

Circular Walk Nineteen - Hatch Beauchamp Wrantage and the Chard Canal - Exploring Taunton Deane



General Information

Distance of Walk: 5 kilometres

A walk from the pleasant village of Hatch Beauchamp east along the high ground formed by limestone and down the scarp to Wrantage, returning through the western extremities of the low-lying moorland.

OS map - Explorer 128, Taunton and Blackdown Hills.

Terrain - Much of the walk is on level ground, but there is a steep descent to Wrantage, and a moderate ascent up the road back to Hatch Beauchamp.

Parking - There is parking along the road side in Hatch Beauchamp

Refreshments - The Hatch Inn, Hatch Beauchamp, and the Canal Inn at Wrantage (turn right at the main road instead of left)

Landscape characters of the walk

The walk begins by following the Limestone Scarp. This runs from north-east to south-west where it joins the Blackdown escarpment at about 200 metres. The ridge is split along a fault line which runs roughly from Hatch Beauchamp to the east of Stoke St. Mary. There are two distinct soil types. Along the ridge line are the Jurassic limestone and clay soils which are unique in the Deane for their high pH. At the foot of the ridge are the Permian-Triassic reddish mudstone soils. The high alkalinity of the calcareous soils allows a diverse range of trees and ground flora. Much of the soil is shallow, moist and slippery, and generally unsuitable for farming - hence the scarp is heavily wooded. The walk descends to the low-lying western edge of the Sedgemoor Old Rhyne catchment area.

This River Flood Plain landscape is well treed with open river edges, and is liable to occasional flooding. Land use is mainly permanent grassland suitable for stock rearing and dairying, with some cereals where the flood risk is low. The soils are mainly alluvial and clay with some overlying peat.

Directions

A From the Hatch Inn walk into Station Road and then left towards Beer Crocombe and Curry Mallet. After 60 metres turn left to walk along the footpath between houses. Go through the kissing gate and walk ahead, crossing over the drive to Hatch Court. Continue along this grass path to reach the church glancing back for a good view of the Blackdown Hills

B Turn left onto the concrete path, follow through the gate and walk ahead to the right of the house. Follow the track beyond the garden walls to meet the concrete driveway. After 40 metres veer left across the field and through the trees to meet the road.

C Turn left and follow this road for about three quarters of a kilometre. On reaching the house on the left, opposite the turning to Beer Crocombe and Curry Mallet, turn left immediately in front of the house and walk down the narrow path alongside the garden, to a stile. Walk to the front of the pill box on the right and then straight down the steep path following the red marker posts to the stile at the bottom of the field. Cross the stile and walk ahead through the trees with the hedgerow on the left. (Notice on the right as you walk down, the concrete blocks and the entrance to Crimson Hill Tunnel - see point 9 overleaf). Continue ahead over a further stile and walk down the farm track to the gate and road. (To see the Chard Canal more closely and see the interpretation panel, first go right over the stile and then retrace your steps)

D Turn left along the verge and then take the next lane on the left. Shortly before the first house on the right, turn right over a small wooden bridge and walk ahead to the end of the hedge. Turn half-left across the field towards the telegraph pole. Go over a ditch and then to the left of a gate. Turn left and walk beside the stream to the stile in the corner of the field. Continue ahead, following the stream, to a metal gate on the left. Go through and turn half-right towards two gates (ignore the gate in the right-hand corner

Circular Walk Nineteen - Hatch Beauchamp Wrantage and the Chard Canal

of the field). Go through the right-hand of the two gates, then turn left along the field boundary. After about 100 metres, go over the stile on the left and right to follow the field boundary again. Where the hedge turns right continue straight ahead across the field, veering right to reach the stile near the road. Turn left down the track towards the house. Where the fence turns left, continue ahead along the track and over the stream. Turn left to walk between the stream and the side of the house and continue to the gate in the corner of the garden. Turn right and then left, following the hedge, across to a gate and on to Old Way Lane. Turn right and follow this to the T-junction, passing beneath the old railway bridge.

E Turn left and walk along the grass verge as far as you can - this will depend on whether the hedge has been cut recently. Where necessary, cross the road and continue up the hill back to Hatch Beauchamp.

