

Walk No. 4 OAK TREE TRAIL

Circular Walk: Dyke Hill -> Forton -> Dyke Hill

About 2 hours: Easy going, waterproof footwear advisable in wet weather

From the Spar Shop walk about 50 yards up Dyke Hill and, opposite the Linkhay turning, you will see a footpath to the left, which is the start of this circular walk. Take this path and continue straight down it alongside a stream.

Ignore a path, which intersects our route and continue straight on over a concrete surface to a ford and footbridge over Perry Street Brook, a fast running tributary of the River Axe. Over the footbridge follow this wide path between high hedges with overhanging oak trees. Wild flowers are in profusion in Spring.

Our path crosses the course of the former London & South Western Railway line from Chard Junction to Taunton and continues alongside the former goods yard – still used for timber and coal distribution.

On reaching Station Road, cross over and turn left keeping to the pavement as this road is busy at times. There are good views of Perry Street and Tatworth over open fields to your left.

After about 400 yards you will see a wide lane on your right signposted to Forton. This is Bugway lane and you should proceed along it. [From where does the name 'Bugway' derive and where do the pieces of iron embedded in the surface of this lane come from?]

Eventually on reaching a tarmac drive, turn left and after 100 yards or so you will reach the B3167 Fosse Way. Turn right and almost immediately left at the public footpath sign into a wide, ancient drove road known as The Drift.

Continue for about a mile, enjoying the views of the countryside towards Forton and Chard, until you reach a metalled road. Cross over and follow the path signposted 'Chard Reservoir into a mixed woodland of oaks and beech with a fine display of rhododendrons in early summer. [Notice the concrete 'pill-box' to your left – a relic of the 'stop line', war time defences, which stretched from Seaton to Burnham on Sea].

You will soon reach another metalled road. Turn left and walk down the hill into the village of Forton.

Passing Forton House on the right with its magnificent copper beech tree, the road bears sharply right at the bus shelter. Our path turns left at the Public Footpath sign along the bank of a small stream leading to a stile. Cross this and continue in the same direction with the hedge on your left.

After about 100yards follow the hedge round to the left, through a field gate beneath a clump of oaks and then turn right and over a stile into a field.

Continue ahead, keeping the hedge on your right, across a field, through a field gate and into another field still keeping close to the hedge on your right and finally out into a lane called Blacklands Drove by means of an interesting metal stile. Pause while crossing these fields to enjoy some lovely views of Dorset.

Follow the wide track opposite the stile between hedges which forks after about 150 yards. The left fork crosses the Perry Street Brook and there is a footpath to the Golden Fleece public house, but our path follows the right hand fork through Lower Coombses.

On reaching the main road by the Perry Street Club, turn right and follow the road until you reach a wide turning to the right (Loveridge Lane). On the opposite side of the road you will see a track leading to a small bridge over a stream. This is the path you must take which eventually returns you past houses to Dyke Hill and your starting point.

NATURE NOTE

There are two varieties of oak tree native to this country – the 'English' oak and the 'Sessile' oak. The former has short stemmed leaves and long stemmed acorns, the latter has long stemmed leaves and no stems to its across. The Sessile oak is perhaps squatter than the English oak. The lifetime of an oak tree can be 600 – 800 years. See if you can spot both types during your walk.