

# A guide to the Timsbury walk undertaken by Clare Balding for an edition of her BBC Radio 4 *Ramblings* programme

Clare joined Peter Bradshaw, Larry Cunningham and Sue Fraser to explore the area's little known coal mining history. The walk started from the Conygre Hall, passed through the historic centre of the village, visited the hamlet of Amesbury, went down to the Timsbury Basin and continued beside the former Somersetshire Coal Canal.

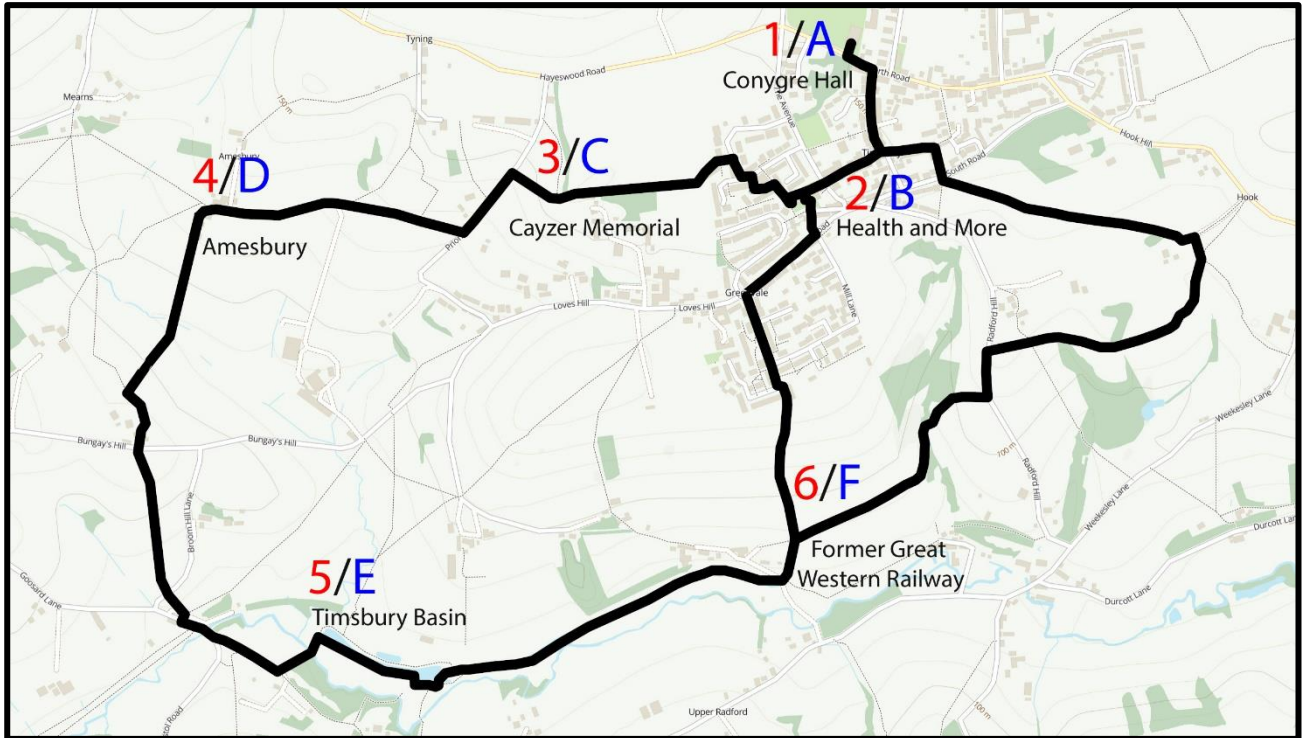
It had been planned to continue and return to the village passing Parish's House, a total of just over four miles, but because of the wet and windy conditions on the day the walk had to be shortened. The two walks presented here are the actual route taken on the day and the longer one that had been originally intended.



	ACTUAL WALK	PLANNED WALK
Distance	3.6 miles (5.8 km)	4.2 miles (6.8 km)
Stiles	8	8
Approximate Time	1 ¾ hours	2 ¼ hours
Start/Finish	The Conygre Hall	The Conygre Hall
Start/Finish Grid Reference	ST 668589	ST 668589
Start/Finish what3words	goes.smoke.nightcap	goes.smoke.nightcap
Map	OS Explorer 142	OS Explorer 142
Terrain	Hilly in places, fields, paths and tracks. Flat along the Coal Basin.	Hilly in places, fields, paths and tracks. Flat along the Coal Basin.

