

| Bruton Circular | | | Castle Cary to Bruton | | |
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| 1 st walk check | 2 nd walk check | 3 rd walk check | 1 st walk check | 2 nd walk check | 3 rd walk check |
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Bruton Circular (via Hauser & Wirth Somerset) or from Castle Cary

Start: Bruton Station

Finish: Bruton station

Bruton Station, map reference ST 687 347, is 45 km west of Salisbury, 31 km south of Bath and 168 km south west of Charing Cross. It lies 72m above sea level. Castle Cary Station, map reference ST 635 335, is 5 km south west of Bruton and 43m above sea level. Both are in **South Somerset**.

Length: 25.1 km (15.7 mi), of which 10.6 km (6.6 mi) on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 504m.

For a longer or a shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Time: 6 ½ hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 12 hours.

Transport: Bruton and Castle Cary Stations are stops on the Heart of Wessex line from Bristol to Weymouth. Trains on the London Paddington to Taunton Great Western Main Line also serve Castle Cary (journey time from 84 minutes), but do not normally stop at Bruton. There is also a limited direct service to London Waterloo. From London a change is therefore usually necessary to Bruton, either in Bath Spa or in Westbury, journey time from 117 minutes.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Bruton and Castle Cary are outside the Network Southeast Railcard zone. Off-Peak returns for morning departures can be prohibitively expensive. Advance tickets are usually the better option. Take the earliest train you can.

OS Landranger Map: 183 (Yeovil & Frome)

OS Explorer Map: 142 (Shepton Mallet & Mendip Hills East)

Walk Notes:

This excursion is centred on the remote Somerset town of Bruton, with its honey-coloured stone-built cottages, a large dovecote on a mound overlooking the townscape and a fine selection of lunch and tea options. It leads through a scenic South Somerset landscape of narrow steep-sided valleys and coombes with some fast flowing streams and rivers, with the route dipping in and out of the Brue, Alham and Pitt valleys. From the rolling hilltops you get some far views across to the range forming the boundary with Wiltshire and Dorset, with the local landmark Alfred's Tower, a folly, on top of it, as well as across vast parts of Somerset.

The route leads close to the renowned art gallery Hauser & Wirth Somerset, and a short version of the walk leaves enough time for an extended visit to it and/or its fascinating bar and restaurant.

The recommended lunch stop on the main walk is a fine country inn in Batcombe.

A start from Castle Cary (with faster and more frequent trains) adds about an hour of walking.

Walk Options:

As a **Figure-of-Eight** walk, you can walk the two loops in reverse order.

A **shortcut in the morning**, with lunch in Bruton, enables a longer visit to the Hauser & Wirth art gallery for an exhibition and/or for lunch or tea. This cuts 8.8 km/5.5 mi and 175m ascent, the resulting 16.2 km/10.1 mi walk is rated **4/10**.

A **shortcut towards the end**, avoiding the final ascent up to Ridge Lane, cuts 1 km and 42m ascent.

An **extension before lunch**, further up the narrow Alham Valley, adds 3.1 km/1.9 mi and 150m ascent.

An **extension in the afternoon** adds 2.9 km/1.8 mi with 95m ascent to the southerly loop. **Bus line 667** from Shepton Montague to Castle Cary enables a finish at The Montague Inn on this extension.

An **alternative start from Castle Cary** (one stop further from London along the same line, but with more frequent – and often much faster – train services) adds 3.9 km/2.5 mi and 88m ascent/descent.

Lunch (details last updated 11/09/2021)

The Three Horseshoes Inn Gold Hill, *Batcombe, Shepton Mallet, Somerset, BA4 6HE (01749 850 359)*.

The Horseshoes is located 8.9 km/5.5 mi into the walk. **This pub is currently closed.**

On The Brook Coombe Farm, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0QP (01749 813 048, <https://onthebrook.co.uk/>)*.

On the Brook is located 150m off route, 15.1 km/9.4 mi into the walk (6.3 km/3.9 mi into the shortened walk). Open every day 10.00-16.00. Coombe Farm is one of the four original farms in Bruton, nestled between woodland and the picturesque Coombe Brook, just outside the present-day village.

Hive Bruton 95 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AR (01749 937 420, <https://www.hivebruton.com/>)*.

Open to 17.00 Thu-Tue. Located 15.9 km/9.9 mi into the main & 7.1 km/4.4 mi into the shortened walk.

At The Chapel High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AE (01749 814 070, <http://www.atthechapel.co.uk/>)*.

Open daily from 08.00. Food served 12.00-21.00 Mon-Sat and 12.00-20.00 Sun. The Chapel is a Grade II listed former chapel, and the restaurant puts a Mediterranean touch to British food.

The Sun Inn 33 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AH (01749 813 493,*

<http://www.thesuninnbruton.com/>). Open all day. Homemade food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-22.00 daily. With a full Persian Menu in the evenings.

The Bruton Castle 45 High Street, *Bruton, BA10 0AW (01749 812 104)*. **This pub is currently closed.**

Matt's Kitchen 51 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AW (01749 812 027,*

<http://www.mattskitchen.co.uk/>). Open for dinner only: Thu, Fri and Sat. BYO with £3 corkage.

The Old Pharmacy 3 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AB (01749 813 111)*. A wine bar and deli.

Osip 1 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AB (01749 813 322, <https://osiprestaurant.com/>)*. A farm-to-table restaurant, open Thu-Sun 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.30. Tends to be fully booked weeks ahead.

Roth Bar & Grill Hauser & Wirth Somerset, Durslade Farm, Dropping Lane, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0NL (01749 814 700, <https://www.rothbarandgrill.co.uk/>)*. The Roth Bar & Grill is located 730m from the end of the walk. It is named after one of the more than 60 artists Hauser & Wirth are representing: Swissman Dieter Roth, and decorated with numerous art works along its walls and off its ceiling. It includes a site-specific bar created by Björn and Oddur Roth, the son and grandson of Dieter Roth. Open Tue-Sun from 09.00 for breakfast, lunch served 12.00-16.00, tea served 14.00-16.00, dinner served from 18.00 (Fri-Sat only). On weekends, a booking is recommended. The Roth Bar & Grill is located 350m off-route, 16.8 km/10.5 mi into the main walk and 8.0 km/5.0 mi into the shortened walk.

The Montague Inn *Shepton Montague, Wincanton, Somerset, BA9 8JW (01749 813 213,*

<https://themontagueinn.co.uk/>). The Montague is located 21.5 km/13.4 mi into main walk (or 12.7 km/7.9 mi into the shortened walk) if following the afternoon extension, and a warm and friendly gastro pub. Open 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-23.00 Tue-Sat and 12.00-15.00 Sun. Food served 12.00-14.00 and 19.00-21.00 Mon-Sat and 12.00-14.30 Sun.

Tea (details last updated 11/09/2021)

Cole Manor Tea Rooms Cole Manor, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0PJ*. Located 2.6 km from the end of the walk. Closed in 11/18 as running a business from the premises was contravening its mortgage conditions.

