climbing up left. Go through a wooden gate and continue with woodland left and meadows falling away to Marlees Brook on the right. Your route eventually swings away from the woodland to cross the field then curves left **E** with trees to your right. Cross a cattle grid then ignore a track doubling back on the right to reach the top of the hill. Here, the track smartens itself up with fresh gravel bordered by well-tended lawns and an avenue of young lime trees which leads you to the entrance to Ozleworth Park Farm.

At the gates, when you expect to continue ahead through the arched entrance to the farm, a diversion forces you right, skirting the property. All is not lost though, as this must be one of the more attractive deviations with a duckpond to your right, whose waters feed a rivulet running down through gardens to your left. When you reach a surfaced drive, turn left to Ozleworth church.

*The (now redundant) Norman church at Ozleworth is one of the most unusual in the country. It stands in a remote situation on an escarpment overlooking the deep valley of Ozleworth Bottom and it is thought that the site, which was once circular, may have been used for pre-Christian rituals. The irregular, hexagonal tower is the only*

*one in the country that stands in the middle of a church. The oldest structures are the tower and chancel which are early 12th century, since when the church has undergone a number of alterations and extensions. Ozleworth Park beside the church was built in the 18th century. It has a large porch on six round pillars and a fine cedar tree on the lawn, these can be glimpsed if you peer over the churchyard wall. Construction of the house, with its extensive stables, outbuildings and gardens has removed most traces of the former settlement around the church.*

Retracing your steps from the church, make for the large beech tree at the head of the drive and fork left in front of it. Follow the drive until you can see it swinging right; before this bend, look for a metal signpost on the left pointing to a bridleway opposite on the right **F**. Take this path, climbing the stone stile at the far end to reach a quiet country lane. Go ahead, following the lane to a telephone box and here, take the left fork signposted Newark. The lane climbs towards woodland and gives splendid views across the valley. As you enter the wood, passing the last of the farm buildings down on the left, look for wild strawberries growing on the bank to your right. A little further, the lane bears right and you pass the entrance to Newark Park on the left.

*Newark Park was built by the Poyntz family during the mid-16th century as a hunting lodge using stone from the former Cistercian Abbey at Kingswood near Wotton. It was made into a four-square castellated country house by James Wyatt in 1790 and is now owned by the National Trust with restricted seasonal opening times.*

You have a choice of routes here, road or parkland. There is permissive access through Newark Park for most of the year; follow the driveway to the car park, then turn right and follow the wall on your right to rejoin the road, where you turn left to reach the bridleway signposted 'Cotswold Way' mentioned below.

If access to the park is unavailable, continue for 500 metres with the wall of the Park to your left, to reach a road junction where you turn left. 400 metres further, the wall is separated from the road by a wide verge; here, the road bends to the right and starts to drop downhill, but your route lies alongside the wall where you pick up a bridleway signposted 'Cotswold Way'.

This well-used track affords fine views to the right with the Tyndale Monument clearly visible on the hills above Wotton-under-Edge. Follow the Cotswold Way for about 500 metres, passing through a wooden field gate and ignoring the track which jinks left at this point **G**. Cross the field, then when the 'Way' turns to the left a 'wardens bench' has been built. This is a combination of beech and Cotswold stone and it is a most splendid viewpoint and/or lunch stop, with one of the best

views of the walk. From here, your path continues to the left, entering woodland and then climbing a set of steps to join the track that you ignored earlier.

Go right, with conifers on both sides of the track, to reach a clearing from which radiates a number of tracks and paths<sup>H</sup>. Look for a yellow waymark arrow on a low wooden post to the right of the track and follow the footpath to which you are directed. The first part of this path runs between a mixture of shrubs and trees, mainly sycamore and coppiced ash, but as you descend, the banks on either side become increasingly steep, with carpets of celandine and primrose making a wonderful display in springtime. Wood violet, ivy and hartstongue fern complete the decoration on these soft (and often unstable) banks of sand and clay.

Suddenly, you are out in the open again and going over a wooden stile to a further track. Go left here for 150 metres then over another stile to a lane. Climb the stile opposite into a pasture where you go diagonally left, passing under power lines and aiming for the far opposite corner which as yet is out of sight. The path is well-trodden and you soon pass under further power lines before reaching a gate. Cross the following narrow strip of field with a stream to your right, then another gate, then the stream by way of an overgrown stone bridge. Follow the Cotswold Way to the right<sup>I</sup> ignoring a path and stile ahead, and climb to the village of Alderley. When you reach the tarmac lane, turn right for a few metres then over crossroads.

*The village of Alderley (alder clearing) has fine houses, a legacy of the wealth accrued when the woollen industry was at its peak. Behind the church stands the Elizabethan Alderley House, now a school. Here, for generations, lived the Hale family, the most famous being Sir Matthew Hale (1609 -1676), who rose to become Lord Chief Justice and known as 'The Upright Judge' for his honesty and impartiality. He would have defended King Charles I at his treason trial in 1648 had the King admitted the validity of the trial. In the churchyard is the grave of Marianne North who travelled the world painting, sketching and recording rare flora of remote countries. Her work was so admired that she built at her own expense a gallery at Kew to house her paintings so that any visitor could see them. She died in 1890 through ill-health brought on by the conditions in which she lived while travelling. At another house, The Grange, lived the eminent botanist Brian Hodgson who introduced the Himalayan rhododendron to this country.*

Walk to a road junction where you fork left with the church on the right, then ahead for a few metres before turning left along a drive with a fine Georgian house to your right. The drive ends at a wooden gate<sup>J</sup> and from here, you follow the track which contours the hills, keeping close to the fence to your right.

At the end of the path go through a gate to a track junction<sup>K</sup>. The Cotswold Way goes down to the right but you go up to the left along aptly named Watery Lane. This can be very muddy after rain for the first 150 metres, after which you pass through a field gate and follow the now grassy track up through the middle of the valley.

*Around the marshy areas where springs feed the stream on your left, clumps of marsh marigolds grow; this once commonplace plant is becoming scarcer owing to its loss of habitat by land drainage.*

The final stretch of the walk passes a pond on the left, goes through a gate then leaves the valley bottom via another gate with fence to the left<sup>L</sup>. Follow the track through trees then out into the open. Where the banks are free from grazing sheep, you see in spring and summer the purples, whites, golds, blues and yellows of countless flowers. Early purple orchids also flower here in late April, a fitting finale to a wonderful walk. The path leads you in a few hundred metres to the top of the valley and the Millennium Garden, returning you to the hamlet of Tresham.



## Walk 19 – East Mendips The East Somerset Railway

**Start** Great Ostry car park, Shepton Mallet, (ST617436).

**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.6km.

**Refreshments** Pubs at Cranmore and Chelynch, café at the Railway.

**Getting there** A37 from Bristol, then B3136 signposted Shepton Mallet town centre. The car park is on the left as you enter the town.

*A pleasant ramble starting from a historic town with hidden alleys, then through the countryside of the eastern Mendips along field paths to visit a restored stretch of railway, before returning to Shepton Mallet along an elevated route with good views. There are a couple of easy ascents but a number of stiles. In summer, cereal crops make for unpleasant progress when wet. Allow about 4 hours plus time at the railway.*

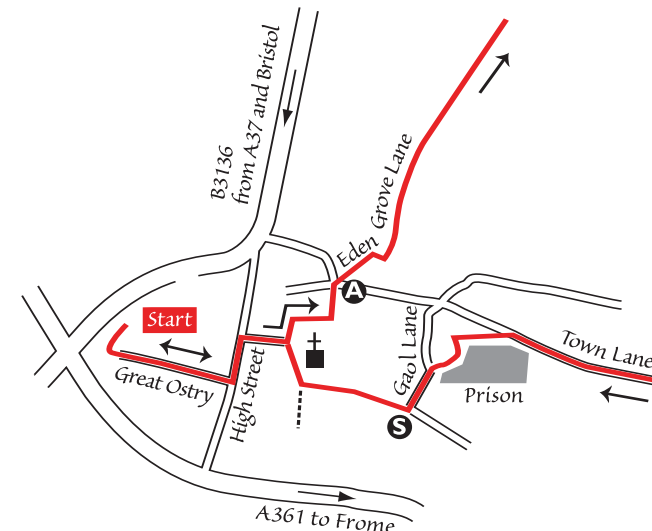
Shepton lies on the edge of the Mendips and is one of several early Somerset 'sheep farm' place names. The Malet family owned much of the land here in the 12th century and added their name to the town. The 17th century terrace of cottages in Great Ostry, as well as many of the old houses you will pass beyond the church bear witness to the town's prosperity, built on the woollen, and later silk trade. The medieval butchers' stalls and the market cross erected in 1500, are now overshadowed by the 'Shepton Mallet Centre' funded by the Showering family who rejuvenated the town's old brewery by the popularity of their 'Babycham' brand.

## The East Somerset Railway

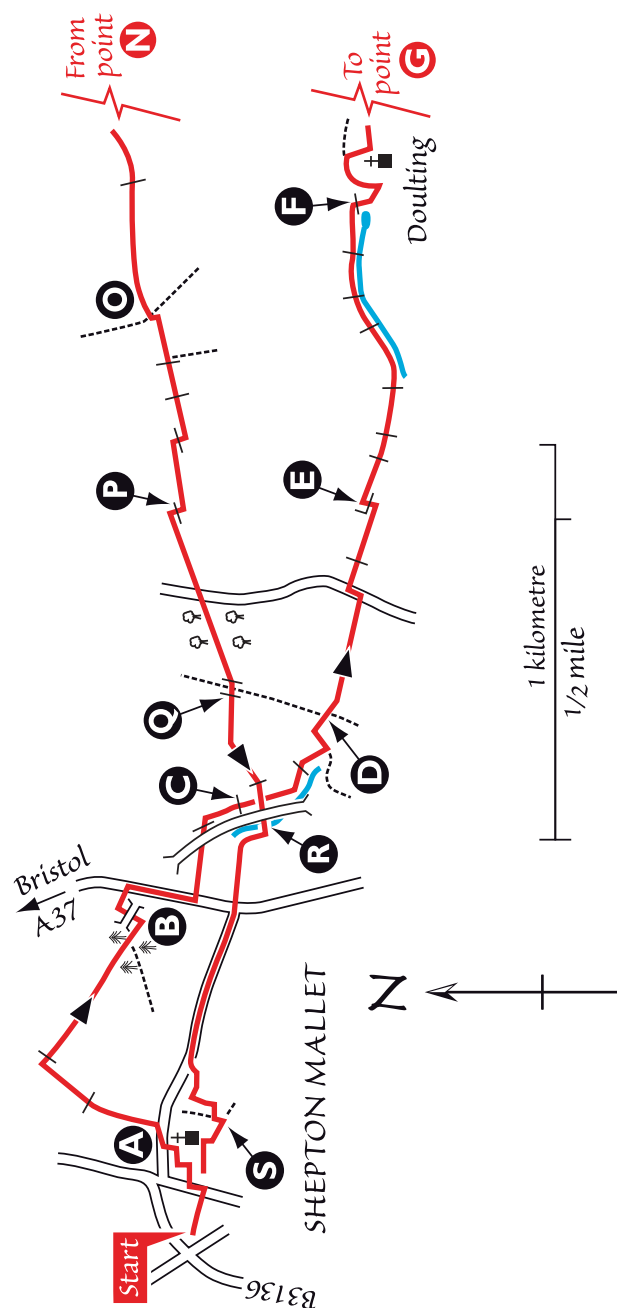
Leave the car park by the top entrance along Great Ostry which leads into the pedestrianised High Street. Turn left then immediately right by the market cross into Market Place. Pass under the appalling Showering's Centre, to the churchyard then turn left, skirting the church on your right. The old, paved footpath leads you past fine buildings onto the road **A** cross to Eden Grove Lane opposite and follow it twisting and turning between low walls until a stone arch is reached. Go left here and climb out of the town via stone steps and a metal stile into pasture. Pause for breath and turn your gaze back over well-tended gardens and the roofs of Shepton prison.

Continue your ascent with an unfriendly wire fence on your right, to the top of the field where you reach the course of the Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway. How many generations of trainspotters stood on this spot and watched the 'Pines Express' go thundering by! Turn right here, climbing the metal barrier then follow the footpath with the wire fence still on your right, and the track bed on your left. Continue as the path leads you under a canopy of conifers, eventually dropping down away from the track bed into trees with Matthew Clark's factory coming into view on your right. As a path joins from the right, your route goes left, through a brick passageway under the railway **B**. Now with the embankment on your right, you soon reach the busy A37; cross with great care, turning right to walk down the hill past the old school house, now the Mulberry factory shop.

Look for a path on the left, Great Barton, signposted Doulling. Walk with a stone wall then a cottage on your right to eventually reach the railway viaduct. Climb a stile and turn right to walk down the meadow, ablaze with golden buttercups in







summer, following a wall on the right. As the wall goes right, walk ahead to climb a metal barrier **C** to a further field then continue parallel with the viaduct to pick up a well-worn path following the course of a stream on the right. With cottages on the right, pass through a metal farm gate and walk up the path alongside the stream. When you reach a lane, go left and follow a driveway passing Brewmaster Buildings on the right. As you approach the entrance to a double garage, take the rough path up to the right; pass between stone walls and cottages on your right, now converted to industrial use, to reach a lane **D**.

*This is the Fosse Way, a Roman road that crosses the country diagonally from a point near Axminster to Lincoln, passing through Bath, Cirencester and Leicester.*

Cross the lane and climb a couple of concrete steps then an earth bank around the corner of an old building and into a field. Here, strike out across the field aiming for a square brick sewer access ahead, continuing to reach the tall trees on the far boundary where you will find a kissing gate. Go over and walk left along the lane for 50 metres to a kissing gate on the right. Walk straight across the field, aiming slightly left to reach a concrete squeezer stile in the hedge opposite. (This, and the next two fields may have crops in summer, but better to follow the legal path than to trespass around the field edge.) In the next field go ahead, again slightly left, but keeping to the right of the tree in the far corner and passing beneath power lines. Climb a stile and bridge combination into the next field and turn right **E**. Walk slightly left across the field to trees in the far corner where a stile is visible. Cross another stile/bridge combination and carry on through the pasture to climb a stile and footbridge to the right of the field entrance. Now continue with the field boundary to your right and the spire of Doultong church on the hillside ahead. Cross this, and three further fields with a stream down to your right, then in the next pasture climb the hill, keeping to the lower right flank from where you can look down over filter beds and a pond. Follow the path down to a stile in the hedge on the right **F** and take the stone steps beyond, (slippery when wet) to reach a narrow, well-used path passing between ponds containing water of a dubious hue. Continue with a stream on the left to reach a lane where in front of you, water pours forth from a pipe in the wall. This is St. Aldhelm's Well. You may wish to climb to the right of the wall to see whence the water springs; there is the pungent aroma of wild garlic here in springtime.

*Aldhelm, a Saxon Bishop of Wessex, died in Doultong in 709. He had been Bishop of Malmesbury since 675 and became the first Bishop of Sherborne in 705, establishing religious communities at Frome and Bradford-on-Avon. The route along which his body was transported back to Malmesbury was marked every seven miles by a stone cross; the dedication of this spring recalls the Aldhelm's last visit.*

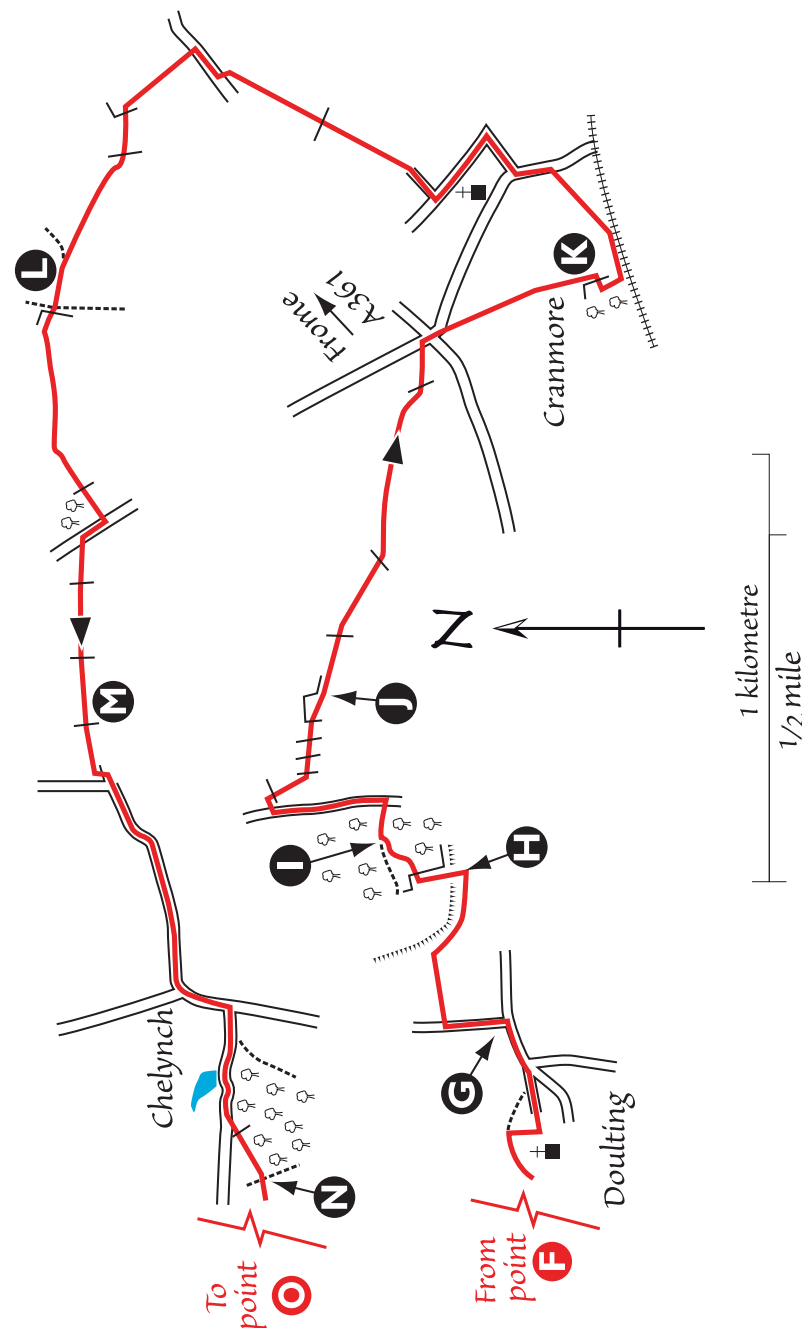
From the well, walk left up the lane which bends right. 50 metres past the bend take a narrow lane right leading you to the church; turn left on reaching it and carry on to the main road where you turn left again.

*The cottages and terrace near the church were built at the end of the 19th century and bear the arms of the Paget family of Cranmore Hall.*

Walk for a short distance along the road then go first left, signposted Chelynch and Stoke St. Michael, into Chelynch Road **G**. When convenient, cross over and look for a stile just past the last house on the right. Climb into the field and follow the well-defined path ahead to the quarry bank, following it round to the right, then bearing left. Continue until you are level with woodland beyond the bank, then look for a waymark post **H**. The path goes left here, over the bank to reach the corner of the wood. Proceed in the same direction, wood right, to the next corner where you climb the stone stile on the right.

Now follow a pleasant path beneath the trees, eventually joining a track on the left **I**. Turn right and follow the track to a road. Cross over and walk left, passing a lane with cottages on the right, then continue for 200 metres to reach a further cottage on the right. Immediately beyond, turn right onto a grass track with the wall of the cottage on your right. Climb the stone stile at the wall corner then go half-left across the pasture, looking for a stone stile halfway down the opposite hedge. Cross over and aim for a wooden stile by a tree on the far side of this narrow field, then go straight across to a stone stile in the hedge opposite. Cross another strip of grassland keeping to the hedge on the left to a further stone stile. Now in a larger field, bear slightly right aiming for a hedge corner that will come in from the left **J**. Follow the hedge along the edge of the field for 200 metres then climb a wooden stile into another field. Go half-right here towards a metal field gate where you will find a stile. If this is difficult to locate, look for a clump of trees along the right boundary of the field and aim for the nearest end. Having found and climbed the stile, go half-left to pick up the boundary on the left then follow this to a wooden stile in the fence, cross to reach a cricket pitch. Cross the grass, passing disused tennis courts on the right and go through the gateway to a lane; turn right and a few steps will take you to the main road.

Cross the road and look for a stile in the wire fence on the right. Climb over and go left, initially following the boundary on the left, then veer slightly right across a large field aiming for the trees to the right of the house on the far side, then walk a short distance with the fence and hedge on your right to a stile **K**. Beyond the stile, follow an overgrown path to a driveway with the house on the right; go left along a roughly surfaced drive to reach the railway with the signalbox on the right,



then cross a set of rails and walk down the tarmac drive, passing the rear of the station buildings.

*The first train ran through Cranmore on the East Somerset Railway in November 1858 from Witham, on the Weymouth branch of the Great Western, to Shepton Mallet. Before the Second World War, a quarry line brought stone from nearby workings to Cranmore where it was transferred to the main line. At its peak, there were a hundred wagons a day but after the war the quarry closed and gradually, the passenger traffic fell away. With just four trains a day running on what had become known as the Cheddar Valley Line, the route finally closed to passenger traffic in September 1963. At present, there are over 11 kilometres of track from the junction with the main line at Witham to beyond Cranmore, but most of this track is reserved for the trains running from the vast Merehead quarry 3 kilometres to the east; nonetheless, steam locomotives run again over a short section of track.*

At the end of the drive, double back right into the railway car park if you want access to the station and café, otherwise turn left onto the road, walk past the telephone box then turn right. On your right now, the duck pond of Manor Farm, left is the Strode Arms, an imposing hostelry with a good menu! Take the first turning left and climb the lane passing the church on the left then turn right into Jill's Close. At the end of this short road enter a field, marked with a FP sign, and head across towards Cranmore Tower on the sky-line. Go straight on through a kissing gate into another field, still heading for the tower, and reach a kissing gate in the far left corner by the main road. Go right for a few yards on the main road crossing just before a Methodist chapel where another kissing gate, signed 'Burnthouse Farm' leads into a field.

