

Castle Cary Circular (via Camelot)		
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Castle Cary Circular (via Camelot)

Start & Finish: Castle Cary Station

Castle Cary Station, map reference ST 635 335, is 39 km south of Bristol and 172 km south west of Charing Cross. It lies 46m above sea level and in **South Somerset**.

Length: 30.3 km (18.8 mi).

Cumulative ascent/descent: 602m. For a shorter walk, see *below* **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 8 out of 10

Time: 7 hours walking time.

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

Transport: Castle Cary station is on the Reading to Taunton and the Bristol to Weymouth (Heart of Wessex) lines, with a train from London roughly every hour (two-hourly on Sundays). Journey time from 82 minutes.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Castle Cary is outside the Network Southeast Railcard zone. Off-Peak returns for morning departures can be prohibitively expensive. Advance tickets are usually the better option. Take a train no later than 09.30.

OS Landranger Map: 183 (Yeovil & Frome)

OS Explorer Map: 142 (Shepton Mallet & Mendip Hills East) & 129 (Yeovil & Sherborne)

Walk Notes:

This is a route along the fringes of the Somerset Levels over some fine viewpoints to three magnificent hills, one of which may well be the site of the mythical Camelot of King Arthur fame.

You rise from the station up a hillock and through quiet residential streets to the centre of the charming market town of Castle Cary with many of its buildings built in the honey-coloured Cary stone, including the stunning Market House. Climb out of the modern-day town past the site of the medieval castle (only earthworks remain) to the top of Lodge Hill with its panoramic views across the Somerset Levels to Glastonbury Tor and the Mendip Hills, and inland towards the wooded boundary ridge with Wiltshire. Visible ahead already are the three hills at the far end of the walk route: Cadbury Hill, Parrock Hill and The Beacon/Corton Hill, each different in shape and appearance.

You continue through a scenic dry green valley and along an ancient holloway, then through pastures in the shallow Cam River valley to lunch in North or South Cadbury, from where it's only a short while to Cadbury Hill, the 'likeliest contender' for King Arthur's legendary court at Camelot.

Apart from being a stunning Bronze and Iron Age hillfort site, it also offers some very fine views across bucolic valleys to the other hills of the route. Steep ascents are needed for Parrock Hill and The Beacon/Corton Hill, but the rewards are more fine views, back to Cadbury Hill and on to the Dorset coastal ranges. The return route passes some remains of a large WWII airfield and crosses the very large Sigwells plateau-with-views, before re-crossing the Cam River valley and approaching Castle Cary from a different angle.

Walk Options:

Bus Line 1 (Yeovil – Shepton Mallet) connects South and North Cadbury, as well as Castle Cary's Town Centre to the Railway Station. The bus runs Mon-Fri hourly in the morning from the station, but only once late lunch and once late afternoon to Castle Cary Station. On Saturday, there is only one bus in the morning, but it has more convenient times in the afternoon/evening than on weekdays.

Bus Line 667 (Street – Wincanton) links Castle Cary's Town Centre to Bruton (and its station), early evening Mon-Fri.

Cut out the out-and-back up to and around the plateau of the **Cadbury Castle** hillfort site. Cut 1.8 km and 80m ascent.

Outbound and Return Route are never far from each other, so there are numerous ways to cut out some of the route, using footpaths or roads. An example would be Compton Road, between the lunch pub in South Cadbury and Compton Pauncefoot village:

- walk it after lunch, either without or with first going up to Cadbury Castle, to pick up the return route in Compton Pauncefoot at the double asterisk **);
- walk the route as described to Compton Pauncefoot (20.2 km/12.6 mi with 450m ascent), and *turn left* along Compton Road back to the pub in South Cadbury and wait for a bus (Line 1, as above).

A Shortcut in the afternoon leads along the valley between Sigwells Plateau and Parrock Hill, thus avoiding the steep ascent up onto and subsequent very steep descent down from Parrock Hill, as well as the steep ascent of The Beacon/Corton Hill, climbing up to Sigwells at a gentler gradient. Cut 2.5 km and 40m ascent.

Elenvenses/Lunch (details last updated 20/09/2021)

The Catash Inn Cary Road, *North Cadbury, Somerset, BA22 7DH (01963 441 531)*. The Catash is located 80m off route, 8.4 km/5.2 mi into the walk. Open evenings only Mon-Fri and all-day Sat-Sun.

Chapel Cross Coffee Rooms Chapel Cross, *South Cadbury, Somerset, BA22 7ET (01963 440 501)*. The Coffee Rooms are located 9.7 km/6.0 mi into the walk. Open 10.00-12.00. Located in the former Chapel of South Cadbury, believed to have been a stop-off point for pilgrims en route to Glastonbury, and with its mobile unit serving from an old horsebox (annually based at Glastonbury Festival).

