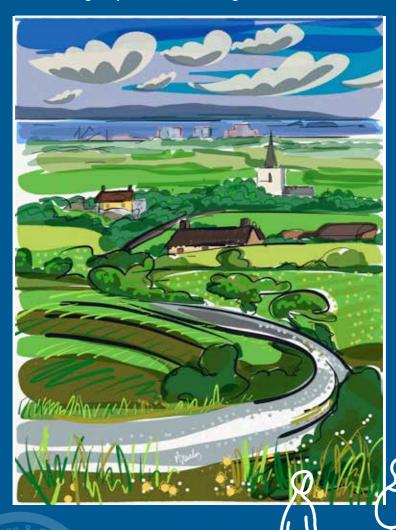
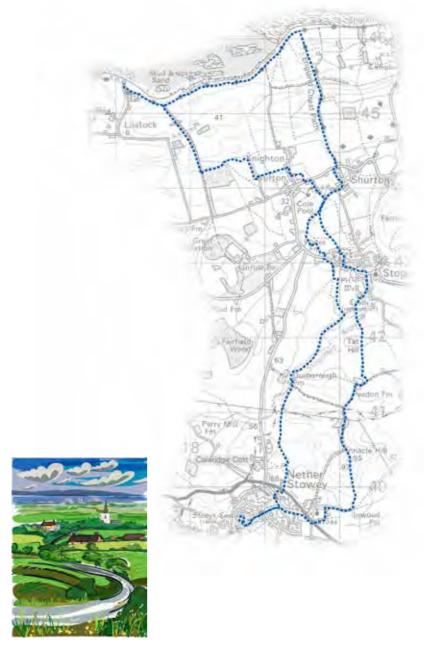
CASTLES & COAST WAY

Circular walk from Nether Stowey Castle to Stogursey Castle and the England Coast Path



13 miles / 21 km **Easy to Moderate**

OVERVIEW MAP



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FOREWORD

The Castles and Coast Way walking trail came about as a result of a request to me from members of Stogursey Parish Council to establish a promoted walking route in the area.

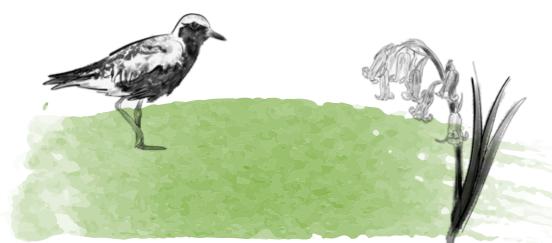
At the time of the request, Hinkley Point C power station was under construction and the impact of this major project on the local community would be felt for a number of years. As I was dealing with mitigation of the closure of footpaths and developing longer term legacy benefits of the project, developing a new walking trail seemed a good idea to try to draw visitors to this previously quiet and seldom visited part of Somerset to appreciate the landscape, ecology and other attractions on offer.

The walk links The Coleridge Way in Nether Stowey and the England Coast Path and can be completed as a day walk or in sections which lend themselves to easier circular walks. The route is well signposted and waymarked with the Castles and Coast Way logo. I hope you enjoy the walk.

Sarah Littler

Project Manager, Rights of Way Somerset County Council









NETHER STOWEY CASTLE

This is a large motte with two baileys, probably built in the middle of the 12th century and abandoned by 1485. Much of the original stonework was removed and re-used on the manorial estate but the earthworks are well preserved. It is possible to walk to the top of the castle mound and to see the overgrown foundations of the former stone tower structure. There is an amazing 360-degree view from the top of the mound across Nether Stowey and northwards towards Stogursey.



NETHER STOWEY MEDIEVAL MARKET TOWN

The name "Stowey" means "paved road" and may refer to a pre-Saxon road that ran east to west across this part of Somerset. The village was likely to have been a farming based settlement and by the early 13th century, Nether Stowey was recorded as a borough and vill (a medieval land unit). In 1304 John de Columbers was granted a Tuesday market and a yearly two-day fair. The medieval economy was largely agricultural with pottery and textiles made nearby. The castle and the west tower of St Mary's Church are the best surviving medieval buildings but the town also contains many listed buildings from the 16th to 18th-centuries, often constructed from the local stone.

WALK DIRECTIONS



From Nether Stowey Castle walk down Castle Hill in an easterly direction and continue in the same direction along Castle Street until you come to The Cross.



