



Walk 48A. Aisholt, Hawkrigde Reservoir and Lydeard Hill.

● 6.8 miles, 2 hours 45 minutes. Ascents and descents of 355 metres.

Terrain: Paths, tracks, roads and fields; expect some mud and steep slippery paths.

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 48/48A, including a pub lunch.

Map: OS Explorer 140 Quantock Hills and Bridgwater.

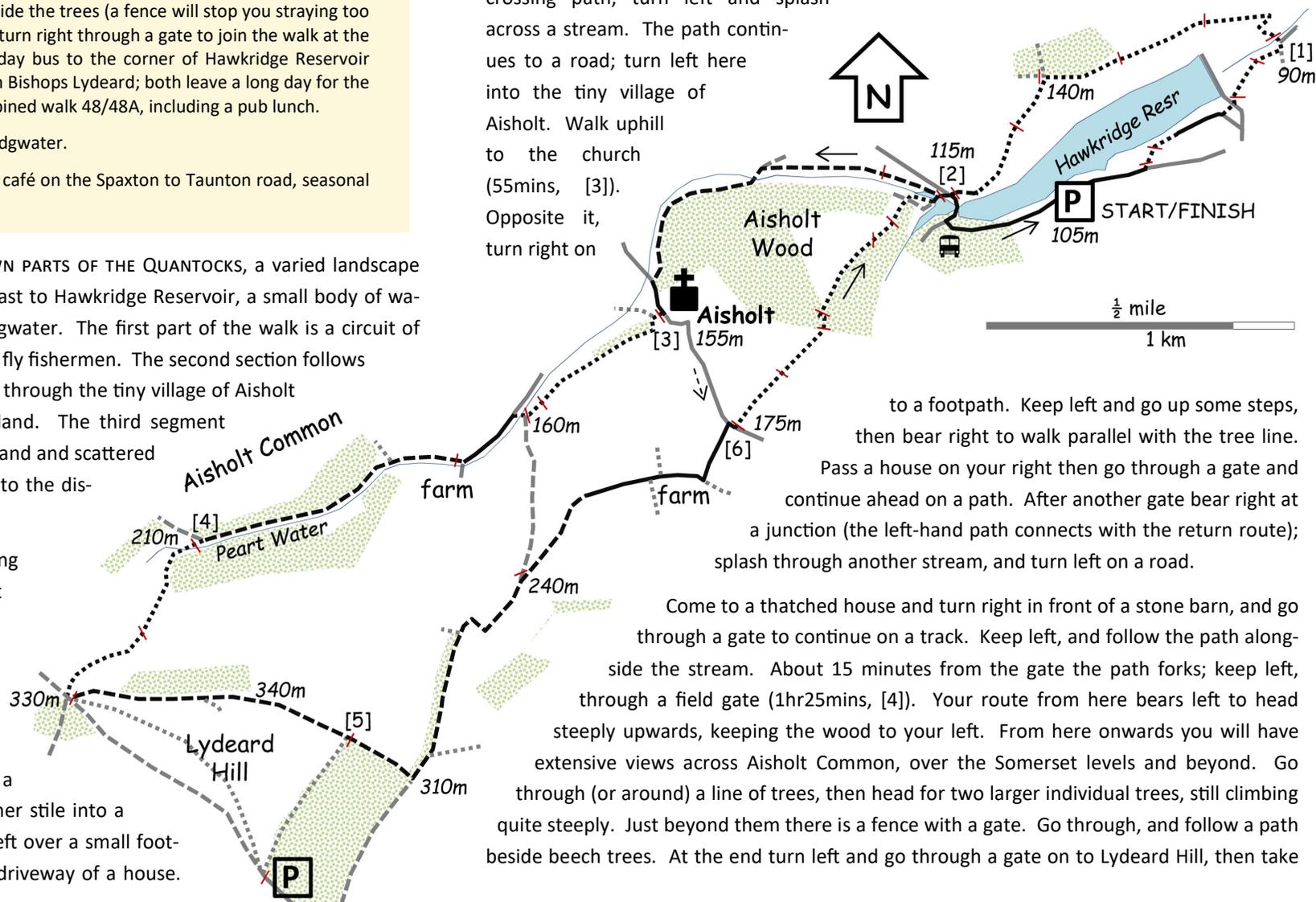
Refreshments: None on the route; pubs and café on the Spaxton to Taunton road, seasonal tea room at Fyne Court.

THIS WALK EXPLORES ONE OF THE LESSER-KNOWN PARTS OF THE QUANTOCKS, a varied landscape stretching from the spine of the hills north-east to Hawkrigde Reservoir, a small body of water created in the early 1960s to supply Bridgwater. The first part of the walk is a circuit of (and above) the reservoir, a quiet preserve of fly fishermen. The second section follows Peart Water, the reservoir's main feeder, out through the tiny village of Aisholt and through a mixture of woods and farmland. The third segment climbs up on to Lydeard Hill, an area of moorland 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 sign to walk alongside a tall hedge. Cross the access road to the dam, then turn left over a stile to cross a field diagonally and downwards. Over another stile into a small wood and continue along a path. Go left over a small footbridge (12mins, [1]), then continue into the driveway of a house.

Keep left, and follow 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, and go over a stile into a field that is studded with ant-hills. 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; go through two gates to arrive at 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. At a crossing path, turn left and splash across a stream. The path continues to a road; turn left here into the tiny village of Aisholt. Walk uphill to the church (55mins, [3]). Opposite it, turn right on



to a footpath. Keep left and go up some steps, then 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 another stream, and turn left on a road.

Come to a thatched house and turn right in front of a stone barn, and 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, keeping the wood to your left. From here onwards you will have extensive views across Aisholt Common, over the Somerset levels and beyond. Go through (or around) a line of trees, then head for two larger individual trees, still climbing quite steeply. Just beyond them there is a fence with a gate. Go through, and follow a path beside beech trees. At the end turn left and go through a gate on to Lydeard Hill, then take

the left-hand of the three paths (either of the others will take you to the Lydeard Hill car park). Where the path forks, keep 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 starts to head downwards, and brings you to a gate with a stile beside it (2hrs, [5]).

Go through, and walk downhill beside a row of trees; this area used to be a conifer plantation, but it was clear-felled in 2019. 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 a track comes in from the left: this is the path up from the ford encountered soon after Aisholt. Ahead, the lane sinks between banks; there is a large house over to the right, then the land becomes hard-surfaced 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 this 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 and head towards a modern stable block; go over another stile in front of it. Turn right, and almost immediately fork left on a footpath. Head downwards steeply, cross a track, continue ahead, and descend a very steep, narrow path which bears around to the right, arriving at a driveway. Turn left here, then right to re-join (briefly) your outward route. At the road ([1]), turn right over the bridge, then left to return to the parking area.

Short walk: Aisholt and Hawkrige 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]).

Longer walk: Hawkrige, Aisholt and Triscombe (● 11.2 miles, ascents and descents of 655 metres). This even more varied and scenic walk combines walks 48 and 48A, 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 48 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.

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