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Walking with Coleridge and Wordsworth

A self guided walk in the Quantock Hills



Discover the valleys, woods and streams that inspired Romantic poets
Visit the home of a wide variety of wildlife and plants
Find out how human activity has helped the land over 200 years
Explore how landscape and literature shape ideas of beauty in nature

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the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks







This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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Walking with Coleridge and Wordsworth

Discover connections between literature and the landscape in Somerset's Quantock Hills

Introduction

Beauty is in the eye of the beholder, or so the saying goes. So what makes a view beautiful? Who says that a hilltop panorama, a leafy glade, an open moor, a bubbling brook or gently rolling fields are beautiful?

Actually our ideas of what makes the natural landscape picturesque have been quite strongly influenced by how people have written about them in literature.



View from Black Hill
Rory Walsh © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

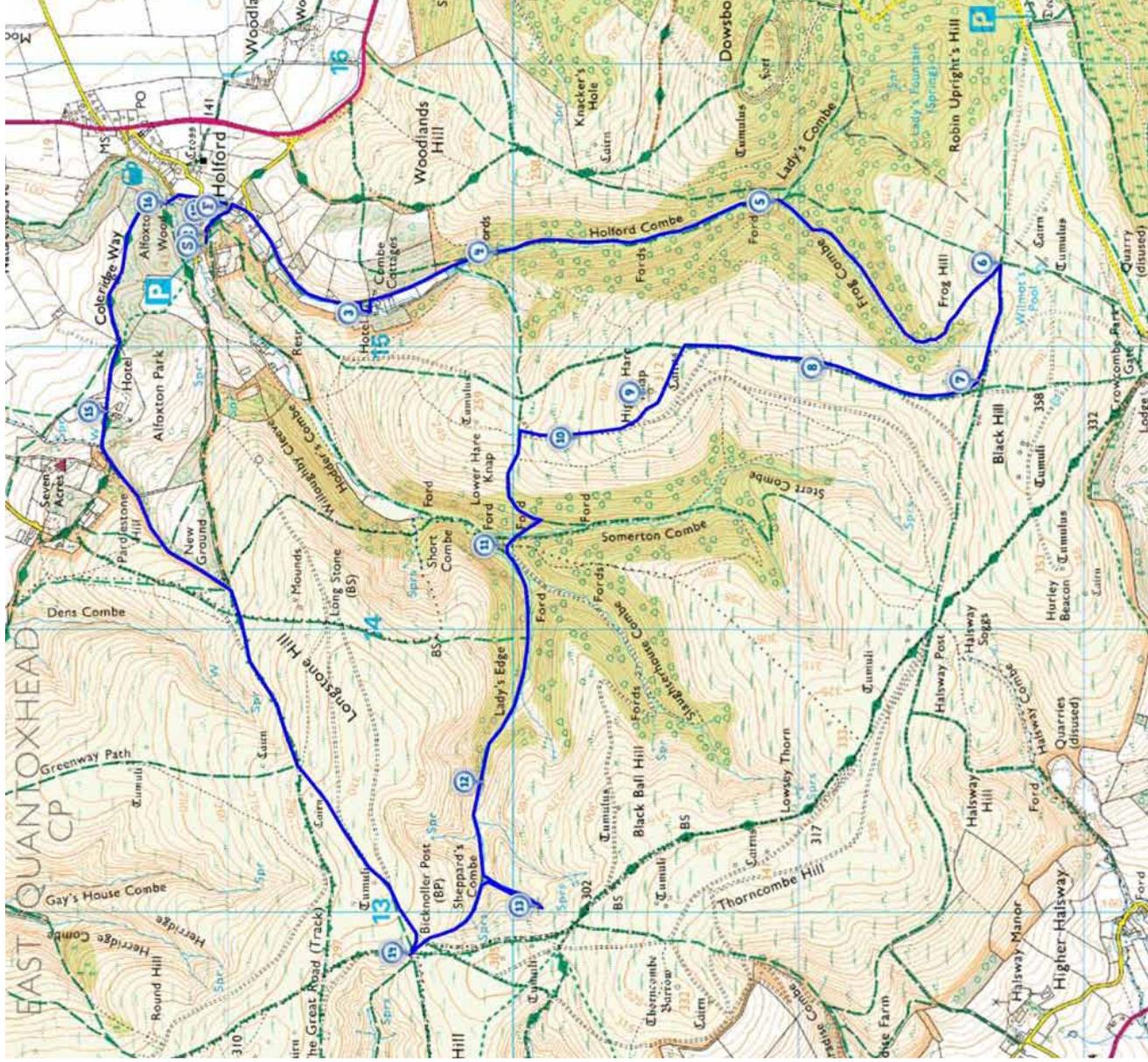
In the late 1790s, the Romantic poets Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth spent a year in the Quantocks, getting inspiration for many of their most famous works from their walks in this lovely area. This walk takes you in their footsteps, visiting many of the valleys and woods, streams and waterfalls, hilltops and viewpoints that they explored.

