

Bruton Circular (via Stourhead)		
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Bruton Circular (via Stourhead)

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 and in **South Somerset**.

Length: 22.7 km (14.1 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 456m.

For a longer walk, see *below* **Walk options**.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Time: 5 ½ hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 11 hours.

Transport: Bruton Station is a stop on the Heart of Wessex line from Bristol to Weymouth. There is also a limited direct service from/to London Waterloo. For the fastest connection from London a change is therefore usually necessary, either in Bath Spa, Westbury or Castle Cary, journey time from 110 minutes.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Bruton is outside the Network Southeast Railcard zone. Off-Peak returns for morning departures can be prohibitively expensive. Advance tickets are usually the better option.

OS Landranger Map: 183 (Yeovil & Frome)

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

Walk Notes:

This excursion is centred on the small 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 tea options. It leads along the vigorous River Brue and through bucolic pastures up to the wooded range forming the boundary between Wiltshire and Somerset, with the dominant local landmark Alfred's Tower, a folly, on top of it. From there you drop down through enchanting woods to the heart of the Stourhead Estate at the source of the River Stour, with its breath-taking 18th century landscaped garden with lakeside walks, grottoes and classical temples (National Trust, ticketed entry, although large parts of the garden and most notable buildings are visible from the walk route).

After lunch at the estate pub or an NT restaurant you circle back past the large Palladian mansion with views, then through a U-shaped grassy valley (by the source of the river Stour) and up through hanging woods to continue high above the Brue Valley with fine far views across the South Somerset landscape. Towards the end the route passes the renowned art gallery Hauser & Wirth Somerset with its fascinating bar and restaurant and an optional loop routes up to Bruton's dovecote and through town. A start from Castle Cary (with faster and more frequent trains) adds about an hour of walking.

Walk options:

An out-and-back to the **Bronze Age Bell Barrow** site Jack's Castle adds 550m.

A loop through the wooded Park Hill via its Iron Age hillfort site adds 900m.

A mid-afternoon loop through **Walk Farm Hay Meadows**, currently map-led, adds 1.6 km.

A loop at the end up to Bruton's dovecote and **through town** past most tea places adds 1.5 km.

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 5.0 km/3.1 mi and 88m ascent/descent. For a detailed description see SWC 284 Bruton Circular or from Castle Cary.

Accommodation at Stourhead:

The Spread Eagle Inn (see below).

Stourhead Holiday Cottage and **Stourhead B&B**

For details check: (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/stay-with-us-at-stourhead>).

Lunch:

The Old Red Lion North Brewham, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0JL (01749 850 287, <http://www.theoldredlion.org.uk/>)*. The Old Red Lion is located 950m off route, 5.0 km/3.1 mi into the walk.

The Spread Eagle Inn Church Lawn, The Stourhead Estate, *Stourton, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 6QE (01747 840 587, <https://www.spreadeagleinn.com/>)*. The Spread Eagle is located 11.0 km/6.8 mi into the walk. Open all day. Lunch served 12.00-15.00 Mon-Sat and 12.00-16.00 Sun.

The Stourhead Estate Restaurant The Stourhead Estate, *Stourton, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 6QD (01747 841 152, <https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/stourhead/features/tasty-treats-from-our-restaurant>)*. The Stourhead Restaurant is located 150m off route, 11.4 km/7.1 mi into the walk. Open all day. Hot food served 12.00-15.00 daily.

Tea (on or just off route):

The Bull Inn Hardway, Kingsettle Hill, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0LN (01749 812 200, <https://thebullinn-bruton.com/>)*. The Bull Inn is owned by Hauser & Wirth and managed by the team behind the Roth Bar & Grill. It is located 1.0 km off route, 4.5 km from the end of the walk. Open all day Wed-Sun. Food served 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-21.00 Wed-Sat and 12.00-16.00 Sun.

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 10.00 for breakfast, lunch served 12.00-15.00 (-15.30 Sat-Sun), tea served 14.00-15.45, dinner served from 18.00 (Fri-Sat only). On weekends a booking is recommended.

The Godminster Farm Shop Station Road, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0EH (01749 813 733, <https://www.godminster.com/our-information/godminster-shop>)*. The farm shop is just off route before turning up to the station and sells 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 and to 16.00 Sun.