The Godminster Farm Shop Station Road, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0EH (01749 813 733,*

<https://www.godminster.com/about-us/godminster-shop/>). The farm shop is selling beautifully packaged, vintage organic Cheddar, handmade Brie, gourmet crackers, tangy chutney, infused vodka spirit & more, as well as serving hot drinks. Open to 17.00 Mon-Fri, to 17.30 Sat. The farm itself is passed in the afternoon.

Of the lunch options: The Old Pharmacy, Osip, At the Chapel, The Sun Inn, The Roth Bar & Grill.

Notes:

Bruton

Bruton is a small town in East Somerset along the A359 between Frome and Yeovil. The name refers to the River Brue, which flowed dramatically fast through a deep valley in the heart of the town from the steep-sided neighbouring valleys, and often flooded the town (one of the buildings still shows a water mark 6m above the normal level of the river), until a 1982 prevention scheme following yet another flood, resulting in 1984 in a protective dam being built 1 km upstream, near Cogley Wood and passed on this walk.

In medieval times Bruton Abbey was one of the great religious houses of Somerset.

With just 3,000 residents it is one of the smallest towns in England, but has three highly regarded boarding schools and traces throughout of its history, including its ancient streets of stone and stucco houses, the 14th century Church of St. Mary and 16th century dovecote that stands on a hilltop overlooking the town.

There are ancient stepping stones across the River Brue, next to a 15th century Packhorse Bridge.

The centre of town is laid out in the late medieval way with restricted frontages on the main road and long strips of land behind them, known as burgage plots.

King's School (founded 1519) dominates the town, then there are Sexey's School (founded 1889 and named after Hugh Sexey) – on the outskirts – just off Lusty Gardens, and Bruton School for Girls (Sunny Hill) (founded 1900).

Arts and crafts flourish here in terraced streets of historic houses, and it's one of Somerset's local centres of creativity, punching far above its weight. Jon Steinbeck was a resident of Discove just outside Bruton for 6 months in 1959 and today the town can boast 15 published authors. Current part- or full-time residents include: Cameron Mackintosh, Rhys Ifans, Sam Taylor-Wood and some famous fashion creatives (Phoebe Philo, Bill Amberg, Alice Temperley and Solange Azagury). Don McCullin lives in neighbouring Batcombe, as does Mariela Frostrup, while Kevin McCloud is up the road in his converted 500-year-old house. Ben Goldsmith and Nicolas Cage are also locals and it's rumoured that Stella McCartney has bought a farm in a valley outside Bruton. A further boost has been given in 2014 by the opening of a new Hauser and Wirth art gallery, ingeniously installed in a restored farm just outside the town. <https://www.brutontown.com/>.

St. Mary the Virgin, Bruton

The church of Saint Mary the Virgin sits on an historic site at the centre of the town. The present church was started in the 12th century, but sits on the site of one of the earliest churches in England, founded by King Ine of Wessex in the 7th century AD. It is described by Pevsner as one of the proudest churches in the county. It is unusual in that it has two towers, a 14th century north one and a much larger west tower, built roughly one hundred years later. The west tower houses the oldest dated bell in Somerset (1528).

The church is shared with the Roman Catholic congregation who have a weekly Mass.

River Brue

The River Brue (supposedly meaning 'vigorously flowing river') originates in the parish of Brewham, close to the border with Wiltshire on the westernmost edge of the high land of Cranborne Chase and the West Wiltshire Downs, and reaches the sea some 50 km west at Burnham-on-Sea. It originally took a different route from Glastonbury to the sea, but this was changed by Glastonbury Abbey in the 12th century. The river provides an important drainage route for water from a low-lying area which is prone to flooding which man has tried to manage through rhynes, canals, artificial rivers and sluices for centuries. Major tributaries are the Rivers Pitt, Alham and Whitelake.

The Brue Valley Living Landscape is an ecological conservation project based on the Somerset Levels and Moors, managed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. Much of the area has been at the centre of peat extraction.

Sexey's Hospital

Sexey's Hospital is named after Hugh Sexey (1556–1619), a local landowner and later Queen Elizabeth I's and James I's royal auditor. The 'hospital' (after 'hospitium', a place of shelter) was established after his death by his trustees as an institution to care for the elderly, i.e. an almshouses. The West Wing and chapel have been designated as a Grade I listed building. The East Wing and gateway are Grade II listed.

<http://www.sexeyshospital.org/>

Alfred's Tower

King Alfred's Tower, also known as Stourton Tower, is a folly, located at the north-western edge of the Stourhead Estate in Wiltshire. The tower stands on Kingsettle Hill and belongs to the National Trust. It is designated as a Grade I listed building. The project to build the tower was conceived in 1762 by the banker Henry Hoare II (1705-1785), owner of Stourhead and creator of its famous garden, known to his family as 'the Magnificent'. The tower was intended to commemorate the end of the Seven Years War against France and the accession of King George III, and supposedly stands near the location of 'Egbert's stone' where it is believed that Alfred the Great, King of Wessex, rallied the Saxons in May 878 before the important Battle of Theandun (now Edington, south-east of Trowbridge) where the Danish army was defeated.

The tower was designed in 1765 by Henry Flitcroft, the notable 18th century Palladian architect, and despite the inspiration from St Mark's Tower in Venice, this tower is rather different: triangular in plan, with round projections at each of the three corners. One of these, furthest from the entrance door, has a spiral staircase within it by which visitors can climb the 205 steps to the top, where there is a platform with a crenelated parapet. Open outside of core winter: Sat and Sun 12.00-16.00. <http://www.alfredstower.info/>

Alham River/Valley

The Alham is a small river of 16 km (10 mi) length formed by springs which rise north of Higher Alham, through the steep-sided Higher Alham valley and on through Batcombe Bottom to Spargrove to the mouth at its join with the River Brue at Alford. On its journey to the Brue it is joined by several unnamed tributary streams. It was known as the Alauna in Roman times.

Coney Wood Nature Reserve

Coney Wood is a small Woodland Trust-owned mixed broadleaf wood (1.35 ha/3.34 acres) in a small steep-sided valley containing a plethora of tufa (freshwater limestone) springs, through which a small tributary of the River Alham flows. Work has been undertaken to restore ponds created by a previous owner, the Coney Family, for the benefit of wildlife (they had altered the stream in the early 1900s so that it supplied a small boating lake). The family gifted the wood to the trust in 1980. The ground flora is mixed: as well as typical woodland species there are many plants associated with a wetland habitat.