See just what inspired them. Discover how some aspects of the landscape have changed and others have not changed in the last two hundred years. Uncover evidence of human activity in a landscape that looks natural and think about what makes a view beautiful.

Route overview

Stopping points

1. Holford village green
2. Holford bowling green
3. Combe House Hotel
4. First glade in Holford Combe
5. Glade at the top of Holford Combe where it splits into Lady's Combe and Frog Combe
6. Solitary tree above Frog Combe
7. Junction of tracks, Pack Way
8. On the ridge of Black Hill
9. Higher Hare Knap
10. Path between Higher Hare Knap and Lower Hare Knap
11. Junction of Hodder's Combe, Somerton Combe, Slaughterhouse Combe and Sheppard's Combe
12. Partway up Lady's Edge
13. Spring off Lady's Edge
14. Bicknoller Post
15. Alfloxton House
16. Footbridge over Holford Glen
17. Ruined mill, Holford Glen
18. Holford village signpost



Practical information

Location	Quantock Hills, Somerset, Southwest England
Getting there	<p>Car - access via the A39 between Bridgwater and Minehead. Follow the directions below. A free car park at the start of the route beside Holford green.</p> <p>Bus - served by buses running between Bridgwater and Minehead (one bus every 2 hours). Nearest stop at The Plough Inn.</p> <p>Train - the nearest station is Bridgwater (11 miles away)</p>
Start point & postcode	Holford village green, TA5 1SB
Directions to start	<p>Follow the A39 to The Plough Inn then turn left if coming from Bridgwater, right if coming from Minehead. Follow the brown sign for Combe House Hotel.</p> <p>After about ¼ of a mile bear left along the lane. At the next junction bear right, following the fingerpost marked Car Park 150 Yards, Alfoxton and Hodder Combe. Follow the lane through the trees up to the car park on the left. Holford village green is on the right.</p>
Finish point	Holford village
Distance	7 miles
Level	Challenging – hilly with several steep ascents and descents. There are a few small streams to jump across.

Conditions

Some very steep slopes so take strong walking boots or shoes. You should also consider a walking stick and weatherproof clothing. The route can be slippery in wet weather and take care in the boggy sections. Close all gates you use and don't leave litter behind.

Suitable for

Dogs - keep on a lead as there is grazing land for horses, sheep and goats. Beware of wild ponies and deer

Refreshments

Combe House Hotel, Holford (Stop 3 or 18) is the only place on the route serving food and drink - cream teas, lunches, evening meals (Tel: 01278 741382)

Alternatively consider preparing / buying refreshments beforehand - there are many places to stop for a picnic

Facilities

No public toilets on the route

Other info

The route is spectacular all year round but the heather is most colourful in spring and summer

