

WALK WEST *again*



*A second volume
of the
best selling
local walks guide
containing a
further thirty
west country
walks
all within
easy reach
of Bristol
and chosen for
their variety
and interest*

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. You will have to use the PDF page numbers when you print, rather than the individual page numbers.

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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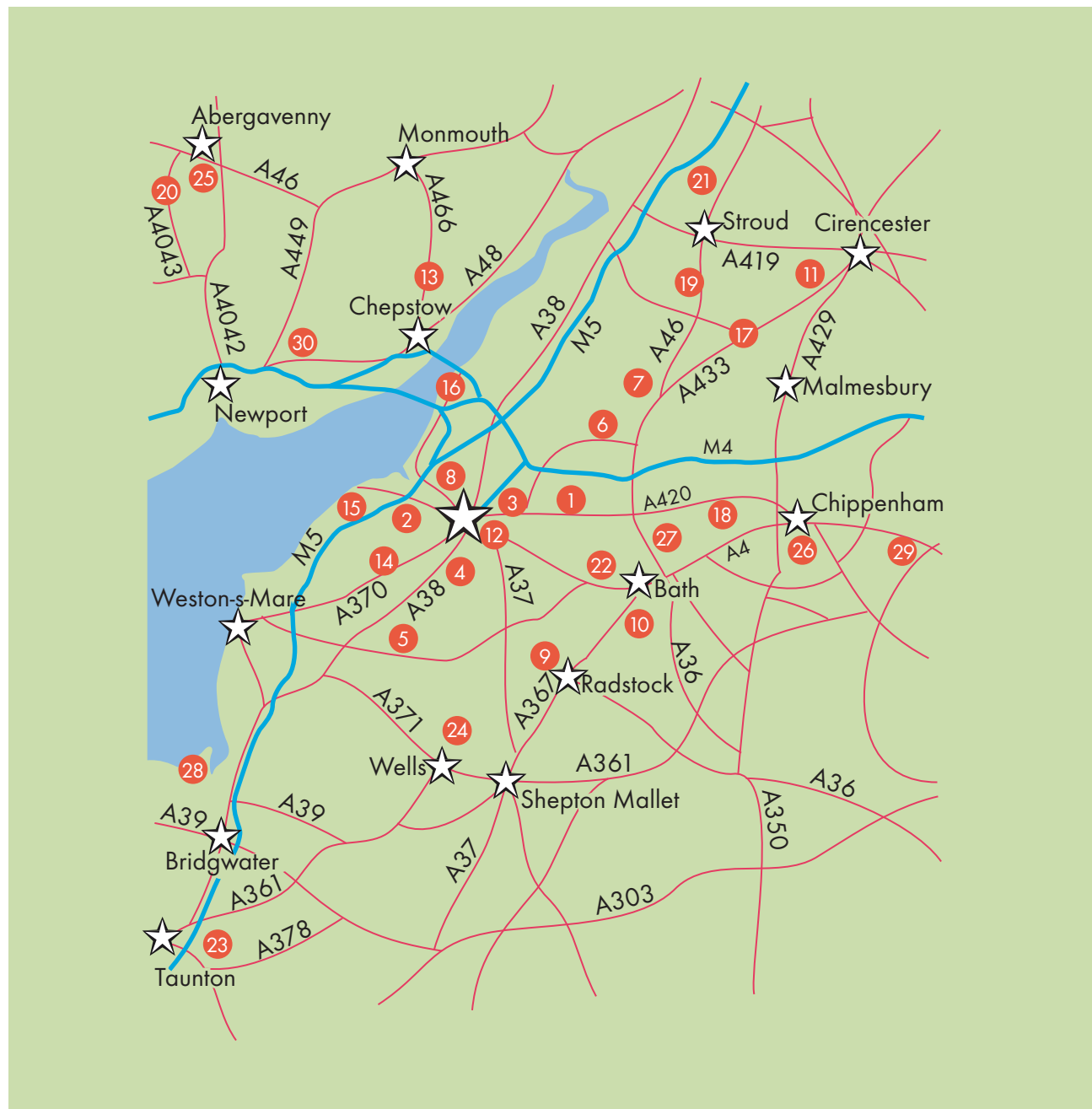
Researched and written by
Geoff Mullett

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!

My thanks go to the volunteers who walked the routes once again for this e-book and submitted alterations, suggestions and a wealth of other information that makes this project worthwhile.

In no particular order:

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Phil Lawrence
Chris Bracey
Gary Gee
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Matthew Cole & Kate Stewart
David Price





Walk 1 Wick Rocks

Start Cross House Inn, Doynton (ST 719740).

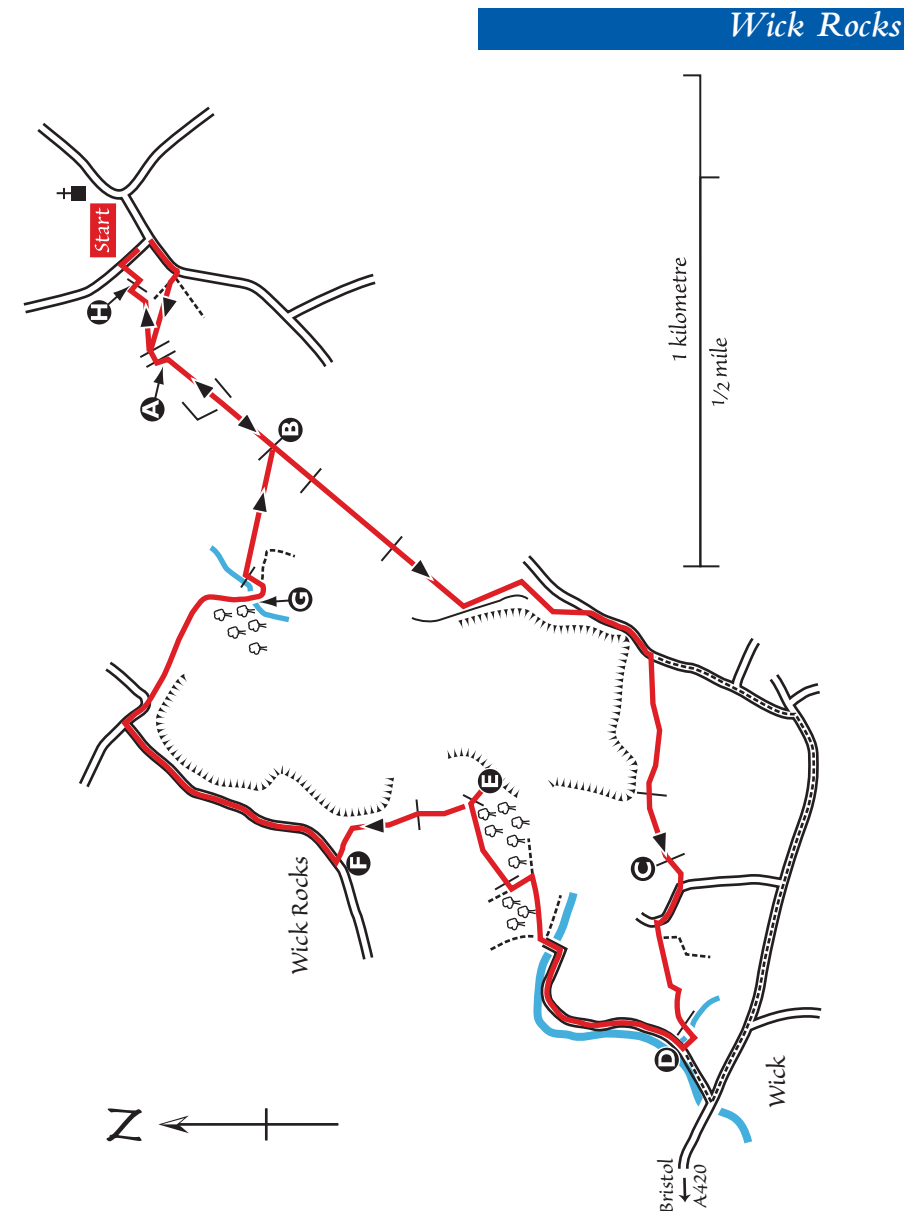
Distance 4 miles / 6.4km.

Refreshments Pub at start/end of walk.

Getting there A420 east to Wick, turning left on minor road signed Doynton. In the village, turn left at the Cross House Inn, parking at the roadside or in the pub car park, if permission is given.

A lovely, easy ramble across fields and along riverbanks, with an interesting excursion through a working quarry (optional diversion if blasting is in progress!). One climb that affords dramatic views across the river, and some short stretches on country lanes. A good morning walk before lunch at the pub, or an evening stroll with refreshment at the end. The circuit should take 1.5 to 2 hours.

From the Cross House Inn, walk the few paces to the road junction and turn right. Follow the road for a short distance to reach a footpath sign on the right and enter the field. There are clear paths ahead and left, but you need to cross the field to the lower opposite corner, so walk diagonally left, eventually picking up the hedge and



fence of the left boundary and climb a pair of stiles sporting the 'Monarch's Way' symbol. Keep left of the thicket **A** then walk up the centre of the field aiming for the left end of the hedge on the far side. In the next field, follow the right boundary to reach a stile **B** climb over and go ahead without deviation, passing waymark signs

at the field corner, crossing another field and stile, then continuing onward to reach the quarry boundary fence. Follow it left to the road where you turn right.

Walk down the road with care to the quarry entrance on the right and climb the stile into the quarry premises. Care is needed here, you have right of way but you can be delayed if blasting is in progress. Follow the clear footpath signs ahead to the wooden screening on the left of the quarry office. Pass through the screen and continue on, keeping to the right of the cream building. At the end of the walkway climb the drive ahead passing a black oil tank on your left and using the marked footpath between a wooden fence and an Armco barrier. At the top of the rise go straight ahead to cross a stile beside a warning sign and follow the narrow footpath between two fences to a stile giving access to a meadow. (If blasting is in progress, you may wish to avoid the area altogether, in which case continue down the road to reach the A420, turn right and follow the road to reach Boyd Bridge. Go right before the bridge and walk along the lane to **D**.)

Beyond the quarry, walk down the meadow keeping left to climb a further stile **C** then walk down to the left side of the farm buildings to a lane. Walk right here for a short distance, then go through a kissing gate on the left. Walk with the hedge initially on your left for a short distance, then continue in the same direction across the field, climbing a stile and continuing to reach another in the bottom left corner. Cross to a footbridge, then go right along a lane to a road **D**.

Turn right and follow the road into the Golden Valley Nature Reserve, with the River Boyd on your left, eventually crossing it via a bridge. On the far side, ignore the turning immediately right, but follow the path ahead that climbs gently up to the right, signposted the 'Ravens Rock Trail'.

Continue on this broad path to reach a sharp left turn, signed 'Easy Access'. Take this, (if you miss it, you will reach a clearing with disused quarry workings) and in a short distance go through the kissing gate on the right. Climb to the top of the meadow, keeping right, then follow the right boundary to another set of gates. Pass through and descend to a level area, then walk ahead with care to the cliff edge where you will enjoy dramatic views over the quarry beyond the river, far below **E**.

The valley below is known as The Golden Valley, taking its name from the ochre extraction that took place on the site. It is an important area for nature conservation as the site contains woodland, grassland and numerous rock faces, as well as the river and its banks.

Now retrace your steps and return through the gate, then go right and ignoring the gate in the corner, follow the field edge along the stone wall to further gates. Go



Wick quarry, viewed from Rock Road

through and continue along the path to a lane with cottages, where you bear left to reach a road **F**.

Turn right, following the tarmac to a T-junction where you go right, signposted Doynton. In a few yards, the road descends left, but you go ahead along a bridleway, losing height and crossing the river at the pretty Cleeve Bridge **G**. Now take a path left to a kissing gate, then go half-right, climbing to the far corner of the pasture to the stile crossed on your outward route **B**. Cross the stile and go ahead keeping to the left boundary to reach the next field. Walk down the centre of this field, veering left to pass the thicket near the bottom left corner. Cross a pair of stiles ahead (ignoring one on the left), then go ahead towards the backs of the cottages where, by a patch of old stone wall, you go through a kissing gate **H** and walk between the cottages to a gate, then onto the road. Turn right to reach the Cross House Inn.

Doynton at one time boasted a brewery, which was situated in Toghill Lane. This is now a private house, as is the 'Three Horseshoes' a pub long-closed, that you now pass on your left.



Walk 2 The Bluebell Walk

Start Portbury, corner of Station Road and Clapton Road (ST 498752).

Distance 3.5 miles / 5.6km.

Refreshments Pub at end of walk.

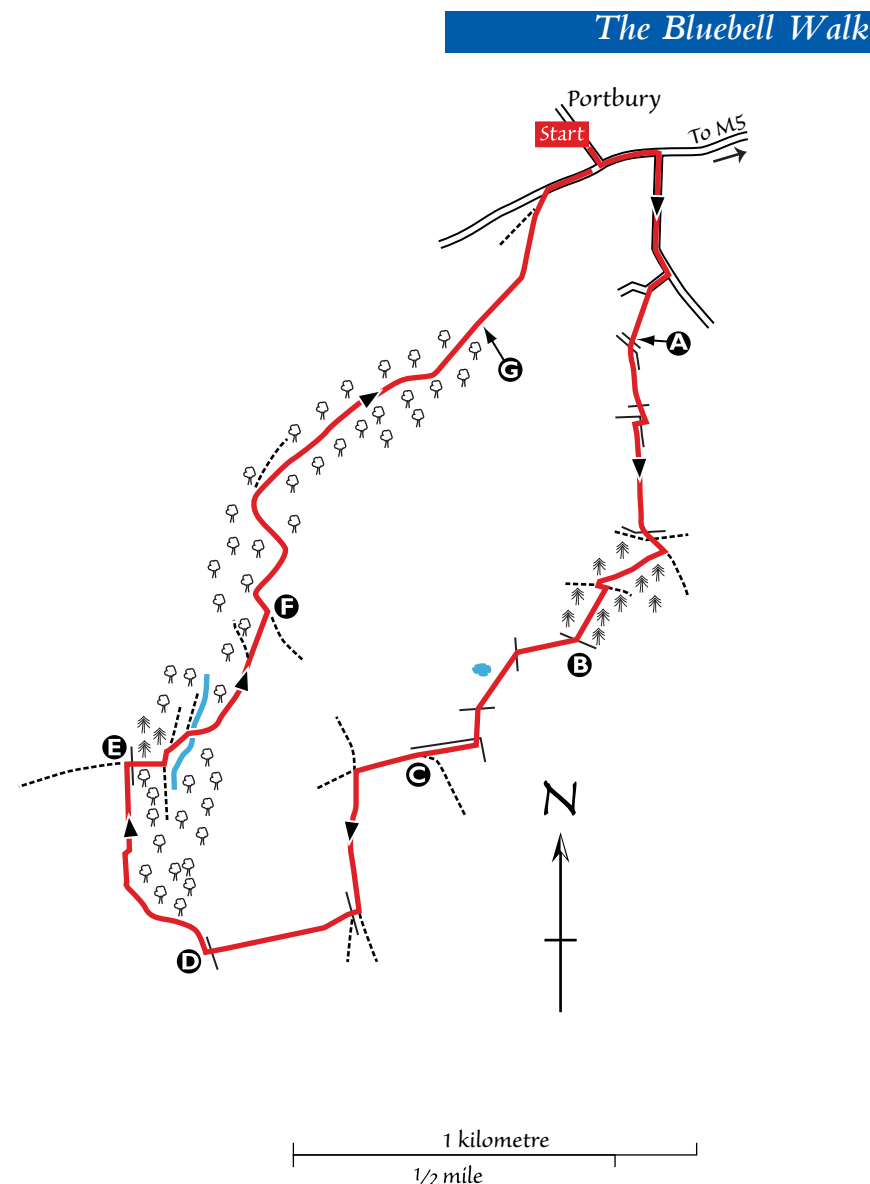
Getting there Portbury is reached from junction 19 on the M5, or A369 from Bristol.

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.

Sadly, the original route that passed through the private zoo of Moat House Farm, aka Noah's Ark Farm has been blocked. After several years of debate and abuse of walkers, the owners of this establishment have paid to have the historic Rights of Way crossing their property closed, so a diversion is now in place that cuts half-a-mile off the original route.

The Priory pub in Station Road has an extensive food menu and makes an ideal start/finish point.

Park near the war memorial on the corner of Station Road and Clapton Road then walk back to Mill Lane on the right. Follow Mill Lane, turning right into Mill Close where, in a few yards, you go through a kissing gate on the left. Cross the field diagonally right towards the boundary hedge **A**.



Climb two stiles with a stream between, then turn left, walking with the hedge on your left. At the top of the field go through a gate, then another on the right. Continue up this next field, boundary left, to a gate and stile with track beyond. Cross the track, climb the stile ahead and continue a few yards to a path junction where you take a signed

Walk 2

path to the right, climbing through the woodland to a path junction. Here, turn left then immediately right, climbing again to emerge at a stile with farmland beyond **B**.

Go half-right across the field corner to a gate, beyond which, veer slightly left, passing a pond on your right and aiming for a further stile in the field boundary. Cross over and aim for a stile in a new fence by a ruined barn. Climb over and turn right, walking with the fence on your right, to reach a driveway **C**. Continue along it with the main building of the Downs School (formerly Charlton House) now visible on the left. Turn left at the driveway and walk for 300 yards to a stile in the fence on the right. Waymark signs offer two routes across this field. Take the one going slightly left, skirting to the left of an old hedge boundary – now a row of trees – and continuing down the field to reach a stile at the bottom **D**. Beyond the stile, you are confronted with a seven foot fence. Turn right and keep the fence to your left, soon reaching woodland on your right. Continue down, ignoring a gate into Prior Woods, then climbing and passing two fields to your left, to reach a path junction **E**. Turn right and descend into woodland.

Ancient woodland, streams and plantations can all be found in this wildlife-rich wood. In winter, a golden carpet of beech leaves cover the ground, replaced in early summer, by the sea of bluebells that makes Prior's Wood famous. Move quietly and you may see deer beneath the trees. Prior's Wood was part of the Tyntesfield Estate, but was not wanted by the National Trust when it purchased Tyntesfield, so it was bought by Avon Wildlife Trust.

Take the steepish path down through the trees to a grass track. Go left here and in a short distance at a fork, take the lower, right-hand path to cross a stream via a wooden bridge. (To see the best bluebells do not cross the bridge but divert down the path to the left, with the stream on your right.) Returning to the broad path over the bridge it now climbs, passing a new track that has been opened up on the left where the rhododendrons have been cleared. Ignore this and continue to the obvious cross track at the top of the rise **F**. Turning left, you now have easy walking, ignoring a number of minor, indistinct turns and going straight ahead at a crossing path to reach an obvious fork in the track. Here, take the higher, right-hand route and walk with woodland to your left and a high, wire fence to your right after a few yards. After 500 yards, you pass a former gamekeeper's cottage **G**. From here, the vista opens out on your left and you have just a short distance to walk before a gate gives access to the road. Turn right and walk to the road junction and your starting point.

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.



Walk 3 Snuff Mills & Oldbury Court

Start Snuff Mills car park (ST 623765).

Distance 4 miles / 6.4km.

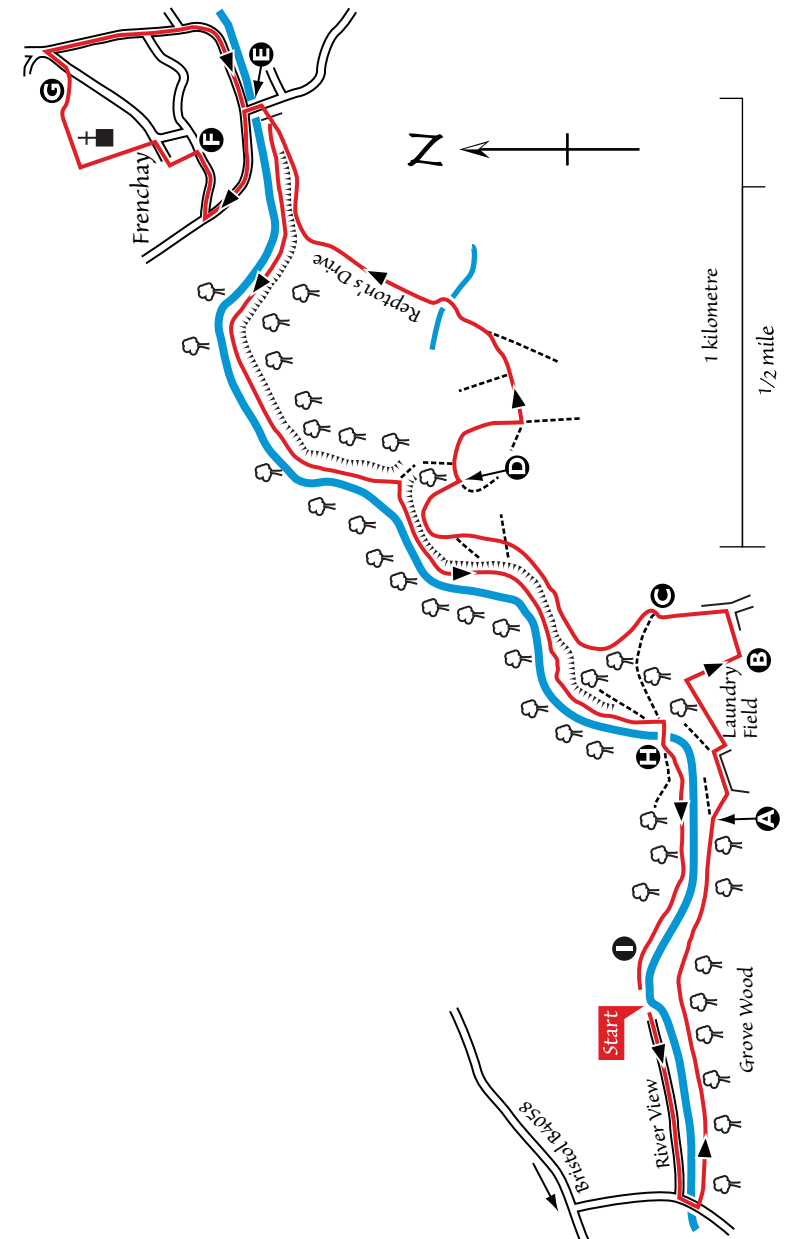
Refreshments Tea hut at start/finish, pub at Frenchay (half-distance), teas at Frenchay Church on Sunday afternoons in the summer season.

Getting there Snuff Mills car park is at the end of River View, a narrow road by the River Frome bridge, accessed from Blackberry Hill or Broom Hill off the B4058 Frenchay Park Road.

A short walk, based on one popular with those who are familiar with the area, but with the addition of a few lesser-known paths. Free of stiles (this must be a first!), mostly on surfaced paths and with just two climbs – one of those can be avoided if you forsake the pub stop – this is a walk for young and old alike, taking about two hours.

From the car park, walk back along River View to the main road and turn left, crossing the river. At the far side of the bridge, take the footpath left and walk for about a kilometer through Grove Wood with the river on your left. For the most part, you are walking above the river-bank but when you reach a clear fork in the path **A** take the right option to climb higher, ignoring the left path down to the river. Your progress is aided at intervals by flights of steps until at the top, you reach a stone wall. Walk left alongside the wall to the far end where you take a couple of steps up, then turn right to reach an open area called Laundry Field.

Snuff Mills & Oldbury Court



Turn left and walk with a grass bank to your left. Aim for the far end (the right of way follows the edge of the field) **B** where you take a broad surfaced path left, between houses and allotments. At green railings go left, and keep to this fence until it ends, ignoring a surfaced path descending left **C**.

You now find yourself on the edge of parkland; walk ahead keeping to the left boundary where you can catch glimpses of the river far below. As you approach building, cross a little-used tarmac path, then veer off left before reaching them, crossing a dip with a path descending left, which you ignore, to pick up another underused path that leads you through trees with a wall on the right.

Ignore paths left, but keep to the wall as it bears right, finally making a sharp right turn with steps descending left. Ignore this path and continue ahead for a short distance to reach a path junction **D**.

You are walking in the estate of Oldbury Court. The old house was given to Bristol Council in 1936 after being derelict for many years, but was burnt down in 1948. The gardens are still known as Vassalls Park, after the last family to live here. Humphry Repton (1752-1818) advised on the design of the estate. He was the leading landscape gardener of late Georgian England, being both innovative and prolific, and undertaking more than four hundred commissions during his thirty-year career.

Turn left and follow the broad, surfaced path as it bears right to reach cross-paths by a children's play area. Go left here, along what is known as Repton's Drive, walking through parkland and eventually crossing a bridge over a stream. Follow this meandering route, finally descending via a barrier to reach Frenchay Bridge **E**.

Cross the bridge, then go left, climbing Pearces Hill. Take the first right – The Common – to the White Lion pub, a handy watering stop **F**. Refreshed, take the lane in front of the pub, passing in front of Westbourne Cottages, a row of ten small cottages built in the 19th century. Turn right at the end of the cottages and then first left up a lane passing the primary school entrance on the left to reach St John the Baptist Church (good teas on Sundays in the summer). Turn right immediately after the church to cross part of the common.

A large part of Frenchay Common was quarried for Pennant stone, used for gravestones and buildings, also kerb stones for Bristol's streets. The Common you see today is the result of infilling.

In front of you are two splendid Georgian houses built between 1795 and 1799. As you approach them look left to see one of the oldest Unitarian chapels in England. Next to it is The Old House home of Francis Fox Tuckett, a famous Alpine mountaineer, who climbed 165 peaks (60 previ-

ously unconquered). A number of religious dissenters, especially Unitarians and Quakers settled in Frenchay and built large houses round the Common. Beyond the wall on the left are the house and estate of Frenchay Park, now Frenchay Hospital.

Walk towards the brick house (the new rectory) to the right of the Georgian houses and pass to the right of it **G** to reach Church Road. Go left and almost immediately take the road right to descend steeply down Frenchay Hill.

As you reach the bottom of the hill, the houses are former quarry workers' cottages. Grove Cottage on the left was the home of the notorious highwayman named Higgins. Immediately on the left after the bend is the last mill to be built on the Frome in 1761, which has now been converted into apartments.

Walk with the river on your left to reach the bridge. As the original sign on it informs you, it was built by subscription in 1788 and replaced what must have been a difficult crossing by ford. Re-cross the bridge **H** and go right, back through the barrier, but this time take the steps on the right, down to the river bank.

The name Frenchay came from 'Fromeshaw' which meant 'small wood by the Frome', and the oldest part of the village is down here, by the river. There were a number of mills along this stretch of the Frome and a corn mill stood just across the river. Along the gorge, you will pass numerous disused quarries where Pennant stone was extracted.

The path undulates at first, and can be muddy until you reach the beginning of the surfaced route that faithfully follows the Frome back to your starting point. Keep to this path, ignoring tempting diversions up to the left, until you reach a footbridge **I**. Cross the river here, then at a path junction, drop down left and keep the river in sight until you reach Snuff Mills Park **J**.

The partially restored mill here is Whitwood Mill and contrary to its popular name, there is no record of snuff being ground here (though the mill up-stream, Witherly's, ground snuff from around 1790. That mill was purchased by H. O. Wills in 1805 and ground snuff until 1843). The horizontal 'egg-ended' boiler, seen by the path, is thought to be the only one in existence in this country still in its original working situation. It was part of a 12 hp steam engine, installed in the mill sometime around 1850 to augment the power of the water wheel.

Now continue along the tarmac path for a short distance to the car park, tea hut, and your starting point.



Walk 4 Dundry Hill

Start Car park on Dundry Down (ST556668).

Distance 4.5 miles / 7.2 km.

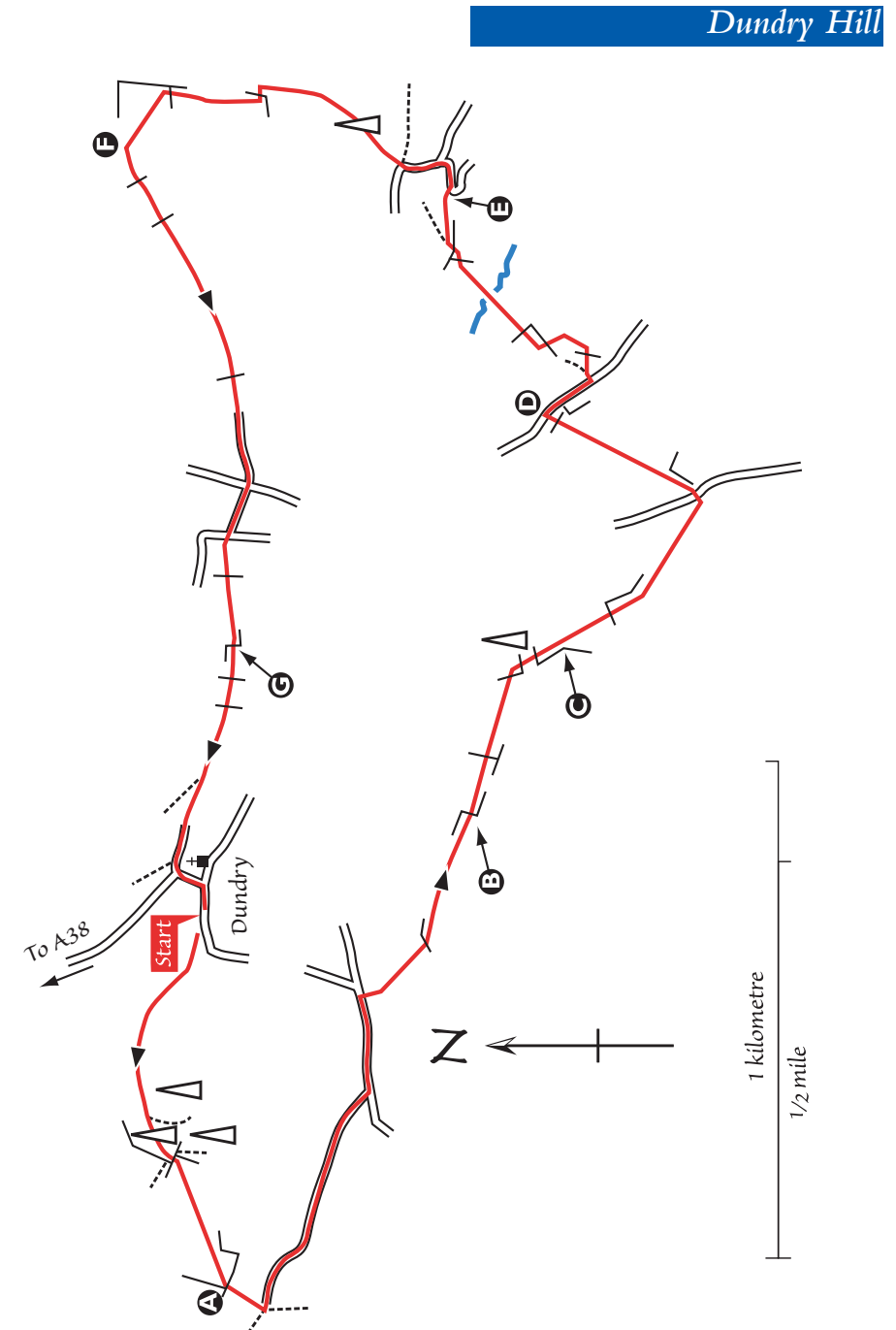
Refreshments Dundry Inn at start/finish.

Getting there By car, there are several routes to the starting point on Dundry Down. For those unfamiliar with the area, take the A38 out of the city, turning left into Dundry Lane just before a reservoir on the right. Follow the lane up to the church where you turn right at T-junction. Park on the right just before left bend on Dundry Down.

An elevated ramble with superb views in all directions as the walk progresses. A couple of climbs and some wet and muddy stretches, but on a clear day, a great morning walk taking about two hours, before a pub lunch!

From the car park, go through the metal field gate and follow the track. There are superb views from here north across the city towards the twin Severn crossings.

The Romans quarried on this hillside to provide stone for their fort at Cardiff and the 'Dundry Freestone' was used extensively from the 12th to 15th centuries for many of the local churches and other important buildings.



As the track bears left towards the radio transmitters, follow it then take the narrow track ahead, parallel to the right boundary and passing close to one of the transmitters on your left. In the corner of the field, you have a choice of three stiles, cross the centre one – a stone upright topped with metal bar. Now go diagonally down the hill towards the farm to reach the gate in the bottom corner **A**. Beyond, walk through the farmyard, through a gate and out the other side to a junction of footpaths, where you take the tarmac lane up to the left.

At a road junction, continue ahead, then just before Downs Road with a green 'Transco' box on the left, turn right along the signed driveway next to the cattle grid. Walk past houses and a smallholding, to reach a metal field gate, go through, then walk with the boundary to your left, aiming for another transmitter. From here, there are fine views towards Chew Valley Lake on the right.

At a 'dog-leg' in the boundary **B** go through the field gate ahead, then carry on in the same direction, now with the boundary on the right. In the corner of the field, go through a gap in the field boundary, then continue to the corner of the next field. Climb the stile here and go right, walking a narrow path between transmitter fence and hedge with stiles at both ends.



Springtime on Dundry

Now in a field, continue to walk with the boundary on your right at first, then as it goes right **C** keep ahead to a metal gate. Go through, then walk with the hedge on your left, eventually climbing a stile to reach a road. Cross, and climb a stile in the hedge opposite, then walk ahead, initially with the hedge to your right before striking out across the field, aiming to the left of the barns. Go through the nearest of a pair of field gates then walk ahead through a further one to a lane **D** with farm buildings to your right. Turn right along the lane for a short distance before going left, down a walled track by an electricity pole. Follow the track round to the right and pass through a 'step through' metal gate.

Now turn left and head down the field to the electricity pole, then descend the bank left to reach a stile at the bottom. Cross over and turn right, walking through a very wet area to a metal gate, beyond which, continue to the valley bottom and cross the stream where convenient. Climb now to the top right corner with a radio mast visible ahead, go through a gap in the boundary and follow a track up, between stone gate posts to reach a wall. Fork right here (one track continues upward) and walk with the wall on your right, passing a house and climbing a stile to reach a lane on a bend **E**. Go left and climb to a junction, keep left and in a short distance the road turns left with minor routes ahead and right.

Take the lane ahead and continue, passing the mast on the right, beyond which your route degenerates into a track, which you follow to an improvised iron gateway. Climb the stile on the right to access the field beyond the gate then walk down the field, boundary right, to the bottom corner, climb the stile, then walk half-left, eventually picking up the bottom hedge by a concrete trig. post **F**. Walk now with the hedge on your right to climb a stile by a gate. In the next field, continue in the same direction to another stile, then follow a track, passing through metal gates.

The track is roughly surfaced now, but continue to a road junction and cross into Oxleaze Lane. Walk ahead to a junction with a metal field gate left. Go ahead, climbing the earth bank and going through a metal gate, then continue, boundary left, following a line of stones on the right, to reach a gate **G** just beyond the last stone.

These stones mark an ancient trackway that continued from Oxleaze Lane to Dundry village.

Pass through, then continue in the same direction, hedge right. Go ahead, passing two sets of metal barriers to reach a tarmac lane. Follow this to a fork, where you keep to the upper route and proceed to a junction with a school opposite. Turn left, passing the church, to a T-junction; the Dundry Inn is to your left, your car along the road to your right. Your choice!



Walk 5 Burrington Ham

Start Car park at the top end of Burrington Combe (ST 489581).

Distance 4.75 miles / 7.6km.

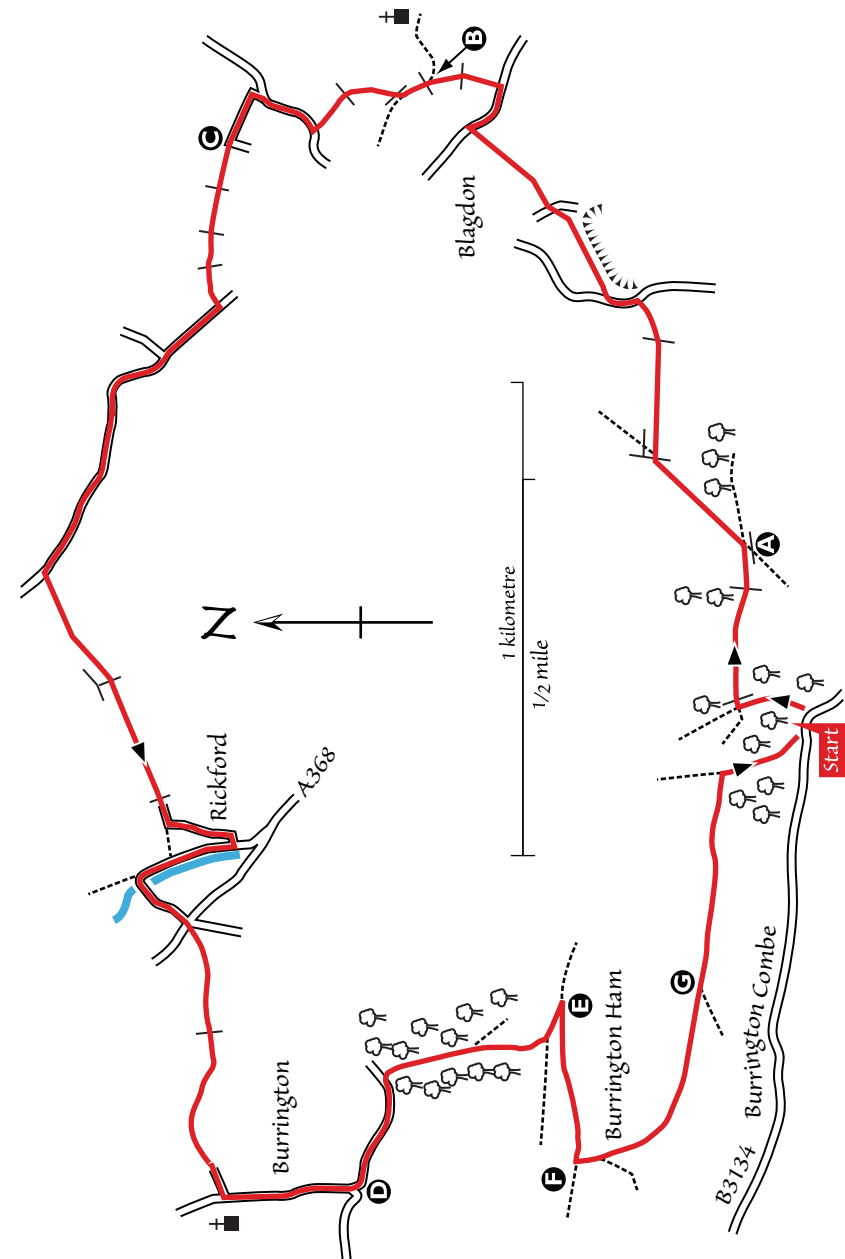
Refreshments Pub at mid-point of walk, ice cream van at the end in summer.

Getting there A38 south to traffic lights at Churchill. Left on A368 for two miles then right onto B3134 signed Burrington Combe. Continue through the combe for 1.5 miles to car park on the left.

A delightful ramble on country paths and lanes, down to sleepy villages, then up, to splendid views from limestone grassland where in summer, you are surrounded by countless flowers and butterflies. With just one steady climb, the circuit should take just over two hours.