Mendip Ring

Mendip Ramblers have created this 186 km (116 mi) waymarked Long Distance Path, a circuit of the Mendip Hills in 9 legs using public footpaths and other rights of way, following as closely as possible the boundary of the Somerset district of Mendip. <http://mendipring.org.uk/MendipRing.php>

(Bruton) Dovecote

Bruton is dominated by its famous dovecote. It's visible from most places in town on a neighbouring hilltop (Pillow Mound), and is the best place from which to view the town. Built in the 16th century, it was once within the deer park of the Abbey and was adapted by the monks from a gabled Tudor tower. It was at one time used as a house, possibly as a watchtower and converted to a dovecote around 1780, catering for over 200 pigeons. It is a Grade II* listed building and ancient monument and managed by the National Trust.

Bartons

Barton derives from Old English *bere* (barley) and *ton* (enclosure) and is a local word for the narrow alleys heading off the High Street, formerly to farmyards, now to the two parallel roads, Lower and Higher Backway.

Hauser & Wirth Somerset

Hauser & Wirth Somerset is a pioneering world-class gallery and multi-purpose arts centre, featuring new and innovative exhibitions of contemporary art. In December 2012 plans were announced by Hauser & Wirth to open a new gallery and arts centre at a derelict farm on the outskirts of Bruton. It opened in July 2014. Its owners Iwan and Manuela Wirth (they were jointly ranked as the number 1 most influential figures in the art world in Art Review's "Power 100" in 2015, but down to 6th in 2018) live locally and saw the derelict 17th century Durslade Farm as a ripe opportunity to add a Hauser & Wirth Somerset to their collection of galleries in London, New York, Los Angeles and Zurich.

Durslade Farm consists of a group of Grade II listed farm buildings, and was initially built as a 'model farm'. It sits within 100 acres of fields and woodland. The Farmhouse and outbuildings at Durslade were used during the filming of 'Chocolat' (2000).

The gallery also houses the Roth Bar & Grill and has a landscaped meadow garden, designed by the internationally renowned landscape architect Piet Oudolf.

Hauser & Wirth Somerset has been awarded a Civic Trust 2015 Award, and in 2014 it was the winner of the William Stansell Historic Buildings Award, for Durslade Farmhouse.

St. Peter's, Shepton Montague

The ancient parish of Shepton Montague comprised the three manors of Shepton, Knowle and Stoney Stoke given by William the Conqueror to one Drogo De Montague. These three manors became an ecclesiastical parish with one church in Lower Shepton, more accessible for many parishioners when all had to walk to church. The church burnt to the ground in 1964, the walls and tower only left standing. You see now the medieval church remade, without chancel, new oak pews for 120, once 220. The contrasting modern interior is unique and surprising. Of interest are the coat of arms, 'the Achievement', given by Queen Elizabeth II, the modern pipe organ in the west end gallery and the significant shields on the ceiling.

Macmillan Way

The Macmillan Way is a 470 km (290 mi) waymarked long-distance footpath that links Boston, Lincolnshire to Abbotsbury, Dorset. It is promoted to raise money for the Macmillan Cancer Relief.

Leland Trail

The Leland Trail is a 51 km (32 mi) waymarked footpath through the rolling hills of Somerset from near Stourhead to near Stoke-sub-Hamdon following the route traversed by royal librarian John Leland during his 16th century survey of Britain's churches and priories. The waymark is a bust of John Leland.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train in **Bruton Station** on platform 2 and use the overbridge to exit the station from the other platform to *turn left* through the car park past the old (and beautifully refurbished) station building and station clock (also note the **permanent lady caller, Rita, in the red phone box** to the left of it). Continue along the station approach and in 150m, by a recently built office building in the style of an old signal box on the left, *turn right* at a T-junction with the B 3081 **Station Road** towards the town.

In 60m you pass the entrance to **The Godminster Farm Shop** on the right, a possible tea stop in the afternoon, as the road turns left and passes **St. Mary the Virgin, Bruton**. In 100m *turn right* at a three-way junction to cross the **River Brue** on **Church Bridge** past a bus stop (note the **Patwell Pump**, a pointed-roofed well on the right hand end of the bridge) and *turn left* with the road to ascend **Patwell Street** past one of the village stores. In 50m on the left at knee height spot a sign marking the **level of the 1917 flood** and ascend further. In 25m, at a four-way junction, with the **library** on the right-hand side (built by a teetotal philanthropist on the site of a former pub), and with **Osip** and **The Old Pharmacy** across, *turn left* along **High Street** to follow it through the village.

You pass a **Spar** store on the right and the **Bruton Museum** on the left, as well as several lunch and tea options: **At The Chapel**, an upmarket restaurant, bar, bakery and boutique hotel on the left, with another convenience store opposite, then **The Sun Inn** and **The Bruton Castle** pub on the right, followed by **Matt's Kitchen**, before passing **Sexey's Hospital** on the left (an almshouses, the courtyard and chapel – with Jacobean furnishing – are **well worth a visit**, but *please respect the privacy of the elderly residents*). In another 130m, opposite **Mill Lane** on the left and 20m **[!]** before you reach **Hive Bruton** on the right-hand side (and where the road turns left), **[!]** *turn right* along a narrow tarmac lane (**Mill Dam**).

The Alternative Start from Castle Cary has joined from the direction of Truffles.

***)** Follow the lane around to the left and right after passing the house on the left and continue between stone walls, gently rising. In 60m the path levels out, with a duck pond and a sloping meadow beyond it on the right. In 90m cross a mill leat overflow on a two-railed plank bridge and in 60m you have the **Combe Brook** to your immediate left, as it flows under the old mill on the left. You continue in the same direction along the pavement of **Tolbury Lane** (the lane itself will be submerged after heavy rain) and *turn up right* with it in 30m. In 50m you *turn left* with a signposted restricted byway ('Creech Hill Lane 1m'), along an earthen track between trees. In 130m ignore a path turning up to the right and continue in the same direction.

In 130m cross **Combe Brook** on a railed plank bridge (this is the 'Ford' on the OS map) and *turn right* on the other side and in 20m *turn left* with the signposted restricted byway (ignore metal field gates on the left and ahead), gently ascending the flank of the coombe on the right through a wood with plenty of wild garlic in season. In 140m the path turns right and in 55m turns left again to in another 200m level out. In 50m pass a random footpath marker on a tree on the left and in 170m *turn right* with the path where it reaches an open plateau, with **scenic views** down the coombe on the right across the **Upper Brue Valley** back to **Alfred's Tower**. In 60m you *turn left* by a metal field gate on the right and continue along a car wide farm track.

You have views of a – small but striking – table-top hill on the left and in 120m ignore a footpath turning left over a stile. In 250m, *just after a double metal field gate* on the right, **[!]** *turn right over a broken stile* into a grassy field (that's just after a restricted byway joins from the right through an overgrown wooden gate in a hedge and while ignoring the continuation of the farm track through a metal field gate). *Veer left* from

the previous direction to follow a permissive footpath through the field to the left of some farm buildings and to the right of a house (275°) and in 130m leave the field through a metal field gate and a farmyard and in 40m reach **Creech Hill Lane** just to the right of a four-way road/lane-junction, where you *turn right* up the car wide gravel lane, to the left of those farm buildings (70°).