Go slightly left across the field to a gate in the top left corner. Go through and straight up the hill to another gate, after which you follow the field boundary on your right, with a small wood beyond the boundary. Pick up a track from your right and go left to reach a track junction **L**. Cross the concrete ramp into the opposite field and follow the right boundary. At the second field corner where the boundary goes left, walk ahead through a thicket to reach a stile that you cross, taking the footpath down the side of a garden with a hedge and wire fence on your left.

When you reach the road turn right, passing the front of a white bungalow, then cross over before reaching the high hedge. Look for a stone stile (hidden in the undergrowth of summer) and enter a field, then walk ahead aiming to the right of the barns toward a stile in the hedge ahead. Carry on across the next field to a gate then across the third field with Yonder Broad Pool Farm to your left **M**. Clamber over the stone stile in the hedge into the last field where you go diagonally to the far left corner, reaching a metal stile in the wall and access to the farm drive. A few paces right brings

you to a bend in a lane; continue on in the same direction, passing the entrance to Hither Broad Pool Farm. At Chelynych, the lane goes left at a junction and you pass the Poacher's Pocket pub on the right. Beyond the hostelry, take the first turning right signposted Bodden, and follow the narrow lane downhill bearing right and ignoring the footpath sign on your left. Carry on, passing a pond on the right, largely screened from view by an inappropriate belt of conifers.

Beyond the pond, climb the lane with woodland on your left. Where this ends, and before reaching the wire fence on the left, take the footpath left through a kissing gate into pasture. Follow the fence and trees on your left and as you cross a track **N** the woodland is replaced by a hedge on your left and the spire of Doultong church becomes visible. Continue in the same direction to the field corner, cross a double stile then carry on with the hedge still on the left, eventually arriving at a track junction **O**. Walk ahead with the wall to your right to reach a stile where the track descends left. Climb over, and go ahead for 75 metres to pass through a stone squeezer stile, then carry on to a kissing gate in the fence on the right. Cross over and proceed down the hill, veering away from the fence on the left and aiming for the railway viaduct in the distance. By a clump of trees, pass through a kissing gate in the wire fence boundary on the right **P** then go left, down towards an orchard with the hedge on your left to reach a kissing gate.

Beyond the gate, cross the lane and go through another gate to enter the orchard, then walk diagonally left through the trees, emerging to face a row of mature trees ahead. Look here for a broad stone stile with a grand flight of steps; descend to the lane and climb the stile opposite into a field **Q**. Cross the field following the well-trodden path towards the viaduct, where, beyond a further stile, you cross your outward route then pass again beneath the stone edifice. The path leads you across the stream **R** and along the side of houses with a stone wall on your right to reach a tarmac lane. Carry on to the main road with a brief pause to peer through the wrought-iron gate on the right to view the lake and garden.

As you reach the A37 road again, you pass the old Kilverstreet Brewery building on your right, now part of the Gaymers factory. Cross into Town Lane and follow it for 400 metres until the prison is reached on your left. Just after the main entrance, a surfaced path runs left skirting the prison wall. Take this, and when the path drops down between stone walls to a junction, turn left to pick up the prison wall again, the path soon bearing right with the wall. Turn left into Gaol Lane and walk uphill to a junction **S**. Here, go right, leaving the prison behind you to follow an old, paved footpath between high stone walls. When the church comes into view, take the path alongside the churchyard on your right, retrace your steps into Market Place, then a quick left-right into Great Ostry and the car park.





## Walk 20 – The Forest of Dean The Essence of the Forest

**Start** Wenchford car park, near Blakeney (SO 654079).

**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.5 km.

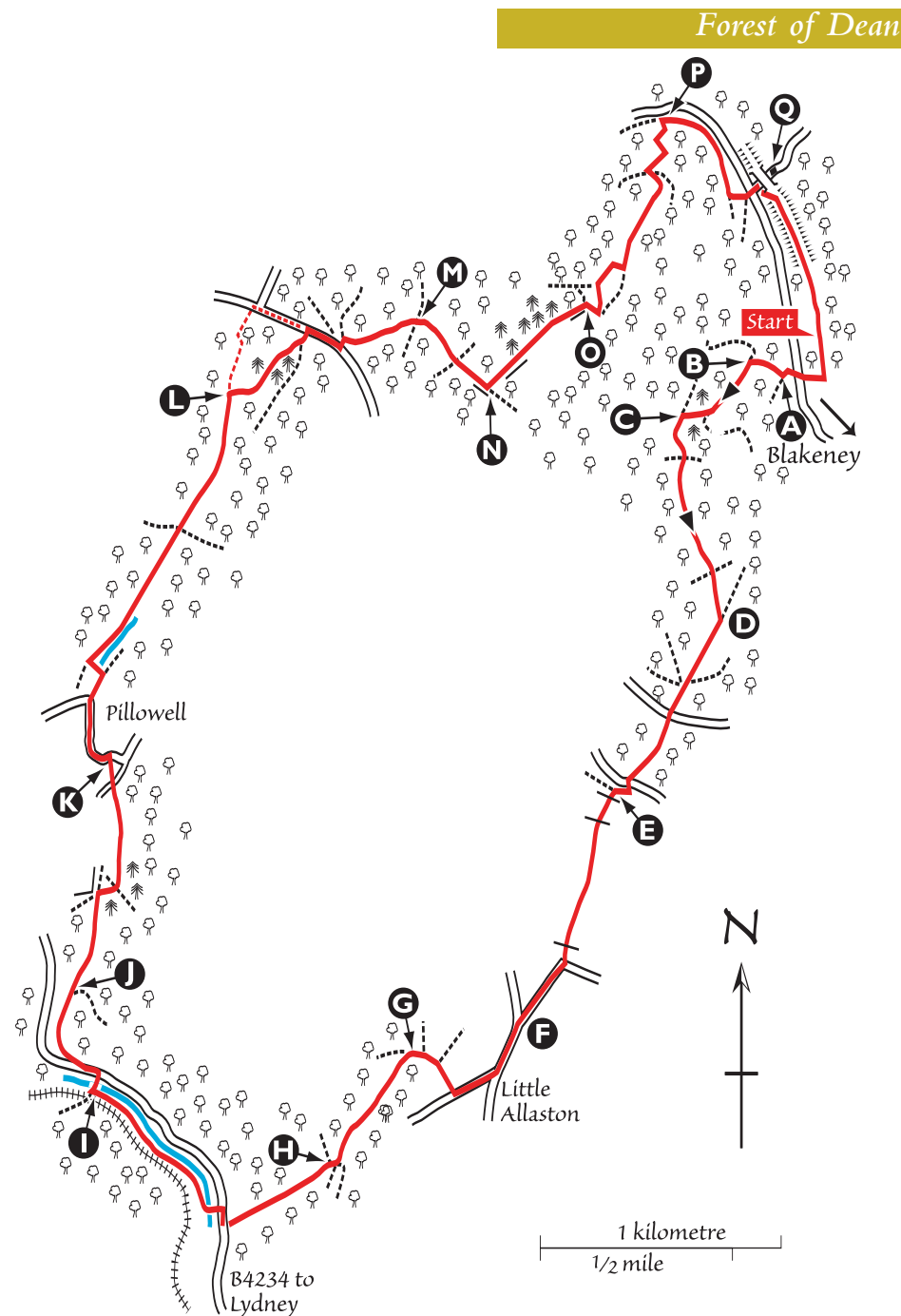
**Refreshments** Café at the Dean Forest Railway Centre.

**Getting there** M4/M48 Junction 2, A466 then A48, bypassing Lydney. On entering Blakeney, first left after the 'Cock Inn' signposted Parkend. Just over 1 mile after this turn, look on right for green barriers and 'Picnic Site' sign. Follow track to car park.

*A relatively easy ramble through this historic forest using the routes of disused railways and forestry tracks. There are a few gentle climbs, rewarded by fine views. The walk itself should take about 3.5 hours, but you could spend an hour at the Forest railway, longer if the trains are running.*

**Note:** As of 22/8/10, the bridge immediately beyond Point I has been closed as it's unsafe. This means an unpleasant walk along the roadside from the station entrance to the point where you join the forest track beyond Point I.

Your starting point is a popular and busy spot on summer weekends with toilets, picnic tables and barbecue stoves. (Note: there are sporadic winter closures to the Wenchford car park to allow for removal of felled trees. If you cannot access the car park and the start of the walk, continue up the road a short distance to the



Blackpool Bridge area (Point Q) where there is ample off-road parking. Start the walk from Q to A.)

Follow the track back to the car park entrance to reach the road. Now cross the road diagonally right to a track, follow this for 20 paces only, then go right **A** on a little-used path over fallen trees. As the path climbs, the route becomes clearer and you continue to reach a forestry track at a bend **B**.

Turn left and follow the track, descending gently, for about 250 metres. Just before a distinct left bend, you reach an area of cleared trees on the right. Take the narrow path up to the right and follow it to reach a cross-path, almost hidden beneath bracken in late summer **C**. Turn left here and follow this Right-of-Way for almost a kilometre. The route varies in width along its length, sometimes a narrow foot-path, then a broad grassy track, and a number of paths join and forsake it. At one point, vehicles used in forestry clearances have turned the path into a track, which you must follow for a short distance. Your direction changes after passing beneath power lines to a T-junction beyond **D**. Now you turn right and walk parallel with the wires to reach a broad, roughly surfaced track at a junction of paths. Continue in the same direction to reach a road 100 metres further.

Cross over and continue straight ahead passing a pylon on your left. 300 metres further, go over another road and follow a grassy path ahead for a short distance to reach a tarmac drive by cottages. Take the route down to the right towards iron gates, and look for a hubcapped stile in the wire fence on your left **E**. Climb over and walk down the meadow, parallel with the power lines to reach a kissing gate in the opposite fence. Follow the green lane beyond for 700 metres, and notice the kerbing and cobbles which become visible from time to time.

*This is the remains of the Dean Road that ran from the iron mines north-west of Lydney to the great Roman smelting town of Ariconium, near Ross-on-Wye. Described as the 'Black Country of Roman Britain', arms for the legions were crafted there. You will visit a better example later in the walk.*

Eventually, cross a stile by a metal farm gate then continue a few metres further to a minor road that you join on a bend. Go straight ahead along the road, climbing gently and passing under power lines to reach a busier road after 300 metres which you follow ahead left **F**.

Pass by Driffield Road which forks left and continue to a telephone box on the right where you turn into Grove Lane. At the bend in the lane, continue ahead beyond the remains of a barrier into woodland where you follow the broad track

ahead to reach a track junction beneath power lines **G**. Take the left fork, leaving the power lines and pylons on your right. In 400 metres, you walk beneath another set of lines and 100 metres further, you reach a broad clearing where when you reach the broad clearing, take the path on the right **H** ignoring paths ahead and left, and follow it downhill to reach the road by electricity transformers. Cross the road and go right, passing the entrance to the steam railway. If you have time, the railway with its fascinating museum is worth a visit.

*The railway centre at Norchard occupies a site previously mined for coal since the 13th century. In 1923, a power station was built on what is now the car park and Norchard coal was used to fuel it for a few years before the closure of the mine due to water problems in 1930. The power station closed in 1967 and was demolished a year later.*

Just beyond the station entrance, take the drive down to the left passing the frontage of a whitewashed cottage, then follow the path over the River Lyd and into trees. You soon find yourself walking parallel with the railway. Follow this path, passing various stone structures until, beyond the remains of a forge on the right, built in the early 1600s, you climb steps to a path junction **I**. From here, walk right, soon crossing the Lyd again to reach the road. Walk left for a few metres then cross to reach the start of a forest track.

*A walk through the Forest of Dean gives the observer a glimpse of the character of the mysterious, primeval forest that once covered the country. This former royal hunting forest covers an area of 13000 hectares and contains a mixture of broadleaved and coniferous woodland as well as open country. Now managed by the Forestry Commission, fewer conifers but more deciduous trees such as oak, ash, sweet chestnut and beech are grown here than in most forests.*

*The quality of Dean oak timber has been long been recognised, especially for ship building in the days of Drake and Nelson. A word of warning though; as in most managed forests, tracks other than Rights of Way are subject to change as different areas are opened up for tree felling. Follow this narrative carefully and be particularly wary of 'new-looking' tracks that are not mentioned in the route description.*

Beyond the barrier, the track climbs for about 400 metres, passing beneath power lines. Where it turns sharply to the right **J** go ahead along a lesser track through the trees. Continue over a path junction and onward to a second junction with a fence corner on the left. Take the right fork to walk briefly through a stand of conifers then continue over a cross track, climbing to reach playing fields where you walk along the lower, left side towards houses ahead.

*These playing fields were constructed on the site of the waste tip for another colliery, Pillowell Level. In operation by the 1830s, it was superseded by the Norchard Colliery in 1937 when mining from the latter reached the coal seams in Pillowell.*

When you reach a track, follow it to a metalled lane and cross to a path opposite that leads down to a road ❶. Turn left and cross to the right side when convenient, then walk along the pavement passing School Road on your right and eventually reaching a sharp left bend. Here, go ahead on a track with pebble-dashed house left, and woodland right. The track soon becomes a path with a barbed-wire fence on the left. Continue to the stream where you go left and cross at the back of the cottages, keeping the boundary on your left and walking up the drive ahead. Where the drive bends left, go right, onto the trackbed of a disused railway.

*The railway that you met at Norchard started life in 1809 as a horse-drawn tramroad and was relaid as the main Severn & Wye Valley Railway in 1876. You are now on the 'Mineral Loop' of this railway, which was opened in 1871 to serve the many collieries in the Forest. It closed in 1953 after a long decline from mining's peak just before the First World War. Sections of the main line were closed in the 1950s and 60s with the demise of the coal traffic, the last trains running in 1965.*

You have easy walking now for almost 1300 metres, passing cross-tracks and paths at various points, until you see a well-worn path up to the right at a point where the path ahead narrows ❷. To confirm your location, ahead and up to the right is a stand of conifers, while the route ahead changes from an embankment to a cutting. You have a choice of routes here.

Ahead is a fascinating path to the mouth of a blocked tunnel, where you climb concrete steps on the left to reach a fence crossing the top of the tunnel. If you can negotiate this (easier with two people, I'm told), walk ahead on a pathless route passing an air shaft to reach a road at a junction. Walk right, along the road, to meet the alternative route.

The safe option from ❷ is to take the well-worn path up to the right, soon climbing to the left through a stand of young oak trees, then with a few scattered conifers. When you are within sight of a road, you join a good forest track, turn left and walk for a few metres to reach the tarmac.

Go right along the road for 100 metres then cross to a broad drive on the left. Take the narrow track immediately on the right and climb the hill for 300 metres, initially with a wire fence on your right. When you reach a broad, surfaced cross-track ❸ go straight ahead over the track to a path running parallel with the over-

head power lines. Climb ahead ignoring a grass track left, to the top of the ascent. Here, by an electricity pole take the path on the left ❹. Walk now for 500 metres with wire-fenced enclosures to your right and a conifer plantation left. When you reach a gap in the fence on the right by an electricity pole go through and head for the gates of Danby Lodge.

*Iron-ore and coal have been mined since Roman times and many abandoned mines, disused railways, old forges and mills are to be found in the Forest. You have just walked over the spoil tip of Danby Mine, one of the last of the independent Forest mines which closed just a few years ago. Danby Lodge was built in the 1670s, one of six constructed to house Forest officials.*

Take the track on the left, which skirts the property, now on your right, and pass a wooden barrier. At a path junction go right, keeping the boundary wall to your right, soon passing the lodge itself, and continuing to a T-junction. Walk left and in a short distance you have superb views right, across the treetops towards the Vale of Berkeley on the far bank of the Severn.

Your path now loses height to reach a broad forest track, cross over and look for an indistinct path that leads you down to the right, twisting and turning between moss-covered boulders and passing by a lone conifer on your right. You eventually arrive at a lower, cross-path with a road some distance beyond just visible through the trees ❺. Turn right to contour around the hill with the road down to your left. Traces of a fence can be discerned at intervals on the left, the boundary of the Dean Central Railway. Continue on to a fork where the path goes left, downhill to the road. Opposite is a railway bridge, take the road beneath the arch, crossing to the left side and in a few metres, you will see the worn, cobbled surface of a far earlier route ❻.

*This is a further section of the Dean Road, the Roman route from Lydney to Ariconium. Although Ordnance Survey maps show this section to be of Roman origin, this is a more recent surface although the Romans undoubtedly passed this way.*

Now retrace your steps, pass under the bridge, then turn immediately left to follow a driveway up, onto the railway embankment.

*This was the Dean Central Railway, opened in 1869 to compete with the Severn & Wye Valley Railway for the coal traffic. It closed in 1962.*

The broad trackbed provides you with easy walking for about 700 metres to the car park and your starting point.





## Walk 21 – The Cotswolds Chedworth

**Start** Chedworth village hall car park (SP 053113).

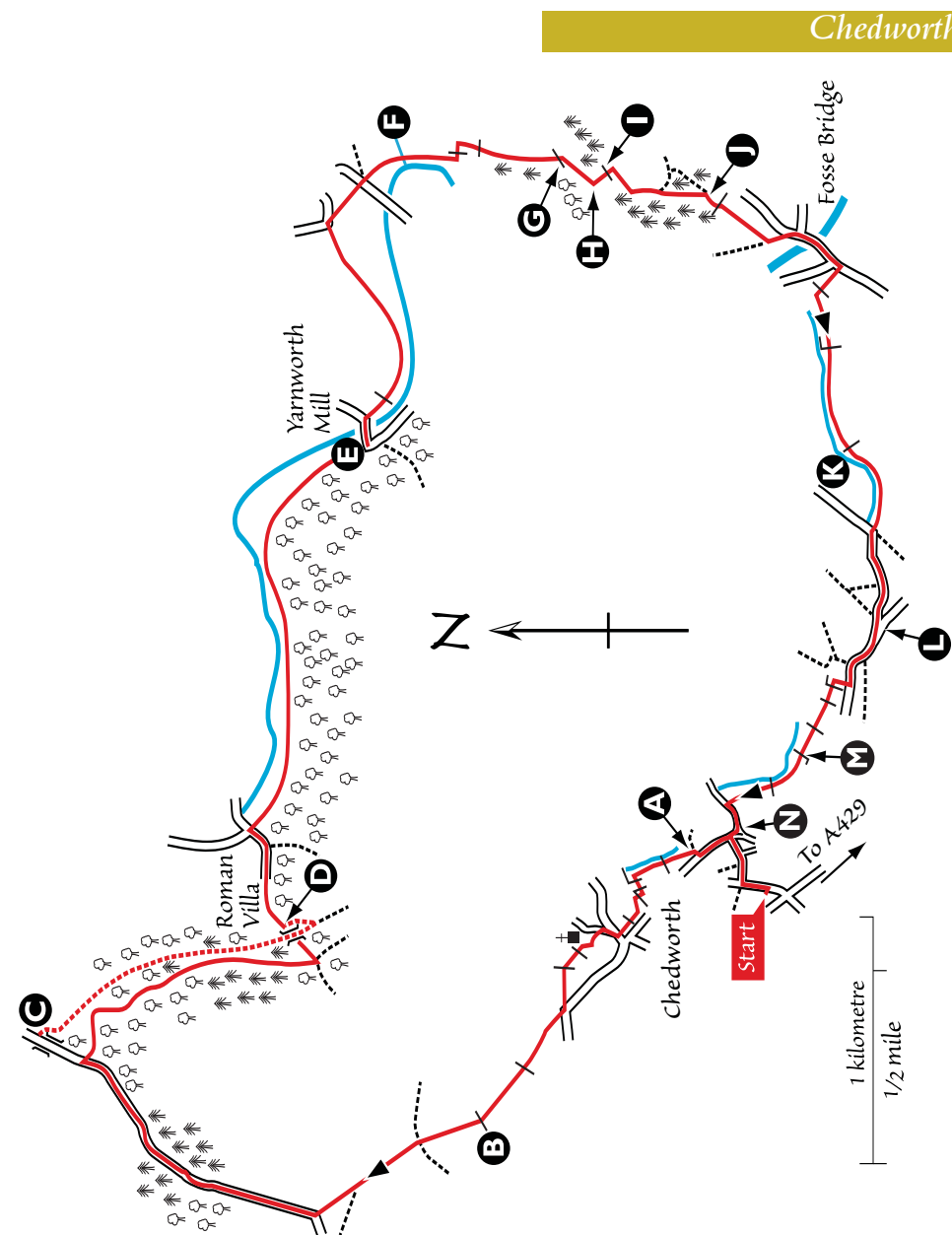
**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.5km.

**Refreshments** Pubs at Chedworth (near start) and Fossebridge.

**Getting there** M4 Junction 18, A46 north, then right onto A433 to Cirencester ring road. From here, A429 turning left into Fields Road (signed Chedworth, Withington). Follow the road for 1.5 miles to crossroads where you turn right. Village Hall car park is a short distance on the left.

*A pretty Cotswold village, attractive woodland, a nature reserve and one of the most complete Roman villas in England are all included in this walk of gentle hills and valleys with babbling brooks. Although a full hours drive from Bristol, this ramble will reward your efforts within the first quarter mile. Allow 4 hours plus at least an hour if visiting the villa (seasonal opening).*

From the Village Hall, go left and follow the road to a right turn. Take this and walk downhill, passing a turning and school on the right, to reach a junction with 'Hawks Lane House' ahead. Turn left and follow the road to a waymarked stile on the right that you climb **A** then descend towards the bottom left corner of the field and another stile. Climb this, then go ahead, passing through an old hedge boundary and continuing over the meadow to the far side and with houses ahead, you aim for the top left corner of the field to climb a further stile.



Your route now takes you up and over the embankment of the defunct Cheltenham to Cirencester railway. *This picturesque line was closed in 1961 and the viaduct which spanned this valley has been removed.* On the far side of the embankment, climb a

stile then go immediately right over a further stile. Walk up to the left boundary and follow it to climb another stile beyond which there are stables on the right. The footpath now goes ahead, keeping to the right of the conifer hedge, to pass through a stone gateway onto a lane. A few metres to your right is the Seven Tuns public house, serving fine beers and food (though can be very busy at weekends).

