

The Greyhound Inn Walk

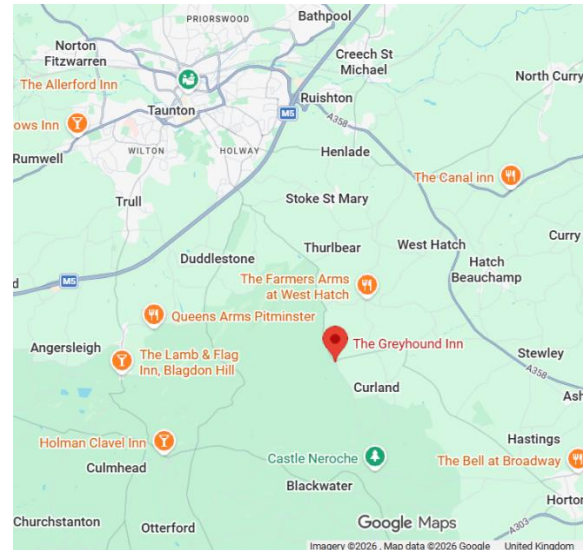
Forest & Farmland Tracks

OVERVIEW

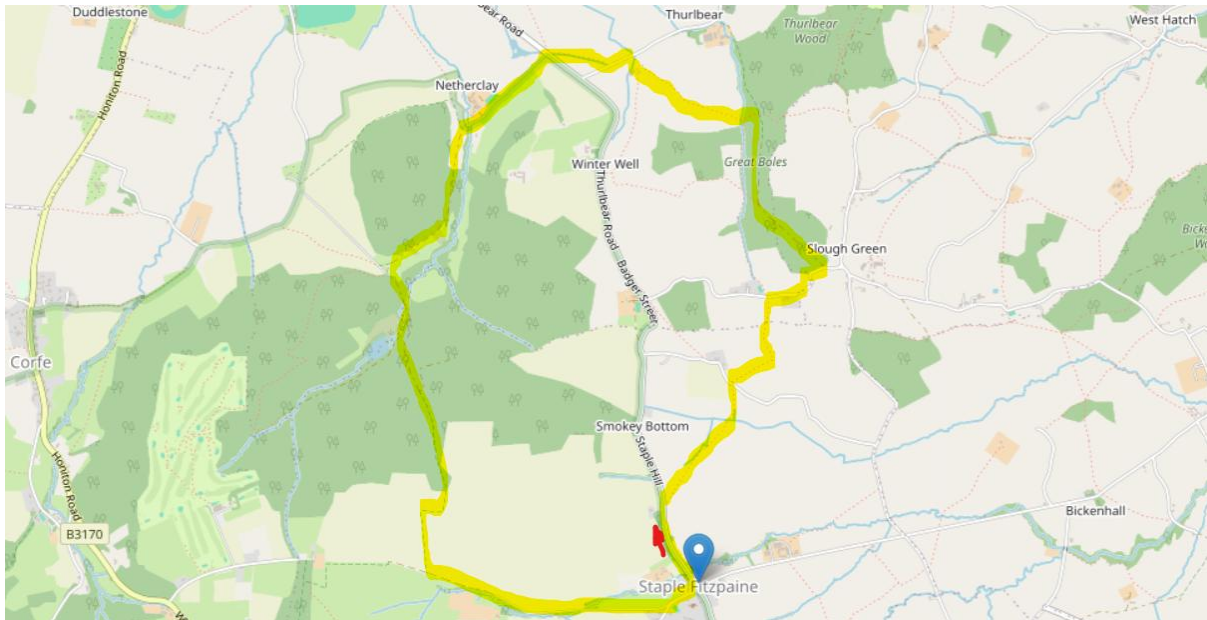
Staple Fitzpaine is a small village & parish in the old borough of Taunton Deane, 5 miles to the south of Taunton. It's best accessed from the A358 Taunton to Ilminster road.

The village sits within the area called the Blackdown Hills, an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, and offers far reaching views across the Vale of Taunton to the Quantocks and Brendon Hills to the North.

This is a gentle walk which starts out from the pub, uphill along a B road for c.400 metres, then takes you through fields, quiet lanes, forest trails and bridleways, and follows part of the Herepath Trail and East Deane Way.