In 100m the track becomes grass and in 180m the lane *turns up steeply to the left* and narrows to a rutted track between tree-topped high earth banks (this is a byway, be prepared for motorised vehicles or bikes). In 350m the track levels out as you emerge in the farm yard of **Creech Hill Farm** and continue in the same direction along its gravel then concrete drive. In 100m you get open views on the right towards **Alfred's Tower** again and down to **Bruton**. In 80m walk through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate to continue along tarmac, with **Creech Hill** on the left (the former site of a **Roman Temple**). In 400m *turn left* at a T-junction with the **B 3081**.

In 80m you have a choice:

For the shortcut, *turn right* to cross the road and go along a signposted bridleway through a metal field gate into a grassy valley to follow its right hand upper boundary with the – at times steep – drop of the slope on the left and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut**.

For the main walk, *turn left* along a signposted bridleway through a metal gate into a large field (first though, you may want to follow the shortcut for 10m or so for the splendid views down Green's Combe) and briefly *turn right* and then *veer left* to ascend through the arable field to the right of an electricity pole on a bearing of 295° towards a point a little to the left of the left hand edge of a copse at the top of the field. You have **Creech Hill** on the left and in 230m at the upper field boundary reach a signposted three-way bridleway/footpath-junction by a wooden gate to the left of a metal field gate with some grand views ahead into the **Alham Valley** and the plain on the other side of the river.

Turn right [!] this side of the gate with a yellow marker and follow the field boundary past the small copse on your left. In 70m you *turn left* with the boundary and in 50m *veer right* across a narrow part of the field to a wooden kissing gate on the other side of it. Go through the gate into another arable field and *veer right* down the field (30°) and in 190m leave it over a stile in a hedge into a steeper valley side. *Veer left* down the slope and in 20m *bear left* further towards a footpath marker post 80m away. At the post *veer right* through some bracken and in 25m *veer left* to keep the fence line below you on the right.

In 45m pass another footpath marker post to enter a lightly wooded area and follow the winding path, getting ever closer to the road, but without joining it, and in 130m go over a stile to leave the trees and *turn left* along a road (**High Street**). In 130m *turn right* off the road along a signposted footpath along a driveway. **[!]** In 20m *fork right* through a metal field gate with a yellow marker on a gate post, ignoring the more obvious car wide driveway/farm track ahead, to *turn left* immediately with the fence **[!] on your left [!]**, and continue along a field boundary car wide track.

In 150m you walk through a metal field gate with a yellow marker into a large pasture and *veer right* towards a metal field gate 220m away in the opposite field boundary (30°, 60m to the left of a large solitary tree). *Veer left* in the next field and leave it in 40m through a metal field gate (with a yellow marker on the reverse) to continue in the same direction down a left hand field boundary and in 200m enter the next field through a metal field gate to continue in the same direction. In 140m go through a wooden field gate (with two stiles to the right) and *veer right* in the next field (15°) to leave it in

170m by *turning right* through a decrepit metal field gate and then across a stream and through a wooden field gate into another grassy field with a yellow marker on a gate post. *Veer left* (40°) to the left of an earth mound and then a **large moated farm**.

In 220m you leave the field somewhat to the left of its far left corner, by turning right through a wooden kissing gate by the **River Alham** on the left. In 40m walk through a wooden gate onto a tarmac lane (with **Spargrove Bridge** on your left) and *turn right* along it through **Spargrove** hamlet. In 40m *turn left* through a black metal kissing gate to the left of a black metal field gate just before a house on the left (part of **Lower Spargrove Farm**) along a farm track to in 30m emerge in a grassy field with a car wide bridge away on the left (notice a mill stream crashing down a wheel on the right in the far part of the house: this was an 'evening mill', used for grinding cattle feed, and is again in working condition, now intended to be used for electricity generation).

You *veer right* across the field towards a two-railed metal plank bridge in a hedge and in 100m continue in the same direction through the next grassy field in this area called **Batcombe Bottom** (on the OS map). In 300m in the far right field corner cross a stream on a two-railed concrete plank bridge and continue in the same direction through the next field. In 150m, 40m after passing a stone bridge on the left, *turn right* over a two-railed metal plank bridge across the mill leat on the right and *turn left* on the other side. You pass the spot where the leat splits from the river on your left and in 150m in the far left field corner ignore a field gate on the left and continue in the same direction across a set of two-railed metal plank bridges, now with the river on your right.

You curve ever so slightly left along this scenic stretch of the valley bottom with the river away on the right and in 380m go over a car wide stone bridge across the river to *turn left* on the other side, now following the river past some weirs. You pass **Mill Farm** (on the OS map) on the right hand side of the field and in 300m cross a tributary stream over a more than car wide two-railed plank bridge and through a metal field gate on the other side to *veer right* through the grassy valley bottom towards a stile 70m away (to the left of a metal field gate).

At the stile you have a choice:

For an extension further up the Alham Valley through Westcombe and Honeycliff hamlets (adds 3.1 km and 150m ascent), *veer left* before the stile and continue through the valley bottom, with the River Alham away to the left and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Morning Extension**.

For the Main Walk, the direct route to the lunch pub in Batcombe, go over the stile onto a tarmac lane (Holly Lane) and cross it a little to the left and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate to continue through the grassy valley of an unnamed stream along a clear path, with the stream on your right (ignore a second footpath veering up to the left). In 135m go over a stile and in 150m over a stile and a two-railed plank bridge to cross a tributary stream and continue in the same direction through a lightly wooded area with the stream on your right. In 90m at a footpath T-junction by **Paddock House** *turn left* along its garden fence, cross a track, ignoring a right turning tarmac lane (Mill Lane) to continue on grass between the house and a garage and in 20m go over a stile on the right to continue steeply uphill through an overgrown area.

You emerge into a grassy sloping field to follow its left hand boundary into **Batcombe** village. At the top left field corner go over a stile to the right of a double metal field gate and *turn right* along a tarmac lane towards a church. In 160m pass a converted chapel and in another 80m ignore a footpath, turning right through a metal kissing gate into a field (the post-lunch onwards route), just before **St. Mary's Church, Batcombe** on the left. You pass a couple of raised benches on the left (an ideal picnic spot) and then the

King George V Playing Field on the right (with another bench) to *turn left* at a four-way lane junction and in 40m reach the lunch stop **The Three Horsehoes**, with its **ingenious boot cleaning device** around the back at the garden door.

******) From the lunch pub *turn left* up the lane and in 60m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Back Lane**. In 60m *turn left* through a metal kissing gate along a tarmac path and in 70m, just past a car park and the **Jubilee Hall** on the left, either *turn left* to have a look at the church or continue in the same direction to pass to the right of the church yard of **St. Mary's Church, Batcombe** and in 50m leave it through a metal kissing gate to cross a lane (walked along before lunch) and go through a metal kissing gate into a pasture to continue in the previous direction along its right hand boundary fence.