Situated just north of Black Down and Beacon Batch, the highest point on the Mendips, Burrington Ham is frequently overlooked when planning a walk, yet its limestone outcrops give a dramatic vantage point and the flora and associated insect life make this a fine area to wander.

From the parking area, take the narrow path to the right of the information panel and walk to cross-paths, ignoring a path joining from the left. Go through the gate on the



right and walk with hedge on the right to a further gate. Go through and continue as far as a stile on the right **A**. Don't cross, but instead go half-left across the field to a stile (left of the large tree). Climb the stile and walk ahead (ignoring a stile on the left), picking up the left boundary with views of Blagdon Lake down to your left. In the far left corner of the field, climb a stile and follow the path to a road.

Walk left downhill for a short distance, then cross to a grassy picnic area. Keep to the right hedge with picnic benches away left, and pick up a descending path, passing a disused quarry down to your right. The path leads you past cottages to a lane, cross and continue on the path to reach a busy road. Cross with care and walk right to reach a gate on the left into an orchard. Walk down through the orchard to a further gate, then on, to reach a tarmac cross-path by a small pond **B**.

You have a choice here, the route goes left, but you can detour right to visit Blagdon church. Augustus Toplady was curate here for a time from June 1762. He is remembered for the Hymn "Rock of Ages" that he wrote on the back of a playing card while sheltering from a storm in a cleft in a rock at Burrington Combe.

To resume the walk, go left through the gate, and continue to a further gate on the right. Go through and follow the elevated path beyond another gate to reach a lane. Turn right down the lane for a short distance, then go ahead into Garston Lane. Follow it round to the left and walk past houses until you come to a gate with field beyond **C**. Go through and follow the well-worn path straight ahead, picking up the hedge on the right and going through an open gateway. Beyond, continue in the same direction keeping to the right boundary and passing through another gate. Walk a short distance further to reach a lane where you turn right. Follow the lane for almost half a mile, with the high stone wall of Coombe Lodge on your left. (Built in the 1930s, it now houses a company specialising in weddings and corporate training.) After the last farm buildings on the left, look for a footpath sign on the left and climb the stile by the gate. Cross the field to a gate on the far side, then continue ahead again to a further stile by a gate. In this field, aim for the white house where a stile to its left gives access to a lane. Walk the length of the lane as it bears left, to reach the cluster of houses that is Rickford. Turn right to the 'Plume of Feathers'.

Suitably refreshed, follow the lane with stream on the left, passing the pretty ford then climbing to the main road. Beware of the blind bend to your right as you cross with extreme care, then take the right fork, Burrington Lane, and follow it to Burrington village. Facing the church, turn left and follow the road, passing the village pound, to a fork **D**. Go left, climbing now to the brow of the hill where a bridleway sign directs you right, through an elaborate gateway into woodland.

Proceed on the broad stony path passing to the left of a blue bridleway marker and climbing slightly. The path veers gently to the left and flattens out. On reaching another blue marker on the right side of the path turn very sharply right **E** onto a broad grassy track (so that you are doubling back on yourself) and follow this, climbing until you reach a limestone outcrop **F**. From the top, you have a fine view south to Black Down and north to Dundry.

The last stretch now! Go back to the path and with the limestone outcrop behind you, turn right, walking for a few yards then forking left. The path narrows and levels out, bearing left; continue, eventually reaching a broader path **G**. Carry on to a cross-path and here, go right towards the distant cottage. This descending path leads you to the car park (and ice-cream van at weekends).



Walk 6 Three Sodburys

Start Car park in Wickwar Road, Chipping Sodbury (ST 727823).

Distance 5.75 miles / 9.2km.

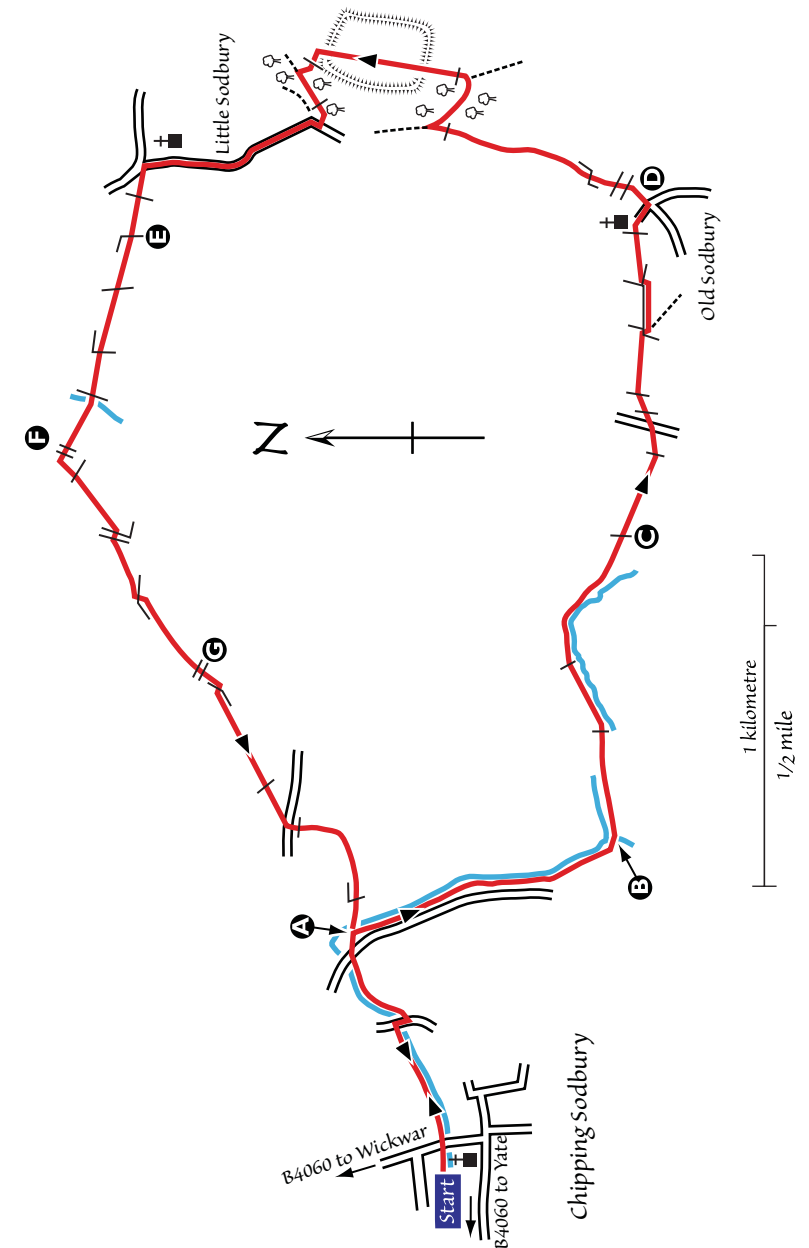
Refreshments None en-route, but a good choice at the end of the walk in Chipping Sodbury.

Getting there A432 to Yate, then onward to Chipping Sodbury. Wickwar Road is a left turn off the High Street.

A pleasant ramble along field paths and quiet lanes, with a couple of short climbs that give you fine views over the surrounding countryside. Generally easy walking but several stiles and some muddy stretches underfoot. Allow 2.5 to 3 hours.

Note that many stiles mentioned in the text have been replaced with gates, but until I know which ones, I'll keep with the original text.

From the car park, cross the Wickwar Road to a tarmac footpath with the Kingfisher symbol of the Frome Valley Walkway. Walk with the river on your right to a road, go right, over the bridge and then immediately left on a grassy path with the Frome now on your left. Walk with the river to another road, cross, then beyond a grassed area pick up the river, still to your left, and pass a footbridge (your return route) **A**.



Keep close to the river, eventually joining a surfaced path behind houses with views of the Cotswold escarpment away to your left. On reaching a footbridge **B** cross, and follow the path into a field. Walk the length of this field, go through a gate and cross the next field where, beyond another gate, you keep right, with the Frome beyond the hedge. The path eventually drifts away from the river-bank, crossing the field ahead to a gate and footbridge in the far hedge **C**. The path now guides you slightly right.

Notice the railway ventilation tower (one of six) on the ridge ahead. Built around 1900, the bricks for the towers were made locally in Old Sodbury.

On reaching another gate, pass through and cross the narrow field to a lane. Here, you leave the Frome Valley Walkway. Cross the road, climb the stile and in a short distance another. Walk half-left to a further stile and in the next field go ahead, aiming for Old Sodbury church on the hillside. After climbing the next stile go left, up the field, keeping the hedge to your left. In the top corner of the field you pass through a kissing gate and join the Cotswold Way. Make the short ascent to the church where you will find a comfortable bench, from where you can enjoy the views westward with Chipping Sodbury church in the distance.

Walk through the churchyard to reach a lane. Go right, then turn left onto a wooded path **D** alongside the school boundary wall, waymarked 'Cotswold Way'. Pass through two kissing gates keeping the fence on the left to reach a further gate. Go through and walk ahead along the top of the field. After the next kissing gate, follow Cotswold Way signs and double-back right, up the hill, ignoring the path ahead. You now have a short, steep wooded climb to a further kissing gate. On reaching it, go through, ignoring the path right, to reach Little Sodbury Camp.

Eleven acres in size with ramparts up to twelve feet high, this was a large Iron-Age hill fort dating from about 500 BC. It was subsequently fortified by the Romans and in later times was used as a resting place by King Edward IV on his way to the battle of Tewkesbury in 1471.

Your route takes you across the fort, exiting at the far side to the left of the farm buildings and turning left to a kissing gate. Beyond the gate, follow the Cotswold Way descending half left with the farm buildings on your right. Turn left descending on a wooded path to reach fence ahead with barn on your right. Go through the gate and cross a small orchard to the next gate and exit onto the road.

The driveway is the entrance to Little Sodbury Manor. William Tyndale, who translated the Bible into English in the early 1500s, stayed here in 1521 as tutor to the family of Sir John Walshe. The Manor was an important house – Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn stayed here in

1535. In an age when religion was a political issue, Tyndale fled to the continent, but was arrested, accused of heresy and treason and burnt at the stake near Brussels in 1536.

The ruins of a mediaeval church are high on the bank above the manor house and stones from it were used to build the present one, that you will soon pass.

At the road, turn right and walk through the village, passing the church of St. Adeline, the patron saint of Flemish weavers. Just before the road junction, you leave the Cotswold Way, taking the footpath left over a stone stile. You will now follow the Monarch's Way back to Chipping Sodbury.

Beyond the stile, walk through a small plantation, climb another stile and head out across the meadow to the far right corner and a stile by the electricity pole **E**. Continue, hedge right, to a stile and footbridge, then in the next field aim again for the far right corner to cross another. Now proceed to the stile ahead and cross the bridge beyond. The fields either side of this crossing get waterlogged after rain, so choose your path carefully! Walk up the field to a stile in the hedge, Winchcombe Farm to your right **F** then continue a short distance to pass through a gate.

Now go left to cross another stile, then half-right to find a stile in the far corner, hidden in the trees. Beyond, go through the old orchard, cross the footbridge then the stile, and now walk half-left, picking up the left boundary and looking for a footbridge near the top left corner of the field. In the next field, go right, keeping to the right boundary, to reach two gates giving access to a farmyard **G**. Continue through the yard, exiting via a gate in the right hand corner. Now, follow the fence on the left to a gate, then continue, crossing a metalled lane to reach another gate. From here, follow the well-defined path to a gate in the top corner of the field, then a short distance further, cross the footbridge passed on your outward journey **A**.

You will now retrace your steps for the last leg of the walk, cross the road and follow the path with the River Frome on your right to reach the bridge. Go right, then left, now walking with the Frome on the left. Continue to the Wickwar Road and cross to the car park.

Chipping Sodbury is an early example of town planning; William Crassus laid out the town in 1175 on the site of an older Saxon settlement. The wide main street originally had buildings in the middle, and the plots had service roads to the rear. The first market charter was granted in about 1200, at a time when cows could be bought for ten shillings (50p) and pigs for sixpence (2.5p pence).



Walk 7 Two Hawkesburys

Start Village hall car park, Hawkesbury Upton (ST 777870).

Distance 6 miles / 9.6km.

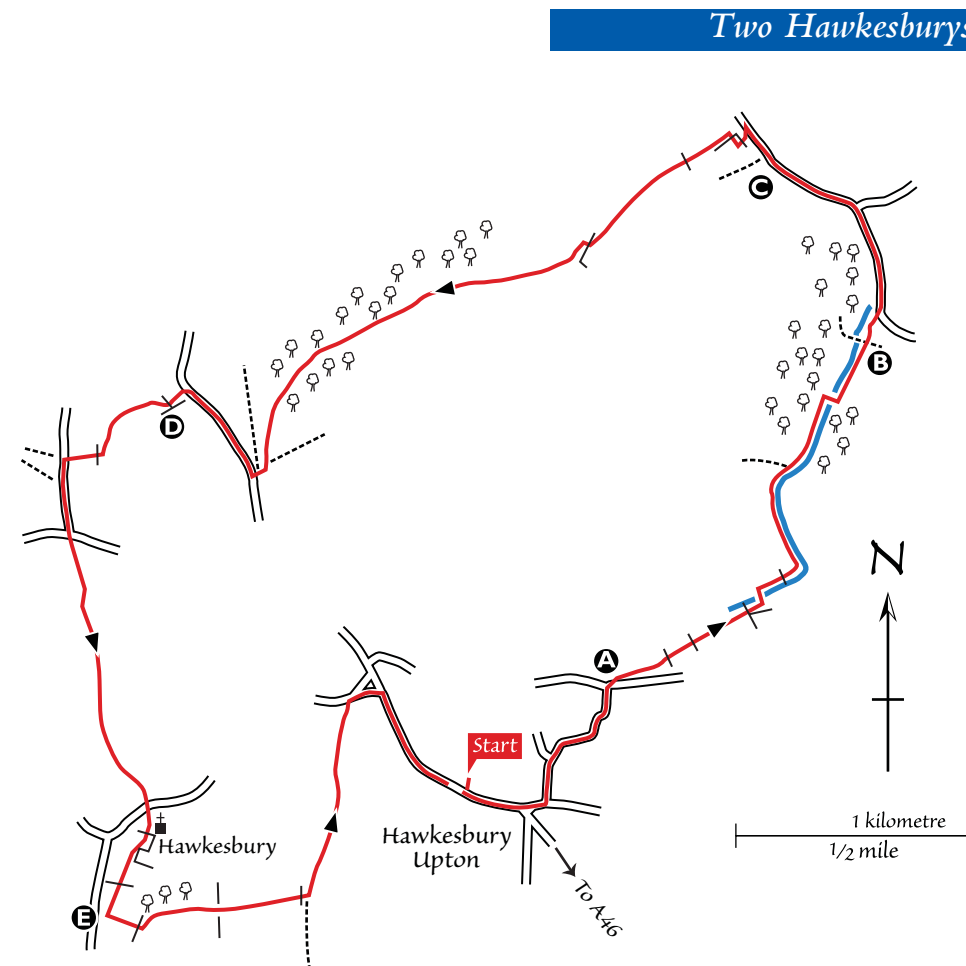
Refreshments Pub at start/finish.

Getting there A46 north from M4 junction 18. The Hawkesbury turning is on the left after 5.5 miles. Park in the village hall car park, on the right, just after the Beaufort Arms pub.

A lovely summer stroll taking about 2.5 hours, through a Cotswold countryside of meadows and quiet lanes. A couple of climbs but nothing to set the heart pounding – except for the superb scenery!

From your starting point at the village hall car park, walk left along the road, passing the Beaufort Arms on your right. At the war memorial, take the left fork then in a short distance, left again into Back Street. Continue along this road out of the village to a junction, where you cross to a footpath **A**.

The path descends right to a kissing gate. Beyond, continue in the same direction and follow the track down the hill, passing through two further fields. As you approach



the third field, go through the wooden gate, and then continue heading downhill to a stream, crossing by the footbridge. Now go right and walk with the stream to a stile. Beyond here, keep to the broad valley bottom with the stream on your right to a bridge. Cross, then walk with the stream to your left to cross-tracks **B** then continue a short distance to reach a road.

Go left, passing a lane on the right, then Corn Mill Farm. Ignore a 'Cotswold Way' sign on the left **C** but a little further, a millstream runs to your right and as it parts company with the road, look up to your left for a footpath sign as you approach Stream Cottage on your right. A few paces further, climb steps to the stile, cross and go right uphill, past a redundant stile to another. Now go half-right to cross a third

stile then walk along the field edge keeping close to the left boundary to the far end, where you go through the gate.

Continue, keeping to the bottom edge of the field and passing two ponds on your right, until you see a stile as you approach the far corner. Cross, and proceed in the same direction, keeping to the valley bottom and eventually picking up a track. Beyond a wooden gate the track becomes more pronounced and you now climb to reach a road, with a monument up to your left.

The Somerset Monument was built by Lewis Vulliamy in 1846 in memory of Robert Edward Henry Somerset (1776-1842), a general who fought in the Peninsular War and commanded the Household Cavalry Brigade at the Battle of Waterloo. He was a nephew of the Sixth Duke of Beaufort (whose ancestral home is at Badminton).



The Somerset Monument

Turn right and walk on the grass verge, following the road to the brow of the hill. Cross with care to a footpath sign and go through the field gate. Up to your left is a small wooden gate, ignore this and walk a few paces further to a second gate hidden behind the bushes **D**. Go through and turn right, following the field boundary downhill. When you reach a stile (partially hidden) on the right, climb it, then another, and cross the field to a lane. Walk left to reach a T-junction and here, go through the gate ahead and follow the track that will eventually lead you to Hawkesbury church.

The grassland up to your left is known as 'The Sands', where medieval tenants ploughed their strips of land. These lynchets can be clearly seen as terraces on the hillside. At the end of the track, you pass Church Farm on your right. Part of this dwelling has been identified as a portion of a monastic grange, constructed about 1500. There are also three large

medieval fish ponds behind the house. St.Mary's Church is of Early English style, 12th-13th century, though with many additions. The neatly trimmed yew hedge around the churchyard has been a notable feature for many years.

Proceed in the same direction skirting the churchyard wall on your left and climbing a stile into a field. Go half-right to the graveyard wall then walk with it on your left to the next corner, where you continue towards the electricity pole by the hedge. (Ignore the kissing gate off to your right). Go through the gate and in the next field, aim for the far right corner, where you exit to a track **E**.

Go left and climb the stony track to reach a stile by a metal gate. Go over to enter access land, then continue uphill passing through several gates to eventually reach a T-junction. Here, with the houses of Hawkesbury Upton visible across fields, turn left onto a track. and follow it to a road.

Turn right, passing an ancient drovers' pond where beasts were watered en-route to market. Keep right to the main road then going right again, walking back to your starting point.



Walk 8 Blaise & Shirehampton

Start Car park by Blaise House (ST 558786)

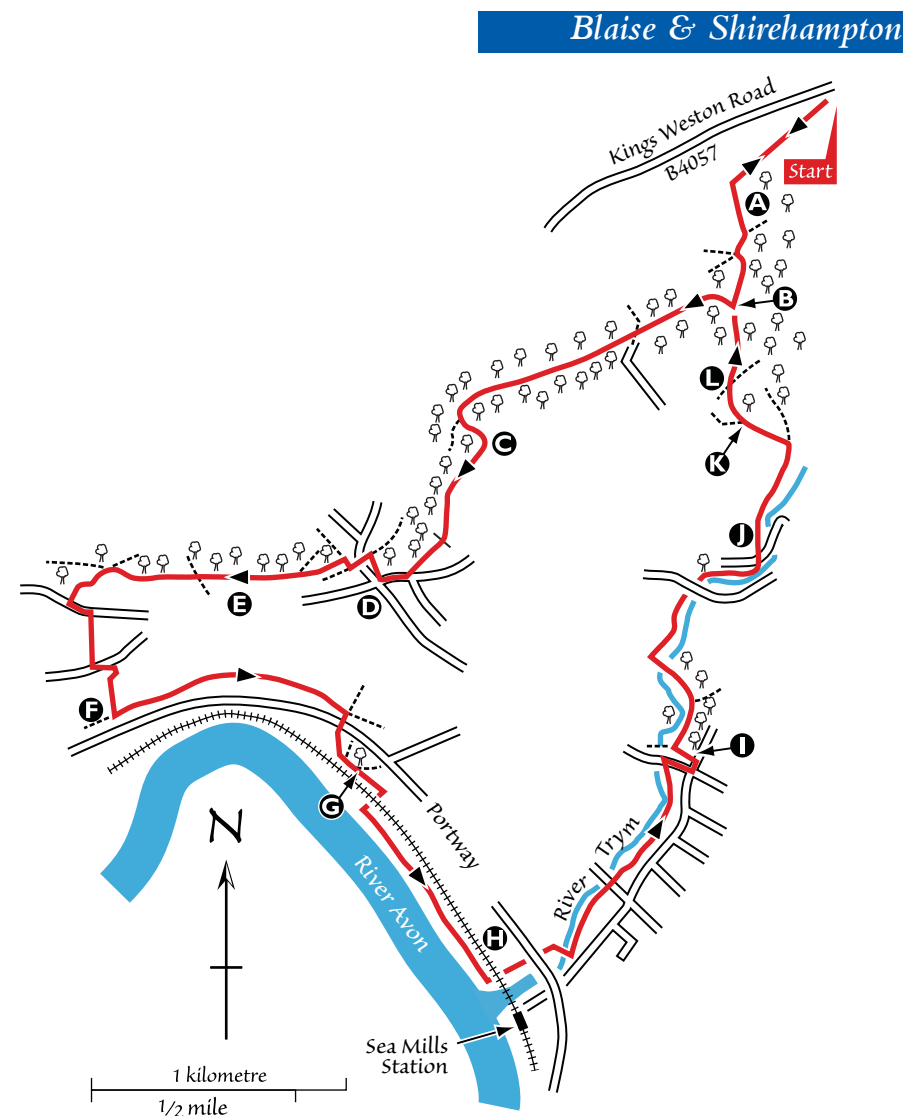
Distance 6 miles / 9.6km.

Refreshments Teas, ice cream etc. at start/finish, pub 3/4 distance.

Getting there The Blaise Estate is located between Henbury and Lawrence Weston, entrance on the B4057 Kingsweston Road.

Much of this walk is sub-urban; often close to roads and habitation though with a country feel, yet near enough to see in places, the detritus of a throwaway society. However, a fine woodland stretch and good views will lift the spirits. One steep climb. Allow up to three hours.

From the far end of the car park, walk half-right, across the grass to Echo Gate, a gap in the woodland. Keeping the woods on your left until you reach a red-capped orienteering marker number 3 **A**. Ahead, pick up a cross-path and go right, into woodland, then bear left at a fork and follow the track until it bends right at orienteering marker 14 **B**. Ignore the path descending left (your return route) but continue on the main track. At cross-tracks by a stone wall, continue onward on a level and fairly straight course. Eventually, the track descends, bending first left then right **C**. A little further,



with a high metal fence up to your right, the track again descends left. Leave the woodland via a metal gate.

Follow the lane ahead passing a quarry right and the backs of houses left, to reach a road. Turn right and walk a short distance to a major road junction **D**. Go right again and follow the tarmac path as it climbs above the road to a footbridge. Cross over to enter parkland and climb the steps on the right. Turn left and walk for some distance

with a wall on your left. Ignore a path joining from the right and continue, crossing a tarmac path with picnic tables to the left **E**. Pass a cricket pitch on the left, beyond which go left at cross-tracks for a short distance to emerge at an open area opposite the grandly named 'Oasis Academy Brightstowe'.

Turn left and cross the road, then walk left to the end of the railings where you descend right and follow the right boundary of another cricket pitch. At the bottom of the field keep right and look for a path leading to a road. Cross over to Shirehampton Golf Club and walk down the driveway towards the car park. Keep right and in a short distance you take a descending path through woodland, skirting the edge of the golf course. When you reach a metal gate on your right **F** go left, passing a National Trust sign.

Your route now follows the lower edge of the golf course, the path dodging in and out of bushes until you reach a spectacular view point with the busy Portway and the River Avon far below.

This bend in the river – Horseshoe Point – was always difficult for ships to negotiate and many were stranded here as the tide ebbed. The Portway was the most expensive road per mile in Britain when it was opened in 1931.

Now continue to a surfaced path descending right to reach the Portway and cross with great care to a metal gate opposite. Beyond the gate, head across the rough grass bearing slightly left, aiming for a waymark post when it comes into view, then a gate behind. Descend the flight of steps, cross the boardwalk and climb the other side with the railway on your right. Ignore the path left, but proceed ahead for a short distance before going right to playing fields **G**. Walk alongside the railway as far as a high metal gate and here, pass beneath the track before continuing in the same direction, now with the railway left and the river right.

This next stretch takes you along the river-bank, just above the plastic bottle-line. The route passes capstans, a reminder of a more industrial age, and you will walk with mixed emotions at the state of this historic waterway. As you approach the sports ground on the left **H**, the path becomes low-lying, narrow and overgrown, but with some relief, the path swings left at Sea Mills, where the River Trym joins the Avon.

When the Romans invaded in force around 40 AD, they built a series of forts on the Welsh side of the Bristol Channel. They didn't settle in great numbers in the area of Bristol, but what they did need was a location within reach of their Welsh forts from where supplies could be shipped, so they built a harbour at Abona – now Sea Mills. The 'modern' harbour was constructed in

1712, but the distance from Bristol and the lack of good road links made it unpopular with merchants, so when the city docks were developed, the use of Sea Mills as a commercial enterprise declined.

Walk beneath the railway and road bridges, then go right, crossing the Trym via a footbridge. Turn left now, walking over the grass with the Trym on your left. On reaching a road, cross and continue until the river veers away and a small wood replaces the grass. Here, a path leads to a road. Cross and go right to the road junction by the Millhouse pub. Turn left passing the pub, then left again following a footpath alongside the pub and its car park **I**.

At a fork in the path go right and in a short distance you rejoin the River Trym on your left. Ignore paths on the right but continue to eventually cross the river by a footbridge. Now go right and walk the length of the meadow with the Trym on the right, passing beneath a road and into woodland. Choose your own path now; they all reach a road that you cross to a car park **J**.

You are now re-entering the Blaise Estate; keep to the broad track on the left, soon passing the backs of houses. Where these end, take the stepped path up left next to two silver birch trees. As the path levels out you reach a fork **K** take the lower right-hand route, ignoring steps up left in a short distance. When you reach a major path junction with an open area on the left **L** go ahead on a narrow, ascending path, passing orienteering marker 15 on the right. You now climb steeply, with a house on the left. In a short distance the path broadens and the ascent continues to a track junction **B**.

This was your outward route, with orienteering marker 14 on the right. Retrace your steps now going right, and at the next fork right again, to reach the grassed area of Echo Gate. Bear right to regain the car park.

Blaise Castle Estate takes its name from a Gothic folly, built in 1796 on the site of an Iron-Age hillfort. Blaise Castle House, now a branch of Bristol City museum, was constructed between 1795-6 for a wealthy banker, John Scandrett Hartford, while the parkland was designed by the famous landscape architect, Humphrey Repton.



Walk 9 The Somerset Coal Canal (part 1)

Start Britten's Hill, Paulton, (ST 656569).

Distance 6.25 miles / 10km.

Refreshments The Old Malt House hotel in Radford (just off route).

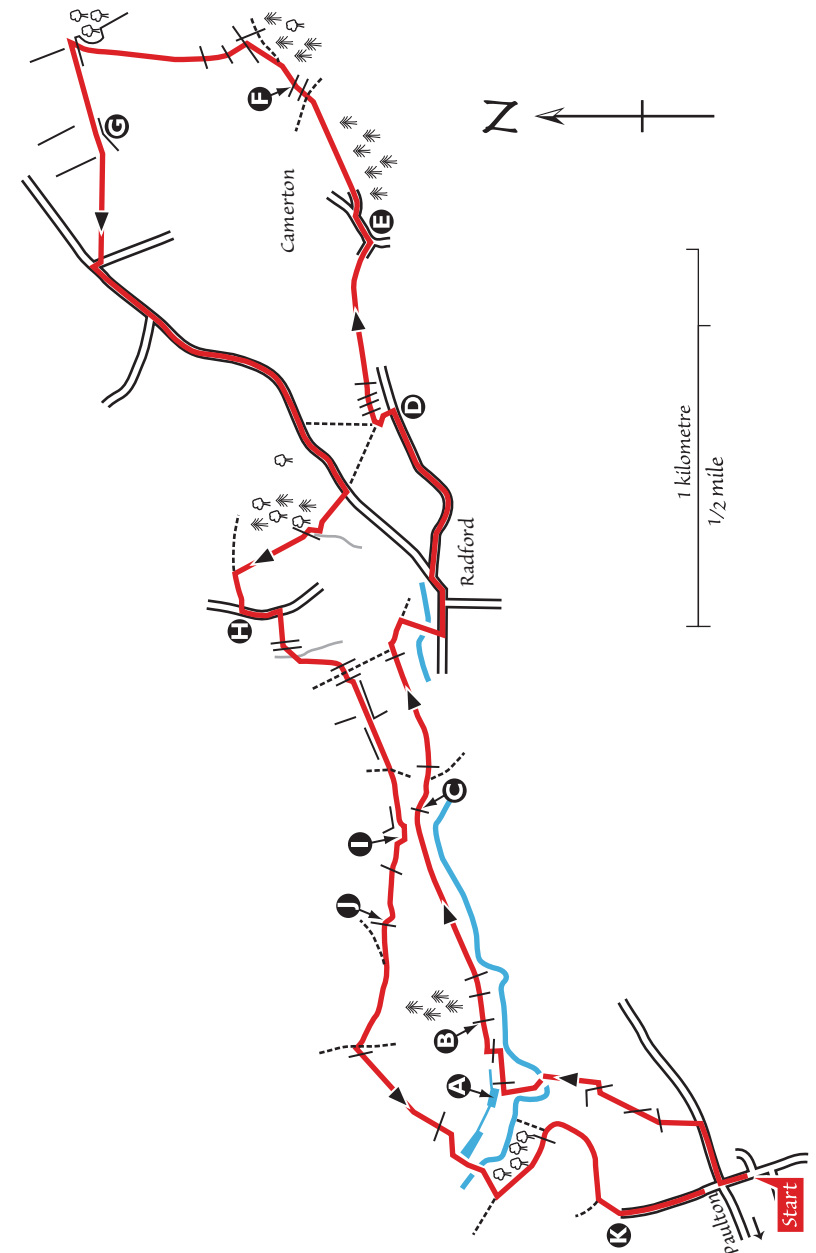
A37 south, turning left onto A39 into Hallatrow, then right, on B3355

Getting there signed Paulton. Through High Street and out of town on Bath Road. At crossroads on brow of hill, turn right into Britten's Hill, signed Midsomer Norton. Park at roadside in residential area.

The first of a two-part walk along the route of the Somerset Coal Canal, discovering the relics of a once bustling industry. Now, nature has triumphed and this gentle walk of about 2.5 – 3 hours takes you through fields and meadows, and along country lanes with a couple of easy climbs.

With your transport secured, walk back down Britten's Hill and turn right at the crossroads. Walk with care as far as the (now closed) Somerset Inn, then cross to a kissing gate opposite. Beyond, follow the track down the field going through another kissing gate ahead, then going half-right to a further kissing gate in the fence on the right.

The Somerset Coal Canal (part 1)



Walk 9

You are following the course of a tramway serving collieries to the south; the grassy embankment can be clearly seen ahead.

Go through a further kissing gate in the cross-fence at the bottom of the field and continue to another on the right in the far corner. Beyond this, go left and walk down the edge of the field to cross a metal footbridge over the Cam Brook, then go half-right to the remains of the canal.

Before you is Paulton Basin [Ⓐ]. Along with Timsbury basin, these formed the canal's terminus. There is also a dry dock here that could accommodate two boats. Paulton Basin served six collieries to the south, all linked by tramways. Timsbury Basin took coal from seven pits scattered around the countryside to the north. All these pits had closed by the 1860s.

Construction of the canal began in 1794 as a cheaper means of transporting Somerset coal to the markets in Bath and surrounding areas. The canal was to have two arms, with connecting tramroads to the pits. Starting at Dundas Aqueduct on the Kennet & Avon, the Paulton arm passed through Monkton Combe, Midford, Combe Hay, Dunkerton and Camerton, ending at Paulton. At Midford, the other branch headed towards Radstock via Wellow and Writhlington. The canal was one of the most successful in the country, carrying over 100,000 tons of coal per year by the 1820s. However, this prosperity was soon to be halted by the coming of the railways and the working out of the coal seams. The official liquidator tried to sell the canal as a going concern in 1894 but to no avail, and closure came in 1898. In 1904 the abandoned canal was sold to the Great Western Railway, who in 1907-10 built the Camerton to Limpley Stoke railway over much of its course. By 1951 the GWR branch line had also closed, losing out to road transport.

Turn right and climb the stile, then walk ahead, passing the site of the dry dock on your left. Continue for a short distance with the Cam Brook to your right, then go left over a stile. In front of you was the entrance lock to Paulton Basin. Now go right, through a kissing gate [Ⓑ] and walk ahead with the canal bed to your left. Pass through two further kissing gates, after which you find yourself walking in the canal bed with the tree-covered Withy Mills colliery tip up to your left. At the end of the canal bed (where trees have been planted) pass on the left a wigwam, take the walkway and go through the kissing gate [Ⓒ].

Over to your right is the site of Radford Colliery wharf. Radford Colliery, to the south, opened in the 1790s and closed in 1847. The final stretch of the canal between Radford and Paulton opened in 1799. It was this section that was the first to suffer from lack of maintenance and fall into disrepair.

Cross the farm drive and proceed alongside an electric fence to a gate where there used to be an information board. Go through and follow the surfaced path, noticing the rail-

The Somerset Coal Canal (part 1)

way embankment above the canal. Eventually, you go through another gate to reach a lane. The car-breaker's yard covers the canal here, but there is an information board about the mines that is worth a look.

Turn right and follow the lane, passing Radford Mill on your right. Keep with the lane as it turns right, then continue to the road where you turn left. Follow the road into the village of Radford, passing the first turning right (if you require refreshment, the Old Malthouse Hotel is a short walk up this road), then taking the second turning – Durcott Road, though not signed. Continue along the road, and beyond the fencing on the left, you pick up the course of the canal, which ran parallel to the road. When



you reach bungalows on the right [Ⓓ] go left at the footpath sign and past a dismantled railway bridge. Beyond this, you enter a garden through which the Right of Way passes, so please take care here!

Follow the footpath sign sharp left up to a garage, then half-right on a grassy path with the garden to your right. At the top, you come to a tarmac drive. Directly in front of you is a gate in the field boundary; don't take this but turn right and proceed towards the house on the obvious path – this was the towpath, the canal is down to your left – and walk behind the house keeping very much to the same line across the garden and passing through several gates. You now follow the path into the village of Camerton, where much has changed since the days of the canal. Beyond the line of modern bungalows on the right, a flight of steps leads down to the road; ignore these, but notice the large house following, almost obscured by trees.

This was the Jolly Collier pub (originally the Camerton Inn). It faced the canal when built but later turned its face to the road. It closed around 1991 and is now a private house.


The path emerges into Canal View, continue to the main road, cross, and go through the gate opposite [Ⓔ].


The 'Jolly Collier' at Camerton Old Pit


This nature reserve was the site of Camerton Old Pit (opened in the 1780s, closed 1898). From here, the first coal-laden boats were loaded for the inaugural trip to Dunkerton on October 1st 1798. The fibreglass statue of a miner once stood in front of the Jolly Collier pub, and the metal hatch in the ground nearby caps the mineshaft. The canal wharf, which stood only a few yards away was filled in long ago. You may want to spend a little time in the reserve, climbing the batch before returning to the road.


Back onto the road, walk up the hill for a short distance, then go right, through the metal gates of 'Woodside'. Go through this small estate and on, along a surfaced track – the course of an old tramway that connected the two Camerton pits – with the canal visible down to your right, below the spoil tip.


You soon reach more mining relics – the bungalow on the right was the canteen for Camerton New Pit (opened in 1794, closed 1950), and this levelled area was the site of the colliery workings.

When you reach a cross-track, go ahead through the wooden gate into the garden of the house, then pass to the right of the house and outbuildings, going through a metal gate into a field . The canal is again on your right, with the spoil tip of Camerton New Pit beyond.

You begin your return route now, by heading up the hill across the field to a fence. There are stiles at both ends of the fence, you need to head for the top left one. If the gate is open, pass through, otherwise climb the stile and turn immediately left, and take the track up to the left to reach Sheep House Farm. Go through the metal gate then ahead, to a second one. Now walk down to the bottom of the track and continue diagonally up, across the field passing close to the middle electricity pole. On reaching the top right corner, climb the stile and turn left, walking along the field edge with the boundary to your left. As this boundary bears left  walk ahead over the field (if this has crops, blaze a trail and be aware of the drainage ditch), skirting the end of the hedgerow on your right. Head across the field aiming to the right of the whitewashed houses, and exiting the field via a gate in the far boundary.


Cross the road and turn left into Meadgate, which, as you keep left, becomes Weekesley Lane. Beyond the last of the cottages the road begins to descend more steeply; continue down to a kissing gate on the right, just before a 'slow' sign and yellow markers painted on the road. Go through, and follow the path between wire fences, with the spoil tip of Lower Conyger Pit, (opened 1858, closed 1916) up to your right. The path leads you beneath the tramway incline; at the far side go right, with a stream on your left, to reach a stile. Climb the field beyond to a further stile by a gate in the far boundary, go over and turn left along the track to reach a road .

Turn left and walk for a short distance, then go through a kissing gate on the right. Walk down the field to the bottom left, through two kissing gates and continue down the meadow to cross a brook. Now follow the well-defined path to a further gate that gives access to a lane. Go through the gate opposite and cross the field with the hedge to your left, then pass through the left-hand of a pair of gates to pick up a track through a market garden. Here, you are walking above your outward route with the railway at the bottom of the field. Ignore paths left and right, and continue into the farmyard, passing to the left of the barns . Follow the track up to the right, keeping to the right of the farmhouse, and go through the metal gate ahead, keeping to the track with the railway embankment clearly visible at the bottom of the field on the left.

Now look for a gate ahead  go through and continue along a path that becomes a driveway with a house on your right. Continue on, ignoring a track joining from the right, and passing Withy Mills colliery on the left (opened 1815, closed 1877). A short distance further, as a track joins from the left, climb the stile ahead to enter a field.

Across the bottom of this field ran two tramroads serving the northern collieries. As they reached Timsbury Basin, they split into four, to facilitate unloading onto the waiting barges.

Head downhill towards the bottom left of the field (which field may be cropped). You can see the railway embankment and the gap where the bridge was, with Timsbury Basin beyond. Go through the metal gate by the remains of the bridge; Paulton Basin is to your left, Timsbury Basin is ahead. Go round to the right of the latter and head for the trees where you go through a gate and cross the stream via the only remaining original tramway bridge. Follow the path ahead with a spoil tip on the left to reach a tarmac drive by water treatment works, the site of Paulton Engine Colliery. Go left along the drive, picking up a footpath with a wire fence on your right, then pass through a kissing gate.

