PUBS WORTH THE WALK · THE QUANTOCK HILLS

The Carew Arms Pub Walk

The Carews, Deer and Dead Woman's Ditch: Quantock Tales from Crowcombe

DISTANCE	TIME	ASCENT	DIFFICULTY
5.3 miles	**3 hours**	**1030 ft**	**Moderate**
8.5 km	approx.	320 m	initial steep climb

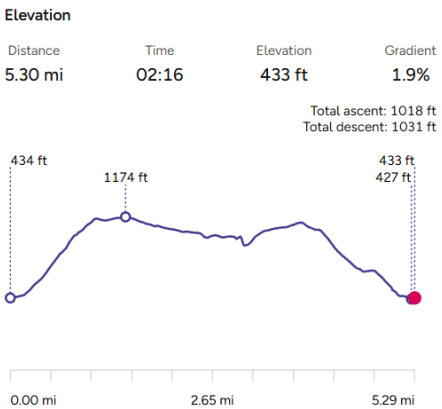
OVERVIEW

This rewarding circular route combines some of the best walking on the Quantock Hills with one of the most historically fascinating villages in Somerset.

Leaving Crowcombe, the route climbs through fields above the village steadily towards open moorland, where huge views stretch across West Somerset towards Exmoor, the Brendon Hills and the Bristol Channel. Hurley Beacon, Black Hill, Wilmot's Pool and Dead Woman's Ditch all feature along the way, while red deer are often seen amongst the heather, woodland and combes.

The return is equally rewarding. As the Quantocks fall away behind you, Crowcombe reveals itself as far more than a picturesque village. Within a few hundred yards lie monuments to centuries of wealth, faith, landownership and community life, culminating in a visit to one of Somerset's most characterful pubs.

START / FINISH	**The Carew Arms, Crowcombe, TA4 4AD**
PARKING	At the front or rear of the pub.
GRID REFERENCE	ST 138 368
WHAT3WORDS	///zinc.nothing.cried
PATHS / TERRAIN	Grass tracks; stony footpaths; woodland paths; lanes
PUBLIC TRANSPORT	Bus services between Taunton & Minehead serve Crowcombe.
TOILETS	At The Carew Arms