In 20m continue in the same direction where the fence discontinues with some grand views ahead of a winding valley opposite, with several interlocking chevron-like field boundaries running down its flanks. In 80m you pass a redundant stile, where you start to descend steeply. *Veer a little to the left* towards a stile at the bottom of the drop and in 60m leave the field over the stile to cross an unnamed stream (walked along before lunch further downstream) over an earth bridge onto a tarmac lane (**Vining's Hill**) to *turn left* along it. In 40m *turn right* through a wooden kissing gate with a Woodland Trust sign into **Coney Wood Nature Reserve**.

You follow a clear path with the stream on your left and a pond on the right through this enchanting reserve, a mixed broadleaf wood in a small steep-sided valley containing a plethora of tufa (freshwater limestone) springs. In 70m cross a plank bridge over a ditch and in 10m **!!** *turn right* over a plank bridge across the ditch to double-back on the opposite side of the pond. In 70m descend some wooden steps and in 20m cross a two-railed wooden footbridge to in 15m walk closely along the pond with some railings on your right to in 50m leave the woodland down some steps on a steep bank past a Woodland Trust marker post back onto the tarmac lane (now called **Portway Hill**) and *turn left* long it, immediately ignoring the left turning **Saite Lane**.

In 40m **!!** *turn left* along **Moor Lane**, gently uphill between hedges. In 600m, 20m before the lane turns sharply right, *veer a little to the left* along a car wide track and in 20m go over a stepless stile to the right of a metal field gate by a footpath signpost and continue along a track with a stream on the right. In 90m ford the stream bed and in 40m emerge in the open. Ignore a wide gap on the right to continue in the same direction over a stile in a hedge 15m away into a sloping field corner.

Ignore a car wide gap on the right into another larger field to *veer up right* (compared to the previous direction) steeply on a bearing of 190° towards a stile at the top of the rise, cutting halfway through this slope. In 130m go over the stile in a hedge gap (from where you have grand views back) and follow a raised grassy strip between arable fields to in 110m go through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along another raised grassy path between arable fields and in 120m, at a field boundary corner, continue in the same direction along a right hand boundary.

In 300m leave the field in its far right corner over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and *turn right* along a tarmac lane (**Copplesbury Lane**, with views ahead on the left of **Creech Hill**, on 235°). In 330m you descend steeply and in 200m ignore a footpath joining from the right over a stile. In a further 40m *turn left* along the driveway to **Hanley Grove Farm** (a signposted footpath). In 300m at the farm buildings, *turn right* through some sheds and barns. In 60m ignore a right forking drive and continue through a metal field gate and to the right of a large new barn and then to the left of a last large barn, with a slurry pond away on the left.

At the end of the last barn, go through a metal field gate and *bear left* down a steep grassy slope to the bottom of the drop and in 50m *turn left* over a set of stiles either side of a plank bridge to *turn right* on the other side and to continue with a stream on the right (one the two sources of **Combe Brook**). In 100m the path curves left and in 65m you enter some trees over a stile on the right (and then a railed plank bridge) by a confluence of the two streams forming **Combe Brook**. Follow the path through the wood with Combe Brook on the left and in another 250m emerge on a tarmac lane (**Snakelake Hill**) where you *turn right* uphill between steep banks. At the top of the rise you ignore a signposted bridleway (the **Mendip Ring**) turning left.

160m further on you *turn left* with a footpath signpost through a metal field gate, into an arable field corner and follow its left hand boundary for 320m to leave the field in its left corner over a stile into an adjacent steep coombe (an overgrown footpath joins from the right). *Veer left* down into **Green's Combe** towards some farm buildings (205°), passing to the left of a fallen tree after 90m to then *veer right* just past the tree to leave the field through a wooden kissing gate in a hedge after 100m and, with **Green's Combe Farm** opposite, *turn left* along a tarmac farm track.

You descend gently through Green's Combe, curving left with the drive and in 210m a couple of unmarked bridleways join from the right out of a field through a wooden field gate. The bridleway from the valley bottom is the shortcut.

***) Continue along the drive and in 250m, where the tarmac drive curves slightly to the right (just before a couple of tall trees on the right), **[!!]** *veer left* through a wooden field gate with the unmarked bridleway to continue through a grassy slope. In 160m, by a line of trees running down from the left, *turn right* with the bridleway towards a water trough and a line of trees 50m away and continue to the left of the trees. In another 90m you ford **Combe Brook** (again) and enter a wooded area through a metal gate to continue in the same direction along an earthen path (plenty of wild garlic in season). In 250m (after going through a couple of wooden gates along the way) you emerge from the trees and continue along a left curving wire fence. In 130m you *turn left* along the **B 3081** by a signpost (Snakelake $\frac{3}{4}$ m, Milton Clevedon $1\frac{1}{4}$ m).

In 230m, just after **Coombe Farm Lodge** on the right and where the road turns sharply left, *turn right* off the road down a tarmac drive, but in 15m **[!]** *turn left* with a footpath signpost through trees (but follow the drive down for 150m to **On The Brook**, a recommended tea/lunch stop). Ignore a fork to the right in 5m and all subsequent ways off and follow a broad track through the upper part of a hanging wood, with occasional glances through the trees down into the valley below. In 250m continue in the same direction through a grassy clearing, following its left hand side, and in 50m continue down a car wide track. In 60m you go through a (missing) wooden field gate by a footpath signpost and continue in the same direction along a tarmac drive with a house on the right. In 80m continue in the same direction **into Bruton** where another tarmac lane (Tolbury) joins from the right.

In 150m cross **Tolbury Lane/Higher Backway** to continue in the same direction down into Bruton along **St. Catherines Hill** (famous for Sat Nav-guided trucks getting stuck in the downwards sloping, narrowing lane). In the lower part you get views of the **Dovecote** in its hilly position, dominating the view beyond Bruton. In 135m you emerge on **High Street**, opposite **Sexey's Hospital**. **Hive Bruton** is 150m down the right, **all other late lunch/early tea options in Bruton** are along the left, the **Roth Bar & Grill** is about 1 km further along the walk route, and **The Montague Inn** on the afternoon extension a further 4.8 km still.

To continue the walk, *turn left* along **High Street (the A359)** as far as **At the Chapel**, and directly afterwards *turn right* across the road and down **Chapel Barton**, a narrow

tarmac lane between buildings. In 50m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Lower Backway** and in 30m *turn right* to cross the **River Brue** on an ancient **packhorse bridge** to ascend to **Plox (the other arm of the A359)** and *turn left* along it past **St. Mary's church** and the **Godminster Farm Shop** and past the turnoff for the train station to go carefully under the narrow underbridge carrying the railway line.

In 30m from the underbridge *turn right* (signed 'Footpath to Hauser & Wirth Somerset') up some steps and through a wooden kissing gate into a grassy area by an info panel. *Turn left* along a new gravel path and *veer to the right* with the path to cross a stream (often dry in summer) and continue to the right of a pond (one of the former **Bruton Abbey fishponds**), and in 40m climb up a grassy bank to *turn left* along its top. In 15m ignore a right turning path and continue with the pond on the left. In another 40m reach a barbed wire fence corner with a **DEFRA Conservation Walks** marker on a fence post.