The Camelot Inn Chapel Road, *South Cadbury, Somerset, BA22 7EX (01963 441 685)*. The Camelot is located 10.4 km/6.5 mi into the walk. Open all day Wed-Sun. Food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.00 Wed-Sat and 12.00-19.00 Sun.

Tea (details last updated 20/09/2021)

The Horsepond Inn The Triangle, *Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7BD (01963 361 313)*. The Horsepond is located 1.8 km from the end of the walk. **This pub is currently closed and for sale.**

The White Hart 4 Fore Street, *Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7BQ (01963 350 077, <http://www.thewhitehartcastle Cary.co.uk/index>)*. The White Hart is located 1.7 km from the end of the walk.

Somerset Wine Co. and Enoteca Market Place, *Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7AL (01963 548 228, <https://somersetwinecompany.com/>)*. The Enoteca is located 1.5 km from the end of the walk. Shop open Mon-Sat 10.00-18.00. Enoteca open Thu-Sat 10.00-22.00.

The George Hotel Market Place, *Castle Cary, Somerset, BA7 7AH (01963 350 761, <https://thegeorgehotelcastle Cary.co.uk/>)*. The George is located 1.5 km from the end of the walk. Open all day every day. Food served 12.00-14.45 and 18.00-20.30 daily.

Plus several other options in Castle Cary, mentioned in the directions.

Shortcut

Go downhill across the field and in 45m cross a stile and a railed footbridge over a stream into another field, which you ascend on a similar bearing (160°). In 180m, having crossed a field, continue in the same direction *to the right* of some hedgerows (170°). In 100m, continue along the left-hand side of the next field. In 200m cross into another field to continue in the previous direction, ignoring an unmarked right forking public footpath. In 600m at the far field corner, you go through metal sheep pen gates and cross a car wide track into the corner of the next field and continue along its left-hand side (160°). You follow the path through a dip and in 450m enter a wood to continue uphill (120°). In 100m *veer left* uphill (80°), ignoring a path forking up to the right. In 100m *turn right* along a car wide track (initially 120°) to continue uphill. In 220m the track continues on gravel (ignore a track to the left) and in 100m – just before a white rendered house – you *turn left* into **Sigwells Farm**. The Main Walk has joined from the road ahead.

Pick up the directions below in the main text at the asterisk *).

Notes:

Castle Cary

Castle Cary (CC), locally referred to as 'Cary', is a market town in south Somerset, at the foot of Lodge Hill and on the River Cary, which springs on the flanks of the hill. The river's name derives from the Celtic *caer* meaning rock, crag or castle, making the term Castle Cary a double-play.

Cary first appears in recorded history after the Norman invasion and the first known Cary castle was Norman in origin and made of timber frame. It was besieged in 1138 and in 1152 by King Stephen. The second castle was built around 1250 in honey-coloured Cary stone from the nearby Hadspen Quarry, but it was abandoned by the mid-15th century in favour of a manor house, when improvements in artillery ranges meant that the castle could now be fired upon from the surrounding higher ground. The stones were pillaged for other town buildings, including the George Hotel, and only earthworks remain.

CC developed as a market town with a number of rural industries, especially wool, and by 1700 it was known for its cloth production, by then mainly linen. In 1837 John Boyd began making horse-hair textiles, for which the company is still renowned today, producing on looms from 1870.

The manor was bought in the 1780s by the Hoares of Stourhead. The grade II* listed Market House was rebuilt in 1855 in anticipation of increased trade influenced by the railway station opening a year later. It now contains a museum, tourist information and community centre. Further renowned old buildings are the Roundhouse (a village lockup from 1779) and the thatched George Hotel.

Douglas Macmillan, founder of the Macmillan Cancer Relief charity, was born in CC and his birthplace on the High Street has a blue plaque. The Macmillan Way long-distance footpath passes through the town.

Monarch's Way

The Monarch's Way is a waymarked linear 990 km (615 mi) long-distance footpath in England that approximates the escape route taken by King Charles II in 1651 after being defeated in the Battle of Worcester. It runs from Worcester via Bristol and Yeovil to Brighton. The waymark is yellow and shows a picture of the ship *The Surprise* above the Prince of Wales's three-point feathered crown which is superimposed on a Royal Oak tree (which is at Boscobel House) in black.

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.

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.

River Cam

The River Cam is a river in the south of Somerset. It rises east of Yarlington and flows south west past North Cadbury, Sparkford, Queen Camel and West Camel. Tributaries include the stream through Blackford and Compton Pauncefoot. The Cam flows into the Yeo at the Royal Naval Air Station near Yeovilton.