Tea (on a loop through town):

The Bruton Castle 45 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AW (01749 812 104)*. Open 16.00-23.00 Mon, 19.00-23.00 Tue, 12.00-23.00 Wed-Thu, 12.00-24.00 Fri-Sat and 12.00-22.30 Sun. Food served Wed-Sun 12.00-14.30 and 17.30-21.30.

Matt's Kitchen 51 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AW (01749 812 027, <http://www.mattskitchen.co.uk/>)*. Open for dinner only: Wed, Thu and Fri. BYO with £3 corkage. Cash only.

The Table (formerly Truffles Brasserie) 95 High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AR*. Open Thu 12.00-14.00 & 18.00-21.00, Fri 09.00-21.00, Sat 12.00-15.00 and Sun 11.00-14.00. Having closed down in 2018, it reopened in March 2019, now managed by catering outfit The Table (<http://www.tablecatering.co.uk/>).

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.

At the Chapel High Street, *Bruton, Somerset, BA10 0AE (01749 814 070, <http://www.atthechapel.co.uk/>)*. Food served 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-21.30 Mon-Sat (Pizza served all day) 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. It has been awarded a Michelin Bib Gourmand every year since 2010.

The Godminster Farm Shop As above.

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/>

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.

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/>

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.

Stourhead Estate

Stourhead is a 1,072-hectare estate at the source of the River Stour in southwest Wiltshire, extending into Somerset. The estate is 4 km northwest of Mere and includes a Palladian mansion, the village of Stourton, gardens, farmland, and woodland. Stourhead has been part-owned by the National Trust since 1946.

The Stourton family had lived at the estate for 500 years until they sold it to Sir Thomas Meres in 1714. His son sold it in 1717 to Henry Hoare, son of wealthy banker Sir Richard Hoare. The original manor house was demolished and a new house, one of the first of its kind, was built 1721-25. Over the next 200 years, the Hoare family collected many heirlooms, including a large library and art collection. In 1902, the house was gutted by fire but many of the heirlooms were saved, and the house was rebuilt in nearly identical style. The last Hoare family member to own the property, Sir Henry Hugh Arthur Hoare, gave the house and gardens to the National Trust, one year before his death.

The original estate remained largely intact, the main additions are: Three temples (The Temple of Ceres in 1744, the Temple of Hercules in 1754 and the Temple of Apollo in 1765); Alfred's Tower in 1772; an ornamental cottage in 1806 and a Grecian style lodge in 1816.

The lake in the gardens at Stourhead is artificially created. Following a path around the lake is meant to evoke a journey similar to that of Aeneas's descent to the underworld. Buildings and monuments are erected in remembrance of family and local history. Monuments are used to frame one another. The gardens were laid out between 1741 and 1780 in a classical 18th-century design set around the lake, achieved by damming the Stour. The inspiration behind their creation were the painters Lorrain, Poussin and Dughet, who painted Utopian-type views of Italian landscapes. Lakeside features include the five-arched Palladian Bridge, the Rockwork Bridge over the road, the 14th century Bristol High Cross, the Temple of Flora, the grotto and the Gothic Cottage summerhouse.

Stour Valley Way

The Stour Valley Way is a 103 km (64 mi) long-distance footpath from the Stourhead Estate in Stourton, Wiltshire along the course of the River Stour, mostly through Dorset to Hengistbury Head, opposite Christchurch town quay. The waymark is a Kingfisher logo. <http://www.stourvalleyway.co.uk/>

River Stour

The River Stour is a 98 km (61 mi) river flowing from springs fed from greensand at Stourhead in Stourton, Wiltshire south into Dorset through the Blackmore Vale and Gillingham and Sturminster Newton. At Blandford Forum the river breaks through the chalk ridge of the Dorset Downs and then flows south east into the heathlands of south east Dorset. At its estuary at Christchurch it is joined by the (Wiltshire and Hampshire) River Avon before it flows through the harbour, draining into the Channel.

It is sometimes called the Dorset Stour to distinguish it from other rivers of the same name in Kent, Suffolk and the Midlands. The catchment area for the river and its tributaries is listed as being 1,240 km² (480 mi²).

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.

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.

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.

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.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train in **Bruton** and...

