

Westbury to Warminster (via Imber Range)			Edington to Warminster (via Imber Range)		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check	1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
16 th April 2017					
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Westbury to Warminster (via Imber Range)

Start: Westbury Station

Finish: Warminster station

Westbury Station, map reference ST 816 519, is 35 km north west of Salisbury, 17 km south east of Bath and 147 km south west of Charing Cross. It lies 62m above sea level. Warminster Station, map reference ST 877 453, is 7 km south of Westbury and 120m above sea level. Both are in **Wiltshire**.

Length: 30.3 km (18.8 mi), of which 14.2 km (8.8 mi) on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 490/432m.

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

Toughness: 9 out of 10

Time: 7 hours walking time.

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

Transport: Westbury Station is a stop on the Paddington to Taunton Great Western Main Line, the Bristol to Weymouth Heart of Wessex Line (via Bath Spa) and the occasional service from Waterloo via Salisbury, journey time from 108 mins Mon-Fri, 102 mins Sat and 84 mins Sun. Warminster is a stop on the Bristol to Portsmouth Wessex Main Line (via Bath, Westbury and Salisbury) and also served by occasional direct services to Waterloo, journey time to London from 109 mins Sun-Fri, longer on Saturdays.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Both stations are outside the Network Southeast. Advance booking is recommended, singles or split tickets may be cheaper than a simple return. Take the train closest to 08.00 hours.

OS Landranger Map: 183 (Yeovil & Frome) & 184 (Salisbury & The Plain)

OS Explorer Map: 143 (Warminster & Trowbridge)

Walk Notes:

Bookended by urban stretches through Westbury and Warminster, this walk is a fascinating journey across the Imber Live Firing Range on Salisbury Plain to the abandoned village of Imber, nestled in a secluded wooded downland valley. The Plain is full of pre-historic sites and the Range an accidental wilderness as it's been MoD property since 1898, out-of-bounds for most of the year apart from short stand downs over Christmas and Easter and for some weeks in August (most years). Either side of the Plain the route crosses five hills, three of which with notable remnants of Iron Age hillfort sites: Bratton, Scratchbury and Battlesbury Camps, and it also passes Wiltshire's largest White Horse, at Westbury.

You get superb views across Salisbury Plain and of the surrounding countryside of Wiltshire and Somerset. Imber was abandoned in 1943 at 47 days' notice for training house-to-house combat in preparation for the invasion of Continental Europe and it is a haunting and evocative place like no other.

Shorter walks, starting from Bratton or Edington, or finishing in Heytesbury, involve short bus journeys.

Note: Before embarking on this walk, please read below chapters on **Public Safety and Access Rights** on Salisbury Plain/Imber Range and on **General Health & Safety Rules** for military areas and ranges

Public Safety and Access Rights on Salisbury Plain/Imber Range

The current status of access rights on Salisbury Plain should be checked at

<https://www.gov.uk/guidance/public-access-to-military-areas#contents>

[under 'Locations in South West England – Salisbury Plain']

At time of writing the rules relevant for this walk are as follows: "A variety of access is available on DTE SP including the Imber Range Perimeter Path (IRPP), a waymarked route ..."

No access to the Imber Live Firing Range is granted to the public and all Danger Area notices and safety signs must be obeyed at all times. **Nevertheless, on a limited number of days** each year (usually around Christmas and New Year, over Easter and for some parts of August), **access is granted to the public**. The MoD publishes a monthly newsletter where **details of access days** can be found:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/salisbury-plain-training-area-spta-newsletter>

Note that **these open days can be rescinded at short notice!**

Further information about **Public Safety at Imber** can be found here:

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/435909/Imber_A5_Leaflet-final_Online_version.pdf

The main points are:

- **Stick to public rights of way** (i.e. the four access tracks outlined on the map in the linked leaflet); note that there are additional concrete MoD roads on the ground not shown on the OS Explorer maps, so care should be taken to ensure that you are on the designated route;
- **Don't enter buildings** marked 'unsafe';
- **Don't approach disused tank hulls** (they are targets, not playgrounds);
- **Don't stray from the path.**

General Health & Safety Rules for military areas and ranges

- Keep away from all buildings unless marked otherwise;
- do not touch any military items;
- wash your hands before you eat;
- clean your shoes and boots before you enter your car or home.

Walk options:

An **alternative start from Bratton**, a 12 minute bus journey from Westbury on line 87/87A (Trowbridge – Devizes) with 6 buses on weekdays and 4 on Saturdays (01/17 price: £1.90), cuts 5.5 km/3.4 mi and 67m ascent. This cuts Westbury, the White Horse and the Bratton Camp Iron Age hillfort site. Rated **7/10**.

An **alternative start from Edington**, further along the same bus line (01/17 price: £2.40), cuts 5.9 km/3.7 mi and 94m ascent. This also cuts a stretch of the Imber Range Perimeter Path. Rated **7/10**.

An **alternative ending at Heytesbury**, a 13 minute bus journey from Warminster (and 33 from Westbury) on line 265 (Salisbury – Bath) with an hourly service Mondays to Saturdays (01/17 price: £2.70), cuts 8.0 km/5.0 mi and 300m ascent at the end, i.e. the most scenic part of the walk: the succession of Cotley, Scratchbury, Middle and Battlesbury Hills, two of which are notable Iron Age hillfort sites. Rated **5/10**.