Cadbury Castle/Camelot Fort

Cadbury Castle is a multivallate Bronze and Iron Age hillfort in South Cadbury, on the southern edge of the Somerset Levels. It has been called the 'likeliest contender' for King Arthur's legendary court at Camelot. The hillfort is formed by a 7.3 hectares plateau at 153m above sea level, surrounded by the 1.2 km-long inner bank. It has four ramparts and three ditches on the slopes of the limestone Cadbury Hill (only two survive in the east). Excavations have revealed artifacts from human occupation and use from the Neolithic through the Bronze and Iron Ages. There is evidence that the fort was violently taken at around the time of the Roman invasion, and that the Roman army erected barracks on the hilltop.

The site was refortified and used again after the Roman period, from c. 470 until after 580. Evidence of various buildings at the site has been unearthed, including a Great Hall, round and rectangular house foundations, metal workings, and a possible sequence of small rectangular temples or shrines. It therefore seems probable that it was the chief *caer* ("fort") of a major Brythonic ruler, his family, his warriors, servants and horses. Militarily, the location makes sense as a place where refugees and the southwestern Brythons of Dumnonia could have defended themselves against Saxon attacks from the east. If Arthur did indeed exist and was conceived at Tintagel, as tradition asserts, he may have been a prince of Dumnonia and used Cadbury as a stronghold on his eastern frontier. More tenuous support for Cadbury being the mythical 'Camelot' is given by the names of the nearby West Camel and Queen Camel villages, and by the River Cam which has been proposed as the 'Camlann' (Crooked Bank), of Arthur's last battle.

In the 11th century, the hill was used as an administrative centre in place of Ilchester due to Viking threats.

The hill is overlooked by Sigwells, a plateau rich in archaeological remains, containing two overlapping Early Bronze Age round barrows and a single round barrow, as well as Britain's oldest known metalworking building, dated to the 12th century BC: a bronze casting building with an associated enclosure.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alight from the train in **Castle Cary** on platform 2 or 3 and go up some steps onto the overbridge near the rear of the platform (i.e.: not the bridge near the front of the platform leading to the station building). *Turn right*, signed '**Footpath to Town**' and go down some steps and *turn left* through a metal kissing gate and continue between fences past a map and info panel for **Castle Cary & Ansford**, along a tarmac path, steadily uphill. This path is part of the **Monarch's Way**, which you will now follow for the next 6.0 km. Through the hedge on the left, occasionally you can spot a wooded hilltop; this is **Creech Hill** near Bruton, and you will see it again from the high points at the far end of the walk. In 300m go through a wooden gate onto **Ansford Hill** (the A371) on the fringes of **Ansford** and cross it carefully and continue up **Lower Ansford**, a residential road. In 20m continue in the same direction, where **Hallett Road** curves up to the left, immediately ignoring a signposted public footpath to the left. In 230m continue in the same direction along the continuation of the road, a signposted public footpath ('Castle Cary Town Centre'), ignoring the left turning Tuckers Lane, and in 50m *fork left* gently uphill along tarmac, again signposted for the Town Centre.

The path turns left and you go up some steps and *turn right* along another tarmac path to the right of the churchyard of **St. Andrew's, Ansford** (the return route will go through it). In 20m continue along a large grassy area (**Fairfield Common**), either along the grass itself or along a tarmac path to the left of the fenced area (Woodforde Green, continuing as Priory View). In 180m cross **Florida Fields/Churchfields Drive** and *bear right* along a tarmac path (a signposted footpath) up into **Castle Cary**, soon with some sports fields on the left. In 60m go over a brow, now with the green flank of **Lodge Hill** visible ahead, and in 160m continue in the same direction downhill along **Florida Street**. In 170m you emerge on a triangular square (**Bailey Hill**) with a **Roundhouse** (an 18th century lock-up) in the middle. An explanatory panel is mounted on its far side. *Bear left* across the square (from the previous direction) and in 20m *turn right* down a cobbled path (**The Pitching**) to the right of the **Market House** (built in 1855 to replace an older version, although looking much older in style).

In 25m you emerge on Castle Cary's **Market Place**, by the **Somerset Wine Company and Enoteca** and **Pinsents** (deli and coffee, 09.00-16.00 Mon-Sat) on the right. Cross the road and continue in the same direction to the right of **The George Hotel** along **Paddock Drain**, passing an info panel on the **Castle Cary** on the left. In 15m *fork up to the right* along a fenced tarmac path to the left of some buildings, a signposted public footpath ('Lodge Hill ½ m'), with **Monarch's Way**, **Leland Trail** and **Macmillan Way** markers (these three Long-Distance paths run concurrently for the next 4.0 km). In 100m you pass the small communal **Moat Garden** on the right and go up some steps and through a wooden kissing gate into a large open sloping meadow. **The medieval castle** would have been occupying the disturbed looking area to the right below, all the way down to **Park Pond**, fed by a spring above, the **source of the River Cary**.

