

- A** There are many **pre-historic trackways** in this locality including the Abbot's Way and the Honeygore complex comprising of the Honeygore, Honeycat, Honeybee and Honeypot Trackway.
- B** Piecemeal reclamation and **drainage** of this area began in medieval times and has continued to shape the landscape ever since; the drainage allowed extraction from the raised peat bogs.
- C** **Peat extraction** has taken place on the levels since Roman times; a peat factory was established in the area by 1891, and by the 1940s The Eclipse Peat Company owned most of the land in the area. Mechanisation of cutting and the introduction of the plastic bag in the 1950s dramatically changed the area.
- D** Over 200,000 years ago islands of clay and shelly sand known as **Burtle beds** were formed; these created suitable land for occupation across the moors such as Burtle after which the beds are named.
- E** Willow has been harvested using traditional **pollarding** for centuries; the Somerset Levels is now the only area in the UK where willow is grown commercially for basket making and is used for passenger baskets for hot air balloons or coffins amongst other things.
- F** **Dairy herds** are a prominent feature within the Avalon Marshes and have historically been a significant provider to the local economy.
- G** Before 1774, when the Petition of **Enclosure** was introduced, a landowner did not even have to notify his neighbours that he was petitioning Parliament to redistribute their property, you could wake up one morning to find your land was being taken from you.
- H** **Fisheries** were a vital resource to Glastonbury Abbey; in addition to the one at Meare there have been fisheries recorded at Godney, Marchey and one probably near Panborough.
- I** The **Hy-Mac digger** in the front picture is a common sight on the Avalon Marshes and is equally effective at keeping ditches clear for drainage as it is for excavating peat.

More information about this walk and others can be found at [www.avalonmarshes.org](http://www.avalonmarshes.org)

**Acknowledgements:**

Walk adapted from Route C in 'Meare & Westhay Circular Walks', which has three other local walks to explore. Special thanks to the many local volunteers who have been involved in the surveying of walking routes across the Avalon Marshes. Lots more information on the local area can be found at the Avalon Marshes Centre.

**Feedback:**

If you would like to comment on this walk route, please contact us at:  
 Avalon Marshes Centre, Shapwick Road, Westhay, Somerset, BA6 9TT  
 T: 01458 860556 E: [info@avalonmarshes.org](mailto:info@avalonmarshes.org)

Specific footpath faults should be reported to Somerset County Council.

# Avalon Marshes Heritage Walks: Islands & Peatlands

## Avalon Marshes Centre to Westhay



One of a series of circular heritage walking routes in the Avalon Marshes of Somerset.

This easy 3.5 mile (5.5km) walk explores the peatlands and islands around Westhay and considers how people have lived and worked within this special landscape over thousands of years.





**The Walk:** Parking, café and toilet facilities are available at the Avalon Marshes Centre (BA6 9TT), which provides the start and finish of the walk. There is also a pub in the village of Westhay.

Red sections of the walk indicate permissive paths.

- 1** Turn right out of the Centre onto the main road; walk about 80m and take the footpath over the stile on the left.
- 2** Follow the path until it emerges on Burtle Road; turn right and then left again over a stile after about 60m to pick up the footpath towards the farm.
- 3** Keep the farm to your left using the permissive path, and look for a stile leading out of the field on the far side of the farm; turn right onto the track and follow this towards Westhay passing many pollarded willows.
- 4** About 100m before the main road take the footpath to the left through three gates past a few houses.
- 5** At the road, turn right and then left at the signpost for Meare/Glastonbury (Back Lane). In about 100m at the left hand bend take the footpath on the right and cross the field diagonally to a wide stile in the hedge.
- 6** Turn left following the waymarking across / around another field to a stile next to a wooden gate.
- 7** Cross this stile and turn left, following the hedge line around the field to a gate which leads into the lane.

- 8** Follow the footpath and track to the right, leaving the track after about 100m to cross the field on the right towards a distant isolated gate.
- 9** Cross the bridge at the gate, and head across the long field in front looking for a wooden bridge on the right hand side; this leads to another bridge and straight ahead onto a track.
- 10** At the fishing lake, turn right and follow the waymarking through the fisheries.
- 11** Cross the bridge to leave the fisheries; there are another two bridges to cross the fields (which can be very muddy) before following the permissive path around the outside of the barn; at the road turn left back to the Avalon Marshes Centre.

#### THE AVALON MARSHES WALKERS' CODE

1. Keep to the right of way to avoid trespass (droves are not rights of way unless shown as such on the map). If the path is obstructed you should seek a reasonable route around the obstruction.
2. Leave gates and property as you find them.
3. Keep dogs under close control at all times, and on a lead around farm animals and wildlife. However, if cattle chase you and your dog, it is safer to let your dog off the lead.
4. Where the route takes you onto a road, make sure you can be seen by traffic and be especially careful when approaching blind bends, using the verge wherever possible. The marshes can be very muddy at times, so always make sure you wear appropriate footwear and clothing.
5. Respect the local community and other people enjoying the countryside, and take your litter home.

