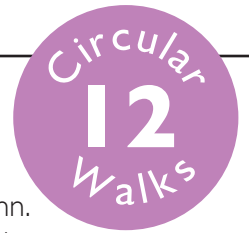


Circular Walk Twelve - Wellington to the Monument - Exploring Taunton Deane



General Information

Distance of Walk: 9 kilometres

Heading south from Wellington, this is a steep climb up onto the Blackdown Hills, rewarded by spectacular views, often across to the Bristol Channel.

OS map - Explorer 128, Taunton and Blackdown Hills.

Terrain - gently undulating at first, followed by a steep ascent

Parking - North Street car park (from Taunton go straight over at the traffic lights and turn right after 100 metres)

Refreshments - There is a range of pubs and shops in Wellington.

Landscape characters of the walk - From the urban scene of Wellington the walk heads south through **Low Vale** and **High Vale** landscape before climbing the steep Blackdown Scarp. Rising to 100 metres in parts of the Deane, Low Vale is gently undulating landscape with small pockets of mainly broadleaf woodland, the higher ground often accentuated by copses. Ash and oak are the dominant trees, and there are many standards in the hedgerows. There are numerous orchards, and also a number of historic parklands such as at Nynehead east of Wellington. The underlying geology here is predominantly marls, and the agricultural land is good quality, composed of pasture, arable and market gardening. As you progress south towards the monument, you will cross High Vale landscape, moderately undulating with wooded hilltops and small fields enclosed by hedgerows, rising to 170 metres in parts. Lying within the catchment area of the River Tone, it is the source of many springs and tributary streams. Typical tree species vary depending on the type of habitat, which might be woodland, woodland edge and scrub, heath, or wetland and river banks. The underlying geology is mainly Devonian sandstone, siltstone, mudstone and slate with Permo-Triassic reddish mudstone and alluvium. The good quality agricultural land is suitable for mixed arable and pastoral farming. For Blackdown Scarp see point of interest no. 2.

Directions

- A** Return to the main road (Fore Street) and cross to the Three Cups Inn. Go under the archway of the inn and bear left onto the alley way out to an estate road.
- B** Turn right and then left and take the path ahead with the playing fields to your right, and crossing two roads until you reach a lane. Turn left to the by-pass.
- C** Cross the road carefully, turn right and walk along the verge for about 60 metres to a stile. Bear right across the field to another stile by a gate. Turn left along the hedge to a kissing gate and then cross the field to a second gate and then a third gate onto a lane.
- D** Go through the kissing gate ahead. Cross the fields to a second kissing gate and turn left onto a path by a wall. After crossing a road follow the path ahead towards the motorway. Go through the tunnel under the motorway, over a stile and keep forward close to the hedge through three fields and over further stiles.
- E** Cross over the road and continue through the gate opposite up the farm track until it widens between a group of little used farm buildings. It may be very muddy here so pick the driest route and continue straight up through the next narrow field to a kissing gate. Go up into the next field and climb steeply towards the Monument. Go through another kissing gate by a National Trust sign and up through the woods to steps leading up to the Monument.
- F** From looking at the view, move off left going past the end of the gravel track and information panel. After a short distance, fork right to walk along the edge of the wooded slope with the mature beech 'hedge' on your left, descending steeply and then following the path round to the right and down to a metal farm gate on the left.
- G** Go through, turn right through a wooden gate and follow the track down through the yard of Park Farm and onto the lane. Follow this

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until you pass under the motorway to a T-junction, and then turn right.