Bear left uphill along the left-hand boundary trees and fence, in 50m going under a large tree, with the outer bank and ditch of the Castle on the right. In 110m go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate and continue up **Lodge Hill** with various markers. In 200m the terrain levels out and you *bear right* with the fence and path through a gap in an electric fence (may be temporary), crossing a footpath joining from the left over a stile in the fence. There are some benches on the right and you have far views **across the Somerset Levels to Glastonbury Tor** (300°), with the long low ridge of **Pennard Hill** leading towards it on the right. In 120m *turn right* with the fenced boundary and a marker on a gate post on the right, ignoring a metal field gate ahead. On a fair weather-day you will see the **Mendip Hills** this side of the Bristol Channel to the right of the Tor, and maybe even the **Brecon Beacons** beyond them.

In 50m *bear to the left* with the boundary and continue in a broadly southerly direction. You have a barbed wire fence on the right and are almost level with the Park Pond and with Castle Cary's parish church below. In 230m you reach the raised, metal fenced viewpoint on **Lodge Hill** with its telescope and toposcope at 154m above sea level. Continue in the previous direction along the upper boundary of the fenced hill. In 40m *turn left* through a wooden gate with a small Monarch's Way sticker and up a bank onto a gravel farm track at a bend and *turn right* along it (i.e.: if you start to descend from the hill, you have missed the turning). With far views in all directions, behind you on the left, on 70° you have **Alfred's Tower** on the wooded ridge between Somerset and Wiltshire (SWC Walk 342 Bruton Circular via Stourhead). Half right ahead are the three hills climbed just after lunch, from right-to-left: the wooded **Cadbury Hill**, the green plateau of **Parrock Hill** and the long ridge of **The Beacon segueing into Corton Hill**.

In 250m cross a farm track down to **Manor Farm** on the right and go through either an overgrown kissing gate or over a stile to the right, or through a field gate, passing a solar panel farm on the left. In 50m *turn right* through a wooden kissing gate into the large pasture on the right and *turn left* through it, aiming for a fence corner (190°). In 250m pass the fence corner and in 60m *turn left* through a wooden kissing gate ('The Pat Jones Gate') to the right of a wooden field gate and follow a left-hand boundary to the far-left field corner by an electricity substation 300m away. Go through a wooden gate in the middle of the substation and *turn right* along a fenced path around two sides of the metal bar fenced site in 40m to the **A359** (Galhampton Hill). *Turn left* along the road, without a good walkable verge on either side. In 160m *turn right* through a wooden gate with a signposted bridleway ('Hicks Lane ½ m, Yarlington 1 ½ m').

In 50m go through a high metal gate and cross a concrete farm track and continue downhill into a U-shaped scenic dry valley along a wide grassy path. Towards the bottom of the drop, the path curves gently to the right, staying to the left of an intermittent line of trees. From the last of the trees, you have **Parrock Hill and Cadbury Castle dead ahead**. You eventually go through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate and continue in the same direction along **Hick's Lane**, a car wide track at a bend, ignoring a restricted byway to Yarlington on the left. You have trees on the right and a low hedge on the left, giving intermittent views to a low curving ridge above Yarlington (**Yarlington Sleights**). In 220m ignore a signposted footpath turning left through a metal gate ('Yarlington ½ m') and then along a left-hand field boundary.

In another 30m a couple of footpaths turn right over a stile into a field, and in 90m you ignore the farm track veering right into a pasture and continue in the same direction along a grass track between hedges. In 300m, another public footpath turns right unmarked through a metal gate-within-a-metal-fieldgate, just before Hick's Lane commences a gentle descent into the shallow valley of the **River Cam**. The track continues as a deep holloway and in 200m you emerge onto a tarmac lane at a bend by a two-way signpost. A footpath joins from the left from Yarlington. *Turn right* along the lane (Long Lane), gently uphill for 50m, where you get views again of **Parrock and Cadbury Hills**. In 250m you start to descend with the lane and in 140m cross a tributary of the Cam River. Ignore a signposted footpath into a field on the left and *curve up to the right* with the lane. In 150m, where the lane turns to the right, you *turn left* along a grass path and down some steps by a footpath signpost into a sunken path.