- if arriving on platform 2 **from the direction of Westbury**: use the overbridge to cross over to platform 1 and **[!]** *do not turn right* through a fence gap into the car park **but turn left and left again** to **[!]** walk down the platform to its easterly end (the direction from Westbury/London) and in 110m...
- if arriving on platform 1 **from the direction of Castle Cary**, continue along the platform in the direction of travel and...

... at the end of the platform **by a '5 Car Stop'-sign** *fork left* along a gravel path which in 10m turns left, and in 20m go through a metal gate and *turn right* along a tarmac drive, soon gently descending with some houses on the left and a stream on the right.

In 60m go through a gap to the right of a wooden field gate (ignore a metal field gate on the right) and in 20m – just before the drive crosses the **River Brue** on a car wide bridge - *turn right* with a footpath marker across the stream over a two-railed wooden footbridge with a metal gate on the far side. You follow the Brue River along the left-hand boundary of a sloping pasture, in 20m passing a marker post and in 60m another. Continue between trees, with the river now below on the left and in 150m a couple of marker posts guide you over a footbridge crossing a stream. In 65m you *turn left* across a footbridge over another stream and go through a wooden gate into a pasture and broadly follow its left-hand boundary, with **Brewham Road** away on the left.

In 420m you cross a car wide bridge across the Brue and follow another pasture's right-hand side boundary. In 140m go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate or through the metal gate-within-the field gate (a public footpath joins from the left) and *turn right* towards an 'underline' railway bridge. In 40m go under the line and *turn left* on the other side, ignoring a right forking farm track, and in 30m go through a metal gate-within-the field gate and continue along a car wide gravel track parallel to the railway line. You have the **Bruton Dam**, the wall of the **Bruton Flood Storage Reservoir** on the right and follow the track to gently rise to the level of the top of the reservoir wall. In 190m ignore a footpath turning right with the farm track along the reservoir wall and continue in the same direction over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and along the railway line, with **Cogley Wood** away on the right.

In an extreme flooding situation, the whole valley on the right could be flooded... Towards the end of the pasture, *bear right* down to the bottom-right corner and *turn right* across a two-railed wooden footbridge by a confluence of two streams with the Brue. Go through a belt of trees and in 20m over a stile into a potentially overgrown area and keep to the right-hand side, away from the Brue, but close to the tributary stream and the wood on the right. In 60m go over a stile in a fence into a sloping pasture and *turn right* through it, veering away from the right-hand boundary (85°) and heading for a difficult-to-spot stile about 80m to the left of the bottom-right field corner.

In 220m go over a set of stiles either side of a stream and follow the right-hand side boundary of the next pasture, with **Colinshays Manor** looming large up on the half-left. In 130m, where the fence on the right curves slightly away to the right, you continue in the same direction (80°) towards a stile 20m left of a metal field gate at a field boundary T-junction. In 270m go over a set of stiles (either side of a stream) and continue in the same direction up the field (still 80°), towards a fence line at its top, i.e. away from the right-hand boundary. At the top of the rise by the fence and a concrete cattle trough, you get first views of **Alfred's Tower** ahead, and *turn right* along the electric fence with a grassy farm track on the other side of it (i.e. not straight across the farm track, as per the right-of-way on the OS map).

In 180m by a metal cattle trough *turn left* (25°) through the electric fence (with handles) and head to a double metal field gate in a hedge 100 away, with fine views on the left across the **Brue Valley**. Walk through the gate and follow a pasture's right-hand boundary hedge to its far-right corner. In 250m ignore a metal field gate on the right and the car wide farm track behind it, and go through a metal gate with a yellow marker and cross a plank over a ditch to go through another metal gate and continue in the same direction through a smaller pasture. In 125m in the far-right field corner you cross a car wide farm track and continue in the same direction through a metal kissing gate with a yellow marker (a public footpath having joined from the left) and *veer right* towards the church tower in **South Brewham**.