Turn right and walk along St Mary Street until you come to the main road (A39). You have two options here; turn right and either continue along the pavement adjacent to the road for approximately 130 metres or go into the recreation ground and walk along the path inside the hedge that runs parallel to the road all the way to the gate emerging back onto the pavement.



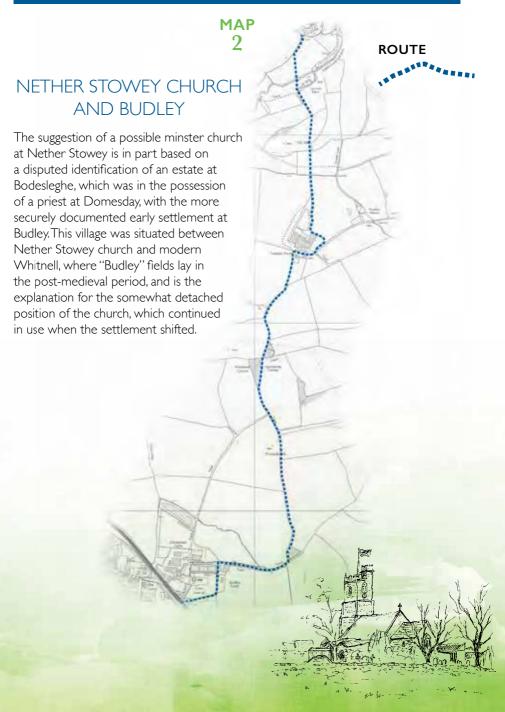
At the signpost cross the road with care and go through the pedestrian gate which is just to the right of the road leading to the church. After a short distance you will join the access track to the farm. Follow the track which then turns left and continue past Budley Farm on your right.

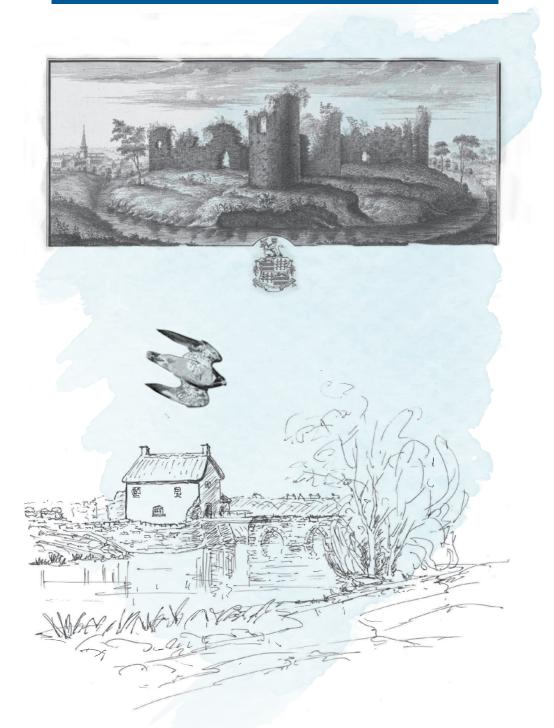


Go through the two-in-one gate and past the farm buildings then turn right onto the track and follow it for approximately 400 metres. Turn left and follow the footpath uphill with the hedge on your left. You will go through a kissing gate which takes you to the top of Pinnacle Hill. Views to the north across the Bristol Channel include Wales straight across and Brean Down and the Mendip Hills to the right. Further to the right in the near distance you can see the mound of Castle Hill in Cannington and, on a clear day, Glastonbury Tor in the distance. Continue downhill through another kissing gate until you reach the surfaced track. Go straight on along the track, ignoring any paths off to the left, until you reach Peadon Farm. Turn right and follow the signposts and waymarks through the farmyard. Just past the farm buildings leave the track and take the enclosed path off to the left. At the end of the path go through a kissing gate, turn left and follow the field edge path until you come to two kissing gates. Once through the gates head uphill and go through a two-in-one gate then walk up to the top of Tet Hill. Views here are more open and if you turn to your left you will see Minehead and other coastal Somerset towns and villages and further to the left are the Quantock Hills with Exmoor in the distance.



Walk down the hill heading for the kissing gate to the right of the track. Go through the gate into the field and follow the field edge path with the hedge on your left and through another kissing gate. Cross the farm track and walk through some rough ground until you come to a footbridge, through two kissing gates and walk across the field. At the waymark post turn right and follow the footpath (with the hedge on your left) until you reach another kissing gate. Go through the gate and turn right. You will now see the moat and ruin of Stogursey Castle.





