



Walk 98. Fyne Court, Ruborough Camp and Cothelstone Hill.

- 9 miles, ascents and descents of 500 metres. 3 hours 35 minutes constant walking, allow 4½-5 hours.

Terrain: Roads, paths and tracks; some steep stony paths, a small stream to ford, and parts of the route can be very muddy.

Access: By car, park at Fyne Court (ST 222 321, TA5 2EQ, £, free to NT members). Fyne Court is a National Trust property near Broomfield north of Taunton. Buses 613 from Bishop's Lydeard via north Taunton and 23B from Watchet and Williton pass the Pines junction (see the map), both once daily on weekdays only. The bus times make for a long day, enough to do the walk at a relaxed pace and explore Fyne Court.

Map: OS Explorer 140 Quantock Hills and Bridgwater.

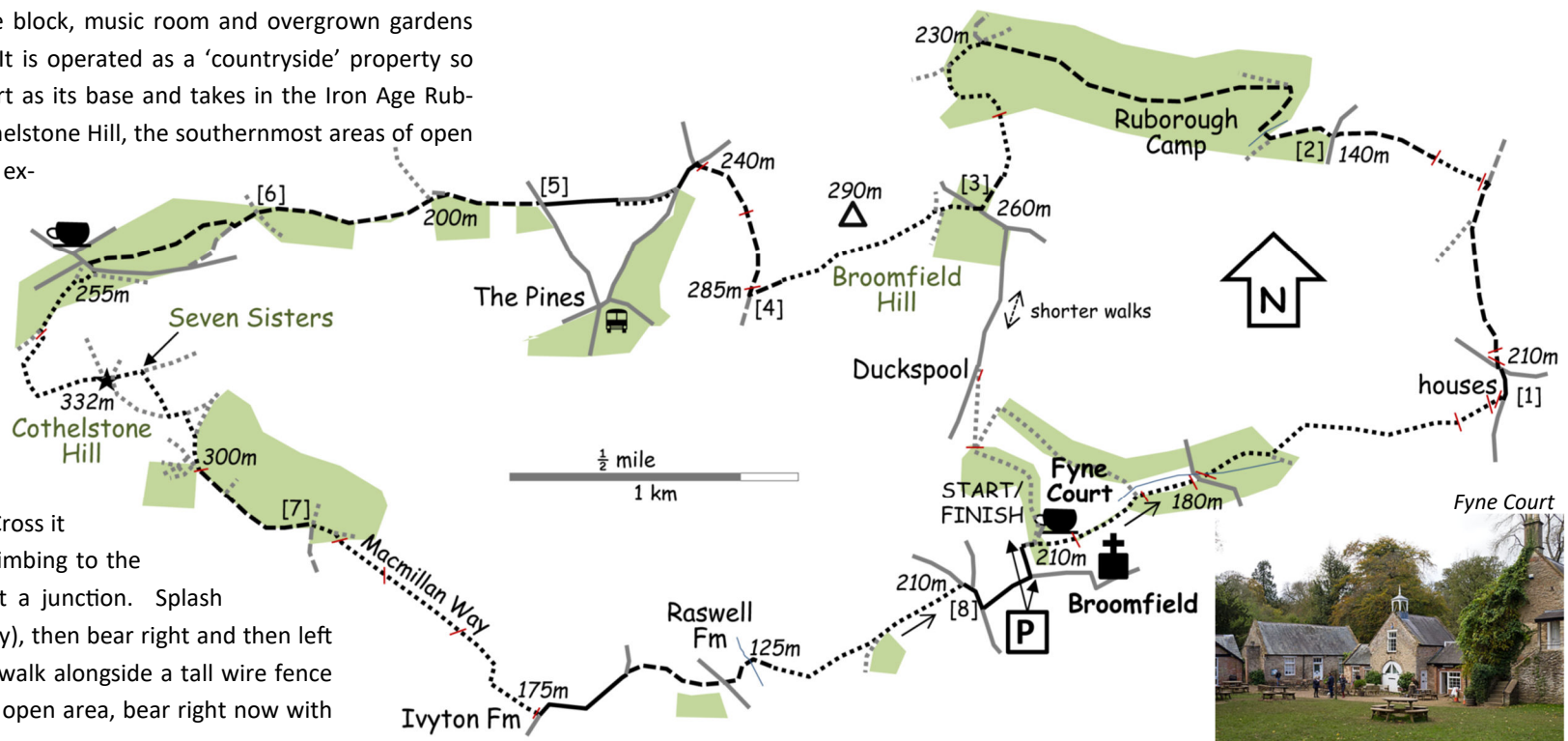
Refreshments: Café at Fyne Court, seasonal tea garden at Cothelstone.

FYNE COURT WAS THE HOME OF THE CROSSE FAMILY for over 300 years, most notably the 19th-century scientist and experimenter Andrew Crosse. The house was burned down in 1894 and the garden fell into disrepair. Today the stable block, music room and overgrown gardens remain, under the care of the National Trust. It is operated as a 'countryside' property so there is no entry fee. This walk uses Fyne Court as its base and takes in the Iron Age Ruborough Camp as well as Broomfield Hill and Cothelstone Hill, the southernmost areas of open heathland on the Quantocks. Cothelstone has extensive views across much of Somerset and beyond. The return route from Cothelstone follows the Macmillan Way West.