Spend a few minutes reading the information board, then go ahead to a driveway and follow it, bearing right up the hill. Keep on the drive, going left at all junctions and eventually reaching a roadway . Follow this to the main road and cross into Britten's Hill to retrieve your transport.



Walk 10 The Somerset Coal Canal (part 2)

Start Southstoke, south of Bath, (ST 747613).

Distance 6.25 miles / 10km.

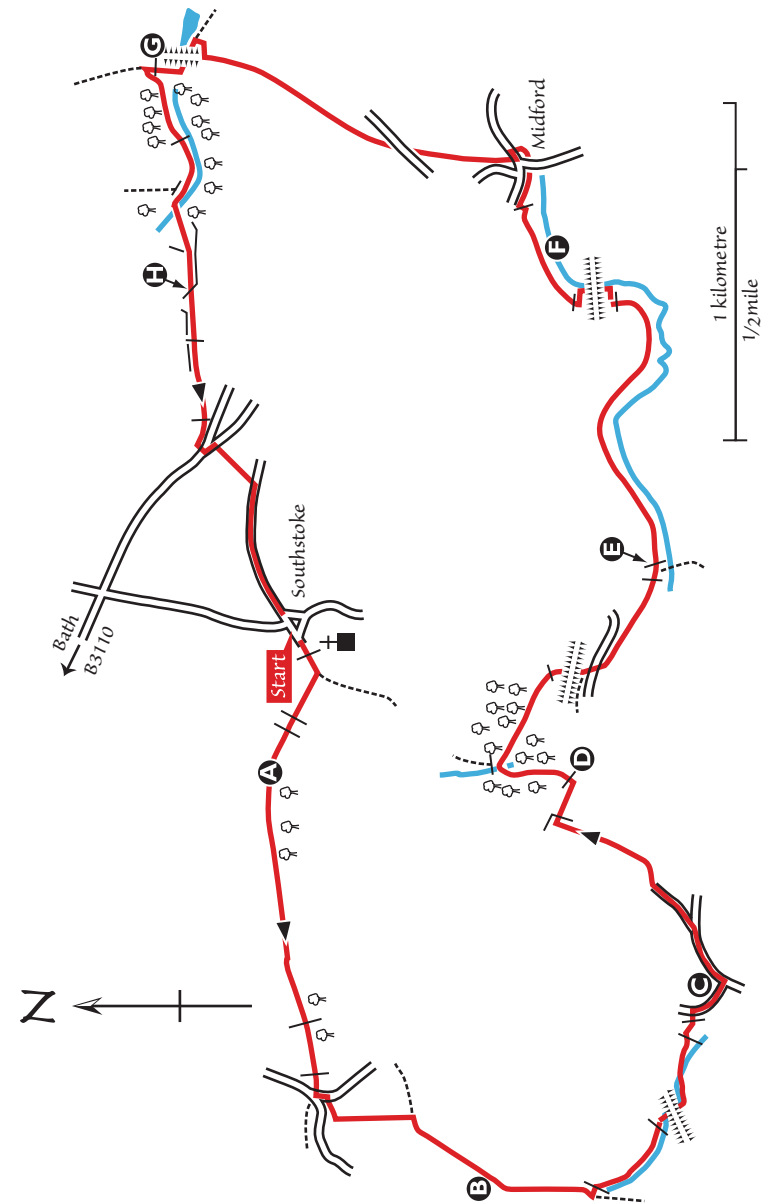
Refreshments Hope & Anchor pub, Midford, makes a good lunch stop.

Getting there Southstoke lies south of Combe Down, right at the 'Cross Keys' on the B3110 road to Midford. Park by white railings around the village green.

This walk follows a fascinating section of the Coal Canal from Combe Hay to Midford, thence along a railway path, returning through woods and across fields. Some good views, attractive woodland, and just one steep climb near the end of the walk – easily overlooked after lunch at the 'Hope & Anchor'! Allow up to three hours of walking.

From the white metal railings, walk past the telephone box, then go through a kissing gate and follow a level, surfaced driveway to a fork, where you go right, over a cattle grid. Continue to a stile by a gate, beyond which there is a fine viewpoint on the left. Climb a further stile by a gate with farm gates right and left, then follow the drive, soon to be replaced by a track **A**. Keep on in the same direction to eventually reach a road via two kissing gates.

The Somerset Coal Canal (part 2)



Take the lane on the left for a few yards, then go right, onto a footpath that descends to a field. Walk down the centre of the field (if the field has been split in two, follow the fence), passing to the left of the electricity pole, and exiting at the far side where you turn right along a track. Pass Fortnight Farm on the right **B** and continue to a restored farmhouse up to the right. A few yards further, look for a stile by a gate on the left, climb over then follow the footpath signs right, between a fence and a stream. Continue, eventually crossing a stile, beyond which the path can be overgrown and is often muddy. In a short distance you reach an embankment with a culvert beneath.

This was the Combe Hay aqueduct that carried the canal across the valley. Originally just 30 feet wide, it was extended to 110 feet to accommodate the railway that was built over the course of the canal. The flagstone path through the culvert was laid to maintain it as a right of way.

It is along this path that your route lies – tread carefully!, the flagstones are now quite rough in places. At the far end, follow the path along the right hand side of the stream for about 30 yards, then cross to the left hand bank and walk through woodland to a stile. Cross the stile and turn left and then right, following the beech hedge on your right. Go over a stile on the left and climb the steps to a drive, then continue right to climb a stile by a gate (Rectory Lodge) on to a lane. Turn right down the lane, going left at the junction by the ‘Wheatsheaf’ **C** then follow the road to a fork, where you go left, crossing the old railway bridge and continuing to Caisson House on the right.

On the left side of the road, the course of the canal is visible. Here was the start of the canal designers’ problems, a sudden drop of about 135 feet. To overcome this, the first of three Caisson Locks was built in 1796 with a drop of 60 feet. The barges were floated into the caisson – a watertight chamber – and the water in the lock was released, allowing the barge to drop with the water level, finally emerging at the canal’s lower level. Unfortunately, the Fullers Earth rock became swollen when wet and trapped the caisson, so the lock was replaced by an inclined plane in 1801. This was also unsuccessful due to the problem of transferring the barges’ loads, so it was eventually replaced by a flight of 20 locks in 1805. The site of the caisson and the top of the inclined plane are in the private grounds of the house.

Continue to the driveway of Rowley Farm and follow it onto a track with stables on the left. The track ends at a field gate and here, climb the stile on the right and head down the field. At the bottom, beyond the gate, climb the stile on the left **D** and follow the narrow feeder channel on the left to reach archaeological excavations.

One part of this costly venture was the need for a pumping station capable of lifting 5000 tons of water in 12 hours. This feeder channel transferred the water from the pumping station, which you have now reached, to the top of the lock flight.

Follow the path descending to the right of the earthworks, and beyond the trees you get your first glimpse of the chain of locks – this is number 10. At the bottom of the hill, cross a wooden footbridge.

On your right, the muddy area was known as the ‘bullnose’ where barges passed each other negotiating the hairpin bend between locks 10 and 11.

Ignore the stile ahead, but follow the broad path right, alongside the locks, some partially restored. As you pass a redundant stile, you are able to go right to reach lock 14.

Notice the milestone at the lock side. They were placed at one-mile intervals along the course of the canal but few of these stones remain and none have their brass plate indicating the distance to Dundas, the canal’s terminus.

Continue on your route to climb a stile then pass beneath the railway to reach a road. Cross over and go through a kissing gate, then follow the track down to the left, walking over a level area of ground, the site of locks 17 and 18. As the path narrows, you cross the entrance to lock 19, down to your right.

Just beyond the entrance to this lock, you can see the entrance to the feeder cut that marked the approach to the bottom of the inclined plane. When the flight of locks were completed in 1805, the feeder cut was abandoned although its basin was retained as a reservoir for the lower level of the canal.

Climb steps to a metal gate, turn right, then pass through a gate and down steps on the left **E**. Walk ahead to pick up the canal bank and follow it, passing the remains of three more locks – the last two being of greater age than the others – to eventually pass through a kissing gate with the railway embankment ahead. Turn right and follow the path beneath the railway to a further gate, beyond which you rejoin the canal, passing an old ‘Turnover’ bridge that gave access to a towpath on the north side of the canal. Continue to reach the fine stone bridge across the meadow to your right **F**.

This is the restored Midford aqueduct, crossing the Cam Brook. This was the northern end of the canal’s Radstock branch that operated from 1815 to 1871. From here, a tramway ran to the southern collieries, while beyond the aqueduct was a large basin with wharves and tramway sidings.

Continue to reach a wire fence, go through the kissing gate and walk with the canal, now a garden, on your right. Notice the unusual peeling bark of the paper bark maple (*Acer griseum*), in the garden. Pass beneath a road bridge, then the imposing bridge of the defunct Somerset & Dorset railway, to reach the road opposite the ‘Hope &



The 'Turnover' bridge over the Coal Canal, that gave access to the towpath on the opposite bank. Note the old railway embankment in the background.

Anchor'. The pub, with its wooden floor, real ales and creative menu, makes a perfect lunch stop. Enter from the car park, round to the left. This was Midford station yard, and the walk continues from here.

The Hope and Anchor is an historic building, some parts of it dating back to the 17th century. The original building was enlarged at the end of the 18th century when the newly constructed Somerset canal ran close to the east side of the inn. It was about this time that the present name was adopted in an attempt to gain trade from the barges.

Refreshed, walk onto the station platform; there's no hurry, the last train departed in March 1966. The platform and single track bed beyond is now a cycle track that you follow, passing through a tunnel, beyond which, Midford Castle (built circa 1775) can be seen up to the left. You eventually reach a viaduct where you part company with the cycle track and descend steps to the right, then walk beneath the arches and follow the driveway. Pass between the water treatment works and the railway embankment to reach a metal gate and squeezer stile ⑥ go through and turn left, entering woodland

on a broad path with a meandering stream down to your left. Climb a stile by a weir and continue through an open area then back into woodland. Here, ignore a stile and steps to the right, but follow a muddy path to a gate, where you go left, crossing the stream via a footbridge.

A bit of climbing now (muddy in winter)! First, ahead, up the meadow to enter another, where you continue in the same direction to climb a stile in the top left corner ④. Go on, keeping right, then just beyond a gate on the right, climb a stile ahead next to another gate. Continue up the field, keeping to the right boundary until you reach a stile at the top of the field. Climb over and walk to the road. Cross with care to the minor road then go right, through a kissing gate into a field. Go ahead, aiming for the visible gate in the far boundary. Pass through this and turn right, along the road, which will lead you back to Southstoke.



Walk 11 The Source of the Thames

Start Tarlton, grass verge by water tower (ST 958994).

Distance 6.75 miles / 10.72km.

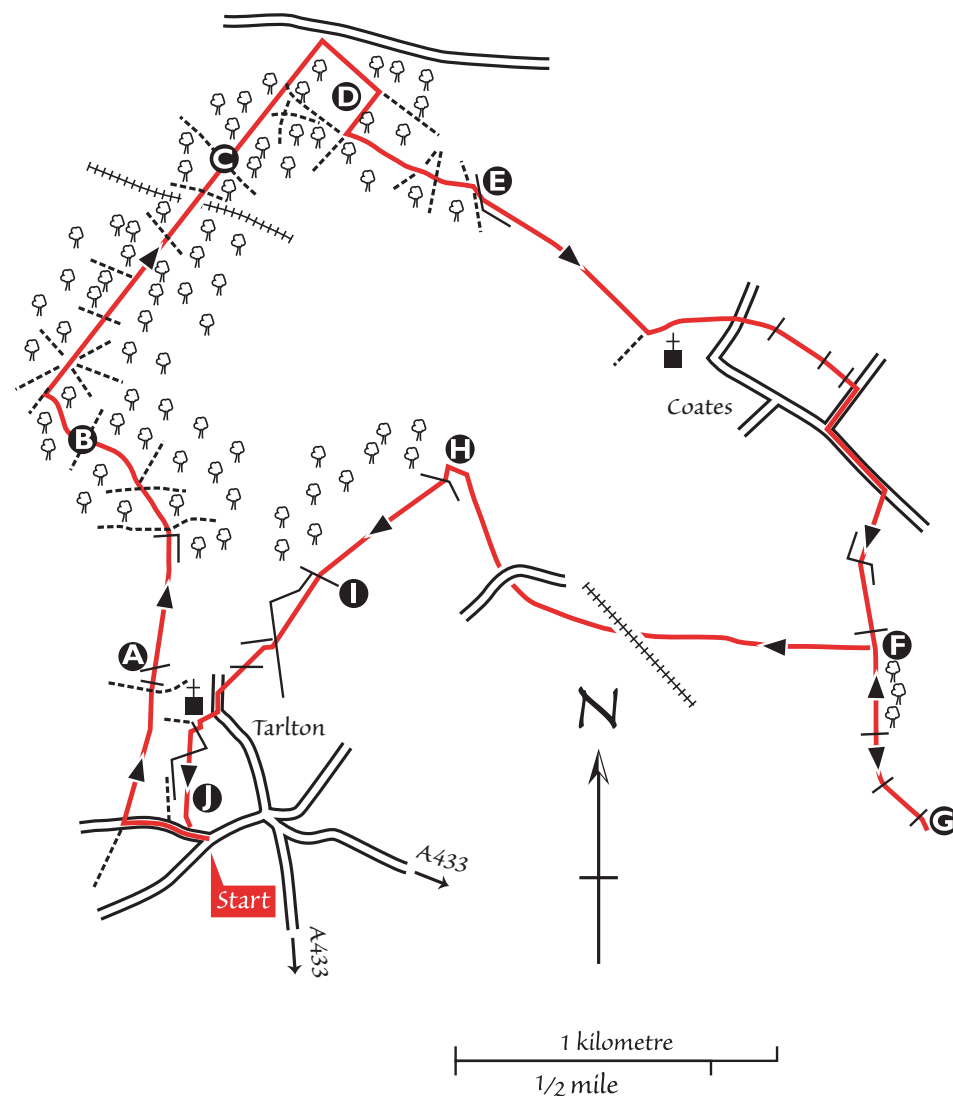
Refreshments Pub near end of walk.

Getting there M4 junction 18, north on A46 then right onto A433.

4 miles beyond Tetbury, take first turning left (unsigned) after left turn for Rodmarton. If you miss this, take next left signed Tarlton. In village, keep left to reach a water tower on the left.

An easy, fairly level walk through pretty Cotswold villages, using woodland tracks, field paths and lanes. The official source of the River Thames is visited, and a disused canal provides archaeological interest. The circuit should take about three hours.

The water tower stands at a junction of roads, take the one opposite the tower, signed Cherington, and walk out of the village, ignoring a footpath on the right (your return route) to reach a metal kissing gate on the right alongside double field gates. Take the track right, and follow it to a cross-track with a house on the right. Cross over to a metal field gate, then go ahead to pass another, the left-hand of a pair **A**. Now walk down the edge of the field to a wooden gate in the far corner, where you enter woodland.



Here, with tracks left and right, take the one ahead and follow it down to a five-way junction. Keep in the same direction, walking up the left-hand of two tracks that start to climb. After continuing past a grassy cross-track ❸ another track joins from the left as your track makes an obvious right turn. A short distance beyond this, you enter a clearing known as 'The Star'. Eight tracks radiate from this point and your exit is straight ahead – easier said than done if you forget the track by which you entered! This broad track provides easy walking now, so continue without deviation, eventually crossing the Gloucester to Swindon railway line. Pass cross-tracks immediately beyond the bridge, then beneath your feet at the next pair ❹ runs the Sapperton canal tunnel, to be seen later in the walk. Now continue until wooden gates come into view ahead with a road beyond. As you approach these your track bears right, keep with it, to reach a track on the right ❺.

To avoid walking through a sawmill ahead, the Public Right of Way has been diverted here (most of the tracks you have been following are 'permissive' paths), so take this right turn and walk to the next track junction, where you go left. Go ahead, ignoring two cross-tracks (which lead to the sawmill away to the left). At the third track junction, go right and walk for a short distance to a waymark post directing you left, through a gate into a field ❻. Now walk along the field edge, boundary right, to eventually reach the village of Coates, with the church ahead. Turn left and follow the driveway, passing the church on your right.

St. Matthew's church was built around 1086 and restored in 1861. The aisle and perpendicular arch from the nave to the tower are early English, while the south doorway has a Norman arch. The baptistry still has the original Norman font and stone seat.

The driveway brings you to a road, cross over and go through a kissing gate, then go ahead through another to enter a field. Here, keep to the right boundary as you walk down the field. Go through another gate and cross the pasture ahead to a further gate. Beyond this, a path leads you between houses to a road. Turn right and walk to the road junction where you go left.

Follow the road out of the village, then look for a stone stile on the right, by a wooden gate. Climb over and walk down the field with the wall on your right to reach a stone stile in the bottom corner. Climb this and continue in the same direction with the wall now on your left, to climb a further stile at the bottom of the field. Follow the track ahead over an old bridge to reach a path junction ❻.

This is Trewsbury Bridge, the best surviving example of a rough stone Thames & Severn Canal bridge – most of the other survivors have been subjected to extensive brick patching, whilst this one remains almost entirely in stone.

The next part of the walk is a there-and-back-again stretch totalling three-quarters of a mile, which takes you to the source of the River Thames. You will return to this spot, taking the path down to the canal.

So, walk ahead on the track climbing two ladder stiles. The route of the canal is in the woodland to your left, having changed its course from east to south, just beyond the old bridge. When you reach the next stile, a waymark post marks the start of the Thames Path, a splendid riverside walk of 180 miles. No riverside here, however! Climb the stile and keep left in the following meadow for a short distance, then look left ❼.

Here, in this Gloucestershire meadow called Trewsbury Mead, where the Romans fought a battle for the nearby British stronghold of Trewsbury Fort, is the official source of the Thames. The stone slabs at the base of an aged ash tree mark the spot where, in winter, sometimes – so rumour has it, a trickle of water can be seen! The stone monument confirms the location now that the statue of Father Thames, itself of historic interest as one of the earliest concrete statues, was moved from here to St John's Lock near Lechlade to protect it from vandalism.



Return now to ❹ descending left to reach the canal towpath. The canal at this point is little more than a ditch. It is hard to imagine the activity here in the 1800s.

Opened in 1789, the canal was built to link the Thames at Lechlade 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.

The source of the River Thames. Photo taken in January 2010 by Helen Clover

Follow the towing path, eventually passing beneath Skew Bridge where the railway is taken over the canal. A little further on, you pass a circular brick structure on the left.

This was one of five 'roundhouses' built along the canal's course, and used by the lengthsman who looked after the daily running and maintenance of his stretch of canal and towpath. Roundhouses had three storeys, with the ground floor used as a stable and those above for living accommodation. They had a funnel-shaped roof that acted as a rainwater catchment, rain falling on the roof being channelled to a lead collecting bowl in the centre, which was connected to a cistern that stored water for drinking purposes. Behind this roundhouse was a small rectangular extension that used to house the kitchen, while a separate stone structure housed the privy.

Carry on, passing beneath a road bridge beyond which, the canal runs in a concrete channel.

This length of the canal leading to the Sapperton tunnel is called the King's Reach, following a visit from George III during the time of the tunnel's construction. This stretch suffered badly from leakage until Gloucestershire County Council constructed a sophisticated concrete channel with side vents above the waterline to relieve the ground water pressure, a successful solution that has lasted for about a century.

You finally arrive at the mouth of the tunnel🏠 the portal being a wonderful piece of Georgian Classical stonework that was completely rebuilt in 1976-7. From here, the path leads you up to the left, where you find the Tunnel House Inn.

The inn was originally built as a hostel for the men building the tunnel, with large communal rooms for sleeping and eating. For many years it would have been the place where 'Leggers' waited to offer their services to passing boat crews about to enter the tunnel. With no towpath through the tunnel, these Leggers would lie on their backs on the canal boats and propel the craft by 'walking' it along the sides of the tunnel. The building originally had three floors but was gutted by a severe fire in 1952, after which it was rebuilt as a public house, minus the top floor.

Sir John Betjeman once said of the pub, "My father took me here as a child and the romance of the place has never diminished for me". However, the romance may have diminished had he paid in 2011, so I'm told, £8.95 for the 'Ploughman's lunch', a slab of cheddar, slice of bread and butter, pickled onion and garnish.

To continue the walk; with your back to the front door of the pub, go half-right, across the grass and down to enter a field. Go ahead along the unploughed strip of land, walking parallel with the power lines off to your right. At the far side of the field, climb a stile👤 and continue ahead in the same direction, initially following

the right boundary. As you climb this field, the boundary wall deserts you, veering right, but when it returns, look along it for a stone stile. Climb over and cross the following meadow keeping to the left of the electricity pole to arrive at a gate in the far boundary. Beyond here, continue in the same direction to reach a farm gate, located to the right of the cottage. Go through to the road.

You are now back in Tarlton. Go left along the road, then take the grass path on the right, signed 'To the Church'. To visit the little church, take the gate on the right and cross the track.

St Osmund's church was built in the 13th century as a chapel-of-ease for Rodmarton church, a mile or so away. It eventually fell into disuse and in the early 1800s was used as a farm building, before being restored in 1875.

Back on the grass path with iron railing to your left, follow it round to the left and climb a stile into a meadow. Turn left, passing an electricity pole on your right, to climb a stile in the cross-fence. Now walk straight down the following long meadow passing a redundant gateposts👤 and continuing to a field gate giving access to a road. Go left to reach your starting point.



Walk 12 Conham & The Avon

Start Conham River Park (ST 629721).

Distance 7.5 miles / 12km.

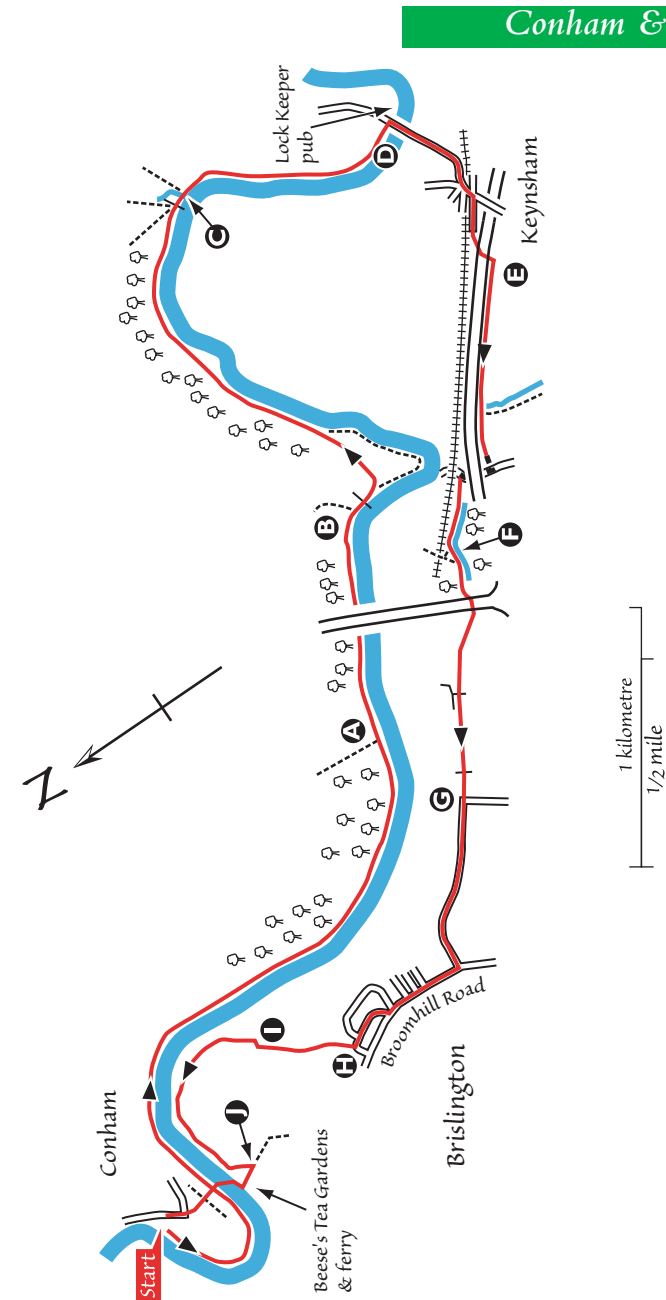
Refreshments Pubs quarter and half distance, tea room at walk's end.

Getting there The River Park can be accessed from Hanham High Street (A431), or from Crews Hole Road east of Pile Marsh. Alternatively, park at the Lock Keeper pub on the Keynsham Road and make the tea gardens your lunch stop.

An easy outward walk following the banks of the Avon, returning on little-used paths south of the river. Mostly level walking on good paths. If taking children, extreme care is needed crossing the dual carriageways before Point E and after Point F. Allow up to three hours, plus stops. Note that the obligatory ferry service only runs weekends from Easter to the end of September. Phone 0117-9777412 for confirmation.

From the car park at Conham River Park pick up the path by the river and walk with the Avon on your right. In a short distance you will pass the ferry landing stage and across the river Beese's Tea Rooms that you will visit on your return.

Your outward route is very straightforward; just follow the river path eventually passing a row of cottages **A** and walking beneath the massive road bridge. A short distance



further you have the first refreshment possibilities as you pass first the Lock and Weir pub and next to it 'The Chequers' **B**.

Having quenched your thirst, continue along the towpath where in a few yards you go through a kissing gate into a meadow. Leave the river bank here, veering left to follow a route below the woods up to your left, the wide path guiding you underneath power lines and back to the river (you may see cormorants on these power lines drying their wings). Continue for some distance with the river to your right, eventually reaching a path junction at a kissing gate with tracks left and ahead. Continue beside the river to a second kissing gate and beyond this, cross an old stone bridge ㉔.

This is the site of Londonderry Wharf, one of two riverside termini of the horse-drawn tramway completed in the 1830's that transported coal from the north of the region to the waiting barges, and hence to Bristol. 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 long gone but the restored stone building nearby was the weighbridge house while the ramshackle structure beside it provided stabling for the horses.

Continue with the river on your right through a metal kissing gate, then walk along the river bank, passing the red brick building of the former Cadbury's chocolate factory on the far bank.

During the Monmouth Rebellion, James Scott, the Duke of Monmouth used the meadow to your left as the rallying point for his army in preparation for his attack on Bristol in June 1685. At that time, Bristol was second largest and most important city in the country.

Your arrival at Keynsham Lock ㉕ heralds the halfway point in the walk and is a good picnic spot. Alternatively continue for a few more yards and climb up to the old bridge where the 'Lock Keeper' provides a selection of real ales and a varied lunch time menu.

The walk continues along the main road with the pub down to your left. The road takes you over the River Avon, after which you need to cross to the opposite pavement when safe to do so. Now climb the hill and cross the railway bridge, then turn right into The Avenue. Follow this road until the tarmac peters out, continuing ahead a few more yards with the railway on your right to a footpath sign. Follow the path left to reach the main road and cross with care via the central reservation to a stile in the fence on the far side ㉖. Turn right and walk down the hill to the sports ground where the poorly-maintained public footpath runs to the right of the low boundary fence.

Continue, the road up to your right, to the far corner of the sports ground where you cross a concrete bridge over a stream. Now follow the footpath as it bears right with further playing fields on your left. The path exits via a kissing gate onto a road, go right, underneath the dual carriageway and then look for a footpath and steps on the left, just before the railway bridge.

Climb the twenty steps and follow the path through the woods, eventually picking up a small stream on your left. Where the path forks ㉗ (difficult to spot if everything is overgrown), the public footpath veers off to the right; ignore the footbridge over the railway, but follow the path left alongside some old iron railings to reach the stream again. Continue, soon to climbing a short flight of steps, beyond which you pass a venerable chestnut tree. After a few more yards a slight sloping path bending left brings you to a stile beyond which runs a major road. This is the southern end of the Avon Ring Road, and its junction with the A4 Bath Road is down to your left.

Negotiate the stile and metal barrier to reach the roadside, then follow the tarmac path left, before crossing the dual carriageway by the central reservation. Now go over the stile by the footpath sign and climb the hill ahead walking on an indistinct path parallel with the power lines to your right. At the far side of the field go ahead through the farm gate and continue directly across a second field with a broken hedge on your right. Keep on this well-used path to leave the field via a kissing gate to the right of a football ground. After a short distance, pass through a second kissing gate at the bend of a green lane and go right along this to reach a gated tarmac lane. ㉘.

Follow the lane to reach houses and a T-junction on the edge of Brislington. Turn right into Broomhill Road and pass three road turnings on the right to reach Whitmore Avenue. Go right here and follow the road as it bears gradually left, then on the right by a sharp left bend ㉙ enter the tarmac driveway of Eastwood Farm, a 65 acre conservation area managed by Bristol City Council. Follow the driveway as far as the farm buildings on your left, then immediately go right, down a set of steps to a lower path ㉚.

Take this pleasant path down the hill and at an indistinct fork take the higher, right-hand path to a lookout spot with views over the river. From here a flight of steps returns you to the main track that leads you down to the valley bottom and the river bank. Walk now with the river on your right, the path leading you through a lovely nature reserve. Cross a metal footbridge, pass a large pond on your left and continue with the river on your right until you reach an open grassed area commonly used for picnics. Here, bear left to climb a stepped path through the trees to meet a rough track ㉛ where you turn right, walking downhill to reach the tea gardens.

To complete the circuit, take the ferry, (which runs from midday until 7pm Friday, Saturday, Sunday and Bank Hols., cost 25p) to once more reach the north bank of the Avon. Now back on terra firma, take the broad path ahead away from the river and ignoring paths left and right, continue until near the road where a path left will return you to the car park.

This last stretch takes you through the grounds of Conham Hall, demolished in 1971. In the 17th century, the Hall had associations with the Non-Conformist movement when the Baptists met there following the closure of their Bristol chapels.



Walk 13 Tintern

Start Tintern Abbey car park, (SO 533000).

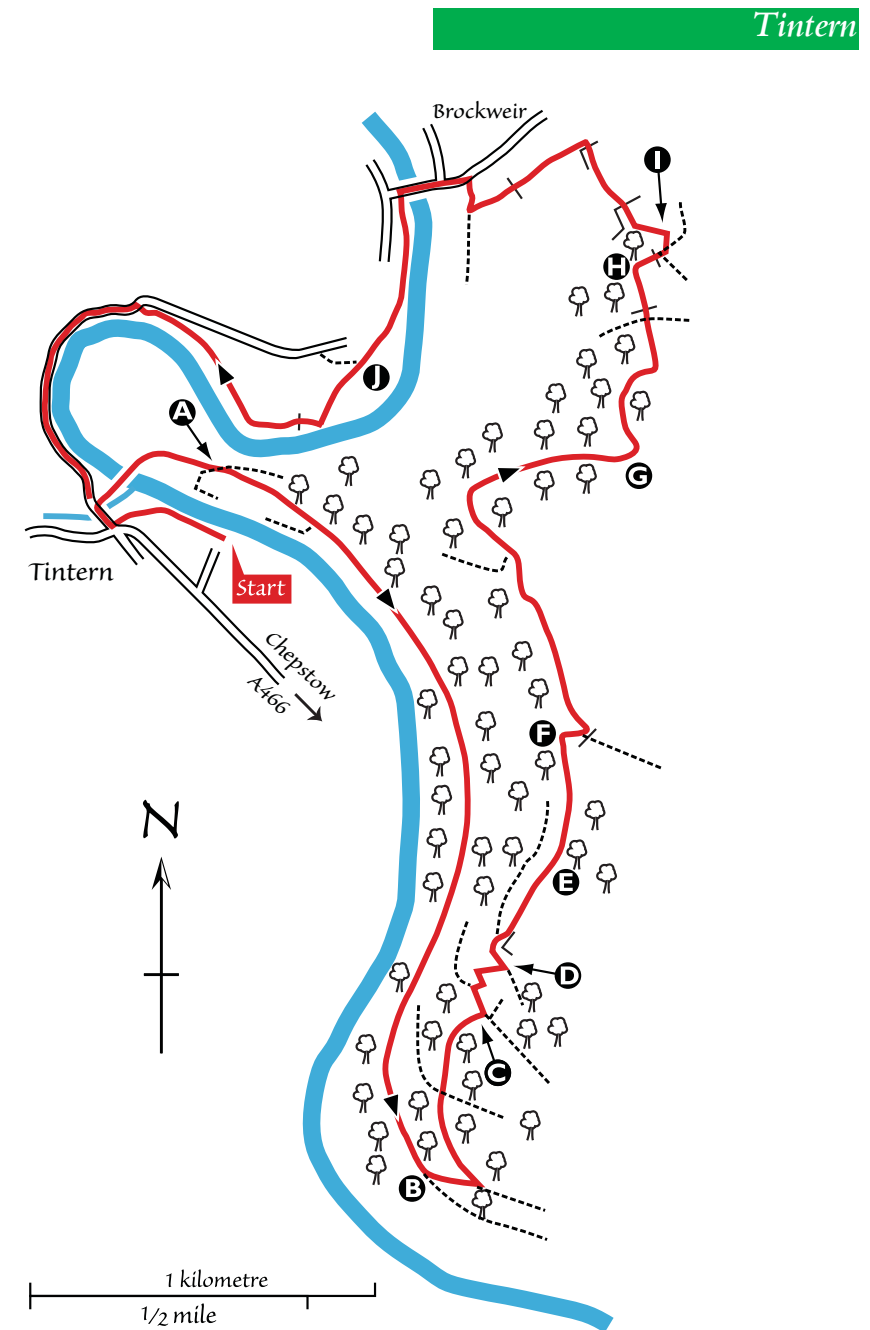
Distance 7 miles / 11.2km.

Refreshments Tea room at the Horse Rescue Centre (after Point I and before Brockweir), pub in Brockweir, plus cafés and pubs at walk's end.

Getting there M48 over the River Severn to junction 2, then A466 north, passing Chepstow racecourse. On reaching Tintern, follow car park signs on the right to the abbey.

This is a lovely walk that gives you a taste of the beauty to be found in the Wye Valley. The route follows woodland tracks and paths, some rough underfoot, and there is a muddy riverside stretch. There are a couple of steep ascents and a little road walking at the end, but don't be put off, just enjoy it! Allow up to four hours of walking.

From the Abbey car park, take the riverside path with the River Wye on your right and continue along a lane between cottages, turning left to reach the main road. Turn right and walk past Abbey Mill, then turn right again towards the river and cross by the broad footbridge.



Not always a pedestrian bridge, the 'Wireworks Bridge' as it is known, once carried a tramway from the local ironworks situated along the Angidy valley that runs into Tintern from the west. For Tintern was not always the rural setting that one imagines. In the 1560s engineers looking for a site for the manufacture of iron and brass for ordnance purposes chanced upon the village. It offered all that was required; the Wye for transportation, the Angidy River for water power, trees for fuel and charcoal and a ready supply of minerals in the locality. Although the first brass in Britain was produced at Tintern, the brass works soon became the wire works, employing some 100 men locally. Throughout the county, upwards of 5000 people were manufacturing goods from the wire, and hooks, eyes, needles, wire combs and bird cages were among their products. For 300 years the numerous wire works and forges along the Angidy valley dominated the village until the Industrial Revolution put paid to it all. By the end of the 19th century all the works had closed.

Beyond the bridge, follow the old trackbed into woodland to a path junction **A**. Ignore the paths left and right, but continue ahead, parallel with the river bank. Beyond a path to the right, look left for a tunnel entrance. Here, the 'Wireworks' line joined the Wye Valley Railway.

At **B** you reach a fork where a broad track runs up to the left, leaving the railway. Take this and climb to a cross-track, then double back left, passing a waymark post. At the next cross-track, go ahead to a waymarked path and climb through woodland. The path is easy to follow and leads directly up the hill, veering right before meeting an obvious cross-path **C**. Go left, passing a waymark post (currently missing) and a narrow, downhill path after about 100 yards, then a short distance further, another waymark pointing right (currently missing). Take this path, climbing with the aid of rough steps and doubling back left, then going right again with views of the river ahead. Continue to a further waymark post **D** this one bearing the 'acorn' symbol of the Offa's Dyke Path. You'll follow this route for a while, so climb to the left, then right, and in a short distance look for an indistinct barbed-wire fence on the right. You need to become familiar with this fence as it will be your guide for the next stretch!

The Offa's Dyke Path is the only National Trail to follow a man-made feature. Built by Offa, King of Mercia between 757 and 796 AD, the dyke formed a rough boundary between the Anglian kingdom of Mercia and the Welsh kingdom of Powys, and stretched 182 miles from Prestatyn in the north to Sedbury, near Chepstow in the south. Men from the border country along the Mercian (English) side all had to contribute; they could either send food or they could build a section of the earthwork.

As you proceed, almost imperceptibly the path forks; your route climbs to the right between trees, leaving the more obvious path to continue ahead. At all times, you

should be walking more or less on top of the dyke, fence right, with the other path visible down to the left. Keep with the fence and a field beyond the trees, until you reach the corner of the field **E**. Here, you say goodbye to the fence, but your route ahead is now assured.

As the path descends, you have good views of Tintern abbey far below, but the clearest sighting comes at a rocky outcrop, known as 'The Devil's Pulpit' **F**.

The abbey at Tintern was founded in 1131 by the Cistercian order of monks and was the subject of alterations and additions until well into the 14th century. The Cistercians were often known as 'White Monks' because their habits were woven from undyed wool. Monastic life ceased in 1536 with the dissolution of the monasteries. The legend goes that the Devil taunted the monks from this rock pinnacle overlooking the Wye and the abbey.

Now continue on to reach a path junction and metal kissing gate, where a wooden sign post gives directions to Brockweir, Tintern and St. Briavels. Follow this route, easy walking now, to a junction where the Tintern path descends left. Go ahead here, signed Brockweir and St. Briavels.

Eventually, you come alongside a field on the right **G** then the path veers away to the left. Continue, descending to cross-paths and here, go ahead, then right at a field corner **H** climbing the stile ahead. A short distance further at the next Offa's Dyke 'acorn' sign, take a barely discernable path down to the left, eventually emerging from trees to the top of a field **I**. Below, you can see Brockweir and its bridge, with a whitewashed house standing alone to the right of the village. Head down the field towards the house, picking up the field boundary on the left, and climbing what passes for a stile in the fence at the bottom. Continue down the following field, keeping to the hedge on the left and climbing the metal gate ahead. Turn left onto a track, going through a gate, with horse paddocks to the right. The 'Horses & Ponies Protection Association' offer teas here in summer, and will be grateful for your patronage.

The Horses and Ponies Protection Association (HAPPA) is one of the oldest and most respected charities for equine welfare. It was founded in 1937 to help fight against the transportation of large horses to the continent for slaughter. HAPPA has been instrumental in achieving better protection for horses and continues to campaign for improvements to existing legislation to ensure that horses, ponies and donkeys are protected from cruelty and neglect.

Now continue to a lane where you turn right, walking down to the road. Turn left here, passing (or stopping at) the Brockweir Inn, then go ahead to cross the river via the road bridge. On the far side, before the main road, descend concrete steps on the left to the railway path and follow it to reach Tintern station **J**.

Walk 13

The Wye Valley Railway passed through Tintern in the 1870s and it was thought that the picturesque line would attract many tourists. Unfortunately, it never quite happened and although this station had two platforms sharing three tracks, plus a goods yard and sidings, the Wye Valley Railway succumbed to the inevitable, closing in January 1959. In recent years however, the old station has taken on a new lease of life as a bustling café in the summer months until the end of October, with a display of the line's history and an art gallery in the signal box.