STOGURSEY CASTLE & MILL

Stogursey Castle & Mill are located at the southern end of the village. The castle is a fine example of a romantic ruined castle. The Landmark Trust owns the castle and its earthworks. The detailed history is scant and an exact date for it's foundation has yet to be determined. It was linked to the main manor in Stogursey held by William de Falaise after 1066 and the estate passed to the de Courcy family until 1194. It was the de Courcys who gave their name to the medieval town. In the early 13th century there were troubled times and the castle was held for King John who visited Stogursey in 1210. Orders to destroy the castle in 1215 and 1228 do not appear to have been followed and the castle was refortified on the orders of Henry III in 1233.

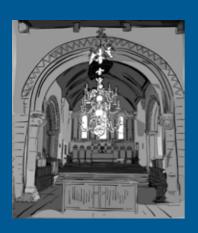
A thatched building stands on the remains of the gatehouse towers next to a medieval stone bridge now crossed with a modern timber drawbridge.

Next to the castle is the old Town Mill; the current building dating from the 18th century with an overshot wheel and largely 19th century machinery surviving in the building. The mill is on a medieval site and Stogursey had a watermill on the manor in 1086. The water works and raised footpath and banks around the mill and the castle are linked with water management around the castle moat.

A chapel is mentioned at the castle in a document of 1204. A deep moat encircles a raised area that was the site of the main castle buildings, few of which survive. The ruined curtain wall is clearly visible and dates from the 13th century. In 1457 the castle was a major Lancastrian power base but was besieged and burnt down and only rebuilt to function as an administrative centre for the manorial families of the Percys and the Egmonts.



Follow the path past the castle and take the path off to the left (do not go down the track). Go through a gate and follow this path until you join the pavement. Continue up Castle Street to Stogursey village centre. You can turn right and go down Church Street to visit the Priory Church of St Andrew.





STOGURSEY CHURCH & PRIORY

The church of St Andrew in Stogursey is an impressive building containing many fine architectural details that mark its Norman origins. After the Norman conquest, Stogursey manor was held by William de Falaise and between 1100 and 1107 he gave the church to the Abbey of Lonlay in Normandy. For more than 300 years, the church was a Benedictine Priory, a cell of Lonlay and mother church of a further cell, Black Abbey at Ards in Co. Down.

The original church was cruciform in shape and dates from c1100. In 1414, the priory was suppressed with other "alien priories" and the lands and revenues taken back by the crown. In 1440, the crown used the funds to help to set up the royal foundation of Eton College. An obvious landmark feature is the church spire probably added in the early 14th century but since rebuilt. The nave was rebuilt c1500 but retained its Norman west doorway. Much of the detail of the stonework was renewed in the Victorian period.

The plan of the church reflects its monastic origins with a short one-bay chancel and three staggered apses similar to the layout of Muchelney Abbey. Internally the crossing is a rare survival, with four broad arches on stone columns. Stone carvings of early Norman date adorn the capitals, depicting lions, winged creatures, and a green man. The arches of the arcades have late Norman carvings of chevron decoration dating from c.1180-85, like work at Glastonbury Abbey and Wells Cathedral. The south aisle became the chapel of the Verney family from the middle of the 14th century and several generations of the owners of the Fairfield Estate are buried here.





STOGURSEY MEDIEVAL TOWN & MARKET PLACE

The town of Stogursey lies towards the south-west of its parish between the low-lying coast and river areas and the Quantock uplands. While the early history of settlement at Stogursey itself is unclear, there is evidence of both prehistoric (especially later prehistoric) and Roman activity in the surrounding area. St Andrew's Well at Stogursey may be an ancient holy well, but there is no sign that it would have been more than an isolated sacred site before the Saxon period.

The manor of Stoke was held by Beorhtsige before the Conquest. It was then granted to the Norman, William de Falaise, and passed down through his daughter's line. She married into the de Courcy family and it is from this family that the second element of the name Stogursey comes. The foundation of the castle, probably in the late 11th century, and of the priory, very early in the 12th century, occurred before the establishment of the medieval borough by some years.

The first reference to a borough is in 1225 and the settlement appears to have been remodelled around the central market place. An annual fair at the end of November and a Saturday market were first recorded in 1301 and in the same year, there were 60 burgages (rented properties) in the town. By 1340, its taxable wealth was twice that of Nether Stowey's. The borough expanded to the north, and there were more than 80 burgages in 1614.

