



West Knighton and Max Gate

Visit fascinating churches and pass Thomas Hardy's home at Max Gate on this easier walk

Essential Facts

- | | |
|-------------------------|---------------------|
| ▪ Route distance: | 13.4 km (8.4 miles) |
| ▪ Approximate time: | 3 hours 30 mins |
| ▪ Approx. total ascent: | 100 metres |
| ▪ Start point Grid Ref: | SY 732 876 |
| ▪ GPS Ref: | SY 73244 87651 |
| ▪ Recommended O.S. Map: | Explorer OL15 |
| ▪ Toughness Rating | Dorset 1 |

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

Up For A
CHALLENGE ?

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An Individual Walk
A Team Effort

Full Info from the Great Walks web site

THE ROUTE

The walk starts from the village of West Knighton, south-east of Dorchester. From West Knighton Church, **S**, turn right and at the T-junction turn left. Walk past the New Inn and at a bridleway turn right. At the top of the climb turn left. Follow a gravel path to a gate, go through and walk to the gate straight ahead. Follow the hedged path beyond, cross a quarry road with care and continue along a hedged footpath. Cross a stile on the left and walk across a large field. Pass a pond on the right and continue to a stile. Cross a track and continue straight ahead to reach a gate onto a lane. Continue ahead to cross the railway and walk through a field to a road at **A**.

Cross the road and turn left onto a footpath that goes along two sides of a field to reach a lane. Turn left and just past Lower Lewell Farm follow the National Cycle Network route along an enclosed track and past Tenantree Cottage. At a road junction turn right to Lewell Mill. Just before the mill turn left along a narrow path. Follow the path as it widens until you reach a gap in the hedge on the right. Cross a field to a stile, go slightly left in the next field and in a third field continue in the same direction to reach a road, **B**.

Turn right and follow the road into West Stafford. Pass the Wise Man Inn and the church then follow the road out of the village. Cross a bridge and turn left into a field. Keep a stream on your left to reach a barrier. Go through and cross a field to a stile. Continue past a house on the left to a road. Turn left, cross a bridge and turn right signed Dorchester. Keep a hedge on the right then follow an enclosed path to a road on the outskirts of Dorchester. Continue ahead and just before the flyover turn left along a leafy lane. Cross the railway and continue to the end of Syward Road at **C**.

Here Thomas Hardy's home at Max Gate is just a few metres to the right. Walk to the roundabout, cross the A352 and follow the bridleway signed Winterbourne Came. Go through a gate and keep a hedge on the left. At the top of the hill walk through trees and then along a clear path through parkland. At a gate cross a road and continue along the estate road. When you reach a house turn left to a crossing track. (To visit the church continue along the road and follow a sign to the right.) Go through a gate and turn left to follow the field edge past a quarry to a gate at **D**.

Now turn left and follow a track through trees to a gate. Walk diagonally across a field to a stile. Continue to the road, turn left and pass Whitcombe Church, **E**.

Turn right and keep a fence on the right along two fields, behind barns and along another field. At a crossing path turn left, now with a hedge on the left. Cross a track and continue with the hedge on the right. Just before you reach buildings turn right and follow a path to a road. Turn left past West Knighton House and left again to return to the church, **S**.

Refreshment

The New Inn
Public House
West Knighton
Tel: 01305 852349
Meals and bar snacks
Garden

Wise Man Inn
Public House
West Stafford
Tel: 01305 263694
Meals and lunchtime
snacks, Real ales,
Garden



West Knighton



Winterbourne Came



New Inn

LOCAL INFO

Max Gate was Thomas Hardy's home from 1885 until his death in 1928. It was designed by Hardy, himself a trained architect, and built by his father and brother. It is named after the last keeper of the tollgate on the Wareham road – Harry Mack. Here Hardy wrote some of his best known novels including *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, *The Mayor of Casterbridge* and finally *Jude the Obscure*. The house is now run by the National Trust, but opening times are limited. See our **What to See** section for contact information.

