

BRIDGWATER to LUXBOROUGH: 25 MILES

Quantock Hills, Brendon Villages and Hills

Coming off the Westonzoyland Road, you find yourself at a mini roundabout. Turn left into St. John Street. Continue for a few hundred yards to the first set of traffic lights, then turn left into Cranleigh Gardens. This arcs around to the right, with a park on your left. At the end of this short road you will come to a bridge crossing the **River Parrett**. Go over the bridge and continue to the next major junction. Turn left as if going to Barnstaple and North Devon. Immediately go over the road on a pedestrian crossing, then take a little lane on the left. Not far down here there is a bridge. Go over, turn left for a few yards, drop down to the water, turn sharp left again so that you are heading under the same bridge, then up the towpath with the canal on the right.

After a quarter of a mile the canal bends to the right; keep close to it, going under a bridge. A little further on there is another bridge, but don't go under this; take the slip lane up to the left which leads straight on to the main road. Then turn left. After approximately a hundred yards there is **Westfield Church** on the left. Still on your left hand side, you will see a playing field. Enter the field and cross over, heading towards some allotments. Keep these on the left. At the end of the allotments, turn left and go down the path, with the hedge on your right, then over a stream. Turn right and go **through gate** and follow the stream to the next boundary - approximately 200 yards - then head diagonally towards the left hand corner of the field. Go **through a gate and over footbridge**, then follow the right hand boundary down. At a bend in the path, just before an oak tree, **go through gateway** on your right. Once in the field, head diagonally left to another gate. Go through it, heading slightly left, towards the opposite boundary. Well concealed in the hedge to the right of an ash tree is an iron stile and a footbridge. Cross over, follow the next field down, keeping close to the right hand boundary. In the corner **go through a gate**, over a footbridge to the left, then down the next small field. Following the right hand boundary again, go over **a stile**. At the end of this field, ignore the **gateway** and turn left, keeping the boundary on your right. After a short distance, cross another footbridge directly underneath some power lines on the right. Turn left down the next field for a short way, keeping close to the left hand boundary. After approximately 250 yards, cross over a footbridge on the left (**beside an Ash tree**). Continue down (it's quite a long field), keeping close to the right hand boundary. In the far bottom right hand corner go over another **concealed** footbridge (*) on the right and enter a small field. **Go down the field** then go through a gate in the right hand corner and onto a road. (*) **In June 2019 this bridge was dangerous. The council have been informed**

This can be quite an exhausting stretch from **Bridgwater Station** as regards map reading, the footbridges, **gates** and stiles are well concealed.

Turn right on the road, go round the bend, and there is a footpath on your left. Go through the gate into the field. Head towards the prominent pylon, **heading slightly left** until you reach the field boundary, then walk down the same field, with the boundary on the left. You will go under more power lines, but there are compensations for their lack of charm; if walking through stubble in August, you may find heartsease, poppies and speedwell growing.

At the end of the field in the left hand corner there is a stile. Go over it and continue up this field for about a third of a mile, keeping close to the right hand boundary. On reaching a

gate go through on to a minor road and turn left. Follow this road (there are a few bends until you arrive at the village of **Goathurst**. Be careful of the blind corners. You will then reach the church on your left. On leaving the church, continue up the road a short way; then turn right as if going to **Enmore**. Carry on, noticing the **Temple of Harmony** on the left, and very soon afterwards there is a junction. Turn right, still going towards **Enmore**. Continue until the road bends right at Cobbs Cross Farm, then leave the road and take the track straight on past the farm. One hundred yards further on, the track divides; take the bridleway on the left, and a little further follow up track in same direction into a field. Keep close to the boundary, which will be on the left, heading in a southerly direction. You are starting to climb. If the weather is clear, look back and see some of the country covered so far. **The Mendip Hills** are very plain, and from time to time you may see **Glastonbury Tor**, and also **Bridgwater Bay**, which gives an idea of how you have gone round the entire elbow of **Somerset**.

