

# Circular Walk Seventeen - Chipstable and the River Tone - Exploring Taunton Deane



## General Information

**Distance of Walk:** 6.7 kilometres

A walk east from the small village of Chipstable, over hills to reach the River Tone, which you then follow upstream to Washbattle Bridge before returning over Heydon Hill.

**OS map** - Explorer 128, Taunton and Blackdown Hills

**Terrain** - Undulating, with a steep descent into the Tone valley and steep ascent up to Heydon Hill

**Parking** - Limited parking by the roadside at Chipstable Church

**Refreshments** - There are no pubs or cafes along the route. The nearest pub is the Rock Inn at Waterrow, two kilometres south of Chipstable. There are shops, cafes and pubs in Wiveliscombe, four kilometres east of Chipstable.

**Landscape character of the walk** - Brendon Hills (see points of interest number 2)

## Directions

**A** From the parking space at the church turn right and walk down the road and round the left-hand bend between the houses. At the right-hand bend, take the bridleway up the hill ahead. Continue ahead, going through a metal gate and then a wooden gate further along. Continue down the hill which becomes steep and winding.

**B** Near the bottom of the hill, turn left to follow the track towards Wadham's Farm. At the first farm building turn left again and continue along the track on the side of the hill, eventually through a gate about 50 m before the road. Turn right immediately after the gate and cross the river via a wooden gridge. Turn left to the road.

**C** Cross the road and go over a stile. Continue alongside the river to the road at Washbattle Bridge.

**D** Turn left, over the bridge and follow the road up the hill. Go past the entrance to New House Farm. After

approximately 120 metres turn left into the entrance to New House Cottage. Walk ahead through the kissing gate and across the meadow to the gate in the top right corner. Walk ahead across further wet meadows with the hedge on your left to a stile by a house. Cross the garden to a five-bar gate onto the road.

**E** Turn left and walk up the hill. Just beyond the track to Higher House turn left up the steep narrow path. On reaching a wider track, continue up the hill (ignoring the smaller track that leaves on the right) between beech trees. On reaching a further crosstracks, keep ahead to continue up the side of the hill. The path begins to veer left as it reaches the top. At the junction turn right. Where the wide track bends right to go down hill, continue ahead through the gate and then half left across the meadow to a stile to the right of a metal gate. Cross the next field to go through the gate and continue the line across the next field to the trees in the far corner. Go through the gate and follow the track to the road.

**F** Turn left. Shortly after the left-hand bend in the road turn right and follow the hedge on the left down the hill to the gate and stile on the left. Cross and turn right to follow the hedge down the hill towards the church. Go over the stile in the corner of the field and follow the track down between the buildings to the road. Cross and go through the church yard to return to your car.

## Points of Interest

**1 Chipstable and the Church of All Saints**  
Originally 15th century, the church was rebuilt in 1869 in the geometrical style by Benjamin Ferrey. Remnants of the older church include the west tower, the capitals of the three-bay arcade with their figures of angels, and the bench ends dated to around 1530. The ringing chamber with its handsome oak front was built in the 1990s.

**2 Site of W. H. Pool Engineers**  
Here on your right, behind a house called Elms Green, was the site of the engineering

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works of William Pool. In the late 1840s William had set up his business in West Skirdle near Waterrow, where he produced various farm implements, carts, wagons, threshers and other machines. There, he had formed a working relationship with a blacksmith called Samuel Surridge who made all the ironwork required and arranged for any casting that was needed.

By 1861 he had moved his business to a larger site behind his parents' house in Chipstable, where he prospered, employing several people such as wheelwrights, carpenters, a smith and a machine maker. The range of products was extensive and included turnip cutters, chaff cutters, cultivators, horse hoes, corn and seed drills, reed combers and hay machines. During the latter part of the 1800s William's son Alfred developed an oil engine which gave impetus to the firm's progress and allowed it to survive long after many similar concerns had ceased trading. However, by the 1930s the business had declined and in

1956, when Alfred died, the buildings were demolished and their contents sold.

