Walk 6 – Smallcombe Wood circuit

Please read the general introductory notes before walking.

Total distance – 3.3kms. 2miles.   Duration - approx. 1 ½ hours at a moderate pace.

Starting from the rear of the Bath Spa railway station cross the River Avon by the footbridge.

> *Halfpenny Bridge was originally built in 1863 as a toll bridge. In 1877 it collapsed as hundreds of people were crossing the river to attend the 100th anniversary of the Bath and West of England Agricultural Society Show at Beechen Cliff. Sadly, eight people lost their lives. Shortly afterwards the current bridge was built and was strengthened in 1992. The toll house became a newspaper kiosk for a short time but is now a private house.*

At the end of the footbridge cross the dual carriageway at the traffic lights, then L along Widcombe Parade. At the end of the Parade, follow the road round to the L and immediately cross over. Turn L, crossing the canal and then turn R onto the path on the L of the canal.

> *On the right is Widcombe Deep Lock, the second deepest lock in the UK at 5.92 metres deep. This is the lowest stretch of the 57-mile-long Kennet and Avon Canal, designed by John Rennie in 1793. Shortly after the lock is one of many ornate wrought iron bridges constructed to soften the industrial landscape created by the canal.*

Follow the canal as it winds round to the L and after approx 400metres the path will rise up onto to a canal bridge. Turn R over the canal, cross to the left-hand side of the road and follow a residential street, Horseshoe Walk, for approx. 400 metres keeping houses on the L and a steep triangle of grass on the R. As the road bends round to the L, turn R along a stony lane signposted Private Road which leads to Smallcombe Farm.

Follow this lane, ignoring gates on either side where this track intersects the Bath Skyline walk and keep straight ahead to the wrought iron double gates to Smallcombe Cemetery.

> *This is two cemeteries, the largest of which was opened in 1855. From 2013 local community efforts rescued it from dereliction and ensure that it is maintained and remains a haven for wildlife as well as being a tranquil place to sit. There are over 100 different species of lichen growing on the headstones and memorials.*

Once through the gates, bear immediately L and walk through the cemetery on this lower path for 100 metres. Then turn R and walk up a chevron-patterned concrete path heading towards some yew trees. This path meanders up the slope (ignore the first turn on the R) and where the path turns sharply to the R, immediately turn L up some steps in a built-up wall, up to a gap in the cemetery boundary wall to enter Smallcombe Wood.

> *This is one of Bath's oldest woodlands, being at least 400 years old, with a mix of oak, lime hazel and ash trees underplanted by a sea of wild garlic in the spring. Watch out for birds such as nuthatches, wrens and blackcaps.*

Keep straight along the path, with glimpses of first the cemetery and then a meadow bordered by a steam on the L through the trees. Ignore any tracks leading off to the R. Where the meadow ends keep straight on then immediately bear slightly to the R, straight up a steep bank, keeping the stream on the L, to a number of fallen tree trunks. Step over the fallen trees and follow the path winding upwards through the woods. At a T junction, take a level path to the R for another 200 metres to a metal gate into an open meadow.

Head straight across the meadow towards a KG. Go through this and turn R onto Widcombe Hill. Follow the pavement all the way back down to Widcombe Parade with its selection of shops and places to eat and drink.

> *Walking down the hill note the gateway to Crowe Hall on the L – a fine house with an imposing portico built in the 1770s. Also note Widcombe Crescent on the L, completed in 1805. On the R is an 18th century horse trough.*

At the end of Widcombe Parade continue to the traffic lights at the far end. Cross the dual carriageway and go over the footbridge and to the back of the railway station.

Map of the walk