After the dissolution of the priory, the status of Stogursey was much reduced, and it's urban role diminished through the post-medieval period being an agricultural settlement with some cloth making and tanning. The market lost its importance although it continued to be recorded until the early 18th century and two annual fairs (May and September) continued until the mid-19th century. Collinson's History of Somerset in 1791 described a place with no market and consisting of but one long street.

WALK DIRECTIONS



Turn left and continue straight on through the centre of the village. Cross the road with care so you are on the north side of High Street.







Continue walking along on the pavement until you come to Vicarage Road. Turn right and follow the road, which becomes Town Close, until you come to the footpath which leaves the road between numbers 37 and 39 Town Close. Take the path off to the right and go through the kissing gate. Follow the path then go over a stile, continue along the footpath with the hedge on your right and go over another stile and kissing gate. Walk in the same direction then through another kissing gate and follow the path round to the right and go through a field gate. Keep straight on through another kissing gate and onto a track which leads to the road. Turn left and follow the road through the hamlet of Shurton, using the pavement where provided, until you come to a T-junction with another road.



Turn right and cross the road with care, continue along the road for a short distance until you reach Benhole Cottage where you turn left into the footpath. Head north on the track and then leave the path to go up the steps on your right (do not continue along the lane). Turn left and follow the footpath. Cross the footbridge and continue north all the way along Benhole Lane until you reach the Coast. Hinkley Point C is on your right.

ARCHAEOLOGY AT HINKLEY POINT

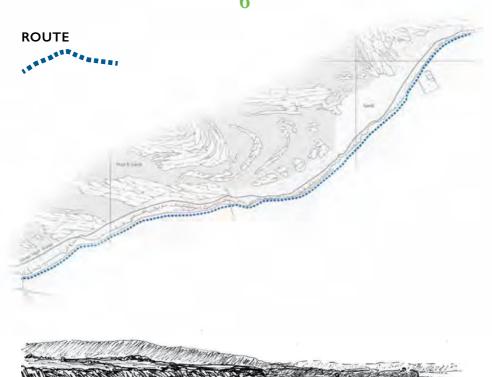
The construction of Hinkley Point C has resulted in an extensive programme of archaeological investigation and research into the whole development site. Archaeological research in advance of the construction programme has revealed evidence of settlement and land use dating back over 5000 years. Numerous sites have been investigated and recorded including Bronze Age field boundaries, Iron Age and Roman farmsteads through to the standing remains of 19th century farm buildings. The discovery of a large Dark Age cemetery dating from the 6th century AD on the edge of the development area was an unexpected and unusual find. More than 330 burials were investigated, and detailed scientific analysis of the remains has been undertaken.

This footpath runs in a south to north direction from Shurton to the coast and is likely to be an early medieval trackway.



Castles & Coast Way MAP ROUTE

MAP 6





SHURTON BARS

The name Shurton Bars is given to this part of the West Somerset coast, which has one of the largest tidal ranges in Britain. There are some fine views across the Bristol Channel to Wales with the islands of Steep Holm and Flat Holm silhouetted against the skyline. The coast shows the edges of the Jurassic limestone outcrops exposed at low tide. The limestone along the coast was quarried for building stone and for the production of lime mortar. Five kilns are recorded in this area in the 19th century and there was a guay here in the 18th century for the import of coal. The most famous reference to Shurton Bars occurs in Samuel Taylor Coleridge's love poem "Lines written at Shurton Bars" in 1795. During 1795, Coleridge met and became engaged to Sara Fricker. During the engagement, he wrote a few poems dedicated to her.

Coleridge begins his poem by incorporating a quote from William Wordsworth, a poet with whom he would later become close friends:

Lines written at Shurton Bars
Nor travels my meandering eye
The starry wilderness on high;
Nor now with curious sight
I mark the glow-worm, as I pass,
Move with "green radiance" through the grass,
An emerald of light.

The poem continues with words that express Coleridge's closeness to Fricker and are an attempt to comfort her before their wedding.

And there in black soul-jaundic'd fit A sad gloom-pamper'd Man to sit, And listen to the roar:
When mountain surges bellowing deep With an uncouth monster-leap Plung'd foaming on the shore.

WALK DIRECTIONS



Turn left and follow the England Coast Path. After approximately 750 metres you will come to an area known as Shurton Bars.



Continue along the coast for another mile (1.6 km) then go through a kissing gate.