Edington Start + Heytesbury Ending: 16.4 km/10.2 mi with 198m ascent. Rated **3/10**.

Lunch:

Picnic Lunch

Tea and Biscuits at **St Giles, Imber** church on most of the open days (14.4 km/9.0 mi).

Tea:

The Angel Inn High Street, Heytesbury, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 0AD (01985 840 330, <http://theangelatheytesbury.co.uk/>). Open all day every day. Dinner served 18.30-21.30 Mon-Sat.

The Red Lion 42A High Street, Heytesbury, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 0EA (01985 840 315, <http://www.redlionheytesbury.co.uk/>). Open all day every day. Dinner served 18.00-21.00 daily.

The Masons Arms 34 East Street, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9BN (01985 877 188).

The Old Bell Inn 42 Market Place, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9AN (01985 216 611, <http://www.old-bell-inn.co.uk/home>). Open to 23.00 or later daily. Dinner served to 21.30 weekdays and 21.00 weekends.

The Bath Arms 41 Market Place, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9AZ (01985 853 920, <https://www.jdwetherspoon.com/pubs/all-pubs/england/wiltshire/the-bath-arms-warminster>). Open late.

Coffee #1 30 Market Place, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9AN (01985 213 118, <http://www.coffee1.co.uk/our-locations/warminster/>). Open 07.00-18.00 Mon-Sat and 09.00-17.00 Sun.

La Dolce Vita 28 High Street, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9AF (01985 988 090, <https://www.dolcevita.org.uk/>).

The Organ Inn 49 High Street, Warminster, Wiltshire, BA12 9AQ (01985 211 777, <http://theorganinn.co.uk/>). Open Mon-Fri 16.00-24.00, Sat 12.00-24.00 and Sun 16.00-23.00.

Notes:

Westbury

Westbury, in the far west of Wiltshire not far from the boundary with Somerset, and at the north western edge of Salisbury Plain, is most famous for the Westbury White Horse. The -bury ending is thought to relate to the former fortified hill fort site found immediately above the White Horse. Westbury was sometimes known as Westbury-under-the-Plain to distinguish it from other towns of the same name.

A former cement production plant lies about 2 km north east of the town centre; production ceased in 2009 but the site remains in use as a distribution centre and can be seen from the walk route. From 1961 until its demolition in 2016, the plant's 120m chimney was the tallest unsupported structure in the Southwest.

Mid Wiltshire Way

The MWW is a 109 km (68 mi) waymarked linear Long Distance Path. It takes in some of Wiltshire's finest countryside and downland areas.

Wessex Ridgeway

A waymarked linear 220 km (137 mi) long-distance footpath, part of The Great Ridgeway, a prehistoric trade route which once stretched right across England linking the Norfolk coast to the Devon coast. It basically extends the Ridgeway National Trail to the south-west, crosses the glorious downlands of Wiltshire and Dorset and links the ancient stone circle at Avebury to the sea, following as near as possible the line of the ancient route. Passed on the way are the stone circles at Avebury, the Vale of Pewsey, the northern edge of Salisbury Plain, the Wylve Valley and Win Greene Hill in Wiltshire and Cranborne Chase, Cerne Abbas and Pilsden Pen in Dorset.

Westbury (or Bratton) White Horse

The Westbury or Bratton White Horse, on the edge of Bratton Downs on the escarpment of Salisbury Plain and lying just below an Iron Age hill fort site, is both the oldest and largest (55m tall x 52m wide) White Horse in Wiltshire, but no evidence has yet been found for the existence of the horse before 1742. The form of the current White Horse dates from 1778, when it was restored. During the 18th century, the white horse was a heraldic symbol associated with the new British Royal Family, the House of Hanover, and it is argued that it may have first been carved as a symbol of loyalty to the new Protestant reigning house.

The horse's original form may have been different from the one seen today though: an 18th century engraving shows the horse facing to the right, while currently it faces to the left. In the 1950s it was decided that the horse would be more easily maintained if it were set in concrete and painted white.

Bratton Camp/Castle (Iron Age Hillfort Site)

Bratton Castle (also known as Bratton Camp) is a bivallate Iron Age hill fort on Bratton Down, at the western edge of the Salisbury Plain escarpment. The hill fort comprises two circuits of ditch and bank which enclose a pentagonal area of 9.3 ha (23 acres). Within the extensive fortifications there would have been roundhouses, granaries, stores and workshops. Located within the Castle/Camp on Bratton Down are three Barrows: one Long Barrow, a Bowl barrow and a short Round Barrow. The Long Barrow is from the New Stone Age. Roman and Saxon coins have been found in the area.

White Horse Trail

The WHT is a 146 km (90 mi) waymarked circular Long Distance Path. It provides views of eight white horses which are cut into the turf of the chalk hillsides of Wiltshire, as well as visiting many other historic and prehistoric locations.

