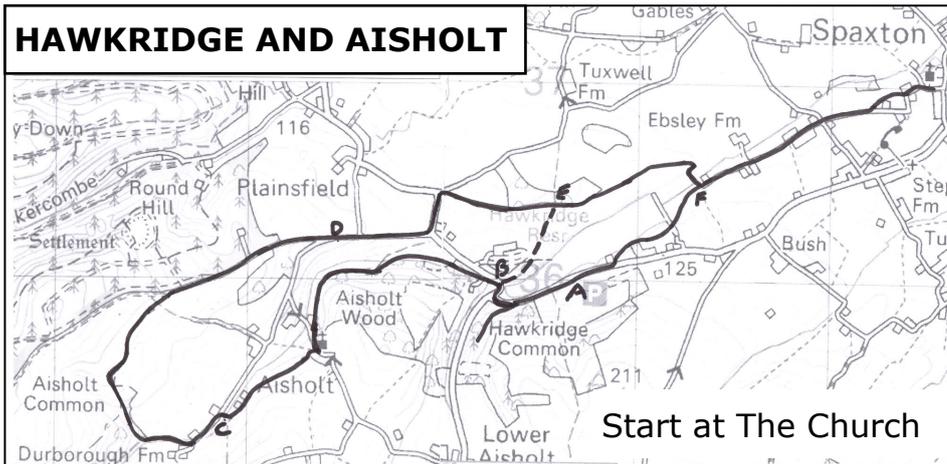


Another Walk from Spaxton

A walk to Aisholt, the most picturesque part of our parish.



Distance: 7 $\frac{1}{4}$ / $\frac{3}{4}$ miles depending on route. Walking time 1 - 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ hours. (You can shorten the walk even more by driving to Hawkridge car park (A))

Conditions: Mostly easy with one steep climb on Aisholt Common and two other short climbs. Also two fords. If you intend walking on Aisholt Common take precautions against ticks (long trousers and sleeves). OK for dogs but check for ticks.

Refreshments: None

Head along Church road and cross Peartwater road into Twinell Lane. A short way along this lane are the remains of one of the several mills that used the power of Peartwater. Keep straight ahead where a track branches to Ebsley Farm and shortly on your R is Ebsley Cottage (F). The return route will bring you back to this point.

Take the marked footpath that goes through trees by the side of the stream. Where it enters a field head up and to the L. On the way is a fine view of the dam that forms Hawkridge Reservoir. Near the top of the field is a stile onto the track. Follow this to the lodge by the side of the lake (dogs on leads here). The lake is now used for fishing and produces some fine trout. The reservoir was finished in 1962 and holds 190 million gallons.

A short way past the lodge a stile leads into a field. The path takes you onto the road next to the bungalow. Walk along the road, past the car park towards the head of the lake. On the way a path is marked on the L. It is a short waymarked route to a restored limekiln - a real gem of our parish and well worth a detour. There is an explanation board there. Behind it is a surprisingly deep quarry in a band of limestone.

Back at the head of the lake, if you want a very short route take the path on the R up to the woods at point (E). The main route takes the track on the L which follows the north bank of the stream. After fording the stream the woods on the L are a wildlife reserve owned by The Somerset Wildlife Trust. After another few (muddy) hundred yards you come out on the lane in Aisholt. The cottage on the R was the home in the 1930's of Henry Newbolt, a poet well known for maritime pieces. "Drakes Drum" is his most famous work. The seclusion of Aisholt is probably favoured by poets. Apparently Coleridge wanted to move there but his wife thought it too far from the shops.

Up the hill is the church which is relatively unaltered. It wasn't that long ago it was lit by oil lamps. It has a squint, which in this case is a hole through which those not allowed inside could see what was going on. The churchyard is managed for wild flowers which really suits the tranquil setting.

Just below the church a gate leads into a field which has some remarkably large trees and a view over the valley to the restored old rectory. On the L steps lead up a bank. At the top keep the hedge on your R. Go through a gate at the end of the field, turn R, cross the stream and you are on a lane. Opposite you is picturesque Holcombe Cottage. Holcombe is the proper name for this valley, although it is often called Durborough after the farm a little further up. Follow the lane up the valley. If you don't fancy the steep climb ahead, follow the lane back to join the route at point D.

For some real Quantock terrain and views go through the gate and walk along the stream. Follow the track until, just as you enter woodland, a path goes off on the R. Do not take the well-worn path but walk up a gully that is (usually) a dried stream bed. This turns into a path and shortly after leaving the wood it turns sharp R and up a short, steep climb. At the top keep your height and soon you see a clearer track ahead. The climb reveals great views down the valley and over the Levels to The Mendips whilst just below Aisholt church peeps out of the trees.

The track takes you to a gate that leads onto the lane leading gradually downhill. After a mile you arrive at a busier road. Turn L and after 200 yards, where the road turns L go through the gate on the R. A footpath heads to the R side of a wood ahead. When you reach the wood keep the trees on your L and you pass point E. This section has the best views of Hawkridge Reservoir. At the end of the wood a stile leads into a large field. Head for the far end of the field and on the R is a stile. A path leads down through a small wood and comes out by the side of Ebsley Cottage. Through the gate and you are back at F and on the way back to the church.