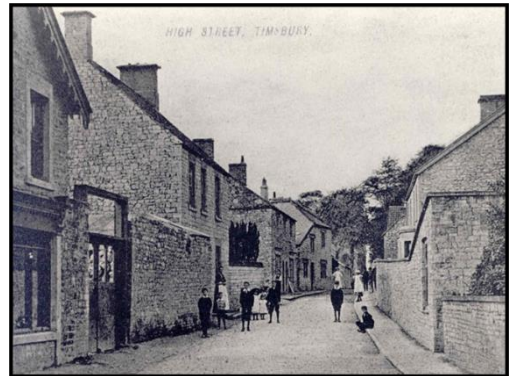
## DIRECTIONS

Nearest Postcode: BA2 0JQ Map Ref: ST 668589  
what3words: goes.smoke.nightcap



### 1 / A CONYGRE HALL

With your back to the entrance to the Conygre Hall, walk through the car park to the road. Turn left and walk along the pavement to the bus shelter. Turn right and **CROSS THE ROAD CAREFULLY** into Newmans Lane. Continue along Newmans Lane passing the British Legion and War Memorial on your left until you reach The Square with Our Plaise and the Old Rectory gate posts on your left. Turn right and walk along the High Street until you reach Health and More and Timsbury Pharmacy on the left.



*There is a long history of coal mining in Timsbury which dates from at least 1592. The spoil heap opposite the Conygre Hall is that of Upper Conygre Pit, which was in operation between 1791 and 1916.*

*Following an Act of Parliament in 1920, The Miners' Welfare Scheme was set up order to finance welfare and recreational schemes for miners. The result in Timsbury was the Miners' Welfare Field (now the Recreation Field), with a hut large enough for playing snooker. The Conygre Hall opened in 1973 and was built on the Miners' Welfare Field. The Hall was the result of village fund raising.*

*The British Legion Hall and War Memorial reflect a long history of military service by families from Timsbury.*

*Timsbury used to have a far greater number of shops and services than those currently found in the village. Visit the History section of the Timsbury Community Website to see more information on the 82 shops from the past that have been mapped.*

## **2 / B HEALTH AND MORE**

Continue along the High Street towards the Church. Cross the road and enter the



churchyard. Follow the path to the right around the church to reach Samborne's Gate at the rear. Go through the gate and turn right. Walk along the path going through a chicane; then take the next left and turn right to reach the entrance to St Mary's Surgery. Continue past the surgery to reach a T-junction. Turn left and follow the road around to the right. Look for footpath sign on the first lamp post on the right in Somerset Folly. Turn

left and follow the footpath ahead along the Ha-Ha until you reach a gate at the end. The large field on the right is Emlet, which for many years hosted the Timsbury Horse Show. Go through the gate at the end of the Ha-Ha and follow the fence/hedge on the right. The Cayzer Memorial can be seen as the fence/hedge turns to the right.

*On the left-hand side of the High Street is Church Farm, which used to be a butcher's shop. Pitfour House, on the right, dates from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. The Georgian façade was the result of alterations at the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. It is a Grade II listed building.*

*The first mention of a parish church in Timsbury dates from 1292. The ancient church fell into disrepair and was pulled down and re-built in 1826. The Samborne Gate is named after the family who were the lords of the manor for many centuries and lived in Timsbury House. The surgery marks the location of Timsbury House, which was a large Elizabethan mansion house, built towards the end of the 15<sup>th</sup> century. It was demolished in 1961.*



*The Ha-Ha is an ancient path and was lowered when it passed Timsbury House so that the residents would not see the local inhabitants passing by. Pause for a moment to enjoy the information board at the end of the Ha-Ha, the bench and the views across to the Mendips. Major B G S Cayzer, who owned Parish's House, had a lifetime interest in horses and was a great supporter of the Timsbury Horse Show.*



### 3 / C CAYZER MEMORIAL

As the fence/hedge on the right turns to the right walk diagonally left across the field towards a metal kissing gate in the corner. There are good views ahead towards the Mendips. After the gate turn right and walk down the slope and go through another metal kissing gate and down some steps. Continue straight on to a further metal kissing gate which leads onto a quiet lane.



