



Walk 97. Kingston St. Mary to Bicknoller.

- 11.3 miles, ascents of 500 metres and descents of 510 metres. 4 hours 20 minutes constant walking, allow around 6 hours.

Terrain: A mixture of roads, fields, and upland tracks and paths, with some steep stony sections. Parts may be muddy.

Access: Start at Kingston St. Mary (ST 221 297, TA2 8HW). The easiest way to connect start and finish by bus is to start from Taunton town centre (or Taunton station) and take late morning bus 23 to Kingston (weekdays), returning on half-hourly bus 28 from the A358 at Bicknoller. Alternatively, park in Bicknoller and use up-to-date timetables to find buses to Kingston, changing to the 23 either in Bishops Lydeard or Taunton. For the Triscombe start or finish, the bus stop is on the A358 opposite Flaxpool Garage (ST 143 351).

Map: OS Explorer 140 Quantock Hills & Bridgwater.

Refreshments: Pubs in Kingston and Bicknoller. The village shop in Bicknoller (weekday and Saturday mornings) serves hot drinks and has a picnic table. For the alternative walks there are pubs at Holford and West Quantoxhead.

THIS WALK EXPLORES THE LONG RIDGE running along the eastern edge of the Quantock Hills, starting at their far southern end in the pleasant village of Kingston St Mary, just north of Taunton. After meandering through fields and woodlands it joins the (often unsignposted) Macmillan Way West to follow the 'spine' of the Quantocks, via Cothelstone Hill, Lydeard Hill, Will's Neck and Crowcombe Park Gate. The finish drops down through the pretty Bicknoller Combe to equally attractive Bicknoller village and the A358.

Start in Kingston, facing the Swan Inn. Turn left and walk straight ahead as the main road bends right, passing a school. Ignore a road to the right but soon afterwards turn right at a gate lodge on to a private road. Tetton House comes in to view on the right. As you approach an octagonal lodge (22mins, [1]), bear left across the field on a signposted footpath. Head just to the left of the individual trees to come to a pair of gates. Follow a track across the field and go through another gate. Continue ahead to the corner of a wood, follow the track part of the way along its edge, then head slightly left to come to a gate halfway down to the valley bottom. In the next field continue ahead and slightly to the left to a stile beneath a multi-stemmed, spreading ash tree (still thriving in 2021). Now head upwards across the field to a cluster of houses. Join a surfaced drive for a few yards, then turn left on a signposted footpath (45mins, [2]). Head across the field, climb (or bypass) a stile, and walk alongside the hedge on the right. Coming through a gap into a larger field, cross diagonally to a stile in the hedge on the far side. Continue on your diagonal path; at first nothing is visible beyond the



hilltop, but you will be heading for a gap in the hedge to the left of a large holly tree. Go through the gap and bear slightly right, towards a gate in the line of trees. Enter the woods and follow a vague path; soon pick up a better-defined path and turn left. Go straight on at a stile, keeping the field edge on your left and, later on, ignoring a turn to the right.

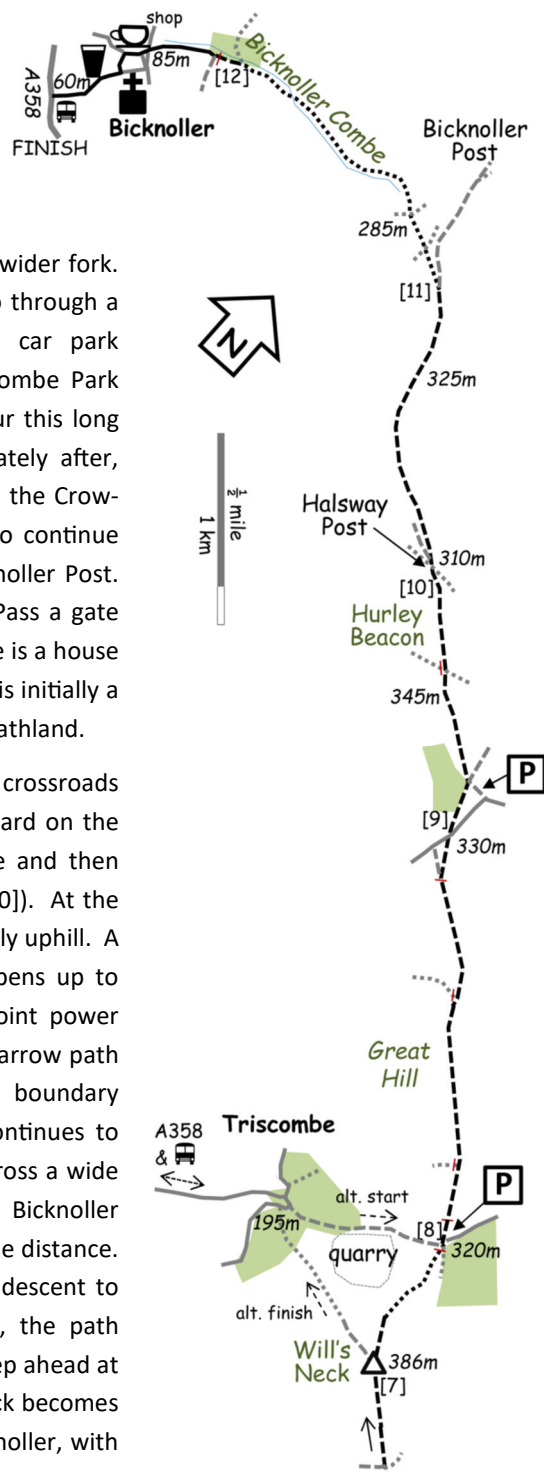
Arriving at a gate (1hr15mins, [3]) head right on to the open moorland. Just beyond a blue bridleyway post, take a narrow track to the left that heads up through the bracken towards some tall beech trees. Turn left when you come to a wide grassy path, then a little further on turn right to the trees. These are the Seven Sisters, on Cothelstone Hill; they are visible from miles around, and your almost continuous ascent from Kingston will now be rewarded by far-reaching views (and a log seat to rest on). Passing beneath the trees, adjust your course leftwards (almost due west) along a broad grassy track, which takes you past the ruined base of a tower and just beyond it another log seat. At a small fenced-off burial mound take the marked footpath to the right; it descends quite steeply through woods. Go through a kissing gate and turn right on a bridleyway. Turn left and downwards at a fork to come to a road (1hr35mins, [4]).