Continue up the track in the same direction for approx. half a mile, on reaching a large oak tree on the right, go through 2 gates and walk up the sloping field, heading slightly right, and make for a bungalow. To the left of the bungalow, go through a gate and then turn left on a small lane. Continue up here a short way and onto a minor road. Turn right here, and a bit further on go over some crossroads as if heading for **Spaxton**. Progressing down here you will walk beneath some oak trees. In summer, rose bay willow herb is in flower, and also knapweed, yellow vetch and hawkbits. In spring early purple orchids can be found.



You will come to a turning on the left. Ignore this, and carry straight on along the lane past Rockhouse Farm, which is on your right. Almost opposite, take a bridleway on the left, which will swing left, then, the track divides. Follow the right hand track and continue for approximately half a mile, keeping close to the right hand boundary.

When track divides keep right and continue for approx. 60 yards then at a junction of paths turn right, go through gate into a National Trust area marked **Broomfield Hill**. Notice the view to the left before following the path down through a couple of gates, then cross over a busy main road (take care), then turn left to the **Traveller's Rest Inn**. Just past the inn is a small lane on the right. Go down here; towards the bottom of the combe you will see Manor Farm on the right and Waterpits Farm on the left (where accommodation may be found).

Up a slope, the lane comes out on to a road. Go straight over, and at the right hand side of Timbercombe Lodge a bridleway will take you on in the same direction. Continue along here for some distance, not diverting or going through any gates. The path will then start to enter a wood and go uphill. Eventually there is a junction of various paths. Ignore the wide one hard right. The one you want is a small track a few yards further on. The broad track on the left of this is a forestry or farm track. If you happen to take it by mistake and end up on the road, just turn to the right, go straight ahead and you will end up at the same point.

If you did manage to keep on the correct path, it will end up at the junction of roads and paths called Park End.

Now take the road on the right marked to **Bagborough** and travel uphill in a north-westerly direction. Half a mile up this road you will come to a junction. Don't turn left for **Minehead**; go straight on (marked for the car park). The lane gives a good display of foxgloves and tormentil in summer. (To avoid the narrow lane, there is a permissive bridleway to the right).

Arriving at the car park, cross over to the opposite side and still going in a north-westerly direction take the track straight ahead. This is the top of the **Quantocks**; the views are quite spectacular to the left. Carry on along this track with gorse on the right; you then come to a line of beech trees on your left. Continue straight ahead, and notice the abundance of ferns growing here.

Further on there is a gate and a stile. Go through and continue in the same direction. Proceed along this track, still with beech trees on the left. At the end of the beeches, the path forks; take the path to the right. In late August or beginning of September, there are various heathers in bloom, with bees hard at work collecting the pollen.

Carry on; you will see a wood ahead. Continue along the track; it will take a right hand swing, but take the path slightly to the left, towards the corner of the wood. Then cut down the side, beneath a canopy of beech trees. The path bends off to the right a little - there are pine trees to your right and fairly open scrub ground to the left. You can make very good progress along this well-defined track. At no time lose contact with the open ground on the left, even though it may be scrub.

Eventually you will come to another car park, which is through a gate on the right, but carry straight on through the beech trees until you come to a gate. Go through it and continue in the same direction. Further on there is another gateway; pass through it and carry straight on for approximately one third of a mile. Go through a hunting gate on your left. Once through the gate there is a pond; then head straight down the combe, following a long line of beeches on the right. This is known as **Little Quantock Combe**. (If you happen to have missed this gate and carried on, don't worry too much about it; you will come to a road - go left on the road known as **Crowcombe Combe** and you should end up in the village.)

Now hopefully you've come down **Little Quantock Combe** at the bottom of which there is a small farmyard. Pass through two gates on to a lane, then turn right. Past the first bend in the road, another lane goes off to the left; ignore this and take the one straight ahead. These lanes are a picture in the spring, but it seems the tops of the hills can match this during the summer. The road gradually winds its way down to a junction. At this point bear left (marked to Taunton). A few yards down the road you will find yourself in the village of **Crowcombe**. At a junction of roads, turn right as if going to **Stogumber**. On the right you have the village church and, on the left, one of the finest church houses in England. Carry on a little further with the cross on your right, and on the left the **Carew Arms**. Accommodation may be found here.

