



# Beckington

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A 4.5 mile walk between two Somerset border villages. Many stiles, possible muddy paths. *Click map to enlarge.* Red dots outward. Blue return.

Walk to main road and uphill to point **1**, left into Mill Lane for 200yds

**2:** Veer left up to a farm gate, walk along a hillside field towards a stile that leads into a short fenced path with further stile at end

**3:** Ignore “Beckington Loop” sign but walk forward. To next stile and enter a wooded area. More stiles leading to...

**4:** Cross this lane, walking alongside some farm buildings. Continue walking straight passing a pill box on your right

**5:** Cross River Frome on bridge. Walk diagonally to stile

**6:** Head right up Lullington Lane following this until..

**7:** Walk past grand driveway to Gloucester Lodge on left.

**8:** follow Lullington Lane round to church here. Retrace (blue) steps until..

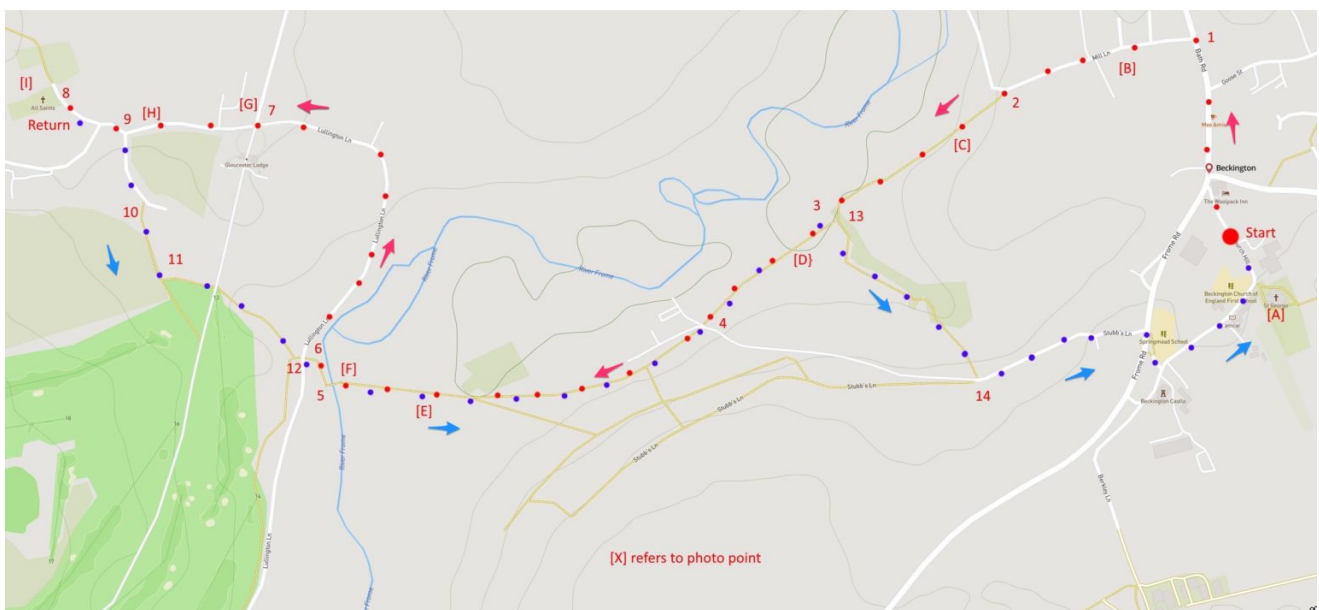
**9:** Head down cul-de-sac slope at red phone box.

**10:** At lane bottom turn through ‘no fouling’ gate.

**11:** Walk past ‘please keep to the footpaths’ sign and shortly walk forward beyond a solitary post with two footpath arrows. Drop down left side to stile and lane.