Turn right at the road, then almost immediately left signposted to West Bagborough. Follow this road uphill for ten to fifteen minutes, then turn right on the road to Lydeard Hill car park. Soon bear right on a bridleyway, which will bring you to the car park while avoiding the narrow access road. Cross the car park and go through a gate next to a Lydeard Hill signboard (1hr55mins, [5]). Following a gravelled path keep the fence to your left; there will soon be views over to the Blackdown Hills and further to the right the Brendons. In about ten minutes go through a gate between two large beech trees (2hr5mins, [6]), continuing ahead along the Quantocks spine. At a yellow-marked post take the left-hand, upwards fork on to open moorland. Continue upwards until you reach a trig point: this is Will's Neck, the highest point of the walk and of the Quantocks (2hr25mins, [7]).

Take the right-hand fork at Will's Neck (the left fork heads down to Triscombe for the alternative finish). Descending from the hilltop there are views to the coast on either side: to Minehead on the left and Bridgwater Bay to the right.

As the path descends take the right-hand, wider fork. Drop down through light woodland and go through a gate to come to the Triscombe Stone car park (2hr35mins, [8]). Continue ahead (Crowcombe Park Gate via The Drove). In about half an hour this long avenue will bring you to a gate; immediately after, take the larger, right-hand fork to come to the Crowcombe road (3hr5mins, [9]). Cross over to continue on the signposted bridleway towards Bicknoller Post. To your left is private Crowcombe Park. Pass a gate into the woodland on your left, where there is a house hidden in the trees, then bear left on what is initially a narrow track, soon heading up on to the heathland.

The track becomes stony and arrives at the crossroads for Hurley Beacon, with an information board on the left. Continue ahead along the fence line and then drop down to Halsway Post (3hr25mins, [10]). At the post take the right-hand fork and head gently uphill. A little further on Slaughterhouse Combe opens up to the right with a view down to Hinkley Point power station. Ten minutes later look out for a narrow path on the left, marked by an inconspicuous boundary stone (3hr45mins, [11]; the main track continues to Bicknoller Post to join up with walk 92). Cross a wide grassy track then start descending into Bicknoller Combe, with Minehead straight ahead in the distance. Cross another path and continue on your descent to Bicknoller. A stream joins from the left, the path eventually crossing it at a shallow ford. Keep ahead at a gate (4hr5mins, [12]), after which the track becomes a hard road. Arrive at a crossroads in Bicknoller, with



the village hall and shop on the right. The finish is straight on; turn left at a cottage to come to the church, then right to pass the Bicknoller Inn and arrive at the A358. Taunton-bound buses stop at the shelter on the left.

Shorter walks. The route can be divided roughly in half at Triscombe. To finish at **Triscombe** (● 7.5 miles, ascents of 420m and descents of 350m): At Will's Neck take the left fork, descending steeply through scrub and woodland. At the road turn right, then left and left again to walk downhill to the A358. Turn right and walk to Flaxpool Garage, where the bus stops. To **start from Triscombe** and end at Bicknoller (● 6.6 miles, ascents of 270m and descents of 350m): Reverse the instructions above from the bus stop to Triscombe, then take the rough road to the right ('unsuitable for motors') past the quarry, joining the main walk at Triscombe Stone.

Alternative finish at West Quantoxhead or Holford. At the 3hr45min point ([11]) continue on the main track to Bicknoller Post, and join walk 92 just after the 2hr15min point to continue to Holford (● 12 miles starting from Kingston) or reverse it to West Quantoxhead (● 11.7 miles); ascents and descents roughly as the main walk. Unless you time your finish to connect with the once-daily college bus 15 from Bridgwater you will need to arrange your own transport back.



The Seven Sisters from Wills Neck

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