The wooded range ahead forms the **boundary between Somerset and Wiltshire** and also is the local watershed. You leave the field through a metal kissing gate 50m to the right of the church and *turn right* along a concrete drive to a tarmac lane. In 30m *turn left* down through the village along the lane (**Charcroft Hill**), in the next 80m passing the **Village Hall** and **St. John the Baptist, Brewham** (usually locked). In 130m where the road turns further down to the left, you *turn right* along a cul-de-sac. [**But** for a diversion to **the early lunch stop The Old Red Lion** (950m away) follow the road down across the Brue and then back up Tile Hill into **North Brewham** and *turn right* to the pub. From there you could either re-trace your steps to here, or take a shorter mapped route to link up with the walk route further along at **Haven Farm** (add 1.5 km).]

The lane rises out of the village, soon leaving the houses behind and in 300m you *turn left* with the lane, ignoring a signposted public footpath ('Kingsettle Hill 1 ¼ m') into a pasture. The lane drops a little to cross a confluence of streams in 250m and then rises again gently towards **Haven Farm**. You cross a stream on the lane and in 220m pass an '**Access to Haven Farm and Holland Farm-only**' sign and in another 40m have a stream on the right. In 300m you cross another stream joining from the left and go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate with a 'Holland Farm – Private' sign and follow the tarmac drive towards a house. In 60m *turn left* with the tarmac then gravel drive, now with a wooden fence on the left, to skirt around **Holland Farm**.

In 100m ignore a left turn and continue in the same direction (110°) broadly **heading towards Alfred's Tower**. In 75m go through a wooden field gate into a large pasture and *veer ever so slightly to the right* (130°) up through the sloping field, heading to a point just to the right of the highest point of the field (spot height 146m on the OS map), about halfway between the tower and a large open shed in the next field up the hill. In 300m from near the highest point of the field you have fine views back to Holland Farm and down the valley to the Brue and to the hills on the opposite side.

You leave the field in another 90m through a wooden gate in a boundary fence and cross a stream on a plank bridge. In the next field aim for a point to the right of the rickety open-sided shed at the top of the field and in 470m leave the field through a metal field gate onto a tarmac lane. *Turn left* up **Kingsettle Hill** along the lane, in 150m passing **Hilcombe Farm** on the left, while ignoring a right turning footpath through a metal field gate. The gradient gets steeper as you ascend through **Hilcombe Hanging**, and in 250m the **Macmillan Way** crosses along a forest track. In another 200m you reach the top of the rise. **The walk continues** with a *right turn* through the trees towards **Alfred's Tower** 40m away in a large clearing (a forest ride).

Optionally you could first investigate the Bronze Age Bell Barrow site Jack's Castle on the left though (adds 550m): in 10m *turn left* along a narrow path through the trees, which continues as a wider path to the left of an earth bank, a medieval parish and county boundary (Somerset/Wiltshire) for 230m, and in another 30m you reach the site, thought to have been built sometime between 1500 BC and 1100 BC.

Alfred's Tower is open March to October on weekends from 12.00 to 16.00, and it is 205 steps to the viewing platform. **To continue the walk**, with the tower entrance in your back, walk away from it **down the Terrace Ride** (i.e.: *turn left* from the previous walk direction), broadly easterly, to continue parallel to the tarmac lane away on the left. In 300m by a metal car barrier and an interesting info panel away on the left, you enter **Wiltshire** and cross a car wide gravel track. In 160m cross another car wide track (a bridleway) leading into the wood on the right and pass a map of the **Stourhead Estate** to continue in the same direction along the (now narrower) grassy clearing, still parallel to the tarmac lane. In 150m *turn sharp right* along a car wide gravel track and in 25m pass a footpath signpost. In 15m *fork left* with the main track (135°) and in 60m start a steep descent through the wood.

Ignore all ways off and in about 500m, after the track has levelled, you pass a recently-felled area on the right-hand side (felled because of 'Phytophthora ramorum', a water mould disease, particularly affecting larch trees). In about another 700m you continue with a more open area on the right and a steep hanging wood on the left (**Shady Hanging**, then **Tucking Mill Hanging**). In another 30m you ignore a left fork up **Park Hill** and in 300m go over stile to the right of a metal field gate out of the fenced wood and now have open pastures on the right. In 220m go through a wooden field gate by a two-way signpost and continue in the same direction towards '**Turner's Paddock**', just before another car wide track joins from the right below (the return route will follow that track, a public footpath). In 80m you pass a marker post where a footpath descends on the left out of the wood, and the **Stour Valley Way** joins along it. The return route comes down that way.