There will be quite a bit of lane walking for the next few miles. This is because there is no direct footpath. **To avoid crossing a main road, go through a gate at the side of the Inn, and then to Crowcombe bridge under the A358. Continue onto a lane and turn right. At junction, continue in the same direction to a lane and then bear left.** You are walking on this lane right through to **Stogumber** - about two and a half miles - so keep straight ahead, not diverting off on any side lane. In August there is ribwort plantain, sorrel, plenty of hips, blackberries and the red berries of Wild Arum which shine like small lamps. Earlier the dog-roses are in bloom, mingling with honeysuckle, foxgloves and campion.



After a while the lane starts to drop down as you go under some quite large oak and beech trees, with a view of the **Quantock Ridge** to the right. At a crossroads; go straight on, past Quarkhill Farm on the right.

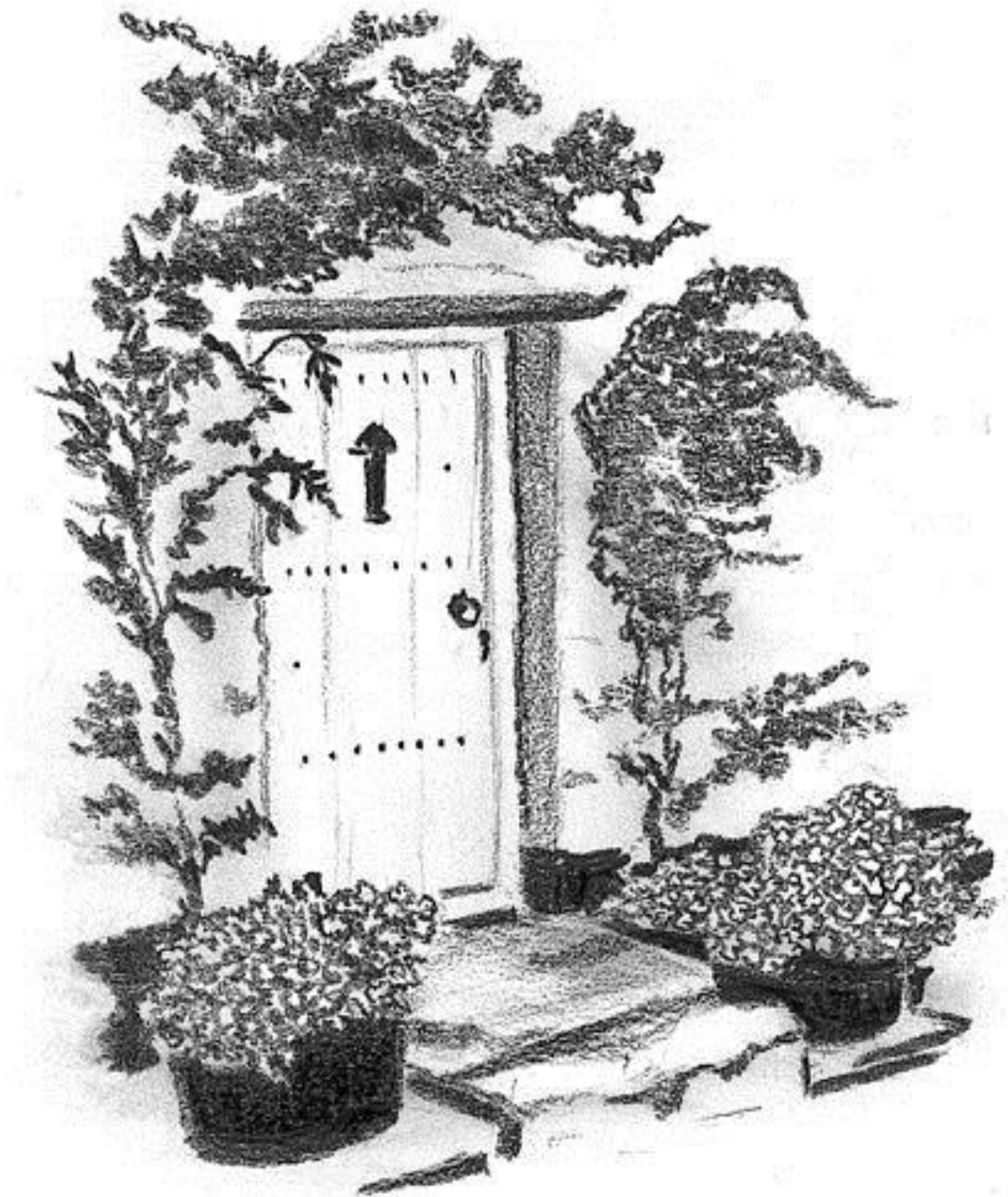
A bit further on, pass Brewers Water Farm on the right, and as you go down the hill the countryside of the **Brendon Hills** stretches out in front.

