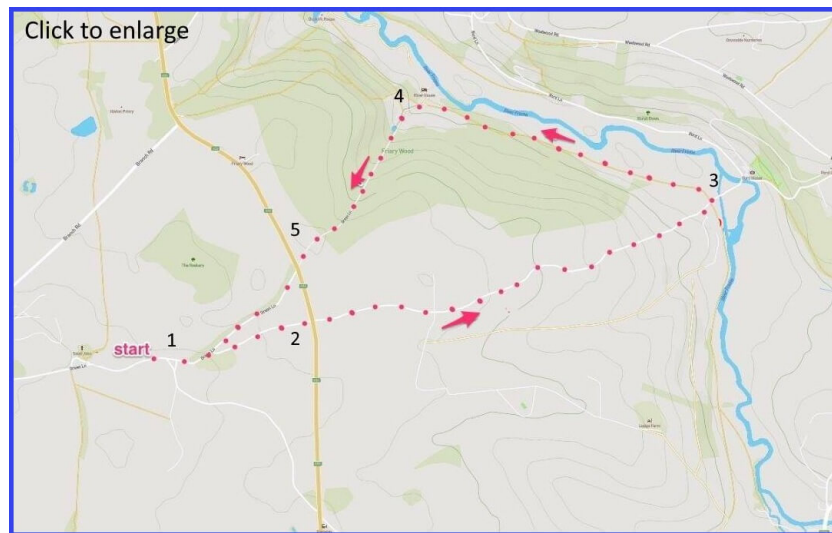




Hiinton

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BA2 7TJ A pleasant 4-mile walk through lanes, across field, and through woods. But with something of a slope in towards end. [Click map to enlarge](#). Water is blue, wooded green, contour lines show slopes. [Click here](#) for arial view. [Click here](#) to download/print PDF



(Routes suggested from each map point + metres to next point)

Start somewhere on Green Lane and walk away from the village. Dont take first right fork (with sign pointer).

- 1:** Take the second by a dry stone wall and follow track to (busy) A36. 220m
- 2:** Cross and follow forward the lane immediately opposite. 1.6km
- 3:** Pause at River bridge and admire the Manor. Turn back and in a few yards find footpath entrance to fields on your right (pic [F](#)). Walk across left side of this field. 1km
- 4:** Exit at farm and take left turn footpath that leads up through Friary Wood (pic [H](#)) finally getting back to A36 on Green Lane. 500m
- 5:** Cross A36 once more and follow lane back to start. 725m

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



[\[B\]](#)



[\[C\]](#)

Observations

Depending where you start on Green Lane you may see [St Johns Church](#) to your right. Norman origin, but was in place roughly as it is now in the 12th century – when it was linked with the church at Norton st Philip. Currently, it forms part of a [three church parish](#) – Limpley Stoke, Freshford and Hinton.

Hinton priory

Although the walk is named here after Hinton Charterhouse, the recommended start is on the edge of the village and takes you away from it. But the route runs through the heart of the land that does give the village its name. That is, the land of Hinton Priory. You are closest when you walk through Friary Wood around the middle of the route and cross the main road (with the old priory on land to your right).

Hinton was only the second Carthusian Priory to be established in England (1227) – the first being at Witham, founded by Henry II in 1172 as part of the penalty imposed by the Pope for his murder of Thomas a Becket. The circumstances of the Hinton priory's origins were more in private hands. It was founded by the widowed but wealthy Ela Countess of Salisbury (1187-1261) who declared *"to the Carthusian order all my manor of Hinton, with the advowson of the church and the park and all its other appurtenances without anything reserved to me or my heirs"*. The Carthusian order demanded a particularly private, strict, and contemplative community: the land here may have fitted well with social and cultural seclusion. The monks moved here from Gloucestershire, which wasn't working for them. The contained life does depend on a fertile setting. Its evident here.

The monks did build (so it is said) the oldest (continuous) pub in Britain ([George Inn](#) at Norton St Philip) as an outlet for their produce. However, inevitably, the priory was 'dissolved' in 1539 (dissolution, second round). So there is not much left by way of records. Although two weavers reported seeing a certain Brother Ballard haunting the place subsequently: Ballard was a monk who was reluctant to concede to the King (his Prior successfully covered for him, reporting *"he had been many times a lunatick"*). Shakespeare in Henry VIII Act I mentions a 'monk of Henton'. This was not Ballard, it was more likely a certain Father Hopkyns – one who claimed powers of prophecy. Some of his predictions were not appreciated by Henry VIII – in particular the prophecy that the Duke of Buckingham (Hopkyns was his confessor) would become King (wrong, Buckingham was executed instead).

And Iford manor

The other major feature of the walk is the village of Iford and its [Iford Manor](#) (the Wiltshire county boundary runs through it). It was owned at one time or another by a selection of the great local families: the Methuens, the Ashes, the Hortons, the Yerburies. It is definitely worth visiting (if time allows – and if its one of its opening days). The house is privately occupied but its most famous feature is its Italianate [gardens](#), designed by Arts and Crafts enthusiast [Harold Peto](#) between 1899 and 1933. Perhaps some may find the detail of Italian reference (in buildings and statues as well as the plants) a little overwhelming. The house has been used to host successful opera and jazz events in the gardens. But these have now [re-sited at Bradford-on-Avon](#).

In front of the manor and on the river bridge (1400 but much restored), there is a statue of Britannia [E] with her shield (the trident is now lost). This was added by Peto around 1899. But there is something rather incongruous about the majesty of this figure and the rather modest nature of the river she commands. Her presence is a little melodramatic (but at least she is facing upstream).

Finally there is a [cider maker](#) attached to the manor – and it includes a taphouse, if its open and you seek refreshment.

Countess Ela

Historically, the whole area may be best known for its story of Ela, the countess. Richard I took her as ward to respect her dead father's previous loyalty to him. He thereby arranged her marriage (aged 11) to William Longespée, his loyal half brother and illegitimate son of Henry II. William Longespee was made Earl of Salisbury and Sheriff of Wiltshire. After a full military and diplomatic life he was believed to have been poisoned when recovering from duties abroad. He became the first burial in Salisbury cathedral. Ela became Sheriff and, not re-marrying, she retained his estate and titles. This put her in the unusual position of being a female benefactor to the community (cf. Maud Heath).

Longespee had founded a Carthusian priory in Gloucestershire to ensure the well-being of his soul. But because it had not prospered he urged his wife on his deathbed to found Hinton Priory as a replacement for its community. This Ela did, and in terms that reflected her commitment to her husband and father (openly declared in terms of an insurance policy for the afterlife): *"I being desirous to finish what he well begun.... I have done this for my husband's soul, and the soul of Earl William my father, and for my salvation and that of my children, and for the souls of all my ancestors and heirs."* Yet she was certainly a genuinely devout person. She also founded (apparently on the same day in 1232) the Augustinian Abbey of Lacock (a building not seriously harmed by the dissolution and thus a good measure of a nun's life circumstances at that time). She entered the Abbey herself in 1239 and later became the Abbess. John Aubrey (1659) comments she was "above a hundred yeares old: she outlived her understanding". She was probably about 70.

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