Imber Range Perimeter Path

The IRPP is a 48 km (30 mi) waymarked circular Long Distance Path around the perimeter of a military training firing range located on Salisbury Plain following the escarpment above Westbury White Horse and giving views across Salisbury Plain and the surrounding Wiltshire and Somerset countryside, while passing several Iron Age hillfort sites along the way. **[!]** Warning notices must be adhered to. **[!]**

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/27468/SalisburyPlain.pdf
<http://imberwalk.com/>

Salisbury Plain/Imber Live Firing Range

Salisbury Plain is a chalk plateau in central southern England covering 780 km² (300 mi²). It is part of a system of chalk downlands throughout eastern and southern England formed by the rocks of the Chalk Group and largely lies within the county of Wiltshire, with a little in Hampshire. The Plain is famous for its rich archaeology, including Stonehenge, one of England's best known landmarks. Largely as a result of the establishment of the Defence Training Estate Salisbury Plain (DTE SP), the Plain is sparsely populated and is the largest remaining area of calcareous grassland in north-west Europe. Additionally the Plain has arable land, and a few small areas of beech trees and coniferous woodland. Its highest point is Easton Hill.

To the north the scarp of the downs overlooks the Vale of Pewsey, and to the northwest the Bristol Avon. The River Wylve runs along the southwest, and the Bourne runs to the east. The Hampshire Avon runs through the eastern half of the Plain and to the south the Plain peters out as the river valleys close together before meeting at Salisbury. Stone Age humans began to settle on the Plain, most likely centred on the causewayed enclosure of Robin Hood's Ball. Large long barrows and other earthworks were built across the

Plain. By 2500 BC areas around Durrington Walls and Stonehenge had become a focus for building, and the southern part of the Plain continued to be settled into the Bronze Age.

Around 600 BC Iron Age hillforts came to be constructed around the boundaries of the Plain. In Roman times the Plain was mostly a grain-producing imperial estate, while Anglo-Saxon incomers built planned settlements in the valleys surrounded by strip lynchets, with the downland left as sheep pasture.

The military training area covers roughly half of the Plain. The army first conducted exercises on the Plain in 1898. From that time, the MoD bought up large areas of land until WWII. The MoD now own 390 km² (150 mi²) of land, making it the largest military training area in the UK. Of this, around 100 km² are permanently closed to the public, and access is greatly restricted in other areas.

Because of the large training areas inaccessible to the public, the Plain is a wildlife haven, and home to two National Nature Reserves. It supports the largest known expanse of unimproved chalk downland in north-west Europe, and represents 41% of Britain's remaining area of this wildlife habitat. As an archaeological landscape, it is of unparalleled importance in Northern Europe, with some 2,300 archaeological sites, amongst which it has one of the most dense concentrations of ancient long and round barrows.

Imber Village and St Giles Church

Imber is an uninhabited village in part of the British Army's training grounds on Salisbury Plain, situated in an isolated area of the Plain. The entire civilian population was evicted in 1943 (with 47 days' notice), as Imber was to be used by US forces to practise street fighting in preparation for the invasion of Continental Europe during WWII. After the war, villagers were not allowed to return to their homes, as the village was used extensively for training, particularly preparing soldiers for their duties in the urban environments of Northern Ireland. Several empty house-like buildings were constructed during the 1970s to aid training, and it is these, along with the church, the Bell Inn and Imber Court, that are Imber's most striking buildings today. The village remains under the control of the MoD despite several attempts by former residents to return. Non-military access is limited to several open days a year.

Several ancient trackways lead to and from the village. The first documentary evidence of Imber's existence comes from Saxon times, with a mention of the village in 967. Imber is also recorded in the Domesday Book, at which time it is believed to have had a population of around 50. The village's church of St Giles dates from the 13th century and has notable wall-paintings from the 15th.

Imber was always an isolated community, Salisbury Plain being sparsely populated, and most of its residents were employed in agriculture or work that depended on it. The village had an elongated form like a linear village, and its main street followed the course of a winterbourne stream known as Imber Dock. The only building in a reasonable condition is the church, with the rest becoming derelict or demolished by the Army. In 1943 there was also a Baptist chapel (built in 1839, demolished in the late 1970s), a post office, and a pub called the *Bell Inn*, which still stands, as does the manor house, Imber Court (although reduced in height by one storey). Also still standing are a farmhouse, farm cottages, a school room and four "council house" type blocks built in 1938.

The Grade I listed St Giles Church was 'maintained' by the War Department/MoD from the evacuation until 2002, which included the stripping of all fittings and furnishings for distribution amongst other churches, and was then declared redundant and in 2005 vested to the Churches Conservation Trust, who has undertaken a multi-stage repair and restoration programme. The church is open during periods of public access to the village. An annual service is held in September and a carol concert at Christmas.

Scratchbury Camp (Iron Age Hillfort Site)

Scratchbury Camp, an Iron Age univallate hillfort, occupies the summit of Scratchbury Hill, part of Scratchbury & Cotley Hills SSSI, with its four-sided shape largely following the natural contours of the hill. The Iron Age hillfort dates to around 100 BC, but contains the remains of an earlier and smaller D-shaped enclosure or camp (possibly Bronze Age), although there are reasons to believe that this was preceded by a Neolithic causewayed enclosure. There are seven tumuli located within the enclosure of the fort. The Iron Age fortifications consist of a single large ditch and rampart to the most steeply contoured flanks, with some secondary counterscarps to the more accessible sides.

Battlesbury Camp (Iron Age Hillfort Site)

Battlesbury Camp, an Iron Age bivallate hillfort, occupies the summit of Battlesbury Hill. It has triple ditches and ramparts for the most part, with double on the southeast side.

