

WALK 1

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Landscape/Natural History - By Edward Griffiths

Hills, vales and hamlets of the River Hooke. 5½ MILES.



Toller Fratrum and Wynford Eagle

The A356 Crewkerne-Grimstone road runs along the top of Toller Down, a plateau of chalk with tremendous views over the river-cut valleys and fingers of ridges on either side. From its southwest flank, narrow, often single-track, lanes lead to innumerable tiny villages and hamlets that are dotted about the downland. The River Hooke, a tributary of the Frome, runs along the valley inhabited by Toller Porcorum and Toller Fratrum whilst, in the next valley, a smaller brook threads its way through Wynford Eagle, also on its way to meet the Frome. These streams have cut through the chalk to the greensand, giving rise to springy and boggy patches in the valleys in winter. The walk visits several valleys, and the hills in between, so this is something of a switchback journey, punctuated by sudden delightful views, glimpses of historic buildings and close-ups of chalkland wild flowers. Skylarks, yellowhammers and buzzards abound, and you may even disturb a deer or two.

WALK GUIDE



LIMITATIONS:

Very hilly, needs some stamina.
 Dogs on leads

START:

Toller Porcorum village hall
 (Ref: S7562980). Park facing
 the allotment fence

MAPS:

OS Landranger Sheet 194

PUBLIC

TRANSPORT:

South West Coaches 73

THE WALK

1 Walk down School Lane to Sts Andrew and Peter's church. Then, turn left into High Street. Past Kingcombe Road, take the right footpath stile for 'Toller Fratrum'. Cross the paddock to stiles that zigzag across the old railway track. In the next field, bear half left to the stream footbridge. Over this, turn right and walk up the field to twin hedge stiles. Over these, bear half right, down the field to the bottom-corner stile. Over this, go through the gates and turn left, signed 'Toller Fratrum'. Following the stream into the open field, turn right up and over the hill, keeping to the right.

2 Past the solitary oak, go over the right stile and follow the other side of the hedge down to the gate in the wooded valley. Through here, keep on up and over the next field to the brideway gate into a hedged track. At the gravel track, turn left. Walk up the deep, wooded track. Pass a right gate for 'Wynford Eagle ¾'. Walk down the track and turn left to visit St Basil's Chapel, Toller Fratrum and the 17th-century farmhouse, close to where the Knights of St

John (the Brethren) set up the monastery that gives the hamlet its name. Then, return to the 'Wynford' gate.

3 Through this, follow the gated track up and round to the left. Emerging into the open field, turn sharp right, straight up the hillside to the top-hedge gate. Through it, follow the left hedge over a high field and down the track to Wynford Eagle. Turn left to St Laurence's church and the 1630 Manor House. Then return to pass your arrival track. Keep on up the steep road, passing a right footpath for Toller Porcorum, and

climbing to the top trees. Take the right footpath to the wood's edge. Go through the left wicket-gate and follow the wood's fence along and down the steep valley side.

4 Cross the valley floor, avoiding the boggy bits, and up the other side. Go through the right gate and follow the left hedge to a brideway gate. Through this, skirt anticlockwise around two sides of the high field. Over the top, turn right onto the stony brideway. Keep straight on down. When the track bends right, take the left-fork gate, signed 'Toller Porcorum

¾'. Descend by the left hedge's green track. Go through the 'Round Walk' gate and down the scrubland path to cross the stream. Bear right to the gate. Ascend the woodland path to the top T. Turn right, up the track.

5 At the road, go through the instant right gate, signed 'Frogmore Lane'. Follow the well-used path through three fields, then down to the stile in front of the white cottages. Turn right in High Street. Over the railway bridge, take the left path back to the village hall, or next left to visit the church.

Opposite:
After ewe! Waiting for St Basil's to open
 Edward Griffiths

Below:
Toller Fratrum corner
 Edward Griffiths