In 10m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate with **Lynch Wood** down on the right and **Top Wood** up ahead on the right. Continue in the same direction along the car wide track. In 100m you reach the brow of this gentle rise, just before passing **Beech Cottage** away on the left, and in 180m by the corner of a wood on the left you pass a multi-marker post. The public footpath continues as a permissive path and in 80m you get first views of the south westerly end of **Stourhead's Garden Lake**. The track descends to continue below the level of the (artificial) pond but for **views of the Iron Bridge** walk up to the pond dam. In 120m go over a cattle grid to the right of a wooden field gate where a public footpath joins from the right across the pasture (SWC Walk Gillingham (Dorset) Circular joins along it). You continue along the track with a fishing lake below on the right and in 50m get views of **Turner's Waterwheel** and a waterfall on the right through trees and across Turner's Paddock lake.

In 80m pass an info panel on **Turner's Paddock and Waterwheel** and in 60m the **Lower Pumthouse** on the left on the back of an older drinking trough (an info panel and peeks into the machinery room are available on the right-hand side). You rise to a road in 40m and *turn left* along it under the **Rockwork Bridge**, an artificial arched rock gateway, towards **Stourton**. Views on the left across the lake to the various buildings dotted along its fringes are restricted by foliage but in about 350m the area opens out by the **Bristol High Cross** on the left (moved here from Bristol after it became an obstruction to increased traffic) and the **Palladian Arched Bridge** on the left behind, with **The Temple** visible across the lake, and a row of cottages on the left en route to the garden gate (ticketed entry) and **St. Peter's Church** on the right (worth a visit).

Continue in the same direction along the lane past the church and find **The Spread Eagle Inn** on the right (**the pub entrance** is on the far side of the building through the courtyard, signed for 'House and Stableyard, Toilets, Car Park & Exit'). Leave the pub into the courtyard and cross the courtyard diagonally, passing an **Ice Cream Parlour** (seasonal) and a **Gallery** and go through a gravel car park and then along a rising tarmac path, parallel to the road away on the left, signed 'House and Stableyard, Shop & Restaurant'. In 80m the path zigs to the right and zags back to the left, still rising

gently and in 30m you reach a four-way junction ('Shop & Restaurant' up to the right, 'House & Garden' and 'Stableyard' to the left).

For the National Trust Shop and the alternative lunch stop, The Stourhead Estate Restaurant, 150m away, *turn up to the right*, in 30m *turn left* with the path, in 25m *turn right* and in 20m *turn right* into and through the **Visitor Reception Centre**. Out of the Visitor Centre, **Shop and Restaurant** are on your right-hand side.

For the continuation of the walk, *turn left* towards the **Walled Garden**, en route crossing the road on a footbridge. In 40m *turn right* at a T-junction of gravel paths, signed 'House & Garden', and in 40m go through a metal gate out of the garden and in 30m onto the tarmac drive up to Stourhead House by **Gatehouse and Lodge** on the right. The **Stour Valley Way** joins from the right. *Turn left* up the drive, passing some magnificently gnarled Sweet Chestnut trees on the way. The drive turns left (ignore a public footpath continuing ahead across grass) and continues as gravel just before you pass **Stourhead House** on the left (ticketed entry, last at 16.00). There are grand views on the right towards **White Sheet Hill** (on 80°), north of the town of Mere, as well as (on 110°) some of the downs far away near Tisbury (possibly Win Green).

In 100m from the house entrance go through a metal gate to the left of a cattle grid and a metal field gate by a two-way footpath signpost and *turn left* with a yellow marker, signed for 'Alfred's Tower', ignoring the tree-lined gravel drive ahead, also National Cycle Network Route 25. You have the flank of Stourhead House on the left and a pasture on the right. In 80m ignore a wooden kissing gate on the left and in 70m go over a cattle grid. Continue along the car wide gravel track and in about 350m pass **The Obelisk** (an 1839 replacement for the 1746 original) on its right-hand side, on the track. In about another 250m go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a cattle grid by a lodge to the right and ignore the continuation of the track, signed on the left for 'Alfred's Tower' and *turn left* over a stile (signposted '**Six Wells, Park Hill**') and go down steeply along some steps then a path through a hanging wood (**Sunny Hanging** on the OS map, bluebells in season).

