



Walk 84. Bampton and Clayhanger.

- 11 miles, ascents and descents of 430 metres. 4 hours 10 minutes constant walking, allow 5½-6 hours.

Terrain: Roads, wide tracks, paths, and fields; thick mud is possible particularly on the second part of the walk (mostly avoided on the shorter version).

Access: By car, park in Bampton (there are two car parks, a small one by the river at SS 959 222, near EX16 9LX, and a larger one off Station Road, SS 956 222, EX16 9QJ). By bus, route 25 (Taunton to Dulverton) stops opposite the war memorial near the larger car park, and 398 (Tiverton to Dulverton) in Brook Street; buses run Monday to Saturday.

Map: OS Explorer 114 Exeter and the Exe Valley plus 128 Taunton and the Blackdown Hills.

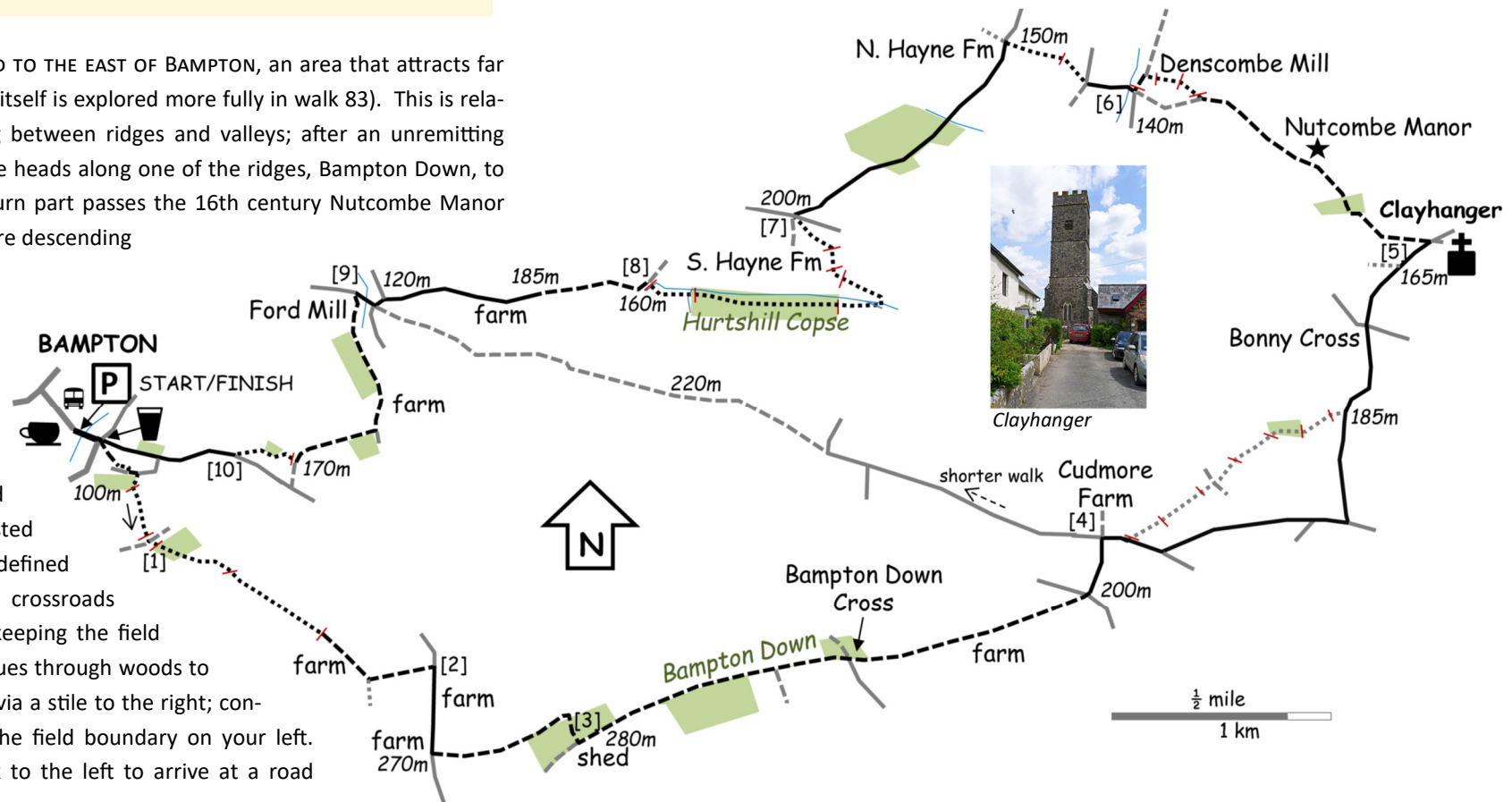
Refreshments: In Bampton.

