



Walk 100. Kingston, Cheddon and West Monkton.

- 9.6 miles, ascents and descents of 270 metres. 3 hours 30 minutes continuous walking, allow around 5 hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks, roads and fields. Lots of gates and stiles. Expect some mud and slippery sections.

Access: Start in Kingston St Mary. Limited parking; there are usually spaces on the road near the school (TA2 8JH, ST 217 296), particularly at weekends. Bus 23 runs between Taunton and Kingston St Mary on weekdays, stopping outside the Swan Inn, but it doesn't leave enough time to do the whole walk; check the timetable before setting out. Alternatively, start from West Monkton (TA2 8NP; there is a small layby at ST 262 284).

Map: OS Explorer 128 Taunton & Blackdown Hills.

Refreshments: Pubs in Kingston St Mary and West Monkton, cafés just off the route in Monkton Elm and Hestercombe, wide choice in nearby Taunton.

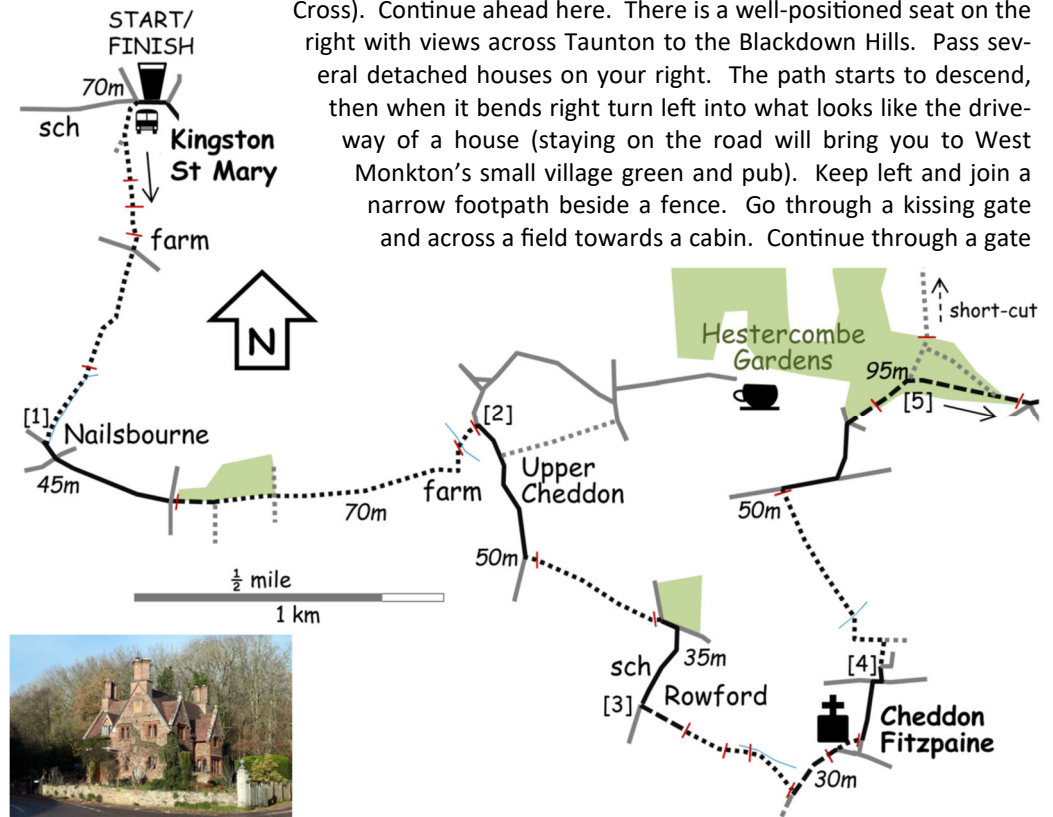
THIS WALK EXPLORES THE FAR SOUTHERN EDGE OF THE QUANTOCK HILLS as they fade into the Vale of Taunton Deane. It passes through the largest and arguably most attractive of the villages north of Taunton, Kingston St Mary and West Monkton, as well as Cheddon, split over the three hamlets of Upper Cheddon, Rowford and Cheddon Fitzpaine. The outward part of the route takes in one of the best bluebell woods in this part of Somerset, on the Hestercombe Estate, while the return passes two disused windmills within a mile of each other. Hestercombe Gardens, a Lutyens and Jekyll composition with semi-formal and landscape gardens, is just off the route near Upper Cheddon (entry charge). The walk only warrants its 'blue' rating because of its length; it is mostly gentle with three short steep sections, at Gotton, after Combe Bottom, and climbing out of Gadd's Bottom.

