



Walk 43. Wiveliscombe, Waterrow and Hurstone Viaduct.

- 9.1 miles, ascents and descents of 510 metres. 3 hours 40 minutes constant walking, allow around 5 hours.

Terrain: Paths, roads and fields; can be muddy.

Access: By car, park in the free town car park off the B3227 in Wiveliscombe (ST 080 277, near TA4 2BF). If it is full there is an alternative car park in North Street (ST 080 280) and limited on-street parking. By bus, no. 25 runs Monday to Saturday between Taunton, Wiveliscombe, Waterrow, Bampton and Dulverton.

Map: OS Explorer 128 Taunton and the Blackdown Hills.

Refreshments: Pub at Waterrow, several options in Wiveliscombe.

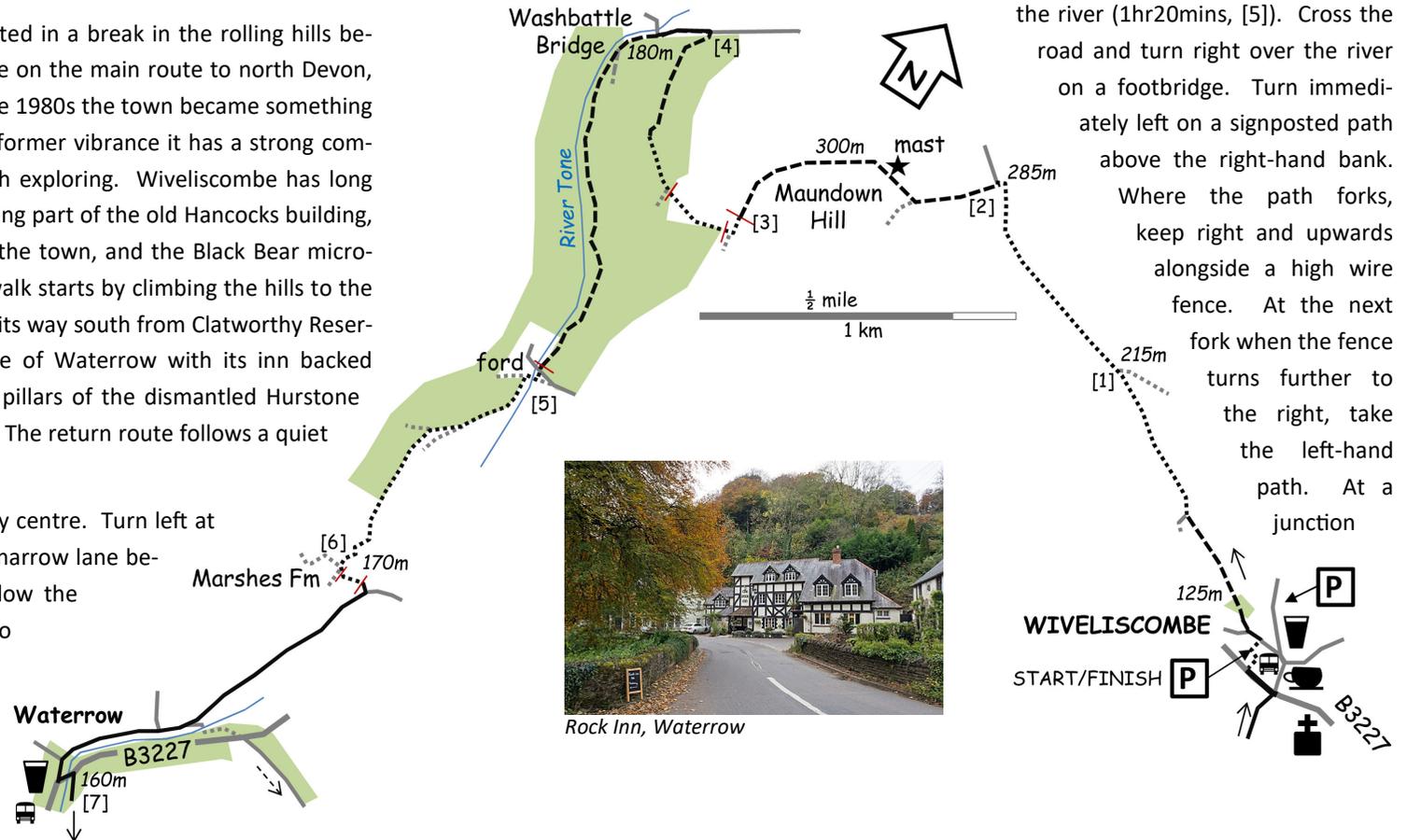
WIVELISCOMBE ('WIVEY') IS A PLEASANT SMALL TOWN situated in a break in the rolling hills between the Brendons and the Taunton vale. It used to be on the main route to north Devon, but when the new A361 Link Road was opened in the late 1980s the town became something of a backwater. Although it took a while to recover its former vibrance it has a strong community feel, and it's a well-equipped place that is worth exploring. Wiveliscombe has long been a centre of brewing, with Exmoor Ales now occupying part of the old Hancocks building, rival Cotleigh Brewery closing in 2021 after 40 years in the town, and the Black Bear micro-brewery working out of the back of the Bear Inn. This walk starts by climbing the hills to the north-west of the town, then tracking the River Tone on its way south from Clatworthy Reservoir. It passes through the picturesque riverside village of Waterrow with its inn backed against the bare rock of the hillside, before under the pillars of the dismantled Hurstone Viaduct, once part of the Taunton to Barnstaple railway. The return route follows a quiet lane with distant views of the Blackdown Hills.