*The church, standing on the hillside above the pub is worth a visit. The pulpit, with its very tall pedestal is one of about sixty medieval stone pulpits left in the country. Carved from a single block of stone over seven feet high, it is enriched with tracery and canopies, a beautiful example of what is known as the Gloucestershire wingglass style. In a glass case is one of the best copies of the Breeches Bible in existence. This translation was made in 1560 by English exiles in Geneva and was the most popular translation until the Authorised version appeared in 1611. The name was derived from the account in Genesis where Adam and Eve made themselves breeches out of fig leaves!*

Opposite the pub, take the footpath up the hill, passing cottages to reach a road and the church beyond. Walk through the churchyard, where, through a gate in the wall to your left get a glimpse of the manor house, which has medieval origins, though the present building dates from the 17th century. Exit the churchyard through a squeeze stile into a meadow and aim for a waymark post on the skyline, then continue on to climb a stone stile in the wall at the top of the field. Beyond the wall walk along a grassy avenue of fine beech trees to a stone stile from where you gain access to a lane. Turn right to walk along a track with a cricket pitch to your right. Continue to the end of the track where a metal gate gives access to the edge of a disused airfield ❸.

*Chedworth was opened in 1942, one of the utility airfields planned during the early war years. It had two runways, two curved 'blister' hangars and extensive dispersal sites for safe aircraft storage. Initially, Spitfires of 52 Operational Training Unit were stationed here, latterly, Mosquito, Mustang and Typhoon. After the war, the grass areas were returned to farming use although the Central Flying School used the airfield for a number of years as a practice forced landing field. In the 1970's Chedworth fell into disuse; both the hangars still exist, used for agricultural purposes but the other buildings are now derelict.*

Waymark posts guide you across the ploughed and cropped field – expect mud here in winter. Cross the perimeter road and follow the waymarks over a further field to the crumbling concrete that was the main runway. Go straight ahead to another waymark post and cross the field aiming for the black, corrugated iron building. Climb the stile to the road and go right, passing a young conifer plantation on the right. Beyond the last of the airfield buildings on your right, the road drops down towards woodland and you now have easy walking along this quiet road with bluebells in the woods and primroses, violets and wood spurge on the roadside banks.

*You are now walking along the 'White Way' a Roman road also known as 'Salt Way' from the time when salt was in short supply. It was used to transport this commodity from the Roman town of Salinae, now Droitwich.*

Where the gradient levels and the road bears slightly left, look for a footpath sign directing you right. (If you miss this, 200 metres further the road crosses the course of an old railway, the same one you crossed earlier in the walk, via a bridge ❹ in which case retrace your steps.) You now have a choice of routes; the public footpath to the right leads you into woodland and includes a steep, albeit short climb; the alternative is to continue to cross the railway bridge ahead, then join the trackbed for 1100 metres of level walking along what is now a nature reserve. Both routes merge at point ❺.

First, the path to the right. Climb the stile in the fence and follow the path as it drops down between the trees. When you reach a beech coppice, the path broadens and curves up to the right, while down to your left, there is a partly buried culvert that carried excess water under the embankment of the railway which at this point is high above you on the left. The path now climbs steeply for 100 metres or so, then bears left and levels out. You have easy walking through pleasant mixed woodland for about 700 metres, when the deciduous trees give way to conifers. Eventually, the route descends steeply to a path junction and here you go left, down a stony, sunken path, shortly to walk beneath the railway. At the far side, a set of steps climbs the embankment to the nature reserve – you may like to investigate.

The alternative route to point ❺ involves a further 200 metres of road walking to cross the railway. Beyond the bridge ❹ there is woodland on the right and you should take the first well-used path through the trees with traces of the original railway fence and the course of the railway in a cutting to your right. In a short distance, your path joins the trackbed and you continue ahead onto a high embankment with lovely views over the treetops. Beyond here, your route passes through cuttings and woodland, crossing two bridges; at the far side of the second, marked by a 'Chedworth Nature Reserve' descriptive board, steps down to the left lead you to point ❺.

*The Gloucestershire Trust for Nature Conservation purchased this one mile stretch of disused railway line in 1969, a few years after the last train ran. The cuttings of oolitic limestone are rich in fossil shellfish from the Jurassic period.*

Back to the walk; leave the railway behind and continue downhill for a short distance to reach the site of the Roman villa.

*A gamekeeper digging for his ferret discovered the remains of this impressive villa in 1864 and excavations have continued here ever since. It is thought to be the centre of*

*an agricultural estate deriving its wealth from wool and built in the second century AD, then enlarged in the third. It was a two-storey house built of Cotswold stone and tiles, with two bath houses, underfloor heating and a temple. The adjacent museum houses smaller items and there is the ubiquitous National Trust shop.*

Beyond the villa, a driveway takes you past a bridleway on the right, to a road junction. Go right here through green painted gates of the Stowell Estate and follow the drive for a little over a mile, with woodland to your right and the pretty River Colne darting around on the left. After passing through a further set of green gates **E** turn left onto the road and cross the river. Yarnworth Mill is on your left, no longer a woollen mill, the caged dogs in the barn and the kok-kok of the pheasants that you have been hearing give a clue to the mill's new source of income. Take the path on the right opposite the mill and follow the field edge keeping the hedge on the right. At the field corner, go through the hedge ahead, continuing in the same direction. You soon have a low stone wall to your right which allows you to appreciate the view over the meadow to the river and the woodland beyond. This is easy walking, although the footpath has been damaged by the riding of horses so may be muddy after rain. Keeping the boundary on the right, you eventually reach a lane on a sharp bend. Take the wooden gate on the right into a meadow, then cross to the far side, following the line of the stream. On the far side, a wooden gate gives access to lane, cross and go through the gate opposite.

Now follow the track ahead, crossing a small stream in 200 metres **F** then continue parallel to the wall on the left with Stowell House, a fine Elizabethan mansion, beyond. The track eventually leads you through a gate in the wall, where you turn right and proceed now with the wall immediately on your right. Continue ahead, through another field gate and walk with a stand of conifers to your right through a further gate **G**. There is woodland on the far side of this field, climb half-right to reach it, then keep the fence to your left, as far as the corner **H** where you will see a waymark. Here, the fence goes left, follow it up the hill to the gate at the top of the field **I**. Once through, go right with the fence now on your right and a cropped field on the left. After about 150 metres, with conifers on the right, you pick up the remains of a surfaced track and in 100 metres where this goes left at the field edge, go ahead along a path through Camp Wood.

*Around you are the concrete and brick remains of a war-time camp. This was the site of an American army hospital, built to cater for anticipated WW2 casualties. In 1947 it became a Polish 'displaced persons' camp, where girls whose education had been disrupted by the war, were resettled to finish their schooling. By 1950 there were over 400 girls, all living in Nissen huts, but with a well-equipped school, medical facilities and chapel nearby. By July 1954 all pupils had completed their courses and the school was*

*closed and eventually dismantled. The woodland you now walk through was planted in the 1990s and covers what remains of the site.*

When you come to a cross path **J** turn right and walk for a few metres to the edge of the wood which you leave via a gate into parkland. To your left is a high stone wall beyond which the traffic on the busy A429 can be heard. Walk down the hill to the bottom where you reach a track, go left along it to leave the estate though green painted gates; you are now on the main road, the Fosse Way.

*The Fosse Way is a Roman road, shown by excavations to have been built partly on earlier tracks. It crosses the country diagonally from a point near Axminster to Lincoln, passing through Bath, Cirencester and Leicester, all Roman stations. This ancient crossing point was used as a watering stop and has had an inn beside it for centuries. The present old coaching inn has remaining 15th century structures and inside, there are the original oak beams, fireplaces and flagstone floors.*

Go right to cross the River Colne at Fosse Bridge, then pass the Inn and a road on the right. Immediately beyond the road, take a gravel driveway right and go through the wooden gate into a field, then walk round the edge with the boundary to your right, passing cottages then following a hedge. At the end of the field go through a metal gate and continue, now with a wire fence to your left while down to your right, a delightful brook hurries on its way. This pleasant path leads you past a pond on the right **K** after which a wooden fence is to your right, then a dry-stone wall with screen of conifers. A stile gives access to a lane where you turn left.

Walk up the lane, eventually passing a road joining from the left **L** and a redundant phone box, now converted by the Parish Council into a public information point, lost property depot and book exchange. At the top of the hill, there are minor lanes left and right, ignore them and continue bearing left and starting to lose height. A few metres further, opposite a cottage on the left, look for Saffron Hill House on the right (the name is low down on a wooden board). There is a footpath and stile on the right just before the house, but you need to take the grassy path beyond the house, keeping it to your right, and climbing the stile on the left at the end of the path into a meadow. Cross to a wooden field gate and into a further field, then contour across the centre to climb a double stile **M**. Go ahead, contouring the field with a stream down to your right, climb a further stile, then cross the following meadow on an ascending path, aiming for a gate where you climb a stile onto a narrow lane.

Turn left along the lane, bearing right as it climbs to a junction **N**. Take the road up to the left, following your outward route, passing the school on your left and climbing to a T-junction. Go left and walk along the road to the village hall and your transport.





## Walk 22 – The Cotswolds Westonbirt and the Arboretum

**Start** Sherston High Street. (ST 853859).

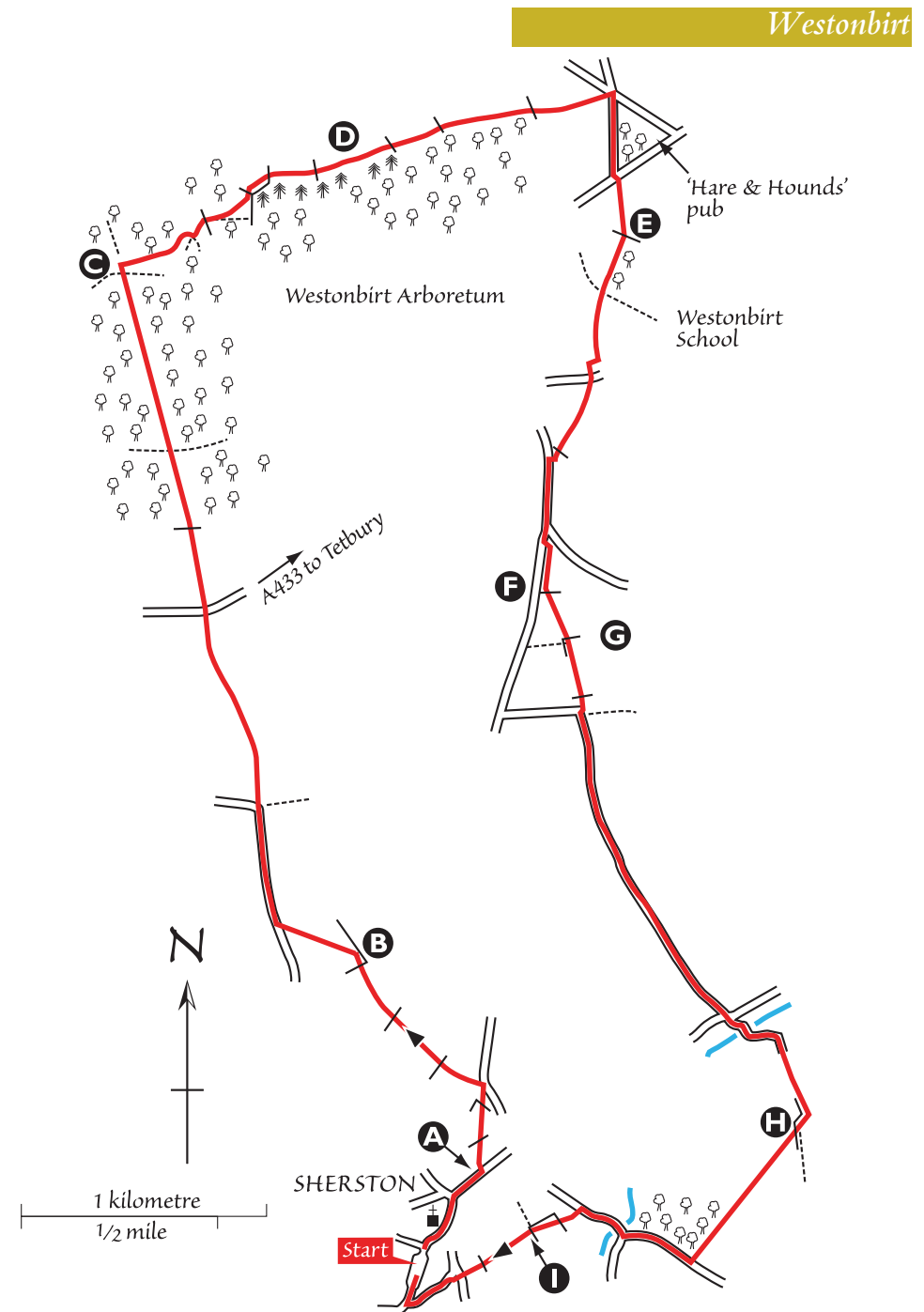
**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.6km.

**Refreshments** 'Hare & Hounds' pub (just off route), several pubs in Sherston.

**Getting there** M4 Junction 18, A46 north, then right onto A433. 1.5 miles beyond Didmarton and just after the Holford Arms pub, take minor road right to Sherston.

*The famous arboretum is the focal point of this easy, generally level walk which takes you across pasture and parkland, along paths and country lanes. The town of Sherston is worth a little exploration, whilst the arboretum is worth a visit at any time of the year. Mud in winter after point (D) and between points (F) and (G). Allow 4 hours.*

Sherston, on the edge of the Cotswolds yet within the county boundary of Wiltshire, is the starting point for this ramble. With a number of 15th century buildings lining its broad High Street, Sherston should be a tourist attraction in its own right, but it has resisted the temptation to allow the derelict shops to be used to promote such a trade! The walk takes you north, out of the High Street into Church Street. The church is on the left, while on the right is the Old Rattlebones pub, named after John Rattlebone who defeated King Canute's army at the Battle of Sherston in 1016 (and with a young Prince Harry providing a more recent royal connection). Stay on the



left side of the road passing the Carpenter's Arms pub on the right, then two small, lay-bys. Opposite the second one, look for a gravel drive leading to houses with the name 'Hunters Field' on a stone gate post **A**. Go up the drive keeping to the wall on the right which will guide you to a footpath then via a kissing gate into a field. Keep on in the same direction across the field to pass through a second gate then a few metres ahead, over a stile to a road. Here, turn left onto a bridleway signposted Knockdown Road.

In 200 metres, the bridleway enters a field, go ahead with the hedge on your right. Continue along a second field, then on entering the third, walk for 50 metres and turn half left **B** to walk across the field (not waymarked) to a farm gate on the far side where you exit to a road. Turn right and walk for 500 metres until just past a farm, the road swings sharp left. Leave the tarmac here and proceed straight ahead along a track following the left boundary of the field; eventually, this track takes you past boarding kennels and onto the main Tetbury road. Cross with care to a metal field gate and walk up the field keeping to the left boundary until you reach the entrance to Westonbirt Arboretum.

*The tree collection was begun in 1829 when Robert Holford started planting oaks, pines and yews in open fields close to what is now the visitors' centre. His son, Sir George Holford took up the work from 1875 and he extended the planting of exotic trees into the established woodland through which you are about to walk. Sir George's nephew, the fourth Earl Morley continued the collection from 1926 and the arboretum continued to expand, but the war years and subsequent neglect through shortage of labour saw a decline in the park's fortunes. In 1956, the Forestry Commission acquired Westonbirt from the fifth Earl Morley with the objective of establishing a specialist scientific collection of trees and shrubs. There are now over 14000 of these spread out over 200 hectares of woodland.*

The public footpath follows the broad drive ahead for a kilometre and many interesting species of tree can be seen without the need to deviate from this route. At the north end of the drive, a T-junction is reached, cross over and proceed ahead along a well-marked grass path into trees where almost immediately you reach a waymark post **C**. Turn right here and look for the next waymark post slightly right of centre; aim for this, then follow the broad, winding path through mixed woodland, veering to the left slightly. Although away from the 'tourist' paths and indistinct at first, the strategically placed waymark posts keep you on track. Where the path makes a definite curve to the right, you will reach cross paths. Turn left and look for bird box 33 attached to a larch tree on your left to confirm your location! Go ahead now downhill on an indistinct path to a squeezer stile which you cross to downland. Climb the well-worn path up the hillock in front of you, passing under a stand

of beech trees and continuing with the wall to your left until a wooden gate is reached where you exit the park. Keep walking in the same direction now over a succession of fields with the low, moss-covered walls of the arboretum on your right.

*Notice to your right as you cross the third field **D** a broad ride stretching across the arboretum beyond which, the tower of Westonbirt school can be seen; this is no coincidence as the school was once the grand home of Sir George Holford whose father started the tree collection.*

As you climb the stile to leave the fifth field, you part company with the arboretum wall. Go ahead now along the edge of a large paddock, keeping the wall on your left and leave via a stile at a road junction. Turn right with the paddock wall now to your right, and walk the short distance to the main road. Cross over and go through a wooden gate into a field. Here, bear very slightly right, passing under power lines and keeping the nearest pole to your left. Head towards the right-hand edge of the clump of trees on the horizon, passing a water trough to your right; ahead, you will see a gate in the fence **E** follow the waymark sign there directing you slightly to the right of the woodland ahead. When you reach a tarmac driveway, look left to see the imposing structure of Westonbirt School.



The public footpath through Silkwood, heading towards Point C

*As Westonbirt House with a facade 120 metres long, it was one of the finest homes in Gloucestershire when built for Robert Holford at a cost of £200,000.*

To the right, the drive curves away to the entrance gate; your route is ahead, along another driveway that crosses the parkland leaving the school away to the left.

The drive brings you onto a lane by cottages, go ahead through the wooden gate next to a metal farm gate. The path beyond climbs gently with a wire fence right and a copse left, soon to give way to a golf course. At the end of the path, go through the wooden gate and turn right for a few metres to meet the road. Walk left along the road, passing Park Farm on the right; ignore a fork off to the left, but immediately after, look for a footpath sign and here, climb the stone stile on the left. After 200 metres and several stiles, you will come to a stone stile offering you a return to the road **F**; ignore this but instead climb the low wall left into a field. Walk diagonally over the centre of the field, aiming for the left end of a row of trees crossing the field from the right **G**. (This field may be cropped in summer and is frequently muddy in winter.) The trees follow the line of a new driveway and when you reach this, continue ahead on the driveway keeping to the right and entering the yard. The Right of Way is narrow, running between the green metal fence and the hedge. At the end of the metal fence, climb a low wooden barrier and continue to the stone stile next to the farm gate, which gives access to the road.

Walk left along this road for about 1300 metres, passing the fine old buildings of Pinkney Court on the left, after which the road descends gently to a junction. Cross and take the lane ahead down to the Sherston branch of the River Avon. Walk over the bridge and up the lane alongside old stone walls. The lane climbs past farm buildings, then degenerates into a track. Keep the stone wall to your right and follow the track ahead up the hill, reaching a metal gate into a field. Walk on, with a fence then a wall on your right, which you follow round to the right to pass through the high, iron gate into Pinkney Park **H**. The track ahead runs in a more or less straight line for 700 metres, latterly passing Pinkney Wood on the right, before emerging onto a lane. Turn right here and follow the lane down to a junction by the river.

Go right, crossing the river bridge and climb the road passing a buttressed wall on the right. Soon after, opposite the entrance to Lower Farm on the right, look left for steps which you climb to a kissing gate. Go half-right across the pasture, passing the back corner of a stone barn on your right, to climb a stile in the wooden fence ahead. Continue, picking up the stone wall on the right. To reach the field corner **I**. Here, ignore the kissing gate on the right leading to a lane, but take a similar gate ahead and

walk along the edge of the next field, with the backs of houses on the right. At the far end of the field carry straight on along a tarmac footpath and go ahead between houses, ignoring the short path to your right, to emerge onto a residential road. Cross, to continue on the footpath which soon descends via steps to a road. Climb the steps on the far side to reach a lane and go ahead to the 'Primitive Methodist Chapel 1851' on the right. Here, turn left along the lane until it meets a road junction; turn right and walk up Brook Hill, which in a few metres brings you to the southern end of Sherston High Street and the end of your walk.





## Walk 23 – Bath The Kennet & Avon Canal

**Start** Rear of Bath Spa station (ST 752643) or free parking at the George Inn, Bathampton (in which case your walk begins between points E & F).

