

Circular Walk Five - Milverton

Exploring Taunton Deane



General Information

Distance of Walk: 7.5 kilometres

A lane and field walk to the west of this large village rich in architectural interest, with extensive views across the surrounding countryside.

OS map - Explorer 128, Taunton and Blackdown Hills.

Terrain - moderately undulating, quite steep in parts.

Parking - At the village car park on the corner of Fore Street and Creedwell Orchard.

Refreshments - The Globe Inn or the White Hart in Milverton.

Landscape character of the walk - High Vale

The walk lies in an area described as High Vale. Rising from 70 metres up to 170 metres, this diverse area tends to be composed of moderately undulating vale with wooded hilltops and small fields enclosed by hedgerows. It lies within the catchment area of the River Tone and is the source of many springs, tributary streams and brooks, which give rise to an interesting riparian vegetation.

Typical tree species vary depending on the type of habitat, which may be woodland, woodland edge and shrub, heath, or wetland and river bank. In the hedgerows hazel, hawthorn, blackthorn, dogwood, spindle, holly, privet, crab apple, field rose, dog rose, and guelder rose can all be found with ash, oak and field maple as standard trees. The underlying geology is predominantly Devonian sandstone, siltstone, mudstone and slate with Permo-Trassic reddish mudstone and alluvium. Throughout the area the soil is generally Lower Marls and Pebble Beds giving rise to good quality agricultural land suitable for mixed arable and pastoral farming.

Directions

A Turn left along Fore Street, pass the White Hart and turn right up St Michaels Hill. Turn left along High Street which becomes the drive to Milverton Court.

B Keep to the right of the house and take a short track on the right before the barn (not the drive to the lodge house). Enter the field and go left through the next gate. Bear right through the field to a gate at the top of the hill. Go through the gate and turn left to follow the hedge to the road.

C Turn left past the Quaking House to a small copse and the Friends Burial Ground. Take the bridle path on the right to 'Farthings'. On emerging from the sunken path, by an old quarry, continue down the hill.

D Just before joining the road turn right on a wide path between trees, bending slightly right uphill and pass two lime kilns. Continue ahead with buildings on the left and quarry on the right to a gate and a stile overlooking Wiveliscombe.

E Descend the hill keeping the hedge on your left, through two fields and then across a bridge in the hedge ahead. Continue by the left hedge of this large field. Half way along by a stile turn right and walk across the field aiming for the gate onto a track to Fry's Farm.

F Follow the track and just before the farm yard go right through a gate and follow the left hand hedge. Join the farm road and keep ahead past Westbrook Farm. On the brow of the hill look for adjacent field gates on the right.

G Take the first gate and climb up the field with the hedge on your left. Where the hedge ends bear slightly right aiming for a stile in the hedge beneath an oak tree. Over the stile, continue ahead through the field bearing slightly left up the hill to a gate onto the road.

H Go right and at the bend at the top of the hill turn left through the second of two gates. Keep forward by the right hedge through two fields.

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1 Cross a stile onto an enclosed lane which leads to a road. Turn right along Wood Street and continue down North Street to the crossroads. Turn right into Silver Street and Fore Street to return to the car park.

Points of Interest

1 Milverton

This is one of the largest villages in Somerset and it is well worth exploring for its many fine Georgian buildings. It retains its medieval street pattern around the church which is on a central prominence. Its name was perhaps taken from the old Town Mill to the north of the village. Although the present building dates from the 18th century (and was still used for grinding corn well into the 20th century), there has been a mill on the site since Saxon times. The Domesday survey of 1086 shows that Milverton was then a substantial place with one of only seven recorded markets in the whole of Somerset. The village seems to have gone into some decline after this period. The woollen industry became, for centuries, the mainstay of the population. It was a cottage industry, with many spinning wheels and looms being worked throughout the village. The weavers of Milverton

