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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



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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.

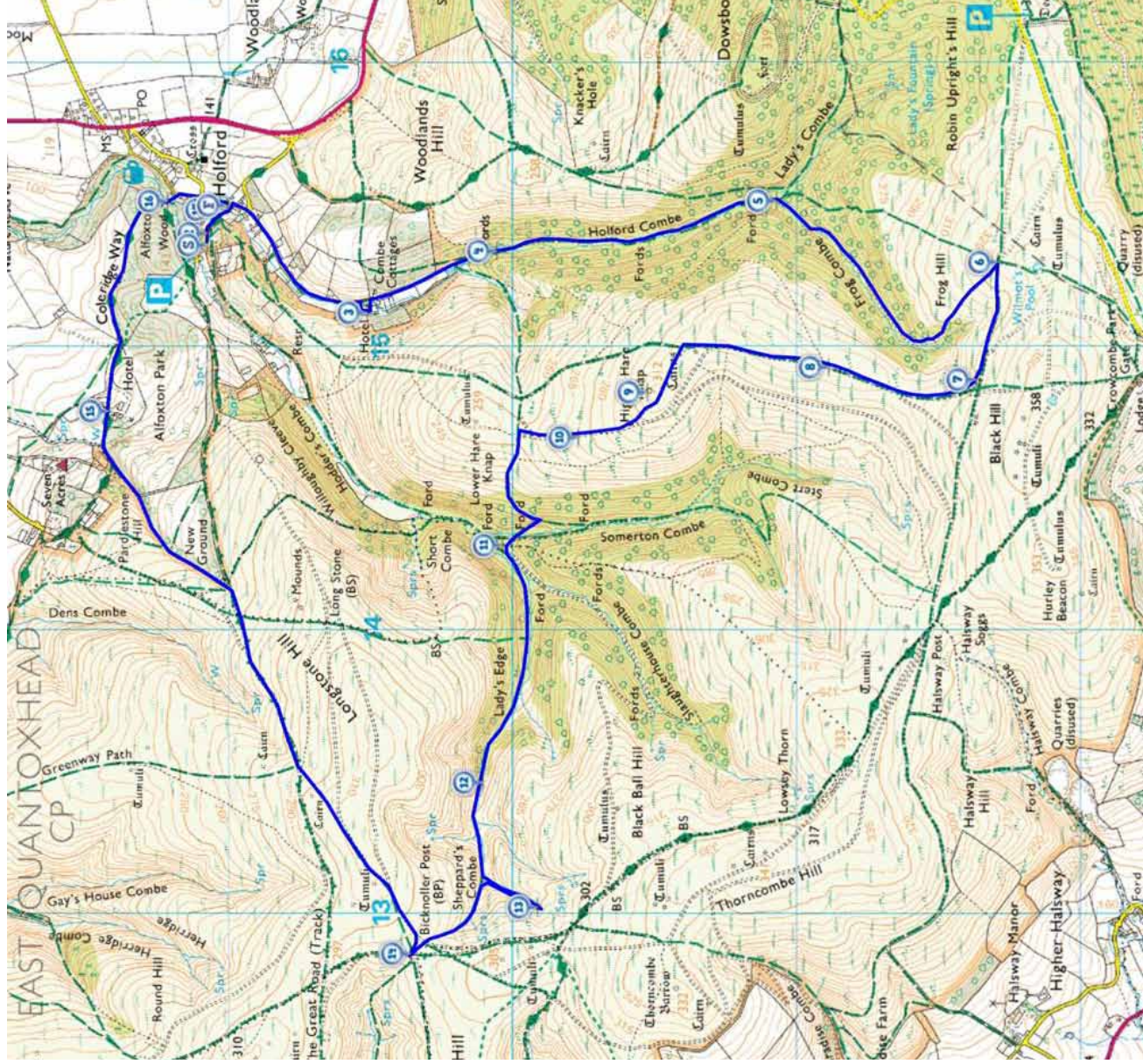
See just what inspired them. Discover how some aspects of the landscape have changed and others have not changed in the last two hundred years. Uncover evidence of human activity in a landscape that looks natural and think about what makes a view beautiful.



## 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, Slaughtershoe Combe and Sheppard's Combe
12. Partway up Lady's Edge
13. Spring off Lady's Edge
14. Bicknoller Post
15. Alfoxton House
16. Footbridge over Holford Glen
17. Ruined mill, Holford Glen
18. Holford village signpost



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## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	Quantock Hills, Somerset, Southwest England
<b>Getting there</b>	<p><b>Car</b> - 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><b>Bus</b> - served by buses running between Bridgwater and Minehead (one bus every 2 hours). Nearest stop at The Plough Inn.</p> <p><b>Train</b> - the nearest station is Bridgwater (11 miles away)</p>
<b>Start point &amp; postcode</b>	Holford village green, TA5 1SB
<b>Directions to start</b>	<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>
<b>Finish point</b>	Holford village
<b>Distance</b>	7 miles
<b>Level</b>	Challenging – hilly with several steep ascents and descents. There are a few small streams to jump across.