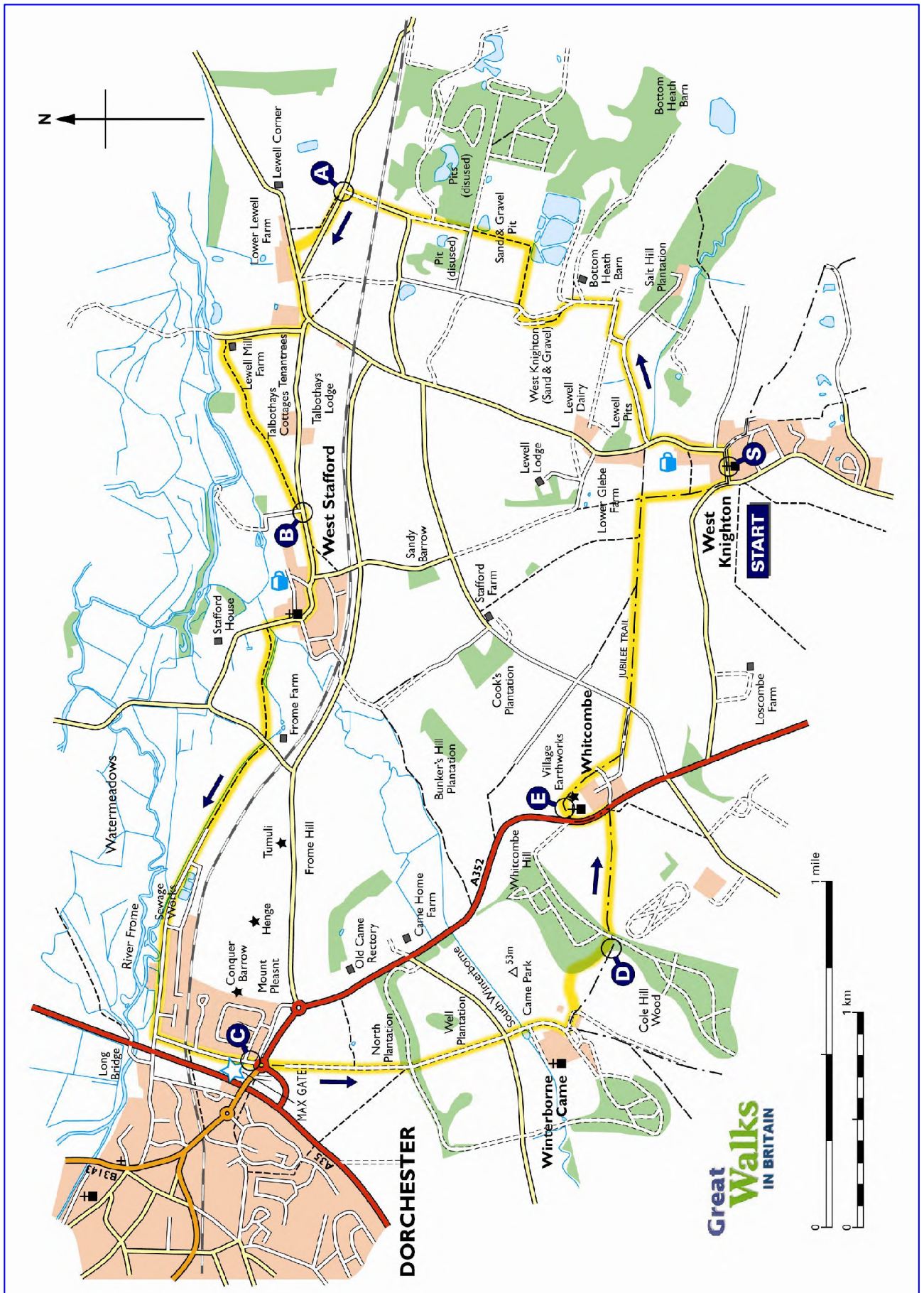
West Knighton is an attractive village. The church of St Peters dates from the 12th century. The church restoration in 1894 was overseen by Thomas Hardy and this proved to be his last project before becoming a full-time writer and poet. The New Inn is a two hundred year old coaching inn. The village is surrounded by the heathland that Hardy knew well, however today much of it has been destroyed by the extraction of sand and gravel. On this walk you will see how this is being managed in a sympathetic manner.

West Stafford is another delightful village with many thatched properties. The Wise Man Inn was the Village Stores and Post Office for 100 years with the ale house being the Wise Man Cottage opposite. In 1938 the pub was moved to provide better facilities. The pub burned down in 2006 but has been rebuilt and refurbished. The marriage of Tess and Angel Clare took place in West Stafford Church. It is believed that Lower Lewell Farm is the location of Talbothays Dairy.

Winterbourne Came Rectory was the home of Dorset dialect poet William Barnes from 1862 until his death in 1886. He is buried in the churchyard. The church is tucked away in the parkland surrounding the palatial Came House.

WEST KNIGHTON & MAX GATE G.P.S. WAYPOINTS

| WAYPOINT NAME | MAP REF | CO-ORDINATES | ELEVATION: Metres |
|------------------|------------|----------------|----------------------|
| WKN S | S | SY 73244 87651 | 60 |
| WKN A | A | SY 74484 89462 | 49 |
| WKN B | B | SY 73054 89640 | 56 |
| WKN C | C | SY 70482 89865 | 71 |
| WKN D | D | SY 70998 88170 | 76 |
| WKN E | E | SY 71620 88284 | 61 |



| MAP LEGEND | | | | | |
|------------|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Great Walks route | | Church with tower | | Spot height - metres |
| | M6 Motorway | | Church with spire | | Information centre |
| | A23 Main road | | Other place of worship | | Parking |
| | B2116 Secondary road | | Cathedral / Abbey | | Public convenience |
| | Minor road | | Building | | Public house |
| | Other road | | Built up area | | Picnic site |
| | Track | | Woodland | | Camp site |
| | Footpath | | Sand, shingle or mud | | Major tourist feature |
| | Bridleway | | Water feature | | Other tourist feature |
| | National trail | | | | |
| | Railway | | | | |

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

All our **Dorset** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise our map segments, together with the route guidance notes. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks with some steep sections, higher paths or places which may be wet and boggy.
4. The most demanding walks in this edition. There may be prolonged steep ascents. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in Dorset may be equivalent to a moderate route in Devon & Dartmoor..