The train now standing... The old station, Tintern

Leaving the station behind, continue along the walkway as far as the river, where you are forced to descend to the river bank. (The railway crossed, and plunged directly into a tunnel.) Pass through a pair of gates and walk with the river on your left. This path can be very muddy after heavy rain or if the river has been in flood. Follow the footpath to reach St. Michael's Church at Tintern Parva. (The name means little Tintern.) Continue through the churchyard to a lane and fork left between cottages to reach the road.

The remainder of your walk lies along this road. Although I'm not in favour of pavement walking if there is a grassy alternative, this last half-mile leads you past some interesting buildings and shops, not to mention a couple of hostelries, and with the river always in sight it makes a fitting end to this excursion into the Wye Valley. Narrow footpaths at some points mean that you must cross the road with care on a couple of occasions, but you will soon find yourself back at Abbey Mill (now on your left), beyond which, you take the lane down to the river-bank again and on to the car park.



Walk 14 Backwell & Brockley

Start Backwell Church (restricted parking) (ST493683).

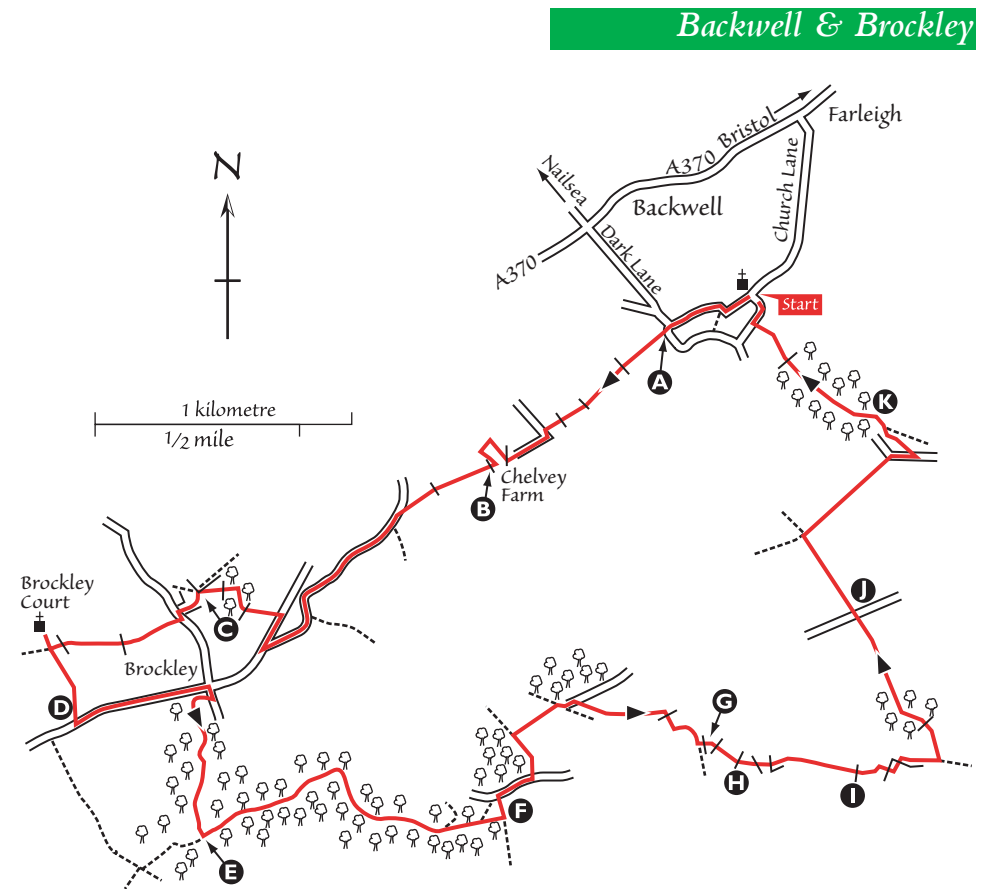
Distance 7.5 miles / 12km.

Refreshments None.

Getting there From Bristol, take the A370 towards Backwell, turning left at Farleigh into Church Lane. Follow this and park near the church.

A fine walk of two halves, the first an easy, level ramble passing imposing houses including Brockley Court, once the family seat of wealthy North Somerset landowners, the Smyth-Piggotts and Brockley Hall with its early 19th century pleasure grounds and park. The second part, takes you climbing into woodland, and from there you follow an undulating route of farmland and wooded areas with fine views. Take a packed lunch and allow four hours.

With the church on your right follow the lane to reach a mini-roundabout **A**. Turn left and cross to a gate that you go through to enter a field. Follow the path through this field and a further three, to reach a lane where you go left, following the lane as it goes immediately right. At the end of the lane you reach the gates of Chelvey Farm; go through the kissing gate on the right, then follow the path that skirts the north



side of the property between a metal fence and the hedge, eventually reaching a further kissing gate **B**. Pass through to enter a field, then walk ahead now with the hedge on your right and continue in the same direction to climb a stile next to a gate at the far side of the field. Carry on with the hedge to your right, passing Bristol Waterworks property up to your left, beyond which you follow a track to reach a lane. Turn left and walk the length of the lane to the main road.

Turn right and use the traffic refuge to cross to the opposite pavement then walk with the parkland of Brockley Hall on your left, entering it in a short distance via a stile. Follow the field edge and climb a stile into woodland. Now take the well-defined path through the wood, leaving at a stile on the right then walking half-left to a path junction at the field corner **C**. Here, leave the well-worn route and go left, keeping

the cottages on your right. Hidden in the hedge you will find a stile that gives access to a lane.

Walk left for a few yards towards the gates of Brockley Hall, then go through the kissing gate on the right. Follow the left boundary of the pasture, passing a dew pond on the right, to reach a stile at the far side. Climb over and head towards the left end of the farm buildings, where you go through a gate and on to a lane. Walk ahead passing Brockley Court on your right to reach black iron gates. Go through and take the path up to Brockley Church. The headstones in the graveyard make contemplative reading. Now retrace your steps to the gates, go left and then take the lane to your right, following it to the main road **D**.

An obstructed and impassable bridleway opposite necessitates a stretch of road walking now. Turn left, crossing where convenient, and continue to crossroads where you turn right into Brockley Combe Road. In a few yards, leave the road and take a track right, which enters the woods. You have level walking for a short distance, then beyond a left bend, you climb steeply, eventually reaching a cross-track with the remains of a walled enclosure to your right **E**.

Turn left and walk for about 600 yards, after which the track turns right. When you reach a fork in the track with a wall on the right, keep right by the wall and stay close to it until you reach a short, steep descent to a lane **F**.

Turn left and walk to a road junction then go right, crossing with care on the bend to a footpath that climbs up to the left. At a junction, go right with fields either side, to reach a lane by white gateposts; continue up the lane to climb a stile on the right. Now walk ahead, parallel with the field boundary on the right, soon losing height to reach the field's bottom right-hand corner. Here, go through the gate on the right and follow the track to reach a farmyard through which you pass, then go immediately left after the outbuildings and through a metal gate **G**.

Now walk with the hedge on your right to cross a stile into a garden **H** then keep left to exit via a further stile into a field. Go ahead and through a kissing gate opposite, keeping the hedge on your right and walking to the far end of the field where you climb a stile **I** then bear left, down to the farmyard.

Walk with the house on the left to enter an open barn (the waymark nailed to the post on the left confirms your route). Pass through the barn to exit via a gap in the far corner. Beyond the stile, go left to climb another by a metal gate, after which you turn right. Walk with the hedge on the right, to the next field then turn left to climb

to the top left corner. Before reaching the woodland, there are views back towards Bristol airport, and left, out to the islands off Weston-Super-Mare.

Enter the woods and follow the track for just over half a mile, crossing a tarmac lane **J** and eventually reaching a T-junction with stile ahead. Take the track right and walk for a further 500 yards to a road where you turn right. In a short distance you pass through the kissing gate on the left into Jubilee Stone Wood Nature Reserve. Follow the path ahead to join another on the right, then continue a few yards to reach the Jubilee Stone **K**.

As well as being home to rare species of mammals and plants, the reserve also has a long archaeological history, containing the ruins of a 14th century rabbit warren and cottage, 17th century lead mines and a 19th century limekiln.

The limekiln is just off your route, so walk downhill from the Jubilee Stone for about 100 yards, then look left for a side path edged with stones & logs. The Kiln is about 20 yards along this path. To end the walk, return to the downhill path, turn left and walk to a gate. Beyond is a driveway and beyond that, a road. Go right here and follow the lane to reach your starting point at the church.



Walk 15 The Gordano Valley

Start Weston in Gordano church (ST 444742).

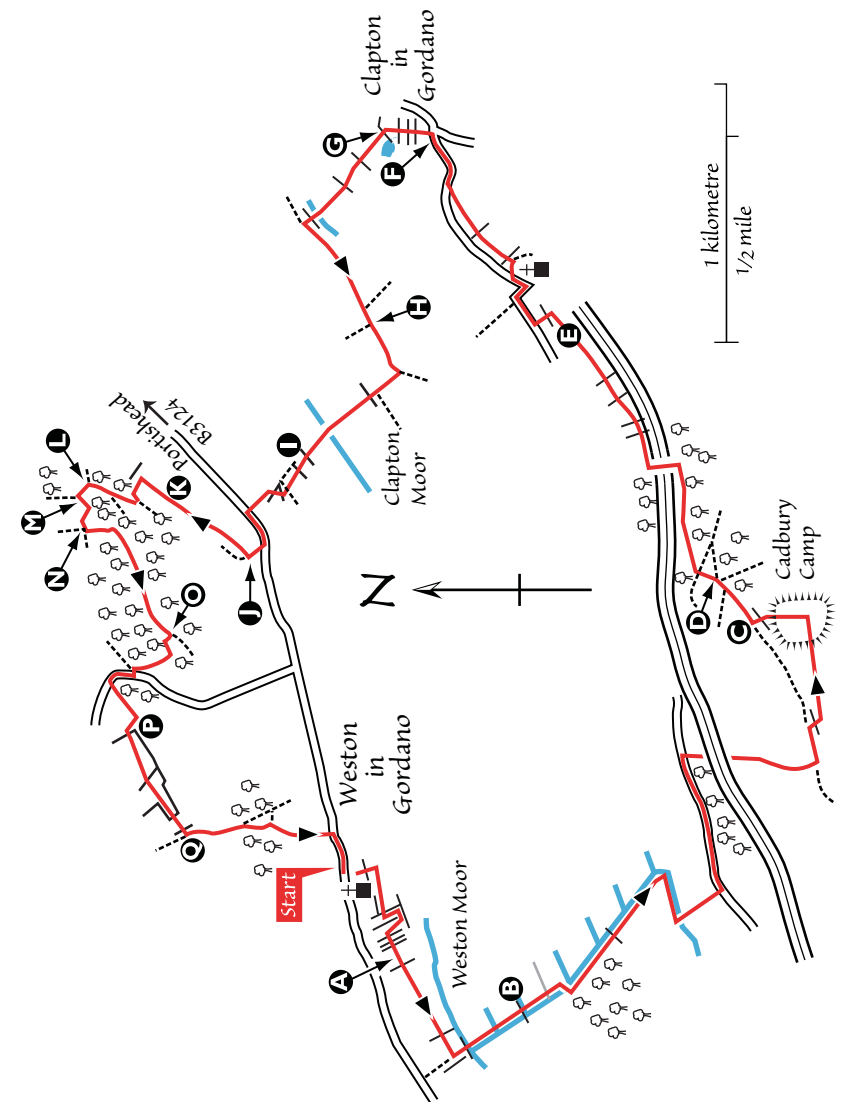
Distance 7.5 miles / 12km.

Refreshments The Black Horse, Clapton in Gordano, about half distance. White Hart, Weston in Gordano at end of walk

Getting there Weston in Gordano is on the B3124 Clevedon – Portishead road. There are few parking opportunities here, but the lane by the church gate can be used. Please park thoughtfully!

A splendid stroll through woodlands and nature reserves, plus an interesting encounter with the M5 motorway. Choose a clear day for the fine views and take binoculars plus a few pennies for a pint of real ale at the pub! There are a couple of steep climbs and numerous stiles, so allow yourself about 4 hours, plus pub stop!

From the driveway by the church, take the track through a gate onto Weston Moor Nature Reserve. Note that this first stretch follows permissive paths so the exact route is liable to change from time to time. Walk to a junction and turn right following the waymarks. You may notice the odd railway fence post or length of rusting rail; this is because you are walking on the track bed of the Weston, Clevedon & Portishead Railway.



One of Britain's most notable light railways, it served the three towns plus intermediate villages, giving the local community an efficient and friendly service until the war forced its closure in 1940. Conceived and built as a tramway from Weston-Super-Mare to Portishead in the 1880's, construction proceeded slowly, the railway opening between Clevedon and Weston in 1897 with the extension to Portishead opening in 1907.

Continue on the track, climbing a stile into Mason's Orchard and following the waymarks left. When you reach the bottom of the meadow with a stile and gate ahead, keep right and follow the waymarked path, going right again into a further meadow. Now go half-left to climb a stile by a gate, then cross a track, go through a gate and climb another stile. Follow the line of the railway now, passing an old barn on your right **A**. Continue beyond a further stile and kissing gate, until your westerly route is eventually terminated by a hedge and fence. Here, take the track left into the heart of the moor.

Weston Moor is a wild place. A large and expansive area of open moor, the wet grassland is criss-crossed by rhynes, and is an important breeding ground for wading birds.

Your route takes you towards the elevated motorway, crossing a couple of stiles to enter the Gordano Valley Nature Reserve **B**. Continue, crossing a footbridge, to leave the reserve via a further stile, then walking with a rhyne on your left to reach metal gates. Go right here, with the waterway on the left that you soon cross via a stile and stone bridge. Now follow the path to the road.

Ordnance Survey maps show a footpath climbing from here to the motorway. They also show a path from the motorway to the hilltop. Unfortunately, there is no longer a route joining the two so you now have to detour left, along the lane for about 600 yards. Beyond a vehicle passing place on the left, there is another on the right; a short distance further, turn right onto a bridleway by a sign to 'Fir Tree Bungalow'. Now climb the rough track, passing beneath the motorway to reach, heart pounding, Cadbury Camp Lane. Turn left along the track and when it begins to climb, cross the stile on the right and follow a well-defined path over downland to Cadbury Camp.

Cadbury is a common name meaning fortified hill. Cadbury Camp is a large, Iron-Age fortified camp, the ramparts enclosing roughly 2.5 hectares. From here you have commanding views across Nailsea Moor to the coast.

From the far side of the fort, go left and cross a stile to re-join the track **C**. Turn right and walk to reach a house on the left. Ignore the narrow bridleway beyond it, but continue on, passing a house 'Monocot' and driveway on the right, to the fine wrought iron gates of the house 'Bridleways' on the left **D**. Here, go left along a nar-

row footpath to a track, cross over and continue on the path following waymarks, to eventually arrive at a footbridge taking you over the motorway.

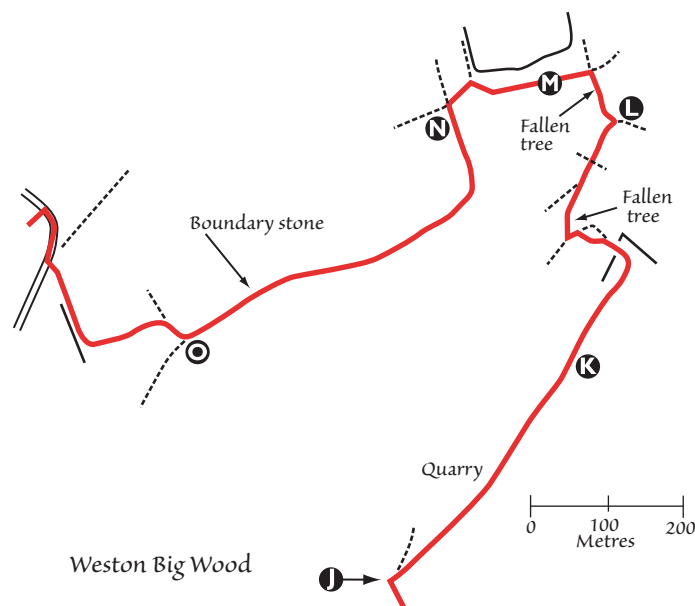
On the far side, descend steps and follow a path parallel to the motorway, then climb a stile into a meadow. A few yards further, cross a further stile then carry on, losing a little height, to climb another stile in the cross-fence. Continue to the stile ahead, beyond which, walk with the hedge on your left to reach a grassy track **E** that leads to a farm. Go through the gate and cross the yard to emerge onto a lane. Turn right and follow the lane, passing Clapton Court on the right. Beyond here, take the driveway right, towards the church, and as this swings right, go through the gate on the left. Follow the waymarks across a couple of fields to pass through a further gate with a bungalow to the right. Continue on to the road, then walk ahead to the 'Black Horse' **F**.

This whitewashed, 14th-century cottage pub, once a local magistrate's lock-up, is a real gem. The main bar of the Black Horse has flagstones, winged settles and built-in wall benches, with a log fire on cold days in a large inglenook. Lunchtime meals and snacks are available (not on Sunday) and real ales are served straight from barrels at the back of the bar.

Your route from the pub runs from the side car park through the wooden gate of the adjoining property. Walk down the drive, through a black metal gate and continue to cross a stile by another. A short distance further, leave the property to enter a meadow. Keep to the left boundary, passing through a kissing gate **G** then follow the well-defined path beyond two kissing gates, a footbridge and a stile, to reach a lane – Clapton Drove.

Turn left and walk to the end of the tarmac **H** then continue on the now unsurfaced track that eventually bends right, beneath power lines. 200 yards further, you leave the track where it turns left. Cross the waymarked stile ahead and walk with a rhyne on your right. Go ahead to cross a substantial bridge and continue, climbing a stile by a gate, then passing a farm on the right **I**. Climb a further stile and continue in the same direction, with the farm drive over to your right. Pass a redundant stile and go half-right across the track to another stile. Climb this and go ahead to climb another, giving access to the farm drive; go left to reach the road.

Now turn left and walk to a parking area, then cross the road, go through a kissing gate and follow the footpath ahead with a house 'Roseland' to your right. At a tarmac path **J** go right and in a few yards fork right, following waymarks. Continue in this direction through woodland initially with property boundaries on your right and a disused quarry left, to eventually reach open grassland **K**. Keep to the top edge of the field and as you near the far side, go left with the hedge and enter the wood.



This is Weston Big Wood. In springtime, the ground is covered with wood anemones, violets and masses of bluebells. The presence of other plants such as herb paris and yellow archangel together with the rare purple gromwell, show that this wood has ancient origins. It is thought that there has been woodland here since trees began to recolonise after the last Ice Age some 10,000 years ago.

These woodland paths present a real test of navigation! Your uphill path immediately forks, keep left to a junction. The more distinct path takes you left again, follow it for a few yards then go right, passing a fallen tree on your right (if nobody has removed it!) and bearing right. Continue your ascent for a short distance passing a path joining from the left, beyond which your route levels out.

The path is now well-defined, so follow it, ignoring cross-paths until a brief descent brings you to a junction **L** where the main path descends right. Here, go up to the left, cross a fallen tree and continue upwards to reach a path junction with a wire fence a little distance ahead. Look up to your left to see a flight of steps **M** that you now climb. At the top, go right to a major T-junction with a wire fence again to your right. Go left here and walk for a short distance to well-defined cross paths where you go left again **N**. You are walking on a good, level path now, which eventually opens out with coppicing on both sides. Beyond a boundary stone on the right, the path starts to descend and you reach a fork **O**. Here, a 'Permissive Footpath' arrow directs you right,

then in a short distance, you follow waymarks left, eventually going right again at a wire fence. Walk now with the fence on your left, descending steps to reach the road.

Walk right with care following the road as it bears left. At a footpath sign on the left (opposite a metal field gate on the right) climb a stile on the left and ascend the hill ahead to reach the ruins of what was Manor Farm. **P**. From here, go sharp right to a stile in the hedge corner. Cross over and walk ahead to a stile in the far boundary. The following field is often cropped with head-high maize in summer, the path being obliterated. The route is ahead to a boundary corner, from where you walk with the hedge on your right to reach a footbridge on the far side of the field. Cross over, and go ahead, climbing a stile to access a path alongside a house **Q**. Go left along the path to enter Middle Hill Common.

At a fork in the path, go right and descend, with fine views ahead over the moorland and the village of Weston in Gordano. On reaching a wooden seat, go right again and follow the path down to the village and the main road. Turn right, to the church and your starting point.



Walk 16 The Severn Estuary

Start Riverside Park, Severn Beach (ST 539846).

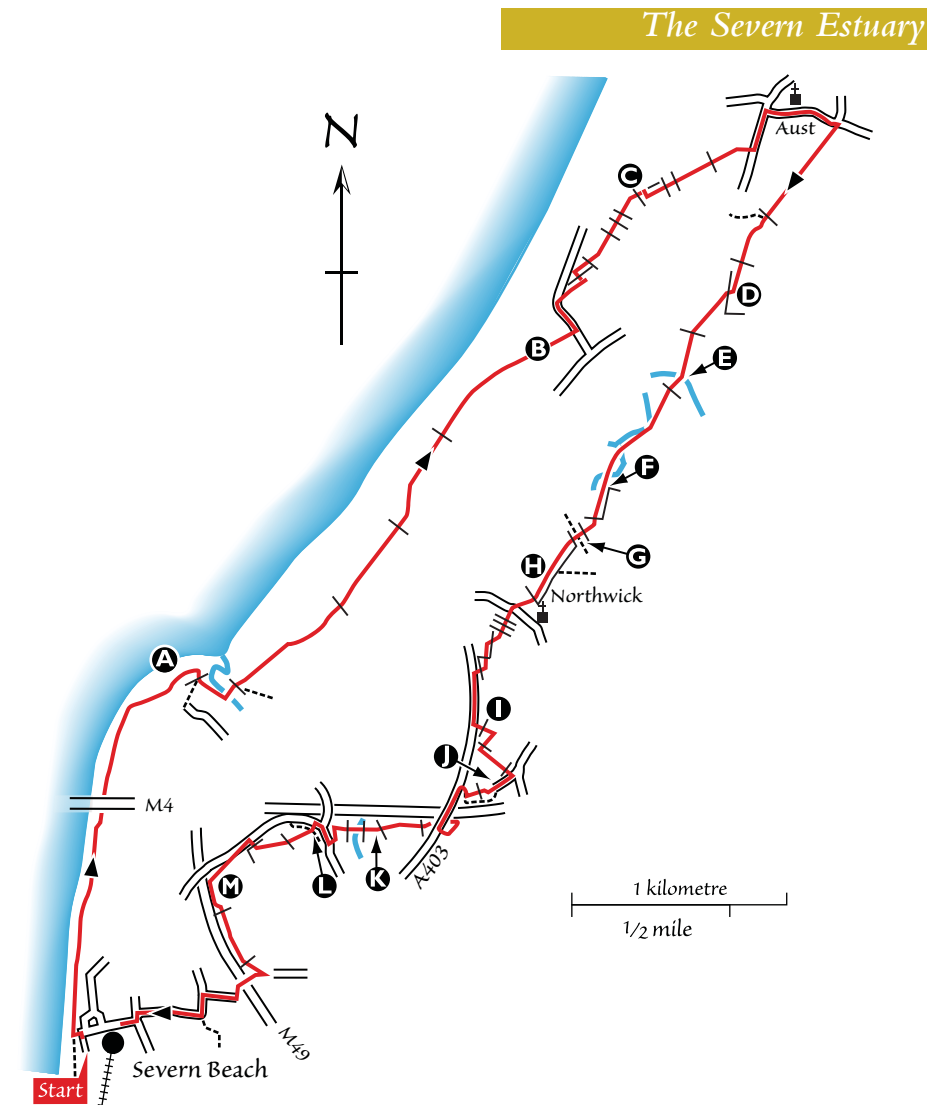
Distance 8.5 miles / 13.6km.

Refreshments Café at walk's end, pubs at half-distance and near walk's end.

Getting there A4 (Portway) then A403 to Severn Beach, or M5 junction 17 (Cribbs Causeway) then B4055 and B4064. Turn right into Station Road, then at the end, left into Riverside Park.

An easy, almost flat ramble though with numerous stiles. Open views across the Severn on the outward leg to the sleepy village of Aust, returning across meadows and pasture. A feature of this walk is the contrast between the new crossings of the Severn and the 19th century equivalent. The ingenuity of the planners is also evident in the way they cleverly re-routed footpaths over, under and around the motorways, that have cut a swathe through this peaceful area in the last few years. The walk shouldn't take more than about 3.5 hours.

From the start, climb to the sea wall, known as the Binn Wall. Here, you have a splendid view across the mouth of the River Severn with the motorway bridge to the north and at low tide, the exposed English Stones. Follow the wall towards the bridge and consider, 100 yards before reaching it, that the railway tunnel to South Wales passes beneath your feet! Continue beneath the bridge and on to the end of the wall **A**.



A few yards further on your left is a plaque marking the point of embarkation for railway passengers crossing by ferry to Monmouthshire. 19th century maps show a pier stretching 400 yards to the low waterline. In the late 19th century, there were two river crossings near Bristol one at Aust, known as the Old Passage, and the other here at New Passage. The crossing from Aust to Beachley in the Gloucestershire parish of Tidenham was about two miles. This was the way to the Forest of Dean, Herefordshire and the upper part of Monmouthshire. At New Passage, the crossing was about three miles at high water to Port Skewith (Portskeewett) in Monmouthshire. People travelling to Cardiff, Caerleon, Pontypool and other parts of South

Wales took this route, alighting at New Passage station and resting overnight at the New Passage Hotel, now replaced by a small housing development a little further on to your right.

Great Western, together with the Bristol and South Wales Railway had established this rail and steamship link between Gloucester and South Wales by the New Passage ferry in January 1864, but there were no facilities for freight, which continued to use the circuitous and steep gradient route through Gloucestershire. This was, however, the time when coal production began to increase – twenty new pits in the Rhondda opened between 1865 and 1875 – so in 1873 a double track, brick-lined tunnel was constructed, carrying trains under the estuary between Pilning and the Severn Tunnel Junction. Completed in 1886, it was over 4 miles in length.

As you reach the creek, the path turns inland. Pass through a gate and follow the track going left over the bridge. Go through the kissing gate, then walk on the dyke passing a rifle range and continuing in the same direction for about a mile through three further gates, until you reach a marker post **B**. Here, the dyke veers left but you go ahead, keeping to the right boundary to reach a road via a kissing gate. Turn left here, walk to the bend then climb a stile on the right. Now follow the fence on your left to cross a stile, then continue in the same direction over a further stile, after which, follow the dyke with the hedge to your right. Three stiles and an awkward (red) gate later, climb a bank **C** and at the top, go right then left, keeping the hedge to your left, and crossing three more stiles to reach a main road. Turn left and cross with care when convenient, then take the first road on the right, passing Aust church. You have reached the mid-point in the walk now and may wish to take refreshment at the 'Boar's Head'. Your return route is along the grass track on the right opposite Sandy Lane, just before the pub.

Follow this green lane to a gate, then continue ahead along the track and through another gate into a field. Stay on the track, leaving via a waymarked gate on the right **D**. Now go diagonally across the field, aiming for a pair of gates in the far boundary that you go through. Walk across the following field and over a footbridge **E** then cross the next field to a stile, then go ahead to a footbridge. In the next field, keep right and cross another footbridge. Now follow the waymarks, going diagonally left to a further footbridge, after which, follow waymarks again going right in this L-shaped field and picking up the hedge on the left **F**. Continue through a gate, then follow the right boundary to a stile and footbridge combination with a waymarked cross-path between them **G**. Eventually, you emerge into a field.

Now walk ahead with the left boundary, passing a stile on the left **H** and continuing towards the trees ahead. In the top left corner of the field, go through a gate and over a footbridge into a churchyard (the church collapsed due to the boggy ground) and go ahead to a lane, then the road. Cross to the driveway of Northwick Farm, go

through the gate and walk straight ahead to a stile on the left, through the farmyard, then climb a stile and pass through a gate to reach a field. Go half-right now to cross a stile and footbridge, then go left, to a stile in the top corner of the field. Continue for a few yards to climb a stile on the right with a main road beyond. Turn left and follow the roadside verge to a footpath sign and stile on the left **I**. Beyond the stile, cross to the far side of the meadow, turn right and walk to a gate. Go through, then walk left with the boundary, passing a small caravan park on the right. Climb the gate ahead and continue to another giving access to a road. Turn right here and walk to the White Horse pub, a possible refreshment stop **J**.

From the pub, walk the few yards to the end of the road and go through the black iron kissing gate on the right. Walk between houses and through a gate, then continue to reach a tarmac road where you turn right, climbing for a short distance to reach a busy dual carriageway carrying the A403 over the M4. Turn left along the pavement to its end where you take concrete steps down to a grassy path that doubles back under the road and alongside the motorway. Waymarks direct you to a stile and meadow beyond. (If you can't find the stile climb the fence into the meadow and follow the right hand boundary fence.) Continue to a further stile; just ahead you will see another, but pause here awhile **K**.

In the 19th Century, Brunel's broad-gauged locomotives passed this spot heading for New Passage station, a mile distant. The track ran from the trees on your left, towards the iron gate on the right.

Now go half-right to the stile and cross the stone bridge beyond. Pass through the kissing gate then cross the next meadow, slightly left, and climb the stile in the hedge opposite. Walk between properties to a lane, turn left and in a short distance you will reach a road junction. Turn right and walk up to a roundabout, crossing to the pavement opposite. Now take the left fork towards Severn Beach and walk for a short distance to a footpath sign on the left, climb the stile and descend to another stile with a farm track beyond **L**. Cross into a field and go straight over to the right-hand gate on the far side. In the next field, go half-right, climbing a pair of stiles to reach a road. (If the stiles are overgrown, use two field gates to reach the road.) Turn left here and walk for a short distance to a stretch of old road on the left. Follow this, bearing left at the motorway and here, below your feet once more, is the entrance to the Severn railway tunnel **M**.

Go through a metal gate then follow the grass lane parallel to the motorway. The lane becomes a path and waymarks lead you through another gate to a tarmac lane where you go right, to cross the motorway by a fine footbridge. On the far side, follow the residential road going left, then right, to reach a junction. Go left to the roundabout then right, into Station Road, which you follow to your start point.



Walk 17 Westonbirt & Highgrove

Start Long-stay car park, Cirencester Road, Tetbury (ST 893932).

Distance 8.5 miles / 13.6km.

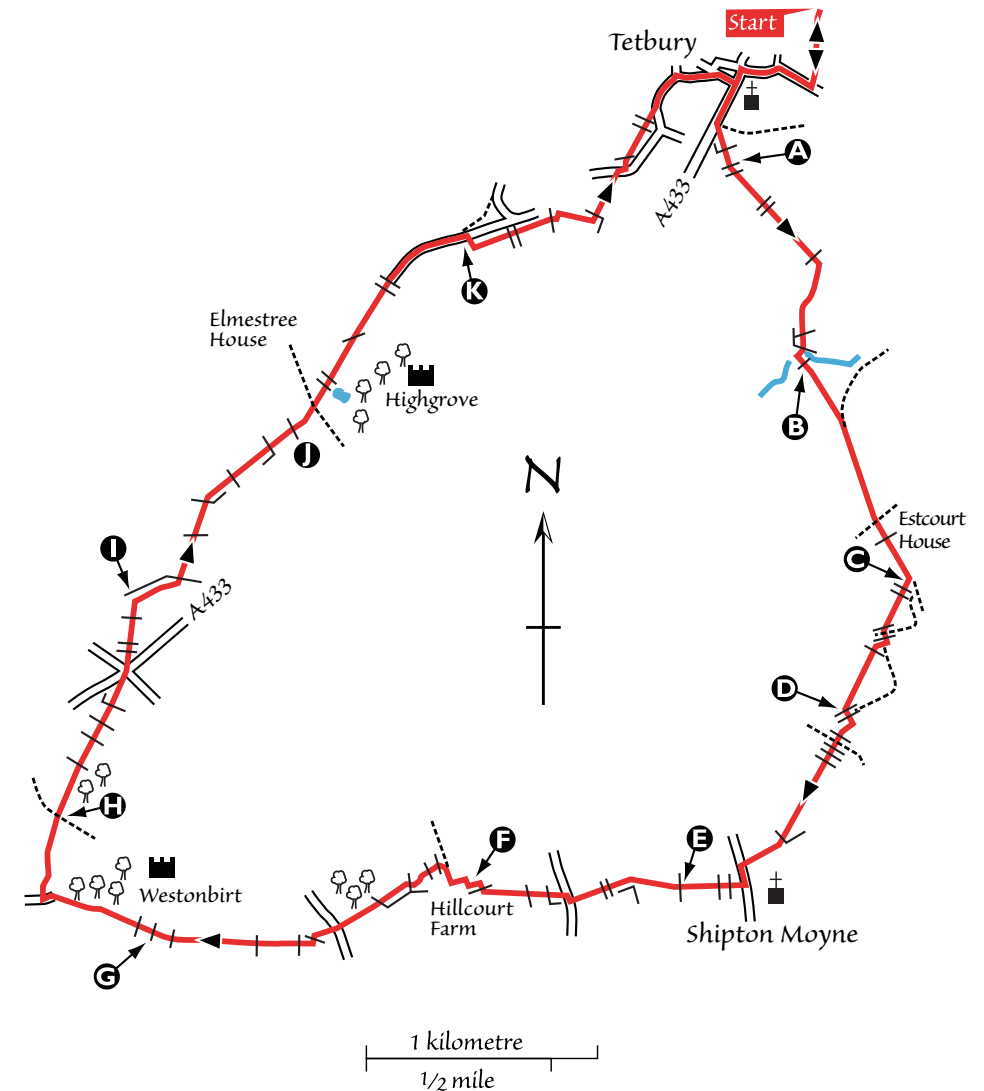
Refreshments Pubs quarter and just over half distance, teas and simple snacks half-distance (weekends and bank holidays only).

Getting there M4 junction 18, north on A46 then right onto A433 to Tetbury. In town centre at crossroads, go ahead passing the Snooty Fox pub on your right, into Chipping Street, then follow signs to the Railway Yard car park.

An exhilarating Gloucestershire walk, visiting pretty villages, country estates with their fine houses, and with distant views of the Highgrove estate. Fairly level terrain of fields and parkland, but many stiles. Allow 3.5 to 4 hours.

From the car park, walk past the Old Goods Shed and follow the path to a road. Turn right and walk up the hill, then go left at 'The Green'. Follow this to a road junction with the Tourist Information Office opposite.

Turn left, passing St Mary's church on your left and walk out of the town over the bridge, looking down to your left to see the route of the old road into Tetbury that fell into disuse when this present bridge was built in 1775.



Beyond the bridge, pass the Old Toll House on the left, then climb the stile on the left and take the track up to the right. Keep to the right boundary with good views back across the valley to the church.

The church of Saint Mary was built on the site of a Saxon monastery constructed in 681 and dedicated to the Abbess Tetta, sister of King Ine of Wessex.

On reaching a stile. Climb it, then two others bisected by a tarmac driveway **A**. Continue over the pasture with the fence to your right, to reach a wooden stile and then an old stone one. Now keep on in the same direction through an avenue of trees to another stone stile by gates. Once over, go right, with the fence and wall to the right, and descend gradually to the bottom corner of the field. Here, ignore a gate on the right, but continue a little further to cross the stile ahead. Proceed a short distance then go through a gate on the right and take the steps down to a stream. Cross an ancient bridge, then a wooden one, and climb the stile to enter parkland **B**.

The waymark points the direction here, and you climb ahead aiming for the white marker post then onward to another, where a tarmac drive is reached. Turn right and follow the drive to gates, go through and continue with Estcourt House to your left. Pass walled gardens left and right, then turn right at a marker post just beyond a house **C**. Walk ahead to climb a stile in the fence and cross to a paddock where the path goes through a gate (though you are invited to walk around the outside of the enclosure). In the paddock, walk half-left, looking for another gate in the far fence. Pass through, climb the stone stile opposite and turn right. Walk for a short distance to go through a further paddock gate (with another horse-free option), then again, go half-left to a gate on the far side **D**. From here, cross to another gate, beyond which go right, with a paddock fence on your left. Climb a pair of stiles separated by a strip of tarmac, then go ahead to a stone stile and on to a wooden one. Now proceed in the same direction (half-left) across the pasture towards a distant wall. In the far corner of the field, cross a stile and follow the path right, with a high wall left, to reach the village of Shipton Moyne.

Turn left along the road, crossing to the 'Cat and Custard Pot' on the right, a possible early refreshment stop. Immediately beyond the pub, take the path on the right between houses that leads to a stile. Cross the paddock to a further stile then continue over the field aiming for a gap in the trees on the far side, where you cross another stile **E**. Now walk ahead towards distant houses, picking up the field corner on the left and keeping the boundary left to a stone stile with horse riding area beyond. Cross this, keeping right, to climb a further stile, then walk with the wall to your right to reach a road via another stile.

Turn right and walk for a few yards, then climb a stile on the left, by the entrance to 'West End'. Turn left and cross the paddock to a farm gate a short distance from the left corner. Go through, and cross the pasture to a stile opposite, beyond which, walk over the field towards a farmhouse. Climb the stile by the metal gate, then go left, through a wooden gate to the farm complex **F**.

It was at this farm, 'Hillcourt', that Prince William did his 'work experience' some years ago, the farm being just a short bicycle ride from Highgrove!

Follow the concrete driveway right, then left, passing sheds and stockyards, then right again to reach tarmac. In a short distance, leave the metalled surface beyond old stables, going left and following the track, keeping the boundary to your left and going through a gate. Now the track goes left, reaching another gate in a short distance. Turn right here before the gate, and walk with the fence on your left. Beyond the next gate, veer right towards a small wood and metal fence, but as the fence swings right, leave it to go ahead across the pasture to climb a stile on the far side. Cross the road with care and climb the stone stile opposite to enter the parkland of the Westonbirt Estate.

Now walk ahead to a stile in the wire fence. Climb over and turn right towards the obvious stile ahead. Beyond the stile, walk ahead roughly parallel with the right boundary, to reach a kissing gate. Go through and continue in the same direction across parkland, with glimpses of Westonbirt School away to your right.

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. In 1829, he started the tree collection in what is now Westonbirt Arboretum, a project continued by his son, Sir George Holford, from 1875.

Eventually, you reach a gate near the field's far right corner, go through and aim diagonally right for the (often isolated) stile **G** and a short distance further climb a stile onto a golf course. Now, your route is half-right again, beneath the balls flying from the first tee, and towards the small clubhouse where you can celebrate reaching the mid-point of your walk with a cup of tea (weekends only).

Follow the driveway out of the golf course to reach Westonbirt village, then walk a short distance and take the drive on the right, over the cattle grid, to Westonbirt School. Follow the drive, with the school away to your right, eventually reaching the main driveway **H**. Cross, and go through a kissing gate, then continue to a metal kissing gate in the fence ahead. Go half-right, towards another kissing gate. Pass by or through and continue to a gate near the far right corner of the field. Go through and continue across this last field to the opposite corner, with the Hare & Hounds

hotel over to your left. Climb a stile and pass through another kissing gate to reach a road junction.