**Distance** 8.5 miles / 13.75km

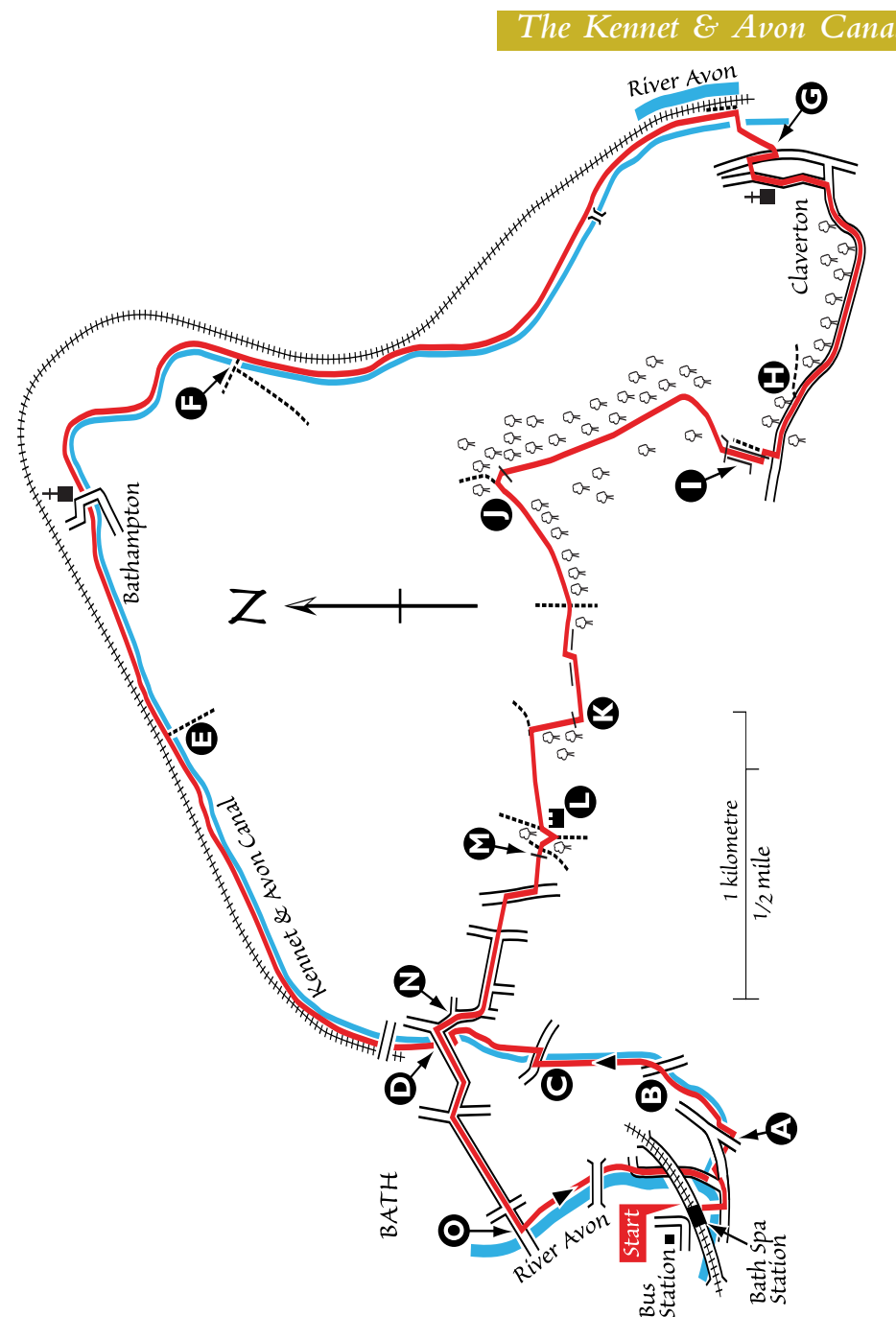
**Refreshments** Pub at Bathampton, countless possibilities in Bath.

**Getting there** Various bus and rail options. Car parking prices vary, generally cheaper on Sunday. Take the access road running beneath the station to the footbridge at the rear.

*A generally easy walk on well-surfaced canal and river paths out of the city into pretty countryside. One steep road climb of about 1 kilometre from Claverton, amply compensated by fine views of Bath thereafter, and a short, steep descent which can be muddy. Allow 4 hours plus a little extra if visiting the pumping station below Claverton.*

This walk begins at the rear of Bath Spa railway station, where a green lattice ironwork footbridge takes you across the River Avon to busy Claverton Street. Turn left and walk along the pavement for 100 metres to reach a lane joining from the left. Here begins the Kennet and Avon canal; ignore the lane but walk a few paces further passing the lock to reach the towpath, with the canal and Thimble Mill on your left.

*The Kennet and Avon Canal was completed in 1810 linking the Kennet Navigation at Newbury with the Avon at Bath, thus giving a continuous waterway from Bristol*



to London. The canal begins at Widcombe Locks, a set of six which raise the canal 65 feet above the Avon. Bath Deep Lock is the deepest canal lock in Britain with a water movement of nearly 20 feet. By the first lock at the foot of the flight is Thimble Mill; now a restaurant, its steam pumps once took water from the Avon to the top of the flight, replenishing the huge volume lost from the canal by each boat movement through the locks.

Follow the towpath under a pair of modern road bridges to the huge gates of Bath Deep Lock. Just as you are wondering about your escape from this gloomy spot, a flight of concrete steps comes into view, giving access to the road above **A**. Cross the road bridge and turn right to follow the towpath with the canal to your right. Climb to cross a road **B** then continue past the remaining lock with the keeper's cottage on the left. Above the locks, you pass a number of moored narrowboats, each with their miniature gardens in pots and other containers, strategically positioned about the craft. On reaching bridge 188, you leave the path and climb the steps to the road **C** which you cross to regain the canal, now on your left. At the next bridge climb again to road level, cross the canal then double back down the far side to pass under this wide bridge with the canal again on your right **D**.

*The waterway now runs through Sydney Gardens, notice the fine iron footbridges and the carved portals of the bridges carrying the road over the canal. They were designed to make the canal's passage through the prestigious gardens less obtrusive. Sydney Gardens were created in 1795 as a retreat for the city's wealthy folk who were less than enamoured at the thought of barges running through their park. The hotel that was built in the grounds is now a museum, you will pass it near the end of the walk.*

Beyond the next road bridge, you pass an interesting relic on your left – Bath Humane Society Station where lifebuoys and drag poles were available. The path continues for about 2 kilometres, with good views left across the railway and the River Avon, to the Batheaston bypass. On the right, a wooden footbridge gives pedestrian access to the Bathampton side of the canal **E** then the meadows submit to a modern, waterside housing development. As you walk past a row of old, stone cottages to the left of the path, you may be pleasantly surprised to find the end cottage is The George Inn.

*The George, with its 14th century origins was the hostelry for the ancient priory of Hampton. It is thought that underground passages link the pub to the neighbouring vicarage and church.*

Beyond the pub, pass under a narrow road bridge and continue to the swing bridge at Hampton Wharf **F**.

*The wharf lies at the foot of an old tramroad, 1.5 kilometres in length, that brought stone down a 20% incline from Bathampton quarry for use in the canal construction.*

Two bridges later (bridge 180), you leave the canal, to take a lane on the left which crosses the canal by way of a stone bridge. (Going the opposite direction down the hill takes you on an optional diversion to Claverton Pumping Station.)

*In 1810, the same year the canal was constructed, this pumping station was built as a means of replenishing the water lost from the canal by the locks in Bath. A giant water wheel powered the beam engine that could raise 455,000 litres of water from the River Avon to the canal 40 metres above and was in continuous use for 140 years before being replaced by electric pumps. The pumping station is open to the public and on occasional days the old engine is in operation.*

Beyond the bridge, the lane climbs to the road **G**; here, turn right and walk for a few metres past the telephone box to the bus stop. Cross to the stop on the opposite side and go through the kissing gate and up the footpath to the village of Claverton, with the grand entrance to a vanished manor house ahead of you. When you reach the lane, turn left and walk past the interesting houses, many with modern conversions and passing the church on the right.

*Claverton was the 'clover farm' of the Bishops of Bath and Wells in the Middle Ages; the stonework and attractive terraces being the only reminder of their 16th century manor house which stood adjacent to the church. The new manor was built further up the hill in the 18th century and now houses the American Museum. The church itself is usually locked, but in the churchyard, the canopied tomb of Ralph Allen, one of the creators of 18th century Bath can be seen.*

At the end of the lane opposite Orchard House, turn right and walk up the hill for almost a kilometre (taking care to watch for traffic on the blind bends). As the gradient lessens, you pass the entrance to the American Museum on the right **H**, continue to reach a footpath sign on the right. Negotiate the green metal barriers and walk for a few metres before going left, through a wooden gate. Now turn right and walk with hedge right, and a bobsleigh run on your left **I** protected by a wire fence. Continue to reach a stone stile, climb over and go half-right, picking up the right boundary of the park which you follow to a metal kissing gate. Pass through, and a few metres further you come to a path junction with waymarks, turn left here and climb the banking to reach the edge of a golf course on Bathampton Down **J**.

Go ahead, keeping to the left boundary with the golfers to your right, eventually crossing a track with a metal field gate to the left. 150 metres further, the unattrac-

tive accommodation blocks of the university come into view beyond a low wall on your left, keep to the wall, passing between it and a screen of young trees to your right. A little further, the path leads you left through the wall, beyond which you resume your original course but now with the wall to your right. As the path and the buildings on the left start to converge, look for a path going up to the right through an iron gate<sup>Ⓚ</sup>; go through and walk with woodland left and the golf course again to the right. In a few metres, you will find yourself walking on the well-tended grass of the course; continue alongside the left boundary, turning left with it and picking up a track running down the hill to the car park and club house on the right. Turn left here to reach Sham Castle in a few metres<sup>Ⓛ</sup>.

*At a time when planning permission was non-existent, Ralph Allen treated himself to this folly in 1762 to enhance the view from his house in the city centre.*

With your back to the folly you have a great view over the city. Descend to the edge of the trees on your right and pick up a path (no waymark) that goes down to the left, to reach the entrance driveway to the golf club, which you cross, to go through a kissing gate<sup>Ⓜ</sup> onto land managed by the National Trust. Go down the hill keeping to the left boundary, soon passing the gardens of houses on the left and eventually reaching a road via a further gate. (This descent may be slippery when wet so take



Sham Castle

care.) Cross the road and walk right, for about 100 metres with fine views over the city. Just after a crossing patrol road sign, there is a set of steps leading to a grassy path which you now follow downhill between fields to reach a kissing gate. Beyond the gate, follow a surfaced path between walls to a road. Cross over and carry on down Sham Castle Lane, turning right at the bottom then bearing left with Vellore Lane on the right<sup>Ⓝ</sup> to reach the main road.

You are now in Sydney Road, turn left to go over the canal and your outward route. Cross the road and walk down to the junction, with the Holbourne of Menestrie Museum, (the old Sydney Gardens Hotel) set back on the right. Cross over to Great Pultney Street and walk down this handsome road.

*Great Pultney Street, constructed of Bath stone between 1789-92, is a fine example of Georgian architecture. It was built as a precautionary measure on a raised platform above the Avon's flood plain. A number of historical dignitaries stayed in this street, including William Pitt and Napoleon III.*

Continue into Argyle Street then before reaching Pultney Bridge, take a flight of steps down to the river<sup>Ⓢ</sup> to follow the walkway with the river on your right. Pause to look at the garden maze on the left, then continue along the walkway, passing under a road bridge, until you reach Ferry Lane coming in on the left. Carry on alongside the river and under the railway viaduct, eventually reaching the main road and your outward route. Go right, following the pavement to the footbridge taking you back over the Avon to the station.





## Walk 24 – The Cotswolds The Thames & Severn Canal

**Start** Lay-by on A419 top of Cowcombe Hill, Chalford. (SO 909018).

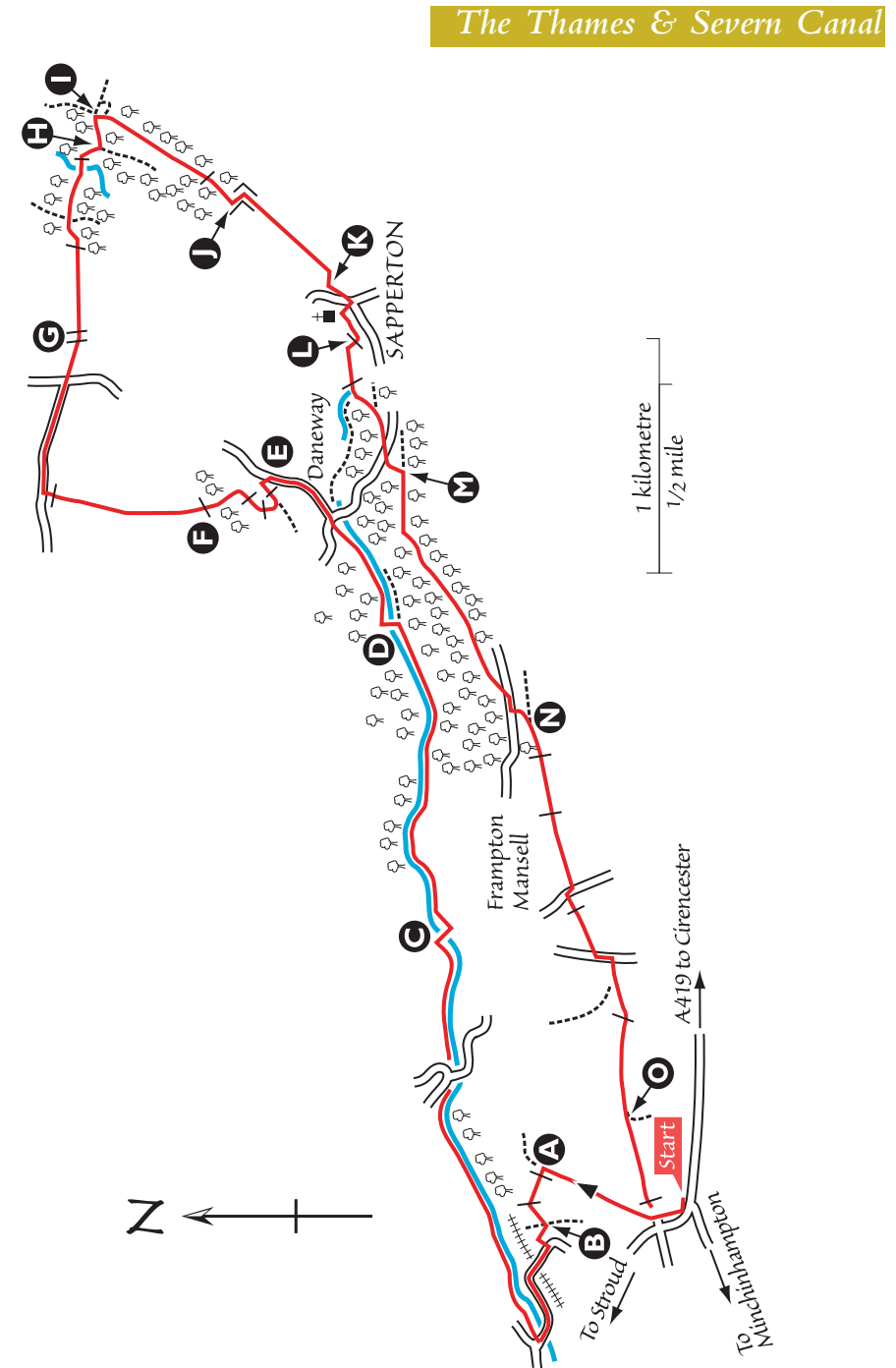
**Distance** 9 miles / 14.25km.

**Refreshments** Pub at Daneway (extremely busy at weekends).

**Getting there** M4 Junction 18 then north on A46 to Nailsworth. Minor roads to Minchinhampton then east on Cirencester Road to A419.

*Variations of this walk appear in a number of guide books and for good reason, the industrial archaeology of the canal, together with nature reserves, woodland and fine old houses make this a walk of great interest. Much of the route is over undulating ground so there are a number of climbs, though nothing too strenuous. Expect muddy patches in the woodland. Allow about 4 hours to complete the circuit.*

From the western end of the lay-by, take the lane which turns right downhill, passing through Westley Farm. Immediately beyond the last stone barn on the left and before the gated entrance to a cottage, turn left through a wooden farm gate on the left **A**. Cross the field to the stile on the far side, beyond which, the path drops steeply bearing slightly left into a thicket; keep going left to emerge in a valley **B**. Look for a wooden finger post directing you slightly right and up the slope ahead with wire fence and bushes to your left (the valley bottom is down to the right). Keep to the fence as the path turns left and continue your ascent until you reach a stile on the



right, climb this to the lane. Turn right and walk downhill crossing the Gloucester to Swindon railway, then the disused and overgrown Thames & Severn Canal, beyond which turn right, following the footpath and walking between a tiny River Frome on the left and the canal on your right. Notice the remains of the canal lock by the bridge, one of many you will pass as you walk the 4 kilometres of towpath to Daneway.

*Opened in 1789, the canal was built to link the Thames at Letchslade with the Stroudwater canal, which connected with the River Severn at Framilode. 44 locks were needed to carry the canal over the Cotswolds, as well as a 4 kilometre tunnel. In its heyday, 70-foot horse-drawn narrow boats carried a variety of freight from iron ore, coal and limestone to dairy produce and textiles. Competition from the railway and constant leakage saw the closure of first the tunnel in 1911, followed by the eastern section in 1927 and the remainder in 1933.*

After 1600 metres, pass through a kissing gate and cross the canal by way of a bridge ㉓. Continue now on the southern bank of the canal, soon to see the meandering River Frome in meadows to your right. Eventually, take a footbridge with metal handrails to the north side of the canal ㉔. Walk a further 550 metres and you will find yourself on the road opposite the Daneway Inn.



View back to Daneway House

*The inn was built in 1784 for the mainly Irish immigrant labourers who constructed the canal. The quantities of alcohol they consumed and the subsequent strong language meant that separate hostels had to be built for them so as not to offend the local inhabitants! The Daneway is worth visiting, if just for a packet of crisps, so as to view the magnificent, Dutch-carved fireplace. Daneway House, further up the road is a fine old dwelling, the oldest parts dating from the 14th century.*

The walk continues along the road behind the pub, signposted Edgeworth and Miserden. Opposite the entrance to Daneway House ㉕ look for a footpath sign on the left, pointing back left. Go over the stile and take the path that climbs up and round to the right, ignoring the lower path continuing ahead. Climb another stile, then a few yards ahead on the right, a third stile in a wire fence, beyond which the path climbs to trees. Once through the trees, you are in a meadow; go ahead to a stile on the right of a metal farm gate ㉖. Go over, into a field and follow the left boundary. The field you are crossing is huge and the first part can be very muddy in winter, but keep more or less to the left until you eventually reach the far corner with a metal farm gate on the left. In front of you, is a small wooden gate accessing the back garden of a cottage; pass through and walk ahead, down the side of the building to reach a lane via a set of steps.

On the lane, turn right and walk for about 450 metres to a road junction; go straight ahead through a gated bridleway then through a second gate into a field ㉗ then a third 10 metres further on. Follow the hedge on the left to the far side of the field where you pass through another gate then follow a track downhill between old, moss-covered stone walls until a stream is reached. Cross the footbridge, go through the wooden gate ahead, then climb the track bearing up to the right through mainly beech trees. As the ascent eases, follow the track round to the left ㉘ ignoring the track on the right.

*A few metres further on the left, partly hidden in the undergrowth some distance away from the path, is a dilapidated brick building which houses a hydraulic ram, used to pump water up from the stream below.*

When you reach a bridleway running across your path ㉙ your route is to the right, but look left first, beyond the gate with the blue waymarks. The fine house in the distance is Pinbury Park once home to the poet John Masefield.

*Born 1 June 1878, Masefield became the 15th poet laureate in 1930. After serving as a merchant seaman aboard a large sailing vessel, he worked at menial jobs in the United States and then returned to England to make a living as a journalist. Although two of*



*his early poems, “Sea Fever” and “Cargoes” are enduringly popular, his reputation seems to have declined in recent years. He died on 12 May 1967.*

Take the bridleway to the right and in a few metres, where the track swings back to the left, continue ahead to cross a long meadow with a row of mature trees to your left. At the far end, you enter woodland and pass through a wooden gate. Ignore a gate in the wire fence to your right, but walk ahead to leave the wood, reaching the boundary of a meadow. Here ❶ the path veers up to the left, through a wooden gate and then runs parallel to the meadows, arriving in Sapperton village ❷.

*The church, although not ancient, should be visited to see the beautiful woodwork, some of it from an Elizabethan manor which has long since vanished. More than 20 bench-ends have quaint carvings on them, the work of a craftsman of Shakespeare’s day. There is also an old gallery, an Elizabethan altar table in the panelled sanctuary, and carved oak chairs decorated with roses and heads.*

Take the tarmac footpath running down the left side of the churchyard, going left at the first turning. Pass two cottages on the right, turning right down the path at the side of the second one which leads you via a kissing gate onto downland ❸. Continue roughly in the same direction, by dropping down the field to the left to reach a stile. Beyond the stile, you find yourself on top of the portal of the canal tunnel, cross over and walk down the far side to view the tunnel entrance and read the information board. Continue the walk by taking the narrow path running up to the left, (don’t follow the canal towpath). Turn right at the top of the rise onto a broader track which leads to a road. Cross over and continue on the track ahead which climbs bearing left then right ❹ with tracks either side.

Your undulating route passes through coppiced woodland initially, then through older oak and beech woods. This is another area where you can expect mud after rain. Shortly before reaching a road, you’ll pass a circular brick structure on to the right of the path; this is a ventilation shaft for the railway tunnel passing beneath your feet. At the road, cross over and take the footpath ahead climbing steeply. At the top of the ascent you will meet a path running parallel to the wall ahead ❺. Turn right, to walk with the wall on your left, soon emerging from the woodland and mounting a low wall to a field edge.

Follow the path across the field climbing a stile midway, and another stile to get out of the field and onto a road on the outskirts of Frampton Mansell. Over the road, look for a squeezer stile, beyond which a narrow path runs between houses to a field. Walk along the field edge with a wall on your right to another road. Here, walk left for a few metres then take the bridleway on the right. After 650

metres the track turns left into a farmyard ❻; continue ahead for 350 metres, with the farm buildings then field wall to your left, eventually passing through a field gate onto a lane. This was the start of your outward route earlier in the day, so a left turn and a five minute walk will find you back at your starting point.





