



Walk 96. Aisholt, Hawkrigde Reservoir and Lydeard Hill.

- 6.8 miles, ascents and descents of 355 metres. 2 hours 45 minutes constant walking, allow 3½-4 hours.

Terrain: Paths, tracks, roads and fields; expect some mud and steep slippery paths. There is one steep climb from Peart Water up to Lydeard Hill.

Access: Start at the parking area on the south side of Hawkrigde Reservoir, near Spaxton (ST 206 350). Alternatively, start at Lydeard Hill car park (ST 180 338): go through the gate at the back of the car park, keeping right alongside the trees (a fence will stop you straying too far to the right). In a little over five minutes, turn right through a gate to join the walk at the 2hr point ([5]). There is a once-daily weekday bus to the corner of Hawkrigde Reservoir from Watchet and Williton, and another from Bishops Lydeard; both leave a long day for the walk, so they make better sense for the combined walk 95 and 96.

Map: OS Explorer 140 Quantock Hills and Bridgwater.

Refreshments: None on the route; pubs on the Spaxton to Taunton road, seasonal tea garden at Fyne Court.

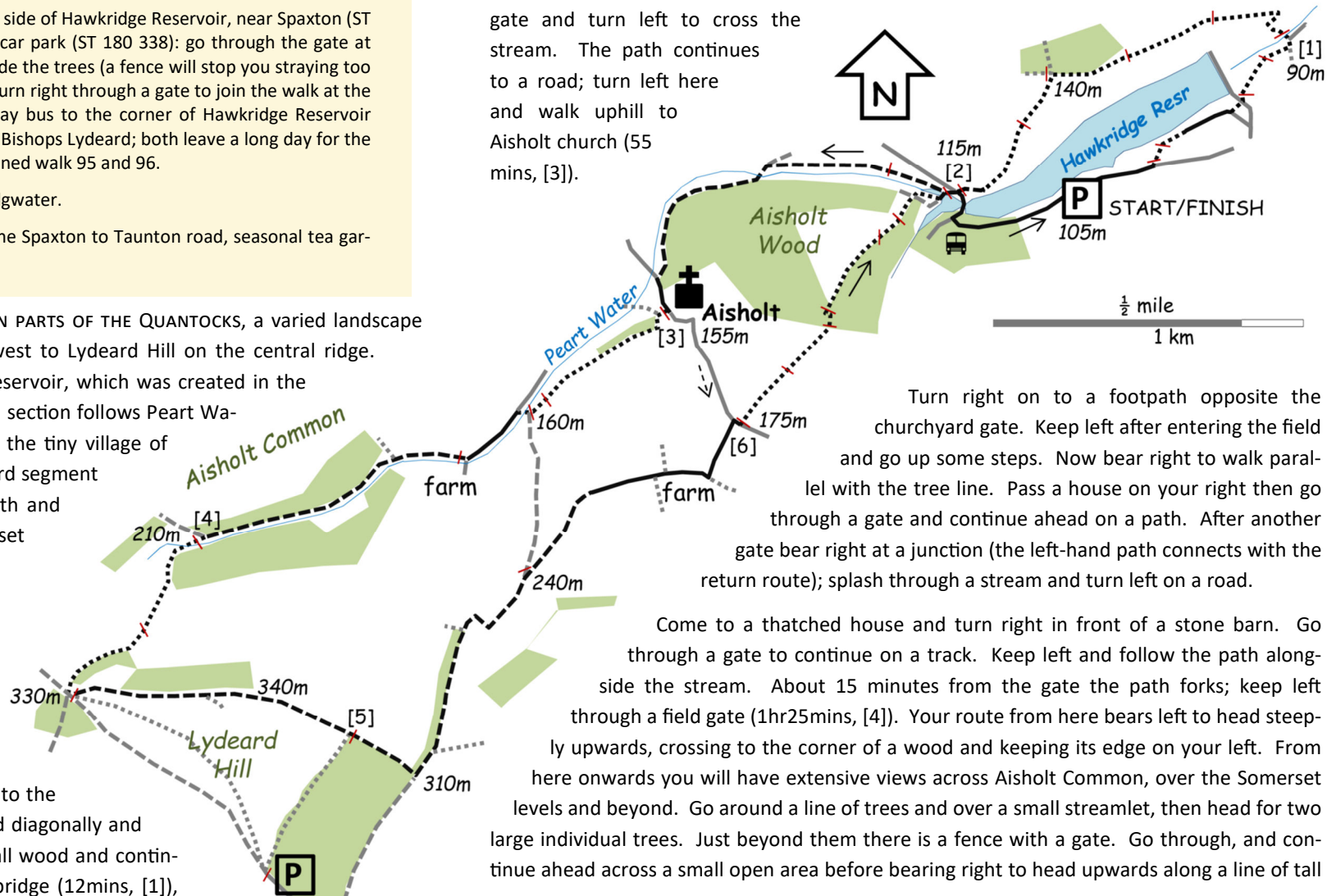
THIS WALK EXPLORES ONE OF THE LESSER-KNOWN PARTS OF THE QUANTOCKS, a varied landscape stretching from Hawkrigde Reservoir south-west to Lydeard Hill on the central ridge.