Cross this busy road with care to the opposite corner where a small wooden gate gives access to a strip of woodland. Exit via a stile then head across the field with a house off to the left, eventually reaching a stile in the wooden fence on the far side. Continue ahead now for a few yards to reach the hedge at the far side of the following field ❶ and here, turn right.

Walk with the hedge boundary on the left, looking for a stile on the left as you lose height. Cross into another field and follow the waymark to reach a stone stile on the far side. Climb this and continue in the same direction to the top right corner and a further stile. Beyond here, go ahead on a grassy path with hedge to your right. Pass through a

gap in the wall at the field corner, proceed to a stone stile in the next corner, then go ahead to an obvious wooden one ❷. Now continue in the same direction to cross a tarmac drive with the fine Elmestree House away to the left. From here, aim towards the left end of the woodland ahead.

Before reaching the trees, look half-right to the white painted buildings in the distance that belong to the Highgrove estate. The thick, Tuscan columns, just visible are part of the 'Orchard Room', built in 1998 of Cotswold stone and featuring a stone roof. This provides Prince Charles with a permanent venue for receptions and parties.

The Duchy of Cornwall bought Highgrove House on behalf of The Prince of Wales in 1980, the house having been the home for 14 years of Maurice Macmillan, Conservative MP for Farnham and son of the former Prime Minister Harold Macmillan.

The 15ft bronze statue of a mythical bird nesting on top of a 60ft column in the 'back garden'



At the far side of the field beside the trees, pass through a pair of gates with a pond down to your right, then walk ahead, keeping left, to eventually go through a metal field gate. Now cross the field, aiming for the house ahead and when you reach it, go through two gates to reach a lane.

Follow the tarmac, passing a house on the right ❸ and a footpath sign on the left. Just beyond the house, look for a stone stile on the right, climb over and turn left, now walking parallel with the lane.

Look back over your right shoulder to see a strange bird alighting on its nest! This sculpture, designed for the Prince in 1997, stands at the north-eastern extremity of the Highgrove Estate. The bird sits on a cast-iron column that was rescued from the front of the old Victoria Station in London.

Follow the field boundary down to a stone stile, cross this and a wooden one beyond the track, then walk with a stream on your left to another stile on the far side of the meadow. Beyond this, go left over a footbridge then continue in your original direction through a plantation of trees, the meandering path leading you to a stile in the top left corner. Climb the stile then follow the discernable path towards a bungalow, where a stile gives access to the road. Cross, turning right, and walk for just a few yards to reach the wooden gates of number 18. The footpath runs alongside the property, so walk down the short drive to the wrought-iron gate, go through and follow the path to reach a stile where you enter a paddock. Now walk with the bungalows on your right to climb a wooden stile at the far end. Continue on to a stone stile, beyond which follow the narrow, often overgrown path with houses on the right, eventually reaching a road.

Follow the road down to the ford, and turn right immediately beyond, into Cotton's Lane. At the end of the lane it joins West Street, with the church ahead. Continue to the main road and turn left, then retrace your outward route, turning right at The Green, right again into Fox Hill and following that to reach the footpath left that takes you back to the car park.

Tetbury railway station was the terminus station on a 7.5-mile branch line that ran from Kemble, where passengers joined the Swindon to Gloucester main line. The line opened in 1819 and closed in 1964, its main source of income being livestock. A cattle market was built adjacent to the station, and the line's freight generally consisted of food for livestock, milk, and coal.



Walk 18 Slaughterford

Start Lay-by on A420 by telephone box, just before right turn at Ford (ST 840748).

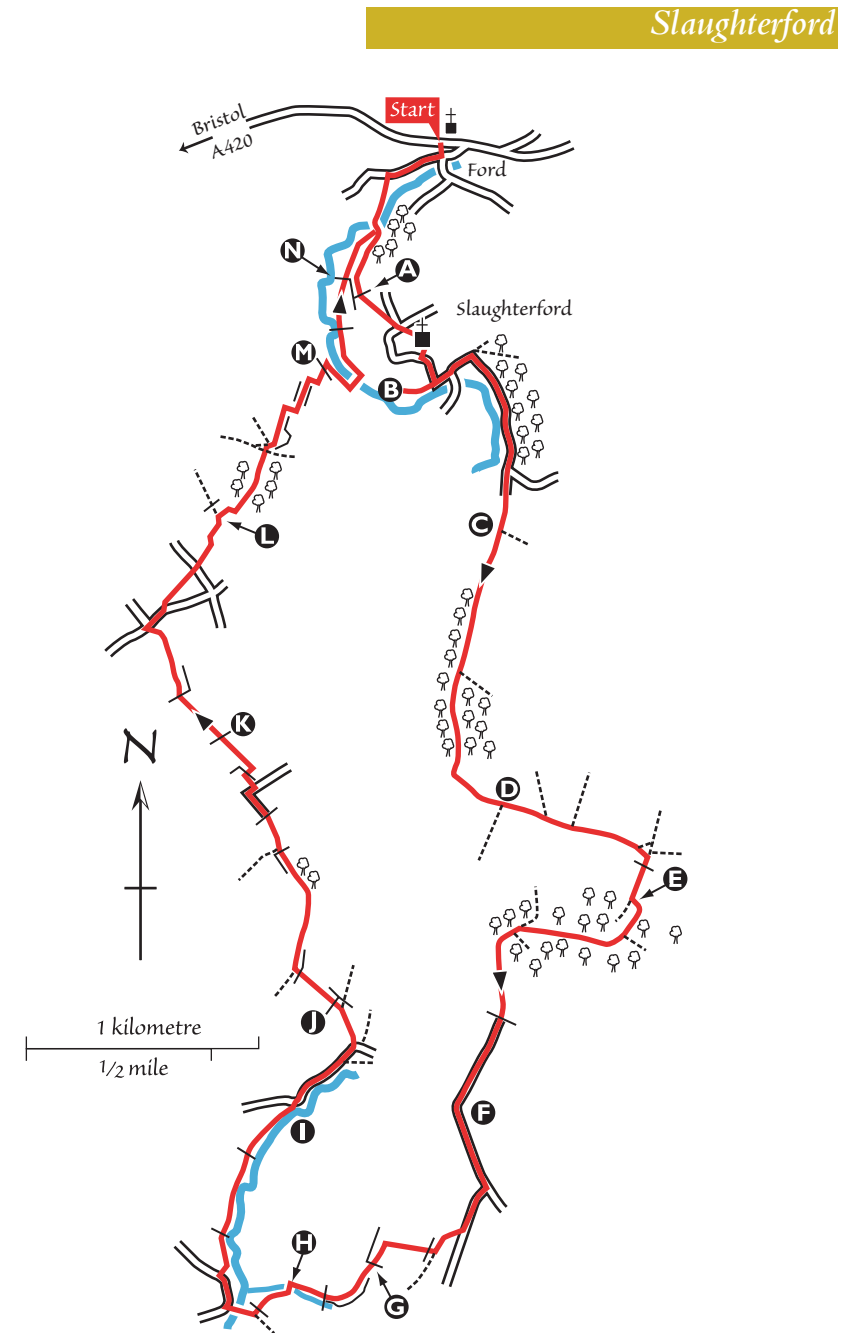
Distance 8.75 miles / 14km.

Refreshments Pub at start/end of walk.

Getting there A420 east from Bristol towards Chippenham. On reaching Ford, there is a church on the left and the lay-by is opposite. (If this is full, turn right to Ford and park in the White Hart car park, after first obtaining permission.)

An undulating but easy walk of river bank, meadows and woodland tracks. Some stretches on quiet lanes with imposing houses and passing through the pretty village of Slaughterford. Allow about 4 hours for the circuit.

A footpath links the western end of the lay-by to a lower road, opposite the White Hart Inn. Facing the pub, go right, along the road for 200 yards. Just beyond the village, climb a stile on the left with the green and white Macmillan Way waymark, into a meadow. Follow the path with the By Brook on your left, then cross it at the weir. In the following meadow, walk ahead on the higher ground, ignoring the more obvious lower path. There are trees to your left initially, then as you keep ahead, climbing



slightly, you pick up bushes on the right that become the right boundary. When you reach a stile by a gate **A** climb over and go diagonally across the field, passing beneath power lines just to the left of the supporting pole. At the far corner, go through a gate to a lane. At this junction, climb the stone steps and stile opposite, then head towards Slaughterford church, passing it on your right.

Slaughterford, lying in the By Brook valley is one of the last few unspoilt villages in Wiltshire with most of the village's 21 houses, Grade II listed buildings. The name comes from Slap Hornford, old English meaning the ford by the blackthorns, which were common here in this valley in Saxon times, although the name is first recorded in 1176. However this peaceful little settlement has seen violent times. In 879 King Alfred defeated the Danes here, the village name being adapted to Slaughterford after this bloody battle. Centuries later, Cromwell's troops, passing through en-route to Bristol thence on to fight in Ireland, destroyed the church. It was eventually rebuilt in 1883 after laying derelict for nearly 200 years.

Walk ahead to a gate in the right corner of the field giving access to a lane. Follow the raised pavement passing pretty cottages, then continue along the lane to a left bend. A short diversion along the path beyond the field gate to the right will bring you to the remains of the old rag mill on the By Brook **B**.

There has been a mill processing rags here since the 1890's until demolition in 1964 and much of the machinery including the mill wheel is still in situ. The rag mill formed part of string of mills between Long Dean and Slaughterford, which date back to the 16th century. Also visible is the remains of the rag boiler. The mill processed rags into individual fibres, which was transported to a nearby paper mill.

Return now to the road and walk ahead to a junction. Go ahead here, don't cross the road bridge, and in a short distance the lane takes you right, ignoring footpath and bridleway signs ahead. Continue on to an uphill left bend and here, go ahead into Weavern Lane, which is initially surfaced but becomes a broad track when the tarmac goes left to Honeybrook Farm **C**.

From here, keep on this wooded track, as it eventually bears left and narrows. Ignore a bridleway on the right **D** but continue, climbing now and soon on a broad track, to reach a fork where the main route veers left. Keep right for a few yards to another junction with a track and field gate ahead. Turn right here and follow the broad track downhill, passing through a wooden gate. When you reach a junction, take the descending track left **E** soon bending to the right. Keep on this route, ignoring gates and stiles left and right. You begin to climb now, and as the initial steep section eases, you meet a cross-track, turn left and follow it out of the wood. There are fine views now across the valley to the tower of Colerne church, a mile or so to the west. When



The bridge at Slaughterford

you reach a gate, go through to join a lane and follow this, ignoring a track on the right as the lane bends left, to reach Rudloe Manor **F**.

Officially occupied until 2000 by the R.A.F., Rudloe Manor, a listed 17th century house was once home to the Defence Communications Network and one of several sensitive military installations sited in the area. In World War II the Ministry of Aircraft Production built the Beaverbrook underground aircraft factory here for Bristol Aeroplane and other companies. The vast caverns had some 2.25 million square feet of space, divided into many smaller chambers. Other local quarries were expanded and linked together, forming a huge network of tunnels and bunkers, parts of which were used for army storage purposes.

In the 1950s, in response to the Soviet Union's explosion of the atom bomb and subsequent development of the more powerful Hydrogen bomb, the British government began a programme of building and strengthening underground facilities to ensure the survival of the government and establishment. The Corsham area, with its already extensive underground areas, was chosen as the wartime seat of power in case of nuclear war. An underground siding was constructed within the nearby Box tunnel that carried the London to Bath railway, facilitating the speedy evacuation of the government from Whitehall straight into the underground base.

Passing the manor, continue for 300 yards then take the lane on the right. Walk downhill passing Folly Cottage, then on reaching a farm entrance, veer right and follow

the bridleway between the farm boundary left, and fields right. When you reach a stile on the right, climb over and walk down the field to the valley bottom, keeping close to the hedge to the right, then go 90° left to a stile in the fence ahead **G**. Climb over and continue along the valley bottom, picking up the hedge on the left, then climbing a further stile.

Walk ahead, keeping to the low ground and look for a footbridge crossing the stream on the left **H** (opposite a cluster of bushes up to the right). Go over and cross the following field half-right, aiming for the right-hand electricity pole whose top becomes visible as you start your climb. As you reach the far side of the field, descend left of the pole to a gate, go through and turn right. Walk along the farm drive with the farmhouse to your left and stone barns on your right, crossing the brook via a bridge. A short distance further, you come to a fork, go right, towards Saltbox Farm.

As you reach the farm, the lane bears left. Go right here, through the left-hand of a pair of field gates with the Macmillan Way waymark. In this meadow, go right to cross a ditch, then walk with the ditch on your left and the brook right. At the far end of the meadow, go through a gate and continue ahead, keeping in touch with the brook on your right, and aiming towards farm buildings. An electric fence often crosses this field, if this is the case, pass through the adjoining gate and continue to the far boundary. Here, go through the gate to reach a lane **I**. Follow the tarmac ahead, passing a farm on the left, and then the driveway to Widdenham Farm House on the right. Here, ignore the track up to the left but continue a short distance further to where the lane descends sharp right. There is a stile ahead, but your route is along the bridleway up to the left, joining a track at the top of the climb. Go ahead now to reach a barn and two field gates. Take the one ahead **J** (the left-hand one), and walk onwards with a hedge to your right. At the next gate, go through and turn right, following the field boundary up to woodland, then bearing left on a path that leads you away from the field edge with the trees on your right. In the top corner of the field, go through a gate and follow the track ahead, then go through another gate to reach a lane. Follow the lane round a right bend, then opposite the entrance to Euridge Manor, enter the field through a metal kissing gate in iron railings on the left.

Follow the clear path across the field to a stile in the opposite boundary **K**. Climb this and cross the following field, going through a gate on the far side. Now go up to the right, then walk in your original direction along the high ground, passing a waymark post. As you reach the sewerage pumping station, take the track ahead to a gate and go through to the road.

Now turn right and walk for about 150 yards to a point where the road bends right. Here, with field gates either side, go left and follow the signed path over the field,

aiming to the left of the distant house, where you climb a stile. Cross the road and take the lane straight ahead towards Hall Farm, home of Tom King, who held a number of Ministerial posts in the 1980s. As you reach the stone-pillared entrance to the farm, a track veers left, running around the property wall. Follow this, keeping left again past the barns, then going ahead with the stockyard and metal pens to your right **L** ignoring a track left to a stile. The path now follows a stone wall on the right and at its end, waymarks direct you right, then left, and you now find yourself on a sheltered path with boundaries either side. The path descends through woodland, then very steeply across a small scrubby field to the track junction. Cross the first one and go over the grass to join another, which in a short distance enters a field, just after a 'private' gate down to the left.

Go half-left in the field, passing beneath power lines and picking up the hedge on the right. Follow this for a short distance to a waymark that directs you right, onto a path through the bushes, finally emerging in another field where you walk now with the hedge on your left. At the bottom of this field, climb the stile ahead **M** and turn right, walking with the brook on your left. Cross at the weir and double back along the meadow, keeping to the right and climbing a stile on the far side. Carry on, again keeping right and passing beneath power lines. Climb a stile in the far corner **N** then walk ahead again, now returning along your outward route. Cross By Brook via the weir and retrace your steps along the meadow path back to the road. Turn right, heading back to your starting point, via the White Hart!

This 16th Century inn was featured in the film Dr. Dolittle. It has a traditional bar with large wooden beams and a fireplace dating from 1553.



Walk 19 Kingscote & Nailsworth

Start Kingscote (ST 818962).

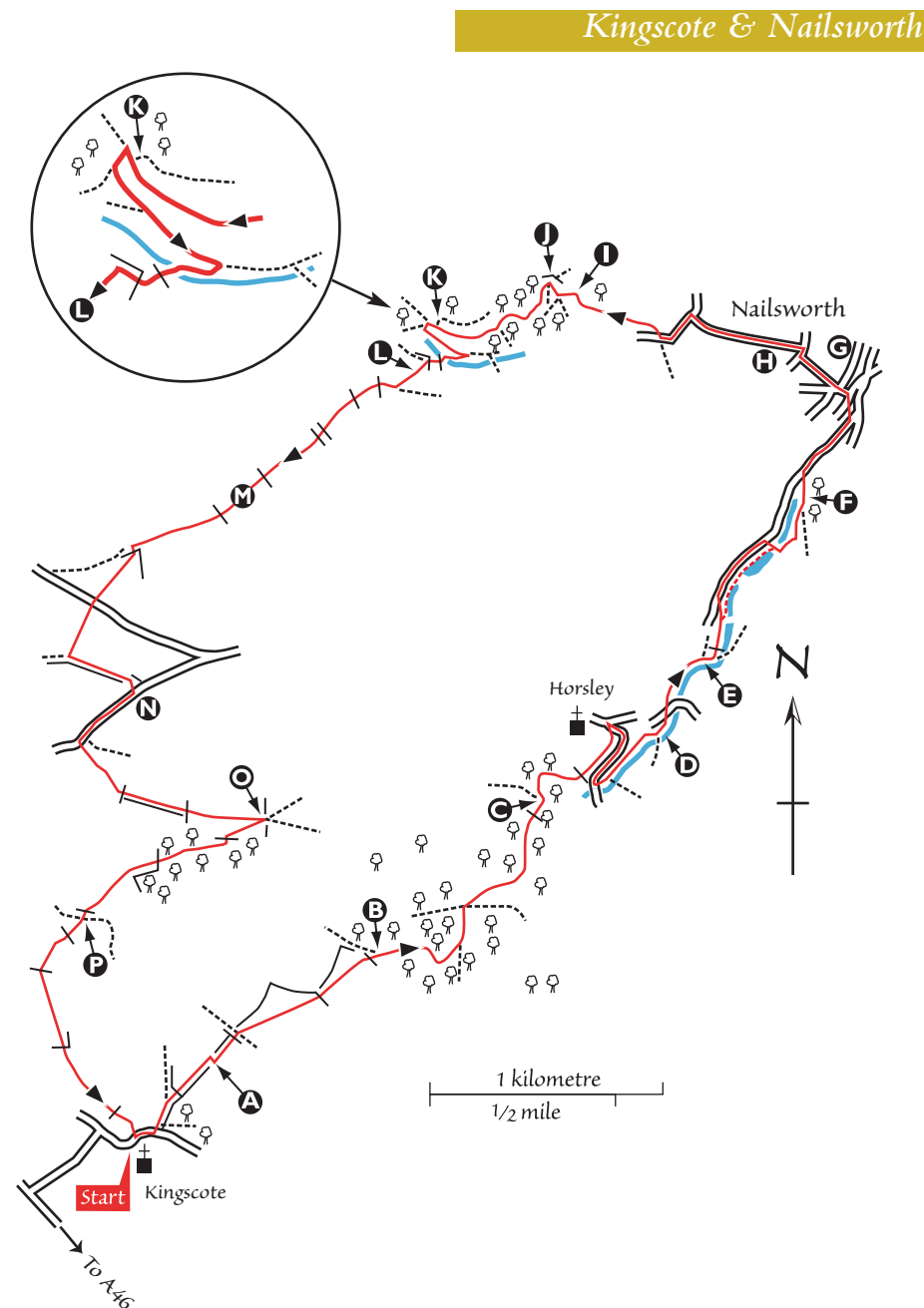
Distance 8.75 miles / 14km.

Refreshments Café and shops mid-point of walk.

Getting there A46 north from M4 junction 18. Left onto A4135 then right at the Hunters Hall Inn, signed to Kingscote. In the village, go right where there is restricted roadside parking before the church. Alternatively, start in Nailsworth where there is a free, long-stay car park in Old Market (ST849995), following the route from Point G.

An attractive, undulating walk of woodland and meadows, visiting the wool town of Nailsworth and passing water mills and fine houses. Allow about 4.5 hours.

From your parking place, follow the road beyond the church to the end of the village where you take the turning left, signed 'Binley Farm'. At the end of this short lane, keep to the right, passing a field gate, and cross a stretch of gravel to enter a field. Follow the field edge, keeping to the stone wall on your right until you reach a clear gap in the right-hand boundary **A**. Here, go through and continue in the same direction, now with a hedge on your left. At the top of the field, go through the gate and cross the track, then follow the path diagonally across the field ahead, which leads you to a



stile. Climb over to another field and again take the cross-field path. At the end of the path, continue downhill to climb a stile and enter woodland.

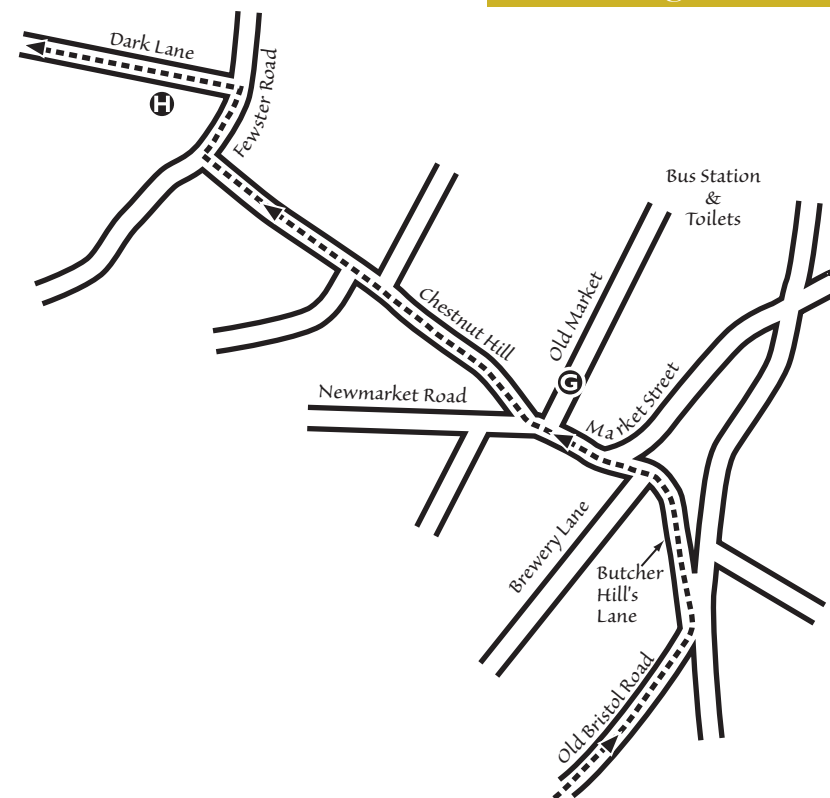
In a few yards you join a track **B** continue in the same direction, gradually losing height and in springtime, walking through a heady mix of wild garlic and bluebells. The track descends through a beech wood and you continue ahead, ignoring a track joining from the right, until you eventually reach a junction. Broad tracks go left and right, but you need to take the lesser one ahead, half right. Follow the track to a gate, go through, and pass cottages to reach a fork with garages to the left **C**. Go right, the track soon bearing right again. Continue on to reach a tarmac lane and the village of Horsley. Your route now doubles back down the lane.

At the bottom of the hill before a bridge, turn sharp left onto a path and walk with a stream on your right, passing a footbridge. You soon reach the first of a series of millponds – little grebe nest here and their high-pitched trill is often heard. Beyond the dam, pass a path joining from the left to arrive a short distance further at a junction with sculpture in the undergrowth on the right **D**. Follow the main path left to a road, cross over and take the narrow surfaced path ahead, walking with the stream on your right. You leave the tarmac when you reach a driveway on the right, signed 'The Mill House' and 'Willow Fishery' **E**. Follow the driveway to a gate and here, ignore the footpath sign ahead, but go left, over the stream and through a wooden gate. Walk with the fishponds to your right, going through a metal gate and continuing on in the same direction, passing the mill on your right.

This was Horsley Mill, one of many in the Nailsworth area. Once a woollen mill, it is now a college run by the owners of Ruskin Mill, who own most of the land in the valley through which you have been walking.

The driveway brings you to a road, continue along the pavement as far as a stepped path descending right. Take this, crossing a private path at the bottom. Beyond the mill leat, the path goes left, then up to the right, then left again between cottages. You now enter woodland, the path leading you down to the banks of a millpond. Ignore a path joining from the right and continue to the mill, with its now defunct waterwheel **F**.

This is Ruskin Mill. Originally known as Millbottom Mill, it was a 16th century corn mill before becoming a fulling mill in the 17th century. With the decline in the woollen trade, the mill was put to a variety of uses before eventually falling into decay. In the 1980s restoration began by a group of volunteers and there is now an interesting art gallery, education centre and craft workshops. Vegetarian food is served here in the café daily, 10am to 4pm. The entrance is on the far side of the building, accessed from the road.



The walk continues from the waterwheel along a path between cottages, eventually reaching the Old Bristol Road. Follow this to a junction where you descend left along Butcher Hill's Lane, passing Brewery Lane on the left to join Market Street.

Butcher Hill's Lane along with Dark Lane, your route out of town, were pack horse roads of great antiquity. The Nailsworth Brewery was registered in August 1889 to acquire the business of Clissold & Son who had established brewing on the site around 1800. In 1908 the Brewery was amalgamated with the Cheltenham Original Brewery, but then subsequently closed. Most of the brewery and malting buildings have since been demolished.

Keep in the same direction for a short distance to reach a road junction. Old Market runs to the right **G** you could divert along it to access park benches for a picnic lunch, shops and public toilets by the bus station.

The walk continues by climbing Chestnut Hill signed 'Quaker Meeting House'.

This house is passed on the left in Quaker Close. Quakerism had been introduced to Nailsworth in 1655, with the initial meetings being held at friend's houses. After a search for more permanent accommodation, this site was acquired around 1685.

Continue the climb to a fork. Go right into Fewster Road then in a few yards, left into Dark Lane^H. Follow this to a junction at the top, with a 'No Through Road Ahead'. Turn left into Seven Acres Road and follow the road downhill until it bears right. On this bend, opposite a stile and stepped path on the left, take a footpath up to the right.

The path can be overgrown at first, but soon clears. Pass a whitewashed house on the right, then later, a waymark post^I. A little further, the path makes a short descent to a junction. From here, until you leave the woodland, you need to follow instructions carefully as the paths on the ground bear no resemblance to those shown on published maps!

You are at cross-paths, with the roofs of houses down to your left. Turn right, climbing past a waymark post in a few yards. Stay on this path as it levels out, passing another waymark post with an overgrown gateway on the right (both easy to miss). Climb again to the top of the hill where you reach further waymarks and a path junction with metal field gates ahead^J. Take the broad path running down to the left (ignoring a path right to a wire fence and one doubling back down left).

You will soon see a parallel path down to your left, and you have easy walking now through mature woodland on a good, broad path. Ignore a path joining from the left, and continue for some distance to where the track makes a U-turn, up and round to the right^K. Ahead is a narrow path passing beneath power lines. Take this for a few yards, then before the path climbs into the woodland, go left, then immediately left again, the narrow path passing beneath the power lines again at a lower level.

The first section of this path can be rife with nettles in summer, but battle through and continue downhill, ignoring a path joining from the right. As you near the valley bottom with a stream within site, you meet a clear path joining from the right with a waymark post. You need to double back right here – if you miss it, a short distance further you come to a bridge over a brook; turn back! Now on this lower path, walk with the brook on your left, then drop down to cross it via a wooden footbridge. Climb the stile ahead and follow the path to another stile, go over and walk with the fence on the right. When you catch sight of an electricity pole up to your left^L climb the meadow to reach it, then continue on uphill to a track at the top.

Turn right, and follow the track towards the farm. Go through a field gate, pass Lower Lutheredge Farm on your right, and onward through another gate. Follow the track ahead, passing through two further gates with barns on the right. Continue on to go

through another gate then walk, boundary right, beneath power lines^M. Beyond the next gate, the track reappears and you pass a farm on the right, then turn left onto a metalled drive.

As you reach fields on the left opposite the last building on the right, climb the stile into the field, then go diagonally across, in the direction of the footpath sign. You need to aim roughly midway between the driveway on the right, and the field hedge on the left, then when the far hedge comes into view, make for the lone tree in the centre, climbing stiles either side of a lane before reaching it. Pass into the next field and cut straight across to waymarks on the far side. Don't go into the following field, but instead, turn left and walk along the field edge with the hedge on your right. As you near the top corner with a road visible beyond, go right, through a gap, and make for the field gate to access the road^N.

Turn right and walk with care along the road as far as a farm drive on the left. The road is in a dip here and bending right, not the best place to cross. Cross you must though, and take the drive to the farm. At the end of the drive, go through a field gate and follow the track with farm buildings on the right, then continue, crossing a cattle grid and walking with a wall on your right. As the wall ends, continue on the track to the next field boundary and waymark post^O. Here, turn back sharp right and cross the field, heading towards the woodland. (In summer, the path is clear across the crops, but cleared by walkers and not by the farmer so it's not immediately obvious.) Climb a stile into the wood, then follow the path to emerge on the far side, where you go over another stile into a meadow. Go downhill, keeping in touch with the fence on the left until it swings left. Here, strike out across the meadow towards a yellow-painted waymark post, crossing a small brook to reach it. From here, aim for the next post on the skyline ahead, then on again, to a further post by a stile. Climb over to reach a track^P.

Cross the track and go ahead down the field to climb a stile by metal gates. Now descend to a stream, then climb the hill on the far side to reach a stile at the top. Go over and follow the cross-field path to the top corner of the field by the electricity pole. Here, go through a kissing gate and follow the left boundary to eventually arrive back in Kingscote.

Kingscote is a small, unspoilt Cotswold village. Most of the houses are built in traditional Cotswold stone, with the land boundaries marked by dry stone walls. The village has a long history, originating with the country mansion of the Kingscote family, who could trace their ancestors back to Saxon times.



Walk 20 Llanfoist

Start Llanfoist Crossing car park (SO286133).

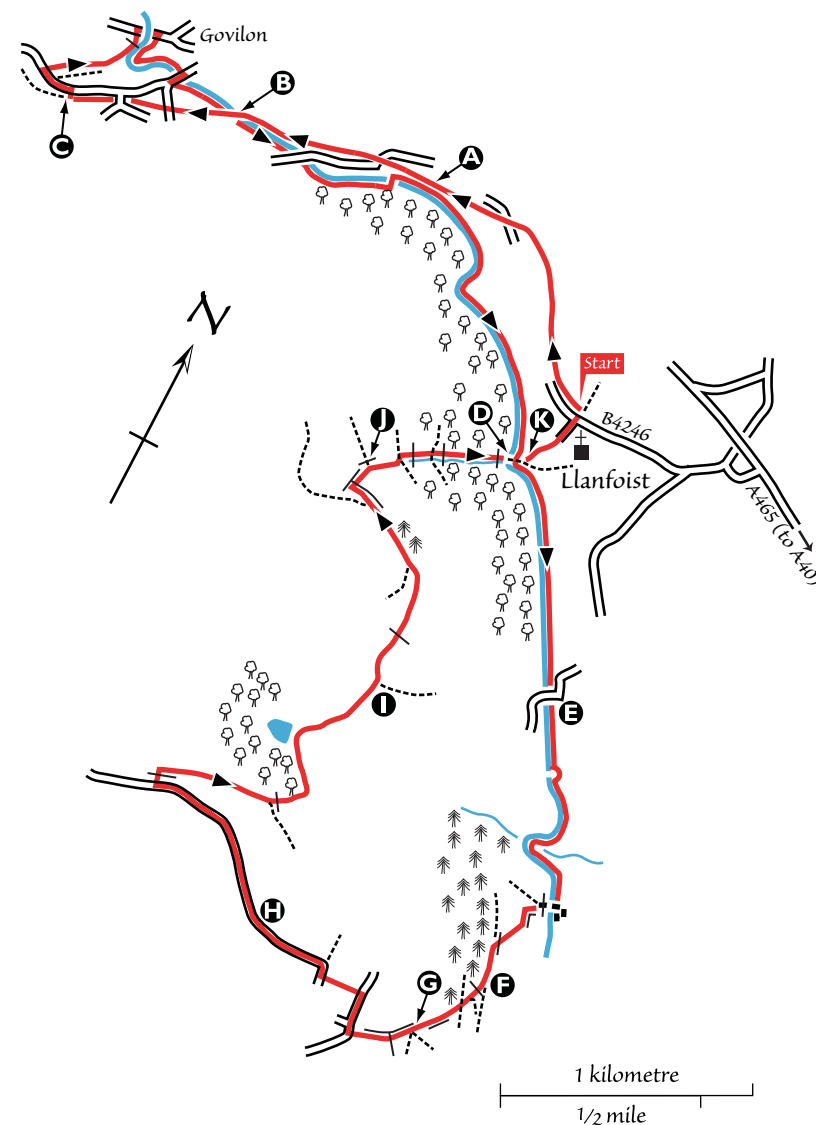
Distance 8.75 miles / 14km. (Can be shortened to 4 miles / 6.4km.)

Refreshments Pub quarter-distance, nothing thereafter.

Getting there Quickest route (though not the shortest) is M4 junction 24, north on A449 then west on A40 signed Abergavenny. At roundabout complex, west on A465 for a mile, taking B4246 left to Llanfoist. Car park is on the right (poorly signed), immediately after traffic calming humps on the far side of the village.

A walk full of historical interest along canal and railway paths, with a lengthy climb to exposed hillside, ending with a steep but straightforward descent. Allow around 4.5 hours.

From the far end of the car park, join the railway path; the noise of the road soon recedes with bird song taking over. Ignore a path forking up left **A** by a derelict brick building, but continue, eventually passing Govilon Wharf. Keep on the railway path as it crosses the canal **B** ignoring the path descending left, then on reaching a road, cross over and walk up the drive ahead, passing the old Govilon station on your right. Continue on, walking under a bridge to arrive at a small car park on the right **C**.



The railway was part of the Merthyr, Tredegar & Abergavenny line when it opened in 1862, belonging to the London & North Western Railway. It closed in 1953.

Leave the railway here and go left, along the road. Pass a footpath and cottages on the right, then take the driveway right to Upper Mill Farm (the footpath is unsigned at this end). Follow the drive beyond the farm buildings and through a black metal field gate, then descend a cinder track, keeping straight ahead when it turns to grass and bends round to the right, to reach the canal. Go left to climb a stile in the field corner, then before the aqueduct, take steps down to the road and turn right under the bridge. Just down the road is the Bridgend Inn – real ales and food served all day – a tempting early refreshment stop. The walk resumes via steps on the other side of the bridge that lead you up to the canal towpath, walking now with the canal on your right.

The spur on the far bank was originally a dry dock and a loading point for iron produced by furnaces located a short distance up the valley. (Older maps spell Govilon as Gofilon, derived from the word 'gefaelion' meaning forges.)

Follow the towpath to a road bridge where you are obliged to swap banks, now walking with the canal on your left. There are good views of the hills away to your left now, the prominent peak being Sugar Loaf. Pass beneath the railway bridge to reach Govilon Wharf.

The canal was built between 1797 and 1812, running for 32 miles to link Brecon with Newport and the Severn Estuary. Stone and processed lime from nearby quarries were transported by tramway to the canal and then by barge to Newport. Govilon Wharf was the terminus of the original Brecknock & Abergavenny canal. Work began in 1810 to extend it to Pontypool, where it joined the Monmouth Canal.

Continue along the canal, crossing to the opposite bank when necessary and passing steps down to the railway path on the left, to eventually arrive at Llanfoist Wharf ⑤.

This is a tranquil site now, but in the early 19th century the wharf was a hive of activity and the trees beyond hide the remains of a tramway incline (to be visited later in the walk). Iron products from a forge on the Bloreng hillside (see walk 20) were taken by horse-drawn tram around the hill to the first of three inclines that brought them to the canal. The low building on the right was the warehouse; built into the hillside, the goods entered on the first floor then were lowered onto waiting narrow boats before making the two-day journey to Newport Docks. Coal and limestone, also extracted from the hill, were taken in the opposite direction to Brecon. The low, cast-iron bridge under which you must pass connected the incline to a lower tramroad that ran to Abergavenny. In 1860, a railway linked Blaenavon, the site of the relocated forge,

to Newport, so this new, quick route replaced the incline and canal as a means of transporting the iron.

A quick exit from this walk to reach ❶ can be made by taking the steps down to the left. To continue, walk beneath the cast-iron bridge and follow the towpath passing beneath a road bridge at 'Canal Cottage' ❷ then bypass an old stone bridge, beyond which you can glimpse the River Usk left, and Bloreng up to the right.

The next bridge is number 93; just beyond it, and before Bridge Farm, climb the stone stile on the left, then double back over the bridge and climb the stile by a field gate. Continue ahead for a short distance, then go diagonally left, climbing gently and picking up a plantation boundary corner by a waymark on a fence post. The next waymark points up to the right, follow it to the top corner of the field, where you climb a stile (very difficult to locate in summer) just below the belt of conifers.

Now go left, towards a ruined farmhouse down to the left. Just before it, the path forks at a signpost. ❸. Go right, and follow an (initially) indistinct rising path through the woodland. Cross a stile and continue climbing to a junction. At this 'U' bend, continue your climb, soon crossing a broader track, then on and upward to reach a property boundary on the left. Follow the sporadic waymarks ahead to a three-way signposted junction ❹ where you continue uphill, to a stile with a farm to your right. Cross to reach the open hillside, then keep to the right boundary as you continue in the same direction, eventually climbing a further stile to access a road.

Turn right and follow the road, almost immediately passing a left turn and continuing to a waymark and stile on the left. Cross, and follow the hedge boundary up the field, climbing another stile to reach a road. Walk right for a short distance, then follow the road as it makes a left turn. More climbing now, passing a parking area on the right ❺ where you can take a breather and enjoy the views over Abergavenny and the imposing shape of Ysgyryd Fawr on the skyline beyond.

Continue on the road until you reach a cattle grid, cross over and go through the wooden field gate on the right, then follow the broad track ahead with an old stone wall to your left, wire fence right. When you reach a wooden gate, go through, ignoring the path forking right, and follow a descending route that swings left, eventually reaching a lake, in an area called 'The Punchbowl'.

Keep the lake to your left and follow the path that bears right. About a quarter of a mile later, ignore a signed path and farm gate to the right ❶ but climb ahead to leave the Woodland Trust land via a field gate. Continue on, boundary right, ignoring a

descending path joining from the left and enjoying fine views to the right, until you reach a conifer plantation. As this peters out, you approach a cleft in the hillside.

Check directions carefully now. When you reach a clear, but narrow path climbing up to the left, ignore it and continue on a level course following a broad, grassy path and soon picking up the wire fence on your right. When you arrive at the boundary corner and signpost, climb the stile on the right, and head down the hill.

Had you taken the path up to the left, you would have reached the end of the tramroad running from Blaenavon, to the hillside forge below Bloreng, and on to the top of a set of inclines that you are about to follow.

Part-way down the field there is a waymarked stile and gate on the left **I** make a short detour here.

Through the gate on the left is the site of the tram assembly area. The first incline ended here and iron-laden trams were given priority for the journey down the second incline. The trams ran on iron rails fixed to stone sleepers, and were attached to a continuous chain, full trams descending by gravity and pulling empty tubs back up a parallel set of rails.



The Punchbowl, a remarkable glacial hollow. Here the trees, immense beech pollards, form one of the highest native woods in Britain and one of the steepest not on a cliff. Also, one of the few native woods to be affected by avalanches.