## Walk 25 – The East Mendips Mells and Nunney

**Start** Bus stop at the west end of Mells High Street (ST 726492).

**Distance** 10 miles / 16km. (Optional 7.5 miles / 12km.)

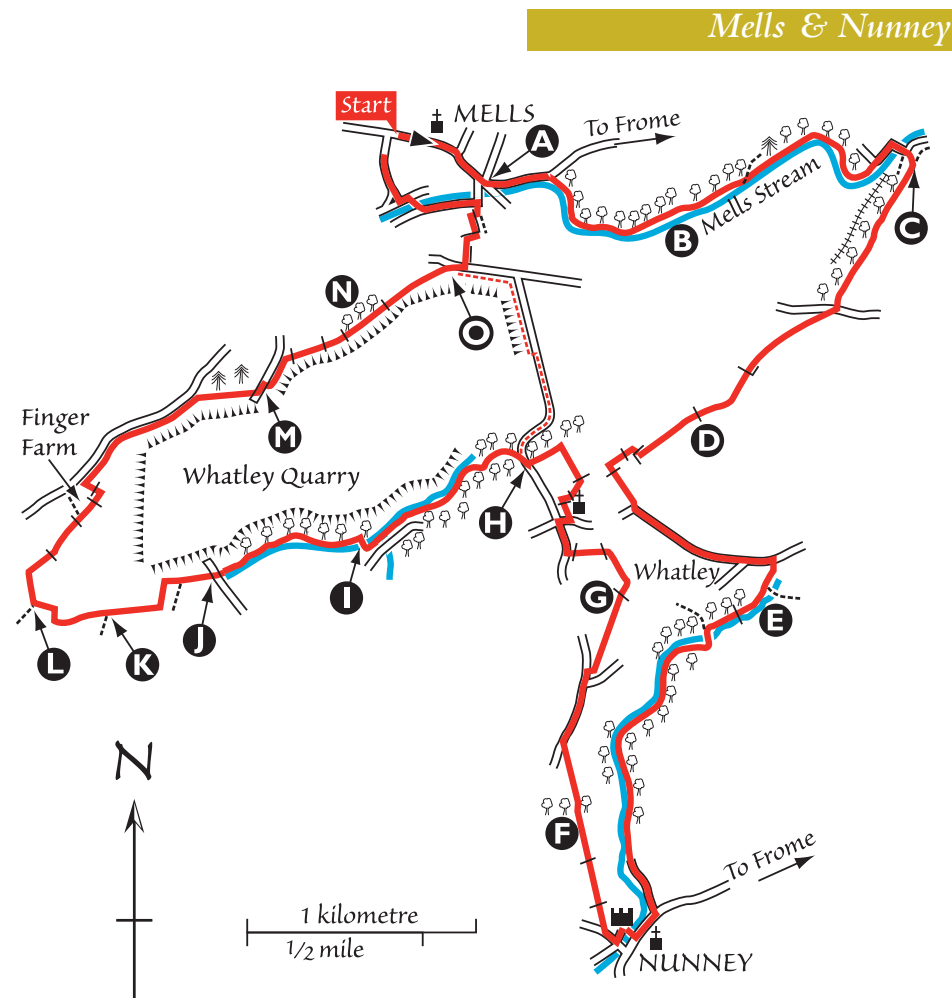
**Refreshments** Pubs at Mells and Nunney

**Getting there** A37 from Bristol to Farrington Gurney then A362 through Radstock towards Frome. Pass the B3139 on right, then take 2nd lane on right signposted Mells.

*Combes and a castle, industry ancient and modern, ducks and drakes are all seen on this lovely walk along river banks, field paths and quiet lanes. The medieval villages of Mells and Nunney are worth a visit in their own right, and their ancient hostleries should also be investigated! No major climbs, although a couple of short, steep descents using steps. Note that beyond Point E, the path along the brook may be impassable in winter. Allow roughly 5 hours for the longer route.*

This walk commences at the western end of the High Street at the road junction by a stone-built bus shelter. Start the walk heading east through the village.

*There is so much of interest to see in Mells that I have planned this walk to take in as much of the village with its 17th century limestone buildings as possible. Mells' wealth came initially from cloth-making, but from 1744 to 1844 it was an industrial centre; water in the Wadbury Valley (along which the walk leads you) that powered*



*fulling mills in the Middle Ages, now provided the power for Fussell's iron works. To your left, The entrance to Mells Manor has gate pillars by Edwin Lutyens; the Elizabethan manor and church beyond can be glimpsed from the road. A 15th century coaching inn stands on the corner of New Street; in 1470, the Abbot of Glastonbury, John Selwood planned to layout a settlement in the shape of a cross. The plan was never carried out and only New Street was built.*

As the road runs downhill, you pass the Lutyens-designed war memorial on the left, then you reach a convergence of roads, with the post office on the left **A**.

*The triangular stone structure on the right was designed by Sir Edwin Lutyens for Lady Horner, then owner of the manor, as a memorial to her son. The good Lady had water from the manor piped to various points around the village in her son's memory. The water points can be seen inside, along with engraved words by Eric Gill, the typographer and skilled letter-cutter in stone and wood, whose typefaces Gill Sans and Perpetua are used throughout the world.*

At this 6-way junction, take the second road, the first (on left) is Park Hill, the third crosses a bridge, and walk out of the village for 300 metres until the road bends left, here take a broad, surfaced bridleway on the right. Follow this, with Mells Stream soon joining on the right and as you bear round to the left, you enter a deep combe with a limestone buttress on your left; this is the Wadbury Valley. When you come



to a split in the path with a ruined building in the fork **B** take the lower, right-hand path to visit the remains of the industry that made the valley a hive of activity in the 18th and 19th centuries.

*The ironworks of James and John Fussell produced a vast array of tools for the agricultural industry, including scythes, reaphooks, spades, shovels and axes. They also manufactured water-wheels, anvils, forges, hammers and bellows. The business was a large local employer and the tools produced were exported to the far corners of the Empire. The works closed about 100 years ago and now the site is reverting back to nature, but amongst the ruins, pits where the steel was forged, hearths and kilns, as well as lengths of rail track can be discovered.*

A stroll around Fussell's iron works (Point B). Someone please phone English Heritage!

On completion of your explorations, retrace your steps to the fork in the path and this time take the higher route which runs along the back walls of the site. As you leave the last of the walls behind, you enter woodland which at various times of the year has carpets of snowdrops, celandines and bluebells. Dippers can be seen flying low over the water and in spring, the drumming of the great spotted woodpecker carries through the trees.

The path leads onto a driveway with houses high on the bank to your left. In a short distance as the drive climbs left, go ahead across a grassed area to re-enter woodland. The path weaves its way through a stand of conifers then mixed wood with the river to the right, eventually climbing away from the valley floor to reach a stone stile, beyond which, you emerge to join a lane. Walk downhill to where the lane turns right, crossing the river, which here broadens to a pool inhabited by mallards and moorhens.

*Nearby 'Jackdaws' was well known for its 'kitchen concerts' occasionally featured on television. Now, it's called 'Jackdaws Music Education Trust', furthering the aims of aspiring musicians.*

Cross the bridge and pass through the kissing gate on the right, then take the narrow path that climbs steeply up the bank immediately ahead.

*Through the trees to your right, the mineral railway of the Amey Roadstone Company carries limestone quarried at Whatley, to join the main line at Frome.*

A few minutes toil brings you to a path running along the top of the bank **C** turn right to walk above the railway uninterrupted for about 800 metres to a road, whose approach is marked by a metal gate. As you reach the road, you are in an area known as Murder Combe. The dastardly deed committed here is lost in the mists of time, but a couple of miles away is Dead Woman's Bottom...

Turn left, then cross the road to a gate and field beyond. Walk ahead, soon following the fence on the left to a gate in the far left corner. Continue ahead with the hedge on the right, over a stile **D** and onward in the same direction with the spire of Whatley Church appearing over the crest of the hill. In the field corner, cross a stile in the hedge on your right, then a few metres ahead, enter a further pasture. You now go half-left to climb a wooden stile beyond the first garden on the left. The narrow path leads you onto the driveway of a house, look for the waymarks left of the drive and follow the path, eventually emerging onto a road by the entrance to a vineyard.

Cross, and head left along the road passing on the right, a road signposted Nunney. 100 metres after this turning, beyond a farm on the right, there is a door in a high



wall with a footpath sign. This leads through shrubbery and onto a gravel drive. Follow the drive right for a few metres and where it splits, keep left, descending on a track through a car park. Beyond a wooden gate, the track bears left over a bridge, don't cross, but instead go ahead, down the bank to the right to reach Nunney Brook ❸.

You are now in Nunney Combe and before proceeding with the watercourse on your left, turn to look at the old, buttressed bridge carrying the track over the brook. Your walk now takes you through woodland, again carpeted with spring flowers, although it can be very muddy/wet in winter and overgrown in summer. Eventually, the path brings you out onto a track where a left turn will take you over the brook (difficult in winter); follow the footpath sign to the right, walking with the stream now on your right. After 700 metres, a sewage plant is passed on the right bank and soon after, you leave the confines of the wood to enter a meadow with horse jumps. At the far side, you reach a driveway with farmhouses off to the right; continue ahead until a high stone wall joins on the right. Keep to the wall and you will soon find yourself on the Frome road running through Nunney; turn right to enter the village. On your right opposite the church, Nunney Castle can be glimpsed through the trees.

*Nunney castle was built by Sir John de la Mare in 1373; a moated four-storey tower house, it was raised as a status symbol rather than a fortification. It was damaged in the civil war and left in such a weak condition that the north wall collapsed in 1910 revealing the interior. The moat is thought to be the deepest in England. However, the focal point of the village is not the castle, but the little market place beside the brook. Here, in the days of cloth-making, was 'a pavement and place to wash wool'. The market cross stands here now; stop to read its history on the metal plaque.*

Continue along the road but before reaching the George Inn, take a lane on the right and cross a footbridge to reach the castle, where you can walk around the perimeter. Unless visiting the hostelry, leave the castle along the lane opposite, passing a chapel on the left. Turn right at the road junction and walk up the hill for a few metres until you reach a layby on the right and a wooden kissing gate. Go through and follow the tarmac path, forking right to a further kissing gate which gives access to a field. Keep to the fence on the right, looking back to view the castle and church beyond.

After passing through another gate, walk ahead aiming for a lone tree in the centre of the field surrounded by horse jumps. Keep this to your right and continue, to climb the bank ahead ❹ to a further field, then continue in the same direction passing the nearest electricity pole to your right to reach the far left corner of the field.

Climb the stile and walk right, along the road (this is a particularly busy stretch during weekdays when the quarry is operating). After 300 metres, you pass a turning right and bungalow on the left. Continue a short distance further, then climb a stile on the right into pasture. Cross the field aiming for the large, gnarled tree ahead and having reached this, look down in the hollow ahead for a metal kissing gate in the hedge ❺. Pass through, and climb the field keeping to the hedge on the left until you reach a stile, just before power lines. Cross over, and walk towards the green slurry tank at the far side of the field. Pass to the left of it and climb the stile by the metal field gate, then go ahead a few yards to climb another which give access to the road, here bypassed. Turn right and proceed to the cross roads where you go right, then left into the churchyard. Take the path running behind the church (which is usually locked), through a gate, go right and through another, then proceed to the stile half-left, but not before stopping to look at the fine old farm buildings to your left. Once over this stile, head straight across the field towards the trees on the far side and when these are reached, go left until you reach the field corner where you climb the stile and take the steep steps down to the road ❻.

Here, you must make a decision! You have almost four miles still to walk, much of it on a meandering diversion around the recently extended Whatley Quarry. If you would prefer to shorten the walk by 2.5 miles, then you must follow the road for almost half a mile as it descends right, passing the quarry entrance, until you pick up a footpath between the quarry embankment and the road. Keep to the path as it turns left at a road junction as far as the stile at ❼.

If your choice is the complete circuit, cross with care and go right for a short distance to a footpath sign with steps climbing the bank on the left. Follow the winding path through the trees, passing a large water tank on the right, then keeping more or less to the fence on the left until a waymark post directs you half right towards the quarry, descending steeply via a set of steps to the stream in the valley bottom with the quarry visible ahead through the trees. Follow the path through a coppice with the stream on the right for about 400 metres until the path begins to climb away to the left and here, climb the stile in the wire fence on the right, into a meadow. Walk left across the field towards the wall and road, where you cross a stream then turn right to follow it, now to your right. Turn left at the bottom of the field (don't cross the stile) and walk with the boundary on the right. Before you reach the end of the field, look for a stile and footbridge crossing the stream to your right ❶ (obscured by brambles in late summer).

You now enter a world of moss-covered boulders, where several species of fern, including the polypody and hartstongue thrive in the shady, damp terrain. Follow the valley bottom with the stream to your left and in a short distance you will reach



a restored section of path over what was until recently, very difficult terrain. Your undulating route twists and turns under a canopy of predominately oak trees until you reach a more open area where the inhospitable quarry fence becomes your guide.

When you get to Chantry Lane **J** you must now cross to a new bridleway. Follow this broad route, going left, then right and passing a waymarked stile on the left **K**. Continue along the bridleway to a junction **L** where you keep right, and after a further right bend, you pass through a 2-in-1 field gate to reach Finger Farm. Beyond the farm, pass through two further 2-in-1s as the bridleway turns left and then right, now running parallel with a lane. Eventually, you pass through a belt of trees to reach Chantry Lane again **M**.

Turn left, then in a few paces climb the stile on the right. Now go left towards a green-roofed barn, then over another stile by a metal gate into what can only be described as a farm wasteland. Keeping the quarry to the right, pass a large barn on the left then climb a stile in the fence ahead and continue to a further stile then onward, to yet another which gives access to a copse, home to many rabbits **N**. As you leave the woodland by way of yet another stile, you may wish to climb the banking on your right to view the desolation that is Whatley Quarry, otherwise, go ahead over grassland following the power lines until you reach a stile by a road **O**. The shorter route meets here, approaching from the opposite direction.

Cross the road bearing slightly right to a stile in the hedge; over this, then head down the field towards a hedge corner. Here, a waymark sign directs you to the right, along the hedge, to reach a substantial squeezer stile on the left. Pass through then go down the field with the hedge on your right to the bottom corner where a similar stile brings you out onto a lane.

*This lane was the old road to Whatley which ran up the hill parallel to the downward route you have just taken. The road was downgraded to a footpath in 1840. The terraced cottages on your left are almshouses, built in 1708 to house four men and four women, at a cost of about £120.*

At the corner of the lane turn left and proceed with Mells Stream below to the right. In 300 metres, opposite Old Prospect Farm on the left, a surfaced path on the right drops down away from the road by Brook Cottage, take this to reach the stream which you cross by way of a metal footbridge, to arrive at a lane. Turn left and almost immediately, go right, to climb the hill.

*There are delightful cottages along this lane and on the left, look for the 18th century lock-up. Further up the lane, Poyntz House was once the home of a wealthy 17th century clothier. Near the top of the lane, the high stone wall on the right belongs to the 18th century rectory, which can be glimpsed along its entrance drive before the road junction is reached.*

Continue to reach the stone bus shelter on the main road, your starting point.



## Walk 26 – The Limpley Stoke Valley Bath to Bradford-on-Avon

**Start** Rear of Bath Spa station (ST 752643).

**Distance** 10 miles / 16km (may be shortened to 5.5 miles / 9km).

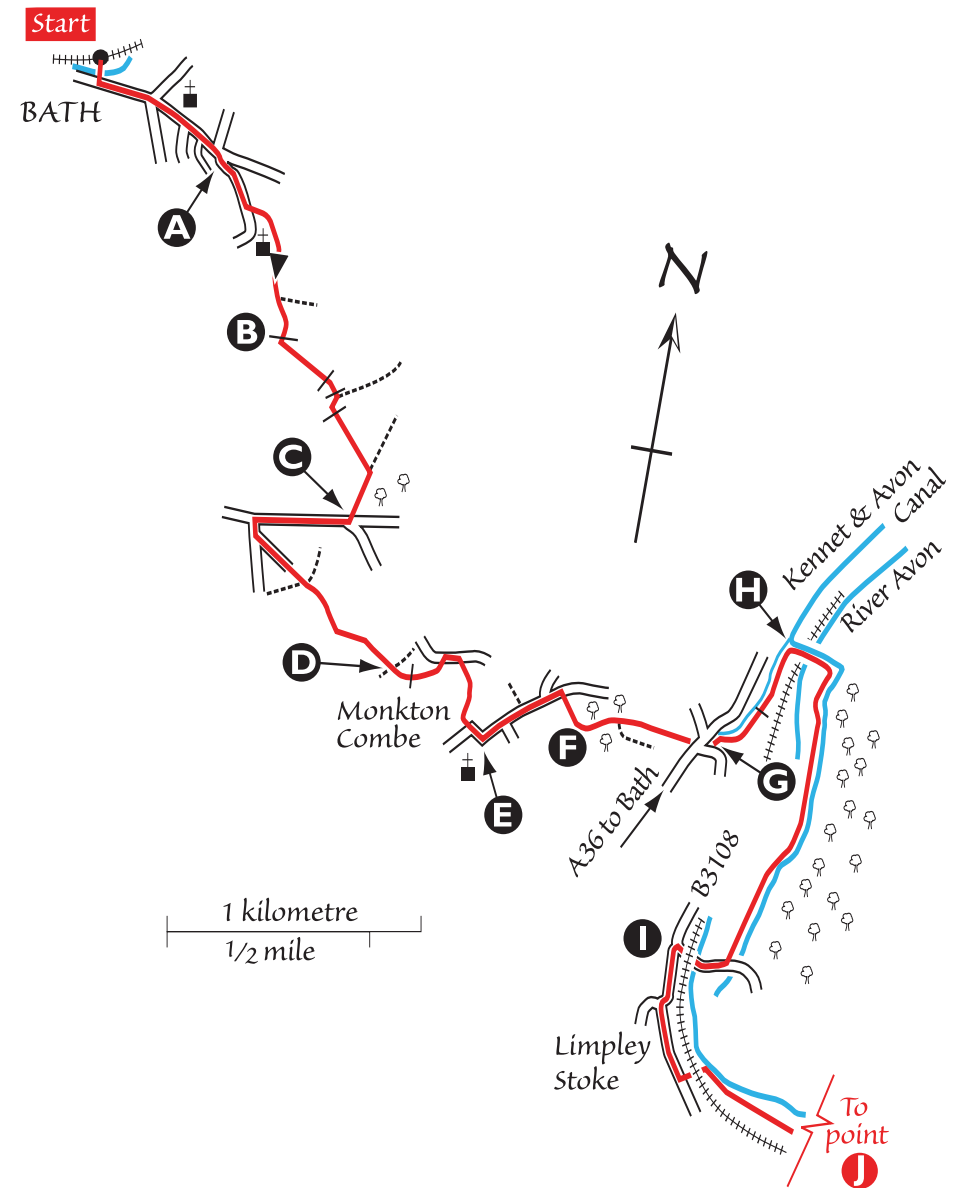
**Refreshments** Pubs at Monkton Combe, Limpley Stoke, Freshford (recommended) and Avoncliff. Cafés at Dundas, Avoncliff and Bradford.

**Getting there** Various bus and rail possibilities. Car parking near the station (cheaper on Sunday). Take the access road running beneath the station to the foot-bridge at the start of the walk.

*A linear walk in pretty countryside looking at the remnants of the woollen and associated industries that brought wealth to the villages through which you pass. A fairly easy walk (just a couple of climbs), which can be shortened by returning by bus or train from Freshford. Note that you should check the return train times from Bradford-on-Avon (or Freshford) before setting out! Allow 4.5-5 hours plus stops.*

The walk starts at the rear of Bath station where you take the metal footbridge across the Avon. Use the pedestrian lights to cross both carriageways of the road ahead then turn left along Claverton Street, crossing Prior Park Road and turning into Widcombe Hill by the White Hart pub. Pass St Matthew's Church on the left and minor roads left and right, then turn right into Church Street (A). When you reach the War Memorial in front of the church, fork left into Church Lane pausing at the gate to Prior Park to view the Palladian bridge ahead. Continue now on the rough-

## The Limpley Stoke Valley



ly surfaced track to the left of the park, this becomes a path which you take steeply up to the right ignoring a gate and stile on the left, to reach a squeezer stile ❸. Take the grassy path half-left up the field ahead pausing for breath and taking in the fine views back to the city. Go through the right-hand of a pair of wooden field gates and climb to the top of the field to cross a stile by a National Trust sign. Follow the path up to the right for a few metres to a gate with playing fields beyond; walk across the field to the far right corner where a lane leads you to a road ❹.

Turn right and walk along the road turning left into Tynning Road then immediately left again into Gladstone Road. At the end of the road follow the footpath to a road with allotments on the left and school playing fields on your right; here go ahead keeping the allotments to your left to reach the school entrance where you continue along footpath. After a jink to the left, the path passes playing fields on your left and when you reach a junction of lanes ❺ go straight ahead passing a sign to Mount Pleasant and turning left in a short distance through a kissing gate. Follow the stone-walled footpath to a lane where you turn right to a footpath sign by a wooden seat; you may wish to take a breather here and admire the view over Monkton Combe.

*In the Domesday Book, the village is referred to as Cume, meaning valley. 'Monkton' was added as from ancient times it was monastic property. For five centuries the monks farmed in the valley, carrying the produce up a path known as the 'Drung' to the grange on the hill above. The Drungway is a fragment of an old road running between Bath and Warminster and is the path you are about to take downhill. The school was founded in the 19th century by the Rev. Francis Pocock, who also rebuilt the church and built a vicarage for himself – presumably, he had helpers...*

When refreshed, take the stepped path, The Drungway, down to the village going ahead at the lane for a few metres then turning left ❻. Follow the road through the village passing the school on the right and when you reach the far end of the (modern) buildings follow the footpath sign to the right, down the side of the school, then ahead descending a gravel path with the school sports centre on the left. At the back of the building the path enters woodland, reaching a lane via a set of steps ❼. Cross over and go left along the broad track, the course of an old railway.

*Here, ran the Camerton & Limpley Stoke Railway, opened in 1910 to carry coal from Camerton and Dunkerton collieries, and passengers between Hallatrow and Limpley Stoke. Dunkerton colliery closed in the 1920s and Camerton in 1950, after which passenger traffic alone wasn't enough to save the line which closed in 1951. It did come briefly to life a few years later in the film 'The Titfield Thunderbolt' the story of a village about to lose its railway and the villagers who try to run it themselves. Monkton Combe station was used and Freshford became Titfield Village.*

At the end of the track continue in the same direction along the lane ignoring the footpath sign pointing right towards the cricket pitch. This old trackbed leads you beneath the bridge carrying the A36 road to reach an open area with a minor road on your right. Go left, then left again to the car park of the boatyard to arrive at the Somerset Coal Canal ❹.