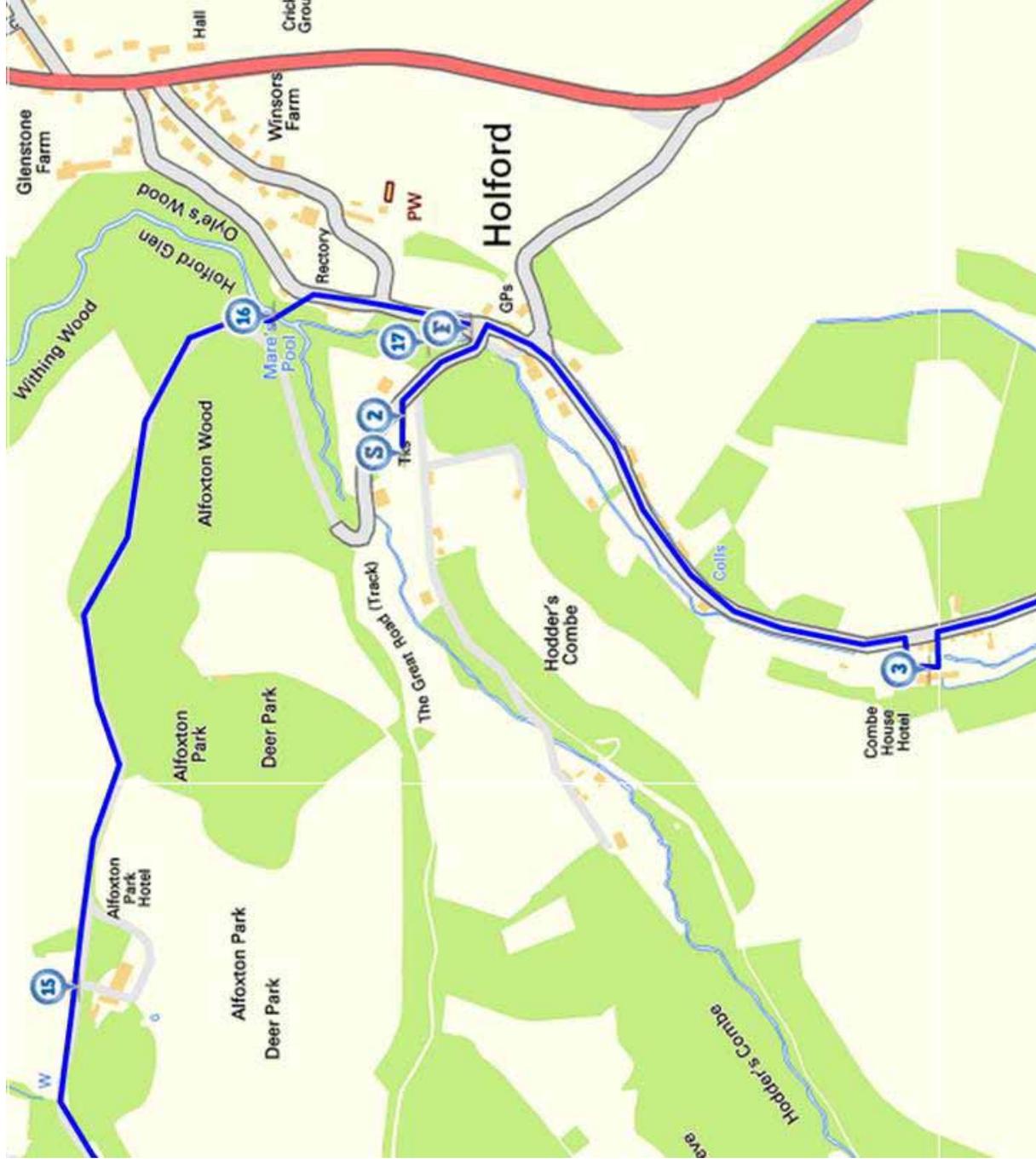
Be careful around wild deer, especially May - June during birthing season and October rutting season

Coleridge Cottage is located at Nether Stowey, 3 miles from Bridgwater. It is run by The National Trust. For opening times and further information Tel: 01278 732662

Tourist information

Bridgwater Tourist Information Centre, Bridgwater House, King Square, Bridgwater TA6 3AR (Tel: 01278 436438)

Detail of start and end of route



Directions

These directions are for use with the Quantocks walk audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to the Quantocks Holford village green

Directions 1

Stay at the green beside the car park (signposted Bowling Green) for Track 2.