Turn left and walk down the lane passing Appletree Cottage and Priors Cottage on the right. After Priors Cottage, turn right along another quiet lane signposted Amesbury. Walk for 550 yards, passing Tynning Pit batch on the right, to reach the hamlet of Amesbury. Go past the cottages on your right and Vines Farm on your left to a metal field gate beside a stile and a bench. Pause here and look diagonally left over the valley to Rugbourn Farm.

*The cottages at Amesbury were occupied by miners in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries. Coal mining was recorded here in 1701. The pit closed in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There were many shallow pits in the fields between Amesbury and Rugbourn Farm.*

*Vines Farm was the home of Fred Wedlock. He was an English folk singer best known for his 1981 UK hit single **The Oldest Swinger in Town**. For many years he contributed to village life by providing entertainment and helping with raising funds for local projects.*



*William Smith, **The Father of English Geology**, lodged at Rugbourn Farm between 1792 and 1795. He was asked to survey Mearns Colliery, just beyond Amesbury, where he observed and recorded the various layers of rock and coal exposed by the mining. He developed his theory of stratigraphy which led to him creating of the first geological map of Britain. William Smith called Rugbourn Farm **The Birthplace of Geology**.*

#### 4 / D AMESBURY

Turn left and walk down the side of Vines Farm and cross a stile into the field. Continue straight ahead and go over another stile. Carry on in the same direction down the slope; go through a metal field gate and cross a small stream. Cross the track and walk up the slope to the left corner of the field to reach a wooden stile in the hedge. After the stile turn left and cross another wooden stile. Walk diagonally right aiming to the right of the bungalow and another wooden stile. Cross the stile and walk ahead to a wooden stile leading onto a road. **CROSS THE ROAD CAREFULLY** to a metal kissing gate directly opposite. Walk ahead in the same direction and drop down to a metal kissing gate in the hedge. Carry on the same direction down the field to a metal stile to the right of a metal gate. These are examples of iron work produced at the Paulton Brass and Iron Foundry. Go across the road to another metal stile. Walk directly ahead to a metal gate; go through and walk up some steps to another metal gate. **GO THROUGH CAREFULLY AS YOU JOIN**

**A ROAD IMMEDIATELY AFTER THE GATE.** Turn left and walk along the road and turn left at the entrance to the sewage works. Go through the metal kissing gate and carry on along the road keeping the fence on your left. Turn left in front of the wooded batch which is Goosard Batch Nature Reserve. Walk along the side of the batch to reach an information board about the Somersetshire Coal Canal. Go through the gates and cross the Cam Brook. Ahead is Timsbury Basin, the terminus of the canal.



*The sewage works was built in the late 1950's on the site of Paulton Lower Engine Pit. The pit was in operation in the second half of the 18th century and continued working until about 1870. The batch was originally the spoil heap for two pits, Goosard Pit and Paulton Lower Engine. Over 70 bird species, 21 species of butterfly and more than 160 different plant species have been recorded on or around Goosard Batch Nature Reserve.*

*The Somersetshire Coal Canal was built in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. At one point the basin was served by numerous tramways which connected to the surrounding coal mines. The canal declined in the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century following the development of the Great Western Railway single track branch line from Hallatrow to Camerton which opened in 1882.*

#### 5 / E TIMSBURY BASIN

Turn right before Timsbury Basin and walk with formal canal on your left to reach Paulton Basin. Walk diagonally right to a metal gate beside a metal field gate. Walk past the recently restored stone bridge and dry dock. Beside the bridge and the dry dock is the



**Paulton Basin and Dry Dock Information Board.**

Continue in the same direction for a few yards across a grassy area to a metal kissing gate on your left. Go through and turn right to walk along the old towpath of The Somersetshire Coal Canal. Continue along the towpath for 750 yards, past the **Withy Mills Stop Gate and Bridge Information Board**, until you reach a farm track crossing in front of you and an



information board about Radford Mill Farm. Turn left and then immediately walk to the right of a large tree to a wooden bridle gate in the hedge. Walk upwards through two more bridle gates. After the last bridle gate, the track crossing in front of you is the line of the former Great Western Railway between Camerton and Hallatrow.