In 140m, just before the track crosses the Cam, *turn right* over a railed plank bridge and cross a stile into an arable field and follow its left-hand boundary. In 280m, about 20m before the far field corner (another footpath joins from the right across the field), you *turn left* over a stile with some markers and cross a two-railed bridge over a millstream channel of the Cam. You *turn right* on the far side of the bridge, ignoring a footpath ahead. In 90m go through a double wooden field gate and *bear right* across a bridge over the millstream, with **Hewletts Mill** (Grade II-listed) on the left. In 30m go

through a stepped wall gap to the left of a double car gate onto **Sandbrook Lane** and *turn left* along it (a footpath signpost points back to 'Stoke Lane ½ m'). In 180m ignore the left turning **Corkscrew Lane** (the Cam runs to the left of the lane now) and in another 130m a right turning signposted footpath through a metal field gate.

In another 80m, just before a very narrow hedged-in part of the lane, *veer up to the left* with a signposted footpath through a metal gate into a pasture and follow its right-hand boundary hedge parallel to the road, with the Cam meandering to the left. In 350m go through a metal gate and *turn left* along the lane across the river and *turn right* in 70m with the lane. In 10m **[!]** *bear left* up some steps and through a metal gate with a yellow marker and a signpost ('North Cadbury ½ m') into another pasture and follow a clear path along a right-hand field boundary. In 170m, at the far end of the field, ignore a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate onto the lane and *bear left* for 10m and go over a stile and cross another pasture towards a stile about 80m to the left of the far-right corner (200°). In 180m go over the stile and follow a fence on the left and a hedge on the right between a school and its sports fields. In 20m go through a wooden gate and down some steps onto a tarmac drive and *turn left* along it.

In 30m, by **Chapel House** on the left, continue in the same direction with a public footpath through a bike barrier where a restricted byway joins from the left, and in 100m continue along **Cutty Lane** through **North Cadbury** village. In 110m at a bend of a through road (High Street), you can see **The Catash Inn** 80m away to the right at the junction with **Cary Road**. Continue in the same direction and in 125m cross **Woolston Road** and continue along the drive to **North Cadbury Court** and **St. Michael the Archangel**, signposted 'Church'. In 90m, by the entrance gate to the Court, *bear right* through the lychgate into the churchyard and follow a tarmac path in 20m *to the left* towards the church, in 40m *forking right* with the path.

Past the church, *bear right* and go through a wooden kissing gate in a hedge 30m away and *veer right* through a meadow on the level, ignoring the slope on the left into the valley of the main tributary to the Cam, with the Three Hills away on the left. In 90m go through a wooden gate and down some steps onto **Parish Hill** (road) and *turn left* downhill along it out of North Cadbury, ignoring a signposted footpath ahead. In 700m you cross the Cam tributary on the lane (Monarch's Way and Leland Trail re-join from the right out of a field) and rise towards the **A303**. In 150m ignore the slip-road to the westbound carriage on the right and in another 30m find the **Chapel Cross Coffee Rooms** on the right, just before crossing the A road. At the other slip road there is a **bus stop for services to Castle Cary** away on the right and a pavement starts on the right, as you follow **Chapel Road** gently uphill into **South Cadbury**. In 600m you reach **The Camelot Inn** at the junction with **Folly Lane/Compton Road**.

You continue in the previous direction past the pub along **Church Road**, and in 130m pass **St. Thomas à Becket, South Cadbury** church (Grade II*-listed and with restored ceiling paintings) and continue along the road. In another 60m, *turn right* up a car wide track to the right of a cottage, signed 'Pedestrian Access to Cadbury Castle'. In 10m pass an info panel on the right for **Cadbury Castle/Camelot Fort** and in 50m go through a wooden field gate and continue the steep ascent up a holloway, one of the three historical approaches to the hillfort. In 140m go through a wooden kissing gate to the left of a wooden field gate and continue uphill, by the now wooded outer rampart. Continue uphill, soon through the inner rampart. [A public footpath runs along the ditch between the ramparts and along it to the left at a slightly higher level you find **King Arthur's Well** 15m away.] In 50m emerge in the **Access Land** of the hillfort plateau and *turn left* along its rim.

The hill drops steeply into the valley on the left, opposite of which rises the **Sigwells Plateau** (the return route crosses the plateau's pastures), with **Pen Hill** (on 110°) and

Charwell Field (the shortcut runs along its base up the valley) jutting out from it. **Alfred's Tower** is again visible over the shoulder on the left (50°), as is **Creech Hill** near Bruton (25°). You go through a dip (the smallest of the three fort entrances) and continue broadly southerly, with **Parrock Hill and The Beacon/Corton Hill** ahead. *Turn right* in the southeast hillfort corner and in another 270m reach the southwest corner. Ignore the descent through the hillfort boundary (a second main entrance used to be here), and *turn right* along the plateau's rim, gently uphill with trees on the left.