2. A distinctive landscape Holford bowling green

Directions 2

From the bowling green, follow the lane through the village. At the junction with a white fingerpost, turn right, which is signposted Holford Combe. Pass cottages on either side. At the next junction of lanes, continue straight on, signposted Combe House Hotel and No Through Road. When you reach the hotel, turn right into the grounds. Stop in the car park and listen to Track 3.

3. A smelly industrial site Combe House Hotel

Directions 3

Opposite the old wheel is a passageway between the cottages that takes you back onto the lane. Turn right up the lane. After a short way, the tarmac surface ends and it becomes a track. Go through the gate and continue following the footpath. Stop by the stream at the first glade and listen to Track 4.

4. Dingly dell First glade in Holford Combe

Directions 4

Continue on the footpath up Holford Combe. There are several paths which wind either side of the stream. It doesn't matter which you follow as long you continue gently upwards through the combe. After three-quarters of a mile – which should take the average person about 15 minutes – there is a glade. This is the top of Holford Combe, where it splits with Lady's Combe on the left and Frog Combe on the right. Stop in the glade where the combes split and listen to Track 5.

5. Gunpowder woods

Glade at the top of Holford Combe where it splits into Lady's Combe and Frog Combe

Directions 5

Follow the path to the right up Frog Combe. The path climbs gradually and towards the top it gets steeper. You eventually emerge above the trees. Continue following the path upwards. Stop by the solitary tree by the track and listen to Track 6.

6. Monarch of the combe

Solitary tree above Frog Combe

Directions 6

Turn right along the track, which is called Pack Way. Just over the brow of the hill, the track splits. Stop at the junction and listen to Track 7.

7. The road that was never built

Junction of tracks, Pack Way

Directions 7

From the junction, take the right fork on the path along the ridge of Black Hill towards Higher Hare Knapp, with the Bristol Channel in the far distance. Either side of this path are areas of heather. Stop by some heather and listen to Track 8.

8. Purple and yellow

On the ridge of Black Hill

Directions 8

Continue along the path which follows the ridge of Black Hill towards Higher Hare Knapp. Where the path splits, keep left. Stop at the stones marking the top of Higher Hare Knapp and listen to Track 9.

9. Blot on the landscape?

Higher Hare Knapp

Directions 9

From the cairn, follow the grassy path downwards towards Lower Hare Knapp. Stop part way down the slope and listen to Track 10.

10. From crops to heather

Path between Higher Hare Knap and Lower Hare Knap

Directions 10

Follow the path downwards. Rather than climb up again to Lower Hare Knap on the right, continue straight downwards towards Somerton Combe. After a short distance the path enters the trees of the combe. The path is very steep so take great care. Stop by the stream at the bottom and listen to Track 11.

11. Mud, mud, glorious mud

Junction of Hodder's Combe, Somerton Combe, Slaughterhouse Combe and Sheppard's Combe

Directions 11

Hodder Combe is downstream. Face upstream and there are three combes – Somerton Combe on the left, Slaughterhouse Combe in the centre and one on the right. Walk a short way up Slaughterhouse Combe, which leads up Lady's Edge. Wherever there is a split in the path, follow the right fork. The path rises gradually up Lady's Edge with the stream on your left. After a short distance, the trees thin out. Stop as the path emerges into the open and listen to Track 12.

12. Wandering lonely as three clouds

Part way up Lady's Edge

Directions 12

Continue up Lady's Edge until you reach a small V-shaped valley on the left hand side. This small detour for the next stop is optional because the path is steep and can be overgrown. If you do not fancy going up there, stop on the path and listen to Track 13.