Warminster

The garrison town of Warminster lies on the edge of the Cranborne Chase and West Wiltshire Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, southwest of Salisbury Plain, beneath the chalk downland with its abundant flora and fauna, and at the head of the Wylye Valley.

The town derived its name from the River Were, a tributary of the River Wylye, which runs through the town, and the Minster Church of St. Denys which was built in Saxon times within a loop of the Were. There is evidence of earlier settlements in the seven hills that surround the town, three of which are Iron Age hill forts, the most notable being Cley Hill to the west of Warminster.

The town boasts many historic attractions including Warminster Maltings, Britain's oldest working maltings, and Dents glove factory. Warminster is the nearest town to Longleat – home of the UK's first ever Safari Park and one of Britain's most impressive examples of high Elizabethan architecture.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Alighting from the train on platform 2 (if arriving direct from Paddington or via Bath) or platform 1 (if arriving from Waterloo), leave **Westbury Station** through an underpass and the ticket hall onto the station forecourt and *turn left* past a **bus stop for services to Bratton and Edington**, along the pavement of **Station Approach**, soon curving right with it. In 150m ignore a tarmac path turning up left towards a road running parallel at a higher level and in 150m *veer right* through a mini-roundabout and along **Station Road** into **Westbury**. In 50m pass **The Railway Inn** on the left and in 70m go under a bridge carrying another railway line.

On the other side *turn left* along a tarmac path. In 80m *turn right and left* with the path (you get brief views – half left over some rooftops – of the **Westbury White Horse** on Bratton Down) and in 30m *turn right* along a residential road. In 80m, where the road turns left, *turn right* along a tarmac path and in 60m cross **Rosefield Way** and continue in the same direction along a tarmac path between brick walls. In 100m you have a metal bar fence on your left and **Westbury United AFC's** football ground beyond it. In 130m *turn left* at a T-junction with **Meadow Lane**. In 50m *turn right* to cross the road and continue along **White Horse Way** and in 180m, where the road turns left, *veer right* to continue along a tarmac path between houses.

In 70m you emerge on **West End** (the A 350) at a T-junction and *turn left* along it but in 60m you *turn right* to cross the A road and continue along **Edward Street**. In 60m ignore **Maristow Street** on the left [!] but in 20m *turn left* along **Glovers Court/Church Lane** to reach the churchyard of **All Saints Church** in 40m. Continue to the right of the church (well worth a visit) and 20m past its entrance pass a blue plaque on the right hand side corner building and ignore a right turning tarmac lane to continue in the same direction to the right of a **War Memorial**. In 50m the tarmac path turns left and in 20m you *turn right* along a narrow tarmac path, with a pretty, sunken garden on the right. In 80m you reach **Alfred Street** at a T-junction and *turn down left* along it.

In 50m *turn right* along a tarmac lane (**Gibbs Close**), just before **Westbury Conservative Club** (in blue) on the right and in 60m *bear right* with the lane, ignoring a narrow tarmac path to the left which follows **Bitham Brook**. In 80m the lane narrows to a path (by Lanes End cottage) and you soon have some school grounds on the left behind a green metal bar fence. In 90m *turn right* through a wooden fence gap and in 20m *turn left* at a T-junction with a road. In 60m *turn right* with the road and in 50m *turn left* at a T-junction along **Windsor Drive**. In 60m *turn right* up along **Danvers Way** and in another 50m ignore **Bremeridge Road** joining from the right. In 30m *turn left* along a tarmac path with a grassy area on the left (signed 'leading to Danvers Way numbers 61, 65, 67 & 69').

The path curves right in 30m and in 50m you continue in the same direction between some houses. In 20m continue in the same direction by a road on the left (Cheyney Walk) and in 40m emerge on the busy **Bratton Road** (the **B 3098**) to *turn left* along its left hand pavement. In 40m continue in the same direction along Bratton Road (signed 'Bratton B 3098'), where **Bitham Park** (road) turns left. In 50m ignore a left turning tarmac lane and a right turning bridleway. In 65m pass **Hillfield House** on the left and in another 130m pass the last building on this stretch: **Fairview Stables**, and continue along a gravel strip to the left of the road, now with clear views of the **White Horse** ahead and the old **Blue Circle/Lafarge cement works** (minus its recently demolished 120m chimney) on the left. In 50m [!] ignore a car wide earthen bridleway continuing in the same direction to *veer right* with the B road along a grassy strip and in 75m reach a car park on the left with some info panels on the White Horse hill figure.

You now cross the road and continue along the right hand side, on the tarmac without a margin to walk along, and in 330m *turn right* along the drive to **Town Farm** (a signposted footpath). In 30m walk through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and in 70m leave the concrete farmyard behind and go through a set of metal field gates into a grassy field. Follow a right hand side fence to in 80m pass a redundant stile at a fence corner and in 90m another redundant stile with a footpath marker on the left and continue broadly in the same direction up **Westbury Hill**, with the gradient gradually increasing. The path used generally runs somewhat further right than the right of way on the map suggests: 160°, i.e. head for the left end of a line of trees on top of the scarp, 300m away (the area to the left, the Plain just in front of the down and the slope itself, are **Open Access Land**, but offer no better ascent route).