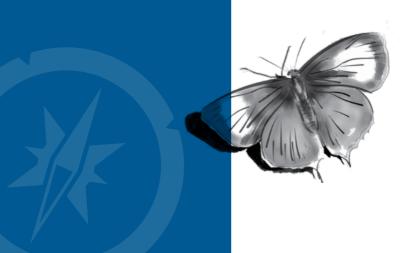


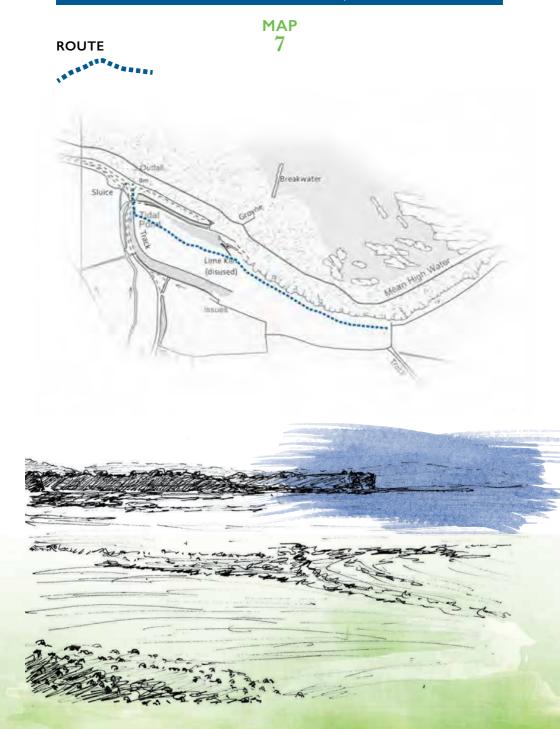
At this point you can deviate from the route to visit Lilstock Harbour by following the Coast Path for another 600 metres. To return to the main route retrace your steps and turn right at the signpost.

LILSTOCK HARBOUR

This area has the remains of a harbour that developed in the middle of the 19th century. The land is part of the Fairfield Estate and around the year 1820 Sir John Acland built a boat house on the beach near the stream and, as a result of this cross channel trade built up. Coal was brought from Wales for domestic use on the Acland estate and to fire the large limekiln that can still be seen on the edge of the cliff.

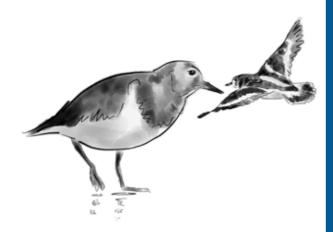
Pit props were the main export along with lime. A harbour was built around the stream where it ran almost parallel to the beach. By 1848 there were resident coastguards, and by 1855 a customs officer. About 1860 a stone pier was built from the north side of the harbour wall, with a wooden awning and a butler's pantry at the end. By 1866 warehouses were standing beneath the cliff beside the southern harbour wall. The harbour was apparently abandoned, and the pier subsequently destroyed after the First World War. There was also an inn called the Limpet Shell. Today much is overgrown but the remains of the stone walls of the harbour are visible and at low tide the remains of the pier foundations can be seen running out into the sea.







The path you are now on is an old trackway running from the coast then skirting the western side of Honibere Wood to the area around Fairfield House. This track, known by some as the Coach Road, is likely to follow an early route linking Fairfield House with the old port at Lilstock. It is a good example of the old footpath tracks that linked the inland farms and estate centres with the coast. The name Honibere can be traced back to the medieval period and the place name is recorded in Lilstock parish in the early 13th century.



WALK DIRECTIONS



Turn left and, following the signs and waymarks, head for the two-in- one gate and continue straight on following the track back inland.



Continue south on this track until you see signs advising you to turn left and walk along the northern edge of Honibere Wood. At the end of this field go through a two-in-one gate and follow the path with the hedge on your left until you see a gate and steps which lead onto Culver Street Lane. Go through the gate onto the lane, turn left, then go through another kissing gate, turn right and follow the footpath with the hedge on your right. Continue straight on this path until you reach Knighton Lane. Cross the lane and go through another kissing gate. Turn right and follow the field edge path with the hedge on your right. Go through another kissing gate and follow the field edge path until you come to another kissing gate. Go through the gate which brings you to the Shurton/Burton road.