Here you have a choice:

For an out-and-back to Hauser & Wirth Somerset art gallery and its restaurant, The Roth Bar & Grill, continue in the same direction along the barbed wire fence on your right and with some more ponds on the left. In 110m continue in the same direction at the top end of the last pond in 65m leave the grassy area a little to the left through a wooden gate, cross a gravel drive and continue in the same direction through another wooden gate and past some allotments and in 80m *turn left* through a wooden kissing gate in a drystone wall gap and cross **Dropping Lane** to reach **Durslade Farm**, the home of Hauser & Wirth and its restaurant. **After your visit** return to this point to either continue the walk or to cut short the walk back to the station or the town centre.

To continue the walk without going to Hauser & Wirth, *turn right* along the fence and follow a clear path through the meadow up **Pillow Mound**; in 80m you can see the dovecote on the top of the Mound and in 130m you walk through a wooden kissing gate into the open plateau with the dovecote just ahead and fine views from this excellent vantage point down to Bruton on the right and along the Brue Valley ahead. From the dovecote *turn left* down the hill (due S) towards a stile at the left hand corner of a car park and go over it and through the car park to a lane and *turn right* along it.

In 160m cross **Godminster Lane** and in 30m *turn left* off the road along a narrow path to the right of a wooden fence with a footpath signpost ('New Barn Farm ½m'). In 90m cross a stream on a two-railed plank bridge and ascend on the other side through a wooden kissing gate and up a pasture in the direction of a transmission mast on **Lusty Hill**. In 50m go over a stile and *turn left* up a tarmac lane (a footpath joins from the right along it). In 120m the lane levels out where a tarmac track joins from the right from the transmission mast and you continue along the now gravel lane.

In 90m *turn left* off the lane through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate into a pasture and **[!]** *turn right* in the field towards a stile by a large tree (210°, i.e.: do *not* follow the direction of the signpost). In 120m walk past the redundant stile and continue in the same direction along a right hand field boundary and in 150m in the far right corner go through a wooden kissing gate and *turn left* along a concrete lane. In 65m a gap in the left hand hedge gives more views of the dovecote (foliage permitting) and in 110m you continue in the same direction through the buildings of **New Barn Farm**. In 75m go through a usually open metal field gate and continue along gravel.

In 100m you cross a cattle grid and then *turn right* at a T-junction with the tarmac **Godminster Lane**. In 100m *turn left* with the lane and in 210m you **[!]** continue in the same direction along a gravel car wide lane (signposted 'Dodd's Corner ½m'), where the tarmac lane forks to the left. In 120m, just before a metal field gate, **[!]** you *fork to the*

right up an earth bank to go through a wooden kissing gate and then through a wooden gate into an undulating grassy field and continue along its left hand boundary. In 75m you have **Godminster Farm** on the left (whose farm shop you have passed near the station) and in 150m you go through a wooden field gate with a footpath marker on a gate post onto a farm track, with another wooden field gate opposite. [Note: the right of way on the OS map differs from the reality on the ground in this area.]

Here you have a choice:

For the afternoon extension, continue in the same direction through the other wooden field gate and along a left hand field boundary. Pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Afternoon Extension**.

For the main walk *turn right* along the track between wooden fences (285°), with some views of Creech Hill through the trees on the right across the Brue Valley, and in 230m walk through hedges on the track, just before it starts a gentle descent into a scenic valley. In about 170m the track curves to the right and in another 200m ignore a stile in the fence on the left into a field corner. In 35m (after having crossed a stream on the farm track) go over a stile between two metal field gates into a right hand field corner. *Turn left* in the field (250°), initially along the left hand boundary but then continuing in the same direction where it bends left, for 300m.

From the brow of the field you can spot a stile in the opposite boundary fence by a footpath signpost. Go over the stile to cross the busy A 359 (**Strutter's Hill** on the OS map) and go through a wooden kissing gate by a footpath signpost ('Pitcombe ¼m') to descend in the same direction down a steep sloping pasture. Head towards the left of a cottage and the church beyond it and in 90m cross a dismantled railway line and go over a stile to walk along a grassy path between fences and through a couple of wooden gates to a tarmac lane (Mill Lane) 50m away and cross it a little to the left to walk down a tarmac lane with a signpost for the church.

******)** Continue along the lane towards **St. Leonhard's, Pitcombe** and cross the **River Pitt** in 75m but *turn right* in 15m with the churchyard wall along a footpath before reaching the church (which is very pretty, as is the churchyard, but usually shut). You walk through a couple of wooden kissing gates over the next 50m and follow the fenced path through the steep-sided **Pitt River valley**. In 250m you go through a double wooden field gate and in 35m through a metal gate as part of a metal field gate to cross a farm track (with a scenic railway viaduct down the track on the right, the line itself long dismantled) and enter a pasture through a wooden gate. *Veer left* through the field in the direction of a signpost (300°) to the left of some cottages and to the right of some sheds on the other side. In 180m you go through a metal gate as part of a metal field gate onto a tarmac farm lane by a signpost.

Here you have a choice:

To avoid the coming ascent up a scenic valley (cuts 1 km, 42m ascent and 360m tarmac), *turn right* along the lane and in 30m by the corner of the garden on the left *turn left* through a wooden gate by a footpath marker post along a narrow path between fences. In 30m go through a wooden gate into a pasture and *veer left* across it, to the right of a solitary old tree in the middle of the field (315°). [**Note:** electric fencing – possibly temporary in nature – in this field and the next may force you onto a different route from what's described.] In 140m from the tree leave the field through a metal/wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate into another pasture which ascends steeply on the left. Continue along the *right hand side* of the barbed wire fence 30m ahead of you and curve left with it in about 100m and in another 120m leave the

field over a stile to descend to a lane 20m away and *turn right* along it at a bend. Pick up the directions below at the quintuple asterisk *********).

For the Main Walk *turn left* along the farm lane (a bridleway). Continue in the same direction for 800m, first along the lane to the left of those sheds, then along a fenced path gently up a tranquil narrow valley between undulating curving hillsides. The last of the ascent is decidedly steeper and at the top of the rise you *turn right* along **Ridge Lane**, a deeply rutted, and often muddy, car wide track.

You follow along the **ridge between the Pitt and Brue River valleys** with occasional far views to the north and west on the left and to Bruton and Pitcombe on the right and in 350m start to descend along tarmac as you pass **Ridge Barn** on the right. In 360m *turn right* at a T-junction with a lane through **Cole** hamlet (the **Macmillan Way** and **Leland Trail** Long Distance Paths merge from the left along the lane). In 30m follow the lane to the left, where a signposted footpath continues in the same direction.