At the bottom of the hill, there is the **West Somerset Steam Railway** and **Stogumber Station**. Go under the railway bridge. On the left just past this you have the Bee World and Animal Centre. Pass over the stream and under the power lines. Continue straight over the next small crossroads. As you carry on, the road starts to go uphill. You will reach **Stogumber** Cricket Field on the right, with a quarter of a mile to go to the village centre. Just after a school, you will find Hall Farm on the right.

Continue down the road, which bends to the right. Go straight on for the village and church, but for the main route take a slip road on the left, then turn right at the bottom. Walk a short way, then turn left on the road and go straight on up the hill past a thatched house on the left. There will be a lane on the right marked 'Monksilver'. Ignore this and carry on up the hill. You are going to **Monksilver**, but the main reason to choose this route is that if you continue up the hill, taking the next turning on the right marked 'Combe Cross Lane' you will get better views. As you walk along this lane, look to your right and see **Stogumber** village and the church, with the **Quantocks** in the background. You are then boxed in a bit by the hedges, but there are gateways to admire the view.

Approaching the top of the hill, the higher road does seem to have been worthwhile. In summer there is yellow toadflax on the side of the lane before you start to drop down. You now come to Combe Cross itself, a junction of lanes. Turn right on the road marked 'Monksilver'. Immediately go to the left, past a thatched cottage. A short distance up the road, turn right at the signpost to Monksilver. You drop down quite steeply now, and can see **Monksilver** and its church on the left, and quite possibly deer on Birds Hill to your left. At **Monksilver** you will be at the end of the lane walking for the time being. From now on you will walk mostly on track, footpath and bridleway.

This is the heart of the **Brendon Hills** and their villages. Approaching **Monksilver**, the Community Hall will be on the right. Walk down the lane beneath some large oak trees. The lane swings left on to another road. Turn right and go over a bridge. Once over the stream, ignore the turning on the right and continue for a few yards along the main road. The road swings right and you will see the **Notley Arms** ahead, where there may be accommodation. On this bend, take the lane to the left, then after about 50 yards follow a bridleway on your left to Colton Cross. This is a wonderful little combe. A few years ago it was a running stream, but a lot of work has been done on the path since then. It is quite hard coming up here, but to compensate the sides are covered in harts tongue fern, lichens, mosses and liverworts.