From the top of the rise by the end of the line of trees *turn left* along the scarp, in 50m passing a post with **Mid Wilts Way** and **Wessex Ridgeway** markers. Follow the drop on the left for 650m to go through a metal kissing gate to cross a bridleway and *veer left* with the fence on your left (20°). In 15m you continue in the same direction up along a clear grassy path and in 50m walk between some wooden benches by a toposcope. Continue in the same direction and in 40m pass another bench and an info panel on the **Westbury White Horse**. In 50m you walk down some steps and through a wooden kissing gate into a grassy area with a very long linear earth bank stretching away to the right. You are on **Bratton Down**, at the site of the **Bratton Castle (or Camp)** Iron Age hill fort, and the earth bank is one part of the ramparts. *Turn left* with a clear chalky path along the drop for 20m, to realise that there are actually two earth banks. **The White Horse** stretches out on the left about 50m away.

Here you have a choice:

For the more scenic route along the rampart of the former hillfort (adds 530m) continue in the same direction, in 100m *turn right* with the outer rampart along the drop with **White Horse Trail** and **Mid Wilts Way** markers along a fence. In 420m, where the inner rampart on your right turns right, **[!]** continue in the same direction through a wooden kissing gate and further along the scarp. In another 60m drop down and immediately *bear right* – away from the path along the drop – along a clear narrow chalky path (100°). In 180m go through a wooden kissing gate and *turn right* to a tarmac lane (a bridleway joins from the left).

Turn right along the lane and in 15m **[!]** *fork left* along a car wide grassy track (a bridleway). You follow the track, curving around the very scenic **Combe Bottom** on your left, for 540m to a metal field gate, with a metal gate on the left and a stile on the right. The path from the right is the Main Walk. Continue in the same direction through the metal field gate along the bridleway and continue along a clear track through a grassy field. Pick up the directions three paragraphs below (“The track curves a little...”).

For the shorter route along the Long Barrow, *turn right* along a bridleway either between the earth banks or along the top of either of them, following the **Wessex Ridgeway** and the **White Horse Trail** (which has joined from along the rampart). In 300m, just before you reach a fence with a tarmac lane beyond it, *turn left* to in 20m *turn sharp right* to go over a stile to the left of a wooden field gate onto that lane and *turn up right* along it. In 90m another tarmac lane joins from the right.

[Notice the lone standing stone away on the right: this is **a memorial stone for The Battle of Ethendun**, where the Saxon King Alfred of Wessex beat the Danes, and thereby laid the foundation for uniting the kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia to form England. This is believed to have happened near Edington, a little along the scarp.] In another 10m you *turn left* over a stile in the fence into a grassy field (this is **Open Access Land**). With the continuation of the **Long Barrow** on the left, you follow the

right hand fence. In 60m the barrow curves away to the left as the terrain starts to drop gently, giving you splendid views into the very scenic **Combe Bottom**. In 200m, in the bottom right corner of the field, go over a stile onto a car wide grassy track, by a metal field gate on the right and a metal gate opposite up a bank. The track from the left is the alternative route around the hillfort. *Turn right* through the metal field gate along a bridleway and continue along a clear track through a grassy field.

The track curves a little to the right and in 180m it *turns left* at a fence to curve around a depression on the left hand side. In 30m you *turn right* with the car wide track between barbed wire fences and large arable fields and in 75m go through a metal field gate. In 200m you walk through a metal field gate onto a gravel car wide lane (a signposted permissive bridleway) at a T-junction. This is the **Imber Range Perimeter Path**, and the land on the other side of the lane beyond assorted warning signs the **Imber Live Firing Range** on **Salisbury Plain**.

Turn left along the lane. In 850m the track turns to tarmac by a double metal field gate on the right, and in another 40m a bridleway, the route of **the alternative start from Bratton**, joins from the left through a metal gate to the right of a triple metal field gate.

***)** Continue along the permissive bridleway tarmac lane (with a walkable grassy strip for most of it) with some fine views of **Longcombe Bottom** and **Luccombe Bottom** beyond it on the left, and of **Salisbury Plain** on the right. There may be some red flags flying on flagpoles on the Plain, but that does not necessarily mean that the Imber Range is closed. In 1.2 km *turn right* at a T-junction of tarmac lanes with an Imber Range Path signpost (by Reeves Farm away on the left, on the OS map) and in 150m reach the vedette/sentry box at the **Bratton entrance** to the **Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA)** where the lane turns left (and with it the White Horse Trail) and a footpath, the route of the **alternative start from Edington**, joins from hard left along a grassy field boundary (the Imber Range Perimeter Path turns left along it).

****)** **If you see a red flag raised here**, on the flagpole next to the sentry box, and the barrier closed, you have come on the wrong day: the range is shut for public access!

Enter the Imber Range through a red metal barrier (open on public access days) and walk along the '**South Down Track**' (you pass a sign in 40m) through the mildly undulating landscape with occasional warning signs ('Tanks', 'Mud', 'Potholes', 'Danger - Unexploded Military Debris', 'Do not leave the Carriageway' etc.). In 1.3 km the track turns to gravel, not long before you pass a container 'village' on the right, used for house-to-house combat training. In 1.5 km *turn left* at a T-junction with a tarmac track (this is the route from Warminster, it can be very busy with cars on open days). There is a disused tank (the first of several) on the hillside on the right, and there are many areas fenced off or otherwise designated off-limits for tanks or trucks (usually with white-topped poles), these are usually tumuli or other pre-historic monuments. The track is crossed by tank tracks along the way as it approaches **Imber Village**.