*********) In 240m you cross the **River Pitt** on the lane and in 110m pass the site of the **now closed Cole Manor Tea Rooms** with its magnificent riverside garden on the right. In 125m ignore a footpath turning right over a stile and *turn left* in 20m by a small humped triangular green along **Sunny Lane** all the way **into Bruton**: the lane turns right and up and you have a steep grassy hillside on the right and some trees on the left initially, then the Brue River with the railway line beyond. In 600m you have the railway line immediately to your left (the lane continues as **Gants Mill Lane**) and in 450m join the **A 359 (Cole Road)** to *turn left* along its pavement into town.

In 130m, where **Lusty Gardens** and **Park Road** join on the right, the road bears left to go under the railway line. **[!]** On the other side of the bridge *turn right* to cross the A-road and walk up a few steps and along a narrow tarmac path parallel to the railway line past a footpath signpost. In 230m *turn left* down **Godminster Lane** and in 30m *bear left* with the lane to in 10m cross **Plox** (road), one arm of the **A 359** through Bruton to enter a small grassy park by a footpath signpost (also signed 'High Street') down some steps and follow a tarmac path down to the left. In 40m *turn sharply right* at a three-way junction of tarmac paths and in 25m cross the **River Brue** on a two-railed wooden plank bridge.

Continue along a tarmac path between wooden fences and in 40m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Lower Backway**. You have Sexey's Hospital's gardens and then many other terraced gardens on the left beyond the wall and in 110m and then in another 100m a couple of **Bartons** (tarmac paths) on the left would get you **back up to the High Street** for the tea or dinner options passed earlier, as well as for the Spar store, but **for the direct route to the station** continue in the same direction.

In another 25m, by **Amors Barton** on the left, *turn right* to cross the **Brue** at the old ford via some stepping stones (a great opportunity to clean the boots before the journey back) [if the water level is too high for a safe crossing, use the packhorse bridge 10m further along]. In either case ascend to **Plox (the A 359)** opposite **Abbey Wall**, with a large blocked-up gateway that used to lead to the Abbey, and *turn left* along it past **St. Mary's church** and the **Godminster Farm Shop** to the train station.

Westbury, Bath and Waterloo bound trains all depart from the near platform. Castle Cary bound trains depart from the far platform.

Alternative Start from Castle Cary (add 3.9 km/2.5 mi and 88m ascent/descent, but cut 180m tarmac)

Alight from the train on platform 2 at **Castle Cary** station and walk over the footbridge across to platform 1 [**The Butty Box** is usually parked outside the station building, selling hot and cold food and drinks] and **[!]** *turn right immediately* at the bottom of the stairs through a black metal kissing gate, **[!]** *before* reaching the station building. *Turn right* along a car wide lane at a bend, with a high metal bar fence opposite, back along the railway line. In 110m go through a gap into the corner of a large arable field and veer a little to the left along a grassy track through the field towards a gap in the opposite boundary. In 140m you walk into the neighbouring larger field and continue in the same direction towards another boundary gap 240m away (keep to the left of three large trees).

Walk through the gap and over an earth bridge across a ditch into the adjacent field and *veer right* (75°) to walk parallel to the railway line towards a protruding corner of the opposite boundary in the distance (with **Trendle Hill** beyond, walked across en route to **Bruton**). In 800m, at the corner, continue in the same direction along the left hand grassy boundary to the left field corner and in 160m walk through a gap into the next field and continue in the same direction along its left hand boundary. In 260m, in the far corner ignore a farm track on the left (not a right of way), but instead go through a wooden gate (although the access to it can be very overgrown in summer) and continue in the same direction inside a pasture along its left hand hedge, parallel to that farm track. In 200m ignore a double metal field gate on the left and in 20m go through a wooden field gate into the next field and continue in the same direction. In 240m leave the field through a metal field gate and in 20m *turn left* along a tarmac lane.

In 50m you cross the **River Brue** on the road and in 80m pass **Wyke House** on the right, as the lane starts to ascend gently. In 110m pass **Steps Farm** on the left and in 200m ignore **Wyke Lane** joining from the right (the **Macmillan Way** and the **Leland Trail** join along it), just before a raised bridge over a long dismantled railway line. Immediately after the bridge a drive on the right through a wooden field gate leads to **Wyke Champflower Church (of the Holy Trinity)** and graveyard, which are **well worth a visit**:

- *go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate and follow the tarmac drive towards the **Manor House**, but in 40m veer left with a sign 'To The Church' along a paved path to the left of a hedge. In 50m walk through a wooden gate into the graveyard (if the church is shut, the key can be obtained at the Manor House, no muddy boots please).*

You continue along the lane, pass **Wyke Manor Farm** on the right and in 40m *turn right* over a stile with a signposted footpath ('Bruton 1¼ mile') into a very large pasture and continue towards the top left corner, halfway up the distant hillside on a bearing of 100° (i.e.: *not* in the direction of the signpost!). In 550m you go over a stile on the left just before the very top left corner and continue in the same direction through a smaller grassy area towards two adjacent stiles. In 90m go over the left of the two stiles and turn right along a concrete farm track to turn left in 10m over the other stile and head further up **Trendle Hill** in the previous direction, but more steeply. In 140m go over another stile and in 40m the terrain levels out.

The **views back** to the West are far (in good conditions), all the way out **to the Quantock Hills and to Exmoor**. In 150m in the narrow top left end of this field, *turn right* over a stile in a fence into the neighbouring pasture and *turn left* along its left hand boundary, soon to the left of some trees, then – where the trees discontinue – with views into the **Brue Valley** down on the right and all the way to **Alfred's Tower** on a wooded ridge on the Somerset/Wiltshire boundary. You follow this pleasant

footpath, partly along a ridge, mostly between trees or hedges, and through one metal gate along the way, for almost 1.0 km, ignoring all ways off until a steep descent into **Bruton**, the last 50m of it along tarmac between some houses.

At a three-way road junction at the western end of the town, cross the road on the left (signed 'Wyke Champflower 1 ½') to continue in the same direction along the left hand pavement of **High Street** (the **A 359**). In 25m you pass **Hive Bruton** on the left and in 25m **Mill Dam** (a tarmac path) turns left between houses. The main walk joins down along the High Street.

Turn left along Mill Dam and pick up the directions in the main text at the asterisk *).

Shortcut

(cut 8.8 km, 175m ascent/descent and 2.7 km from the tarmac count)

The B-road runs some distance away parallel to the right, so there is the occasional road noise, but else this is a very idyllic scene: **Green's Coombe**, carved out over the millenia by spring-fed streams, stretching down into the near distance.

In 600m, where you now have a stream running at the valley bottom along a line of trees, descend down the slope with a footpath marker as well as a **Mendip Ring** sticker on a post, heading for a gap at the left end of the tree line at the bottom (20°). In 140m walk through the gap and cross the stream on an earth bank to continue in the same direction up the other side of the valley, which, as you can appreciate now, has in fact three upper arms to it. In 120m you walk through a wooden field gate onto a tarmac driveway, where an unsigned bridleway joins from the left. The drive comes from **Green's Combe Farm** and the main walk joins along it from the left.