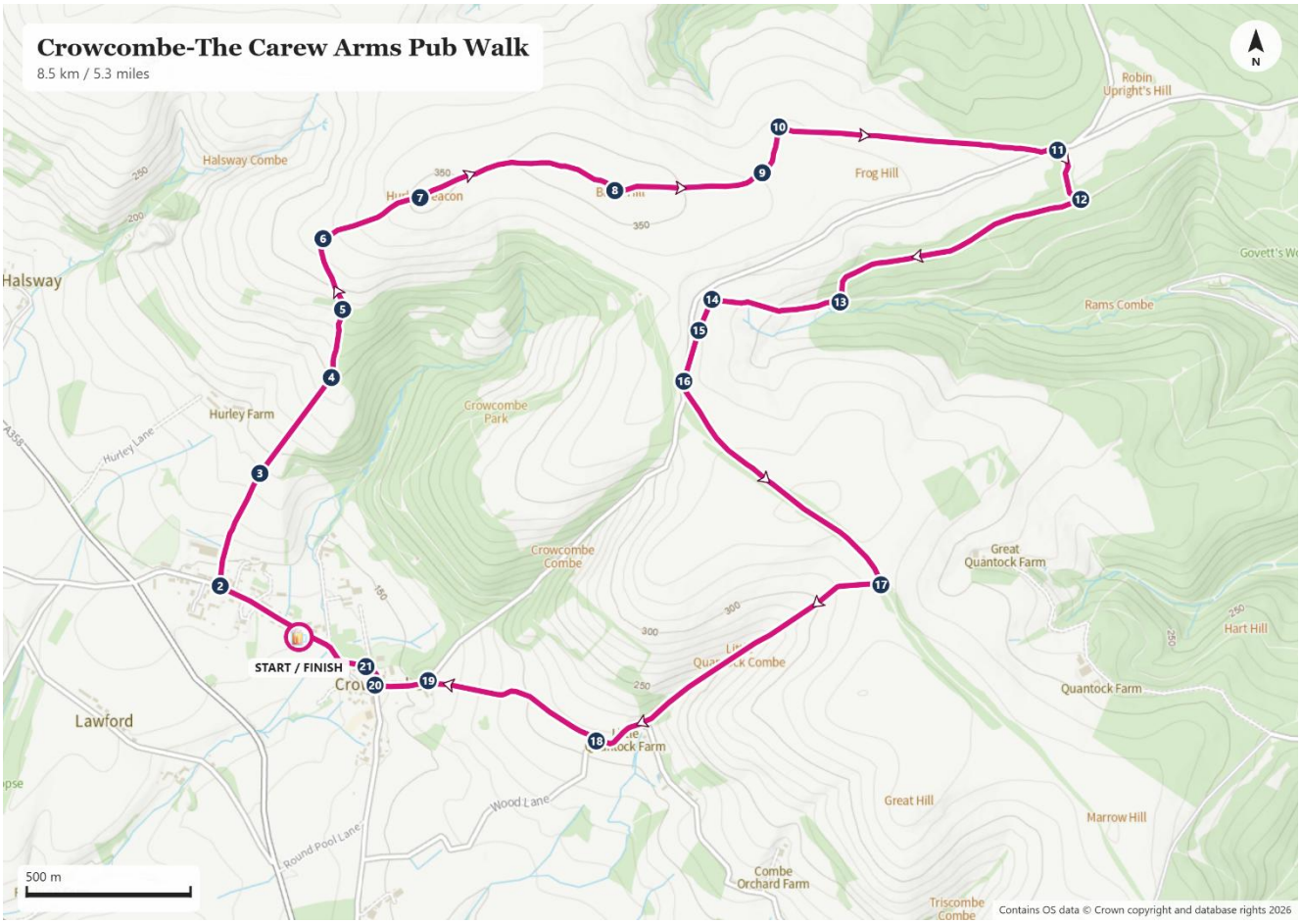


ELEVATION PROFILE

OTHER PUBS NEARBY

The Bicknoller Inn is superb, in the village of the same name. Try **The White Horse** in Stogumber; and for something different, **Pebbles Tavern** over at Watchet - an amazing place. **The Hood Arms** at Kilve and **The Plough** at Holford are Quantocks pubs worth seeking out.

THE ROUTE



Numbered waymarks on the map match the badges in the directions below. Not every waymark is mentioned in the text.

DIRECTIONS

Part 1 · The Carew Arms to Hurley Beacon *steps 1–6*

1 From the pub's rear car park, cross to the pavement and turn left. Continue through the village past the village shop and post office. 100 metres further on, look out for a public footpath between houses to the right, up steps. (**Waymark #2**)

2 A clear footpath now leads uphill, passing through a couple of wooden footpath gates and then into a field. Post markers show the direction to follow ahead on a grass track, continuing uphill. *We'll continue uphill until we reach the trig point on Black Hill, the highest part of this walk*.

3 Cross a farm track through two footpath gates into the next field. **(#3)** Continue straight ahead up the field between the wooden post markers, to reach a metal farm gate, and footpath kissing gate **(#4)**. Grab your breath to enjoy wonderful views over your shoulder, towards the Brendon Hills and Exmoor.

4 Follow a fence line with woodland to your right. At the end of the fenced section pass through a metal farm gate to arrive at the open moorland of the Quantocks.

5 There are a few trees ahead. Pass through them ahead to identify a broad grass track slightly left from the direction you came from. **(#5)** Then follow it around the hill.