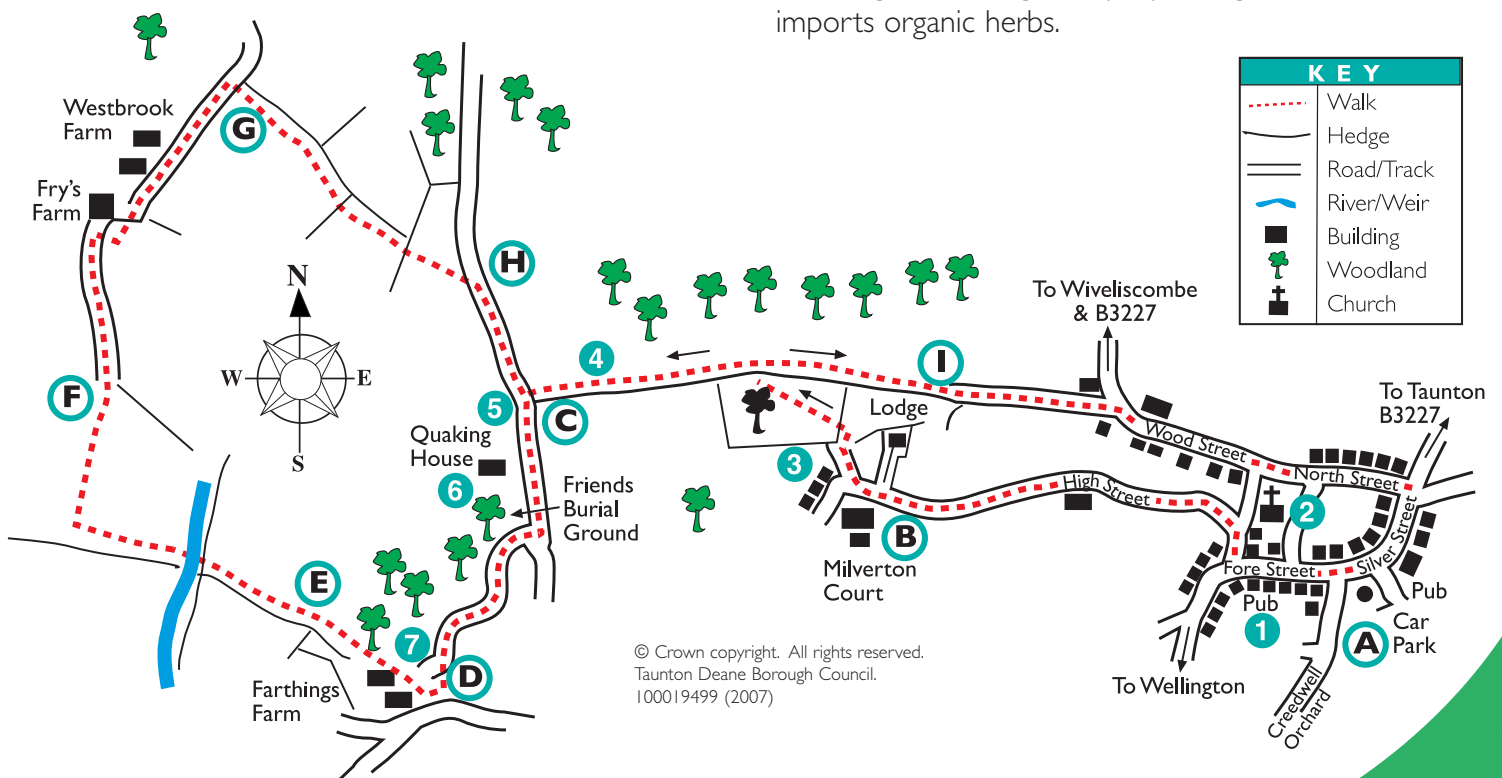
came to be renowned for their serges, druggets and baizes. As there were no textile mills in Milverton the products of the cottagers were sent to the mills of the Were (later Fox) family at Wellington for finishing and distribution. These were prosperous times again, and the resulting houses now grace the streets of the village, the best of which is North Street.

2 Church of St Michael

As with many churches, the oldest remaining part is the lower section of the tower which is thought to be 12th century. Much of the rest is 14th and 15th century, though the church was extensively altered during restoration work in 1849-50. It is predominantly built of red sandstones and breccias (which contain angular fragments of rocks found in the Brendon Hills), with Ham Stone dressings. Inside there is a Norman font, but most interestingly there is an unusually large collection of carved benches (ends, fronts and backs) which date from 1540-60. Once thought to have been carved by itinerant Flemish wood carvers, they are now considered to be the work of local craftsmen.

3 Milverton Court and The Organic Trading Company

This late 16th century house and farm now houses The Organic Trading Company, that grows and imports organic herbs.



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4 View

From this vantage point above Milverton you can enjoy a panoramic view that takes in the Quantock Hills, the Vale of Taunton and the Blackdown Hills. In clear weather the Somerset Levels and, beyond, the Poldens and the Mendips can be seen.

5 View

From this gate you will see the small town of Wiveliscombe, situated at the foot of the Brendon Hills. It has been an important site for many centuries as remains from pre-historic, Roman and Saxon times have been traced, including the fortifications of King's Castle to the east and the Roman fort to the south-east.

6 Quaking House

These 17th century cottages (now a single private dwelling) once included a Quaker Meeting House, which was first registered in 1684. The Friends Burial Ground further down the lane dates from 1681. The Quakers bought and rebuilt a property in North Street, Milverton in 1753 and abandoned this meeting house, though the burial ground is still in use.

7 Pooles Limekiln and Quarry

The rolling landscape to the west of Milverton over which much of the walk passes is formed by an outcrop of the resistant Budleigh Salterton Pebble Beds that caps the hills in a roughly north-south line through Ash Priors, Milverton and Langford Budville.

This Triassic conglomerate contains, amongst other materials, limestone cobbles and pebbles.

In the 17th century there was growing awareness that the application of lime on acid soils improved crop yields. Much of the soil in west Somerset, having developed on non-calcareous rocks, tends towards acidity and therefore a number of limekilns and quarries were established along this outcrop. The limestone was sorted by hand from the non-calcareous stones and burnt with coal (in alternate layers) to produce the lime. It is thought that the burning of lime for agricultural use declined in west Somerset towards the end of the 19th century as crushed limestone and artificial fertilisers became available.

Sources of information and further reading

Guide to Milverton and Fitzhead
Milverton and Fitzhead Society

Listed Building Database
Taunton Deane Borough Council

The Buildings of England - South and West Somerset - *Nikolaus Pevsner - Penguin*

Geology and Landscape of Taunton Deane
Hugh Prudden - Taunton Deane Borough Council

Deane Tree Plan - *Taunton Deane Borough Council*

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Bengali

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Hindi

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