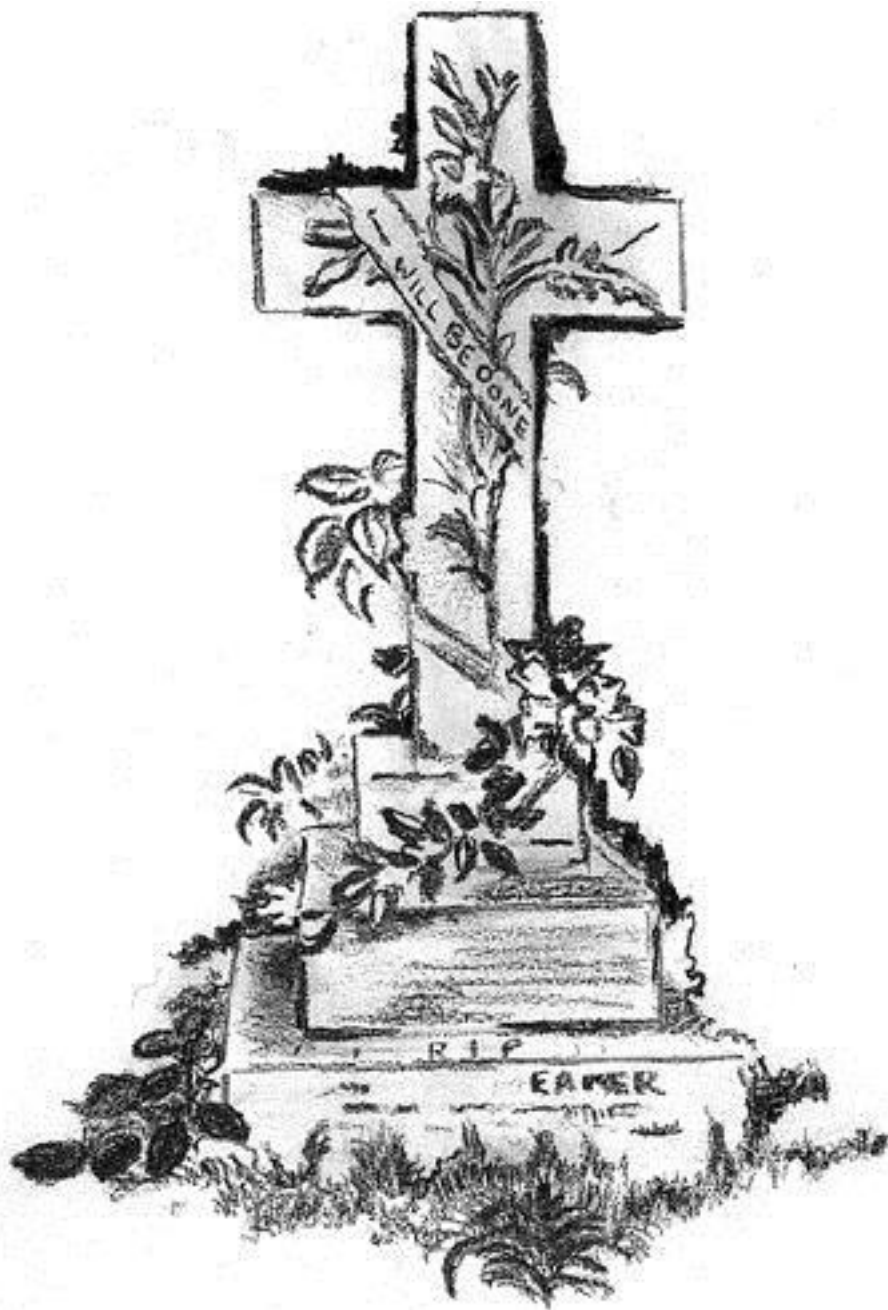


After some distance the path starts to level out. At the beginning of June there were still lesser celandines in flower. You may find cones on the ground beneath a couple of Scots pines, but the trees are mainly oak, with holly and elder beneath. In August you can hear the drum of harvesters moving across the fields below. If the fields have been freshly ploughed and harrowed, they stand out like red carpets.

Carry on climbing up here for about one and a half miles. The path is well way-marked, well maintained and a naturalist's haven. Eventually you will reach some beech trees, with a sign to Monksilver. There is a track to the left. Don't take that - just carry straight on to more open ground with bracken on the left and woodland on the right.

At the end of this track there is a gate and a junction of lanes. Cross straight over - not the one to Holcombe Farm, nor the one on the right that goes down the hill - just go straight on.