*Construction started on the canal in 1794 and for over 50 years barges laden with coal from the Somerset mines negotiated the narrow waterway to reach the Kennet & Avon Canal. The days of the canals were short-lived however, as the railways were in the ascendancy and the Canal was sold to the Great Western Railway in 1898, the Camerton & Limpley Stoke Railway being built following its course. This small section has been recently restored and courtesy of the Bath & Dundas Canal Company, walkers can follow a Permissive Path for a few metres along its course where a variety of narrow boats are now moored.*

Follow the canal towpath passing chandlery and café on the right and continue through the security gate to a sign directing you down to the right. Take this to reach the Kennet and Avon Canal by Dundas Wharf and the aqueduct, turning left briefly to view the entrance of the Coal Canal ❺. (See walk 23 for information about the Canal.) Your route now takes you over the aqueduct crossing both the railway and the River Avon, and along the towpath for 1300 metres to reach the bridge at Limpley Stoke. Leave the canal here and climb up onto the road where you walk right, crossing the bridge over the Avon after which you need to reach the opposite side of the road with care, before walking beneath the railway bridge and turning left to Limpley Stoke village ❶.

*A health resort, the 'West of England Hydropathic Establishment' was founded here in 1860 and advertised as being three minutes walk from the station. The resort is now the Limpley Stoke Hotel and the station closed in 1965 although it once had numerous sidings to cater for the huge quantities of coal, transported from the Somerset coalfields, and stone from local quarries. During the First World War, the sidings were used for hospital trains from Southampton which would wait there overnight before taking the wounded soldiers to hospitals in Bristol and Bath. Like many villages in the valley between the 14th and 19th centuries, Limpley Stoke became prosperous through the woollen industry, which relocated from the towns to the rural villages along the river valley where weirs and millstreams were created to drive the water-wheels. There are weavers' cottages here that date back over 450 years and the Hop Pole Inn, originally a monks' wine house dates from 1580. Limpley Stoke's mill, built in the early 17th century, was sold in 1875 to a timber merchant who began to manufacture rubber in part of the building; within five years the India rubber company was formed, becoming The Avon Rubber Company in 1895.*



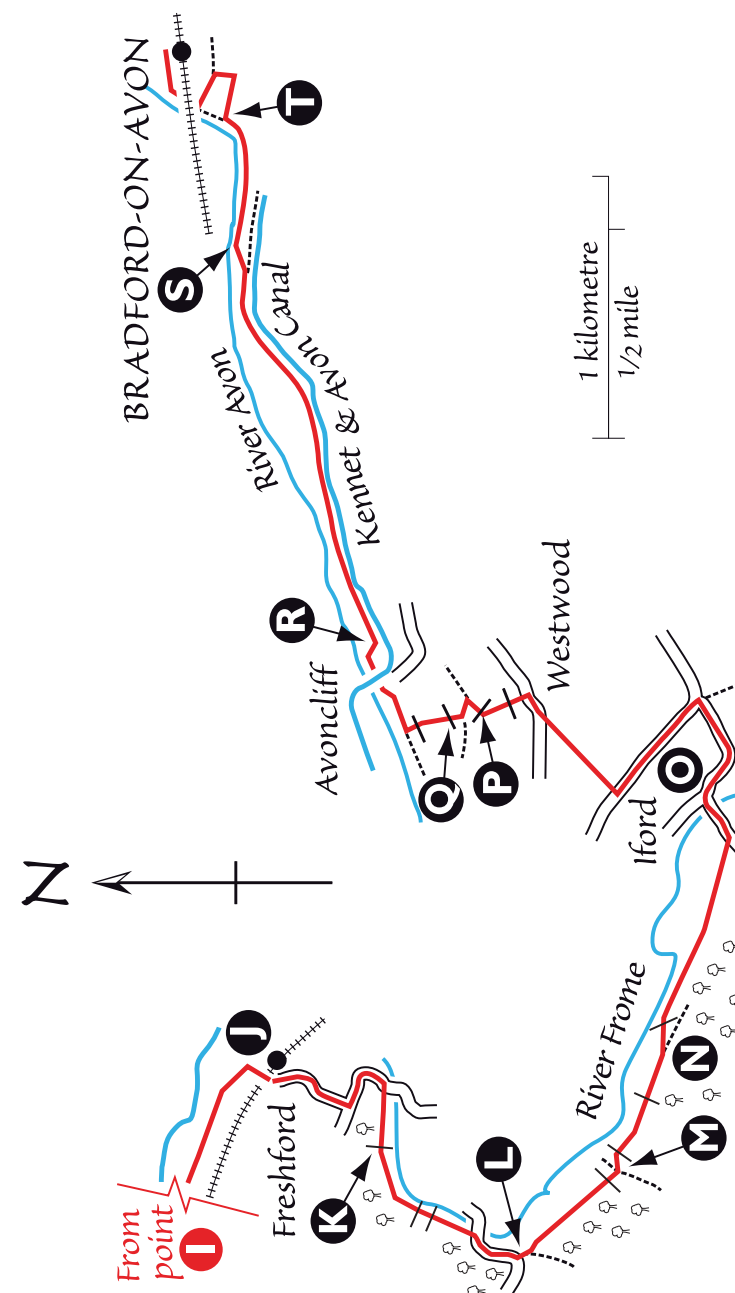
Follow the road with the disused station on the left then the Hop Pole Inn up to your right. Continue through the village for 300 metres then turn left along the lane signed Freshford (before the road ahead starts to climb). Beyond the railway bridge, cross a stile and turn right, then walk parallel with the river keeping to the higher ground as this area can be quite marshy after rain. Continue for 800 metres to reach a water treatment plant on the left where you join a track leading you up to the right and Freshford station ❶. Cross the railway by footbridge (walkers wishing to end their ramble here can flag down a train and return to Bath).

*Freshford stands on the confluence of the Rivers Frome and Avon and is another village that gained wealth and a rising population through the cloth industry; many of the houses with their substantial gardens were built with 'wool money'.*

Beyond the station, follow the lane to the village, turning left at the road junction and walking downhill where, beyond a bend to the right, you pass 'The Inn'. Ahead, the road crosses the river but before this, turn right, through a metal kissing gate into a meadow and take the path climbing up to the right through trees to reach a second gate ❷. Now go left, losing the height you have just gained, with the Frome down to your left. Follow the path through two kissing gates and a meadow to a road with a bridge and Freshford Mill on your left. Go right for 150 metres to Dunkirk Mill Cottage ❸. Here, as the road bends to the right, take the track to the left and follow it to the Mill entrance where you turn left and walk along a bridleway, with the River Frome down to your left.

*The scene across the meadows has not always been so tranquil. Freshford Mill, built below the weir to harness the fast flowing water, has been a place of employment for almost 1000 years, latterly for the manufacture of rubber and polymers. Though it is now empty, it employed ninety two people in 1816 and made this an area of high pollution with noise from the machines all day and night, the smell of lanolin from the wool and urine used for scouring the cloth, as well as the froth and dye poisoning the water. These fields were draped with cloth being stretched on wooden racks, and devices to wash the scouring substances from the wool were built across the river. At the same time, Dunkirk Mill, now restored as private residences, employed around eighty people. The original mill had gone by the late 18th century but a 9.75 metre water-wheel was installed in the present building, replaced in 1856 by a steam engine. The mill closed in 1912 and fell into disrepair until restoration in the 1980s.*

*It is interesting to view the contribution of the 21st century to this scene: the fast flowing water now supports a hydroelectric generator with Archimedean screw. A good view of this is obtained from the path.*



Pass through a field gate and follow the path down to a driveway keeping the wire fence to your left, with a cottage up to your right. At the drive **M** turn left then immediately right along a field track between two stone boulders. Follow this track to a stile by a field gate. Continue ahead to the lower corner of the field, going through a kissing gate to reach a broad path through a wood. After about 200 metres follow a waymark arrow down left **N** to a further gate and into a meadow where you turn right. Walk the length of this meadow aiming for the house ahead, Iford Mill, passing to the right of it to reach a lane; turn left, and follow the lane to Iford Manor **O**.

*The manor house was built around 1480 and extended in the 16th century. Harold Peto the architect, bought the house and designed the Italianate gardens that are periodically open to the public.*

Beyond the river, turn right and follow the lane as it climbs steeply to reach a road junction. Turn left, walking for 400 metres and just before the road bends slightly left, look for a bridleway off to the right signposted Upper Westwood (this can be overgrown in summer and muddy in winter). Follow this to reach a road; turn



Iford Manor, from the 14th century bridge over the River Frome. The figure on the bridge is of Britannia and is an 18th century sculpture from Dorset that Peto gave to the county of Somerset.

right and walk past two cottages on the left, then turn left down a track by a wooden electricity pole. Go through the gate and head down the field keeping to the right boundary and looking for a kissing gate where steps with an iron hand rail are visible beyond **P**. Descend to a sunken lane that you follow back left, then go right with the lane, ignoring the gate on the bend, to reach a broad stone stile at the lane end. Cross into a meadow **Q** and head down towards the corrugated buildings on the right, then on to a gate beyond. Go through and follow the track, soon turning right, and passing the buildings of Ancliff Square on your right.

*Built as a group of weavers' cottages in the late 1770's these buildings became the Bradford Union Work House from 1836 to 1914. In 1841 alone, 400 paupers, skilled workers from the then ailing wool trade, were admitted here. During the 1914-18 war, it was a convalescent home for wounded soldiers, then the building was converted and used as a residential Hotel, 'The Old Court', between 1922 and 1948. A further conversion in 1952 to 14 self contained flats lasted until 1987 when the site was developed into 12 separate houses. Changing it's name to Ancliff Square.*

Continue to Avoncliff Aqueduct where you drop down left to pass beneath the arch to reach the 17th century Cross Guns pub **R**.

From the pub, walk up on to the aqueduct and turn left following the towpath with the canal to your right. Walk for about 1200 metres to reach a footbridge and here, take the surfaced driveway down to the left to enter Barton Manor Country Park, continuing with the River Avon on your left **S**. Eventually, the drive bears left with picnic tables on the grass to your right. Now go right **T** over the grass and through the gateway in the wall to reach the 14th century tithe barn where an information board explains the history of the farm and surrounding parkland.

With your back to the barn entrance, walk ahead passing other farm buildings, now used as craft shops, then Barton Farm on your left. When you reach the driveway turn left passing the front of the farmhouse then go right along a surfaced path with a play area on the right, coming alongside the river and passing underneath the railway. Take the tarmac path right, up to the car park and walk to the far end to enter the station, crossing the footbridge to await your transport back to Bath.



## Walk 27 – Avebury A Stone-Age Perambulation

**Start** Silbury Hill car park near Avebury, (SU 098685).

**Distance** 11 miles / 17.6km. (Can be shortened to 7 miles / 11km.)

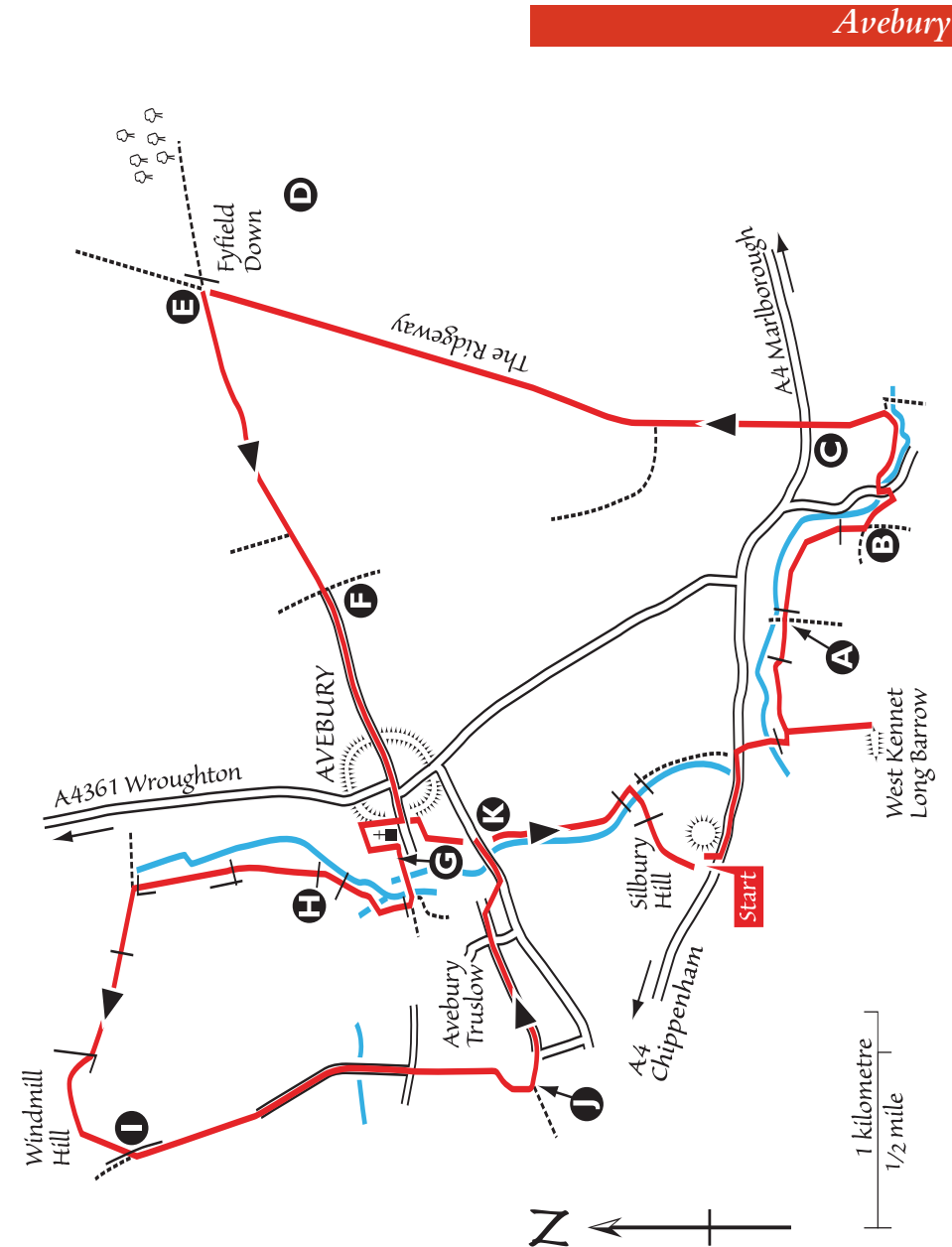
**Refreshments** Shops, café and pub in Avebury.

**Getting there** M4 Junction 16, B4005 to Wroughton, then south on A4361 to Beckhampton Roundabout, where first left onto A4. Car Park on left just before Silbury Hill Alternatively, A420 Bristol to Chippenham, then A4.

*A wonderful walk for all times of the year, although exposed on the Downs in winter. No steep gradients but a couple of gentle climbs with most of the walking on good tracks and field paths. Many interesting sites (and sights), so allow 5 hours, plus plenty of time to browse around Avebury Village.*

Before leaving the car park, walk to the viewing point overlooking Silbury Hill.

*The Hill was constructed in three phases from 2700BC to 2300BC, around the same time as the pyramids. It is regarded as the most enigmatic and mysterious Neolithic site in Europe (nothing has been found inside the mound despite recent excavations to stabilise the site), and is certainly the largest man-made structure, being 40 metres high with a base area of over 2 hectares. However, the most impressive statistic is that*





*working full-time, it would have taken 700 men ten years to complete – barring strikes and other industrial unrest!*

Now head for the busy road and turn left, walking along the pavement passing the hill. Cross the road when necessary and continue to reach a gate signed 'West Kennet Long Barrow'. Go through and follow the path over a brick bridge, through a gate, then go left to reach a broad, grass path. Follow this up the hillside to reach West Kennet Barrow.

*At weekends, a steady procession of sightseers can be found trooping up and down the path, the mystery of the restored edifice enough to tempt them from the warmth of their cars. They also put paid to any remaining hopes of a mystical experience amidst the ghosts of the Stone-Age farmers laid to rest here. Their bodies decayed slowly until the flesh had dropped off the bones, at which point some lucky soul entered the tombs and tidy up, ready for the next interment.*

*Inside the tomb, there are four side chambers accessed from a central passage, plus a larger one at the end. The barrow has a total length of 100 metres and is 25 metres wide, yet the chambers only penetrate about 8 metres into the mound; what lies beyond is anyone's guess. Construction had begun around 3600BC, but the tomb was only finally sealed fourteen hundred years later. That's an awful lot of decay! The illumi-*



Silbury Hill



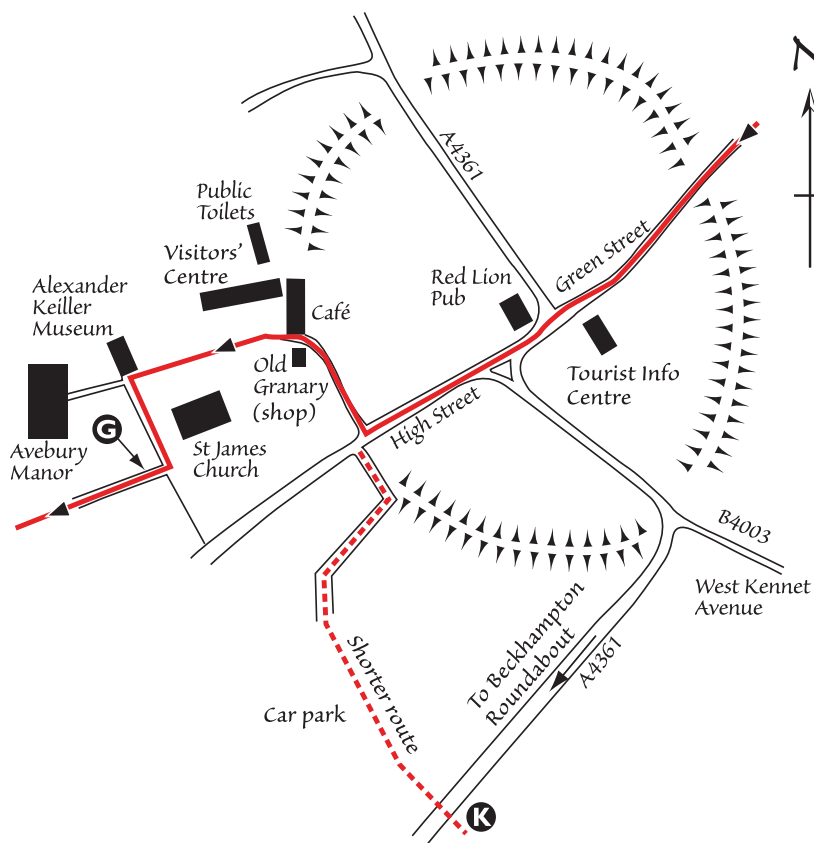
Inside West Kennet Long Barrow

*nation inside now comes from a couple of thick glass skylights built into the roof during restoration after scientific excavation in 1956, when numerous skeletons were found.*

Retrace your steps now to the bottom of the hill and turn right along the field-edge path, following it to a stile. Cross to a track and continue in the same direction to reach a lane **A**. Climb the stile on the far side into a meadow, then walk ahead, boundary right, eventually climbing another stile. Beyond, follow a hedge-lined path, emerging onto a track junction where you turn left **B**.

Follow the track, becoming a driveway, to a road with a brick-built sewage pumping station on the left. Turn left, crossing the bridge, then immediately right, follow the field edge with a stream away to your right. Beyond a field gate (usually open), turn left at a junction and climb the hillside, boundary left, to reach a road, where you pass through a gate on your left to enter the site of The Sanctuary **C**.

*Given this name in the 18th century, the first construction began around 3000BC and consisted of roofed, circular buildings, one replacing another on the same site over a period of several hundred years. The site was eventually linked to Avebury by an avenue of about 100 pairs of standing stones, of which few now survive. The function of this structure seems to be a mystery, but excavation suggests that it eventually became a*



Large scale map of Avebury village with walking route indicated.

*centre for some type of mortuary practice. Today, the site is confusingly marked out with concrete posts and slabs, indicating where the supports for the various huts stood.*

Leaving the Sanctuary, cross the road with extreme care to the start of the Ridgeway. This 137 kilometre National Trail largely keeps to the line of a prehistoric ridge track, one of many that followed natural ways along the contours of high ground avoiding forested and poorly drained lowlands. You follow this, climbing gently, for almost two miles. It is easy walking although in places the ground has been rutted by the 4-wheel drive vehicles that use the route in the summer months. There are good views to either side with numerous earthworks to be seen if you look carefully. The first are on the right, where an information board explains their origin, while if you look across the fields to the left, the clusters of trees all have tumuli beneath them. As the walk

progresses, you will see away to your right, scattered grey boulders on the downland ① these are Sarsen Stones (the ones that move are sheep).

*50-70 million years ago, hard sandstone was formed above the chalk layer of the Marlborough Downs and following geological movement and weathering, this sandstone was broken into blocks and deposited over the chalk downland. Known as Sarsens, they occur widely in Wessex but their greatest concentration is on the North Wiltshire Downs. They provided a local supply of suitable material for Neolithic megaliths, as standing stones and chambered tombs, and also as grindstones for stone tools, as well as Avebury's circles.*

Eventually, you reach a junction of tracks, with a gate and information board on your right, and a signpost directing you left to Avebury village ②. You have an easy descent of almost a mile on this broad track, called Green Street, before reaching a tarmac surface ③. This byway then cuts through the embankment of the henge as you arrive in Avebury and pass the Tourist Information Centre on the left. The Red Lion Pub is over to your right, an excuse to revert to the shorter route, and continuing into the High Street, there are good views of the stone circles to your left.

*Avebury henge is one of the largest and certainly the most complex of all the stone circles surviving today. The outer ditch was originally up to 10 metres deep and 21 metres wide, with a diameter of 350 metres. It is estimated that at least 247 huge stones formed an outer and two inner circles, all this achieved with the crudest of tools fashioned from wood and animal bones between 4300 and 4700 years ago.*

Take a lane right signed 'Cafe and Visitors' Centre, to reach what was originally the farmyard of Avebury Manor Farm. Here is also to be found the ubiquitous National Trust shop. Toilets are behind the 17th century thatched threshing barn, now the 'Avebury Experience', while on the left stands the circular dovecote, that housed up to 500 pigeons, bred as a source of meat during the winter months. Ahead lies a museum, manor house and gardens and the church round the corner to the left.