Start/Finish	The Greyhound Inn, Staple Fitzpaine, TA3 5SP. 01823 480227		
Parking	Large pub car park. Plenty of roadside parking near the church too.		
Grid Reference	ST 264 184		
What3Words	///tokens.renting.tungsten		
Distance	5 ½ miles / 9 km	Time	c.2 hours
		Ascent	460 ft / 140 m
Paths/Terrain	Forestry commission gravelled paths, fields and farm tracks, generally quiet lanes, muddy through gates & fields. 3-4 stiles. It's a 'horsey' area, so be prepared to share the bridleways.		
Difficulty	Easy, some steady ascents.		
Public Transport	Bus service (99) between Taunton & Chard stops at The Greyhound. When I checked, it runs every 2 hours Monday to Saturday.		
Toilets	The Greyhound. The Farmers Arms might be open, 1 ½ miles from the Greyhound.		
Other Pubs Nearby	Check if the Farmers Arms , West Hatch is still open. It wasn't when I tried it. (///retained.galleries.optimally). The Queens Arms , Pitminster; The Lamb & Flag , Blagdon Hill; and The Hatch Inn , Hatch Beauchamp may all be better bets.		



DIRECTIONS

1. Start at The Greyhound and set off up Staple Hill on a B road in the direction of Taunton, with the front of the pub on your right. The road narrows up to its crest at around 400 metres, so take care for this opening section.
2. Take the signpost into fields to the right at the top, opposite the entrance to Forest Lodge. You're aiming for the bottom corner, diagonally across the field.
3. The field narrows here. Follow it around an S shape into another field, passing a small pond on your right as you do so. You'll see a footpath gate into a coppice. I saw a number of red deer hinds here.
4. The coppice isn't showing on OS Maps, so must be a new addition. Whoever planted it hasn't catered for the public footpath that takes you through to the other side of the coppice – I had to find a different route, and followed the field to the right as I'm facing the footpath gate ([//binder.underline.spends](#)) to loop around the coppice, with it now on my left. I picked up the path again up through the field on the other side.
5. The route now is through fields gently uphill to reach Streets Lane. [//bookshelf.blame.landmark](#). Cross here and into the field opposite via a gate.
6. Follow the field straight ahead along the stock fence line to the gate at the far end of the field. Turn 90 degrees left to follow the fence up the next field. You'll see a number of newly constructed stiles now, incorporated in the new stock fencing. Sadly you'll likely need to carry a dog over these.
7. The final (old) stile takes you onto a quiet lane (Frost Street [//weaved.attitudes.testy](#)). Turn right to follow it around an S bend to the gated entrance to Thurlbear Forest, signposted Herepath Trail.

8. Take the path straight ahead through the forest. It forks right, again follow this straight ahead.
9. Ignore the first path to the left. Continue ahead to take the second path gently downhill to cross a brook over a single, wooden beam. You'll see the stile into the field on the other side. I imagine this brook dries out in the summer.
10. Make your way diagonally across the field to its lower end, following signs, then through gates into neighbouring fields. You'll see St Thomas's Church, Thurlbear, to your right. Ahead of you, you'll soon see a house on its own with a large garden – you'll be following its low boundary stock fence to a lane.
11. The route wasn't clear here, and the owners of the house hadn't made things clear for walkers. **You actually follow a path with that fence on your right, as if you're on their land.**
12. Arrive on Thurlbear Lane and turn left, following the lane to pick up a Herepath finger marker signpost through a field path, effectively cutting the corner to reach Netherclay Lane. Follow the lane past fields of horses, and on past Netherclay Livery Stables up to field enclosures.
13. You'll see a Herepath finger marker. Follow the route to the left signposted for Wych Lodge Wood. As you leave the area of field enclosures, take the left hand Herepath route (not right hand up Orchard Hill), to skirt around the base of the hill. Eventually bear left at the junction, continuing to follow the Herepath Trail.
14. One lengthy, steepish uphill to go before the run back to the village: Cross a small bridge to start uphill on a stony path, soon reaching a wide forest road. Bear left uphill, and continue, to pick up a Staple Park Wood sign. Birdsong gave the perfect excuse for multiple stops on this section!
15. Eventually a walker's gate takes you into a field. Go straight ahead through the field, and through another gate into the next field, where you immediately bear right. Continue to the far hedge, where you bear left to follow the (same) field boundary all the way down to the end of the field and a farm lane at the bottom.
16. Turn left here, ignoring the Herepath Trail sign now. Follow this farm track past field enclosures as it becomes a tarmac lane that eventually reconnects with the village, running past St Peter's Church, the Almhouses of Staple Fitzpaine and then back to the pub at the crossroads.

NOTES

A Herepath is a military road (literally, an army path) in England, typically dating from the ninth century. This was a time of war between the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of southern England and the Viking invaders from Denmark. The English military preparations, conducted under the leadership of King Alfred of Wessex, included fortified burhs or places of refuge and interconnecting herepaths using either existing routes or new works. As superior or safer roads, sometimes following ridgeway routes, herepaths were intensely used by ordinary travellers and hauliers. Where these roads exist today, local legend often imputes them with magical, romantic or mystical origins in prehistoric times and the name is rather wantonly applied to any old trackway, especially in the region of Wessex.