Now go back through the gate and resume your descent, keeping to the left boundary (the incline was beyond this) and passing a signpost at a crosspath. Your way is signposted 'Llanfoist Via Tunnel'. Go left through the gate and immediately right down to a stile. Climb over and follow the course of the incline to reach a deeply rutted cross-track. Cross over and continue down to cross a further stile..

This was the third, and longest incline, known as 'The Big Drop'. Moss-covered stone sleepers can now be seen at intervals, with the holes that took the iron pegs holding the tram rails, still visible.

This toe-stubbing descent finally brings you to the canal at Llanfoist Wharf, passed earlier in the walk. Here, an information board and reconstructed trams give some idea of this lost industry. Now follow the Right of Way ahead, through a tunnel beneath the Wharfinger's house, to emerge on the far side of the canal **K**. Continue ahead, going left at the junction and following the track, passing Llanfoist church on the right.

Many notable ironmasters lie beneath the turf here. The rose-coloured granite pillar on the far side of the churchyard marks the grave of Crawshaw Bailey (1789-1872). He developed one of the world's largest ironworks, was involved in canal, tramroad and railway construction, and eventually was elected Member of Parliament for Monmouthshire and Newport.

To complete the walk, continue to the road and cross over to reach the car park.



Walk 21 Painswick & Haresfield Beacon

Start Car park (charge £2 max) at southern end of Painswick, (SO 865095).

Distance 9 miles / 14.4km.

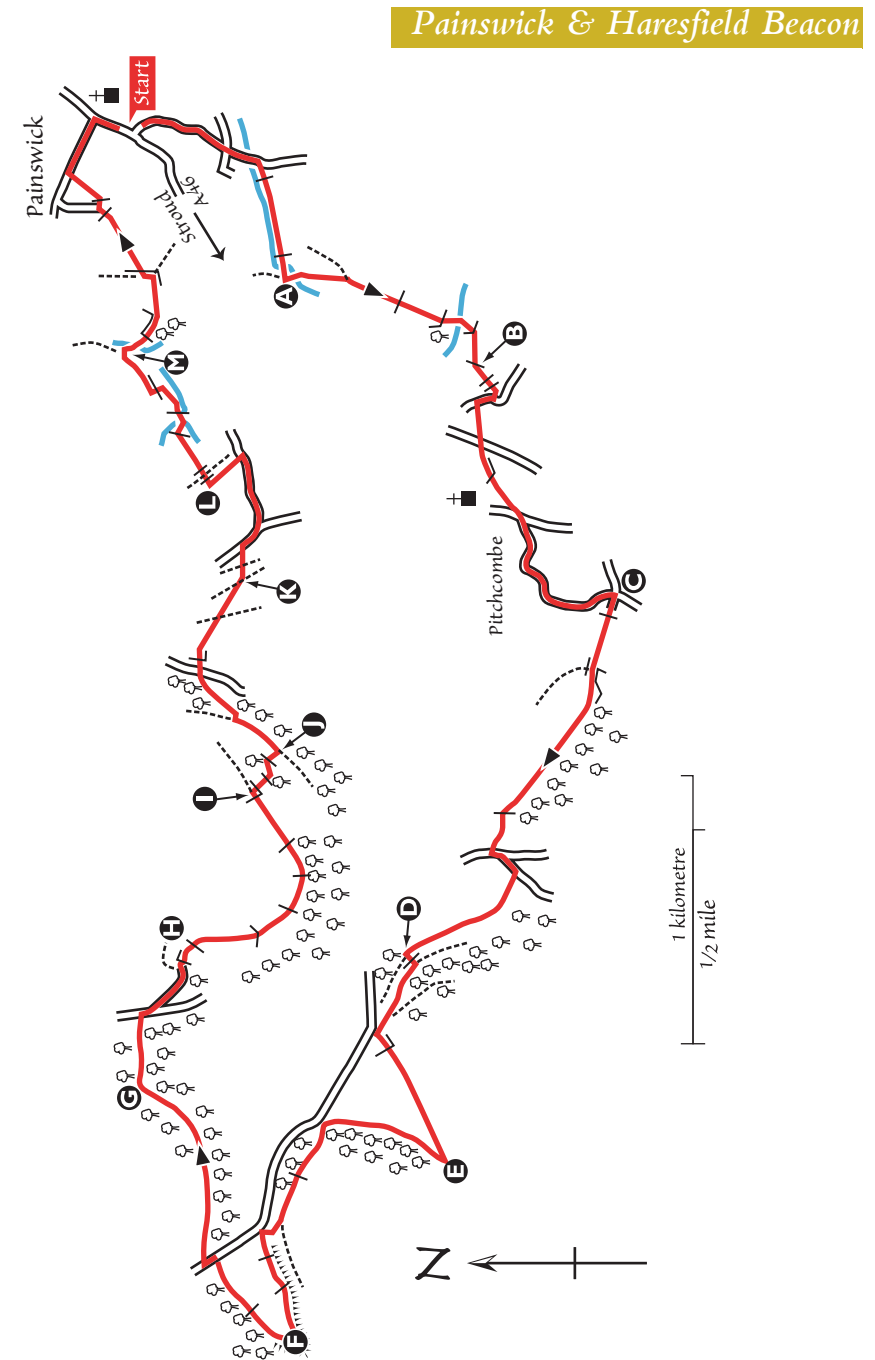
Refreshments Pub 3/4 distance and a selection in Painswick at the end of the walk.

Getting there M5 north to junction 13, right on A419 into Stroud, then left (north) on A46 to Painswick. Car park on right as you enter the town.

A delightful walk visiting unspoilt villages and passing through some of the best Cotswolds scenery. An undulating route gives you several dramatic views, while the snowdrops in early spring, followed by bluebells, makes this a great springtime walk. A few long climbs, so allow about 5 hours.

From the car park, walk down Stamages Lane, becoming Stepping Stones Lane, to reach a bridge over a stream. Take the stone steps down to the right and walk with the stream on your right. Climb a stile, then keep with the stream to cross another stile and weir beyond. Turn left onto the track, pass the splendid Kings Mill House **A** and re-cross the watercourse. Continue to a tarmac lane, turn right and head towards the houses.

Follow the gravel drive ahead through a cluster of beautiful Cotswold stone buildings known as Sheephouse, and continue through a kissing gate into a field. Cross the field



to a gap on the far side, beyond which go down the hill keeping slightly left initially, to cross a footbridge. Now climb to the top right of the next field to a stile, then in the following field go half-right towards a lone tree, a barn roof becoming visible as you progress. To the right of the tree, look for a stile in the fence **B** cross, then keep in the same direction down the hill towards a pair of houses. Climb the stile in the wooden fence, then descend to another between the houses. A few yards beyond the stile, take stone steps down to the right, then follow the path to reach a lane. Turn right, passing the lovely Weavers Mill.

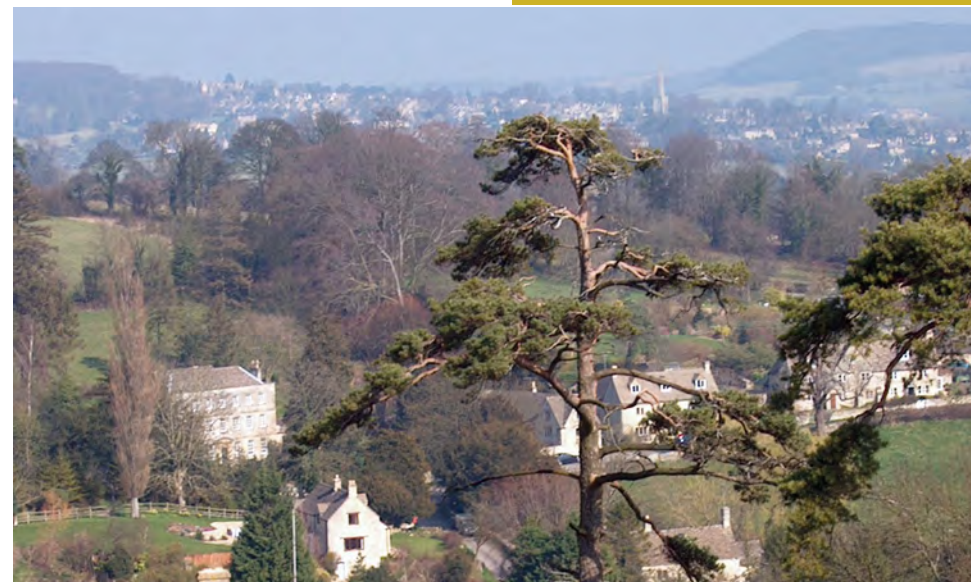
From the 14th century onwards, sheep farming played a significant part in shaping the landscape. There was even a specialised longwool breed, the Cotswold Lion, yielding a heavy, lustrous fleece. Though the sheep remain (listed as 'At Risk' by The Rare Breeds Survival Trust), there is little to see of the mills and factories that once lined the riverbanks and processed their wool.

Follow the lane for a short distance, then take the stile on the left and climb the field aiming for the electricity pole. Continue to the top of the hill where a stile by a gate gives access to the busy A46 road. Go left for a few paces, then cross with care and climb the stile, which can be overgrown in summer, into a field. Go up the field, keeping to the left boundary, then climb a stile to the right of the house and follow the footpath ahead to reach a driveway where you continue to a road.

Cross the road and take the lane ahead that climbs to the village of Pitchcombe. Walk through the village and climb steeply to crossroads **C** where you take the 'No Through Road' to the right. Follow the road to its end, go through the gate ahead and walk up the field, exiting at the top right corner. Ignore the stile and gate on the right, but follow the track up ahead, which peters out in the field.

You have a long, steady climb through the field now, keeping roughly to the left boundary to reach a stile at the far end. Beyond, follow the lane ahead to a farm and continue to the road. Cross over and go left, then take the lane signed 'Randwick'. In just a few yards, climb a stile on the right and walk with woodland to your left.

Continue, keeping close to the left boundary for about 600 yards, then look for a wooden squeezer stile in the wall on the left **D**. Look carefully, as this is easy to miss in summer when the area along the left boundary becomes very overgrown. The stile is located before the path by the boundary enters a patch of woodland and bushes ahead. Once through, you come to a clear path, turn right and walk with the old wall on your right. Follow this path until you reach a car park. Go left, leaving the parking area through a gate, and follow the 'Cotswold Way' signs. Continue ahead on a level path until you reach the topograph. There are fine (if windswept) views from here **E**.



Pitchcombe, with manor house on the left, and Painswick in the distance

The walk continues half-back right along a path that contours around the hilltop above the woodland to your left. You eventually reach a waymark post with a kissing gate up to the right, where you take the broad, descending path to reach a double-hinged gate. Go through and continue to a fork in the path where you climb up to the right, soon reaching steps and a road. Turn left and follow the path past the National Trust sign, going through a couple of gates to reach a hill fort; continue to the trig. point **F**.

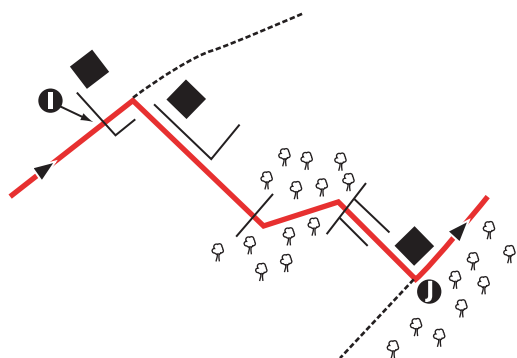
Haresfield Beacon, 700 feet above sea level, provides spectacular views over the Severn Vale. This 39-hectare Iron Age site is enclosed by a single rampart and ditch.

Now follow the 'Cotswold Way' signs on the path above the trees. Go through a gate then pick up the farm track and descend to a farm where you go through a gate to a lane. Walk left for a short distance, then go right, following the 'Cotswold Way' onto a track. Ignore paths left and right in this woodland, continuing to reach a monument commemorating the siege of Gloucester in 1643 **G** now hidden by trees, and almost forgotten, there would have been splendid views over the city when these stones were erected.

The Cotswolds have always been strategically important, particularly during the Civil War when forces loyal to the King took on the Parliamentarians. Battles and skirmishes were regular events here during the seven years of conflict.

Continue on your way now, passing an old well just before reaching a lane. Turn right, then almost immediately fork left. We leave the Cotswold Way here for a while, for a much prettier route.

Head down to Tump Farm **H**. At the gate to the farm go right, along a fenced footpath following the right boundary of the field. At the end of the path go through a new metal kissing gate. Over the brow of the hill descend diagonally left, going through two further kissing gates and head towards the woods. Go left before reaching them, through a wooden gate and over a stile, then walk straight ahead through a field to reach a tarmac lane. Turn right along the lane to reach the gate to Randall's Farm **I**. Go through the gate and turn right immediately.



Walk up the field keeping to the wire fence on the left. In the top left corner of the field, climb a stile into woodland. Waymarks have deserted you here, but climb up to the left through the trees, the path becoming more obvious as you progress, and at the top of the wood with houses ahead, climb a stile and follow the path up to the right of the house to reach a broad track **J**.

Turn left and walk past the house, then continue until you approach further houses on the left. Look right for the 'Cotswold Way' sign (you will be following the 'Way' back to Painswick). The path climbs steeply through woodland to reach a road. Cross over and follow the waymarks leading you via steps into a disused quarry. Go through a gate and keep to the wire fence, climbing further steps and following the waymarks ahead, then right, and descending to cross a broad path. Keep in the same direction following the narrow, way-marked path and crossing another broad path **K** beyond which you continue your descent into a silver birch wood followed by a third broad path that you cross half-right. Continue your waymarked descent, eventually picking up a wire fence on the left and reaching a road opposite the Edgemoor Inn.

Cross over, and walk right alongside the car park, then take the lane on the left, walking to a kissing gate on the left. Pass through and walk down the field to cross a farm track on the right via two gates **L**. Go ahead now, down the meadow and aiming for the lower corner, passing a 'Cotswold Way' milestone. Fortunately, we don't have so far to walk! At the bottom of the field, go through a gate and descend to a footbridge.

Beyond, go right, through a kissing gate to enter a meadow. Walk ahead, with the stream down to the right, and go through another kissing gate in the fence on the left. Proceed now in the same direction, fence right and heading for a barn.

Keep to the left of the barn, then when you reach a driveway, follow it right, passing in front of the house **M** crossing a stream and climbing the track ahead. Pass through a kissing gate and walk ahead, keeping left as far as the boundary corner. Here, strike out across the field towards the distant spire of Painswick church. Turn left at the far boundary, ignoring a kissing gate accessing playing fields, and walk with the hedge to go through a further gate. Now follow the fence on the left, climbing the hill to a gate.

Take the narrow path between gardens to reach a driveway. Turn right here, along another narrow path, then through a kissing gate into a field. Go ahead, following the right boundary to a stile and a lane beyond, where you turn right and walk into the town, reaching the main road opposite the church.

Painswick, known as the 'Queen of the Cotswolds' was largely built on income from the wool trade. Using mellow Cotswold stone from local quarries, it has many fine buildings clustered around quaint, narrow streets.

The church of St. Mary's church, originally of Norman origin, was extended around 1480 in the English perpendicular style. In 1883, the spire was struck by lightning, causing great damage as it crashed through the roof. The churchyard is famous for its 100 yew trees and its lytchgate entrance, made from timbers from the old belfry, complete with carved bells.

Go right, passing the churchyard, to reach the car park a short distance down the road on the left.



Walk 22 Kelston & the Avon Valley

Start Old railway bridge in High Street, Saltford (ST688675).

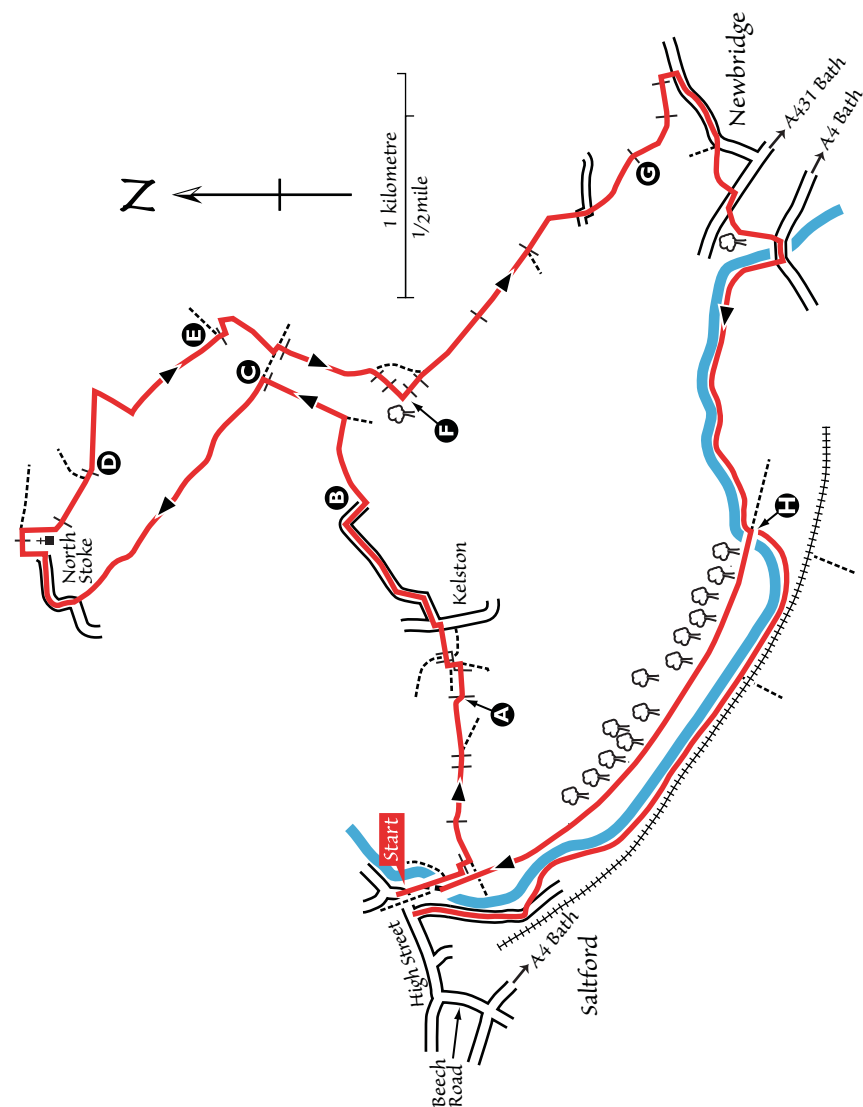
Distance 9 miles / 14.4km.

Refreshments Pub at start/end and also at Newbridge.

Getting there A4 Bath Road to Saltford. Turn left into Beech Road then right into High Street. Park in small lay-by beyond railway bridge.

A walk taking you up, out of the Avon valley via gentle gradients, to the hilltops of the south Cotswolds with a final short, steep section beyond North Stoke. Splendid views from Prospect Stile, then a leisurely descent to the outskirts of Bath, ending with level riverside and railway path walking back to the start. Allow 3.5 to 4 hours.

From the lay-by beyond the railway bridge in Saltford, follow the inclined path up to the cycle track. Don't join the main path, but keep to the left, crossing the bridge on the pedestrian section. The narrow path beyond the bridge was the pedestrian access to Kelston Station. If this stretch looks overgrown, join the cycle track and walk for about 100 yards, passing a bench on the left, to reach the next bridge in about 30 yards. Here, go left, through a gap in the bushes and walk back a couple of yards to concrete steps. Beyond here stood Kelston station.



Until the 1940s, this would have been the route taken by the good people of Saltford who wanted to catch a Midland Railway train. Kelston Station was opened on 1st December 1869, and closed on 1st January 1949. Until about 1930, race trains from the north used to stop at Kelston and many passengers alighted, walking the route you are about to take, to Bath Race Course on Lansdown Hill.

Descend the steps to a stile and cross to a track. Follow this left passing a metal kissing gate and continuing ahead. At the end of the track go through a metal kissing gate by a field gate, then keep in the same direction through another two kissing gates with barns ahead **A**. Take the stile to the right of the gate and continue in the same direction with the hedge on your left and the barns beyond.

On reaching top of the field, you arrive at a multitude of gates and barriers. Climb the stile ahead to a grass track, turn left and go through a metal kissing gate. Cross the surfaced drive and climb the stile, then go straight ahead, crossing a track running left, to climb a further stile by a metal gate. Now follow the path ahead that becomes a lane leading to the road where Kelston Forge is on your left.

Notice the initials of the Inigo Jones family on the buildings here. Although Inigo Jones (1573-1652) received no formal training, his travels abroad gave him insights and knowledge of architecture, so he was given the post of Surveyor-General to the Office of Works. Under this title he became involved with the design of a number of large houses, churches, and palaces for King James I. Between 1625 and 1640, Jones was concerned principally with work on two major London sites: the repair and remodelling of St. Paul's Cathedral, and the design of Covent Garden.

A short distance to the right, but off-route, you'll find The Old Crown Inn. Built in the early 18th century as a coaching inn, the pub once brewed its own beer and twice a year the farmers of the village would come to the pub to pay their rent to the squire. Across the road from the pub in what is now the car park, there was once a small garden and a skittle alley.

Turn left and walk to the end of the pavement, then cross the road with care and walk up the lane opposite. Follow this, climbing gently and turning right past Coombe Barn **B**. A further left bend sees the lane degrading to an unsurfaced track, which makes a sharp left turn with a stile up to the right. Continue now on a level course, eventually passing through a metal gate to reach a T-junction **C**.

Go left here and follow the path, with fine views to your left, to reach the village of North Stoke. At the road, go ahead, keeping right and passing a telephone box, then continuing to the right, up to the church. In the churchyard, rest awhile on the seat and take in the view across the city.

Continue now over the stile by the metal gate then turn right, behind the churchyard, with fence and hedge to your right. On reaching a waymark post go half-left to a stile in the opposite fence, cross, then climb ahead to a further waymark post on the skyline. Continue up to a broad plateau, beyond which a plethora of waymarks direct you ever upwards to a metal kissing gate **D**. The map indicates you are now within a hill-fort, though little can be seen until you reach the far side where you cross a ditch, turning right with the waymark. Contour the edge of the field and go through a wooden kissing gate onto Bath racecourse, then follow the right boundary to reach Prospect Stile, where you have one of the finest views in the County **E**.

You now begin a leisurely descent to the outskirts of Bath, following for the most part, 'Cotswold Way' signs. Go through the kissing gate, then down left and round to the right. Follow the waymarks to an optional diversion via a stile to the summit of Kelston Round Hill **F**. Only a little lower than the viewpoint at Prospect Stile, a circumnavigation of the small wood at the summit affords a 360° vista in fine weather. Return to the main path by descending half-left from the trig point.

When you reach a tarmac lane, continue for just a few yards, then take the stile up to the right. Keep to the top of the field to reach a stile on the far side **G** from where you are guided by fences right and left to a gate. Once through, walk down the centre of the field to the far boundary and go through a kissing gate into a recreation ground. Go right, to reach a narrow entrance and road beyond. Turn right, passing Frankland Close on the left, and continue to a left bend beyond a pedestrian traffic refuge. Cross here to a slip-road where a path soon leads you between school properties to Kelston Road. Cross and turn right, walking for a short distance to a stile on the left, opposite the entrance to Oldfield School. Now descend to a meadow with the River Avon on your right, passing a rowing club boathouse and heading to the Park & Ride. Just before the entrance to it, follow a slightly hidden footpath alongside 'The Boathouse' on the right, and take the steps up to the road bridge. Cross the bridge and descend to the opposite bank of the Avon, then walk with the river on your right for almost a mile to reach a bridge carrying the railway path over the river **H**.

A choice here! One option is along the railway path. Climb the steps and go right, following the route for a mile or so to re-cross the river where, with the 'Bird In Hand' down to the left, you take the exit on the right to complete the circuit. If, however, you prefer to avoid the cyclists who dominate this supposedly 'shared' path, walk beneath the bridge and follow the path alongside the river, soon following the embankment of a 'working' railway. Walk now with railway left and riverbank right. This path brings you to Kelston Lock, beyond which you follow the tarmac of The Shallows to reach the 'Bird In Hand' and the High Street beyond.



Walk 23 The Somerset Levels

Start Car park, Creech St. Michael (ST 275255).

Distance 9 miles / 14.4km.

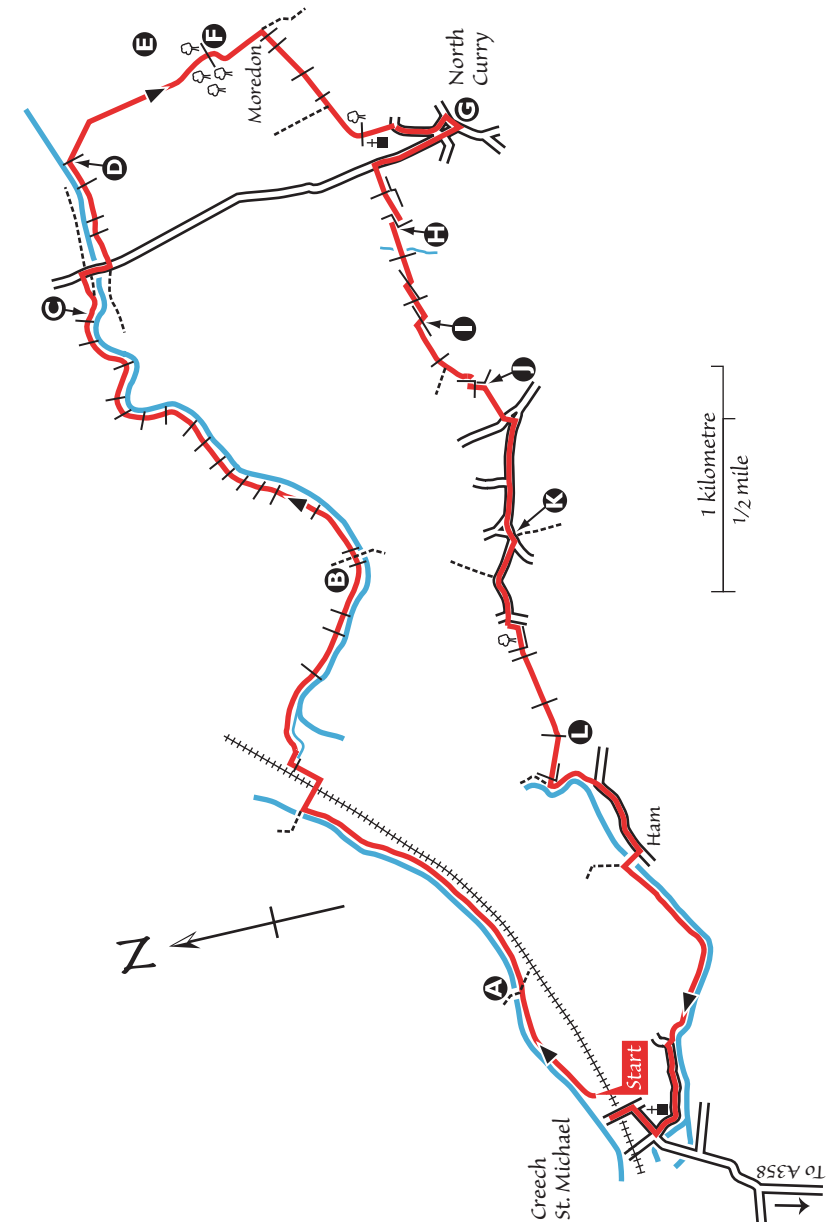
Refreshments Pub half-distance.

Getting there M5 to junction 25 then east on A358. Turn left after 1 mile to Creech St. Michael.

At road junction just after crossing river, turn right, then immediately left (Vicarage Lane). Pass Vicarage Close on the left and on, to a T-junction with a farm gate ahead. Turn left and follow the lane over railway, turning right into car park.

A fascinating and fairly easy ramble over Curry Moor, following canal and river banks, together with some field paths and country lanes. An attractive pub in the pretty village of North Curry is mid-point on the circuit. Good birdwatching possibilities in winter, so take binoculars, but note that the Levels are frequently flooded at this time of year beyond Point D, so an alternative road stretch is detailed. Allow about 4 hours walking, plus time for stops and lunch.

Leaving the car park, make for the canal towpath and walk with the waterway on your left for just over a mile with the railway to the right. Pass a canal bridge by Cathill Farm **A** Leaving the car park, make for the canal towpath and walk with the waterway



on your left for just over a mile with the railway to the right. Pass a canal bridge by Cathill Farm, then a pillbox and converted canal engine house.

The Bridgwater and Taunton Canal was opened in 1827, linking Bridgwater and the River Parrett, with Taunton and the River Tone. With the coming of the railway, canal traffic decreased and the last commercial boat docked in Taunton in 1907. In the 1980s, plans to restore the canal went ahead and the canal was finally re-opened in 1994.

The engine house was derelict for many years but has now been restored as a private residence. Notice the gate displaying the date 1826, the year before the canal became operational. The World War II pillbox, indicates the significance of the canal as a defence line in case of invasion.

Continue on to reach Charlton Bridge. Turn right and follow the track to cross the railway, keeping on the track to its grassy end where you pass through a kissing gate. Turn right and walk with a stream on the right, soon joining the River Tone.

The River Tone was used by boats of up to 15 tons to discharge their cargo at Knapp Bridge and New Bridge. Coal barges came at high tide and supplied a coal merchant in North Curry and a variety of goods were taken to Bridgwater by the same route.

The river is followed for almost two miles, passing Knapp Bridge **B** beyond which you will see withy beds on your left, much favoured by snipe in winter; easily disturbed, they zigzag into the air with a harsh cry.

Among the several industries of the Somerset Levels, willow growing and basket making are perhaps the best known. The marshy land is particularly suitable for the many acres of willow beds. Willow trees are also a prominent feature of the landscape, although they are seldom used for basket making now. The willow rods or 'withies' are harvested during the winter months after the leaves have dropped: much of this is still done by hand using a hook similar to a sickle.

During the First World War, willow baskets were so essential for carrying coal and countless other goods that Somerset basket makers were given exemption from joining the armed forces.

You pass through numerous gates on this section of the walk (some of them locked) before eventually approaching a road. The right of way is shown passing through the garden of the house on the left just by the road bridge; this is blocked, so at **C** you must take the track leaving the embankment, descending towards an old orchard and you walk with the house on your right and pass through a two-in-one gate onto the road.

Go over the bridge and cross the road, then go through another gate and walk with the river now on your left. Pass through three gates, then at the fourth **D** follow the waymarks and descend right to the moor.

This is the area most likely to be flooded, so if you cannot see the grass, don't chance it! Return to the road, go left, and walk with care to North Curry, a mile distant. Once in the village, pass the war memorial on your left and continue to the T-junction with 'The Bird In Hand' opposite **E**.

If the moor is clear, cross the grass aiming for a distant water pump **F**. In about 200 yards you reach a track, follow this passing withy beds and pollarded willows on the left, towards the wooded hillside. Leaving the moor, the track begins a climb that becomes steep and rough for a short distance (the only real climb on the walk). At the top, climb the stile to a driveway **G** follow it right, then bear left onto tarmac.

This is the hamlet of Moredon. The name is of Roman origin meaning fortified place by the sea. It is thought to be the site of a defensive earthwork linking a Roman road that ran from the estuary of the Rivers Tone and Parrett, to the River Axe in Devon.



Withy beds, seen after Point B

Walk down this drive, and a short distance after a red-brick bungalow on the left, look for a stile on the right, beside a metal field gate. Go over and follow the track to a further stile. Climb this, then follow the well-defined path down to another. Descend the steps beyond, then walk with the hedge on your right, passing a stile, then head towards the church, going through the kissing gate to enter the churchyard.

The Church of St. Peter and St. Paul is frequently referred to as 'The Cathedral of the Moors'. It stands on the northern slope of a long ridge of high ground, originally a promontory between marshes on either side. The church has Norman origins, though there is evidence that a church existed on the site from as early as Saxon times in the 9th Century, when King Alfred founded a monastic house at Athelney, three miles from North Curry.

Keep left to exit via a further gate onto a lane, then walk ahead to enter the village, passing the war memorial on the right and reaching 'The Bird In Hand' ㉔.

Your return journey begins in The Shambles, opposite the pub. Walk out of the village passing the war memorial then the church on the right. Beyond the church, look left for a set of steps leading up to a stile. Cross, and walk along the top of the field with the boundary to your left. Squeeze through the next stile then continue in the same direction almost to the top corner where you climb a stile in the hedge on the right. Now walk with the hedge on the left a short distance to the corner ㉕ then go half right, aiming for the electricity pole down the field, from where you will see a footbridge. Cross this and the stile beyond, then continue, hedge right, to reach another stile.

In the following field, walk ahead to a stile in the far hedge, cross, and proceed with the hedge on the right to a further stile ㉖. Climb over and walk now with the hedge on the left to go through a gate. Ignore the stile on the right, but continue to reach a cottage. Climb the stile here, and another, then go ahead initially with the boundary on the left. As it turns left ㉗ head out over the field to reach a stile on the far side that you climb to reach a lane.

Turn left, then immediately right, then right again at the junction. Follow the lane, passing a turning right, then another, opposite Christmas Cottage. Keep left here, passing another right turn opposite Birds Cottage ㉘. Continue a short distance further, then take the lane on the right, and walk to the top of the lane, where it forks. Here, go through the gate and turn left, skirting the orchard and keeping to the left boundary to climb a stile by a wooden bench.

It's all downhill from here! Descend the path to a stile, then go down the field to cross a footbridge over a ditch. Now walk ahead to pass through a gate and over a bridge ㉙ then continue with a wire fence and ditch to your left. In the top corner of the field,

climb a stile to a track by the River Tone, turn left, and walk to a road at Ham Mills. Continue on to the village, where you look on the right for a footpath between houses that takes you over the river. On the far bank go left, following the river-bank back to Creech St. Michael.

When you reach houses, go through a gate to a road. Walk left, eventually passing a church on the right. On reaching the road junction you drove over earlier, turn right into Vicarage Lane, walk to the T-junction, then go left, over the railway and back to your start point.



Walk 24 Wells & Wookey Hole

Start Car park, Wells (ST 546458).

Distance 9 miles / 14.4km.

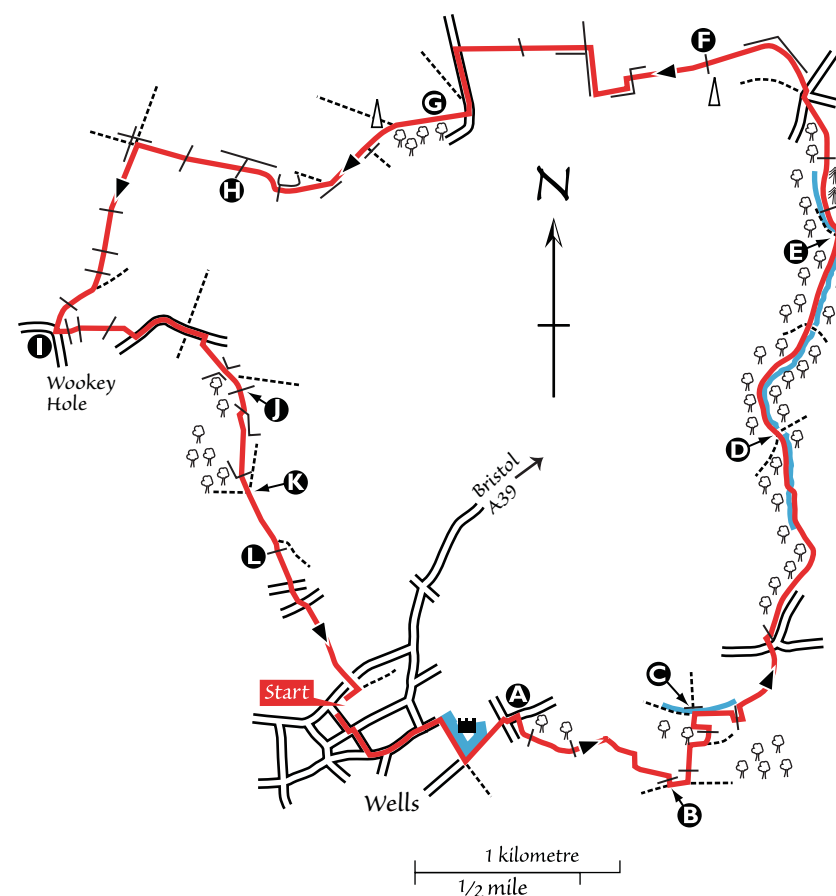
Refreshments Various in Wells, Café at the Wookey Hole cave complex.

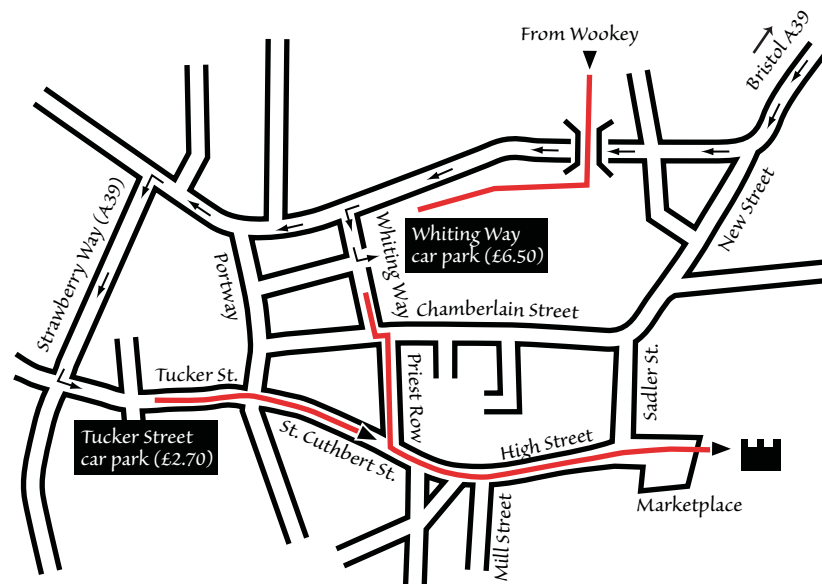
Getting there A37 south then A39 to Wells. This road takes you past two car parks: Whiting Way will cost you £6.50, Tucker Street (extra 10 minutes walk) £2.70 (Aug 2013 prices).

A walk on lesser-known paths out of Wells – a city worth exploring in its own right – with a gentle climb through woodland (bluebells in spring) onto the Mendip Hills. Once on top, an easy walk of fields and downland with superb views, before a steep descent to Wookey Hole. Returning to Wells along field paths and surfaced footpaths. Between 3.5 and 4 hours walking, but allow time for exploring the city.

From your chosen car park, make your way to the Marketplace, via the High Street (see map) and at the far end, pass through the archway.

This 15th century gatehouse leading off the Marketplace is called the 'Bishop's Eye'. On passing through, you reach the moated Bishop's Palace, contained within a 14th century wall of battle-





ments and towers. This is the seat of the Bishop of Bath & Wells and is famous for its swans that twice daily ring the bell beside the drawbridge for food. The springs that gave the town its name were located beyond the bridge spanning the moat; famous even in Roman times, they produced prodigious amounts of water.