If you want to brave it, follow the sheep track through the bracken for several minutes. Just above a clump of trees is the source of the stream – it's a boggy area which will squelch underfoot. Stop on the bog and listen to Track 13.

13. Boggy inspiration

Spring off Lady's Edge

Directions 13

If you made the detour up to the bog, you can either retrace your steps back down to the main path or clamber upwards until you reach Pack Way and turn right. From the main path, continue upwards through Sheppard's Combe until you reach the Pack Way. On the flat area at the top where several paths meet is a wooden post. Stop by the post and listen to Track 14.

14. Changing horses

Bicknoller Post

Directions 14

From the viewpoint westwards over to Exmoor and Minehead, turn back eastwards. Go back past Bicknoller Post and then turn left along the track along the ridge with Longstone Hill on the right. Follow the path over the hill and you should see Hinckley Point straight ahead in the distance. At a path crossroads by a solitary tree, turn right across the top of Dens Combe. The track descends gradually. Follow the track to the edge of some woodland. Here the path divides into five. Straight ahead is a path marked no vehicles. To its left is a path along the top of the woodland. To its left is a path descending diagonally through the woodland. Take this path. After a short distance it becomes a tarmac driveway. Stop where the drive passes Alfoxton House and listen to Track 15.

15. Romantic get-away

Alfoxton House

Directions 15

Continue along the driveway. Pass through the gate at the edge of the grounds and continue along the road towards Holford village. At one point, the road bends round to the right. Shortly after the bend is a footpath post on the left hand side pointing down into the woods. Follow this footpath steeply downwards. Stop on the footbridge over the brook and listen to Track 16.

16. Dorothy's waterfall

Footbridge over Holford Glen

Directions 16

Cross the bridge and climb the wooden ramp on the other side. Turn right along the lane. At the junction is a gate on the right hand side. Stop beside the gate and listen to Track 17.

17. Silky ruins

Ruined Mill, Holford Glen

Directions 17

Follow the lane a short way to the junction. Stop by the white finger post and listen to Track 18.

18. Nature and culture

Holford village signpost

Directions 18

From the sign post, you can follow the lane round to the right and back to the bowling green and car park. Alternatively you may want to go straight up the lane back to the Combe House Hotel for refreshments.

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Peter Coates** for creating the walk and providing the audio commentary, even as Exmoor ponies tried to eat his script
- **Jenny Lunn** for editing the walk materials
- **Rory Walsh** for taking photographs and compiling walk resources
- **Caroline Millar** for editing the audio commentary
- **Nick Stanworth, Gemma Coate, Claire Young and Florence Lee** for additional assistance with compiling walk resources
- **The Wordsworth Trust** for kind permission to use works from their collection
- **The Francis Frith Collection** for kind permission to use archive images
- **Andrew Mann** for testing the walk and providing photographs and useful feedback

Further information

Find out more about the walk story and places of interest along the route:

Coleridge and Wordsworth in the West Country: Their Friendship, Work, and Surroundings

by William Knight, London: Elkin Mathews, 1913

Coleridge and Wordsworth in Somerset

by Berta Lawrence, Newton Abbot: David & Charles, 1970

Coleridge & Wordsworth: The Crucible of Friendship

by Tom Mayberry, Stroud: Alan Sutton, 2000

The Friends of Coleridge

www.friendsofcoleridge.com

Friends of Quantock

friendsofquantock.com

The Historic Landscape of the Quantock Hills

by Hazel Riley Swindon: English Heritage, 2006

Lyrical Ballads (1798)

by Samuel Taylor Coleridge and William Wordsworth - Edited by RL Brett and AR Jones
Abingdon: Routledge, 2005

Portrait of the Quantocks

by Vincent Waite, London: Robert Hale, 1964

Quantock Hills

www.quantockhills.com

The Quantock Hills: Their Combes and Villages

by Beatrix F Cresswell, London: Homeland Association for the Encouragement of Touring in Great Britain, 1904

The Quantock Online Community

www.quantockonline.co.uk

Wordsworth Trust

www.wordsworth.org.uk





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