From the car park head up the steps past the community centre. Turn left at a road with shops. Opposite a garage, turn right into a narrow lane between the signs for West Street and West Road. Follow the road uphill until, in less than ten minutes, it turns left into a driveway: continue ahead on a bridleway, which ascends steeply between banks. Go straight on when another bridleway joins from the right (20mins, [1] on map), and continue uphill. Come to a sharp left-hand bend (35mins, [2]) and immediately afterwards a junction:

take the signposted footpath (a substantial lane) straight ahead, ignoring the road that continues to the right. The lane soon bends sharply right then, just past a radio mast, left; you are now at the highest point of the walk, on Maundown Hill. Continue on the enclosed path then go through a gate into a field (45mins, [3]), where there are views across to the Blackdown Hills and the pencil-like Wellington Monument in the distance. In a minute or so turn right through another gate on a signposted footpath ('West Deane Way'). Head slightly to the right of the field boundary aiming for the end of the taller trees, where a gate is hidden under the canopy of a spreading beech. Go through the gate and turn right on a track, with a high wire fence to your left. Follow the track downhill until it comes to a surfaced road (1hr, [4]): turn left here.

Soon arrive at Washbattle Bridge, where the River Tone is still a stream. Don't cross the bridge but go straight ahead on a vehicle track, keeping right to follow the river downstream. Pass two houses with a footbridge opposite them. Five minutes further on is another house, and beyond it a narrow road that fords the river (1hr20mins, [5]). Cross the road and turn right over the river on a footbridge. Turn immediately left on a signposted path above the right-hand bank.

Where the path forks, keep right and upwards alongside a high wire fence. At the next fork when the fence turns further to the right, take the left-hand path. At a junction



Rock Inn, Waterrow

turn left towards a white house (1hr30mins, [6]), but before reaching it turn left on a narrow footpath (the sign is low down and may be half-hidden by vegetation). Go through a gate, turn right, and then right again on to a lane. Follow the road alongside the Tone valley down to the small village of Waterrow, arriving at a bridge and inn (1hr50mins, [7]).

