

AS - Fosse Way, Ham Woods, Windsor Hill. 7 Miles.

A moderate walk following in the footsteps of the Romans on the Fosse Way with fine views over Shepton Mallet from Downside, then onto Ham Woods with the old viaduct and tunnels, up the side of the quarry to come back over Windsor Hill to Bowlish then back via the older parts of Shepton Mallet. This walk starts from the Mendip District Council car park, or from The Downside Inn on the A37. If starting from the Pub, start at No. 3. Always ask permission to park.

1. Leave the car park via the footpath to the Town Centre, turn left then right into Collett Park keep straight ahead, after approx 100 metres turn left into a footpath taking you between the tennis courts and the bowling green to reach the A361. Cross the road into Frithfield Lane and walk downhill passing the Prison on your left, on reaching the road at the bottom cross to the footpath opposite down the paved path to a road. Turn right and follow the road to the junction with the A37. Cross with care, turn right then turn left into the lane to the right of the car park, at the end of the tar mac lane go straight ahead onto the gravel track under Charlton Viaduct, after which you turn left

at a short marker post to reach a stile with metal rails, cross this and follow the wall round ignoring the stile on your left, keep straight onto pass an old stile through a gate, then follow the fence on your right to cross a double stile you will see in the top corner of field, cross this and turn right, walk down the middle of this field to a stone stile next to a stumpy tree, once over this head for the gas pumping station ahead to reach the Fosse Way.

Also called Martins Lane as it rises to the north out of Shepton. Like many Roman Roads its course has shifted slightly over the centuries and here and there you can see the raised hump of the earlier road in fields to the west of the present lane. The Roman invasion of AD43 began in South East England but its effects were swiftly felt in the Mendip area. By AD49 the Romans were mining lead in



A8 - Fosseway / Ham Woods / Windsor Hill Walk - 7 mls



the Mendips and the Fosseway had been built.⁴ The Fosseway served as a major strategic communications line. The Romans had been getting lead from the Mendips from before the invasion and one of the first roads they built ran from Charterhouse towards Southampton. The strategically important Fosseway was built soon afterwards, possibly as a frontier.

2. Turn left and follow the Fosse Way uphill to eventually reach Bolters Lane. Turn right, then first left into Yellingmill Lane. Follow the lane for roughly 1½ mile, then as the lane bends to the right go over the stile on your left aiming slightly to your right to reach a stone stile in the bottom corner of the hedge on your right. Cross two fields to reach a wooden stile with Yew Tree Farm on your left, cross the stile turn left through the gate then turn right following the hedge on your right, over the ladder stile and out to the A37 via a stile. Cross the road to reach the Downside Inn .



The Downside Inn from its structure would appear to originate from the late 18th or early 19th century. It would have been likely to act as a pub and small farm. In 1839 John Crew is listed as the landlord and in Kelly's of 1861 it is listed as 'Henry Hutton, Downside Inn and Cattle Dealer'. Dual occupations were very common for publicans in those days.

3. Take the footpath between the barn and the Pub, go over the stone stile heading straight towards the derelict farmhouse, go straight through the farmyard keeping in the same direction to cross a stile, then straight onto a stone stile onto a lane. Ignore the lane ahead but turn right up the hill to take the next turning on your left, on reaching a fork in this lane go right down towards Windsor Hill Farm, pass through the farmyard and at the derelict building turn right over a stile next to a gate then follow the track to your left through another gate, walk down the middle of this field and, where this opens out to a large field, head towards the communication mast on Pen Hill. As you drop down the hill you will see a bridge to cross at the bottom, once over this turn left up the hill, ignore the old stile on your left but cross the one at the top onto the old railway track. The path to your left crosses the old viaduct, but we cross the track

going over the stile opposite, keep straight ahead across the field with the wood on your left and after a few metres you will see a kissing gate on your left, pass through this down hill to a stream at the bottom, you are now in Ham Woods. Cross the stream following the path up the bank on the other side, continue along the well trodden path into the old Quarry. As you reach the far side the path starts to bend to the left, take the path straight ahead through the trees then round to the right to some steps up the side of the quarry. At the top follow the fence on your left round two sides of this large field to a kissing gate onto a lane.

4. Turn right past Rubble Lane on your left, then go over the first stile on your left, aim a little to your right to a stile halfway along the hedge at the bottom, cross the next field to the stile ahead of you over this then follow the hedge on the left, over another stile, then half right to cross a stile into a large field. Head downhill to a marker post near a large tree then another post in the middle of the field, turn left here dropping down the bank to go through a gate at the bottom. Turn right to reach Ham Lane, then turn left to a T-junction at the bottom of the hill, turn right then just before reaching the A371 take the turning on your left to pass some cottages. At

the end of these bear to your left through a kissing gate and follow the track along the river through two more gates after which you turn right up some steps between some cottages to reach the A371. Turn left, then after 100 metres left again into Pike Lane. At the end of the lane turn right up Zion Hill to reach the 83136. Cross the road, enter the Great Ostry car park via a gap in the wall to your right follow the road round to the right to bring you into Town Street. Cross the Market Square, pass the Shambles.

The name shambles came from the Anglo Saxon word 'scamel' or 'little bench', and they were originally on the North and South side of the Market Place. The Shambles left on the North side were actually taken down in 1912. There still remains a small section of the Shambles in the market place today.

On through to St Peter's & St. Paul's Church, walk through the churchyard following the path round the back of the church, continue straight ahead to reach the A361. Cross with care, turn left and then right at the footpath signed to Cannards Grave via Collett Park. Once in the Park turn right and follow the path back to Park Road, cross to the footpath opposite and back to the car park.