





WALK 3

THE TORMARTON TRAIL

Start Point	Portcullis Inn, Tormarton
Distance	7km (4 1/2 miles)
Difficulty	Easy
Time	2-3 hours
Refreshments	The Portcullis Inn and the Compass Inn at Tormarton

INTRODUCTION

The trail follows paths and lanes across an ancient open farmed landscape from the historic village of Tormarton and descends through an important Cotswold estate - Dodington Park.



THE ROUTE

- 1** Starting outside the Portcullis Inn in Tormarton, head west through the village to the kissing gate adjacent the Old School House. From here the walk follows the route of the Cotswold Way National Trail. Follow the Cotswold Way National Trail signs, cross several fields, stone stiles and lanes to reach the main A46 road. Cross the A46 taking extra care at this busy road, and continue down into Dodington Park.
- 2** Descend into Dodington Park, crossing the footbridge that marks the source of the River Frome and the start of its 30km journey to the River Avon in the heart of Bristol. Continue to follow the Cotswold Way National Trail way-markers through the park.
- 3** After around 1km, the path swings left and drops down hill. Dodington House lies mostly hidden but occasional tantalising glimpses of its domed roof can be seen in the woods below to your left. Follow the path down to the old stone bridge. After crossing the stone bridge, bear left and cross the estate road, taking care as this section can be muddy in winter months. Continue to Catchpot Lane at Coomb's End.

- 4 On reaching Catchpot Lane, we now leave the route of the Cotswold Way National Trail. Turn left and follow the lane for around 2km, passing Garden House to your right with its beautiful red bricked walled garden, several converted old stables and the elegant Home Farm. Note the old mounting block just before the small post box, used for mounting horses. Proceed over the crossroads marking the entrance to Dodington House and begin the climb back up the Cotswold escarpment, passing Shepherds Close Farm on your right. Continue up the lane until you reach Old Farm on your right.
- 5 Passing Old Farm, turn right to follow the bridleway towards Southfield Clump. The bridleway follows the edge of the field which can be muddy in winter. The bridleway swings left uphill through Southfield Clump and into Long Nursery woodland running adjacent the field edge. Continue through to rejoin the lane where it meets with the B4465 at Dodington Ash.
- 6 Turn left passing the Turnpike House and circular Bath Lodge to the A46, taking extra care here as this junction is very busy. Cross the A46 with care and take the road signposted to Tormarton. Proceed for 100m, turn right and follow the lane for around 3/4km towards Tormarton village. Turn left leaving the lane, following the public footpath across several small fields before emerging back into the village and the Portcullis Inn.

PLACE NAME ORIGINS:

Tormarton

Thor Maer Tun - the settlement with the thorn (tree) on the boundary

FARMING AND BOUNDARIES

Transport, farming and boundaries are closely linked themes that have had a major impact on the Cotswold landscape around Tormarton. The village lies close to the modern Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire boundary, which originally was the border of the Anglo-Saxon kingdoms of Wessex and Mercia. This is a strongly agricultural landscape dominated by the villages of Tormarton and West Littleton, with dispersed farmsteads and barns.



TORMARTON

The Tormarton area - like much of the Cotswolds - appears to have had Roman settlement as a stone coffin of Roman date has been found here. The medieval village was significantly larger than that of today - part of the Cotswold phenomena of some villages declining in medieval times. The extensive earthworks to the north and east of St Mary Magdalene Church suggest evidence of previous settlement. These may be the remains of a shrunken medieval village with several large rectangular enclosures and dwellings, although no field systems associated with the settlement have survived.

The historic buildings of Tormarton Court, St Mary Magdalene Church and Manor Farm are situated near the main street. The Old Manor House, south of St Mary Magdalene Church, belonged to the family of de la Rivere. Most of the building was demolished in the Civil War (1642-1649), but a section, including the vast kitchen and old fireplace, has been incorporated into the present Manor Farm. You can see the Coat of Arms of de la Rivere in the end wall overlooking the churchyard. Nearly opposite the church is the fine 18th century house of Tormarton Court, partly obscured by a high stone wall.


**Hill close to
Tormarton**





THE TAP AND CHURCH

The 'Tap', a monument backing onto the playground at the bottom of The Street was a philanthropic water supply for parishioners that reputedly put the Rector's wife, Barbara Charlotte Anderson, in some financial difficulty. Her grave lies in the churchyard, 5 meters south of the chancel - a low 'coffin' inside iron posts and rails. "Here lieth the body of Barbara Charlotte: Relict of the Rev. J.S.M. Anderson: Rector of this Parish, died April 16. 1872. Aged 76: The Weary are at rest". Another gravestone, 6 meters south of the south porch, is a memorial to Jane and William Risdon Callow and their ten children. Mr Callow was a blacksmith and the Parish Council minutes record that he was their first chairman in 1894.



DODINGTON PARK

Dodington means - "the farmstead associated with Dudda" - a Saxon name. The Domesday Book (1086) records that the manor of Dodington had 7 ploughs, 11 villagers and 7 slaves. From 1350 onwards the lords of the manor were the Codrington family. Sir John Codrington was standard bearer to King Henry V at the Battle of Agincourt in 1415. A large manor house was erected in Dodington Park in 1557, but the great days of the Dodington estate really began with the land boom in the West Indies in the 1640s, when the family made a fortune in Barbuda and Antigua. The seas around Antigua still bear witness to the local connection with the Codrington Shoals and the Dodington Banks.

In the 1760s Sir William Codrington decided to improve the estate and engaged the famous landscape designer Lancelot Brown, often known as 'Capability' Brown, to reshape the park at a cost of 1368 pounds - a large sum of money at the time - creating

one of the great panoramic views of the southern Cotswolds. In 1796 Sir Christopher Bethell Codrington started to rebuild the manor house in a grand style. His architect was James Wyatt, who was also working on alterations to Windsor Castle and the Houses of Parliament at the same time. Sir Christopher had at least fifteen children, so the estate employed six nursery nurses (paid between £7 and £14 per year) and six laundry maids. The butler and the valet, by contrast, earned £52 each. Dodington House is privately owned and is not visible from the walk.

DODINGTON AND THE TURNPIKE UPRISINGS

As you pass The Garden House at Dodington take a look at the wrought-iron gates. These gates were originally erected at Paganhill, near Stroud, to commemorate the abolition of slavery in the British colonies in 1834 - somewhat ironic as the Dodington estate was largely financed by slave worked sugar plantations. At Dodington Ash the original 1730's turnpike house was pulled down by local people resenting the tolls demanded and a reward of twenty guineas was offered to catch the guilty parties. The Pike Cottage you see today is a replacement from the 1840's.

Tolls ranged from one shilling for a vehicle pulled by six animals to halfpence for a donkey laden with coal. Not surprisingly, this outraged the miners of Kingswood, who were suspected of destroying several turnpikes. They refused to deliver coal to Bristol, causing the price of coal to increase from one shilling per load to two shillings three pence. However turnpikes continued to be destroyed even after the colliers were exempted from all tolls, and Sir William Codrington claimed that some of his fellow country gentlemen were behind the trouble, resenting paying the toll themselves. Opposite the turnpike house, Bath Lodge, another building by James Wyatt, is a circular lodge with columns at the front. It has four semi-circular rooms, two on each floor. Despite the grandeur, the gatekeeper had a privy at the bottom of the garden - water closets were reserved for the 'big house'.



Bath Lodge