**12:** Retrace steps until 13 and follow this path uphill until...

**14:** the (Stubbs) lane that leads down into Beckington



The pictures below are in the order things were seen on this walk. Clicking on any one will enlarge it (and the slideshow)



{B}



{C}



OK – this is not a “wiltshirewalk”. But its close enough to the border to be “good walk for Wiltshire folk”. Beckington to Lullington and back again, with the substantial Orchardleigh estate in between.

### Beckington

This was a medieval wool town, with fulling mills on the River Frome (some of which were burned down by rioting workers in 1766). Small cottages on Church Street and Goose Street reflect the spinning and weaving part of the industry. The place is “uncommonly rich in worthwhile stone houses” says Pevsner. While more substantial properties on Frome Road would be for the bosses. E.g. Beckington House and Beckington Abbey as you walk up to Mill Lane. How did towns like this cope after the 19th century when the west country wool trade was collapsing? There are no obvious clues to how it adjusted.

On more cerebral history – the Shakespeare-influencing Elizabethan poet, Samuel Daniel, lived here and is buried (memorial also) at the church. Of which Pevsner declares: “the most ambitious Norman tower of any Somerset parish church”

### Orchardleigh estate

The pill box you pass on this walk seems to be part of the wartime “[stop line](#)” that ran from south of Bath to Salisbury and then the coast. After those paths you head up Lullington Lane to a road crossing (map 7, photo [G]) on the left part of which you will see the flamboyant Gloucester Lodge – a turreted piece spanning an apparent driveway (£400-600 per night, including outdoor hot tub). It is dated 1434 but, don't be fooled, it was built in 1816. Where this driveway leads is to the substantial [Orchardleigh Castle and estate](#). If you could wander in (which isn't exactly encouraged) you would find a lake, a [moted church](#), an 18-hole golf course and a private air strip. Yes, it's a weddings venue! The publicity says that only two families have dwelt on the estate since Norman times (excluding the current owner who purchased and revived it around 2002). The Champney family owned it first but by the 19<sup>th</sup> century they were [overwhelmed with debts](#) and so sold up to William Duckworth (descendants of which own the publishing company). In 1856 the original medieval castle was replaced by a Victorian ‘stately home’ – perhaps another building not the age it would prefer to be.

### Lullington

This little village is also not quite what it seems. The Pump and Corner cottages are picture book ancient – but actually they were built in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Yet its an attractive settlement and boasts a [fine Norman church](#) – “perhaps the most enjoyable Norman village church in Somerset” says Pevsner. While Simon Jenkins declares that the Norman font is “one of the finest in Somerset”. Yes, look at the font – one of the carved rings shows a fascinating circle of animals with foliage coming out of their mouths. But the real treasure is the Norman north door (walk round the outside to find it) with its richly decorated carving.

### Beckington return

As you cross from Stubbs Lane onto the Frome road, notice across to your right the strangely coloured Beckington Castle. It was built in the 17<sup>th</sup> century by one of the ubiquitous Wiltshire Long family – themselves made rich by the wool trade. Although it may have been superimposed on an earlier medieval building. It didn't pick up the “castle” label until 1839. During its long life on this spot it has been variously a school, a hotel, an antiques showroom and a private house. A grey woman was once rumoured to haunt this building – thought to be an abbess.

You may also notice next to it Wool Hall ([15 Castle Corner](#)). !6<sup>th</sup> century but much altered and restored in 19<sup>th</sup>. In the 1980s it was converted into a recording studio by the band ‘Tears for Fears’ (one catchy hit).

Later it become fully commercial and attracted the likes of The Smiths ('*Strangeways, here we come*' recorded at this studio). Although the most long running customer was Van Morrison, who bought the place (but sold it in 2002 for £1m) Since then its been a private home.

Finally, you might appreciate refreshment at The [Woolpack](#) – 16<sup>th</sup> century coaching inn rebuilt in the 18<sup>th</sup>. Plenty of room – although a few suspicious stares from locals taking afternoon beers.

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