

A Stroll from Spaxton - by Spuddler

This walk was published in the SCN in 2007. Spuddler has been persuaded to come out of retirement and revise the old walks. Some more may be published in future editions.

CHARLYNCH AND BLACKMORE FARM

Distance: 5 miles. Walking time about 2 hours. A shortcut saves a mile.

Conditions: Easy walking. Some parts might be a bit overgrown in summer and there are some muddy bits. Quite easy for dogs but look out for stock, especially between Charlynch and Blackmore

Refreshments: Blackmore Farm Shop (open every day) and The Malt Shovel pub (**Mon - Thurs** 12 pm – 3 pm / 5 pm – 11 pm **Fri, Sat, Sun:** 12 pm – 11 pm)

Start at The Community Stores

Head for Four Forks and turn L onto Charlynch Road. Just past Crowlink Cottage on your R take a footpath on the L. At the stile keep straight on across the field to the hedge on the far side. At the hedge turn R. To keep to the footpath the hedge should be on your L but often its easier to walk on the other side. Keep straight on to Charlynch Church. At the gate onto the road look back at the great view of Spaxton with the hills behind. To the L of the church are two fine houses, a Georgian one in front and a tudor house tucked behind. Take the path into the churchyard which is up some steps to the R of the lich-gate. (caution - slippery after rain!).

Nikolaus Pevsner - the famous documenter of old buildings - dismisses Charlynch Church as "Over-restored in 1886" but it has Norman bits and there was probably a Saxon church on the site before that. It is now a private house. It's peaceful enough now but in 1840 its curate, Henry Prince, discovered that he was The Messiah and Spaxton was never the same again!

A gate and stile lead from the churchyard to the adjacent field. Head for the stile opposite and then to the hedge on the L. On the way there are wonderful views, this time over Bridgwater Bay and The Mendips. The route continues via a stile through the next hedge at the far L corner of the field. On the other side keep the hedge on your L and at the corner drop down and over a stile and follow the hedgeline to Blackmore Farm.

At Blackmore Lane you have a choice of refreshments. 250 yards to the R is The Malt Shovel pub, popular for food but with a good range of beer and cider too. If you have a dog or are just too muddy there's a pleasant seating area at the back.

To the side of the old farmhouse is Blackmore Farm Shop. It sells Blackmore's own dairy produce and you can get teas there too.

The old house is well worth a closer look. In contrast to his views on Charlynch, Mr Pevsner described Blackmore Farm as "a rare and fortunate survival". It seems to date from about 1500 and the windows are original. Our route goes through a gate on the right of the drive to the house. In the field you get a close view of the north end of the house which contains the chapel.

Follow the edge of the house and garden and keep that line until you reach a track by the side of the stream. This is Spaxton's own Peartwater, now grown a bit. Keep on the track to the left of the stream (a very pleasant section) and then into a field. The landscaped water garden over the stream was made by Wessex Water at the back of the Water Works. The path continues on a new route between the houses and the stream and out onto the road. The shortcut is up the hill via Charlynch.

The full route continues at the side of Ashford Reservoir. If it's overgrown walk in the adjacent field. There are always some water-birds to see and after turning R at the end of the path, at the right time of the year, you can see nesting swans next to the track.

You're now at Currypool Mill where there is a campsite and a water wheel that generates electricity. Currypool is one of those manors around Spaxton mentioned in the Domesday Book in its own right and its mill was the last in this area to close in the 1960s.

Turn L on the road and look out for the footpath sign on the L after about 500 yards. Follow the well-kept field edge to Splatt Lane. The path reaches the lane next to Splatt Cottages. Turn L and up the hill past the church to the High Street and the Community Stores.