In 1.9 km you have a winterbourne stream (the **Imber Dock**) and some trees on the right. In 500m pass some more warning signs about buildings being off-limits and in 35m a grassy path turns right to the cemetery of the now demolished **Baptist Chapel** 75m away. Just afterwards you pass the first of many empty shells of buildings in the village (this one being the former **Bell Inn** pub). Most of the original buildings in the village have been destroyed over time in the course of armed exercises, and have subsequently been replaced with pre-fabs. In 75m on the left you have **Imber Court**, the former Manor House, now minus its top storey but with a couple of watchtowers next to it and surrounded by a barbed wire-topped brick wall.

In 125m pass a car park on the right and in 50m an (off-limits) track on the right leads to some two-storey buildings used for combat training. In 170m *turn right* up a lane to **St Giles Church**, 150m away on a slight rise. It is well worth a visit and a walk around the graveyard, and both church and graveyard are usually open when the Imber Range is accessible to the public. Hot drinks and biscuits may be available inside, as will be brochures, books, CDs and other souvenirs. There is also an **interesting exhibition on the history of Imber and its church**.

From the church return down the rise to the main road through Imber and *turn right* along it. In 180m, *before* the last buildings on the right, *turn right* along '**American Road**', soon gently rising up **Chapel Down**. In 220m the road bends right as you emerge from trees and you can see the road snaking up the rise into the distance up Salisbury Plain. In 50m a tank track crosses the road and in 450m the road becomes a gravel track. Up to the 20th century these tracks across the Plain were marked by little more than chalk heaps and whitewashed stones erected in the turf, known as 'Wilshire Lamps'. You have rolling hills on the right and flatter terrain on the left, with Imber Church's spire still visible back down in the valley, with **Rough Down** beyond it.

In about 300m the track levels out as you can spot a two-storey house and some more containers on the left in a line of trees. In another 100m or so you should be able to spot cars driving in the distance on the right along the **Imber - Warminster road** and in 200m another tank track runs off to the left towards **Imber Firs** copse (on the OS map). The track curves to the left and in 1.0 km you continue in the same direction at a crossing with a tank track, just after the track starts a gentle descent. In about 400m, just after a little dip and before the crest of the following rise, you can spot a Long Barrow away to the right (**Bowl's Barrow** on the OS map).

In the near distance on the half right you have a few hilltops rising above the level of the Plain, these are (l-t-r): **Cotley, Scratchbury, Middle** and **Battlesbury Hills**, all walked along later. You have a coombe developing away to your right and a more or less level track to walk along. In 1.0 km from the Long Barrow you go over **point 182m** on the OS map, the highest point on this stretch, as the track starts the – initially gentle – descent from the Plain, now with a developing coombe and a cottage on the left at lower level. In the near distance now visible between Middle and Battlesbury Hills: **Cley Hill**, a table-top shaped hill on the other side of the Wylde Valley beyond Warminster.

In 950m you pass the vedette/sentry box at the **Heytesbury Entrance** to the **Salisbury Plain Training Area (SPTA)** by a ruined building on the right and with a steep coombe on the left, to leave the firing range through a metal barrier (a track joins from the left). In 450m you continue in the same direction along tarmac, at a four-way junction with a concrete track, to the right of a fenced grassy, triangular field. In 280m you walk past some buildings of **East Hill Farm** (on the OS map) on the right and in 90m the **Imber Range Perimeter Path** joins from the left along a tarmac lane footpath past some cottages. In 1.0 km the tarmac lane *turns left* and in another 300m **[!]** the Imber Range Perimeter Path turns right up along a car wide track between trees.

Here you have a choice:

For the alternative finish at Heytesbury continue in the same direction along the lane and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Alternative Finish**.

For the main walk *turn right* with the signposted permissive bridleway and in 120m, where you emerge from the tree-lined track, continue in the same direction to the right of a line of trees with a marker post, with some views on the right into the unnamed coombe below and back to the Imber Range. In 90m, where the trees discontinue, continue in the same direction along a grassy path to the right of an arable field, soon

with views on the left into the **Wylye Valley**. You curve up right with the path towards a wood and in 500m enter **Cotley Hill Woods** along a bridleway (ignore a left turning footpath, the Wessex Ridgeway again).

In 100m emerge from the wood and continue in the same direction along a car wide track between arable fields to in 220m reach the cairned tumulus at the top of **Cotley Hill** (the 'off-limits to tanks and trucks' signs suggest that some manoeuvres might spill over to here from the Imber Range). Continue in the same direction along a car wide grassy track between arable fields and in 300m walk through a metal gate by a three-way signpost (a bridleway joins from the left) to continue in the same direction. Some 'no digging'-signs indicate that the earthworks on the left are pre-historic monuments. In 110m the path *veers right* (325°), where a faint car wide grassy track joins from the left (on a bearing of 290° on the half left in the distance: the two-topped **Cley Hill**).