THIS WALK EXPLORES THE QUIET HINTERLAND TO THE EAST OF BAMPTON, an area that attracts far fewer walkers than it deserves (the town itself is explored more fully in walk 83). This is relatively gentle farming country alternating between ridges and valleys; after an unremitting ascent out of Bampton the outward route heads along one of the ridges, Bampton Down, to the small village of Clayhanger. The return part passes the 16th century Nutcombe Manor and undulates across varied country before descending back into Bampton.

Start from the small car park next to the Bathern bridge (SS 959 222). Cross the river and start to bend right as if heading for Tiverton, but turn left on a rough track heading up between houses. When this comes to a residential road turn left, then turn right on to a signposted footpath at house 19. Follow this well-defined path uphill, over stiles, straight on at a crossroads (15mins, [1]) and through a gate, now keeping the field boundary on your right. The path continues through woods to a small field, where it crosses the hedge via a stile to the right; continue in the same direction, now with the field boundary on your left. Pass a farm, then take the vehicle track to the left to arrive at a road

(40mins, [2]). Turn right, pass Little Copse Farm on the right, and turn left on a wide track. You will soon have panoramic views to the left over the Brendon Hills. After six or seven minutes follow the track sharply right; at a stone shed (55mins, [3]) turn left on a public bridleway, taking you across Bampton Down. Ignore a road to the right, then when the track turns right at Bampton Down Cross continue ahead on a signposted public bridleway. Pass a farm, then at the next road junction continue ahead on a road signposted to Clayhanger, Hockwothy (*sic*) and Ashbrittle.

In three minutes or so come to a crossroads at Cudmore Farm (1hr30mins, [4]). Turn right (left for the shorter walk), then in four or five minutes turn left on an initially unsurfaced road. In about ten minutes this lane meets a wider road; keep left here, then follow the road around to the left. Continue straight ahead at Bonny Cross to arrive in Clayhanger (2hr5mins, [5]). (Soon after Cudmore Farm, a footpath turns off to the left; this is an attractive route through fields and a small wood, but it is poorly maintained and can be very muddy. It returns to the road just before Bonny Cross.)



Turn left opposite the short road to the church, taking an unsurfaced lane signposted as a footpath. This takes you past the sixteenth-century Nutcombe Manor. Six or seven minutes further it is possible to continue on the track, but take the signposted footpath to the right through a field gate and keep to the left-hand field boundary. At the end of this field, pass a derelict pond; this is possibly part of an abandoned village. In the next field, climb down in to the gully next to the hedge on the left, and go through a gate. Turn right to go around the back of a house, turn left on a driveway past Denscombe Mill, then right on the road at a gate (rejoining the main track from Nutcombe Manor) and go over a small bridge (2hr25mins, [6]).

Walk up the hill, then when the road bends right continue ahead on a signposted footpath. Head just to the left of a solitary oak tree in the far boundary, then in the next field aim for the farmhouse. Turn left on a road. Head uphill through woods, and in ten minutes or so come to a T-junction (2hr55mins, [7]). Go straight across into the entrance to South Hayne Farm and turn immediately left on a footpath. The path heads to the left of the farmhouse, then crosses diagonally to the left-hand corner of the next field. Continue through gates with the hedge on your left until the path bears left; follow it along the contour, then head right and downwards to a stream crossing (3hr5mins). Go through the gate on the far side of the stream and turn right to follow a track, which goes through another gate to into a small wood; in May this will be filled with bluebells. Cross a small stream and follow a possibly very muddy path until you come to a boardwalk-type bridge over another small stream. Go through the gate and turn left on a stony track (3hr20mins, [8]). In five minutes or so this becomes a hard road, then further on it comes to a junction in front of some farm buildings. Turn left, then right on the road to Bampton ('unsuitable for long vehicles'); the shorter walk rejoins here. Turn left on a wide track behind a stone and brick house (Ford Mill; 3hr35mins, [9]). Pass above a farm on the left, then turn right at a junction on a signposted footpath. Pass an isolated semi-derelict house, follow the track around to the left, then take the footpath to the right, following the right-hand field boundary. Turn right on meeting the road (4hrs, [10]) and return to Bampton.

Shorter version: Bampton and Bampton Down (● 7.5 miles, ascents and descents of 285 metres). At Cudmore Farm ([4]) turn left rather than right. Follow the road for fifteen minutes until it bends sharply right. Continue ahead on a signposted public bridleway. In half an hour this well-defined track emerges at the road junction in Ford, in front of a white house. Continue ahead on the road to Bampton ('unsuitable for long vehicles'). Turn left on a wide track behind a stone and brick house to rejoin the main walk at the 3hr35min point ([9]).

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