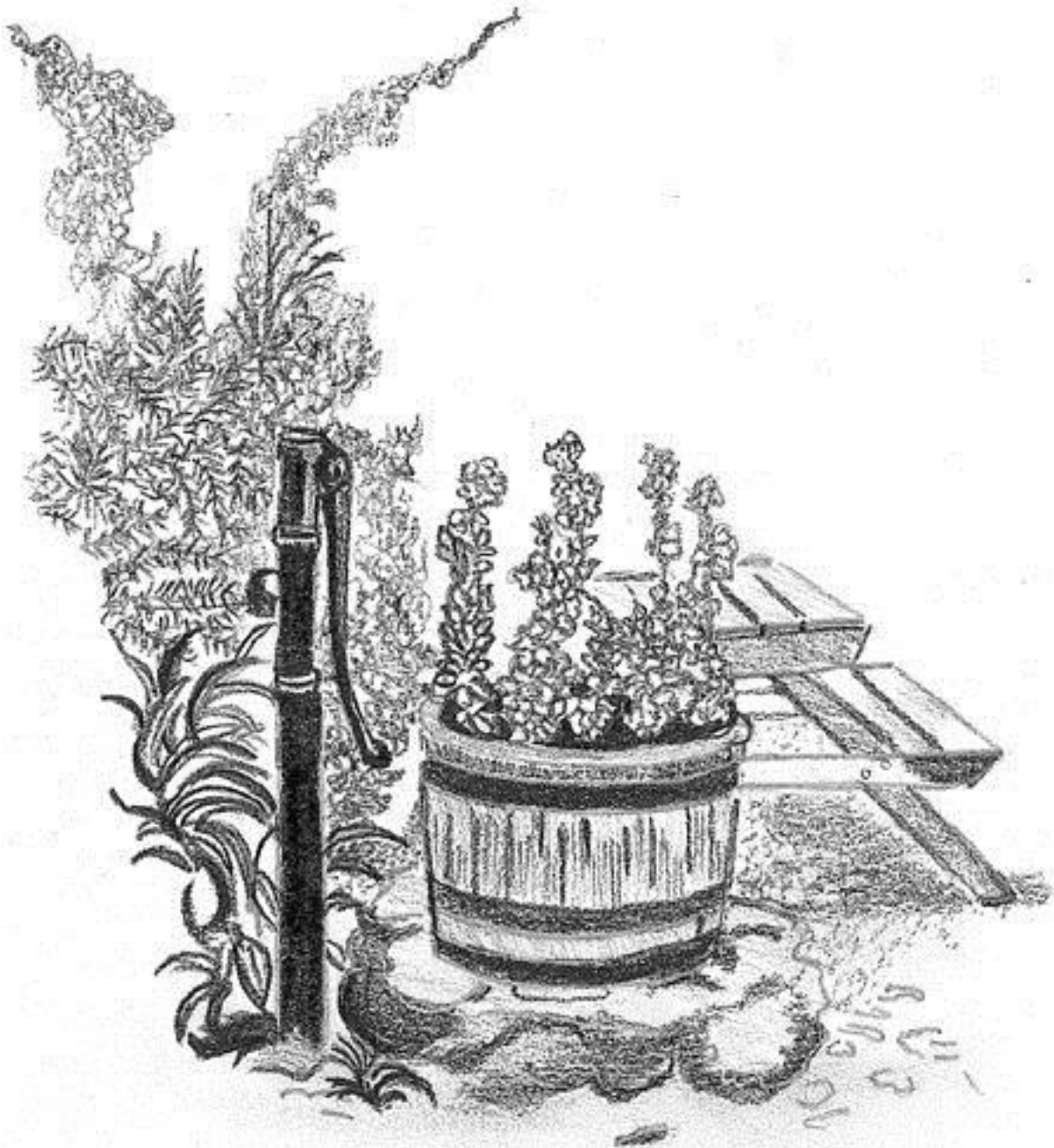
About a quarter of a mile up this lane turn right at a footpath sign. Go through a gate and into a field. Once through the gate, keeping to the narrow part of the field, go straight over to the wood. In the corner, go through a gate. Once through, there are several tracks ahead. The one on your left is a forestry track. You want the one that goes ahead, and drops down the hill. It should be waymarked on the first oak tree on the right. You will soon know if you are on the right track. Although you are walking in the wood, immediately to the right there is open ground. This is a good ridge. You are now walking under beech trees, and looking down the valley to the right you can see the hamlet of **Chidgley** below. The track swings gradually to the left, descending all the time. You will soon come to a junction of paths, one marked Raleigh's Cross. Ignore this and go straight downhill. You will then come to a main road. Turn immediately right and continue down the hill. Notice an old milestone on your left, saying 5 miles to **Watchet**. You will not be on this road for long, but it can be very busy, so take care. On the left is a lane that doubles back on you - take this one. Carry on down the lane, which takes a right hand turn past Willhay Farm on the right (it can be quite slippery down here when wet) and continues, going down quite steeply.



