



2 BECKINGTON

.....
via Rode, Woolverton, Laverton and Lullington

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| <i>Distance:</i> | 5¾ miles |
| <i>Maps:</i> | Explorers 142, 143 Landranger 183 |
| <i>Map Reference:</i> | 801518 |
| <i>Refreshment en route:</i> | The Red Lion at Woolverton The Woolpack Inn at Beckington |
| <i>Note of caution:</i> | It is necessary to cross the busy A36 twice; the first being on a fast stretch of road. There is no danger if you wait for a suitable gap in the flow of traffic though it is always slightly unnerving, especially if you have children with you. |

THE WALK passes through five diverse villages. Most of the walking is by field paths although there is a longish stretch of lane between Woolverton and Laverton, but you are unlikely to encounter much traffic there. An ancient track takes you west from Rode to cross the River Frome by Scutt's Bridge, a former packhorse bridge, unwidened and accessible only on foot, like the bridge at Tellisford a little further down-river (Walk 13).

The cross-country walking between villages will surely convince you that there really is no better way to appreciate a rural landscape than on foot; the route from Woolverton via Laverton, Lullington and back to Beckington has a refreshingly remote feel about it, and is really quite surprising in this respect.

Beckington may be familiar to many who live in the district where Somerset meets Wiltshire as a large village lying close to the junction of two main roads: the A36 Bath-Warminster and the A361 Frome-Trowbridge roads. The bypass, which opened in 1989, has restored Beckington to a peace which almost predates the motor age.



DIRECTIONS

A convenient spot to park is at the top of the main street on the road beside Beckington Memorial Hall.

To begin the walk: At the entrance to the Memorial Hall car park look out for a footpath sign indicating the way to the left. Follow the pavement past the hall towards an indicated footpath to the right. Follow this way, beside the cricket pitch and hedgerow on your right until, at a break in the hedge, you reach a double step stile and the road.

At the end of the crash barrier prepare to cross the road. You may have to wait a while for a break in the traffic but you have a good long view in either direction so when you get your chance - go for it!

On the far side drop down just beyond the crash barrier to reach a similar

wooden stile. Cross here and follow the hedgerow on the right and keep your eyes peeled for the remains of a kissing gate on your right. (If you begin bearing left to reach the gap at the top of the field you will have gone too far).

Go through this kissing gate to reach a lovely tree-lined path which you follow until you reach a minor junction of lanes. Carry straight on for **RODE**. The River Frome flows unseen in the valley to your left, the tower of Rode Church can be glimpsed across fields to your right.

Exit Crooked Lane and bear right into High Street, then turn left into **The Mead** (**Merfield Lodge** is the house on the corner). Once past the houses on your right, the road abruptly reverts to a stony, tree-lined track and leads down towards the River Frome. As the way levels out, look out for a kissing gate on your left.

Follow the course of the former mill stream on the right, until you reach a bridge, indicated by a Public Footpath sign, which leads to the three-arched **Scutt's Bridge**, a packhorse bridge across the River Frome.

Cross Scutt's Bridge, follow the fence on the left and continue by the enclosed track ahead. Bear left at the lane and walk on into Woolverton, taking the left fork at the Red Lion. As you reach the main road you will see the little spire of **WOOLVERTON Church** (declared redundant and converted into a private dwelling).

Cross the road, with great care, and very soon turn right along the lane to **Laverton**. Pass a lane joining from the left. Further along you encounter a crosstrack, the northern section of which represents a short stretch of the Poole-Bath Roman road; the southern section became the old Henhambridge Way.

When you reach a fork bear left (signposted to Buckland Dinham) descend to **LAVERTON**, which is little more than a hamlet, but has its own immaculately maintained church, St Mary's. Leave the road and walk through the churchyard to the right of the church to reach a bar on the far side of the graveyard. Cross over and enter a farmyard.

Bear left to reach a gate; cross here and turn right, as indicated. Pass through a further gate, cross a track and a stile and continue in the same direction. Now look out for a stile in the hedgerow on your left.

Cross over and bear right. The field narrows where it meets a wood. Cross a stile in the very far corner where you enter the wood, albeit briefly.

Climb up on the left and emerge into a field. Now follow the hedgebank on your right to the field end. Enter the next field and turn left to follow the headland as it twists and turns until you reach a wooden stile. From here you can see the buildings of **LULLINGTON** village. Cross this final field to reach a pair of stiles, then bear right to reach a gate in the field corner, then left along the track beside buildings. Now turn right to reach All Saints Church on your right.

Below the church bear left and right past the house called Middle Thatch. Bear right at a traditional red telephone box down a metalled track. Just before the house ahead bear right to cross a stream via a pair of signposted gates and follow the stony path beside the trees to your left. The grounds of Orchardleigh House are to the right, much of which has been converted into a golf course.

Bear left at the end of the line of trees to leave the stony track and follow a beaten path beside the stream which takes you down towards the **River Frome**. As you cross the metalled driveway, leading to Orchardleigh House to the right, look left for a view of the impressive gatehouse known as Gloucester Lodge.

You reach a lane by a stile. Cross the stile opposite, then bear right to cross the footbridge which spans the River Frome. Cross the stile on the left and head diagonally across the field, past a pill box to the left, to reach a stile beside a gate. Now bear left.

Carry on beside the field boundary to your left until you reach a stile beside a drive. Cross to the right of way opposite and follow the well defined path beside pheasant enclosures until you reach a drive which soon leads you to Mill Lane and the main street through Beckington. If you parked your car by the Memorial Hall you will need to turn left.

BY THE WAY...

Beckington: A stroll around the village is well worth the effort and, without through traffic, is much more enjoyable than before the bypass was opened; the village boasts a wealth of fine stone buildings and an interesting church.

St George's stands proudly in its churchyard, and its most impressive feature – a fine Norman tower – at once captures your attention. Inside, the church contains much of interest. There are several monuments, including one on the west wall to Samuel Daniel, the poet, who died in 1619. There is a piscina, a timbered roof above clerestory windows and several fine corbel heads.

On leaving the church bear left at the gate and walk on to Beckington Castle, a three-storeyed, sixteenth-century mansion with three gables facing the street and a castellated porch and stair turret at the side. Bear right here by the former main road (now a cul de sac) and right again at the present road. Opposite is the entrance to Stubbs Lane where the conical roof of a little gazebo marks the boundary wall of Beckington House, a three-gabled house set back from the road. Cross the road and bear left. Just below is a



Street scene, Beckington

most attractive Baptist Chapel dated 1786 and, beyond that, on the same side, a former coaching inn, now a private house, where the iron support of the inn's name board still projects from the wall.

Back on the main road you can see The Grange and Beckington Abbey on the opposite side, parts of which date from the sixteenth-century – these buildings have ecclesiastical origins though details are obscure. Continue through the village, past many old and attractive houses. Beckington is a sizeable village and its many substantial houses bear witness to a former prosperity founded on the wool trade.

Scutt's Bridge Just up-river from this packhorse bridge is a three-arched stone bridge across a mill stream which at this point returns to the river, having been diverted to supply the former Scuttsbridge Mill, now demolished.

Lullington is a most attractive small village with a gem of a Norman church at its centre. All Saints has a splendid northern doorway (see opposite) which can easily be missed if you do not walk right round the church but merely enter by the south door. The plan of the church is unusual in that the tower is at the centre, between the nave and chancel. Inside, the columns at the four corners of the tower are most elaborate and make a fascinating study. The church also contains an inscribed and much decorated Norman font. Lullington village is quiet and well preserved although the school is now a house and there is neither shop nor pub, so almost somnolent.



Faces in stone above the porch at Lullington church