*Avebury Manor, a regularly altered house of monastic origins, is owned by the National Trust. The present building dates from the early 16th century and has notable Queen Anne alterations and Edwardian renovations. The Edwardian topiary and flower gardens contain medieval walls and both the house and gardens are open (seasonally) to the public. Next to the entrance is the Alexander Keiller museum housing archaeological artifacts excavated in and around Avebury. Keiller, an amateur archaeologist and heir to the Dundee marmalade firm purchased Windmill Hill after the first World War to stop Marconi, the wireless pioneer, building a relay station there. Having acquired the Hill, Keiller started excavations and when he bought the*



*Manor in 1934 he moved his private museum to the coach house. This museum is open throughout the year.*

*The church is worth a brief visit; it is thought to have been built around 1000AD and still retains a number of Anglo-Saxon features plus an extremely rare 15th century rood-loft where the Great Rood, a large crucifix, was placed. You may be surprised at its shape when you see the interior and the porch makes a welcome shelter in inclement weather.*

If you are opting for the shorter route, make your way to the National Trust car park, walk through to the road, then cross with care to reach ❶ then follow the main narrative.

Those on the full circuit will leave the village via the churchyard, following the wall on the right until you reach the exit. Now walk with the wall of Avebury Manor on your right ❷ to join a metalled driveway by whitewashed cottages. Continue ahead, the drive becoming a path again, and beyond the white-railed footbridge bear right at a junction.

*The moated farmhouse on your left belonged to the Truslow family, wealthy landowners until they left the area in the early 18th century. The hamlet of Avebury Truslow will be passed later in the walk. After heavy rain, the dry moat fills to the brim with water from the nearby Kennet.*

Leave the tarmac footpath via a stile on the right and cross the meadow to a sturdy footbridge. Go over, then walk ahead to climb a stile into a further meadow (these fields may be waterlogged in winter). Continue in the same direction and over another stile ❸. Beyond a further set of stiles, walk with the boundary left to a final stile by a field gate. Once over, walk left along the track that climbs to Windmill Hill, passing through a metal gate. The track ends at a wooden gate by an information board that makes some sense of the area you are about to enter.

*Windmill Hill, though sometimes referred to as a Neolithic fort because of the ditches surrounding it, wasn't used as fortress at all. It is thought that festivals and markets took place here during the summer months, the rest of the year given over to death and burial rituals. Proof of the latter events was found during excavation of some of the ditches. Many human and animal bones were uncovered, the bodies left in a nearby mortuary house until the flesh rotted, when the bones were removed to the ditches. Construction here started around 3700BC but a mere 1000 years later its use declined – around the same time that the Avebury circles were started.*

Head for the first of the round barrows, from where you can get your bearings. You need to cross the site aiming half-left and picking up an indistinct grassy track that leads you down to a gate ❹. Go through and turn left down the track. Easy downhill walking again now, with fine views away to the right where Lansdowne Column can be seen on Cherhill Down. The track becomes a lane and you continue, eventually arriving at a junction of metalled lanes. Keep going in the same direction, passing between farm buildings and now on a broad, grassy bridleway. As the track bears right, look in the field on the left to see two standing stones.

*These stones are all that remains of an avenue of megaliths that stretched from here back to the great henge in Avebury. It is thought that all the stones would have been visible until the end of the 12th century when Christianity was struggling to make a comeback and such pagan monuments as the stone circle and the two avenues of stones that ran southwest and south-east from it were all but destroyed. Thirty stones were recorded as standing on this, the Beckhampton Avenue, in the early part of the 18th century but the others were broken up for building material.*

When you reach a junction ❺ turn left and walk with the stones again on your left for 150 metres until with a conifer hedge right, you get to a lane. Keep in the same direction to enter the hamlet of Avebury Truslow. Walk along South Street with its interesting mix of old and new dwellings, then straight on over crossroads. As you approach the end of this road, look for a stile in the fence on the right, climb over and head half-left over undulating grassland to another stile on the far side, giving access to the busy A4361. Turn left, you have 250 metres of this road to negotiate, so keep close to the rough grass verge or preferably on it. Pass over New Bridge which spans the River Kennet then look across to the right for a gateway (before the car park is reached on the left). Cross with care to the gate ❻. The shorter route joins here.

Pass through the gate and follow the path, this final stretch of the walk takes you back to the car park and Silbury Hill, following for the most part the River Kennet that at this point in summer is usually a dried up, reed-choked ditch, whilst in winter it flows fast and free. The path is easily followed now, keeping close to the river bank with fields to your left. On reaching a gate, go through and turn right to cross a bridge. Pass through another gate, then follow the path as it steers you back to your starting point.





## Walk 28 – South Wales Mynydd Machen

**Start** Machen village car park, bottom of Forge Road, (ST 209890).

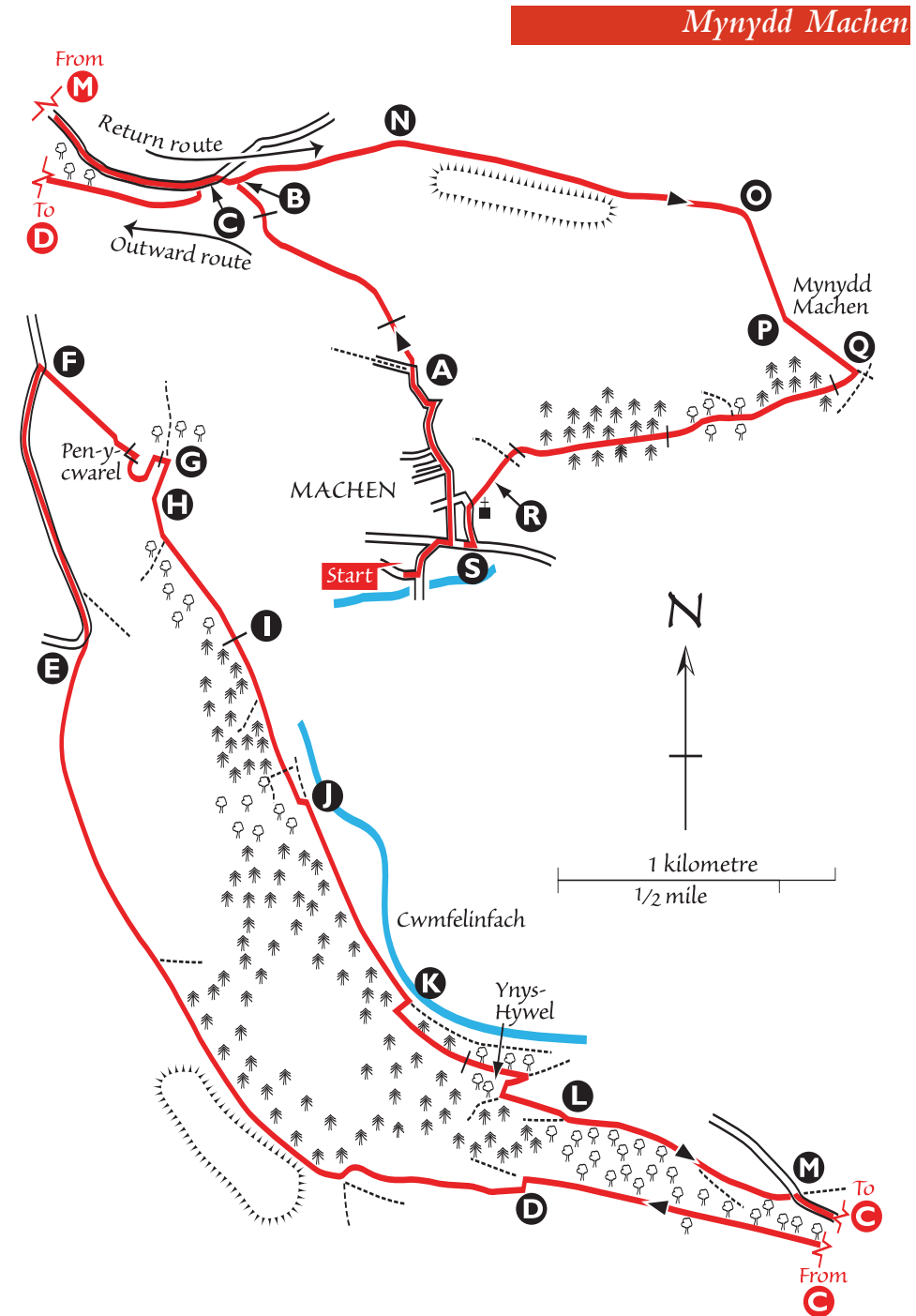
**Distance** 11 miles / 17.5km. (Optional route 4.25miles / 6.75km.)

**Refreshments** Ynys Hywel Visitors' Centre, (weekends, April - Sept).

**Getting there** M4 west to junction 28 then north on A467 and west on A468 to Machen. In village, left into Forge Road, then right to car park.

*A strenuous, but extremely rewarding walk in the Welsh hills where steep beech woodlands merge into panoramic hill tops with a mixture of short road sections, footpaths and bridleways, generally free of mud, and with few stiles. However, there are several steep climbs, one of them lengthy and as part of the route is over exposed hill-tops, waterproofs, warm clothes, food and drink are essential. This isn't a walk to be hurried, so give yourself around 6 hours plus stops.*

For car drivers, this walk begins at the public car park in The Crescent, above the Rhymney River. Walk back up Forge Road then right into Commercial Street, the main road from Newport to Caerphilly. Cross over and take the first left, Lewis Street, then start climbing! A useful excuse to pause for breath is to peer over the parapet of the old railway bridge; the amount of development on the track-bed shows that this Newport to Caerphilly line has long been closed. Beyond the bridge, Lewis Street becomes Penrhiw Lane, carry on for about 350 metres to a sharp left-right bend. A few metres further the houses are replaced by meadows and distant hills come into view.



Where the lane makes a sharp turn to the left opposite a metal field gate<sup>A</sup> take the stony track ahead, passing through a metal gate 200 metres further. As the gradient eases, you have fine views southwest across the valley to Caerphilly. Continue through a metal field gate whence the track runs between stone walls beneath a canopy of beech trees, losing height and soon meeting a broader track<sup>B</sup>.

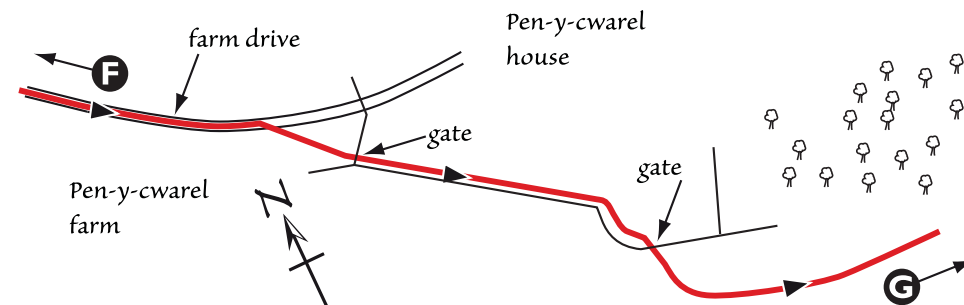
*(If you are short of time, a right turn here will set you on course for the shortened version of the walk, in which case jump ahead to point<sup>C</sup> further on in this narrative.)*

Everyone else will turn left and in 75 metres cross a cattle grid on a tarmac lane<sup>C</sup>. A few paces further, leave the lane to take a track up to the left, crossing another cattle grid. You have easy walking now on a gently climbing route for 1400 metres with a lovely wood of oak and beech down to your right. *This is an ancient, semi-natural woodland, which is being conserved to encourage the return of wildlife and to protect the trees.* Ignore a number of paths joining the track from both sides until you eventually reach an obvious left turn immediately followed by a right<sup>D</sup> beyond which you cross a cattle grid. Continue ahead, aiming for the conifer plantation and the spoil tip to its left.

*Flocks of birds, mainly tits and goldcrests inhabit these woods whilst stonechats are frequently seen flitting between the gorse bushes that line the track at intervals.*

As you reach the trees, the track climbs up to the left to a broad junction; turn right to walk between the spoil tip on the left and the conifers on the right. When the tip is left behind, there are open views ahead and to the left where the conical waste heaps of the old Llanbradach colliery can be seen over three kilometres distant across the Rhymney Valley. Continue ahead across open country with a wall to your right, heading for a radio mast on the skyline. The sport of fly-tipping, which is popular across much of south-east Wales is practiced regularly around here, it never ceases to amaze how far people will drive to dump a mattress or even a car!

As you come abreast of the mast<sup>E</sup> keep to the wall where your track will soon be replaced by a metalled road joining from the left. Follow it downhill and through a kissing gate by a parking area, ignoring a lane coming in from the right. After passing derelict quarry buildings on the left, the road bears gradually right; look out now for a farm drive on the right, just before the road starts to climb<sup>F</sup>. This has an unmissable 'no entry' road sign. Take this driveway, the name 'Pen-y-cwarel' is just discernible on the gatepost, passing farm buildings on your right, to reach a wooden gate and a house beyond. To the right by the wall, is a smaller gate, pass through this and go ahead, keeping close to the right-hand wall and respecting the privacy of the owners of the garden through which you are now walking. (Note that there have been issues with aggressive dogs running free in the garden (see the Walk West web site 2004 edition for



Detail of route between points F & G, passing Pen-y-cwarel house

further details.) When you reach a gate in the wall, go through to leave the garden, then look half-left for a little-used grassy track (overgrown with nettles in summer); take this, descending as the track bears left below the boundary of the garden and passing a rocky outcrop to reach a stile<sup>G</sup>. Cross over and descend to a path where you turn right.

You are now on the Sirhowy Valley Walk, a 42 kilometre path from Newport to Tredegar. The path at this point can be indistinct for much of the year, but walk a more or less level route for a short distance to an open area with a low, wire fence a few metres to your right<sup>H</sup>. (In high summer, bracken and purple loosestrife cover the area obscuring the aforementioned fence but allowing the path to be more obvious.) From here, the path runs half-left towards woodland, losing height with a fine view across the valley. Into the trees, you pass the concrete bases of an aerial ropeway that linked the mine in the valley with the spoil tips above. Now on a more definite path, you pass a ruined building on the right while here and there, remains of steel cables protrude from the ground, further relics from an industry that is now no more. Continue downhill, ignoring a path going steeply up to the right and eventually passing through a wooden barrier into a conifer plantation<sup>I</sup> where footfalls are muffled by the blanket of pine needles.

Go straight ahead at cross paths and a few metres further, down to the left, you will see a picnic area and small car park, both accessed along the trackbed of a dismantled railway, now a cycleway. Carry on ahead, crossing a small stream and keeping the trackbed on your left. Eventually, you will see a finger post by a green metal barrier on the left, join the walkway here and continue in the same direction past a house on the left<sup>J</sup>. You now have easy, level walking for 1200 metres on route of the old railway.

*Closed in 1970, this line has a history stretching back to the beginning of the 19th century when as a tram road, it brought iron and other goods down from Tredegar to Newport.*

You leave the walkway where a post with a black and yellow waymark directs you to steps leading up the bank to the right, signposted Ynys Hywel<sup>Ⓚ</sup>. (Similar waymarks appear at various stages along this section of the route, indicating it as the 'Raven Walk', a circular 19-kilometre trek beginning and ending at Cwmcarn, two valleys away.) Before beginning the climb, look through the trees to the Sirhowy River below to the left and across the valley to the village of Cwmfelinfach.

*The village was built over a ten-year period to house the workers in the Nine Mile Point colliery. Blue pennant stone was quarried locally to build the houses and brickworks were opened alongside the railway to produce the yellow bricks characteristically used around the doors and windows. An industrial estate now stands on the site of the colliery.*

At the top of the steps, you come to the dramatic metal sculpture of a raven, one of four such posts along the route of the 'Raven Walk'. Turn left here and follow a lovely path through the conifer woods, crossing streams by wooden footbridges and eventually climbing a stile into more open beech and oak woods; here, where sunlight filters through, bluebells carpet the ground in spring. Keep to the path until you reach a tarmac driveway, where you turn sharp right to reach the Countryside Centre.

*Ynys Hywel was built in 1776 and is a typical Welsh longhouse which has been converted to a centre for conferences and countryside activities. Attached to it is a working farm which is run using traditional methods and livestock. There is also a small camping barn, the first to open in Wales. Refreshments can be obtained at the Centre on most weekends, full meals being served during the summer months.*

From the Centre, walk up the steps opposite the patio area and turn left to pass the camping barn on the right. Follow the path as it climbs to reach a broad forest road<sup>Ⓛ</sup> which you take, continuing in the same direction and ignoring a path to the right, to reach the farm. Pass through green metal barriers with a picnic site on the left and continue for a few metres to where the forest road crosses a tarmac lane<sup>Ⓜ</sup>. Here, turn right to climb the lane to the cattle grid you passed earlier at<sup>ⓐ</sup>. Take the rough track up to the right, aiming for the high ground to the left of the conifer plantation. When in a few metres you pass your outward route, a track coming in from the right<sup>ⓑ</sup> keep left, still heading towards the high ground. When the path levels out<sup>Ⓝ</sup> catch your breath and look back towards the radio mast passed earlier, now almost 5 kilometres distant. Continue, passing on the right another spoil tip, now reverting to nature and cross more steel cables that pulled the tubs full of waste up here from Risca colliery in the valley bottom, when the tips there were full.

*The area sloping down to the valley floor on the left is known as the Black Vein. Long before the sinking of deep coal mines, there were many bell pits and small levels exploit-*

*ing the rich Black Vein seam. Although the coal was in plentiful supply, so was the lethal quantity of methane gas; explosions in 1846 and 1860 at the Black Vein colliery killed over 180 miners while at nearby Risca colliery, 120 men died in an explosion in 1880.*

Now continue on, and as the track bears right towards the masts<sup>Ⓒ</sup> look left to the two hills across the valley.

*The 'bald' summit on the right is Twmbarlwm, its Iron-Age hill fort is just visible to the right of the summit. There is also a medieval motte and bailey but little seems to be known about the history of these forts and by the 14th century, the castle site appears to have been abandoned.*

On gaining the trig point at Mynydd Machen<sup>Ⓓ</sup> you can take comfort that from here, it is all downhill!

*At 364 metres above sea level, Mynydd Machen is the highest point of this walk. On a good day you can see across Cardiff Bay to the hills of Somerset, whilst to the north, the Brecon Beacons can be glimpsed in the distance. As well as the summit's use for the telecommunications masts, its importance in prehistoric times is evident, as there is a Bronze-Age round barrow and cairn, the latter with a long history of use as a beacon.*

Your route from here lies ahead, initially down a grassy track aiming to the left of the quarry, the descent soon becoming steep and rough in places. As you reach level ground at the bottom, look for a wooden waymark post and here, take the narrow path to the right<sup>Ⓔ</sup>. (If you miss the waymark, you will come to a broad track running diagonally across your path and you'll have to retrace your steps.)

The path leads you between gorse bushes, heading for a conifer plantation where access is gained via a kissing gate. Follow the delightful path downhill through the trees passing a stepped path up to the right, then a stone seat – sit and take in the view of the Rhymney River and the hills beyond. Continue past a stile and back into the trees, you have about 450 metres to walk before exiting the wood via a metal gate. Go ahead now downhill through an area of young woodland, ignoring paths left and right, and crossing a stream via a wooden footbridge. Cross the old Newport to Caerphilly railway line (now in use up to this point as a quarry railway)<sup>Ⓡ</sup> and take the path ahead down steps with Machen church on your left and houses on the right. When you reach the road, turn left to pass the churchyard entrance and continue downhill to Commercial Street<sup>Ⓢ</sup>. Those who arrived by bus should turn left, the bus stop is a few metres along the road. Car-drivers should turn right, then left into Forge road and thence to The Crescent and your car, with a mixture of fatigue and (hopefully) elation.





## Walk 29 – The West Mendip Way Uphill to Loxton

**Start** Uphill Way. Car park 200 left yard past Dolphin pub. (ST 315584)

**Distance** 12 miles / 19km.

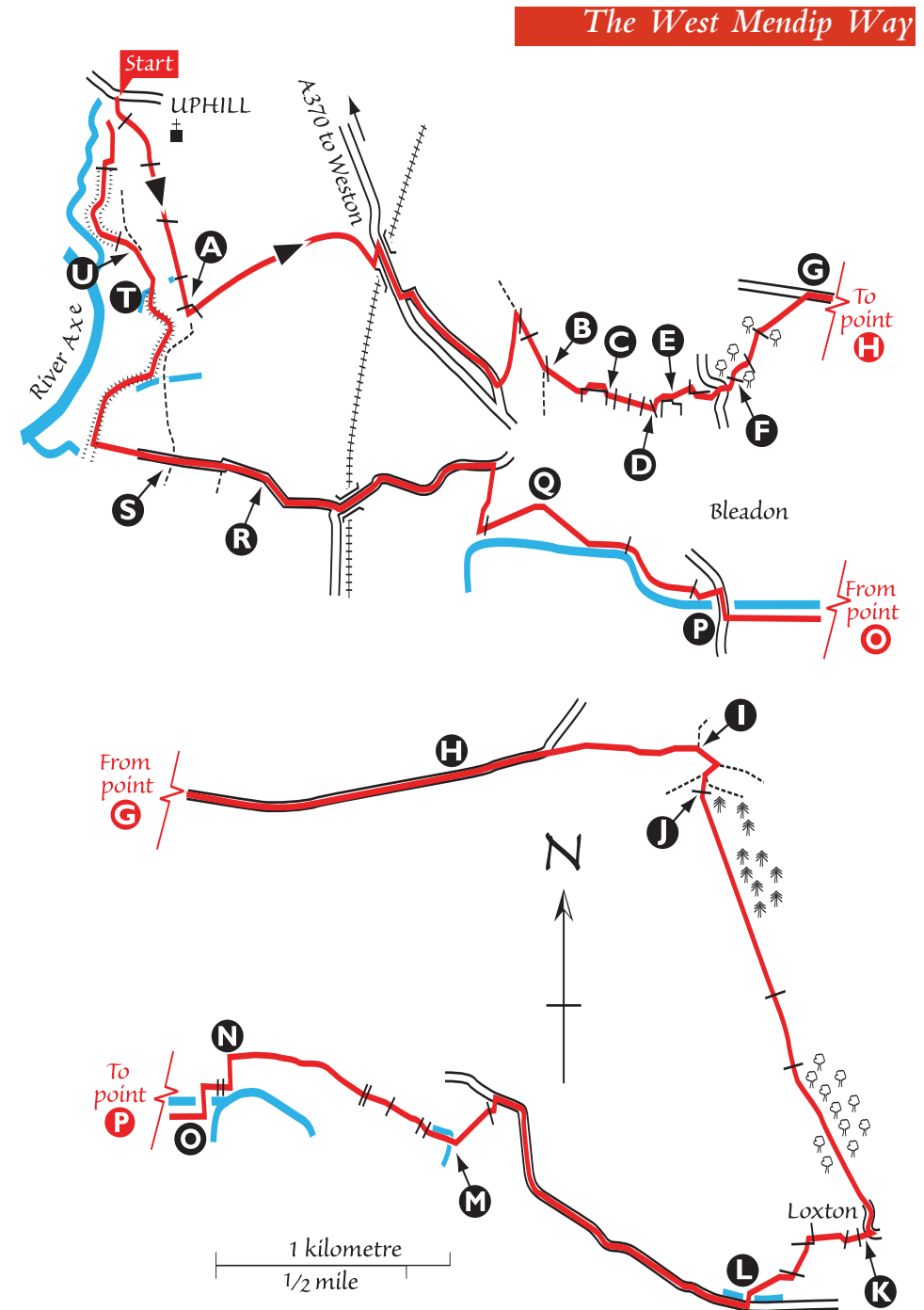
**Refreshments** Pub at end of walk, nothing en-route.