At the bottom of the wood *turn right* with a marker post along a car wide track. You have a barbed wire fence on the left and several medieval ponds below, leading down to the main Garden Lake. In 70m go over a stile to the left of a wooden field gate and *turn left* into the U-shaped valley of **Six Wells Bottom**, towards an earth bridge between two of the ponds. You go over a stile to the left of a metal field gate and cross the nascent **River Stour** (the furthest wellhead is up Six Wells Bottom at the – just about visible – **St. Peter's Pump**, which also was moved here from Bristol). In 25m *bear right* with a marker post and ascend steeply through another hanging wood (**Tucking Mill Hanging** on the OS map), including a stepped section near the top and come out by a wooden bench at a T-junction with a car wide forest track.

Here you have a choice:

- **For a loop through the forest via the Parkhill Iron Age hillfort site** (adds 900m), *turn right* along the forest track along the edge of the wooded plateau, in 100m where a track joins from the left, ignore a right fork downhill and in another 250m *bear left* over a stile into the fenced hillfort site. A clear path leads through two circular ditch-and-bank ramparts into the mostly cleared large inner area. To continue *turn left* from the previous direction and *turn left* along a car wide forest track that runs through the middle of the site. Leave the area through the ramparts and then a wooden field gate (there is an interesting info panel on the left) and continue down the **Broad Ride**. In 300m cross a forest track and in another 100m a path crosses by a **Stour Valley Way marker post** on the left. This is the continuation of the main walk. *Turn right* along the path (210°).

- **For a direct continuation**, continue in the same direction a little to the left (210°) and in 80m pass a marker post and cross the **Broad Ride** with a forest track running through it.

In 120m cross another forest ride and start a gentle descent. In 80m go through a ditch-and-bank (a possible park pale) and commence the steep descent from the wooded plateau through the hanging wood. In 110m you come out on a car wide farm track and *turn right* along it (briefly re-tracing the outbound route). In 90m *fork left* with the car wide track (290°), ignoring the right fork (the outbound route came down that way). You descend with the track and in 150m cross the outflow from a pond away on the right. You re-ascend and in 140m go through a wooden field gate into a large pasture and follow its left-hand boundary fence further uphill in the same direction. In 150m *bear left* with the fence and walk through some trees. In another 90m the terrain levels out and in 125m you go over a stile to the right of a wooden field gate and follow a car wide track uphill through a wood (**Baker's Copse** on the OS map).

Ignore a left turning forest track in 70m and a right turning one in another 60m. In 210m at a T-junction with a track at a bend, *turn left* with a marker post along the track, a public footpath, more or less on the level. In 180m ignore a forest track turning down to the left and curve to the right with the track, now with **Perfect's Copse** on the left and **Three Score Acres** rising up on the right (both on the OS map). In 130m ignore another left turn and in 40m you have an open pasture on the left behind a row of trees. In another 270m at the top of a gentle rise and **[!]** *just before a slight right curve* in the track, you **[!]** *turn left* over a stile into the pasture and *bear right* on a bearing of 260° to cut its corner, aiming for a stile to the right of a wooden field gate, while staying to the right of a large boggy area in the dip, around a beginning stream.

In 300m leave the field over the stile and *turn left* along a tarmac lane. **Macmillan Way and Leland Trail** have joined from the right. In 20m **[!]** *fork right* along a gravel car wide track (225°), ignoring the continuation of the tarmac lane (which forks a little further along). In 20m pass a metal car barrier with a **Macmillan Way** marker and a **Stourhead Western Estate** (Walkers Welcome on Hard Tracks)-sign and continue gently uphill through **Blackslough Wood**, re-entering **Somerset**. In 90m you reach the top of the rise and in another 80m at a multi-path junction by a marker post on the right, ignore the left fork gently uphill and any right turn and continue in the same direction (200°) downhill along a forest track with the Macmillan Way and Leland Trail.