Turn right along the drive and pick up the directions in the main text at the triple asterisk ***).

Morning Extension

(add 3.1 km and 150m ascent/descent)

You go over a stile in a fence line en route and in 430m leave the pasture through a metal field gate onto a road and *turn left* along it. Cross the river on **Church Bridge** and start a steep ascent to **Lower Westcombe** hamlet. In 280m **Bailey's Lane** joins from the left at a staggered four-way road junction by a war memorial on the right. *Turn right* to the right of the war memorial along a tarmac lane. In 350m by **Home Farm House** on the left, continue in the same direction through an often-open wooden field gate along the now-gravel lane, steeply downhill. In 80m the lane levels out by a right turn and with a stream on the right and in 30m you ignore a footpath turning right through a metal field gate into a steep pasture.

The lane undulates along the left-hand side of the narrow **Alham Valley**, with the river steeply below and with steep pastures further up the hill flank to the left. In 300m an unmarked footpath forks left into a pasture through a metal field gate, just before the lane descends to the river. **This is a valid route** and even a recommended route after heavy rain, as the following stretch of the lane can be flooded; it joins the lane a bit further along at a footbridge over the river. Staying on the lane, in 140m you reach the valley floor, where a cascading tributary stream joins from the right and just **where the lane fords the Alham**. In all but very low water situations, you will have to go over a

stile on the left into the pasture and *turn right* through it to a two-railed wooden footbridge a bit further along to re-join the lane.

Ignore a right running footpath and continue along the lane towards **Lower Alham Farm**. In 80m go through an often-open metal field gate and *turn right*, steeply up the tarmac farm drive. In 140m *turn right* with the drive by some open barns. In 50m the drive levels out by some cottages on the left and in another 70m you *turn right* at a T-junction with a tarmac lane. Go through a left-turn on the lane and in 450m by **Honeycliff Farm** on the left, a footpath joins from the right through a metal field gate, up from the river through a new plantation. In 150m, just before a two-storey farm building on the right (**Honeycliff** on the OS map), **[!]** *turn up left* along a car wide gravel track, an unmarked bridleway, steeply up the valley flank between hedges.

In 170m *bear right* with the track, now less steeply, and in 210m *turn right* along **Cockpit Lane**. In 30m *turn left* along a signposted footpath through a metal field gate into a pasture and follow a clear car wide gravel track turning right through it (140°). In 150m you walk through a metal field gate and continue in the same direction through another pasture, towards a stile to the left of a solitary tree, while the gravel track turns to the left. In 130m go over a set of stiles either side of a hedge and veer ever so lightly to the left through an arable field. Head for the right of two stiles in the opposite boundary, either side of the field corner. You have superior views from the plateau across **Batcombe Vale** to the ridge opposite, all part of the onwards route.

In 100m go over the stile and continue down a steep pasture **to the right** of a row of trees. Just before the lower field corner you pass some waterworks building built on top of **one of the many springs** in the area and leave the field over a stile. Continue steeply downhill along a narrow path shared with a stream (including any overflow from the spring) and in 50m reach a tarmac lane at a bend. You *turn right* along the lane at the top of **Batcombe village**, gently ascending and in 200m where a car wide track joins down from the hill on the right, you *turn left* along a lane to the recommended lunch stop **The Three Horseshoes**, 50m away, with its **ingenious boot cleaning device** around the back at the garden door.

After lunch pick up the directions in the main text at the double asterisk **).

Afternoon Extension (add 2.9 km, 95m ascent/descent and 2.2 km tarmac)

In 150m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and continue across the broad top of **Cliff Hill** to *veer left* through a large grassy hillside (170°) to a metal field gate in the left hand fence line 250m away (just to the right of two medium high trees). Go through the gate or over stepless stiles on either side of it and *turn right* along a farm track and in 70m *turn left* over a set of stiles in a hedge into another grassy hillside to *turn right* along its right hand boundary and in 60m go over a stile in the boundary hedge and veer down left towards the roof (just about visible over the brow of a hummock along the descent) of **Chequers Cottage** (on the OS map) at the bottom of the drop 180m away.

Leave the field over a stile in a hedge gap onto a tarmac lane at **Dodd's Corner**. Cross it a little to the right of the cottage to continue down a tarmac lane. In 160m go under a bridge that used to carry the **Somerset & Dorset Joint Railway** (Bath to Bournemouth) and in 75m cross the **River Pitt** (also known as the **Piddy**, a short tributary of the River Brue) on a road bridge and in 40m *turn left* along a tarmac lane. In 125m *veer left* to the left of **Manor Farm**, with some brick cottages on the left and

follow the brick wall on the right to in 120m enter the churchyard of **St. Peter's, Shepton Montague Church**, in **Lower Shepton**.

Leave the churchyard onto a tarmac lane and *turn right* along it. In 125m *veer left* where a lane joins from the right (this is the lane you walked along earlier) and in 40m *turn left* off the lane with a footpath signpost ('East Street ½m') to the left of a metal field gate into a steep terraced pasture. The aim is a stile at the far end, about halfway up the slope, 40m up from the bottom right corner. The best route is to curve gently up to the left away from the right hand field boundary and then contour at about halfway up the slope. In 240m you go over the stile in the boundary growth into the top corner of an adjacent field with another stile directly on the left.

Ignore a distinct path through the pasture ahead, *turn left* over the stile into the neighbouring arable field and *turn right* along its right hand boundary. In 170m in the far right corner the right of way continues to the left of a wooded area along the adjacent field's right hand boundary. Some stiles on the right enable you to walk through this enchanting hanging wood though (carpeted in bluebells in season). Either way: in 160m *turn right*, either down into the wood past a redundant stile or inside the wood (ignore a footpath over a stile) and descend steeply along the wood's edge.

At the bottom corner of the wood continue in the same direction along a left hand field boundary and in 80m (another footpath joins from the right) continue in the same direction through a metal field gate and across a stream and then *veer left* along a clear path through an orchard. In 120m walk to the left of a pond and in 40m through a wooden gate and then through a grassy area and in 65m walk through a metal gate in a stone wall onto a road and *turn up right* into **Shepton Montague**. In 130m pass a **bus stop for services to Bruton or Castle Cary** and then in 60m **The Montague Inn**.

In 40m you cross **Down Lane** and continue in the same direction (signed 'Bruton 2, Frome 13') down into the valley of the **River Pitt**. In 700m the lane joins the **A 359 Bruton Road** and in 120m you cross the Pitt on the road. On the other side of the river in 35m *turn left* along **Mill Lane** (signed 'Pitcombe ½'), with the river now on your left. In 400m a tarmac lane turns left, just before a footpath joins from the right through a wooden gate to the left of a double metal field gate. This is the main walk.

Turn left along the lane towards a church and pick up the directions in the main text at the quadruple asterisk ****).