



Walk 102. Bishops Lydeard, Ash Priors and Combe Florey.

- 6.7 miles, ascents and descents of 180 metres. 2 hours 35 minutes continuous walking, allow 3-3½ hours.

Terrain: Roads, some busy; paths and fields. Several stiles.

Access: Start from Bishops Lydeard station, where there is parking and a bus stop (don't park in the station car park unless using the train; there is usually plenty of parking around the business park). Daily bus 28 runs between Minehead and Taunton, stopping in the village and at the station. Limited parking in the village.

Map: OS Explorer 140 Quantock Hills and Bridgwater.

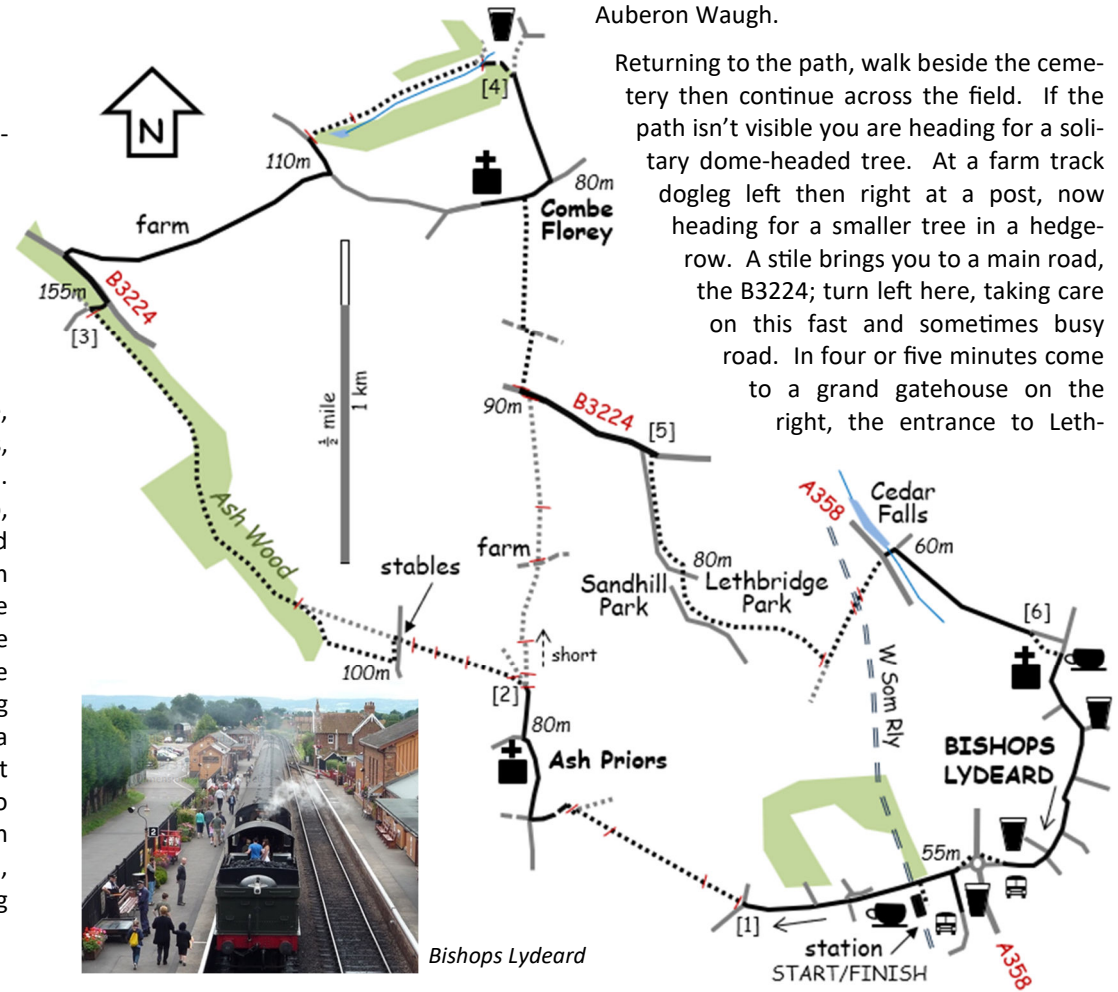
Refreshments: Pubs and tea room in Bishops Lydeard, refreshments at the station when trains are running, pub just off the route in Combe Florey.

BISHOPS LYDEARD is an ancient if now substantially extended village to the north-west of Taunton, in the unnamed vale between the Brendon and Quantock Hills. The station is the southern terminus of the West Somerset Railway, now a heritage line with seasonal steam trains to Minehead. The walk explores the village and its hinterland to the north and east, visiting the smaller villages of Ash Priors and Combe Florey, which feel surprisingly remote and unspoilt despite being just off the main A358. The return route passes Sandhill Park, a country house built in 1720 that is due to be converted into flats after a period of dereliction.