Cross the road with care and go straight into the access road to the Fisheries. Continue along the access track and go through the two-in-one gate then a kissing gate, then straight on until you cross the culvert. Turn right and walk along the footpath until you come to a field gate. Veer right, following signs, and continue along the field edge path (with the hedge on your right) until you come to the next boundary. Go through two gates and continue in the same direction until you come to the corner of the field. Turn left and walk along the field edge path until you come to a kissing gate on your right. Once through the gate turn left and follow the path around the edge of the recreation ground then go through a kissing gate to emerge onto the verge by the road. Turn left, cross the access road to the Victory Hall and continue along the pavement for a 100 metres then cross the road with care to join the footpath which runs down the lane along the west side of Stogursey Primary School.

STOGURSEY SCHOOL

An impressive and unusual Gothic primary school built by Sir Peregrine Fuller-Palmer Acland of Fairfield in thanks for the recovery of his last surviving child. It was designed by John Norton in 1869. It is built of local red sandstone and Bath Stone dressing with gables, chimneys, a spired tower and a fleche. The Teacher's House is attached to the main school building. It is a most exceptional building and unexpected in a small Somerset village.







Continue down School Lane until you reach a kissing gate. Once through the gate, turn left and follow the field edge path with the hedge on your left until you reach another kissing gate. Go through this gate and continue with the hedge on your left until you reach the next kissing gate. Go through this gate, turn right and follow the path for approximately 115 metres, cross the track then go through another kissing gate. Continue straight on through the next two fields with the hedge on your right. Once through the next kissing gate you will have the copse on your left for about 50 metres then go through another kissing gate and cross the sleeper bridge. Continue along the field edge path with the stream on your left and go through another kissing gate where you will come to a track. Turn left and after 10 metres turn right through another kissing gate and go straight on with the stream now on your right. Once through the next kissing gate you cross the track and after the next kissing gate go straight ahead up the hill to the next kissing gate. From here there are lovely views across to Nether Stowey and to the Quantock Hills. Walk down the hill to another two kissing gates and continue in the same southerly direction across the field heading for the corner of the hedge and continue in a generally southerly direction across the field to another gate. Once through the gate turn right and follow the field edge path with the hedge on your right. Keep to the path with the hedge on your right until you go through another kissing gate after which you will reach the main A39 road.







Cross the road with care, turn right and walk along the verge for approximately 50 metres then turn left and take the path up the hill which leads you into the village hall car park. Continue straight on past the village hall until you reach Lime Street. Turn left and walk along Lime Street where after a short distance you will see Coleridge Cottage on your right.



You are now walking on the same route as The Coleridge Way. At The Cross turn right into Castle Street and retrace your steps back to the castle.

COLERIDGE COTTAGE

Coleridge Cottage is a modest town house; an early 19th century rebuild of the cottage that was occupied by the Coleridge family. Samuel Taylor Coleridge (1772-1834) was one of the great Romantic poets. He and his wife Sara moved to the cottage in Lime Street in 1796 and while living there began his literary partnership with William Wordsworth, producing a joint volume, Lyrical Ballads, in 1798. He was only resident in the cottage for three years but produced some of his best work here. The building is now owned and managed by the National Trust and is open throughout the year.

Visitors should check the National Trust website for further information. www.nationaltrust.org.uk/coleridge-cottage





THE NATURAL HISTORY OF THE AREA

On the route from Nether Stowey to Stogursey, as you walk by rivers, ditches, lakes or ponds, you might spot a kingfisher - a neon flash of this bird as it darts by is a sight to remember. Barbastelle bats are also known in the area. This mediumsized bat, with a distinctive pugshaped nose, feeds on small moths, flies and beetles, which it forages for using echolocation calls made up of short, hard smacking noises, in fast and then slower pulses.

Grey plover have been recorded just south-east of the coast. A winter migrant to the UK, it can be seen from July to April. The Yellow-horned poppy is a striking coastal plant seen from June to September. Be careful about the yellow sap they produce as it is poisonous. The Lesser Spotted Woodpecker is now a rare breeding bird in Somerset. The woodpecker is reliant on good quality broadleaved woodland. However, the area's tussocky grassland provides the perfect habitat for the nocturnal Barn Owl to go in search of its small mammal prey. During the summer months, with mouths to feed, this beautiful white and golden owl can be seen hunting at dusk.