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**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

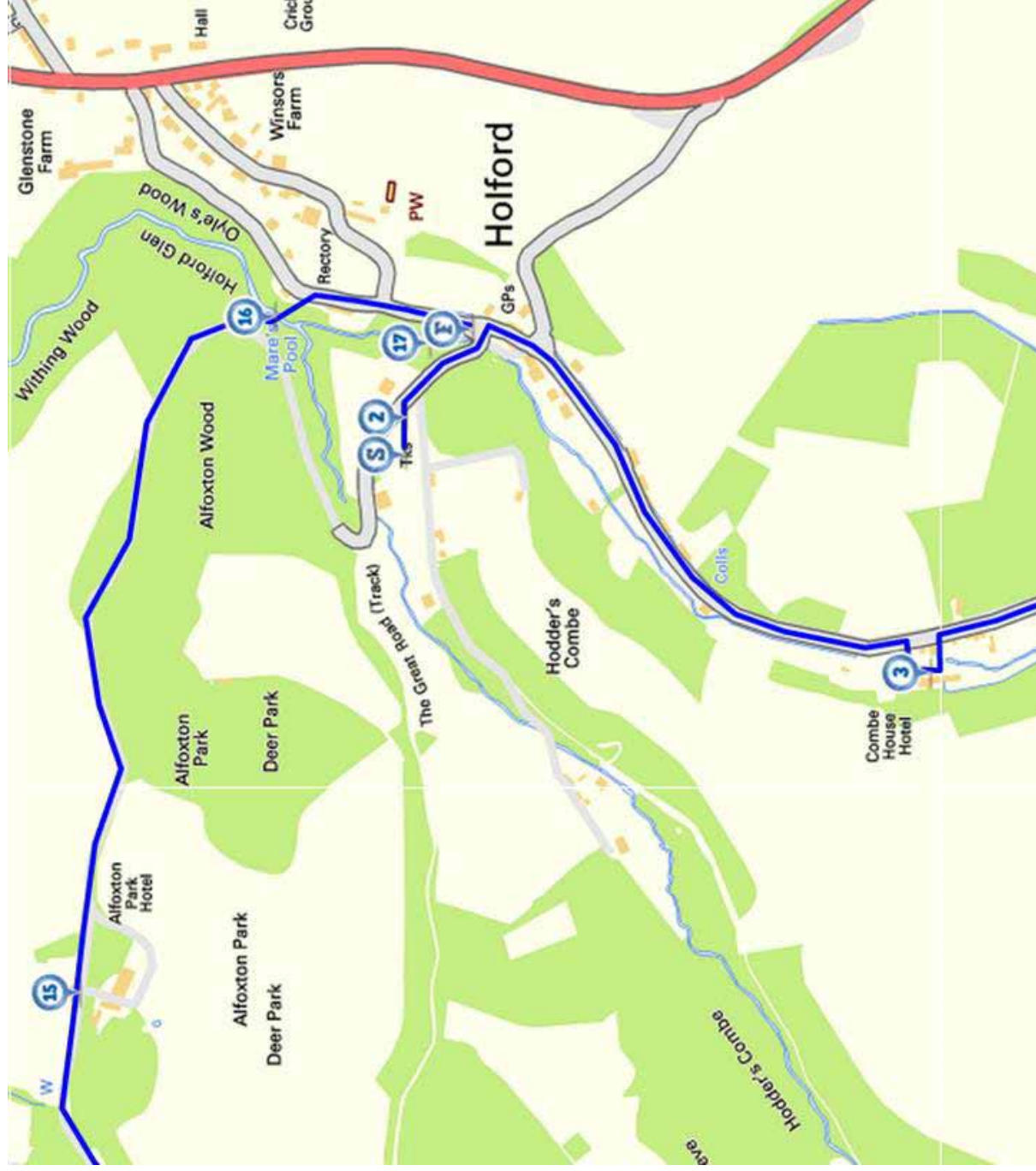
**Coleridge Cottage** is located at Nether Stowey, 3 miles from Bridgwater. It is run by The National Trust. For opening times and further information Tel: 01278 732662

**Tourist information**

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



## Detail of start and end of route





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## 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.

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## **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 Knap. Where the path splits, keep left. Stop at the stones marking the top of Higher Hare Knap and listen to Track 9.

## **9. Blot on the landscape?**

**Higher Hare Knap**

### **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.

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## **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.

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## **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.

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## 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

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## 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](http://www.friendsofcoleridge.com)

**Friends of Quantock**  
[friendsofquantock.com](http://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](http://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](http://www.quantockonline.co.uk)

**Wordsworth Trust**  
[www.wordsworth.org.uk](http://www.wordsworth.org.uk)

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