Turn right, walking with the moat to your left and going left with it at the next corner. Continue to metal barriers and cross the road beyond. Turn right, then immediately left into Torhill Lane **A** and walk for a few yards before taking stone steps up to the right. Now climb into the woodland on a clear path to reach a gate. Proceed ahead to open grassland then continue, climbing gently, and re-entering woodland. The well-defined path bears left and leads you to a gate, go through and walk down the meadow ahead, keeping to the right boundary. At the far end, turn right, then left, now walking alongside the left boundary towards a farmhouse. As you near the house, veer right to the far corner of the field where you will find a stone stile; cross to a track **B**.

Walk left passing the farm buildings and turning left immediately beyond. Now go ahead to climb a stile by a gate, with a golf course to your right. Follow the boundary path around the course, going right at the first corner, but before reaching the next (a left bend) take the waymarked path left, into woodland, and walk with a wire fence to your left. Steps lead you down to a wooden stile, beyond which, follow the path

left with a sports field to your right, then going right to arrive at a broad, stone stile beyond a stream **C**.

Don't cross the stile, but instead turn right and walk with the stream (or ditch, depending on the weather) on the left, playing field right and continue in the same direction on a cycle path leading toward the houses. The path bears right then curves left, eventually bringing you to a gate that you pass through to a main road. Cross to a metal field gate on the far side, go through, then immediately turn right through a waymarked gate. Now turn left and follow the path into woodland.

You now have a gentle climb of almost two miles, through woods carpeted with bluebells and wild garlic in springtime, but so attractive at any time of year that you will only notice the ascent for the last few hundred yards!

Follow the broad path, passing an old limekiln on the left. The path degenerates to a narrow, partly grassed route and you continue, eventually crossing a dry streambed and proceeding in the same direction with the stream on your right. When you reach cross-paths with a stone bridge on the right **D** keep on ahead for almost three-quarters of a mile, passing another cross-path and bridge to the right, to reach a further junction,



Approaching the Mendip Transmitter near Point F

just beyond a circular stone structure down to the right **E**. You need to take care here! Descend right, crossing a brook that runs into the stream you've been following. There is a waymark post here, take the path ahead to Pen Hill. (The other paths fork up left, and back, down to the right.) Ignore the stile passed immediately on the right, but continue to a metal field gate ahead. Beyond this, the route becomes steeper and rougher as you pass a conifer plantation on your right, eventually reaching another gate. Go through and keep to the left boundary with open fields to the right, passing through a gate to reach a road.

Cross the road with care half-right and climb the stone stile, then head

across the hill, keeping in touch with the right boundary until you reach a stile by a gate in the cross-fence **F**. Climb over and walk past one of the supporting cables for the mast.

The television mast, 1000 ft high and located at one of the highest points in the Mendip Hills, began transmitting in December 1968. The West services of BBC and ITV are broadcast from this site.

On reaching the field corner, climb the stone stile and turn left, then follow the field boundary around three sides, eventually crossing another stone stile on your left. In this next field, walk with the stone wall on your left, passing into another field and continuing to reach a road. Turn left and follow the tarmac, ignoring a footpath right, then as the road starts to descend and bear right, take the track on the right, marked as a byway. With woodland on your left, pass Durston Drove Farm on the right **G** and continue beyond Rookham Farm to a fork in the track. Go left to Rookham View, passing a mast on your right.

Follow the track until it bears right and crosses a cattle grid; here, strike out half-left across the field to reach an old hawthorn hedge boundary with farm buildings beyond. Walk now with the farm on the right to reach a waymarked gate. Go through and walk up the hill, aiming for the highest point until a field gate and stile come into view in the cross-fence **H**. Beyond, keep on in the same direction across the field to climb a stile by a gate in the far hedge. Now go ahead, boundary right, to the far corner of the field and a path junction. Turn left here, and keep the boundary on your right as you go steeply down the hill. At the bottom, climb the stile and go ahead to another in the far boundary. Once over, head straight down the field and pass through the boundary hedge. Continue down to a further stile, then in this final field go ahead to pick up a cross-path. Follow it right to a gate, then take the road, School Hill, down to a bus stop at a road junction **I**.

To your left is the Wookey paper mill with show caves beyond. The ancient craft of making paper by hand originated in China around 105 A.D., reaching England towards the end of the 15th Century. The first record of a paper mill at Wookey appeared in 1610, the River Axe powering the mill. For almost 400 years skilled craftsmen have been producing fine quality handmade paper at Wookey Hole with production reaching a peak in the early 1900s. Then the mill employed over 200 men and women producing bank notes and security papers for a worldwide market.

There is a café beyond the car park that you may wish to patronise, otherwise, continue the walk from the bus stop. Take the stepped, surfaced path on the left up the hill, and go through a kissing gate. Now climb a stile to enter a field and walk ahead with the hedge on your right to a metal stile. Climb over and follow the track ahead to a farm,

where you go through a metal gate on the right and descend to a lane. Turn left and follow the lane as it bears right, walking past a ruined cottage on the left, beyond which there is a footpath left and driveway right. Ignore both these options, but a short distance further, climb a stile in the hedge on the right.

You are now in a camping field, walk diagonally down to a gate in the lower left corner. Go through and walk ahead, picking up the right boundary and keeping close to it, soon reaching a metal kissing gate **J**. Beyond, cross the stream then head up to the top right corner of the field where you go through a wooden gate to the right of the farm buildings. Now walk with the fence on your left, metal sheds beyond, then strike out across the field to the far right corner where you go through a kissing gate to a track that you follow for a short distance to join a lane **K**. Continue in the same direction until the lane bears left and here, go ahead along a track then through a wooden kissing gate **L**. Follow the tarmac path, crossing a residential road and continuing to a second. Here, cross slightly left and take the path down the side of 'Coopers Close'. At the far end, you enter school grounds, walk straight ahead passing the reception building on the right, and keeping to the path as it takes you over a road bridge. At the far side, turn right and follow the path back to your car park or the bus stop.



Walk 25 Blaenavon & Bloreng

Start Free car park on Abergavenny Road, opposite the 'Rifleman's Arms' (SO 251094).

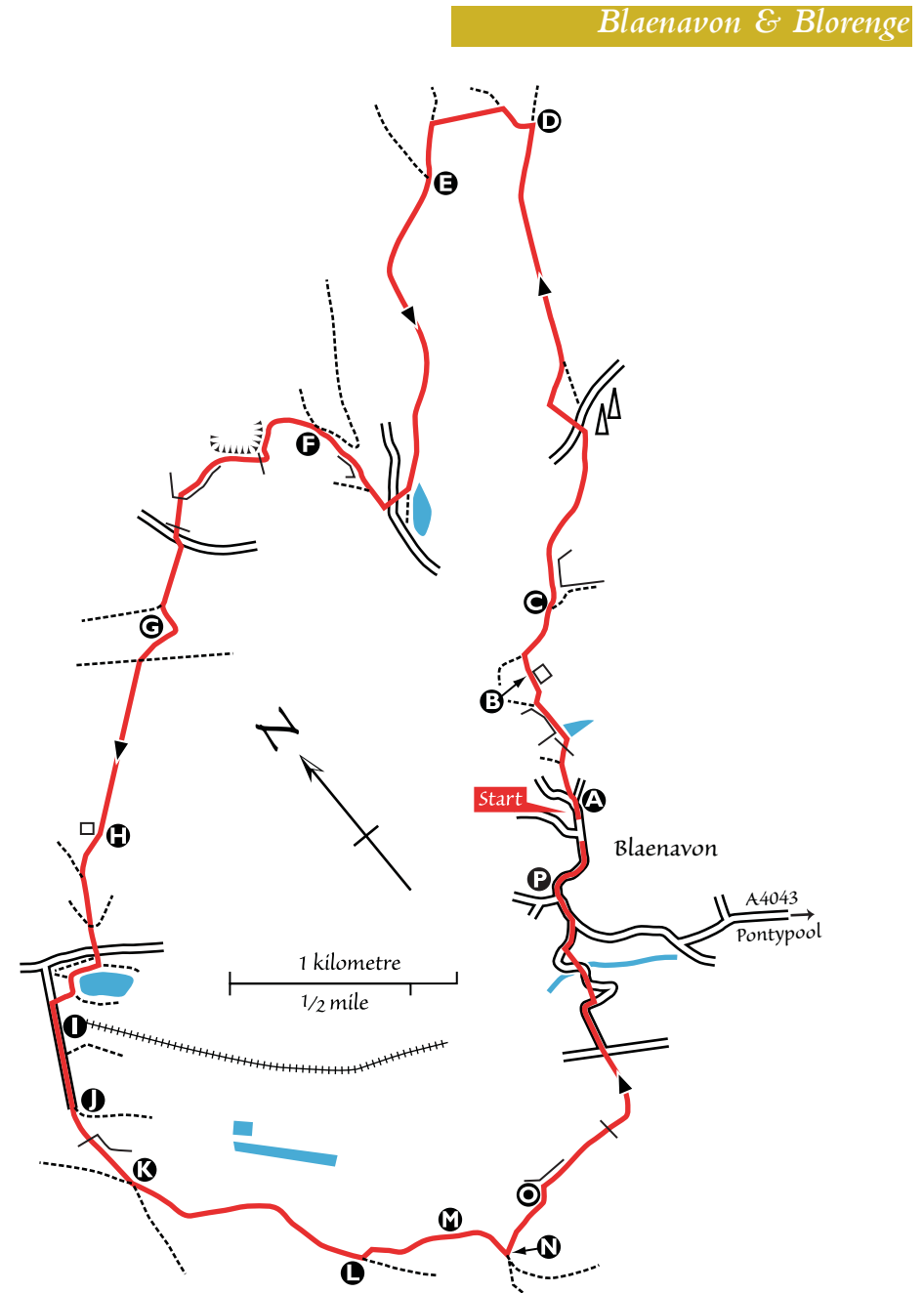
Distance 9.8 miles / 15.8km.

Refreshments Pub and Visitors' Centre café at start/end of walk (both closed Monday).

Getting there M4 west to junction 25A, then north on A4042, turning left onto A4043 going through Pontypool and on to Blaenavon. Once in town, follow signs to car park. (You can also follow brown tourist signs for 'Big Pit' from junction 25A all the way to Blaenavon.)

The area around Blaenavon is one of the finest examples in the world of a landscape created by the principal forces in the Industrial Revolution – coal mining and ironmaking. This walk takes in the sites in the town and surrounding countryside that together make up this World Heritage Site. A fascinating walk with a few climbs, though nothing too strenuous. There is, however, a rough descent from the summit of Bloreng and the hill is extremely exposed, so choose a fine day and allow about 4.5 hours, plus an hour at the visitors' centre.

A part of my route, barely walked before I wrote WWA in 2003 has become the official 'Iron Mountain Trail', so you may come across the 'IMT' trail waymarks and you'll certainly see improvements in the footpaths.



From the car park, cross to the 'Rifleman's Arms' on the corner of Rifle Street **A**. To the left of Rifle Street, a lane gives access to the backs of the houses with lockups on the left along its length. Follow this to the end, where a short, steep climb takes you beneath power lines onto an old spoil tip, now a BMX course. Fork right and climb again, and when a pond comes into view, go through the kissing gate to reach it.

Turn left and walk beside the high wire fence of a sports field on your left. The fence makes a slight bend to the left, then as it makes a second bend, you reach a path junction. Go right here, making a short, sharp climb, then walking on to a wire-fenced compound. When you reach it, keep it to your right and continue to the next fence corner **B**.

Now look half-right for a pair of radio masts on the skyline – this is your next objective. Walk ahead following the direction of the signpost marked IMT (Iron Mountain Trail) and look ahead to see another signpost a short distance away on an obvious cross-track. When you reach it, go right, and as you round the first bend the masts come into view again, confirming your route.

The uneven ground either side of the path is evidence of mineral extraction in the 17th-19th century. Dams were built on higher ground, then the water released, washing away the turf and topsoil to expose the ironstone deposits that were near the surface. There are also numerous saucer-shaped depressions that mark the site of collapsed bell pits, up to twenty feet in depth, from where the ironstone was also mined.

Continue to a fork in the track **C** where you go left, the masts soon appearing dead ahead and you pass a signpost directing you to 'Bloreng 2kms'. The path climbs gently to reach the road, cross to the car park.

This is known as the Foxhunter car park after the champion show jumper of the 1950s owned and ridden by Lt. Col. Harry Llewelyn. The remains of the horse are buried beneath the rocks beyond the car park.

Walk through the car park and on, along the path at the far end to reach the Foxhunter memorial. Now go right, picking up the clear path to the trig. point on the summit of Bloreng **D**. The pile of stones found here is the remains of a Bronze-Age burial mound.

The descent from the summit is made to your left. A brief scramble gives access to a discernable path through the heather. Follow this for a short distance to take a left fork, then descend for about 500 yards to eventually reach a clear track.

The track marks the route of a tramway that carried limestone from a quarry on the hillside, back to the furnaces at Blaenavon. Quarrying here ceased around 1850.

Follow the track left for about a mile, passing a bridleway joining from the right **E** to reach a pond accessed via a footbridge. It's worth pausing here to read the information board. Now re-cross the footbridge and go left, making your way down to the road. Walk left along the road for a few yards then cross to a footpath sign reading 'Garnddry 1.2 kms'.

Follow the broad grassy path as it bends right and heads gently downhill with fine views ahead. As the ground drops away on the right, watch for a fork in the path and a signpost directing you right to Cwm Llanwenarth. Take this down into the valley, eventually passing tumbledown boundary walls on your left. When you reach a path junction, you join the tramroad **F**.

This tramway was used for transporting pig iron from Blaenavon via a tunnel, over a mile in length, to a forge and rolling mill situated on the hillside below Bloreng. From there, the worked iron continued its journey, contouring the hill and finally reaching the Brecknock & Abergavenny canal via a set of inclines at Llanfoist. The trams also took coal and quarried limestone in the other direction to feed the furnaces. In 1860, the decision was made to transfer the rolling mill to a site closer to the furnaces, known as Forgeside. This allowed for greater efficiency and with the coming of the railway to Blaenavon, a short journey to the port of Newport.

Take the tramroad climbing to the left signed 'Garn Lakes 3.4 kms'. Follow this as it contours the hillside ignoring the 'Iron Mountain Trail' sign to the left, but continuing to reach a quarry where you climb a stile.

This is Pwll-du quarry, worked for its limestone from the early 19th century.

You have a choice of routes here: those with a head for heights can continue on over the head of the quarry to the far side. A safer route is to scramble up to your left to reach a wire fence, then walk with it on your left past the quarry, dropping down to the original path at a convenient point.

Now proceed in the same direction, boundary left, until you reach the field corner where you go through a wooden gate and climb the path ahead. At the top, go through a wooden gate and continue past the Lamb and Fox pub to reach the road.

Here, until the early 1960s, was the village of Pwll-du, home to about 300 people. There were shops, a school, a couple of pubs and a chapel. This was also the northern end of the tramroad tunnel that ran beneath the hillside in front of you, to Blaenavon. Deteriorating conditions in the village brought its demolition, the inhabitants being rehoused elsewhere. Only the Lamb and Fox has survived.

Cross the road, bear left, and take the broad track up the hill, signed 'Garn Lakes'. (The track is known as The Dyne Steel Incline which was driven by steam and replaced the horse drawn tram road that went thru the Pwll-Du tunnel.) As you near the summit the top of a brick building comes into view on the left (that housed the winding gear and generators). Fork left to reach it, the track soon swinging round to the right and passing a milky pond down to your right **G**. The track takes you behind the building, from where you continue to the crest of the hill and over a broad cross-track before starting to descend the hillside on a direct route.

Open-cast coal mining in the 1940s caused the area of devastation you have just passed, although coal had been mined here on a smaller scale for centuries. Your ascent and the descent to come, follows the course of inclines, worked by an engine and wire ropes that hauled the coal-laden trams up and over the ridge on their journey to the canal at Llanfoist (see walk 21).

At the bottom of the incline you reach a relatively flat area with a fenced compound (the site of the mine shaft for New Pit) **H**. Pass to the left of this, ignoring the waymark, to reach rough ground again where you choose your own path downhill. Continue, to pick up a track coming in from the right and follow it downhill with a smallholding to your right. Tracks join you right and left as you continue the descent, going through a gate to reach the road.

Cross and go through a gate, then follow the path over a footbridge. Go straight ahead (ignoring an obvious track to your right) down a grass track to reach a good gravel path. Turn right and with the lake on your left follow it round the lake until you can see the Whistle Inn ahead of you. Leave the path at this point to follow a path up to a gate and gap in the wall to reach a road. Turn left and go over the railway bridge to the Whistle Inn. **I**.

Beyond the pub, the road degenerates into a track, continue on to climb a stile by a farm gate, then when you reach a ruined farmhouse on the right, leave the track, which bears left **J** and walk ahead on a grassy path which becomes a rough track. As you start to climb, you go over a stile by a gate. Continue upwards with a fence on your left for a short distance until you reach a surfaced roadway **K** that you follow left.

You have fine views from here down into the valley. The railway, now operated by volunteers on a short length of track, originally ran from Newport via Pontypool to Brynmaur. Passenger services ended in the early 1940s, though coal was still carried until the closure of Big Pit in 1980. Beyond the railway stand the whitewashed miners cottages of Garn-Yr-Erw, once a bustling little village. Further to the right can be seen the winding gear of Big Pit; opened in 1860, it was one of the oldest mines in the South Wales coalfield. It closed in 1980 but three years later, it was re-

opened as a tourist attraction with visitors being able to take a trip underground. To the right of Big Pit, the area around the large aircraft-hangar buildings is Forgeside. This was the site of the forge and rolling mills relocated in the 1860s. The works still operate in these new buildings, while the incongruous brick building was the electricity power plant, built in 1920.

The tarmac starts to climb up the hill to the mining levels, but before you reach that point, drop down to the left **L**.

Now follow an unsurfaced track contouring the hillside and passing beneath power lines **M**. As the track swings to the right beyond the brow of the hill, you can see on the hillside ahead the line of a descending path. Where this meets your track and before the track swings left again **N** take a broad path down to the left. This soon becomes narrow and indistinct in places but if you look ahead, your goal is to the right of the row of conifers in the distance. Beyond rusting iron gateposts **O** you reach a wire fence, follow this right, passing beneath power lines beyond which you walk in water issuing forth from a spring.

Continue, going through two field gates, and down a rough track passing paddocks on the left. When you reach a road, cross over and head downhill, crossing the railway with cycle path alongside, then continue to a right bend in the road. Here, take a roughly surfaced path on the left by old iron gates, down to the bottom where you meet the road again. Follow the road ahead over a bridge, and where the road swings left, follow a narrow path ahead, climbing between two small fields. On regaining the road, cross and turn right, then walk past the hospital to a road junction. Bear left here and continue to reach the ironworks and the whitewashed cottages of Stack Square beyond **P**.

The ironworks, with its three blast furnaces, was one of the largest in the world when built in 1789. All the necessary raw materials – coal, iron ore and limestone – could be found in the hills around the town, and an extensive network of tramways was constructed linking mines, quarries and foundries. As you pass the ironworks, note the massive water balance tower, built in 1839 to raise trucks laden with pig iron to the tramroad.

The cottages of Stack Square were built in the late 1700s for the skilled workforce brought in by the ironmasters. There was also a company shop, a source of much resentment amongst the workers as they were forced to purchase all their goods from that one source, at greatly inflated prices.

Now, just a short distance to the end of the walk. Pass Stack Square on the left, then ignoring turnings left and right, continue up the hill, passing a fire station and garage on the right, to reach the car park on the left.



Walk 26 Lacock & Bowood

Start National Trust car park (£2 free to members), Lacock (ST 918681).

Distance 10.5 miles / 16.8km.

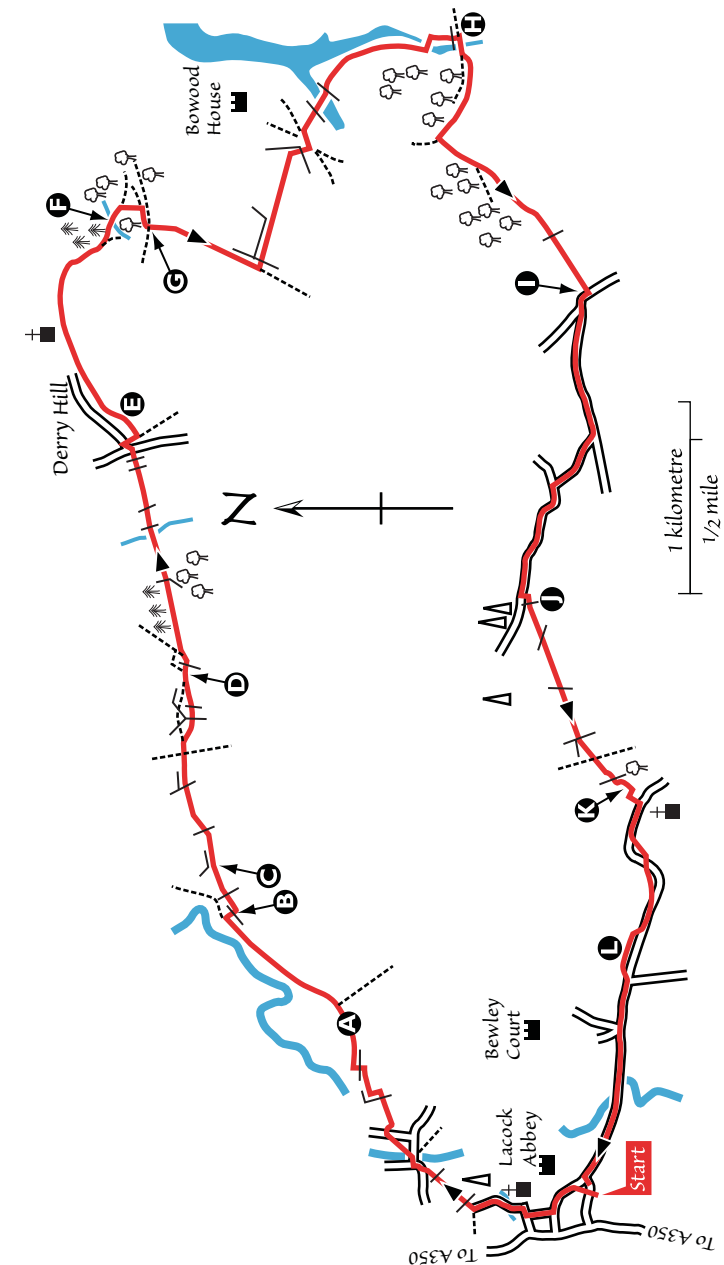
Refreshments Four pubs at various locations on the walk.

Getting there Either M4 east to Junc. 17, south on A429, picking up the A350 signed Poole; or A420 from Bristol, turning right onto the A350. Keep south on A350 eventually following signs to Lacock, and the car park.

A fine walk from a 'chocolate box' village, across farmland to a magnificent estate, returning along country lanes. With a few gentle climbs and some muddy stretches, the circuit should take 4.5 to 5 hours. Lacock village is worth a few hours exploration, so make an early start to take advantage of the tea shops!

From the car park, follow the signed footpath into the village, passing the abbey on your right.

The picturesque village with its many old houses was given to the National Trust in 1944 by the descendants of William Fox-Talbot, the pioneer of photography. It has featured in a number of notable film productions including 'Pride and Prejudice' and 'Moll Flanders', while the house



featured in the first Harry Potter film. The abbey was founded in 1232 and converted into a country house around 1540, though much of the original building has survived intact. The house was the birthplace and home of Fox-Talbot (1800-1877), and the adjacent museum of photography commemorates his achievements.



The packhorse bridge, Lacock

Beyond the museum, turn right into East Street, with the 14th century tithe barn on the corner. At the bottom of the road turn right and walk towards the church, going left just before reaching it. Continue to the packhorse bridge.

In medieval times, this was the main road out of Lacock, continuing to the top of the hill and then down to the River Avon at Reybridge. The ford is still used by vehicular traffic, and the 18th century packhorse bridge was built to enable goods to enter the village when the brook was in flood.

Beyond the bridge, ignore the footpath left and keep right, alongside the brook, then climb the lane ahead to its end. Here, by the radio mast, turn right through a kissing gate and take the surfaced path across the field, leaving by another gate and continuing to reach a road. Go ahead, turning right to cross the River Avon.

On the far side, climb the stile on the left, then walk diagonally across the field to a stile located between the end of the wall and the railings. Cross the road and go over

the stile opposite, then follow the narrow path to its end, where you cross another stile into a field. Now turn left and follow the boundary, going right at the corner and continuing to a stile on the left, beside a gate. Cross, then continue in the same direction keeping the hedge on your right and climbing the banking ahead. The muddy path leads you through a copse, with a watery patch on your right **A**. This is the Wilts & Berks Canal, now at best little more than an overgrown ditch since its closure one hundred years ago.

The 52 miles of canal from Semington Junction on the Kennet and Avon Canal, to Abingdon on the River Thames Navigation took 15 years to complete, opening in September 1810. In addition to providing a route for coal to the London market, the canal served to bring cheap coal to the local market towns, whilst also offering economic transport for the regional export of agricultural produce and such locally produced goods as bricks, and building stone. With its capacity only for narrow boats, the Wilts & Berks always proved of limited economic value while the Kennet and Avon was supporting boats twice the width and providing a shorter, speedier and more economic route to the London market. When the coalfields became worked out, the traffic on the canal declined and severe silting of the channel through lack of dredging reduced the available depth of water. However, it took a storm early in 1901 to finally render the canal useless, by damaging a section of aqueduct between Calne and Chippenham and thus letting the water run out, leaving the canal high and dry!

At the far side of the copse you join a tarmac cyclepath. Follow it ahead passing the recently constructed double bridge, until you come to a clearly waymarked gate on the right **B**. Go throughs to enter a field, then go left, to reach a stile that you climb to enter woodland. The path leads you up to another stile giving access to a field; walk across, picking up the boundary on the left **C**. Go ahead through a gate, cross the field to another and continue to a surfaced driveway.

The right of way now goes up to the top right corner of the field to a waterlogged stile. From here, go half-left, crossing a stile in the fence and continuing to rejoin the original track on the left boundary **D** before reaching cottages.

Just before a gate, ignore a path going left behind the cottages, but go ahead on the bridleway passing in front of the dwellings and continue to a surfaced driveway. Cross the grass ahead half-left to go through a gate to a field, then walk ahead with woodland to your left. The path brings you to a gap in the boundary ahead, beyond which the ground drops away to a stream in the valley bottom. All paths lead to a footbridge, cross this and the following stile, then take the path upwards, passing to the right of an electricity pole. On the far side of the meadow, climb a combination of steps and ramps and at the top, cross to a further stile, then follow the narrow path to reach the road. Over to your left, the Lansdowne Arms is your reward for the climb, though with two-thirds of the walk still to do, don't linger too long!

The route now takes you through the grand entrance to the Bowood Estate. In here, it is impossible to take a wrong turning as the only Right of Way through the grounds is clearly marked! Walk for a short distance along the driveway then go left where directed, following the path to pick up the golf course fence on the right **E**. In a short distance you will be able to see on the distant hillside, the Lansdowne Monument and to its left, the Cherhill White Horse (visited on walk 29).

The Lansdowne family have lived at Bowood since 1754 and by 1760 a grand house replaced an earlier hunting lodge. Robert Adam further improved the house, and built the magnificent façade that forms the main part of today's Bowood House. As the family fortunes dwindled, the 'big' house was used only for entertaining and the service wing, known as the 'little house' provided the living accommodation for the family. After the Second World War the big house was left in such a state of disrepair that in 1955 the 8th Marquess took the decision to demolish it and at the same time have the little house converted to a comfortable residence, incorporating many of the decorative features from the old building. Thousands of visitors now wander through the 'service wing' and enjoy the 2000 acres of landscaped park and gardens visualised by 'Capability' Brown.

Follow the railings on your right until the path forks left to enter woodland, soon descending to cross a stream **F**. Go ahead until directed right, where a short, often muddy climb brings you to cross-paths. Go right and continue to a surfaced drive at a bend **G**. Walk along the drive, passing the golf course on the right, until you are directed left, through a kissing gate. Walk with the wire fence initially on the left, then go onward to the far boundary. Here, you go right to another kissing gate then continue to a driveway. Follow signs left, then go right, down towards lakes, with views of the House up to the left. Cross the gated causeway, then walk ahead across the parkland, keeping the lake in sight down to your left.

Eventually, you reach a gated bridge on the left. Cross, then turn right and walk up to a kissing gate and road beyond **H**. Now go right again, re-crossing the lake. At a fork, keep left, passing a house on your right, then keep to the grassy track until you reach a cottage on the left, beyond which you are directed left. Climb the track into woodland, keeping left at a fork, eventually going through a kissing gate and continuing past cottages to reach a road. Cross over and turn right, passing the George Inn **I**.

You have about a mile of road walking now, mostly unprotected, and care is needed on this first stretch. Go left at the junction and walk as far as the first road on the right, opposite White Lodge. Take this quieter lane to a T-junction, turn left and walk almost to a pair of radio masts before turning left through a metal gate (missing July 2013), then right, to enter a field **J**. Waymarks point to your route, diagonally over the field (this and the following two are often cropped), to a stile in the far fence. Climb this and cross the next field in the same direction to a further stile. Beyond this, cross a

third field to a metal field gate, which becomes more obvious as you approach it. Pass through and go ahead to climb a stile at a driveway, the entrance to Bowden Park. Cross the drive and continue in the same direction with greenhouses on the right, picking up the right boundary and descending to the corner of the field where you climb a stile to enter woodland. Continue, passing a house to the right **K** then on to a drive. Here, turn left and walk to the road with a church opposite.

St. Anne's is a late Victorian church, built by former Prime Minister Gladstone while he lived at Bowden Park.

The remainder of the walk follows the road downhill. Much of the distance can be covered on grass verges and shortcuts that straighten the bends, first on the left, then on the right. Beyond the Rising Sun on the left, you pass some delightful cottages to reach Bewley Common on the right **L**.

Look back right, across the edge of the common, to see 'Night & Day', a pair of gatehouses that mark the western entrance to Bowden Park. In years past, an old couple lived in these buildings, using one for a living room and the other for a bedroom. The couple would travel from one to the other every morning and then back again in the evening, hence their nicknames, 'Night & Day'.

Walk on the common close to the road, then continue on, passing the Bell Inn. Beyond Bewley Lane on the right, you approach the bridge and causeway that will take you over the river. Look back right from the bridge, to get a distant view of Bewley Court.

Originally built in wood around 1330, Bewley Court was re-built in stone in 1390 and more recently restored to its former glory by Oliver Ford, the Queen Mother's decorator. Legend has it that there used to be a tunnel between Bewley Court and Lacock Abbey, although no trace of it has been found.

The final few hundred yards of the walk take you once more past Lacock House, and when you reach the road junction, the car park is over to your left.



Walk 27 Little Solsbury Hill

Start High Street, Marshfield (ST 774737).

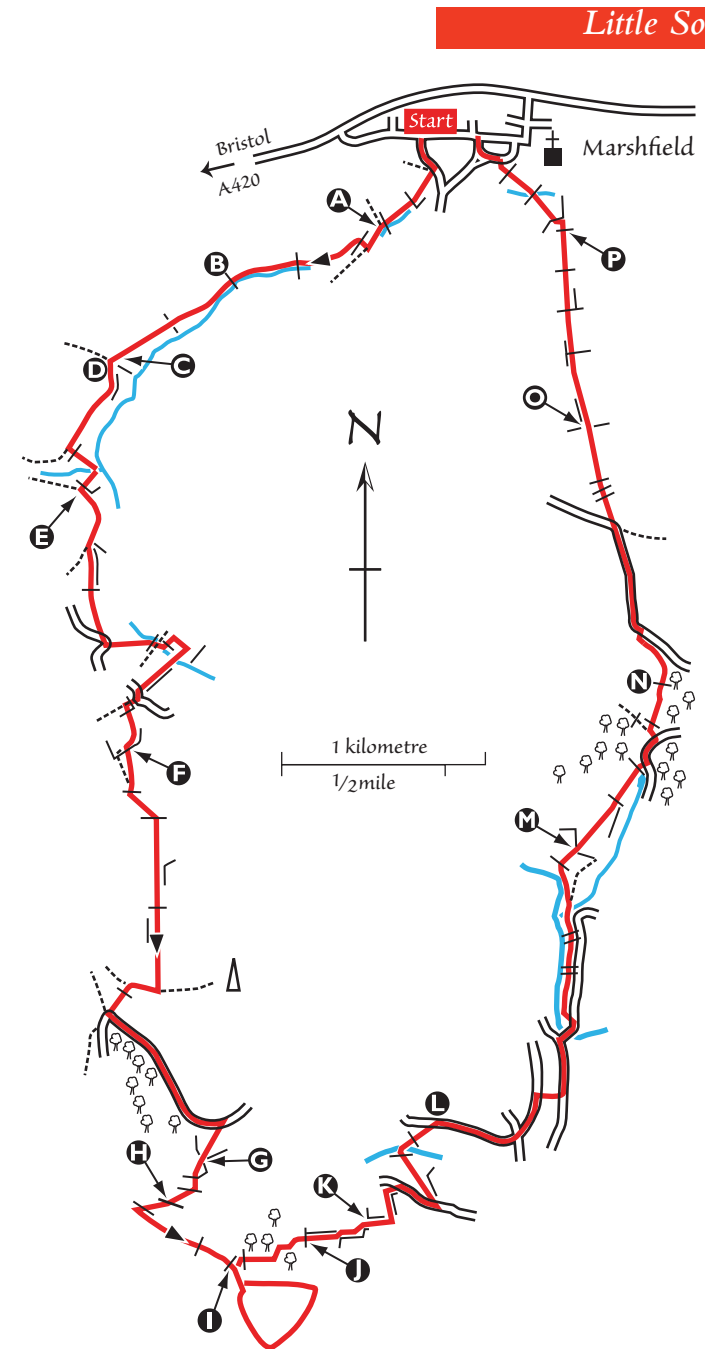
Distance 10.5 miles / 16.8km.

Refreshments Pubs and café in Marshfield at end of walk, nothing en-route.

Getting there Marshfield lies on the A420 Bristol to Chippenham road, south of the M4 junction 18. Park at the western end of the town.

This walk takes you over the southern area of the Cotswolds, visiting the old airfield on Charmy Down and onto Little Solsbury Hill, where there are fine views over the city of Bath. A lovely walk, though the undulating nature of the countryside makes for a fairly strenuous day out that could take 5 – 6 hours to complete.

From the High Street, turn into St. Martin's Lane and in a short distance go through a 2-in-1 gate on the right, signed Cold Ashton. Head down to the lower left corner of the field to a kissing gate, then go ahead along the valley bottom, climbing a stile to reach a path junction **A**. Turn left here, and in a short distance, climb a stile on the right. Now follow a discernable path down to a brook, then walk with it. (Choose your own path through the mud!) Climb a stile, beyond which, the brook, now more visible, is to your left. Go through a kissing gate **B** then take the higher path, passing



between two green pipe-access boxes and eventually going through an old hedge boundary by a gate post. Now climb to the top corner of the field, passing old farm buildings hidden in the trees to your left ㉓.

A few yards further, you reach a hill ㉔. Go ahead left (ignoring the well-worn path up to the right), picking up the trees on your left and walking on a more or less level path with the hill on your right. Keep close to this old boundary and look for a kissing gate down to the left, just past an obvious manhole cover. Go through and head down the hill to cross a stone footbridge over a brook, then go immediately right, up the hill. At the top ㉕ climb a stile and go left, following a well-defined path around the hillside until you reach a field corner, where you go left to climb a stile by a gate. Now go ahead, keeping the hedge to your left. Cross a stile by a field gate then climb ahead to reach a road.

Go ahead and almost immediately take the footpath on the left over a stile by a field gate, then head down the spur towards a house, where you climb a stile by a gate. Cross the driveway, pass through a kissing gate by the barn, then walk halfway across the field before dropping down right to cross a footbridge. Now head for the top left corner of the field where you climb a stile by a house to access a road. Walk left for a short distance, then take the track on the right and beyond the gate, look immediately left for a kissing gate hidden by bushes. Go through, then follow the left boundary up the hill and round to the right to reach a kissing gate and permissive path before arriving at the top corner ㉖. The Permissive Path leads to a track and on, to a 2-in-1 gate. Now follow the footpath sign directing you half-left to a stile in the boundary fence. Cross over to enter the old airfield on Charmy Down.

Charmy Down, a World War II airfield, closed in 1946 and was decommissioned in 1949. Five years later, construction of a radar station began, part of the UK's post-war air attack early warning system. Records indicate some £400,000 was spent here before work was abandoned in 1955.

The footpath sign now directs you straight ahead across the airfield to pick up a wire fence on the left, just beyond one of the two main runways. Keep going to reach a gate, go through and stay on the same course, crossing the other runway then walking with a fence on your right. When you reach the far side of the airfield, turn right at the fence and follow the perimeter track, going left through a field gate, passing the remains of the aircraft dispersal pens on your right, then passing barns to eventually reach a stile with a lane beyond.

Turn left and follow the tarmac, passing Cherry Well House, until you reach a footpath sign and stile on the right. Cross into a field and ahead, you have your first view of your



Pillbox near the perimeter track of the airfield. The remains of a zig-zag trench linking the line of pillboxes can be seen in the foreground

next objective, Little Solsbury Hill. Now head down the hill, aiming for the telegraph pole and from there keeping parallel with the lines overhead and following waymarks directing the you in a zigzag left and right through the field boundary to enter a second field ㉗. Continue your descent following the overhead lines to cross a stile to the left of the pole at the bottom of the field then take the steps down to another stile, thence on to the bottom of the next field. Continue down to the right to reach derelict farm buildings, then go through the metal gate ㉘ and keep in the same general direction, climbing to reach a stile in the bushes beneath the power line.

Turn left and walk with the hedge on the left to a kissing gate, go through and go ahead to another. Beyond here, you have a short, steep ascent to Little Solsbury Hill, though you must return to this point ㉙ to continue the walk. Climb to the top of the hill, noticing the turf maze cut into the step of the hill on your right.

This labyrinth is a relic of the Batheaston Road Protest, the protestors created it as part of some eco-magic ritual intended to halt the construction of the bypass – along which the traffic now thunders.

The hill, now National Trust land, is triangular in shape and was a Bronze-Age fort. Those of a certain age will know of 'Solsbury Hill' from Peter Gabriel's 1977 song of the same name. Apparently, he had a mystical experience here...

It is well worth walking around the perimeter of the hill to take in the views over Bath, before descending to the last kissing gate you used to access the hill ❶ going right just before you reach it.

Your walk now continues on a vague route, keeping the fence to your left and following it downhill for a few yards, then around to the right to a stile. Climb over and take the path ahead through woodland, then follow a waymark directing you down to the left. The path hereabouts is quite indistinct, but you can't go far wrong! You'll find yourself going right again, then descending once more before going right yet again on a level path, where you breathe a sigh of relief as a stile by an electricity pole comes into view ❷. Go over and walk with an old boundary hedge on the left to the field corner where you drop down to the lower field and kissing gate, and now walking with the boundary hedge up to your right. As you approach the cross-boundary veer left, passing through a gate ❸ and keeping on, now with the hedge on the left, as far as a lone gatepost. Follow the waymark left and walk down the hill with a hedge on the right, staying with it as it turns right at a corner. In a few yards, go through a kissing gate to reach a lane.