In 140m you reach the brow of the rise, with slightly higher ground to the right across a dip; a toposcope can be found that way in 100m. Continue along the mostly tree-lined plateau boundary (or any other route, this is Access Land), and in 300m *bear right* to descend the way you came up to the hillfort, down between the ramparts, where two footpaths join from the left, then through a wooden kissing gate to the right of a wooden field gate and in 140m through a wooden field gate. In 70m *turn right* along **Church Road**. In 80m you pass a car park on the left behind a row of trees and a two-way Monarch's Way signpost. In 100m ignore a signposted footpath turning left through a metal field gate and in 300m *bear right* with **Church Road** where **Crangs Lane** joins from the left. In 50m a signposted footpath turns left over a stile.

Here you have a choice:

For the Shortcut, *turn left* over the stile and pick up the directions at the bottom of page 2 under **Shortcut**.

For the Main Walk, continue along Church Road. In 230m you cross a stream on the road and in 130m *turn left* at a three-way road junction, signed 'Sherborne 6, Corton Denham 2', up along a wide, quiet country lane. In 500m a public footpath crosses, signposted on the left to 'Whitcombe ¼m' and 'Corton Denham 1m'. In 150m, at a T-junction with **Kember's Hill** (road), you continue a little to the left with a signposted bridleway, between some trees and a hedge. In 70m go through a metal gate with a bridleway marker into the **Access Land of Parrock Hill** and follow a clear path bearing right initially. The aim is the top of the hill up on your left, but the gradient is very punishing, so it is best to continue gently uphill first along the grassy track along the slope of the hill to the far end of the fenced area by a metal field gate, and there to *turn hard left* broadly along the fence and in about 100m *turn up to the left* to the summit of **Parrock Hill** with its low cairn at 179m above sea level.

Apart from fine views back across to Cadbury Castle, on 20° you can also spot **Creech Hill**, towering above Bruton (seen close by at the start of the walk). *Turn right* from the ascent route along the obvious ridge in a south easterly direction, in 100m passing a line of five fenced young trees planted in memory of Geoff Green, according to a wooden panel (a sixth must have fallen victim to a storm) and continuing to a small clump of trees a further 40m ahead. Descend steeply to Kember's Hill (road) which skirts the base of the hill and **leave the Access Land** over a metal gate (this is locked but heavily climbed over, judging by the sheen on the top metal bar). *Turn right* along the road and in 70m *turn left* up some steps and over a stile into the **Access Land of The Beacon**. *Turn right* along the hedge, with trees on the left. In 35, you emerge into the open, with a few trees on the left on the steep slope of the hill.

[!] *Turn hard left* steeply up the hill slope, through the line of trees then picking up a clear grass path. The path curves slowly to the right to ascend the nose of the hill for just short of 300m to the trig point, stone bench and stone circular bench at the top at 196m above sea level. There is also a fenced contraption that looks like a fire warning system for the surrounding villages. Continue in the previous direction along the ridge, broadly south easterly, towards a fence corner. In 120m continue to the left of the fence line and in 50m *turn right* through a metal field gate and follow the fence line now on

your left, with a yellow marker on a fence post. Beacon Hill almost unnoticeably segues into **Corton Hill** (which is only 2m lower than The Beacon, with a hardly noticeable saddle in between), with **Corton Denham** village nestling below picturesquely in a curve of the hill. On a good day you have far **views along the ridge across Dorset to the coast around Weymouth**. In 250m you pass a fenced reservoir on the left and in 50m go through a metal-gate-within-a-metal-field-gate and pass Corton Hill's hardly distinguishable highest point. In about 350m you *veer to the right* off the high ledge with the obvious grass path and in 100m *turn left* through a metal field gate with a yellow marker (a couple of public footpaths join from below out of the valley plus one other from the farm on the right) and *turn up to the left* along a car wide gravel farm track (a Public Road).

In 80m the track levels out on the plateau of Corton Hill and in another 300m you *turn left* along a road at a T-junction, gently downhill. In 75m continue in the same direction, where **Beacon Lane** joins from the left. In 150m pass **Beech Farm** on the left and in another 150m you have the start of a 200m-long fenced area on the right with some remnants of concrete structures. These are remains of some of the buildings of **RAF Charlton Horethorne Airfield** (an emergency water tank, Stanton air-raid shelters, huts, a guard room base etc.); the airfield opened as an RAF station on 10 July 1942 and was made available for use by the Royal Navy. In 70m, you get good views on the left of **Sigwells House** (supposedly the converted former control tower of the airfield, but possibly just a 1935 private house) and in 220m, where a road turns off to the right to Charlton Horethorne, you *turn left* with a signposted footpath down a gravel track to the left of **Slait Cottage**. In 20m *turn right* with the track into **Sigwells Farm**. The shortcut has joined from ahead along another track.