From the main car park, head to the café in Fyne Court then walk across the green and slightly to the left to go through a pedestrian gate. Follow the path ahead, above a small valley on the left. Pass a footbridge and go through a gate. The path continues to a road. Cross it and continue through another gate, the path climbing to the left. Keep left at a marker post, and again at a junction. Splash through a small stream (this part may be slippery), then bear right and then left to come to a footpath sign. A little further on, walk alongside a tall wire fence keeping it on your right. When you come to an open area, bear right now with

the field boundary on your left. Join an enclosed track then go over a stile. The path goes through two gates to come to a road at some houses (25mins, [1]).

Turn left on the road, then at a T-junction turn briefly left before going right on a farm track through two gates into a field. Follow the wide track; as it starts going downhill, views open up across the Bristol Channel, the Levels and the Mendips. Go through a gate (usually open), pass a solitary oak, then a little later turn left through a pedestrian gate at a water trough, descending on a footpath towards an area of trees and scrub. Climb the other side of the valley on what is now a track, and come to a road (45mins, [2]). Turn right, then left past a vehicle barrier on to a forestry track (the track is used by walkers and horse riders but it isn't a right of way, so respect any signs or restrictions). When the track forks, keep right to cross a stream, then follow it around and upwards to the left. Stay on this wide and fairly straight track for twelve minutes or so. Ruborough Camp, an Iron Age hill fort, is on the left. Soon after the track starts a gentle descent, a path crosses just before it widens out and bends sharply right. Turn left on the path, up into the woods. Turn left at the next junction, continue upwards, bend gradually to the right, and enter a field at a blue bridleway sign. The bridleway continues alongside the field, then it becomes a more clearly-defined track to arrive at a road next to a white house (1hr25mins, [3]). Short walk B returns to Fyne Court from here.



Cross over the road and join a path that climbs steadily through a slight gully between trees. When the path comes to a junction keep right, then swing left and again right (don't go over the stile). Keep to the right, rising gradually on to heathland: views open up to the Blackdown Hills to the south. Walk alongside a line of gorse, ignoring any paths that turn off to the left. The path continues between trees. Look for a kissing gate to the right, with a sign just beyond it proclaiming 'National Trust – Broomfield Hill' (1hr35mins, [4]). Go through the gate and follow the path between trees, through a second gate, then through a third gate where it comes to a road. Turn left, pass the former Traveller's Rest inn, then turn right to enter a field on the far side of the first lane to the right (this is a safer alternative to walking down the lane). Keep right along the field edge, rejoining the lane at the next gate. Pass some houses and at a T-junction cross over to join a broad bridleway (1hr50mins, [5]).

For the next fifteen minutes or so ignore any turns off to left or right: in particular, don't be decoyed into a field by what looks like the main path forking to the right, but keep left and slightly upwards into the woods. Come to a broad path crossing, almost a glade (2hr5mins, [6]), and continue straight over. A minute or just over beyond this crossing turn right on to a narrower track and climb gently upwards to a road junction. Turn left on the road, then almost immediately right on to a footpath. Follow it straight ahead (signposted 'The Rap') into the woods. Where the path comes to a junction, turn left. A little later turn left through a kissing gate and follow the path gradually around to the right. As it emerges into the open on Cothelstone Hill, bear left and walk up to the summit (2hr30mins). On a clear day you will have an almost 360-degree panorama across to Minehead and Exmoor in the west, the long line of the Blackdown Hills to the south, and up the Bristol Channel to the north, with only the north-western sector foreshortened by the Quantocks.

From the top of Cothelstone Hill follow the path to the Seven Sisters, a group of tall beech trees. Turn right between the trees then head downhill on a grassy path. Where it meets another broad grass path circling the hill, turn left for a moment and look for a path heading down to the right. Follow this, keeping right where it forks, and then turn right on a bridle-path, heading for a marker post and just past it a wooden gate with a field beyond. Go through the gate and turn left on a well-defined lane. In about five minutes the lane turns sharply right at a crossing (2hr45mins, [7]): continue straight ahead on a footpath into a wood. Look for a turn to the right, and follow this into a field. Cross the field, aiming for a wide gap in a hedge, cross the next field, go over a stile, across a third field, then follow the signposted path right then left. Descend to a group of houses at Ivyton Farm, then turn left on the access lane. Bend right then left, then at a second left-hand bend go straight ahead on the signposted restricted byway. Follow this downwards, cross a road in front of a thatched house, and continue down to a small stream crossing. The lane now narrows and ascends continuously for the next half-mile, eventually coming to a junction with a road (3hr25mins, [8]). Turn right here, take the second left, and stroll back to Fyne Court.

Shorter walk A: Fyne Court and Cothelstone Hill (● 6.3 miles, ascents and descents of 360 metres). From the main car park, head towards the café but turn left just before reaching the buildings. Take the left fork, signposted yellow and purple. Keep right to pass a walled garden then follow the purple arrow uphill to the right. Come to a circle of half-log posts, arranged for sky gazing. Follow the path across the circle and continue until it reaches a gate into a field on the right. Go through the gate, keeping the line of trees to your right. Aim for the roof of a house then a gate leading out to a road. Turn right and follow the road until it arrives at a T-junction; turn left, and in a minute or so come to a white house on the right. Turn left opposite it to join a path and continue on the main walk from the 1hr25min point.

This version can also be combined with **walk 99** for a 9½ mile route taking in Kingston St Mary.

Shorter walk B: Fyne Court and Ruborough Camp (● 4.3 miles, ascents and descents of 200 metres). Follow the main walk to the 1hr25min point, then turn left on the road and a minute or so later, right. Five minutes further on, at a house called Duckspool, turn left through a gate into a field. Ahead of you is a line of individual trees: aim for the rightmost one, then a gate into a wood. Go through the gate, turn left and stroll down through the grounds of Fyne Court to arrive back at the café and car park.

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