### 3 Green Lanes

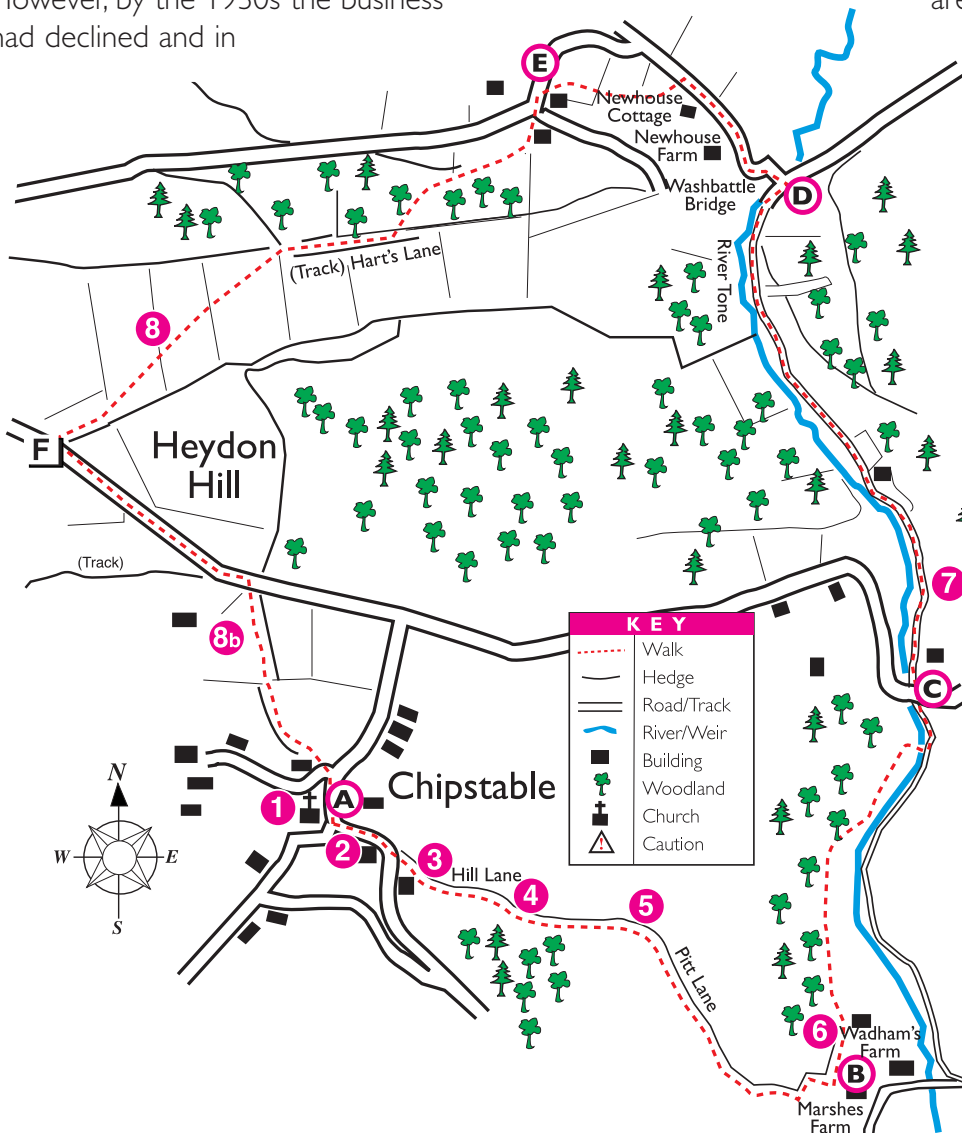
With the advent of motorised vehicles, the number of so-called green lanes has diminished rapidly. Tracks such as Pitt Lane have great cultural and historical value. They may represent routes that have been in use since pre-historic times, perhaps trodden by Roman legions, pilgrims, medieval travellers or miners, or etched out by primitive sledges and cart wheels. The antiquity of the hedgerows and banks that often enclose these lanes makes them important wildlife habitats.

### 4 The Brendon Hills

The Brendons in Taunton Deane are mainly characterised by exposed high ground roughly between 100 and 300 metres high, the highest point being Heydon Hill (342m). The higher areas are generally to the north and west with more gently sloping lower ground to the south. There are deeply dissected valleys flowing eastwards to the River Tone. The geology of the area is predominantly Devonian slates, siltstones and sandstones giving rise to fine loamy reddish soils. The remainder is made up of Carboniferous shales and limestone outcrops giving rise to slowly permeable, seasonally waterlogged fine loamy and fine silty soils. The land is mainly of low agricultural value and is used principally for dairying, although there is cereal and stock rearing in the uplands. On the steep slopes there are coniferous and deciduous woodlands and rough grazing.

### 5 Views

From Pitt Lane there are lovely views over the surrounding countryside. The Devonian rocks that form these rolling hills are part



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of an east-west belt that extends from the coast at Ilfracombe and embraces Exmoor and the Brendon Hills, occurring as an inlier in the Quantock Hills. The Brendon Hills rise to over 400 metres at Wiveliscombe Barrow to the north west of Chipstable. During the 19th century a number of small mining settlements grew around local deposits of iron ore, and many of the buildings and features from this industry remain.

### 6 West Deane Way

From here to Washbattle Bridge you follow part of this 72 kilometre circular route which starts in Taunton and follows the Tone valley west and then north before returning back via Wiveliscombe to the lower slopes of the Quantocks and to Taunton.

### 7 The River Tone

This river flows for 33 kilometres down from Beverton Pond in the Brendon Hills, south at first before turning east to flow into the River Parrett at Burrowbridge, and then out to the Bristol Channel through Bridgwater. The fast flowing headwaters pass through steep wooded sections, into a meandering channel (as here) before emerging downstream of Taunton as a deep and slow river. The entire length of the river has been influenced by man's activities, from the damming of the headwaters at Clatworthy Reservoir to the various leats and weirs that were constructed to power mills such as those in Wellington. There was a corn mill at Washbattle Bridge, and here the river

forms the boundary between Taunton Deane and West Somerset

### 8 View

At 342 metres Heydon Hill is one of the highest points in Taunton Deane. There are good views to the east and south, particularly as you descend back towards Chipstable church. There are two round barrows near the top of Heydon Hill, ancient burial sites in which were found urns and a sword during excavations in the 19th century.

## Sources of information and further reading

The Deane Tree Plan - *Taunton Deane Borough Council*

A Village Industry - W. H. Pool and Sons

*D W Warren - Somerset Archaeological Society*

Listed Building Database - *Taunton Deane Borough Council*

The Green Lanes of England - *Valerie Belsey - Green Books*

Geology and Landscape of Taunton Deane

*Hugh Prudden - Taunton Deane Borough Council*

West Deane Way, Guide Book

*Taunton Deane Borough Council*

Somerset's Industrial Heritage

*Edited by Derrick Warren - Somerset Industrial Archaeological Society*

## If You Require Further Information Please Contact:

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