Start the walk at the Swan Inn in Kingston St Mary. With your back to the pub, cross the road and head up some concrete steps on the right to join the West Deane Way. Pass the gardens of houses then go through a gap to walk alongside a field. Continue through three gates, across a road and alongside another field. After another gate the path continues next to a small stream. Arrive at some houses; this is Nailsbourne (15mins, [1]). Turn left on a concrete drive, then left again to join a lane. In five minutes or so arrive at the main Kingston road. Cross over and go through a gate on to a track. Keep left at a fork on to an enclosed path, then straight on when the path emerges in a field at a pylon. Follow the path straight ahead until you come to a field corner in front of farm buildings, where you must turn left. Go over a stile on the right and cross a stream. Cross a field, over a stile, and turn right on a road (35mins, [2]).

Walk through Upper Cheddon on the road. Pass a large house on the left and turn left at the end of its garden, enclosed by a long holly hedge above a wall. Go through a pedestrian gate and follow the track along the edge of the field. Hestercombe House can be seen to the left.

Pass a pond and go through a gate, turning right on a road (careful here - cross over as you are on a blind bend). Follow the road around to the right into the hamlet of Rowford, pass a small school, then at the end of the houses (just after a post box set into the wall) turn left on a driveway (50mins, [3]) Go through a gate and walk along the side of the field. Continue through a pedestrian gate, go straight ahead across the field, through another gate, and walk alongside a stream. At the next gate turn left on an unsurfaced lane. After another gate pass a house then bear left to enter the churchyard. If you go in the church be sure to look at the modern stained glass window on the left. Leave through the lych gate and turn left to walk through Cheddon Fitzpaine. At the T-junction turn right then immediately left into Cheddon Lawns (1hr5mins, [4]).

When the road bends right to some houses, continue ahead on a narrow footpath. At the end turn left into a field, turn its corner, then in less than a minute head left down some steps and over a stream on a plank bridge. Bear right and walk along the side of this large field to a gate; it can be very muddy here. Turn right on to the road. In two minutes or so turn left into the driveway of Hestercombe Farm and continue to the farmhouse. Bear left on a green track heading uphill, and go through a gate into Gotton Copse. Hestercombe Gardens are on the left (there is no access from this direction). In season the whole area is carpeted with bluebells. At a path junction (1hr25mins, [5]) keep ahead; the short-cut goes off to the left. Go around a gate next to a gate lodge, and arriving at a road, turn left. Follow the road up through the bends and onwards to a crossroads (New Cross). Continue ahead here. There is a well-positioned seat on the right with views across Taunton to the Blackdown Hills. Pass several detached houses on your right. The path starts to descend, then when it bends right turn left into what looks like the driveway of a house (staying on the road will bring you to West Monkton's small village green and pub). Keep left and join a narrow footpath beside a fence. Go through a kissing gate and across a field towards a cabin. Continue through a gate



to join an enclosed path, which brings you to a road (1hr50mins, [6]).

Briefly continue ahead then bear right on a driveway marked by a public footpath post. An alley to the right detours to the church; otherwise continue past a stone house on the driveway, which soon becomes a footpath. Cross a road diagonally to the left and continue on an enclosed path. Go through a gate, walk beside a field, then go over a stile between walls and turn sharply right on a narrow lane. When this starts to bend right at a gravel layby, bear left on a public footpath. Continue ahead through two more gates, noting a small pond on the left. After the path drops downhill go through a gate in the right-hand fence. Keep left, go through a gate and cross a stream, then walk along the right-hand side of a field, briefly keeping left of some trees before returning to the field edge. Soon come to a metal gate on the right: this takes you on to a wooded path. Go over a stile (2hr10mins, [7]) and continue straight ahead; the path on the right goes over a stream to Coombe Bottom.