As you walk along the coast which is within the Severn Estuary Special Protection Area, the Bridgwater Bay Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and National Nature Reserve (NNR) you are in an internationally important feeding and roosting site for many waterfowl and wading birds. You may see some on Lilstock beach. Common ringed plover and turnstone are recorded

regularly in the area. The ringed plover nests directly on the beach and can be spotted watching for insect prey then suddenly darting out to catch them. A mottled brown, black and white bird, the turnstone can be seen searching for invertebrate prey under stones.

The Blue Anchor to Lilstock Coast SSSI is an outstanding series of sections through the Lover Lias, spanning the Hettangian and Lover Pliensbachian Stages. The sequence and the good Rhaetian succession beneath, are repeatedly affected by faulting, making many sections available in comparison to the same interval on the Glamorgan and Dorset coasts. In a British context. the Watchet coast is the thickest succession for this interval. This makes it of international significance, since Britain's Lias sequences are arguably the best in north west Europe. In addition, it has been proposed that this coast be accepted as the standard for the base of the Hettangian Stage, and thus by definition the lurassic period as a

whole. It is therefore

an internationally

important

locality.

stratigraphic



Turning inland as you walk down the track away from the coast you may see a brown hare, known for its fast running, reaching speeds of 45mph when evading predators. It prefers a mosaic

of farmland and woodland habitats. Pyramidal orchids have also been recorded in the area, recognised by their bright pink flowers. Brown hairstreak butterflies are other possible sightings. Our largest hairstreak butterfly, it stays loyal to hedgerows and woodland edge. It is a local species that lives in self-contained colonies breeding in the same area year after year. It can also prove elusive, since it spends much of its time resting and basking high up in tall shrubs and trees.

Honibere wood, an ancient semi-natural woodland, plays host to both bluebells and the greater butterfly orchid. The latter is a green tinged white flower known to attract moths with its strong scent at night. Peregrine falcons have also been known to frequent the wood. The world's fastest creature, it can dive in stoops of up to 200mph. Here it hunts across the coastal edges in search of a wide variety of prey, with the sheer rocky cliffs and small ledges in the areas providing the perfect nest site.

Near Bum Brook there may be blue water-speedwell growing on the banks showing its luscious green leaves and dainty blue or purple flowers. There have also been recordings of rare grey long-eared bats, which may be using the brook as a commuting route. These bats have long folded ears and are very similar to the brown long-eared bat, only discerned by their paler belly.

As you approach Stogursey you may catch sight of a Jersey tiger moth butterfly in the summer with their distinctive black, white and orange wings. Sparrowhawks have been noted nearby, recognisable by their barred chests and undercarriage.

Along Stogursey Brook there have been numerous recordings of otters, seen throughout Somerset owing to the high-quality wetland habitats. Skylarks have also been seen in the area. Sadly declining, the red listed farmland bird can be heard singing across the grasslands throughout the spring and summer, its song filling the air with a cascade of liquid notes. The unusual looking Lesser Horseshoe Bat is one of two species having a nose leaf in the shape of a horseshoe. Smaller than its cousin, the Greater Horseshoe Bat, the Lesser Horseshoe is quick and agile while hunting, often flying within five metres of the ground while avoiding contact with bushes and shrubs. They eat small insects, most of which are gleaned from stones and branches, with their favourite types of prey being

flies, moths, and spiders.



GENERAL INFORMATION

The route mostly follows public rights of way and crosses a wide variety of terrain and farmland. Please remain on the public footpaths at all times and do not deviate onto private land. There is no access to any of the woodlands in the vicinity of the walk.

The trail is well signposted and waymarked with the Castles & Coast Way logo. In the summer the route is likely to be dry and easy to walk however during winter there may be one or two boggy stretches and there are a couple of slight inclines and descents. It is advisable to carry an Ordnance Survey Map Explorer 140 Quantock Hills and Exmoor which shows the area in more detail.

Be a green visitor:-

- · Do not disturb any livestock and leave all gates as you find them
- · Do not disturb wild animals, birds or flowers
- Keep dogs under close control and take home dog waste
- Take your litter home and recycle it if possible
- Support local shops and other local services

For information on accommodation and other services visit www.visitsomerset.co.uk/plan-your-visit For information on rights of way and to report any issues on the walk visit www.somerset/rightsofway

FACILITIES & AMFNITIFS

Nether Stowey













Stogursey











Lilstock







DISCLAIMER

The trail has been signposted in one direction only and that is following the route directions provided in this booklet. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of the details given in this publication, Somerset County Council cannot accept responsibilty for any errors or omissions, nor for any actions taken, or not taken as a result of the information presented.

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