***)** You follow the gravel track to the right of some horse stables and sheds and a couple of houses. Where the track ends at a garden fence, you *turn left* up some steps over a wall with a yellow marker on an electricity pole and follow the fence to the left. **Note:** the waymarked right of way in this section differs substantially from what's shown on the OS map, and with all its self-made yellow arrows, it looks like an unauthorised footpath diversion. In 25m go through a wall gap and in 10m *turn right* through a wooden gate and follow a wooden fence initially, then a substantial number of markers to the left around **Sigwell Farm's** ground, over a stile, through a gate then a field gate. Ignore a broad concrete farm track to the left, and continue ahead along another track. In 40m *turn left* over a stile into a pasture, with some large barns away to the right. You are **back on the right-of-way** as shown on the OS map.

In 75m cross stiles either side of a farm track and in 230m go over another stile to continue the crossing of the wide plateau through more pastures in the same direction. These fields used to be the airstrips of the RAF Airfield. In 250m leave the field over a stile 30m to the right of the far-left corner, and *veer left* across the next large pasture towards a stile in line with the left edge of a wooded area beyond it. In 210m go over the stepless stile with a yellow marker into a smaller pasture and in 100m go through a wooden gate into a vast arable field's corner and continue in the same direction cutting its corner. In 50m you continue along a clear wide grassy path (a restricted byway) along the vast field's right-hand boundary, with a scenic steep green valley dropping on the right between wooded slopes. In 70m continue to the left of the upper end of **Round Hill Covert** (wood) and then along an intermittent line of trees. **Glastonbury Tor** is visible away on the left.

By a large mature tree, start the descent from **Pen Hill** with fine views into the valley of the River Cam and its tributaries, along a grassy track to the left of the row of trees. In 300m go through a wooden field gate into a wood (**Hicknoll Hanging** on the OS map) and follow the track further downhill. In 25m pass metal field gates on the left and right with **Compton Barn** to the right, soon after which the track continues as a sunken track

between walls of greenery. In 200m leave the wood through a wooden gate to the right of a wooden field gate by a restricted byway signpost pointing backwards ('Pen Hill ½ m'). Ignore a signposted footpath running right through a metal kissing gate and continue in the same direction downhill along **Old Road**, ignoring the left turning **New Road**. In 60m you pass the **Windsor Lodge** of **Compton Castle**. [Judging by the grandeur of the lodge and the gate, it is a shame that the listed house and landscaped garden in the Picturesque Style (laid out 1820-5) are out of view! The garden is famous for the heart-shaped pond at the centre of it.] The lane drops into **Compton Pauncefoot** and at a three-way junction, you *turn left* further downhill. In 50m continue in the same direction where **Compton Road** joins from the left **from South Cadbury**.

****)** In 100m *turn right* with a signposted footpath over a stile into a pasture ('Woolston 1 ¼ m'). You cross a pasture between wooded hills along a clear path and in 300m *turn left* through a wooden gate and cross a **tributary of the Cam** and *turn right* through the neighbouring pasture between the same hills. In 230m go over a stile and through a lightly wooded belt into a large rising arable field. *Bear left uphill* (30°), clear to the right of an electricity pole, towards a difficult to spot stile and footpath signpost. In 270m leave the field onto a lane, and *turn right* along it, parallel to the noisy **A303**. In 370m continue in the same direction where a lane joins from the right from the direction of **Sigwells**, and in 200m *turn left* at a four-way junction towards a subway under the A road 60m away ('Single Track Road with No Passing Places'). The lane drops down the flank of **Knoll Hill** rising on the right and in 200m you go over a locked metal field gate (the stile to its right is inaccessibly blocked by a thick hedge) and continue in the same direction to Woolston, initially down through a pasture.

In 140m go over a stile to the left of a double metal field gate and cross a ditch on a wide earth bridge. In 100m go over a stile to the right of a double metal field gate and cross a tributary of the Cam on a car wide earth bridge and ascend a large field along its right-hand boundary. In 290m go over a set of stiles either side of a car wide track (a Public Road) into an arable field. You now cross this field in the same direction to a boundary hedge corner 140m away (the path may run a little to the left or right from the stile; if no cleared path, skirt the field to the right). Leave the field in the top-right corner in 70m through a gap in the boundary growth and cross a small field, still uphill. In 25m go over two stiles into a pasture and over the brow of the rise. In 80m go over another two stiles into a large paddock (an alternative route to the left of the paddock is signed). Walk down the field towards **Woolston** hamlet and in the bottom-left field corner by a house garden, *turn left* through two metal field gates and along the garden fence, then in 20m *turn right* along the fence and in 50m *turn right* over a stile onto the drive and follow it to a road.