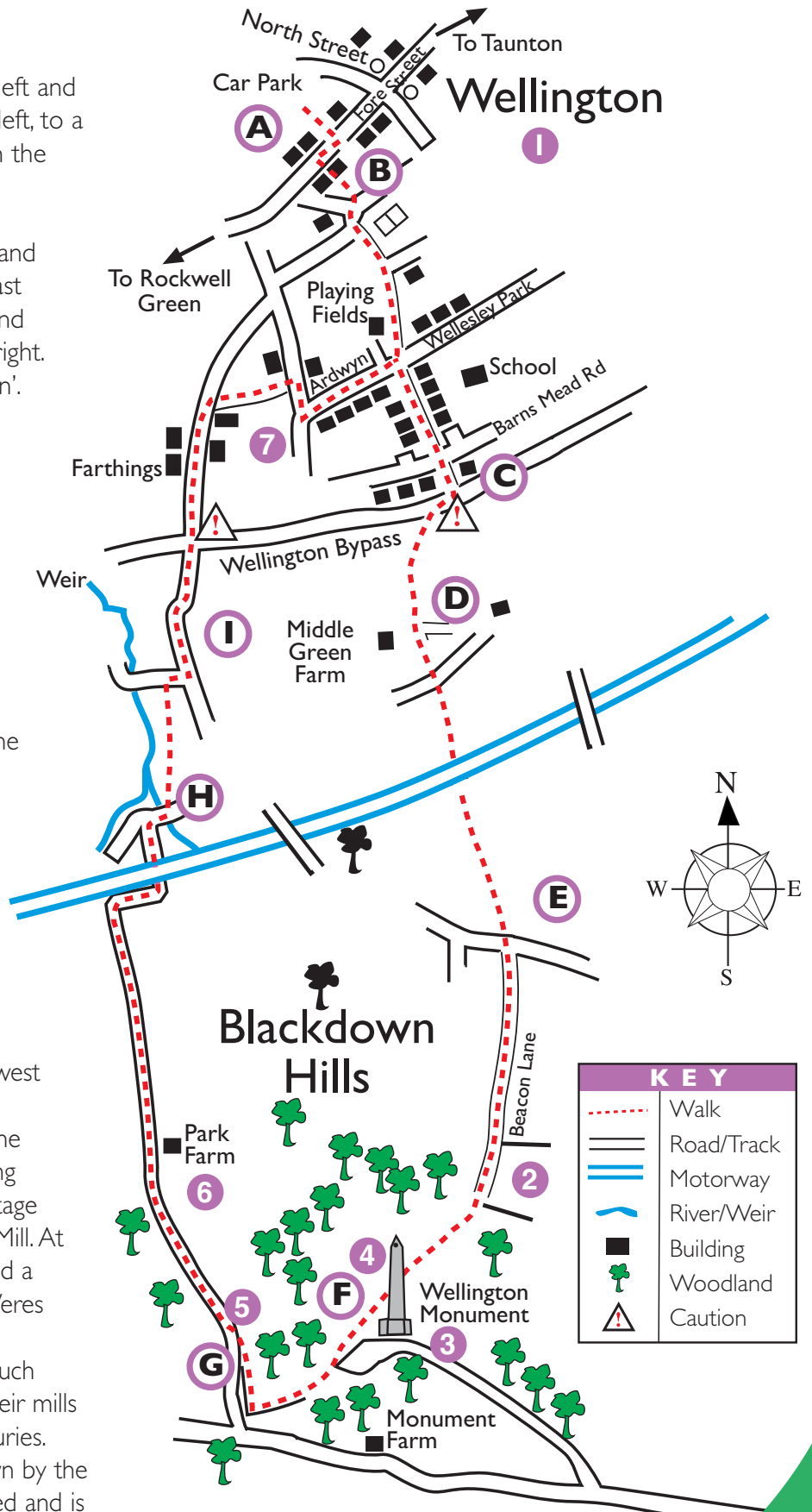
H Go through the first field gate on the left and cross the field, keeping the stream to your left, to a stile which you cross over. Bear left through the next field to a stile onto the road.

I Turn right and then left to the by-pass and cross carefully over to a lane. Beyond the last house on the right go through a gateway and through a field, keeping the fence on your right. Turn right on the road and left into 'Ardwyn'. Continue along here to the top of the rise, past Ashford Road, taking the path on the left. Follow the path past the playing fields and return by your outward route to the car park.

Points of Interest

I Wellington

This small country town, situated between the River Tone and the Blackdown Hills, was mentioned in the Domesday Book which recorded that land at 'Walintone' and West Buckland was being worked by 61 farmers, 65 smallholders and 32 cerfs. Even earlier than that there is reference to 'Weolingtun' in a grant made between 899 and 909. Once a hamlet in the prosperous valley of the Tone, it attracted travellers from the ancient Old Way to the west to its church, and by the 14th century had become a market town and a borough. By the 16th century there is evidence of the growing importance of the cloth trade both as a cottage industry and at mills such as Bishops Fulling Mill. At Pinks Moor Mills to the west of the town lived a John Were who was the forefather of the Weres and Foxes that, together with the families of Elworthy, Southey and Price, were to bring such growth and prosperity to Wellington with their mills and factories during the 18th and 19th centuries. Wellington Park, which was given to the town by the Fox family in 1903, has recently been restored and is an important example of late Victorian design. Today the town features a wide range of small traditional and specialist shops and a number of cafes and pubs.



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2 Blackdown Hills

(Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty) - This area of hills extends broadly from Wellington in the north to Honiton in the south, and from Cullompton in the west to Chard in the east. It is formed primarily by an extensive and thick outcrop of the largely non-calcareous Upper Greensand dating from the Cretaceous period (135 to 70 million years ago). Below this are impermeable rocks, and above, a thin layer of clay with flints and cherts. Rising to 315 metres at Staple Hill, the Blackdowns are characterised by a dramatic, steep, and largely wooded scarp slope facing north and a gently sloping plateau to the south which is deeply dissected by the valleys of the Rivers Culm, Yarty and Otter. The geology and the presence of spring water and impeded drainage has given rise to a notably diverse pattern of plant communities, many of which can be seen at various nature reserves managed by the Somerset Wildlife Trust. There are a number of important archaeological sites such as the great earthworks of the Iron Age hillfort at Hembury to recently discovered evidence of Roman iron smelting. The area is still sparsely populated - there are few settlements and no towns in the AONB. The land is generally of low agricultural value, restricting farming to mainly dairying and the rearing of stock. A distinctive feature of the Blackdowns are the mature beech hedges and avenues along many of the roads and tracks (see point 5).