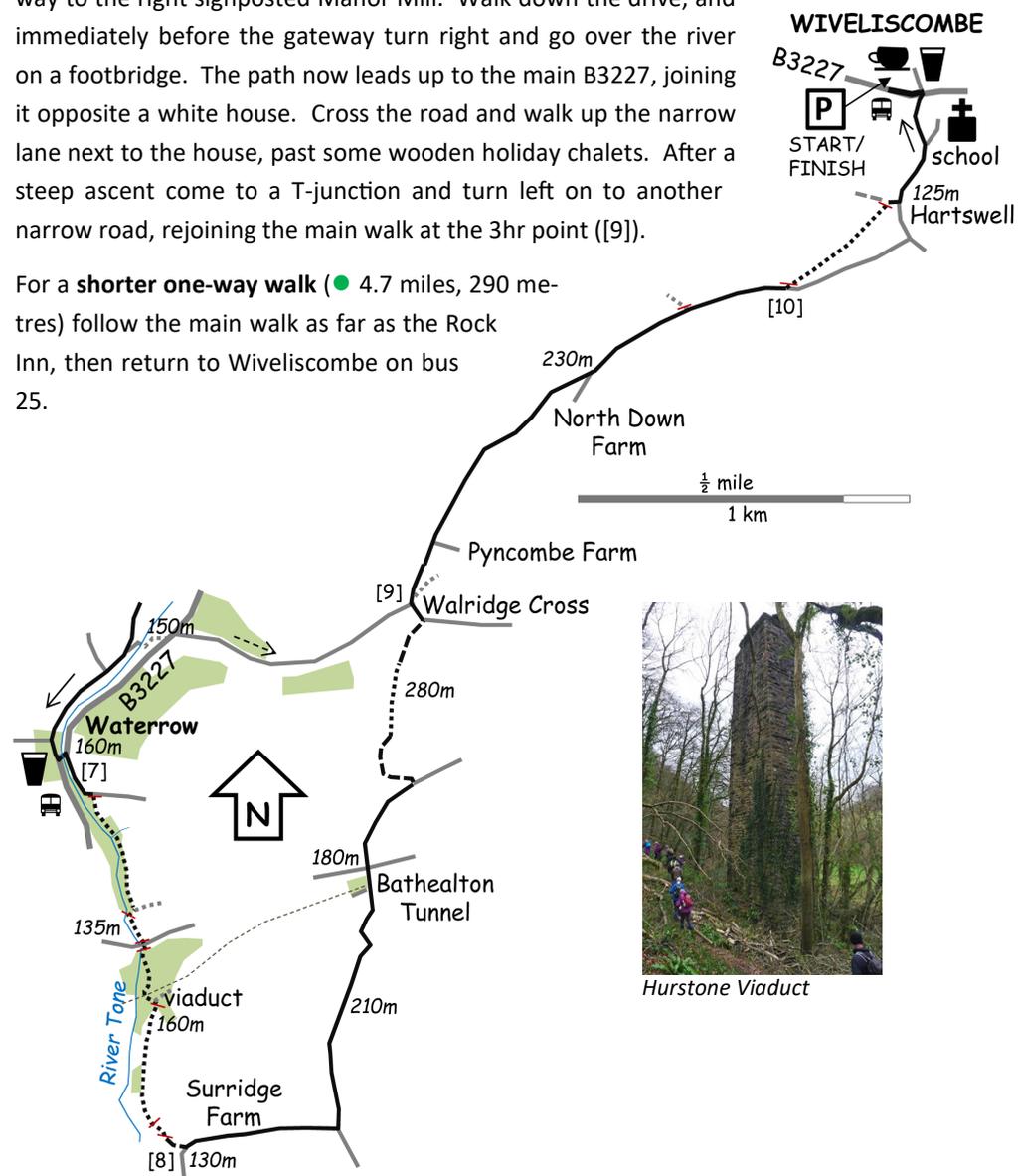
Turn left to cross the bridge, then go right on a narrow lane with the river on your right-hand side. Pass a house on the left, then as the road bends left go through a partially hidden stone stile on the right to join a permissive path. The path soon goes through a gate and becomes enclosed between fences. Follow it beside fields, then when you come to a T-junction turn right downhill. Go through a gate and bear left across a meadow. Another gate brings you to a road: cross over to enter the Hurstone nature reserve through a gate on the other side. (If the permissive path is closed, return to the Rock Inn, turn left on the main road, and in about five minutes enter a caravan park. Keep to the left of the service building then follow a grass path that will bring you to a gate at a road. Turn left on to the road, then in two minutes right through the gate into the nature reserve).

In the nature reserve turn immediately right on a narrow path and descend steps. After some short boardwalks the path climbs up between the pillars of the former Hurstone Viaduct. The viaduct was constructed around 1873, and the iron top section was removed after the railway closed in 1966. Turn right at a post, head up more steps, and through a pedestrian gate. Descend again through the woods. The River Tone widens out below on your right, then the path leaves the wood through a gate. There is a hill fort uphill to the left, but no footpath access to it. Keep to the right-hand side of the field, then go through a kissing gate on the right, initially hidden from view. Drop downhill and go over a stile; the path comes alongside a house, joining its driveway and coming to a road (2hr15mins, [8]).

Turn left on to the road, heading past a farm and then steeply uphill. Turn left at the T-junction, towards Waterrow. Follow the road up and down; immediately beyond a concrete farm drive on the left is a cutting where the railway entered the Bathealton Tunnel. Just beyond it, go straight ahead at a crossroads. In five minutes arrive at a large barn, turning left on the track just beyond it. This first narrows to a path, then bends right to become a track again before meeting a road. Turn left here, and ignore a left turn shortly afterwards (3hrs, [9]). There are soon views to the right across to Wellington Monument and as far as the east Dorset hills. After a while the lane starts heading downhill. Pass North Down Farm on the right, then in another ten minutes look out for two gated field entrances on the left, with a footpath sign (3hr25mins, [10]). Go through the second of the two gates to see Wiveliscombe spread out below you. Head diagonally across the field, aiming to the right of the church, and come to a stile; cross it, and turn right on a lane. This soon arrives at a road; turn left, walk up to the traffic lights, turn left again, cross the main road and return to the car park.

Shorter walk: Wiveliscombe, Washbottle and Waterrow (● 7.5 miles, ascents and descents of 420 metres). Follow the main walk to the Rock Inn ([7]), then retrace your steps through Waterrow for ten minutes or so. Shortly after the turn-off for Chipstable, look out for a driveway to the right signposted Manor Mill. Walk down the drive, and immediately before the gateway turn right and go over the river on a footbridge. The path now leads up to the main B3227, joining it opposite a white house. Cross the road and walk up the narrow lane next to the house, past some wooden holiday chalets. After a steep ascent come to a T-junction and turn left on to another narrow road, rejoining the main walk at the 3hr point ([9]).

For a **shorter one-way walk** (● 4.7 miles, 290 metres) follow the main walk as far as the Rock Inn, then return to Wiveliscombe on bus 25.



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