*For the walk completed with Clare continue with 6 below. For the longer planned walk go to F.*

**6 THE FORMER GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY**

Go straight across the track; take the footpath gate opposite and walk up the field which is called Deekes Hill. Normally the line of the path is very clear or aim for the roof of the bungalow that can be seen on the skyline. It is a steep path so pause on the way up and turn around and look at the good views towards the Cam valley. At the top, there is a metal kissing gate. Go through and walk straight ahead for 280 yards along Greenvale Drive until you reach the T-junction with South Road. Turn right into South Road and walk past the old school to reach a turning on your left which is Mill Lane. Turn left and walk up Church Lane and enter St Mary's churchyard. Go up the steps and follow the path round to the front of the church. Turn right and walk down the path to leave the churchyard. Cross the road carefully and walk along the High Street. Turn left into Newmans Lane and return to the start of the walk.

**F THE FORMER GREAT WESTERN RAILWAY**

Turn right and continue along this track for 150 yards then veer slightly left and walk up to a Bristol Gate. Go through and continue ahead, keeping the hedge on your right to reach a wooden kissing gate and Mill Lane. Cross Mill Lane and go through the wooden kissing gate directly opposite. After the kissing gate follow the path as it gently curves round to the left. At the bottom keep the trees on your right to reach a wooden bridge over a small stream. A little further up the valley was once a sewage works. After the stream, go slightly left and upwards to another wooden kissing gate closely followed by a metal kissing gate. Continue upwards keeping the trees on your right to another metal kissing gate which leads onto a road which is Radford Hill. There are good views down the valley to South Hill House and the Cam Valley. Turn left and **WALK CAREFULLY** up

Radford Hill for 100 yards to reach a signposted path on your right. Pass over a metal stile beside a metal gate to prevent vehicle access. Proceed straight ahead along the footpath ignoring gates left and right for 450 yards until you reach a metal kissing gate. Along this stretch, after the tree section, there are good views towards Camerton. Go through and walk diagonally left down to the valley floor then up to a gap in the hedge. Go through the gap, ignore the kissing gate on the right, and turn left and walk with the hedge on your left to a metal kissing gate and a drive beyond. After the gate, turn left to reach a Bristol Gate on your right. Cross the field following the line of overhead cables to a kissing gate on the far side. Parish's House can be seen on the right. Beyond this kissing gate proceed across a further field towards the South Road Methodist Church and arrive at a metal kissing gate. Cross South Road and enter Rectory Lane. Walk up Rectory Lane past Home Farm on your right. Bear left at the top and along to The Square. Enjoy a rest in the Miners' Memorial Garden. Turn right into Newmans Lane and walk back to the start of the walk.

*Parish's House was built in 1816 on the site of a smaller building for Captain Parish. One story is that Captain Parish built the house from his share of the bounty money he acquired from participating in the capture of a Spanish treasure ship. He was also involved in local coal mining.*



*Home Farm is a Grade II listed building dating from the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century. Much of Rectory Lane was built before 1784. Several of the buildings used to be shops including the one with the large window which was Bridges' boot and shoe shop.*

*The Miners' Memorial Garden, close to the Square, marks the village's long association with coal mining. It was built in 1995 to mark the centenary of an underground explosion at Upper Conygre Pit in 1895, which claimed the lives of seven miners and four horses. Before 1995, National Westminster Bank was located here and further back in time, Gilbert Miles ran a barber shop for many years.*



# ONE HUNDRED LOCAL WALKS!



Welcome to the five books in a series which has featured circular walks in Timsbury itself and the surrounding area. The walks have been enjoyed by the authors and are highly recommended by them. We hope they will become favourites of yours. The walks are all different, but all have good views, varied landscape and interesting features.

The five books are available from Health and More, The Hub and Canine Craze in Timsbury, Radstock Museum, Farmborough Community Shop and Oldfield Park Book Shop.

Each book costs £6.00 and all proceeds go to good causes.