The first part of the walk is a circuit of the reservoir, which was created in the early 1960s to supply Bridgwater. The second section follows Peart Water, the reservoir's main feeder, out through the tiny village of Aisholt and through woods and fields. The third segment climbs up on to Lydeard Hill, an area of heath and scattered trees with views across the Somerset Levels to the distant Mendips.

From the Hawkrigde parking area set out along the road with the reservoir on your left. Just beyond a house turn left over a stile, walk diagonally across the field, cross another stile, then walk along the driveway. Turn left on a signposted footpath to walk alongside a tall hedge. Cross the access road to the dam then turn left over a stile. Cross the field diagonally and downwards. Go over another stile into a small wood and continue along a path. Turn left over a small footbridge (12mins, [1]),

then continue into the driveway of a house. Keep left, following the signposted footpath around the back of the garage. At the end of the path, go over a stile into a field. Keep left, passing above the dam. Towards the end of the field start heading up to the right. Go over a stile into a field that is studded with anthills (and often grazed by Highland cattle). Walk along the edge of the wood, turning left at the field corner. At the lower corner go through a field gate and join a muddy lane; this brings you to a road (35mins, [2]).

Cross the road, go through a gate and keep right on a bridleway (your return route comes in from the left). This goes through another gate and climbs steadily above a stream, Peart Water. Come to a T-junction in front of a gate and turn left to cross the stream. The path continues to a road; turn left here and walk uphill to Aisholt church (55 mins, [3]).



Turn right on to a footpath opposite the churchyard gate. Keep left after entering the field and go up some steps. Now bear right to walk parallel with the tree line. Pass a house on your right then go through a gate and continue ahead on a path. After another gate bear right at a junction (the left-hand path connects with the return route); splash through a stream and turn left on a road.

Come to a thatched house and turn right in front of a stone barn. Go through a gate to continue on a track. Keep left and follow the path alongside the stream. About 15 minutes from the gate the path forks; keep left through a field gate (1hr25mins, [4]). Your route from here bears left to head steeply upwards, crossing to the corner of a wood and keeping its edge on your left. From here onwards you will have extensive views across Aisholt Common, over the Somerset levels and beyond. Go around a line of trees and over a small streamlet, then head for two large individual trees. Just beyond them there is a fence with a gate. Go through, and continue ahead across a small open area before bearing right to head upwards along a line of tall

beech trees. At the top turn left through a gate. This is Lydeard Hill. Take the left-hand of the three paths (either of the others will take you to the car park). The path soon comes to a junction; bear left along the contour. You should soon be able to see Aisholt church, with Brent Knoll and the Mendip Hills in the distance. The path joins a wire fence at the highest point of the walk, eventually dropping slightly to a gate with a stile beside it (2hrs, [5]).

Go through, and walk downhill beside a row of trees. The area to the left was clear-felled in 2019, and is beginning to re-establish. Turn left at the bottom to walk along an unsurfaced lane. Ignore a path to the right, then in about five minutes the lane becomes rocky and snakes around bends. Shortly afterwards there is a fork: keep right on the main track (the left-hand drops to the ford encountered soon after Aisholt). Ahead, the lane sinks between banks; there is a large house over to the right, then the lane gains a hard surface and passes a farm. Ignore any footpaths, but follow the lane left and down to a T-junction (2hr25mins, [6]). Turn right briefly, then left over a stile. Cross the field to another stile, then straight ahead towards a wood. Look for a stile in the fence, a little way to the left of a more conspicuous gate. Head through the narrow strip of woodland, then go over a stile just to the left of a gate. Now keep right alongside the wood edge. Cross a stile on the right and head towards a modern stable block; go over another stile in front of it. Turn right then almost immediately fork left on a footpath. Head steeply downwards, cross a track, continue down, cross a path and descend a slippery bank to a narrow path beside a wide, shallow stream; you are back at Peart Water. Follow the path to the right to come to a drive. Turn left here, over a bridge, then right to rejoin (briefly) your outward route. At the road ([2]) turn right over the bridge, then left to return to the parking area.

Short walk: Aisholt and Hawkridge Reservoir (● 3.6 miles, ascents and descents of 175 metres). At Aisholt church continue along the road for just under ten minutes. When you come to a no through road on the right, turn left over a stile just beyond it: this rejoins the main route at the 2hr25min point ([6]).

Linked walk: Hawkridge, Aisholt and Triscombe (● 11.2 miles, ascents and descents of 655 metres). This even more varied and scenic walk combines **walks 95 and 96**, crossing the Quantocks and taking in Will's Neck as well as the villages of Triscombe and West Bagborough, where there are pubs. Follow the main walk to Lydeard Hill but instead of going through the gate turn right on a track with a row of beech trees on the left. Now follow walk 95 from its 1hr20min point ([4]), to take in Will's Neck, Triscombe and West Bagborough. Arriving back at Lydeard Hill, turn right through the gate and take the leftmost path, rejoining the main walk.



Above Hawkridge reservoir

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