**Getting there** M5 Junction 21 then A370 around W-S-M. Right, past the hospital, right again to Uphill, then left, following signs to beach.

*A walk of contrasts; outward over limestone paths and tracks, the return over the northern limits of the Somerset Levels with characteristic waterlogged meadows, drainage ditches and farms. Fine views over the Levels and north across the Bristol Channel. About 5.5 hours of walking.*

Uphill is a misleading place name for this village, as the 'hill' in this case means a pill or creek. It was a port in Roman times from where lead, mined at Charterhouse (see Walk 6), was shipped to Rome. This walk starts where the road through Uphill meets the sea defences. Walk back from the bus stop or onward from the car park to the bend in the road where, on the flood gate, a white notice proclaims that the West Mendip Way was opened by Queen Elizabeth II on 27 May 1979.

Take the driveway past boatyards to reach a metal barrier with the remains of a lime kiln on the left. Pass through the barrier into Uphill Nature Reserve by an infor-



mation board and go ahead on the broad, surfaced path, with the tall cliffs of the old limestone quarry on your left. Leave the Reserve via a wooden barrier and follow the path to the top of the hill.

*There are good views now behind you to the disused St Nicholas church and the ruins of a windmill on the cliff top. The mill was once fortified and formed part of the coastal defences during the Napoleonic Wars.*

Pass through another barrier, then descend through a third to reach a fourth at the far side of a meadow **A**. Beyond this, with a broad track ahead, go left through a wooden gate and follow the bridleway, eventually passing beneath a power line where the track bears right to climb between houses onto a lane. Go left here and in a few metres you come out on to the busy Bridgwater Road.

Turn right along the road as it crosses over the railway, then at the first safe opportunity cross to the far side and continue 200 metres before taking a side road to the left. This lane runs parallel to the main road and you stay on it until Coombe Farm is reached. Beyond the farm and a pair of barns on the right, look for a track climbing up to the left (opposite a wooden field gate). The incline lessens as you near the top and here on the right, look for a kissing gate next to a metal farm gate. Pass through, and take the path as it runs back downhill with good views left towards Bleadon village. In a few metres, pass through a second kissing gate and continue with a wire fence to your left. As the path bend to the right, keep close to the left boundary to a stile **B** which you climb into a field. Walk downhill between wire fences towards the farm buildings and go over the stile by the farm gates.

You are now in a concrete yard and just beyond two metal gates on your left there is a further stile which you climb, then follow the field boundary on your right until you come to a stile next to a gate **C**; go over onto a farm track, turn left and continue on through a metal farm gate. As the track jinks around to the left, walk ahead to an old stile with the remains of an orchard on your right. In a short distance you climb another stile and the path becomes more enclosed with low stone walls at the backs of houses on your right. Three closely spaced stiles brings you out on to the edge of a field, continue ahead with a boundary on your right, then over a further stile into an allotment. Exit via a wooden gate and go ahead to take a stile by a metal farm gate **D**; here, watch the waymarks as they direct you first left and then half-right to pick up the right-hand field boundary. In a few metres where the hedge turns right, go half-left **E** across the field aiming for a stile next to a metal farm gate. Go over and keep the fence to your right to cross a second stile, then turn left with the property boundaries on your left. Pass a stable block on your right then climb a ladder stile in a wall ahead to gain access to a road.

Cross the road then take the tarmac driveway marked 'Public Footpath' off to the left. This route leads past the frontage of some houses, don't worry about the road sign to Combe Martin, you are not that far off course! As you enter woodland, climb a stile **F** and go ahead along a tree-lined path which climbs slightly, bearing right to a stile in the wall on the left. Go over, then walk across the field keeping to the left of a lone bush and aiming for a waymark post in trees ahead. The waymark directs you into the wooded area, follow the path as it bears right, climbing a few steps to a further stile in the wall corner. Cross then continue ahead following the path as it emerges from the wood and heads up the centre of the pasture. As you pass a rocky outcrop on the right, a wooden gate in the fence comes into view, this gives access to a lane where you turn right **G**. You follow this lane for almost 1600 metres, climbing gently with fine views south over the Somerset Levels to Brent Knoll.

As you approach the top of the road there are spectacular views north over Woodspring and the Severn Estuary towards Newport. An observation point is now soon reached on the left **H** and its picnic tables could be used for an early lunch or late coffee stop.

Continue along the road, losing height, to reach a left bend; here go ahead on a stony track. There is easy walking now for about 800 metres, generally downhill with fine views to your left. The last part of the path is through scrubby woodland which brings you out to a T-junction **I** where you turn right to head up the hill. At the crest of the rise take the track leading off to the right by a waymark sign, then in a few metres look for another waymark directing you down a track to the left where you pass through a wooden gate into a field **J**. Be careful not to take the adjoining track which drops steeply to the left alongside a wood.

Follow the broad path along the edge of the field climbing initially with the conifer wood to your left, then descending gently for a little over 1600 metres to Loxton village. After passing through a second gate, the path upgrades to a track and is enclosed by trees and bushes, through which you catch glimpses of the M5 motorway and Crook Peak beyond. There are good views again of the Levels as you approach Loxton, then as habitation is reached, the track becomes a tarmac lane which bears round to the left passing North Lodge on your right; here you say goodbye to the West Mendip Way.

Take the entrance drive on the right **K** to North Lodge and Loxton Hunting Lodge (unsurprisingly, this is not waymarked) and proceed between the buildings through a farm gate and into a field which you cross to climb a stile on the far side. Go ahead with the hedge on your left, passing through a metal gate and a few metres further through another on the left. Cross the centre of the field aiming for a stile in the

hedge to the right of the farm buildings then walk straight ahead through a metal gate in front of a stable yard. Cross the farm drive and continue half-left over pasture ahead; in the far corner of the field a wooden footbridge takes you out on to a lane ❶.

Turn right and follow this for about 1500 metres until Shiplate Manor Farm is reached at a bend in the road on the left. Fifty metres beyond the farm buildings on the left, turn down a drive to Shiplate Farm and immediately climb a stile into a field on your right. Walk diagonally across the field aiming for the right side of two low farm cottages to a wooden footbridge in the field corner ❷. Cross, then walk ahead following the course of the rhyne on your right until you come to a stile by a gate. Cross this then immediately ahead another stile and follow the boundary to the right passing the farm buildings, to meet a rhyne on your right; follow this to cross a stile by metal gate, then go straight over the field to a stile in the far hedge by an electricity pole. Cross this double stile and go ahead with the rhyne on your right.

Continue, crossing several fields keeping always to the right boundary until the buildings of South Hill Farm come into view. When you reach the first barn, turn left ❸ and with the barn to your right, cross the pasture to the dyke ahead. Here, with the River Axe in front of you, turn right to cross two gates separated by a narrow pasture. Now cross the iron girder bridge, turning right at the far side ❹ to follow the tussocky high ground with the river on your right. This path leads you across the bottom of a number of fields and with the roar of the traffic on the Bridgwater Road getting ever louder you eventually reach Bleadon Bridge ❺.

Turn right, crossing with care to the far side, then take the fenced, concrete path beyond the bridge which leads you down to the bank of the river, now on your left. In a short distance look for steps on the right and climb these to a narrow footpath which you follow, with a wooden fence on your right and a stand of alder trees on your left, to reach a stile. Cross, then follow the river bank, climbing another stile into a second field and keeping to the river until you reach a waymark post. Here, go half-right towards a caravan park and cross a wooden footbridge at the left of the site ❻ into a further pasture where you go half-left to the far corner. A stile here gives access to a track which you take, following it to the right until the road is reached.

Walk left along the road as it snakes left, right, and left again, past the Mendip Model Motor Racing Circuit. A further right bend takes the road over the railway, take great care here! Beyond the bridge the road turns sharply left to follow the railway, but your route lies along the lane to the right. You need to follow this lane, Wayacre Drove, for most of its length, passing through blue metal gates ❼ then ignoring a bridleway on the left shortly followed by another crossing the lane ❽. Eventually

you arrive at the sea dyke, where the lane turns left. Climb the bank and walk right, passing wildfowl lagoons on the right and with views over the River Axe left.

Walk to the end of the bank ❶ and on leaving it go left, keeping close to the left boundary. The path begins to climb, but don't go too far, instead look for a narrow, well-worn path running downhill to the left ❷. Take this, it will lead you through a thicket to a stile in a fence and onto a causeway running between flood-meadows.

*There is much wildlife to be seen in this area at all times of the year, although winter is the best season for spotting wading birds. The redshank, with its grey-brown back can usually be seen searching the mudbanks for worms and molluscs; when disturbed, the white feathers on the trailing edge of the wings reveal its identity. The shelduck, more goose than duck frequently inhabits the grassland on the far bank of the Axe. From a distance, its white body and green-black head is clearly visible, closer inspection will also show a chestnut-coloured breast band. Cormorants are also visitors to this area, often seen perched with wings outstretched and drying in the wind.*

At the far end of the causeway, climb a stile by a metal gate and follow the path which soon takes you through the boatyard. Keep strictly to the path, passing the wire-fenced compound on your right and moored boats in varying states of disrepair on the left. Your route soon swings to the right, and you will find yourself back at the sea defences and your starting point.





## Walk 30 – South Glamorgan The Caerphilly Summits

**Start** Lewis Street, Tongwynlais, (ST 134826).

**Distance** 14.5 miles / 23km (In conjunction with Walk 11).

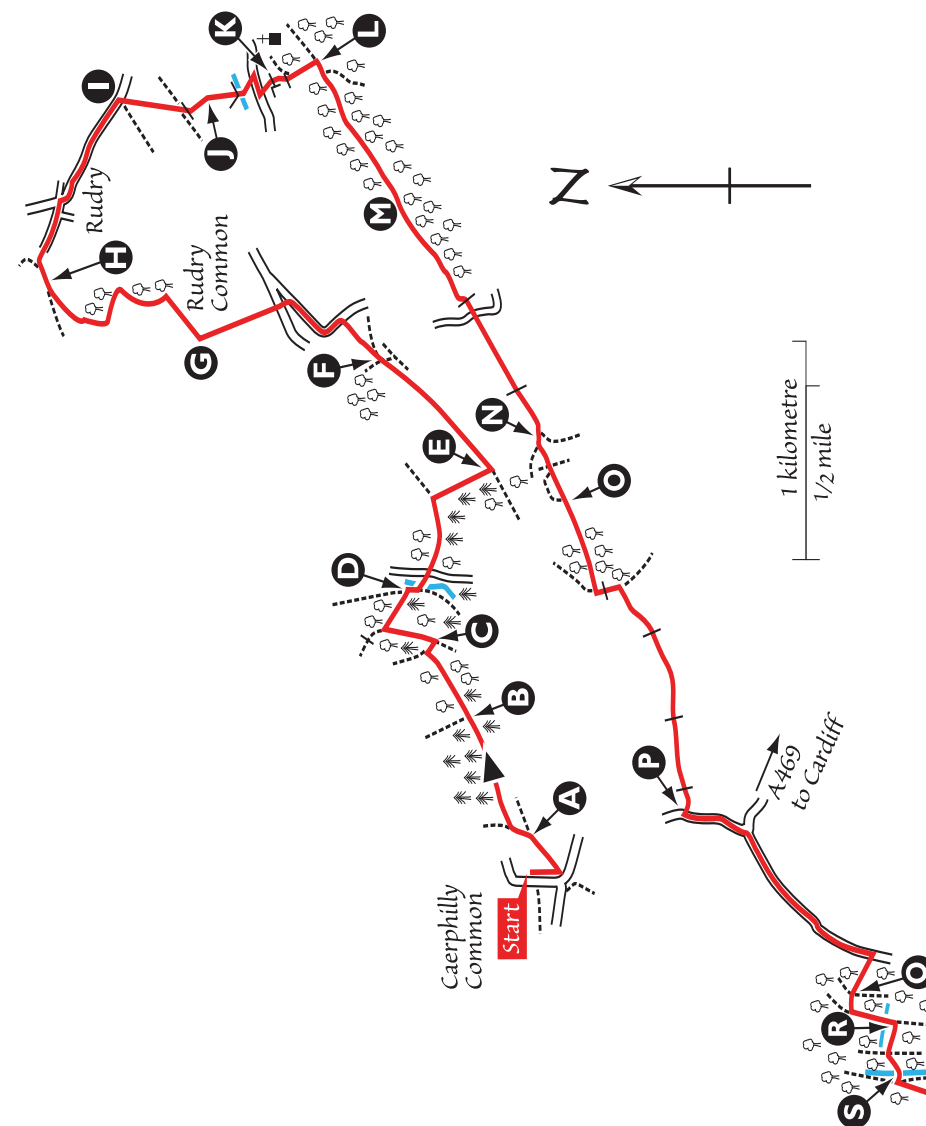
**Refreshments** As walk 11 plus pub and shop at Rudry (half distance) and pub just after point (P).

**Getting there** As for Walk 11 (page 28).

*This walk has been designed as an extension to Walk 11 and is therefore not circular in its own right. It makes for an energetic hike, taking in three of the summits south of Caerphilly plus a stretch of high ridge overlooking Cardiff. From these elevated positions there are extensive views so choose a clear day if possible. Most of the walking is over good tracks with several steep ascents and descents, so allow about 7 hours plus stops.*

To commence this walk, you should have reached point (I) on Walk 11, and be at the snack bar on the A469 Caerphilly to Cardiff road, beyond Caerphilly Common.

Walk down over the grass behind the refreshment hut to reach a roughly surfaced track by the road. Turn left and follow the track until you approach a concrete garage ahead on the right. Before reaching it, take a track up to the left **A** passing the boundary of a house on the right, where you have splendid views down to



Caerphilly and its castle in the lower foreground. When you reach a path junction by a wall with an old gate on the right, go straight ahead keeping the wire fence on your right and ignoring the path dropping down to the left. Continue, with views across meadows on your right and the path broadening as you enter woodland, mainly conifer. Ignore a minor path going off to the left **B** and from here, beech trees predominate, your route descending steeply to a junction of tracks. Go right, then immediately left **C** down the hill to reach a further junction after 250 metres; here, the main track bears left, but your route is to the right though a wooden kissing gate. The track becomes a path which takes you over an old, narrow bridge that once spanned a tramway from mineral workings. Beyond the bridge you reach a T-junction **D** and you can double back down to the right to view the structure.

From the bridge, turn right along the track for no more than 50 metres, looking for a narrow path on the left before you reach the conifer plantation (you can often hear rushing water from an unseen stream at this turning). Follow the path from the track, ascending through conifers to reach a lane, then cross to a track opposite. The path now climbs to woodland and makes for 300 metres of pleasant walking before you reach an open area where the air shaft of the Caerphilly to Cardiff railway tunnel can be spotted in the trees to your left. At the track junction, go right and follow the path as it climbs for a further 300 metres to reach a cross-track where you turn left **E**.



View over Caerphilly looking north from Caerphilly Common.

Walk along this track for a little over a kilometre, ignoring paths left and right then passing a track descending left to a clearing, then one to a plantation of young trees **F**. Eventually, the track swings round left and joins a lane; here, turn left and follow the tarmac taking you round to the right with good views over Rudry Common and across to Caerphilly. Stay on the lane until you see a grass path running down left to a lower road, take this then walk past the picnic tables on the Common and climb to the summit **G**.

*In medieval times, Rudry Common was part of a manor and used for grazing cattle and sheep. It is still privately owned and the Commoners have the right to gather firewood and let their pigs forage for acorns. Rudry is on the southern edge of the South Wales coalfield and miners extracted the coal using bell pits, these are the depressions you can see around you. The miners dug down to a coal seam, then worked horizontally along the seam until the walls of the pit became unsafe, at which point they moved further along the Common to begin again. From the summit, you have good views north to Bedwas; the colliery has gone but the spoil tip can be seen from your vantage point, as can the regimented rows of miners' cottages. Away to the east, the radio masts on Mynydd Machen are visible.*

Moving on from the summit, take the grassy path running east (or right in relation to your approach) and head for the stone wall and trees. When the wall is reached go left, keeping the wall boundary on your right. The wall bears round to the right, leading you to a metal field gate; don't go through, instead go left, again with the boundary to your right. As you descend, you pick up a track which is followed going right with the boundary. Eventually, you pass a metal gate set in a stone wall on your right **H** and another track ascending to join from the left. Continue, bearing right as a path veers away left, and pass beneath power lines with a meadow to your left. You leave Rudry Common via a wooden gate; walk down a metalled lane with farm buildings then a residential development on the right, to the little mining village of Rudry. At cross roads, turn right into the village, passing the pub and Post Office on the left, then a row of miners' cottages built in 1890. The spoil tip for the mine is at the end of the village next to a children's playground.

Follow the road out of the village climbing for 200 metres then passing houses on the left. Opposite a white house on the left with its gable end facing the street, look for a lane on the right marked by white-painted stones **I**. Turn into the lane then go immediately left along a narrow footpath uphill through trees. (The path and its signpost are easy to miss!) You soon come to an open area where you pass beneath power lines, then continue climbing gently, the trees now replaced by bracken, waist-high in summer. At the top of the field pass through a metal kissing gate and go ahead following the just discernible outline of a grass track, bordered on the left by oak and beech trees. Continue to the top of the hill, where a second line of trees

come in from the right❶ then descend, still following this ancient track and aiming for an electricity pole, eventually passed on your left. At the bottom of the field, a further kissing gate gives access to a concrete path which crosses a stream then climbs steeply to reach the road opposite Rudry church.

Turn right along the road, go past a house named The Griffin, then turn left into the road just after it. Follow the drive on the right side to reach the left corner boundary of the white-painted house then follow the boundary fence on your right alongside the property to reach a wooden kissing gate ❷. Follow the path to reach a further gate and beyond here, follow the waymarks up to the right, ignoring the path dropping down left, and climb steeply for 100 metres to the top of the hill then descend to a cross-track❸.

You are now on the Rhymney Valley Ridgeway Footpath; turn right and walk for a few metres to a junction where the main track turns left downhill. Go over the stile ahead and climb steeply into magnificent beech woods, the steel cable slung between the trees on your left being your guide. After the initial hard ascent, the gradient eases and you have generally easy walking through the wood for about 700 metres, eventually reaching an open area with a wire fence on your right❹ then briefly back into woodland before walking with the fence and meadows on your right. The path soon descends to a farm, go through a wooden gate with the farm on the right, then through a further gate to a lane. Cross, go through the gate opposite and climb the track into pasture with fine views north to Caerphilly and the hills beyond. Carry on, eventually passing through another gate to a grassy area where the uneven ground indicates mineral extraction in earlier years.

*This is an attractive spot now however, particularly in early summer with the sweet scent of the hawthorn blossom, and the colourful heathland flowers underfoot. There are superb views in clear weather south to Cardiff Bay and beyond to the Somerset coastline; north lie the Brecon Beacons.*

When you reach a path junction, take the track running down to the right❺ then in a few metres, fork to the left (the original route continues to reach a fence and trees). The path crosses the entrance to a disused quarry on your left. You can leave the path here and climb up left to view the chasm, then walk along the edge to rejoin your route at the far end❻. The path climbs briefly here to woodland of beech and hawthorn with the scent of wild garlic in the air in springtime, and in about 350 metres you reach a left bend where a track comes up from the right. Go left through a wooden gate and follow the rough track downhill for a short distance to a junction. Turn right, soon passing beneath power lines with meadows down to

the left, to a metal gate. Continue onwards for about 800 metres passing through two further gates and walking past a derelict farm on the left to reach the road❷.

Turn left here and cross this very busy road when you get the chance, walking to the top of the hill where opposite 'The Traveller's Rest', you go right along a lane.

*Although nearing the end of your walk, the thatched Traveller's Rest is a tempting proposition, being open all day with a creative menu – perhaps drive back to it having reached your car!*

Follow the lane for about 850 metres, almost to the radio masts, then enter a car park on the right. There is an interesting information board here describing the Nature Reserve you are about to enter.

Two stiles give egress from the car park, take the one opposite the entrance then follow a well-defined path down into woodland. When you reach cross-tracks❸ go ahead, the path veering to the left and the descent steepening, to reach a further track junction; go left here, again losing height and crossing a small, often indistinct stream. Beyond this stream, walk for 30 metres looking for a broad, but often difficult to find path going right, down the hill❹. Follow this descending steeply to a level area, then go ahead to pick up the path and losing height again. The path narrows and winds its way between trees, crossing a bridleway by wooden barriers. Continue on downward to the valley bottom, where a path joins from the left and you bear right to climb a stile and cross a stream❺. Climb the bank ahead to reach a broad track with a stile and gate down to the left. Turn left and walk along the track for 600 metres to reach the road.

You are now at point (O) on Walk 11, refer to page 30 for the completion of this fine walk.