6 At a path crossroads, **(#6)** turn right onto a clear grassy track that advances more directly uphill towards one of the two peaks on this walk. Continue until you reach the rocky crest of Hurley Beacon. There are over 100 monuments like this across the Quantocks. **(#7)**

Part 2 · Hurley Beacon to Dead Woman's Ditch *steps 7–10*

7 Continue straight ahead towards a gate ahead of you. *As you continue , the full expanse of the Quantocks, and the Somerset Coast opens out in front of you. The scale of the Hinkley Point Nuclear Plant is obvious from here too. Cross the stile by the Hurley Beacon information board and carry on ahead, crossing straight over a broad gravel track (it's the Macmillan Way, one of the main routes across the top of the hills).*

8 Continue ahead towards the trig point of Black Hill that will soon become visible in front of you. **(#8)** and then bear slightly left of it to take a green track towards Wilmot's Pool. **(#9)**

9 Follow a track to the left of the pool, until you reach a rutted vehicle access track which leads up to the road to the right. There's rough grassy parking to the left. *This is a parking area called Wilmot's Pool or Withyman's Pool, popular on Autumn days like this for spotting the Red Deer rut*. Go straight across this rough access track and pick up a broad footpath heading off slightly to the right, at an angle from the vehicular route. **(#10)** *If you're familiar with this area, we're heading in the direction of the car park at Dead Woman's Ditch, an ancient earthwork that is often (incorrectly) associated with the murder of Jane Walford by her husband in 1789.*

10 Continue straight ahead on this level, easy footpath, keeping your eyes peeled for red deer in the undergrowth. A squadron of Redwing took to the air for me – they seem to love the holly berries on the Quantocks. Proceed to the road and cross to the Dead Woman's Ditch car park **(#11)**.

Part 3 · Dead Woman's Ditch to The Carew Arms *steps 11–19*

11 As you enter the car park, follow its right-hand boundary along the tree line into the woods – the ditch of Dead Woman fame runs along this right-hand boundary. It's visibly unremarkable if you ask me!

12 A broad trail opens up in the trees, and sweeps to the left where there's a distinct gap in the beech bank ahead. Pass through the gap, and turn right **(#12)** to follow a clear trail with the beech bank on your right and a fenced-off fir tree forest to the left. Follow this wonderful woodland walk, watching for deer still – I saw a number of female red deer here – as it eventually turns sharp left and drops down to a forestry gate. **(#13)**

13 Here, turn right to walk away from the gate into an open green space through a gap in the beech bank, to follow a distinct route that soon starts to head uphill, gently at first and then more steeply as it heads towards the (Dead Woman's Ditch/Crowcombe Gate) road at the top. The road is the only route that crosses the Quantocks and can be busy with local traffic at the start and end of the day, and at weekends too.

14 As you approach the road, **(#14)** follow a grass track curving to the left. The target is Crowcombe Combe Gate. You'll recognise it as the point where the traffic seems to leave the open common land and head back to beech trees and hedges as it prepares to head down the combe to the village.

15 Very briefly join the road **(#16)** and immediately go left away from the road again, passing a wooden field gate. You'll see bridleway signs for Triscombe – continue on the obvious broad avenue ahead in that direction on a wooded track, initially muddy, with beech banks on either side.

16 Eventually a gap appears to the right in the beech bank (#17). Pass through a footpath gate into an area of moorland. Go slightly right in the direction of the telegraph poles and make your way down Little Quantock Combe, soon following the right-hand boundary hedge all the way to the bottom. Pass through metal gates into the farmyard of Little Quantock Farm, and continue straight ahead to join a lane. Bear right on the lane (#18) to pass the farm. Round a corner and where the road forks off to the left, continue straight ahead.

17 The lane is quiet and narrow, and eventually drops down steeply to meet the lower part of Crowcombe Combe. At the junction, (#19) turn left to navigate the final 200m downhill along the combe road – take immense care here as traffic comes down the steep hill quickly.

18 When you reach the bottom in Crowcombe, turn right past Glebe House. **(#20)** This is an ancient part of Crowcombe, with the outstanding, medieval Church of the Holy Ghost, the 16th Century Crowcombe Church House (an ale house and brewery!) and stately home of Crowcombe Court to be found here. The old village Pound too **(#21)**.

19 Continue along the road carefully into the village along a wall, then drop onto a footpath to your left that provides safety from the traffic before the approach to The Carew Arms.

Don't walk past, go in....before it's not there anymore.

More pubs worth the walk across England and Wales, with a GPX download and OS Maps link for every route, at

pubsworththewalk.co.uk