Start from the station. Walk up steps next to the bridge and turn left on the road (or join the road next to the Quantock Brewery shop and bar, also turning left). Head out of the village, passing the speed restriction signs. There is an ornamental house on the right (10mins, [1]); cross the driveway next to it then go over a stile and continue ahead across the field. You are aiming as signposted for a house in the distance. Go over another stile in a dip, across a stream, then at the far side of the field go through a pedestrian gate. Cross the field diagonally and go through a gate in its far corner to walk behind an outbuilding. Turn left on a driveway, then when it comes to a road turn right. You are now in Ash Priors. Follow the road uphill to the church, bearing slightly right at a post box on to a no through road. The lane ends in a gate (30mins, [2]; the short walk leaves here). Go through and bear left on the leftmost footpath to go through another gate. Aim between a new house and the outbuilding on its left. Continue through a field gate, soon arriving at a Bristol gate (a field gate with a pedestrian gate in it). Cross the paddock to a field gate in the far side, walk diagonally right across the yard and exit on to the road. Cross over into the field. The easiest way on is to turn left along the field boundary then right on a bridleway at the hedge. Follow the path alongside the edge of a wood, then through a gate. The path tracks through a wood of ash, beech and chestnut for twenty minutes or so, with views over fields and woods soon opening up on the left.

Arrive at a gate and turn right on a narrow lane (1hr5mins, [3]). A minute of steep uphill walking brings you to a main road. Turn left, taking care on this fast and sometimes busy road. In three or four minutes turn right on a narrow, unsignposted lane that takes you between tall beech trees. Pass a farmhouse, then seven minutes later come to a T-junction with a slightly wider road. Turn left, then in a couple of minutes pass a very modern house and just beyond it turn right over a stile. Drop downhill, go through a gate and bear right along the field edge. A small lake is hidden in the woods on the right. Continue over a stile and along the valley. At its bottom cross the stream on a grassy 'bridge' and go over a stile beneath a broad beech tree. A weatherboarded house is in front of you (1hr30mins, [4]). Follow the drive past another house, then keep right on a lane (the Farmer's Arms is a couple of minutes along the path to the left). This brings you to a T-junction in Combe Florey village. Turn right. Your onward path is just past the village hall, signposted on the left next to a small cemetery. First continue ahead for a little way to visit the sixteenth century gatehouse and the village church. Hidden in wooded parkland behind is Combe Florey House, former home of the father and son writers Evelyn and Auberon Waugh.

Returning to the path, walk beside the cemetery then continue across the field. If the path isn't visible you are heading for a solitary dome-headed tree. At a farm track dogleg left then right at a post, now heading for a smaller tree in a hedge-row. A stile brings you to a main road, the B3224; turn left here, taking care on this fast and sometimes busy road. In four or five minutes come to a grand gatehouse on the right, the entrance to Leth-



bridge Park (1hr55mins, [5]); just beyond it turn right through the pedestrian entrance and continue along the verge. The path gradually leaves the road, then at a development of large modern houses swings back to the right and crosses it at a post box. Sandhill Park is on your right. Keep to the path, following it past the backs of the houses then away from the road. When it ends go through a kissing gate and turn left on a wide green path. Cross the railway, then come to the main A358. Cross over, join the road opposite, following it over the bridge and around to the right. After passing Lydeard House this comes into Bishops Lydeard (2hr20mins, [6]). Look out for a path on the right that heads past the church and brings you to the main road through the village, conveniently next to the tea room (if you miss it, walk up to the T-junction and turn right). Follow the road through this long village; in about ten minutes you will see a roundabout ahead. Fork right just before to go under the road, soon arriving back at the business park and station.

Short walk: Bishops Lydeard and Ash Priors (● 4 miles, ascents and descents of 70 metres). Follow the main walk through Ash Priors to the end of the no through road (the 30min point, [2]). Go through the gate, but continue ahead over a stile on to an enclosed path. Just beyond a large oak tree go through a kissing gate to continue on the path. Soon arrive at a farmyard; cross the track and bear slightly left over a stile. Head for the centre of the far edge of the field, where there is a gate and stile. Continue to the far left corner of the next field (the line of the path is left of where it is shown on the OS map). A stile takes you on the the B3224, a fast and often busy road. Turn right here, then in four minutes or so come to the Lethbridge Park gate lodge. Turn right to rejoin the main walk at the 1hr55min point ([5]).