Points of Interest

1 Hatch Beauchamp

In Saxon times Hatch Beauchamp was called Hache, the Beauchamp having been added some time after the Norman Conquest when the manor was held by an illustrious family of that name. The meaning of the name Hache is a 'gateway', usually the gateway to a forest. Hache was then a gateway to the ancient forest of Neroche. The little river Rag, which flows through Hatch Green, was the northern boundary of the forest.

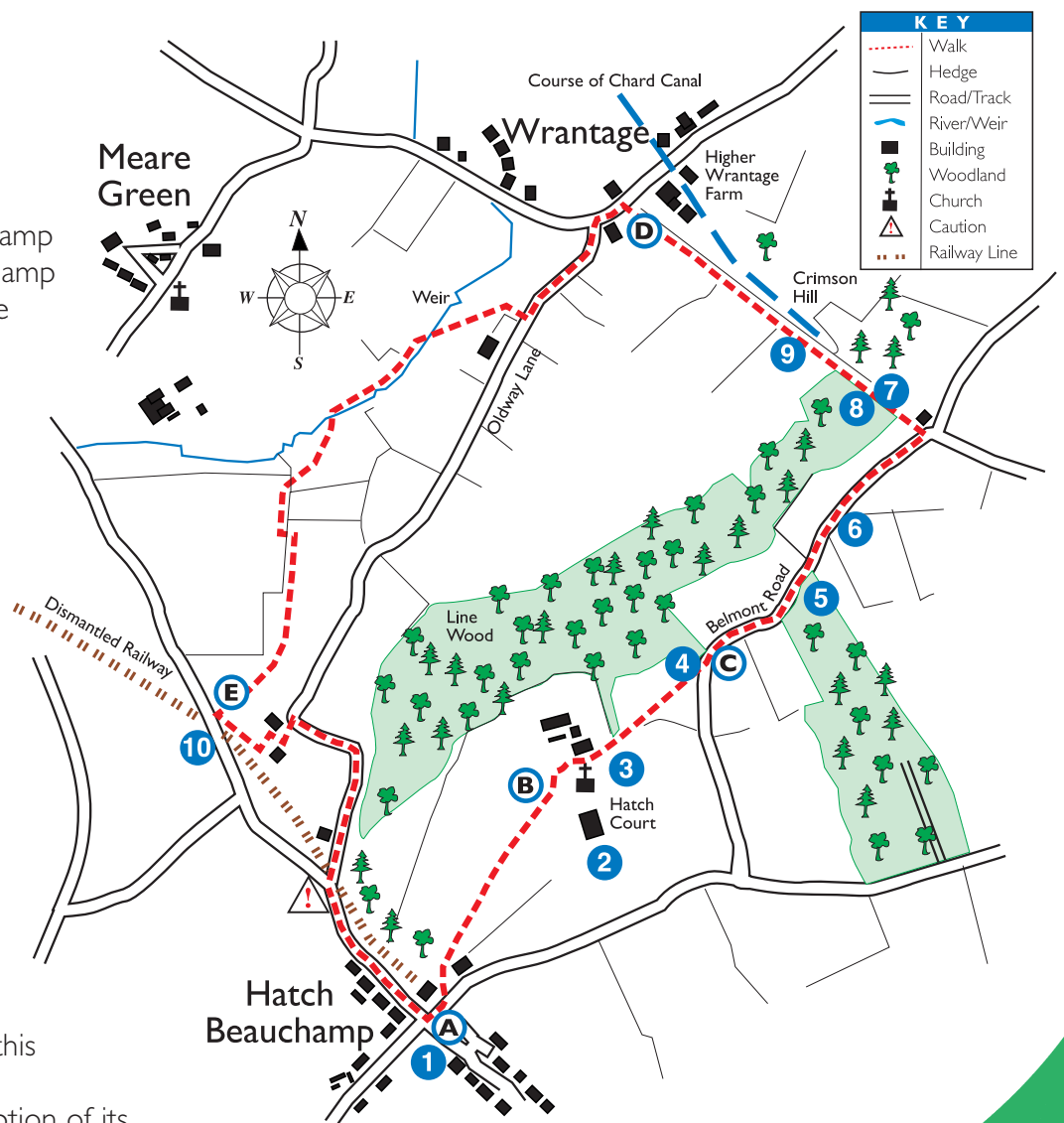
2 Hatch Court (private residence)