Cross **Woolston Road** and continue in the same direction along **Ferngrove Lane**. In 330m, where **Corkscrew Lane** joins from the left, *turn right* with **Ferngrove Lane**. In 70m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Dodinal House Lane** and in 120m pass **Dodinal House** on the right, ignoring a signposted footpath on the left down some steps. In 100m continue in the same direction along a minor lane, where the lane forks to the right. You follow **Stoke Lane** gently downhill, in 190m going under an electricity line and in 300m pass **Yarlington Mill Farm**, where a lane joins from the right and then a public footpath from the left. In 170m cross the **Cam River** and ignore a crossing footpath. In 150m, where the lane turns to the left and a footpath turns right to Yarlington, you continue in the same direction along a gravel car wide holloway. This is **Hick's Lane**, and you are now retracing part of the outbound route along it. Gently ascend between high earth banks and in 200m the wide path levels out to continue between hedges. In 20m you ignore an unmarked left turning footpath through a metal gate. In 300m a gravel track joins from the left through a field gate out of a pasture and in 60m you ignore a couple of public footpaths over a stile on the left into a field and in 25m a public footpath joining from the right through a metal gate from Yarlington.

In 250m *turn left* with the car wide track, ignoring a public footpath continuing ahead through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate. In 125m, through a break in the hedge on the left, you can see the tops of the Three Hills climbed after lunch. In 75m at a T-junction with a tarmac lane, *turn up to the right* and in 120m at the top of the rise, *turn left* with the lane (**Small Way Lane**). In 70m, by a bench on the right, you have even better views back to the Three Hills climbed after lunch. Continue along the lane for another 480m and cross the **A359** carefully to continue along the continuation of the lane, signed 'Castle Cary 1 ¼'. You get views on the left through the trees **across the Somerset Levels**. In 350m *turn right* along the **B3152** towards Castle Cary, initially with a walkable verge. In 140m, at a four-way junction, where a public footpath joins from the right down a farm track, *veer right* away from the B road through a wooden kissing gate into a pasture, a signposted footpath ('Castle Cary 1 m') and continue along a fenced grass path parallel to, and high above, the B road.

In 300m go through a hedge gap and in 75m, at the far end of the field, through a wooden kissing gate and down some steps onto tarmac and *fork right* along **Park Avenue** to the right of and above the B road. In 150m *turn right* with Park Avenue, ignoring a left fork joining the B road. In 70m go through a kissing gate and ignore a signposted right turn to 'Lodge Hill ¼ m'. Instead continue in the same direction with a signpost for 'Castle Cary ¾ m' along a left-hand pasture boundary, soon with a striking red brick wall on the left. [Notice the '**Living Cross**' of hawthorn above on the right on the flank of the hill (just to the left of an electricity pole).] In 150m go through a wooden gate and continue along a tarmac path along the wall. In 120m continue in the same direction along a tarmac lane and in 210m a public footpath joins from the right down from **Cary Hill** (a road beyond Lodge Hill). You pass a school and join the main road into Castle Cary, by **All Saints' church** on the left. In 150m pass the War Memorial standing in the **Horse Pond** (a remnant of the castle moat, **fed by the River Cary**), by **The Horsepond Inn** on the left. *Fork right*, signposted 'Market House, Museum', passing a bus stop on the right in 40m, then **The White Hart** on the left. In 120m you pass **Paddock Drain** (the outbound route), opposite the **Market House** and the **Somerset Wine Company and Enoteca**, and by **The George Hotel**.

The route to the station does *turn left* at the far end of the Market House, but higher up the road you'll find **The Place** coffee shop (to 17.00 Mon-Sat) on the left and, in another 60m, **Home Café** on the right (to 17.00 Mon-Sat) and in another 20m on the left, **The Bakehouse**, a Thai restaurant.

From the town centre, *turn left* around the Market House, past the **Public Library** and the **Roundhouse** and *bear right* up **Florida Street**, with houses on the right initially, then a playground behind a fence. In 170m continue in the same direction along a tarmac path with sports fields to the right (ignore a left turn by a bowling green) and go over a brow to descend to a road. Cross **Florida Fields/Churchfields Drive** and continue in the same direction along **Fairfield Common**, either along the grass itself or along a lane then tarmac path to its right. In 200m go through **St. Andrew's churchyard**, passing the church to its left and in 70m at the far end of the churchyard, continue along a tarmac path joining from the left behind. Drop down to **Tuckers Lane** by the **Ansford War Memorial** on the right, and cross the road to continue along a signposted footpath between hedges. In 100m go up some steps onto **Hallett Road** and *turn left* down it along its pavement. In 150m, where the road turns to the left, you *turn right* down some steps onto the **A371 Ansford Hill** and *turn left* along it. In 40m *turn right* across the road and through a metal gate to follow a signposted footpath down to **Castle Cary Station** in 300m.

London bound trains usually depart from platform 1, stopping services via Bruton to Bath usually from platform 3.