

A Snowdrop Trail to the West of the Town

This is a short walk of about 4 km, taking in some newer planting areas.

It has slopes and can be muddy in places so suitable footwear is essential.

The best place to start is at the Town Hall but don't forget to look out for snowdrops on your way there.

Turning away from the High Street, head along Park Walk in the direction of the Abbey. Stop and take a look at the breath-taking view over the Blackmore Vale before continuing until the path forks. Take the left option onto Stoney Path, which heads steeply down. Don't be afraid to hold on to the handrail here as it can be slippery in wet weather. The snowdrops along this path are among the first to flower each year.

At the bottom of Stoney Path turn right onto Laundry Lane and then immediately left into Tanyard Lane. This will bring you out onto St James' Street. Turn right here and walk towards the church of St James. As you walk along St James' Street you will see the Rolt Millennium Green on your left. There are snowdrops planted in this community garden so it is well worth a look before carrying on.

When you reach the end of St James' Street take care as you cross the road, keeping a look out for traffic heading down the hill from your right, and head along Foyle Hill to the church. Enter the churchyard via the main gate and bear right. There are a number of snowdrops in this churchyard but more were planted by the entrance to the bell tower and the west door in 2019. Carry on through the churchyard towards the wooden gate. This is the Walk of Wisdom and a lovely place to stop and contemplate or enjoy the beautiful view of Melbury Beacon. More snowdrops were recently planted along the edge of the path here.

Leave the churchyard through the wooden gate and cross the gravel parking area to exit back onto Foyle Hill. Turn right and head back in the direction of the church gate for a short distance then turn left between two stone walls into Raspberry Lane. At the top of Raspberry lane, bear left into Breach Lane and continue along the road. You will shortly see Shaftesbury Home Grown on the left. There are lots of snowdrops planted in the verge either side of the gate.

Continue on past Shaftesbury Home Grown and turn right at the T-junction. Keep walking and you'll see Castle Hill is on your right. Many of the private gardens along this road have planted snowdrops and other winter plants at their boundaries, which look lovely as you walk along. You will soon arrive at The Butts, a small, triangular grassy area with three trees. There are many snowdrops here and they light up the area beneath the trees.

There's an opportunity for a short detour here: If you'd like to see the pretty church of St John, bear left at The Butts and head downhill with the little stream on your right, until you reach the church gate on the right. After your visit retrace your steps back to The Butts.

Turn to face Castle Hill and you'll see a wooden gate almost directly opposite. Go through this and take the path slightly to the right leading to some steps. It can be quite muddy here so take care as you head towards the steps and walk up. Turn left at the top of the first set of steps and keep walking uphill. There are two benches on the right as you ascend. A few snowdrops were planted by these benches at the beginning of 2020 as an experiment to see how they cope with the conditions.

After two further sets of steps you'll come to a more level section, which brings you out onto Castle Green. The view to the west is beautiful here and it's a good place to catch your breath after your hill climb. There are no snowdrops on Castle Green itself as it's too dry and exposed in the summer but, if you continue across to the other side of the Green, you'll come to the Queen Mother's garden. This is another quiet community space with snowdrops and other plants for pollinators.

Leave the Queen Mother's garden and turn left, taking the path to the main road in front of you. This is Bimport. Cross carefully and walk directly ahead into Magdalene Lane, passing the hospital on the left. The road bears right into Love Lane and you'll see the metal gate in the wall to the left. Go through this and you'll find yourself back on Park Walk. The grassy verge to your right has many snowdrops planted by the Weldmar Hospice Trust.

Turn right and head along the Pine Walk, where there are more snowdrops. When you reach the end of Pine Walk you'll find yourself facing St John's Hill.

There's another possible detour at this point: The old Bury Litton churchyard can be reached by heading right, up St John's Hill, for a short distance. Please take great care here as the oncoming traffic will not be able to see you from a distance. The Bury Litton is accessible via a gateway on the other side of the road, just before a stone building. This is a very old burial ground and is home to two ancient yew trees. There are snowdrops planted here too. After your visit retrace your steps back to the end of Pine Walk.

Return along Pine Walk and re-join Park Walk. Continue as far as the war memorial and turn left into Abbey Walk. Head along this road until you reach the Quaker Meeting House on the left. Look over the wall into the garden to see the snowdrops in the lawn, another recent planting from 2019.

Turn back to Abbey Walk and, retracing just a few steps, take the road leading to a gate into the Trinity churchyard. This is where the majority of the community snowdrop plantings took place and there are tens of thousands here. It is also a fitting end to the walk. Enjoy the beautiful snowdrops here before heading, through the churchyard, back to the High Street, via a short path. You'll see the Town Hall to the right, where you started the snowdrop trail.