From early times the Beauchamp family's chief residence was at Hache Court. The exact location of this mansion has not yet been established but from a description of its ruin, written in 1633, it must have been near to

the church and was therefore not far from the site of this present house. This was built in about 1755 for John Collins. The architect of this elegant Palladian style building was Thomas Prowse of Axbridge, who was also a member of parliament. The Collins family had previously lived in Ilminster and had accumulated considerable wealth in the wool and cloth making trade during the 17th century. From 1743 onwards John Collins' name appears in the Hatch Church rate book as paying rates 'for the farm' and by 1757 he had become High Sheriff of Somerset.

3 Church of St. John the Baptist

This church as it stands today is mainly late medieval with some 19th century additions in matching style. It is built for the most part of blue lias stone. The Patent Rolls of 1206 establish that an earlier church existed at the close of the 12th century. The date of this earlier church is unknown but it was certainly standing on the



Circular Walk Nineteen - Hatch Beauchamp Wrantage and the Chard Canal



same site during the Norman period. The tower, nave and north aisle of the present church are late 15th/early 16th century. The chancel is earlier but many alterations have been made to it through the ages. The perpendicular tower was almost certainly built by the same team of builders who constructed the towers of Kingston St. Mary and Staple Fitzpaine. Four carvings, one in each corner, feature dogs rather than mythological creatures. These carvings may represent the hunting dogs associated with Neroche Forest. The roof of the chancel is of open waggon design. The church contains some very interesting bird carvings, probably the work of Simon Warman, a local wood carver. There are some remarkable bench-ends and seat-backs with unusual carvings, about a third of which are late medieval. A more detailed description of the church and history of Hatch Beauchamp can be found in Christopher Cookson's guide, available in the church.

4 Line Wood

A woodland walk is now open through Line Wood, with kind permission of the owner John Townson, on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays from March to the end of November. In 1755 John Collins, owner of a large estate bought with the proceeds of a successful family cloth-making business, built the present Hatch Court and at the same time created a landscape garden which was probably inspired by the gardens being created by his neighbours such as Sir Charles Kemeys-Tynte at Halswell and Copleston Warre Bamfylde at Hestercombe. It is thought that the garden at Hatch Court was not as elaborate as those gardens but, despite the moves of Lancelot 'Capability' Brown to simplify landscape design and purge it of unnecessary clutter, was nevertheless adorned with various follies such as a gothic shell temple, bonehouse, hermitage, grotto and roothouse. Line Wood forms the western end of a northwest-facing wooded scarp that continues almost unbroken to Langport.

5 Orchards

Here, on a gentle south-facing slope, is a typical Somerset scene. Orchards make good habitat for wildlife - watch out in winter for large flocks of fieldfares feeding on the remaining fruit.

6 View

Over the hedges and gates to your right as you walk is a fine view across South Somerset with the hills of Dorset in the distance.

7 View

From the edge of the limestone scarp there is a panoramic view over the Taunton Vale to the Quantocks.

8 Pillboxes

During the Second World War, a defence line was built, 44 miles long, from north of Bridgwater to Seaton on the south coast, to protect against invasion from the south west. It consisted of pill boxes, anti-tank ditches and concrete blocks ('dragons teeth') located on or close to canals, rivers and railways. It was completed in five weeks by local labour. Many of the pillboxes remain. The idea for these miniature forts is thought to have originated in France during the First World War, the term pillbox referring to their resemblance to contemporary boxes used for carrying pills and medicines. Some of the 'dragons teeth' can be seen in the woods at the bottom of the hill.

9 Chard Canal

The Chard Canal, which linked Chard to Taunton, was built at the end of the canal era. Work started in 1835, and after seven years it was opened on the 24th May 1842. It cost £140,000 to build, was 13.5 miles long and technically advanced, rising 231ft from Taunton to Chard with three tunnels and four inclines. Work started at Crimson Hill Tunnel, an entrance to which can be seen in the woods on your right. The tunnel is over a mile long (1.6km) and was manually excavated with continual shifts working through the night. One night a man was killed when part of the tunnel collapsed. It is seven feet wide (2.12m). The tub boats, specially made for the dimensions of the canal, were pulled through using a series of hooks in the roof. The horses used to pull the boats would trek over the hill with the barge boy. Further down the hill was the Crimson Hill/Wrantage incline, which raised tub boats 27ft (8.23m).

