

WALK 1

THE SWANS NECK

OS MAP REFERENCE

- Explorer 114 & 128
 - Pathfinder SS 81/91 and ST 01/11.
- 1:25000

APPROXIMATE DISTANCE – 2 miles

APPROXIMATE TIME – 1 ½ miles

STARTING POINT – Tiverton Road bridge
Car Park

TYPE OF WALK – easy – moderate

Walk 1 is a mainly level walk along the Grand Western Canal combined with a route through the village of Halberton along country roads.

Leave Tiverton by way of Blundell's Road

towards Halberton. After 2 miles, passing the Golf Course on the left hand side, take a left turn into the Canal Car Park and Picnic Area, a once important canal wharf.

Cross the new Dudley Weatherley Jubilee Bridge and turn left. The canal takes a wide loop to the right, known as the Swan's Neck. Here a very pleasant vista is opened up past Halberton towards the Blackdown Hills; notice Culmstock Beacon with its beehive hut jutting out and, on the far horizon beyond, Sidmouth Gap. Wildlife abounds along and on the canal: buzzards, kingfishers, sedge warblers, besides the more common species.

Walk along the Canal and under Sellack Bridge towards Greenway Bridge, by way of a high embankment. At Greenway Bridge leave the canal and turn right down the road towards the village of Halberton. Domesday 1086, shows Halberton as part of the 'Landes of Queen

Matilda' - wife of William the Conqueror. At the junction with the main village road turn left and almost opposite, next to the Methodist Chapel is the Old Priory ❶, once a staging post and rest house for monks on their travels. Walk carefully along the road and cross by the Village Hall with extreme care, almost immediately turn right into Pond Hill. This leads down to the village pond ❷, far-famed for the warm springs which feed it (it never freezes over, even in the most bitter winters) and St. Andrews Church ❸.



The pond effectively splits the village into two: Higher Town – from where you have just come – is primarily a long main street, and Lower Town, where St. Andrew's Church is situated. To reach the church, which is well worth a visit, continue up Pond Hill and then follow Church Path around to its main entrance. Built of red sandstone, the church, in the style of the 14th century, was probably built on the site of an earlier place of worship. Noteworthy features are the square 12th century Norman font, the beautifully carved 15th century pulpit and the rood-screen, a rare example dating from c 1420, having some 200 tiny perfectly carved bosses.

After passing a shop and petrol pump, take the second turning on the right (some distance along the road) toward Crownhill, which leads back up a hill to the canal. The Bridge there is known as Crownhill or Changepath Bridge ❹ because the towpath changes from the left hand side of the water to right; barge horses were uncoupled and led across from one side to another. Take the towpath to your right. The car park at Tiverton Road Bridge is now reached in a very short distance.