3 Wellington Monument

This monument to the Duke of Wellington stands on one of the highest points of the Blackdowns (on land that he once owned) and is itself 53 metres high, making it a highly visible landmark in the region. It was built in tribute to the Duke's military achievements at the Battle of Waterloo (1815), the final battle of the Napoleonic Wars in which the Duke and the Prussian marshal Blücher defeated Napoleon's French army. A foundation stone was laid in 1817 by Lord Somerville, but due to lack of funds it was not until 1854, after the Duke's death, that the early work was restored and the monument completed. In

1892 the top six metres were rebuilt during further restoration work, and an additional 1.5 metres was added to the top. The stone is Calcareous Grit, a fine-grained sandstone quarried at Northhay 12 kilometres to the south-east. Structurally the Monument is similar to an Egyptian obelisk, following the trend for Egyptian design during the late 19th century. The three-sided pillar was said to have been chosen to mimic the three-sided bayonet used at the Battle of Waterloo, though the plans indicate that a four-sided pillar would have cost twice as much in materials! Originally the plan was for a column surmounted by a cast iron statue of the Duke with sculptured figures of veterans on the plinth, but this was abandoned due to the expense. Inside there is a spiral staircase of 235 steps leading to the top where there is standing room for three people. (The key is available from Monument Farm). Four cannons surrounded the monument from the turn of the 20th century until World War Two, when they were dismantled to provide metal for the war effort. The existing cannon was given by the Wellington Rotary Club in 1985. The site has been owned and managed by The National Trust since 1934 and today includes 6.5 hectares of semi-natural woodland and species-rich grassland.

4 Views

From the monument there are often fine views north to the Quantock Hills and the Bristol Channel. To the north-west can be seen Dunkery Beacon, the highest point on Exmoor. In good weather the Welsh mountains, the Mendips and Glastonbury Tor can be seen.

5 The Blackdown Beeches

These mature beech hedges and avenues contribute to the distinctive character of the Blackdown Hills. They are generally on top of earth banks which are often very badly eroded. They were planted as hedges to form boundaries, act as wind-breaks and contain stock. It is thought that the magnificent trees of today are the result of years of neglect following the demise of

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hedgelaying. These big, closely spaced trees will be kept for as long as possible as features in the landscape, until they begin to thin out as the older trees die, leaving rows of mature specimens. Where spacings between trees allows, infill planting can take place. The traditional craft of hedgelaying is being encouraged where possible to manage these younger trees. These ancient hedges provide important habitat for wildlife such as nesting holes for birds, wasps and bees, and roost sites for bats. The banks are good for burrowing mammals such as voles, and for many insects and plants.

6 Green Lanes

With the advent of motorised vehicles, the number of so-called green lanes has diminished rapidly. These tracks have great cultural and historical value, and may represent routes that have been in use since pre-historic times.

7 Swains Lane

These two small fields that were once orchards are now being managed by Taunton Deane as a Local Nature Reserve. The site is important for its colony of amphibians which exist in the pond in the southern corner, which includes all three species of native British newts. The old orchard is being restored with new apple trees of local varieties, and the meadow is being managed to increase species diversity.

Sources of information and further reading

Tourist Information website - www.heartofsomerset.com

The Book of Wellington

Gillian Allen and Robin Bush - Barracuda Books

Wellington Basins Heritage Trail - *TDBC*

The Countryside Agency website
www.countryside.gov.uk

The Deane Tree Plan - *TDBC*

British Regional Geology - *South-West England - HMSO*

Wellington Monument - *leaflet, The National Trust/TDBC*
Listed Building Database - *TDBC*

Geology and Landscape of Taunton Deane
Hugh Prudden - TDBC

The Blackdown Beeches - *TDBC*

Green Lanes of England - *Valerie Belsey - Green Books*

Swains Lane Management Plan - *John Clare - TDBC*

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

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>
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<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>
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<p>Polish</p> <p>W celu uzyskania niniejszego dokumentu w innym języku, w języku Braille'a, wydrukowanego dużym drukiem, nagranych na taśmę dźwiękową lub CD prosimy o kontakt pod numerem telefonu 01823 356491 lub na adres heritage.landscape@tauntondeane.gov.uk</p>