



Edington

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A 4.5 mile sausage walk between Edington and Coulston. One stile and some steep (but clear) wood paths half way. Edington church has a generous parking area adjacent. Start by walking due west passed the church. Shortly after turning the corner...

- 1: ..cross the road and walk along 'The Weir'
- 2: Veer left and shortly the road gives way to a footpath that continues west. Cross Tinhead Road and veer slightly left (downhill) to pick up Baynton Way.
- 3: Shortly there is a Y-junction at a white house. Baynton Way continues on the right fork. Eventually it becomes a footpath across a number of gate-access fields until...
- 4: ..head left on meeting the road into Coulston
- 5: At this point take the right fork signposted "the church"
- 6: By a church noticeboard, take the footpath on the right towards that church. A gate on the path alongside leads to a footpath along the edge of the deer park.
- 7: It becomes a lane. Follow it down to the gates at..
- 8: ..cross the road and head up a steep incline, keeping a '1 o'clock' line of walking. It becomes wooded half way and very steep (if you don't fancy the field route, then take the lane marked as blue dots on the map – although reaching this via the cross-park footpath at 7 may be safer than the main road)
- 9: At the summit veer right towards a stile. Walk up the left side of the field beyond it
- 10: Turn right onto Salisbury Hollow Byway and follow it until..
- 11: ..joining the main road; take the footpath home just beyond the Three Daggers pub. This repeats the very first part of the walk back to the church

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



[A]



[B]



Your reward for taking this walk resides in treading ground of great historical significance. The fame of Edington rests not so much on its village identity as in it being a particular piece of land: a place where very important historical events happened (namely, a certain battle). The village today – that which later emerged at this site – is not that interesting (excepting its church). Perhaps because it has no obvious centre, which is a little disconcerting in a Wiltshire village. Even the church – prominent enough – is set apart from any housing. What housing there is lies roughly distributed around the old Bath to Salisbury turnpike (B3098), or scattered along The Weir lane. Edington's railway station, also disconnectedly north of the settlement, was closed in 1952. To the south, the chalk scarp of Salisbury plain reaches over 700ft at Tinhead Hill (included in this walk and the site of a prehistoric long barrow). Tinhead was once a village separate to Edington but now exists only as set of street and landscape names.

The Battle

Most of us know little of the period between the exit of the Romans (say, 500AD) and the Norman conquest. Although what we may know is that the land now called 'England' had been ravaged and occupied by Scandinavian invaders. One event that stopped this territory becoming 'Daneland', rather than 'England', was the Battle of Edington (or *Ethandun*). That battle took place in the present area: where King Alfred defeated the Danes under Guthram in 878. (Find some visual context-building [here](#) if you are want more, while Melvyn Bragg and friends offer a good discussion of the battle and its impact [here](#).)

Historians declare that the significance of the battle outcome was in how it empowered Alfred to extend his existing territory of Wessex to create a unified area that was a large part of what we now call 'England'. But of special importance was his imagination in doing this. It involved converting his Danish enemy to Christianity, creating something approximating a standing army, forming a network of defensive towns (e.g. [Cricklade](#)), and vigorously promoting literacy among his citizens. A truly 'Great' chap.

Later history

Edington's early medieval identity was focussed on [Edington Priory](#), founded in the C14 as a monastery of the Brothers of Penitence or Bonshommes. There were no 'monks' – but a rector and 'brethren'. Sited behind the church, there is little left of this today as most was destroyed by 1539. Post dissolution, the land was granted to Sir Thomas Seymour (brother of Jane and fourth husband of Katherine Parr) – although he was later executed and the property reverted to the Crown and thence to William Paulet (Edington's second pub is the Paulet Arms).

Later in this period, the main business of Edington was some arable and much sheep farming. As with other Wiltshire villages, the processing of wool was a significant source of income – with several mills existing on the minor waterways around this area.

The Church

The rather austere-looking church of [St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints](#) [A] should be visited (or a drone visit is possible [here](#) I suppose). Pevsner declares that this late C14 church is "highly important". Perhaps that is because it illustrates in a single building the transition from the 'decorated' style of English church design to the 'perpendicular' style. It is strikingly all of the same period (except the rather forceful pink/white plaster of the ceiling, which is C17). Take in the particularly flamboyant canopied monument commemorating local landowner Sir Edward Lewis (1665), with its five kneeling children set between two

standing angels. Not to mention a third angel, strangely hovering above the resting couple but obviously up to much good [B].

The church has a set of bells which you can see being rung in [this video](#). Few people seem to know of the [Edington Festival](#). This is a once-a-year (August) jewel of church music, largely sung by choirs from English cathedrals and Oxford or Cambridge colleges. If you like your singing located in the theatre of the [liturgy](#), then this should not be missed.

The Walk

The walk turns round on the tiny settlement (hamlet? village?) of Coulston. No shop, no pub, but 60 or so houses and [the church of St Thomas Beckett](#) which Pevsner observes is “battered in a picturesque way”. A flat grave at the east end of the graveyard is that of Francis Savill Kent (aged 4) knife-murdered (1860) by his sister (aged 16). Much debated at the time: the sister’s confession led to 20 years in prison (after which she changed her name and lived to be 100). However the case is controversial: it involves evidence prompted by a sacramental confession, while [some authors](#) suggest she was covering for her brother. Both children had resented their father’s re-marriage – and the son that had issued from that.

You might look inside the church for a moment of spiritual inspiration, in preparation for tackling the steep slope of Tinhead Hill [H]. But before you get to the foot of that climb, pass through Coulston deer park with its sizeable herd. All this belongs to the resident family of [Baynton manor](#) – a distinguished C18 house with three reception rooms, a panelled hall, long gallery, study, six principal bedrooms, six secondary bedrooms, and eight bathrooms and 16 acres of garden (just where does such private wealth come from, one wonders).

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