In 60m you pass some tumuli on the left and then **point 187m** (on the OS map) behind a fence at higher level on the right. Continue with views of **Scratchbury Camp (Iron Age Hillfort Site)** with its two banks and ditches, and in 190m, by a three-way signpost on the right, ignore the Imber Range Perimeter **Bridleway** turning down left to continue in the same direction with the Imber Range Perimeter **Footpath**. In 40m go through a metal kissing gate with Wessex Ridgeway and footpath markers on a post and continue in the same direction with a barbed wire fence on the right and an arable field on the left to in 70m *turn left* with a signpost along a usually clear wide track across the field towards a distinguished breach in the imposing outer ramparts of the hillfort.

In 300m enter the hillfort site through a metal gate in the breach. The right of way now leads *to the right around the hillfort site* following the outer rampart, although the route up to and across the top is clearly walked by locals. The descent from the hill is from the other side of the hill, a little to the right. Follow the ramparts around to the right and in about 350m you have views of a farm below (**North Farm**, on the OS map). In 40m an unmarked bridleway forks down to the right with the fence line as you *turn up left* to continue in the same direction along the hillfort's bank. You pass a few 'No Digging'-signs, indicating tumuli, and turn left with the bank. In 420m, at a metal post with a yellow marker pointing down a steep chalky path through the outer bank and ditch, you *turn down right* and then curve right with the path.

You head broadly towards a lane junction down in the valley and in 80m walk through a metal kissing gate to continue in the same direction along a barbed wire fence and a left hand field boundary. In 100m emerge on a tarmac lane by a signpost and *turn left* along it towards the junction. In 25m you cross the junction and continue in the same direction with a signposted footpath (and the Imber Range Perimeter Path) through a grassy slope, ignoring bridle- and byways off to the sides. You walk up through an **area of Strip Lynchets** and ascend **Middle Hill**. In 150m you reach a level grassy area by a signpost with some trees on the left and the top of Middle Hill (with a beech-topped tumulus on it) on the right.

Turn left to follow the signposted path along the fence line on the left and in 50m the trees discontinue to open up views across the **Wylye Valley**. The path curves round to the right with the fence in 75m and – when level with the tumulus on the right in 100m – you *veer left a little* with the fence and start to descend. In 170m continue in the same direction with a two-way signpost by a fence corner, broadly towards some distant farm buildings (**Field Barn** on the OS map, visible in 20m), with the **Imber Range** rising beyond it. In 150m *turn left* to leave the grassy slope towards a gap in an earth bank but **[!]** *turn right* through rough ground along the bank with a Wessex Ridgeway marker on a white-topped pole **[!]** **before** the gap and the concrete military road beyond it.

In 40m *turn left* steeply over the bank without a marker, and then cross the military road (a bridleway) to continue up some steps and along a signposted footpath along a right hand field boundary's grassy strip. In 370m leave the field in its top right corner by *veering right* around remnants of a fence corner to cross a footpath and continue – in the previous direction – your ascent of **Battlesbury Hill** along the left hand barbed wire fence of an arable field. In 270m in the top left corner *turn right* with the fence and in 20m *turn left* through a wooden kissing gate by a two-way signpost up through the ramparts of **Battlesbury Camp (Iron Age Hillfort Site)**.

In 30m – in between two of the ramparts – the right of way *turns left* to follow the ramparts, although the route to and across the top is clearly walked by locals. Follow the path along the ramparts more than halfway around the hillfort site, **for 1.0 km [!]**: first with a grassy slope on the left, then (the hanging) **Battlesbury Wood**, then a very steep drop with a track running far below (this is the onwards route). Where a wide track joins from the right through the ramparts down from the hill top plateau, *turn left* at a path junction and **[!]** *turn left again immediately on a dog leg* to pick up a steeply descending track at a lower level. In 90m another path joins from the right and you *bend left* with the track along the flank to eventually walk at the bottom of **Battlesbury Hill**, towering above you.

In 350m, at the bottom corner of **Battlesbury Wood**, *turn right* through a metal kissing gate to continue along a holloway between some trees (initially). In 300m cross a concrete **military lane** by a footpath signpost and continue in the same direction along the left hand edge of a grassy yard, with a footpath signpost. In 120m pass a house on the right and continue along a rough track to in 60m walk up some railed steps on the right (an unmarked footpath joins from the left down another set of steps) to a concrete lane leading to barracks on the left.

[!] *Turn left* along the lane towards **Battlesbury Barracks** across the railway line and **[!]** *turn right just before the entrance gate* to the barracks along a narrow path with a sign on the left hand lamp post along a narrow tarmac path running between the barracks and the railway line, between fences (high and topped with coiled barbed wire on the left, lower on the right). Pass the odd '**Armed Patrols Operate in this Area**'-sign and follow the fence around to the left in 550m *turn left* with the path and the left hand fence. In 130m you emerge on a tarmac pavement along a road by a footpath signpost and continue in the same direction towards a road junction.

In 30m *turn right* at a T-junction with **Woodcock Road**. In 40m pass a **bus stop for services to Warminster Market Place** (300m from the station) **and to Westbury Station** on the other side of the road and in 450m continue in the same direction along **Woodcock Lane** (a shared cycle-/footpath), where the road forks right. In 180m cross **Imber Road** (the westerly approach road **up to the Imber Range**) a little to the left to continue along **Fairfield Road** and in 250m (after passing a Waitrose and a Lidl) reach **Station Road** at a T-junction. **Warminster Station** is 150m along it to the right.