Turn right and follow the lane to a metal gate on the left. Beyond, go down the hill, following a clear path in the direction of the house on the opposite hillside. At the bottom of the hill, cross the stream via gates and bridge, then turn right and head towards the kissing gate. Go through and cross the meadow to a further gate in the far top corner that gives access to a lane ❹. Here, walk right to a junction, where you go ahead along Ranscombe Lane. Continue to a signposted stile on the right, climb over and walk straight down the hill, crossing another stile with a lane beyond.

Walk left along the lane to a right turn that you take to reach water treatment works on the left. Cross the stream and a short distance further climb the stile on the left and walk the length of the meadow, passing through a gate in the cross-fence, to climb a stile by a wooden gate. Cross the drive and another stile, then continue for a short distance to another driveway. Go ahead along this, then when it swings up to the road, cross the stile and walk over the meadow ahead with the stream to the left. At the far end you reach a stile and bridge (waymarked as a Permissive Path). Cross over, then bear left as directed by the waymarks, following the stream around a left hand bend, then ascending gradually to a stile. Cross, then go half right heading for a disused stile, finger post and large boundary stone ❺. Pass through the field boundary and go ahead

in the same general direction, walking the length of the field eventually dropping down to join the hedge on your right, finally reaching a stile. Climb over and continue ahead, picking up a fence on the right with a lake beyond. At the far end of the field, go over a stile by a metal gate then go ahead climbing a stile to access a road.

Go left along the road, then left through a green metal gate with a footpath signed to Ashwicke. In a few yards, before reaching a gate ahead, look up to the right for a stile. Go up and over, then climb steeply, keeping right, to the top of the hill. Continue ahead to a kissing gate ❻ then contour the hillside, finally climbing gently to pass through a kissing gate to a road opposite a cottage. Go left along the road that bears right in a short distance, and continue to a sharp left bend with gates on the right. Here, go ahead through the kissing gate. Cross the field keeping right, then go through gates either side of a track and continue a short distance to go through a kissing gate. Now walk in the same direction across the meadow to the far side, through a 2-in-1 gate, and continue on with a hedge to your left ❼.

On the crest of the hill Marshfield comes into view; keep going down the field and through a kissing gate at the bottom, then continue in the same direction, hedge left, to reach another gate. Go through and continue, now with the hedge on your right, down to a further kissing gate. Beyond this, climb the track ahead to a disused stile ❽ then go up to the left and through a kissing gate. From here the path is clear; follow it down to the valley bottom where you cross a brook and pass through a kissing gate. Now head diagonally up the field to the top corner, over a stile, then continue for a short distance going through a kissing gate into Weir Lane. To return to the main road, go left and in a short distance fork right, then right again into Sheep Fair Lane and thus back to the High Street.

Unlike other medieval Cotswold towns, Marshfield's wealth came mainly from the growing of barley for malting, rather than from wool production. As early as the 15th century, there is evidence that barley was being grown for this process, which converts the grain into fermentable material that can then be sold for brewing beer and ale. Marshfield at one time had over 80 malthouses, the last one ceasing operation in the early 1900s. The town was also the first stage on the Bristol-London stagecoach route, hence the large number of pubs and inns that the town once supported.



Walk 28 Bridgwater Bay

Start Natural England car park in Steart (ST 275459).

Distance 10.75 miles / 17.2km.

Refreshments None.

Getting there M5 south to junction 23, then through Bridgwater on A39, turning right at roundabout signed Cannington & Hinkley Point. From Cannington, continue for 2 miles towards Otterhampton, then beyond the village go right, following signs to Steart. Car park on left in the village.

A level walk of river-bank, tranquil meadows and country lanes, with views of Bridgwater Bay on the return stretch. A good walk for birdwatchers, botanists and those who appreciate big skies and distant horizons! Up to 5 hours of walking, but you should allow much longer if you want to study the flora and fauna of this little-visited part of Somerset.

At the time of writing (October 2013), this circuit cannot be walked following the route shown, due to the Environment Agency's 'Steart Peninsular Project'. This is a coastal realignment scheme to create a habitat for wading birds and wildfowl. Similar schemes are under construction around the country. While work is under way, alternative footpaths are being made available, so you could try the walk using an OS Explorer map. For further information and updates, go to: <http://steart.wwt.org.uk>

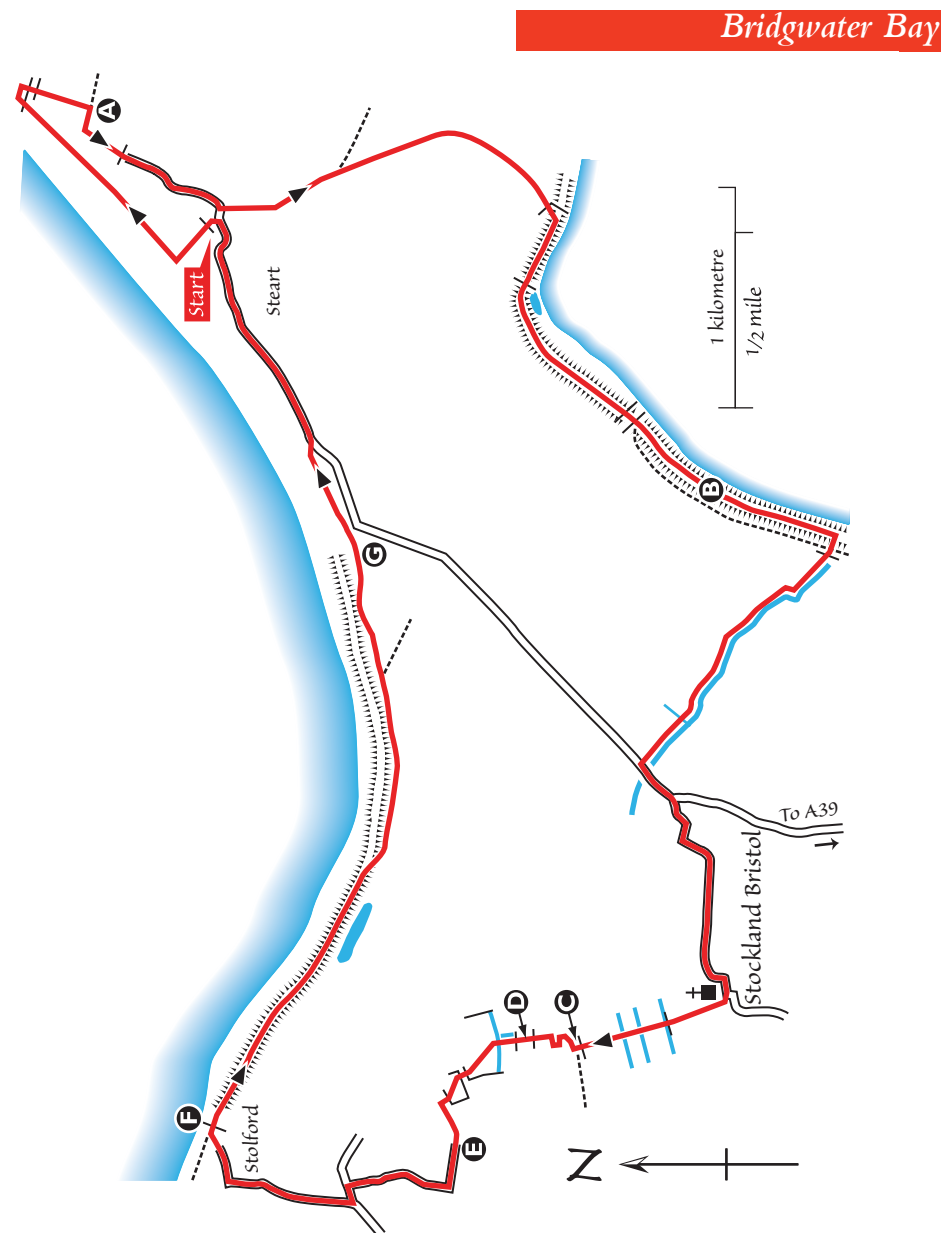


Photo above opposite, courtesy of Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart

A path leads from the car park to the coast, take this, turning right at the end, then walking on a partly shingle path with reed beds and Bridgwater Bay on your left. Continue to the end of the path where you go through a gate. Bird hides are ahead and you may want to spend a little time here, but your route goes right, through another gate to a track.

This is the start/end of the River Parrett Trail, a fifty-mile route following the river through the wetlands of the Somerset Levels to its source in the hills of the Somerset and Dorset borders. You'll follow the trail for the next three miles.

Follow the track, going right at a junction **A** then round to the left and through a gate to the road. Continue, passing farms on the right as far as a broad track on the left, with a 'Caution Site Entrance' sign. Take this (If you miss this, you will arrive back at the car park in a few yards), and follow the track for a mile, passing a left fork, to reach a metal gate. Go through and climb the dyke with the river beyond. Go right, along this elevated walkway, through a gate and passing a lagoon on your left. Continue to a pair of gates, beyond which, a track descends and runs parallel with the dyke – you can take this or continue on your present course, passing beneath power lines at **B**.

You need to turn inland about 700 yards beyond the power lines where a drainage ditch enters the river via a sluice at Combwich Clyce, and the lower track joins the higher one. (On the Somerset levels, a sluice gate is known as a clyce.) Go through the farm gate and follow the path parallel with the ditch on the left, eventually reaching a road. Turn left and walk to a junction, where you go right. Now follow the road into the village of Stockland Bristol, passing the church on your right and going through gates ahead to enter a field.

Turn right down the field edge, then go a little to the left, aiming for a stone bridge immediately before a field gate on the far boundary. Beyond, walk ahead, hedge right, to a footbridge. Cross this and continue to cross another, then go over the field following the line of telegraph poles to gates by a gravel parking area **C**. At the drive, turn right and walk past the house, then go left before the barns to reach the farmyard. Keep left of all the buildings, then pick up the right field boundary and head down the meadow, going through a field gate and passing beneath power lines **D** to reach a metal field gate. Go through and continue in the same direction with a ditch on the right, to arrive at a footbridge, which you cross, ignoring the gate on your right. Beyond the bridge, go half-left to the far corner and a stile.

This next stretch can get very overgrown, but persevere! Climb the stile, then a few yards ahead, cross a footbridge and fence/stile beyond, then go diagonally across the field to a wooden field gate. Go through, passing stables to your right, and reaching

field gates ahead and right. Now turn left along the farm drive, passing Chalcott Farm to your left and reaching a road **E**.

A mile of tarmac now, though not unpleasant. Follow the road, going right at a bend, and continuing to a junction. Turn left, then take the first turning on the right at Priors Cottage. Continue on now, the road eventually going sharp right, and petering out by cottages. Continue for a short distance along a track towards the coast, arriving at the hamlet of Stolford.

In the first quarter of the 19th century, plans were drawn up for a ship canal to avoid the dangerous navigation of Land's End. The canal was to link the Bristol Channel here at Stolford, with the English Channel at Beer. In 1824, Thomas Telford surveyed a line for the canal via Creech St. Michael, Ilminster and Chard, with a branch to Taunton. The canal was to be 15 feet deep and with 30 locks to take vessels of 200 tons and with harbours to be constructed at either end. An Act of Parliament was passed in 1825 giving permission for the project, but financial difficulties put an end to the scheme and neither the harbours nor the canal were ever built, apart from a small section from Chard to Creech St Michael.

Continue to the coastal defences, then turn right and pass through a metal barrier **F**. Bridgwater Bay is to your left, and you keep it in sight for the next mile as you follow the track on top of the dyke.

Bridgwater Bay is comprised of a variety of habitats, from mudflats and saltmarsh, to shingle beach and grazing marsh, intersected by a network of ditches. The area supports large numbers of over-wintering and passage migrant waders and waterfowl, while the ditches and ponds contain a wide variety of aquatic and bankside plants. Steart is probably the best place in Somerset to see large concentrations of wading birds, though success does depend on being there at the correct time, which is just before high tide.

Beyond a lagoon on the right, the track descends to the right, you can choose to follow that, keeping left at a junction, or continue on the higher ground. Both routes will lead you to a small car park **G**. From here, you can continue along the beach, or take the parallel road. You will be forced to join the road anyway when you reach a wooden seat with gate beyond – the coastal path is hard going from here. Either way, the road into Steart will take you back to your transport.



Walk 29 The Wessex Ridgeway

Start Car park on A4 between Calne and Avebury (SU 077692).

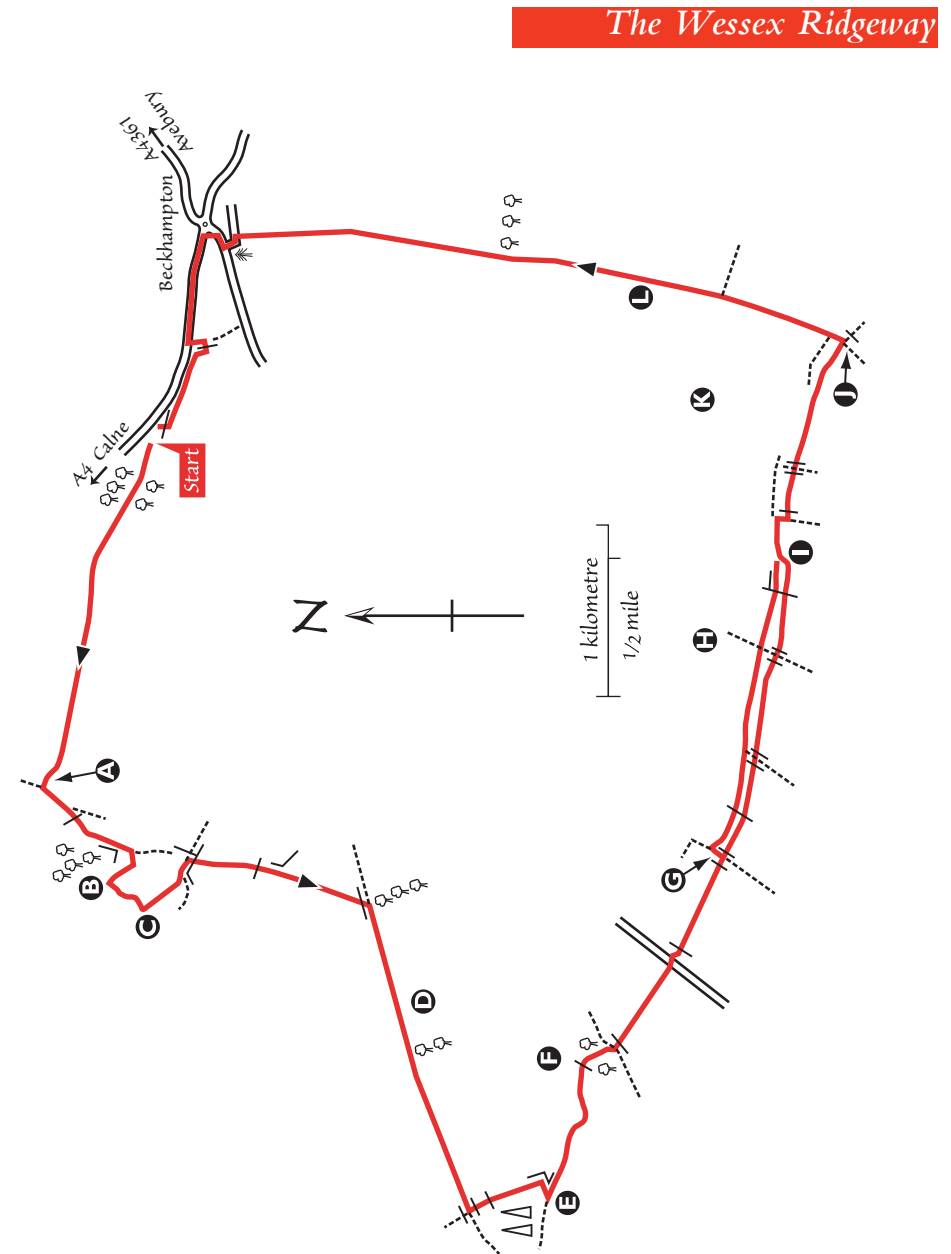
Distance 11 miles / 17.6km.

Refreshments None.

Getting there Quickest – M4 to junction 16, B4005 signed Wroughton for under 1 mile then ahead on minor road through Salthrop to reach A4361. Right to Avebury, continuing to roundabout, then A4 signed Calne. Car park 0.75 mile on left.
Shortest – M4 junction 17 or A420 to Chippenham, then A4 through Calne towards Avebury. Car park on right, about 2.5 miles beyond Cherhill.

A wonderful, elevated walk with superb views, mostly on good tracks, but with a couple of steep ascents. A clear day is essential to appreciate this energetic walk; the route is very exposed and the rain here can be extremely wet! Allow up to 5 hours for the circuit.

From the top end of the car park, take the track leading up towards the clump of trees, then continue on an elevated route with your first objective, the Lansdowne Monument, on the skyline ahead and slightly left. Beyond a metal gate, the track becomes heavily rutted – although a bridleway, it is regularly used by ‘off-roaders’.



This track formed part of the London to Bath coach road and Calne, a few miles to the west, established itself as a busy coaching town with several hotels and inns taking in travellers. When the railways came in the 1840s the importance of this route declined.

You eventually pass a tumulus – an ancient burial mound – on the left **A** and a short distance further you reach a junction. Turn left and walk uphill to farm buildings, where you fork right, climbing the stile and following a greener track to a further stile and entering National Trust land. Continue for a short distance until the track bears left; here, leave it and climb the undulating downland to the right, to reach the ditch and embankment of Oldbury Castle. Once on the embankment, go right and walk to its end, where you have superb views westward towards Calne and beyond, while down to your right is the Cherhill White Horse **B**.

Oldbury 'Castle' is an Iron-Age hillfort, enclosing an area of about 25 acres and defended by sections of single and double ramparts and a ditch. The Horse is 131 feet long and was cut into the chalk in 1780 under the directions of a Doctor Allsop, of Calne, who shouted directions through a megaphone. The horse originally had an eye filled with glass bottles to reflect the sun. These were stolen and recent replacements suffered a similar fate. The eye is now filled with concrete!



The Cherhill White Horse and Lansdowne Monument, viewed from the A4 at Cherhill

Descend to the lower path and go left, heading for the monument; when you reach it **C** you will appreciate its enormous size.

The monument has a height of 125 feet and can be seen 30 miles away. It was erected in 1845 by the 3rd Marquis of Lansdowne to commemorate his ancestor Sir William Petty. The hill on which it stands is thought to be the highest point between London and Bristol.

Finding your way off the hillfort is no easy matter, even in clear weather. Stand with the monument inscription to your right (I'm assuming you have found the inscription!) and walk straight ahead on a level path with an embankment up to your left, noticing your next objective – twin radio masts – away to your right. When you reach a path doubling back down to the right, continue ahead to a wire fence. Keep the fence on your right for a short distance to reach a gate on the right that you go through. (If you miss it, you will reach a stile in the cross-fence, so you'll have to retrace your steps.)

Now head downhill on an easy path, leaving the National Trust land via a gate and with a fence to your left. Continue for 700 yards to another gate and go through to a broad track. Follow this right, for a little over a mile.

In the fields on the left, the Ordnance Survey map shows numerous burial mounds and enclosures, all of great antiquity. Few are easily seen from ground level, but those that are will be mentioned in this narrative. You are at this moment, walking along the course of a Roman road that is aligned with Silbury Hill to the east.

Passing the field on the left, a pair of tumuli can be seen **D**. Eventually, your track makes a short descent and you pass a Wiltshire Trust Nature Reserve sign on the left. Continue a few yards further to gates right and left. Go left into Morgan's Hill Nature Reserve and climb the hill, going through a gate at the top. Continue in the same direction, with the masts now over to your right, until a wire fence forces you right. Follow it for a short distance to join the Wansdyke **E**.

The Wansdyke is a linear defensive earthwork, consisting of a ditch and bank, thought to have been constructed between the 5th and 8th century A.D. It runs from the Savernake Forest near Marlborough to the Avon Valley south of Bristol, and is one of the largest linear earthworks in the country. The east-west alignment and the deep ditch to the north of the bank shows that it was from the north that attacks came; however, who was attacking who, is not known.

Turn left and walk in the ditch, passing through a metal gate, then continue either in the ditch or on the left bank, depending on the weather! At the next gate, look left to see the rectangular outline of an ancient enclosure, visible in the field down to your left **F**.

The next stretch of path can be very overgrown, so make use of any clearer route to the side of the dyke. Continue to reach another gate, beyond which, you pass through a belt of trees and cross a track, before picking up the dyke again for a short distance to a gate and road beyond. You are now at the mid-point of the walk (thought you'd like to know)!

Be aware of the fast-moving traffic and cross the road with care, entering the driveway of a house then forking right and climbing a stile to regain the dyke. Continue to a pair of stiles with a track between ㉔. Here, you can choose to stay with the dyke on its undulating, narrow path, or you can take the easy option, going left along the track for a few yards, then turning right to follow the level, parallel route of a byway for the next mile. If you stay on the dyke, you pass through seven gates before reaching farm buildings where you descend left to reach the track. The alternative route has just one gate. From both paths, a Long Barrow is visible in the fields to the left at ㉕ then the routes merge left of farm sheds at ㉖.

Now, everyone must follow the track for a short distance to a junction where you go right, then through a gate on the left onto the dyke. Continue over a cross-track



The Wansdyke Path, with point J on the horizon. Photo courtesy of Matthew Cole and Kate Stewart

with gates either side, then onwards to reach a farm track with a cattle grid on your right ㉗.

Now, we leave the dyke for the last time and take the track left. From here on a clear day, you can trace most of your route, looking back along the dyke to the distant masts on the skyline, then tracking right, to the monument, and further right to the clump of beech trees through which you passed at the start of the walk. You have an easy, gradual descent along this track now, ignoring a turn to the right opposite another enclosure two fields away on the left ㉘. Keep to the fence on the left and at ㉙ you pass a pair of burial mounds, the rest of the route to the village of Beckhampton offering just distant views.

On arriving at the village, go left along the lane, bearing right with it to reach the main road. Cross with care to the bus shelter opposite, turn right and follow the footpath towards the roundabout and keep with it as it curves left to reach the busy A4. Walk with the road on your right to a suitable crossing point near a layby opposite. Then cross with extreme care and turn left uphill with the stables across to your left. Ignore the first track on the left but at the next, just beyond a Parking sign on the left, cross (again with great care) to this byway on left, follow it for a few yards, then go through gate on right.

Turn right and follow the path, bearing left to walk alongside the road up to the right. Eventually, you will come alongside the parked cars, look back down the path to see Silbury Hill in the distance. Now follow the fence to its end and double back to the car park.



Walk 30 Gray Hill

Start Foresters' Oaks picnic site, Wentwood (ST 428939).

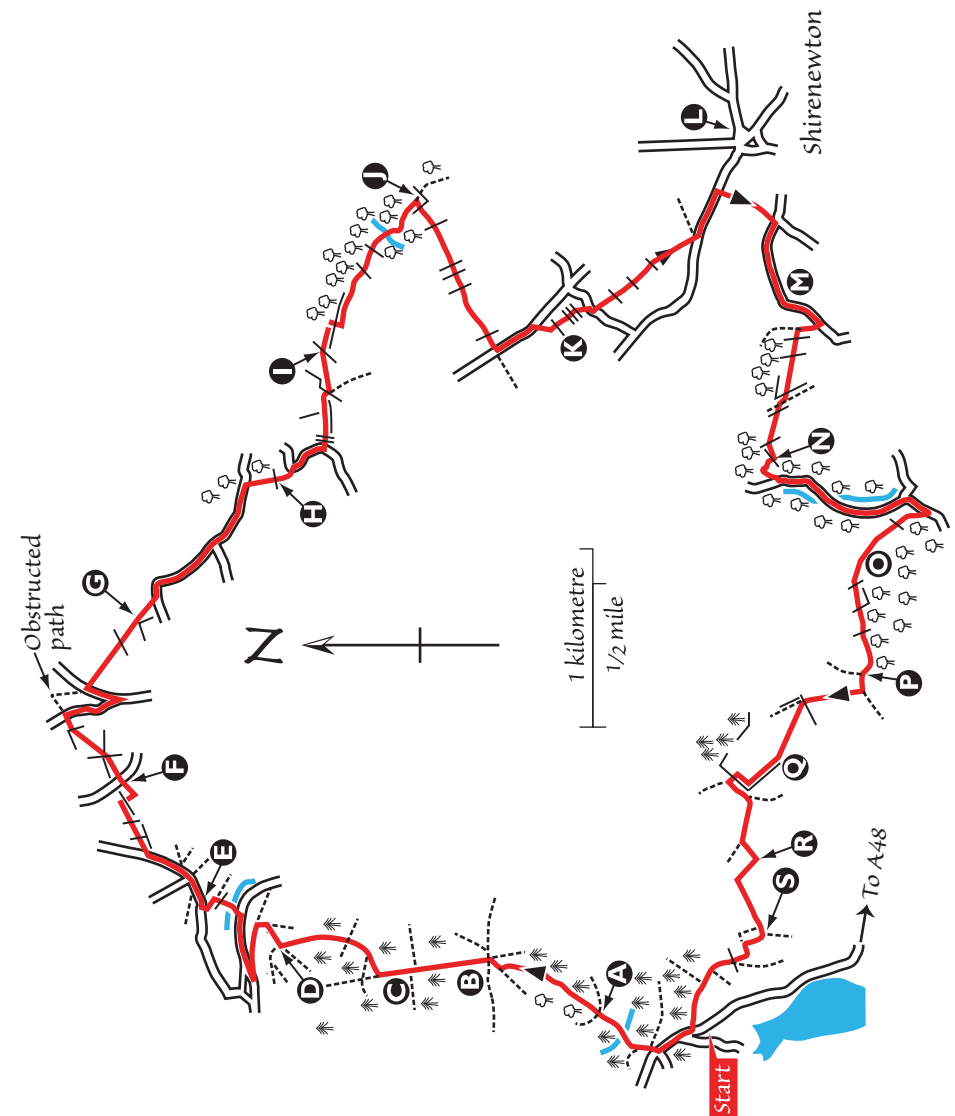
Distance 12 Miles / 19.2km.

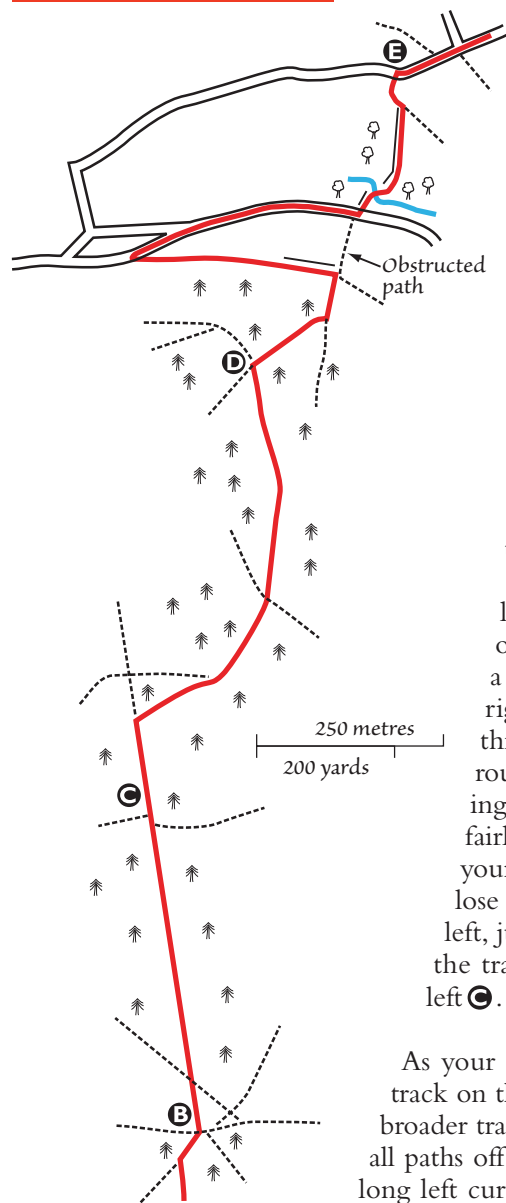
Refreshments Tredegar Arms, Shirenewton (just off route).

Getting there M48 junction 2 onto A466 signed Chepstow. Turn left onto the A48, passing over and under the motorway, then about 1.5 miles further, look for a road on the right, signed Llanvair Discoed and Wentwood. Take this, passing through Llanvair, then with Wentwood reservoir to your left. Now look for the (poorly) signed entrance to the car park on the left.

A fairly strenuous walk through lovely countryside – heath and woodland, plus farmland and country lanes. Several climbs, though none too steep, rewarded with fine views so a clear day should be chosen. Many of the paths in this area have been blocked for years and even those encountered on this walk have stiles that become heavily overgrown in mid-summer, when a walking pole and secateurs are advisable. Allow up to 6 hours, perhaps longer in summer. Please report any obstructions.

From the Foresters Oaks picnic site, turn left and follow the road as far as the second turning left where you take the track right, into Wentwood signed 'Earlswood 2.2k'.





The paths and tracks in this woodland can be deceptive and some paths are overgrown, so please follow directions with care.

Ignore a track joining immediately from the right, but as your track bears round to the left (to reach forestry workshops), fork right onto a narrower muddy track into the woodland. Continue, crossing two small streams (that frequently flood the path), to reach a path junction **A**. Cross-paths curve away right and left, but your route climbs straight ahead, with a conifer plantation on the right. Keep on upwards to eventually arrive at a major track junction, known as 'The Five Paths' **B**. Turn right initially, keeping the woodland on your right and passing a track loop on the left. The next part of the junction is a cross-track, with a path descending sharp right. There is also a track straight ahead and this is the one you must take, walking in roughly the same direction as before reaching the junction. This track runs between a fairly open area on your left and woodland on your right, and in a short distance begins to lose height. Pass a track on the right, then one left, just before you reach the lowest point of the track where there is a small pond to your left **C**.

As your track starts to gain height, take the first track on the right. In a short distance as this joins a broader track, keep on in the same direction. Ignore all paths off the broad track as you follow it round a long left curve. After about 400 yards it goes slightly right, then, just before it bends more sharply to the left, there is a cross path with blue waymarks pointing left and right **D**. Take the path to the right. (If you want to be certain you are at the right point, just continue on the broad track round the bend and you will see that it forks up to the left and down to the right.)

So, following this narrow path to the right, you reach a lower track where you go left, then in a few yards, you reach a junction with a house ahead. The obvious path goes right, alongside wooden railings, but you must turn left. (The path you really need goes ahead, down the side of the house, but the owners have blocked it!) Walk left with the boundary on the right, eventually passing behind a house on the right, from where you follow the driveway for a short distance to a road. Turn sharp right and follow the tarmac, passing a lane on the left, then a driveway to 'North Hill House' on the right. A short distance further, look for a stile on the left, often heavily overgrown, beside an electricity pole. (The blocked path from the forest reached the road here, on the right.)

The next stretch can be hard going in summer, as beyond this stile there is an unbridged stream (new bridge promised by Monmouth County Council in 2004), followed by a pathless route uphill through bracken. If you can't face this or if the stile here is impassable, you must retrace your steps, going right at the lane, right again at a junction, then following the road to **E** a driveway signed 'Barn Farm'. Hopefully, you will choose to take the Right of Way over the stile.

Beyond the stile, make your way ahead with the remains of the boundary to your left, to reach the stream with derelict brick buildings visible left. With no obvious crossing point, go right a little until a house comes into view at the top of the hill beyond the stream. Crossing is not too difficult here as the water is shallow and there are stones on the streambed to aid you. Once over, head straight up the hill, keeping to the left boundary and the house up to your right, cursing the landowner all the while! In the top left corner of the meadow you will find a stile, climb over and drop down the banking to a driveway, then go left along the drive to the road **E**.

Turn right and follow the road for about 500 yards, passing a lane and house on the left and then two footpath signs, both of which should be ignored. Pass a brown wooden shed in the field on the right, then just before the second electricity pole from here, climb a stile on the right and follow the right boundary down the field to go through a metal field gate. Continue, crossing a ditch and onwards to a stile. Cross, and walk up the hill, looking for a stile in the right boundary. Climb it, then go left, walking in the same direction but with the boundary on your left (often very overgrown). At the top of this field, climb a further stile to access a road **F**. Cross to another stile, beyond which, walk ahead with the boundary to your left and go through a gate on the far side. In the next field, go half-left, aiming initially for the green barn in the distance, then when the field gate comes into view, head for that. Go through and continue to a stile and lane beyond.

Long-blocked paths ahead now force you to a little tarmac walking, so turn right and proceed to a road junction where you go sharp left, continuing to a footpath

sign on the right by a field gate. (The obstructed footpath should emerge from the field on the left, but at the time of writing, no exit has been made, ten years after the first complaint.) Enter the field, often cropped in summer, and cross it going a little to the left and aiming for a gate in the far hedge. In the following field, keep in the same direction passing the hedge corner on your right **G** from where you veer right, continuing to the far side of the field and going through a gate to a lane.

Turn left and walk for just over a half-mile, passing a lane then a farm on the right. You leave the tarmac at an old metal field gate on the right. (This is located just before the lane reaches woodland and bends round to the left, with metal railings visible on the right.) Go through the gate and follow the right boundary down the meadow to a small gate hidden in the bottom corner. Go through **H** and cross a wooden bridge over a stream. Beyond this, walk ahead over the grass to join a driveway with a house to the right. Climb the drive, go through a gate to a road and turn right to climb the hill. Near the top, as the road bears right, climb over/go through double field gates on the left and walk along the top of the field following the right boundary. Continue through the following field over difficult ground to climb a stile at the far side.

In this next meadow, with a farm visible ahead, walk downhill, half-left, aiming for a gate and stile beyond the line of bushes that mark the right boundary **I**. Climb over and walk with the boundary to your right until you approach woodland, then look for an old metal field gate in the fence on the right. Negotiate this, then continue in the same direction, boundary left and cropped fields right, to a stile and footbridge into a meadow. Go ahead to another stile then beyond, follow the path onward into woodland. Pass a stream running over the path and continue to where the path ends at a gate ahead **J**. Here, go over the stile on the right then climb the fields, keeping to the left. (If the stile is too overgrown, go ahead through the metal gate, turn right and immediately right again through another metal gate, then immediately left to climb the fields.) You go over a stile and pass through several gates before reaching a farm driveway, where you continue up to the road.

Cross over, turn left, and walk along this busy road with care, passing beneath power lines and continuing to a visible left bend. Just beyond here, go through a field gate on the right (opposite a gate on the left) and climb diagonally to the opposite top corner. Climb the gate here **K** and walk along the top of the field, boundary right, then go through another field gate followed by a small gate next to a barn. (Landowners may have blocked part of this route, so be creative!) Continue through a further field gate, then walk a short distance to reach a road. Turn right for a few yards, and just beyond a farm entrance on the left, climb a stile, often overgrown.

Now walk along the field edge following the left boundary, climbing a stile ahead, then on to another. Continue in the same direction, going through a small metal gate walking downhill, with fine views ahead to the Severn Estuary. At the bottom of the field, climb a stile to reach the road. Turn left and follow the tarmac towards Shirenewton. Immediately after 30mph speed limit signs, take the track on the right. (The Tredegar Arms is a 10-minute walk further if you want refreshment **L**.) Follow the track, boundary left, to a road junction where you go sharp right, along the narrow Red House Lane, eventually passing 'The Red House' on your left **M** then a farm on the right. Shortly after, you reach woodland on your right and here, take the path up to the right (probably overgrown and unsigned). Follow this narrow route to reach a double stile on the left and climb over to enter a field.

Walk ahead across this field with trees up to the right, crossing a further stile, then aiming for the centre of the line of trees on the far boundary where you will find a stile. Climb over to a track and turn right. Walk for about 20 yards to reach a double stile on the left (obscured in summer), climb this, then go over the field to a stile in the right end of the cross-fence. Beyond this, follow the right boundary down to the field corner, ignoring a stile on the right, but a short distance further, going through a second stile into woodland **N**.

Beyond the stile, go immediately left, then in a few yards left again on a barely discernable path. In a short distance you double-back to the right and from here, the path is much clearer as you descend through woodland. The path bends to the right, straightens out, and then turns sharp left by an old gatepost. Continue the descent to reach a lane. Turn left and follow the tarmac for a half-mile to a junction, where you turn right. Walk now until you pass a field gate on the left, then a few yards further on the right, look for a path into woodland that climbs back up to the right. You have a stiff ascent now, and at the top you climb a stile in the wire fence on the left, into a meadow.

Walk ahead now, aiming for the far end of the row of trees that mark the left boundary **O** then continue along the boundary to go through a small wooden gate. Walk ahead with woodland to your left, reaching a metal gate ahead. Beyond this, follow the left boundary again, passing through a metal field gate in the far boundary. Keep on in the same direction, boundary left, and when that turns left continue ahead, eventually reaching a driveway **P**. Follow it a short distance left to a stile on the right, noticing the limekilns in the woodland a little distance from the driveway.

Imperceptibly, your ascent of Gray Hill now begins. Climb the stile and walk up the meadow keeping right, to the top corner where you climb the fence by the water trough. Now go diagonally left for about 400 yards aiming for a thatched building **Q**.

This is one of a number of buildings used by the BBC for a 2005 television series ‘Tales from the Green Valley’) recreating farming in the 17th century. The farm was abandoned in the 19th century, but in 1987, work started to restore the entire 15 acre site to its late 16th early 17th century condition. A number of collapsed period buildings have been restored so far, from Long-houses to pig sties and much of the 3 miles of field boundaries have been reinstated along with ponds and wells. (You have to climb a gate to get into the site but it is rare that anyone is there.)

From this point head north up the hill with a wall on your left. As you approach the wall ahead, look for a memorial stone to the right in the wall with a stone stile behind it. Go over this and then left along a path with the wall on your left and the wood on your right for about 150 yards. Where the path turns left downhill, take the path uphill to the right and follow it until you reach a large flat stone in the middle of the path which is a bit like a step. At this point, there is a minor path to the left. Take this, which may be overgrown in summer and with brambles. Persevere for about 250 yards to reach a standing stone with a number of fallen stones round it. This is the Gray Hill stone circle **R**.

4000 years ago, Bronze Age people manhandled these extremely heavy stones up the slopes of Gray Hill, and embedded them in the ground to create a circle, 12 metres in diameter, with two



The stone circle, seen at its best in late winter when the bracken has died down

other stones standing a little way beyond. It is thought to have been a burial site, with the remains of many stone cairns and other structures scattered all around.

Look north towards the ridge and a short distance ahead you will see another standing stone (an outlier). Follow a good path towards it and then continue on through earthworks to reach the ridge and a main path. Turn left here and follow it, passing signs of quarrying on your left. Suddenly, you are on the top **S**. Superb views all round now, with Wentwood to the north.

There are several paths from the summit and the one you want is on the right, as you face the reservoir (there is another path right a little further back that could also be taken). Descend steeply, ignoring a path joining from the right, to reach a gate. Go through and follow the track ahead, passing a stile on the left, then a track to the right just before a house on the left. When you reach a tarmac driveway, continue on to arrive at a road. Turn right, returning to the car park a short distance on your left.