In 110m ignore a right turning forest track and continue downhill and in 170m *fork left* (250°) along a minor forest track on the level, ignoring the main track curving to the right. In 25m pass a Macmillan Way marker on a dead tree's trunk on the left at ground level and in 130m continue in the same direction downhill to a gate, where the forest track turns left. In 35m go through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate and continue in the same direction along the left-hand boundary of a pasture, with fine far views on the right (295°) across the **Brue Valley** towards the Iron Age hillfort site on **Crech Hill**, skirted along on the other Bruton Circular walk. In 100m continue in the same direction at the corner of the wood on the left and in another 100m go through a gate in a fence line to continue in the same direction along a farm track coming in from the right. In 110m at the top of a gentle rise the track curves a little to the right and now continues in a straight line until you *bear right* off it in 2.1 km.

In more detail: in 160m cross a stream on the track and go through a wooden field gate; in 125m go through a wooden field gate and continue through **Stavordale Wood**; in 200m cross another stream on the track and go through a wooden field gate; in 200m cross a gravel farm drive (from **Bedlam Green Farm** on the right) now with views again of **Alfred's Tower** behind on the right (on 40°); you continue between hedges and in 150m go through a wooden field gate and in 20m through another one;

ascend a little hillock in 300m and go through a wooden field gate at the top; in 75m you have clear views again on the right to **Creech Hill** and to farm buildings ahead; in 160m go through a wooden field gate and in 90m through an overgrown metal field gate and through **Coachroad Farm** to a road.

- [**For the early tea stop The Bull Inn** (adds 700m) *turn right* and in 500m *bear left* with the road where a tarmac drive joins from the right, in 400m *turn left* at a T-junction with a road and in 100m find The Bull Inn on your right. From the pub continue in the previous direction (turning right out of the pub) and in 1.0 km by a footpath signpost on the left the main walk joins from the left over a stile and a plank bridge. Continue along the road and pick up below at the asterisk *).]

Else cross the road and go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate by a signpost ('Redlynch 1½ m') and in 125m go over a stile to the right of a field gate; in 90m go over a stile to the right of a metal field gate (a left turn gives **permissive access to Walk Farm Hay Meadows**, currently map-led; this adds 1.6 km) and in 100m pass a fenced wood away on the left (**Walk Copse** on the OS map); in 130m go over a set of stiles and continue through a pasture. [The Hay Meadows route re-joins from the left.]

In 150m, over the brow of the field, [**!**] *turn right* towards a couple of metal field gates with some large open sheds some way beyond the gates across another pasture (330°). In 80m go over the (overgrown) stile to the left of the left metal field gate (or through the metal field gate) into a pasture and cross it diagonally (305°) to a stile 50m to the left of the sheds. In 200m go over a set of stiles either side of a poplar-lined farm track leading on the left to **Brewhamfields Farm**. Continue in the same direction to the far field corner and in 100m go over a set of stiles either side of a plank bridge over a ditch. *Bear right* in the next field to follow its right-hand boundary and in the far-right corner go over a stile and a plank bridge by a footpath signpost and *turn left* along a road.

*) In 150m you pass a row of cottages and ignore a drive turning right to Horseley Farm. In 100m pass **Leaside** (house) on the left and in another 90m *turn right* along a signposted footpath along a concrete drive to **Tower View Cottage** and **Green Lane Cottage**. In 90m *fork left* along a gravel track and in 80m pass a cottage to its left where the car wide drive ends and continue along a narrow and possibly overgrown path. In 50m go through a gate with a yellow marker into a wooded area (possibly overgrown) and in 70m *turn left* by a marker post and in 15m leave the wood over a stile into a pasture. *Bear right* (265°) down the pasture to the right of a large house and aim for the far corner of the wood fringing the field. In 300m at the wood corner continue along the wood, gently uphill. The wood is **Cogley Wood**, and the spring on the right in **Deadman's Hole** (on the OS map) is the furthest tributary to the stream crossed early in the walk, where the route left the River Brue and the railway line.

In 50m go over a stile and follow the right-hand boundary of the next pasture, still with the wood on the right. In 210m in the top corner, go through a hedge gap (there is a totally overgrown stile to the right) and continue in the same direction through the next pasture. In 130m in its top-right corner *turn right* over a stile, cross a ditch on a plank and continue through a wooded strip. In 25m go over a stile and follow a fenced path, with **Hill View Farm** away on the left. You have open views on the right across to **Alfred's Tower on Kingsettle Hill** and in 160m go over a stepless stile and a plank bridge and continue with a yellow marker through a large pasture towards a metal field gate (305°). In 80m you cross a car wide track (a public footpath joins along it from the left) and in another 130m leave the field through the gate-within-the-field-gate. *Veer left* (280°) through the next, larger pasture towards **Marydown Copse** at the far end.