For the **tea options** *turn left* along Station Road and in 130m you reach a T-junction with **Market Place/East Street** (the B 3414), by the **Masonic Hall** on the right.

- **to the left** you find: an Indian and **The Masons Arms** (the recommended pub with food) in 70m, a Thai and a Chinese within the next 100m;
- **to the right** you find: in 60m **The Old Bell Inn** on the left and **The Anchor Hotel** freehouse on the right, in 25m the **Wetherspoon's Hotel** and then their pub, **The Bath Arms**, on the right, then the **recommended café Coffee #1** on the left, then the **recommended restaurant La Dolce Vita** and finally the **The Organ Inn** (the recommended pub without food) on the left (after the road has descended and just before a roundabout).

Alternative Start from Bratton (cut 5.5 km, 67m ascent/descent and 3.0 km from the tarmac count)

Leave the bus in the centre of **Bratton** outside **The Duke** pub and turn back along the main road (**Melbourne Road**) with a green on your right. In 20m ignore **Tynings Lane** turning left on the other side of the road but in another 10m *turn left* to cross Melbourne Road and continue up along a residential street (**The Butts**) on a bearing of 190°. In 200m *turn right* at a three-way junction, ignoring a signposted footpath bearing left with a tarmac lane. In 120m, just before the lane dips down to a crossing and where a footpath joins from the right, **[!]** *turn left* along a narrow tarmac path with a fence on the left (signposted 'Church').

In 80m the path descends down some steps to cross a stream over a two-railed bridge (the stream is spring-fed from just a few metres away, **Church Springs** on the OS maps). You re-ascend some steps to continue to the right of **St. James the Great Church** at a fence corner (the church is so remote from the village because it originally served another village in the coombe on your right, which got devastated by the plague and subsequently abandoned). The path is narrow and with a drop (towards said springs) on the right, and then ascends steeply to in 80m reach a three-way junction with a footpath running left-to-right, by a metal kissing gate on the left.

Turn left through the kissing gate (there is also a stile a few metres higher up) and immediately **[!]** *fork hard right* along a steep narrow path (getting ever steeper) into trees, ignoring the path along the left hand fence line. In 200m you emerge from the hanging wood by a footpath marker post on an earth bank atop a sunken car wide track running up the hill flank to the right. Descend into the sunken track and *turn up to the right* with it. In 50m you walk through a metal gate to the right of a metal field gate and continue along a right hand field boundary.

In 280m enter a wooded area along a car wide farm track and in 100m emerge from the trees to continue in the same direction, now with the pretty **Longcombe Bottom** shallow valley on the left (on the OS map). In 370m you go through a metal gate to the left of a triple metal field gate onto a tarmac lane by a three-way signpost. The lane is the route of the **Wessex Ridgeway**, the **White Horse Trail** and the **Imber Range Perimeter Path**, as well as of the Main Walk. The land on the other side of the lane beyond assorted warning signs is the **Imber Live Firing Range** on **Salisbury Plain**

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

Alternative Start from Edington (cut 5.9 km, 94m ascent/descent and 4.7 km from the tarmac count)

Leave the bus in the centre of **Edington** village at a three-way junction outside **The Old Schoolhouse** and turn back along the main road (the B 3098 **Westbury Road**) for 250m. **In more detail:** initially you walk along its right hand pavement. The pavement then changes sides a few times, while you pass **The Three Daggers** pub on the right, in 50m ignore a left turning footpath and then pass the **Edington Farmshop** on the right. The pavement then discontinues, where a footpath turns right and in 90m you **[!]** *turn left* up a tarmac drive and in 35m continue in the same direction along a signposted footpath where the drive forks left to a house.

You continue up a sunken track with some trees on the banks above. In 50m walk through a metal field gate and in 300m go through a metal field gate to in another 50m emerge from the sunken track in an open and more level area, where a footpath joins

from the half right. Continue in the same direction along a wider grassy track, with fine views on the left across **Long Hollow** to some interesting topography: some erratic, rounded downs (**Luccombe Bottom**). In 120m go through a metal field gate and in 480m pass some farm buildings on the right to in 50m *turn right* at a three-way junction of tracks (all of them footpaths) with a signpost (the **Wessex Ridgeway** and the **Imber Range Perimeter Path** join from the left).

In 50m *turn left* with a Wessex Ridgeway marker on a barbed wire fence post on your left and a three-way signpost on the right and follow a car wide farm track for 1.3 km (a footpath joins 900m along from the right through a rusty metal field gate) towards a lane at a bend and a vedette/sentry box at the **Bratton Entrance** to the **Imber Live Firing Range** beyond it. Cross the lane (tarmac to the right, gravel to the left) and with it the **White Horse Trail** and pick up the directions at the double asterisk **) in the main text.

Alternative Finish

(cut 8.0 km, 300m ascent/descent and 1.3 km from the tarmac count)

In 350m you reach the busy **A 36** (Bath to Southampton) and cross it a little to the right to continue in the previous direction (signposted 'Heytesbury'). In 80m ignore a right turning road (Newtown) and in 110m *turn right* with **High Street** at a three-way junction. In 40m you reach the recommended tea stop, **The Angel Inn**, and a **bus stop for services to Warminster and Westbury** just beyond it.

The other possible tea stop, **The Red Lion**, is 300m further along the High Street, just past the oversized **St. Peter and St. Paul Church**.