Circular Walk Nineteen - Hatch Beauchamp Wrantage and the Chard Canal

In 1853 it was described as double track counter balancing, with boats carried in six-wheeled caissons joined by a chain. A pound at the base held the waiting boats. An aqueduct carried the canal over what is now the A378 and its stone remains can still be seen. The canal provided low cost haulage for Chard which was an expanding industrial centre, carrying mainly coal, culm (coal slack), stone and grain. It was, however, a financial disaster and in 1866 it was replaced by a railway line.

10 Railway

Running alongside the road here is an embankment that carried the 13-mile (21km) branch line from Creech Junction to Chard, operated by the Bristol and Exeter Railway and opened in 1866.

If you would like to make any comments about this walk, or would like to suggest other points of interest, please contact Ian Clark at: i.clark@tauntondeane.gov.uk, or write to him at Taunton Deane Borough Council, The Deane House, Belvedere Road, Taunton, Somerset, TA1 1HE.

For comments regarding the condition of the paths, stiles, gates etc. please contact Rights of Way at Somerset County Council, 0845 345 9166

Sources of information and further reading

The Deane Tree Plan - *Taunton Deane Borough Council*

A Short Guide to Hatch Beauchamp Parish Church
Booklet - Christopher Cookson (available in the church)

Taunton Deane Church Trail, leaflet
Taunton Deane Borough Council

Towers and Hunkypunks, leaflet
Taunton Deane Borough Council

Bench Ends and Pulpits, leaflet
Taunton Deane Borough Council

Line Wood Walk, leaflet
Taunton Deane Borough Council

Somerset Parks and Gardens, a Landscape History
James Bond - Somerset Books

Why Pillbox?
John Hellis - Pillbox Study Group

Chard Canal Interpretation Board
Somerset County Council

Somerset's Industrial Heritage - *Editor Derek Warren*
Somerset Industrial Archaeology Society

Taunton, the Changing Face of the Town and its People
Nick Chipchase - Sutton Publishing

If You Require Further Information Please Contact:

The Heritage and Landscape Team,

Taunton Deane Borough Council,
The Deane House, Belvedere Road,
Taunton, TA1 1HE

Tel: 01823 356491

Email: heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk

or parks@tauntondeane.gov.uk

www.tauntondeane.gov.uk

If you would like this document translated into other languages or in Braille, large print, audio tape, or CD please telephone us on 01823 356491 or email us at: heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk

<p>Bengali</p> <p>অপনি যদি এই দলিলপত্র অন্য কোন ভাষায় অনুবাদ করে চান, বা ব্রেল, বড়ো ছাপার অক্ষর, অডিও-টেপ বা সিডিতে চান, তাহলে আমাদের টেলিফোন করুন এই নম্বরে 01823 356491 বা আখবা ই-মেল করুন heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>
<p>Chinese</p> <p>如果你要這文件翻譯成其他語言或盲人凸字,大號字,聲帶,或光碟,請致電我們,電話 01823 356491 或電郵 heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>
<p>Hindi</p> <p>अगर आप इस दस्तावेज़ का अनुवाद दूसरी भाषाओं या ब्रेल, बड़े अक्षरों वाली छपाई, ऑडियो टेप, या सीडी में चाहते हैं, तो कृपया हमें इस नंबर पर फ़ोन कीजिये 01823 356491 या यहाँ ईमेल कीजिये heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>
<p>Portuguese</p> <p>Se desejar a tradução deste documento para um outro idioma ou em Braille, letras grandes, cassette de áudio ou CD, contacte-nos pelo telefone 01823 356491 ou pelo endereço de correio electrónico heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>
<p>Polish</p> <p>W celu uzyskania niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, w języku Braille'a, wydrukowanego dużym drukiem, nagranych na taśmie dźwiękowej lub CD prosimy o kontakt pod numerem telefonu 01823 356491 lub na adres heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>