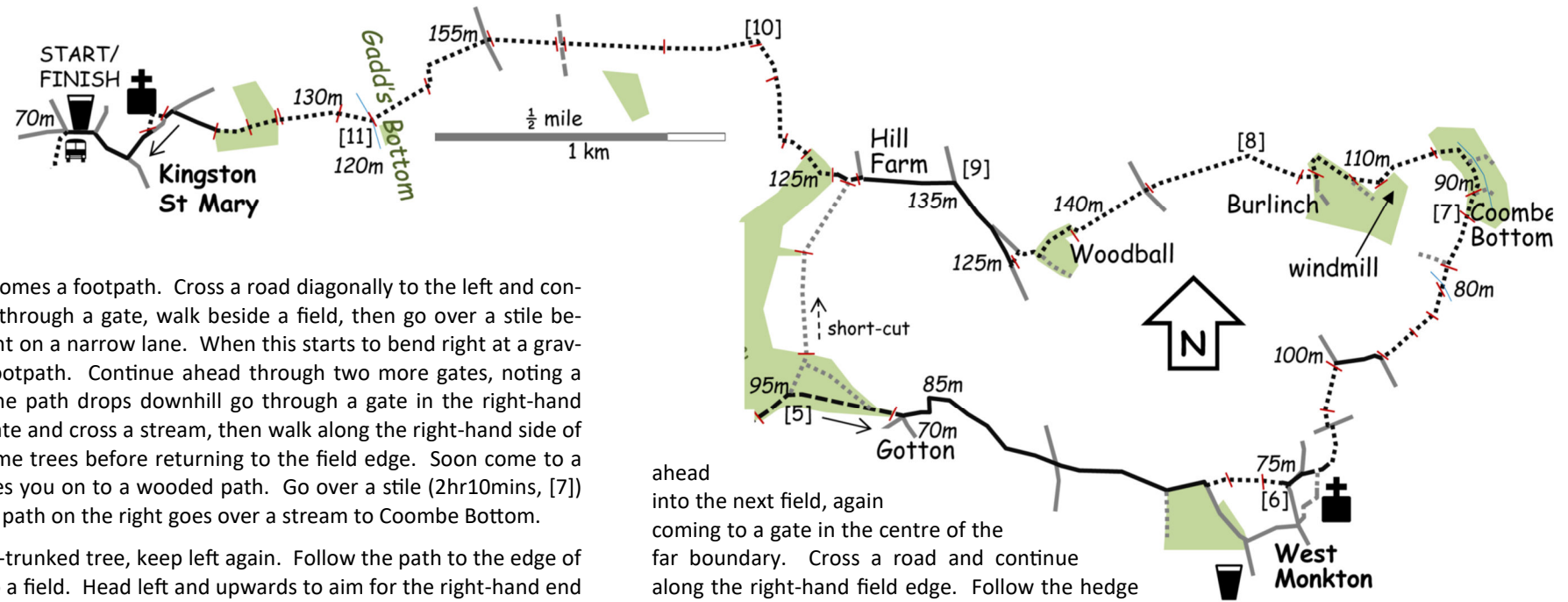
At the next junction, by a double-trunked tree, keep left again. Follow the path to the edge of the wood and go over a stile into a field. Head left and upwards to aim for the right-hand end of a group of trees. This will bring you to the corner of a fenced-off woodland. Continuing with the fence on your left, look through the gate where the tower of a small windmill sits beneath trees. Now head diagonally right across the field to another gate into the woods. Follow the track along the wood edge, keeping left and downhill at the corner. Bear right through a field gate close to a house and head uphill to a stile. Keep to the right-hand side of the field. Looking through a gap in the hedge, a pond will come in to view in the middle distance on the right (2hr25mins, [8]). Just afterwards, head left to the top of a small hill (depending on how many walkers have passed this way, a path may be apparent). From the hilltop continue ahead towards a group of trees with a radio mast. Go through a field gate, cross the road and continue along a track. Walk up to the gates of a house (Woodball Cottage); the turret-shaped structure on its left is thought to be another former windmill. Your way on is the footpath to its right.

When the path comes to a junction turn right towards a house. Join its driveway, then look for a small gate on the left which will take you into a narrow field. Cross it and go over a stile, then turn right on the road. In about three minutes turn left at a triangle with oak trees on to a no through road (2hr40mins, [9]). When the road bends right continue straight ahead through a vehicle gate. The short-cut comes in from the left here; this area can be very muddy and covered with slurry. Pass a farmyard, go through another gate, and bear slightly left to head downhill on a path. A gate on the left marks the top end of Hestercombe Gardens. Your path heads right through woods. As you come out of the woods go through a gate, head just to the left of a pylon, and go through another gate. Turn right here and walk along the field boundary. Go through two pedestrian gates, turning left after the second one to walk across the field (3hrs, [10]): head to the gate in the corner. Go through and bear slightly left, keeping well to the right of the power lines to head to another field gate. Cross a track and continue

ahead into the next field, again coming to a gate in the centre of the far boundary. Cross a road and continue along the right-hand field edge. Follow the hedge around to the left, then go through the second gate on the right, a pedestrian gate with a waymark. Bear slightly left, keeping to the right of a clump of trees and scrub. Crest a small rise then drop down into a valley, where there is a stile in a hedge. This is Gadd's Bottom (3hr15mins, [11]).

Go over the stiles and a small stream, then bear right to climb up to the corner of the field. Go through a kissing gate and continue ahead past two individual trees. Head through a gate, over a stile, and follow a path through woods. After a second stile walk beside houses and go through a metal kissing gate on to a lane. Stroll down the lane into Kingston. Cross a wider road and go up a ramp into the churchyard. The church has a vaulted roof and some interesting carved bench-ends. Head down to the main gate and continue along the road past the village hall to a small green with a central tree and circular seat. Turn right on the main road here, minding the traffic. Follow the road around to the left and back to the Swan Inn.

Shorter walk: Kingston and Cheddon (● 6.5 miles, ascents and descents of 180 metres). Follow the main walk to the 1hr25min point ([5]). Turn left and follow the path through the woods and into a field. Follow the left-hand boundary uphill, with Hestercombe Gardens over to the left. Cross a second field. At its end go through a gate and turn left to rejoin the walk instructions at the farmyard shortly after the 2hr40min point ([9]).



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