Eventually pass through a small tunnel, and shortly after that there is a waterfall on the left. Carry on for a short distance; the track will suddenly swing hard to the left. At this point there is Pitt Farm on the right. Go up the farm track for about 60 yards, then on your left you will see a hunting gate. Go through this and continue. You will find yourself in a small field. Keep to the top of this field, close to the boundary, which will be on the left. On the opposite bank is **Pit Wood**, which is mostly conifers. At the other end of the field you will come to some steps, and a stile. Go over it and continue up the path between two banks. This path does not go on for long. It will swing hard to the right. At this point, pass through the small gate on your left into the churchyard. Once through the churchyard, go through another gate and on to the lane. This is the village of **Leighland Chapel**. Turn right on to the lane and walk up it for about 20 yards, then take the footpath on the left. Walk up a short way and you will come to a gate. Go through the gate and across the next field (keeping close to the left hand boundary) to the gate opposite. Once through the gate, turn right, then go immediately through another gate, continue in the same direction as in the

last field and straight across the field at its narrowest point. It is a bit steep coming up here. After a short distance you will come to a hunting gate. Go through it and continue roughly in the same direction, keeping close to the left hand boundary. You are still going uphill, but are getting the reward for your effort.

You are now in open country. Keeping fairly close to the left hand boundary, you will come to a gate, but don't go through it. You are at the top of the hill here, have a sit down and look at the view. Then continue down the boundary of the same field, which is still on the left. At the corner is a stile. Go over it, and straight ahead on a well-formed track. Take the second gate on the right, and enter a copse, with a pond on the right. Walk straight up the track and pass through the next gate, then turn left and up another track. Follow this round for a short way and you will come to a farmyard. In the middle of the farmyard there should be a signpost. One track is marked to **Combe Berrow**, half a mile. Do not take this one. Take the one to **Raleigh's Cross**. Immediately past this point, still in the farmyard, the track splits again. Take the route uphill and walk straight ahead, keeping the hedge on your right. Very soon there will be another gate. Pass through it and you will find yourself in open country with a deep valley on the left. On the other side of the valley there is **Forehill Wood**. Continue straight ahead on a steady climb. This can be ablaze with colour in summer, with foxgloves, plenty of brambles still in flower, thistledown and a certain amount of gorse. There are grasshoppers and meadow brown butterflies, and the place can be alive with rabbits. At the top of this ridge, go through a gate and on to another path between two hedges, then you will come to a track. Turn left, and follow the track down for about 150 yards. At the end there is a road, with a house on your left. Once on the road, turn right and eventually you will come to a junction. Turn left at this point (marked for **Treborough**). A hundred yards or so down here, take the first lane on the right, just before the houses. The church is on the left. Carry on up the lane a short way; it will then swing hard round to the left. Continue until you reach a lane on your left. Do not take it; keep straight on, but before you do that look over the gate on your right at the view. Immediately to your right there is the **Quantoct ridge**, gradually fading away. On the left you can see **Exmoor** looming up, which will now dominate the route. Continue down; until the lane starts to turn left, on your right are two gateways and a signpost, which says "Footpath to **Luxborough**". Go through the gate into the field and walk in the direction indicated by the signpost - don't take the path to **Roadwater**.



Once

in the field, keep parallel to the left hand boundary, over to a line of beech trees. Go through a gap in the trees; walk on a little further and go through a gate on the left hand side. Once through the gate, take a diagonal route over the field in a north-westerly direction. Follow the field to the bottom left hand corner, to the right of some oaks.

On the opposite hillside there is **Slowly Wood**, and Slowly Farm buildings. Arriving at the bottom of the field, pass through the furthest gate in the corner. Once through here, you will find yourself in a long field; bear to the left and continue to go up the whole length of this field, keeping close to the left hand boundary.

At the other end of the field, go over the stile near the gate on the far right, then bear very slightly to your right, walk down a slope, meeting another major track, and continue in roughly the same direction between tall pines. The track eventually swings round to the left

down to a road. Bear left. The **Washford River** is on your right, carry on a little further on. Ignore the road to the right to **Rodhuish** and go straight on. You may see a water vole and dippers in the river, and mimulus or monkey flower grows near a bridge. This is the village of **Luxborough**. There should be accommodation. There is an inn - **the Royal Oak**, or more accommodation may be found a bit further along the route at **Churchdown**.