In 400m leave the field over a stile to the left of a wooden gate to the left of a cattle grid and follow a fenced track curving left through the wood. In 50m *turn right* with a

footpath marker further down through the wood and in 70m, just before a cattle grid, (at time of writing) you pass an artwork by **Jenny Holzer**, belonging to the **Hauser & Wirth Somerset** Art Gallery, passed very shortly. Enter a pasture and head for **Durslade Farm**, the home of the gallery, with fine views of the **Bruton Dovecote** on **Pillow Mound** a little to the left, with **Creech Hill** behind, and the tower of **St. Mary the Virgin, Bruton** as well as some of the playing fields of the schools in town.

Follow the obvious path and in 250m go over a stile to the right of a small fenced pond and continue through the gallery's car park towards its entrance. Entry to the gallery is free and you'll find the highly recommended **Roth Bar & Grill** in the main building on the right and the interesting landscaped gardens through the building (also free entry). *Turn left 20m* before the farm, in 20m go through a wooden gate and cross **Dropping Lane** carefully to go through a wooden kissing gate in a stone wall gap and *turn right* through some allotments (**Durslade Walled (Community) Garden**). In 90m go through wooden gates either side of a gravel drive and continue through a grassy area. In 70m stay to the left of the first of a string of ponds (the former fishing ponds of **Bruton Abbey**) and in 110m you reach a barbed wire fence corner on the left.

Here you have a choice:

For the direct route to Bruton Station, *bear right* through the ponds, in 40m cross a stream and *turn left* and in 30m *bear right* to leave the grassy area through a wooden gate and down some steps and *turn left* along **Dropping Lane** under the railway bridge and in 70m by a recently built office building in the style of an old signal box, *turn right* up the station approach, in 150m passing the old (and beautifully refurbished) station building and station clock (note the **permanent lady caller, Rita, in the red phone box** to the left of it). Westbury, Bath and Waterloo bound trains all depart from the near platform. Castle Cary bound trains depart from the far platform.

To continue the walk up to the dovecote and then through town and past all other tea places (add 1.5 km), in 20m *turn left* 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 140m 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 continue in the previous direction down the hill (235°) towards one of two stepless stiles and go over a stile into sports fields. Follow the right-hand sports field boundary and in 100m continue through a car park (with a fenced playground on the left) to a road.

Turn right down **Godminster Lane** and in 80m go over the railway line on the road bridge. In 50m *turn right* with the road where a footpath joins from the left along a tarmac path 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 with a **Leland Trail** marker (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 some other terraced gardens on the left beyond the wall and in 110m *turn left* up along one of the town's **Bartons** (a tarmac path) and in 60m reach the **High Street**.

Away to the left you have **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 150m you have **Truffles Brasserie** on the right-hand side. *Turn right* along High Street and pass **The Sun Inn** and **At The**

Chapel, an upmarket restaurant, bar, bakery and boutique hotel, with a convenience store opposite, then a **Spar** store on the left and the **Bruton Museum** on the right. Eventually *turn right* at a four-way junction opposite the **Library** (built by a teetotal philanthropist on the site of a former pub), down **Patwell Street**. In 25m on the right at knee height spot a sign marking the **level of the 1917 flood** and descend further, passing another of the village stores.

[!] **Just before Church Bridge** (on the left-hand near side note the **Patwell Pump**, a pointed-roofed well), **[!]** *turn right* along a tarmac path. In 60m you pass the ancient packhorse bridge over the Brue and in another 20m, by **Amors Barton** on the right, *turn left* 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]. 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 the road past Church Bridge and **St. Mary's church**.

You pass the **Godminster Farm Shop** where the road turns right and in another 90m by a recently built office building in the style of an old signal box, *turn left* up the station approach, in 150m passing the old (and beautifully refurbished) station building and station clock (note the **permanent lady caller, Rita, in the red phone box** to the left of it). Westbury, Bath and Waterloo bound trains all depart from the near platform. Castle Cary bound trains depart from the far platform.