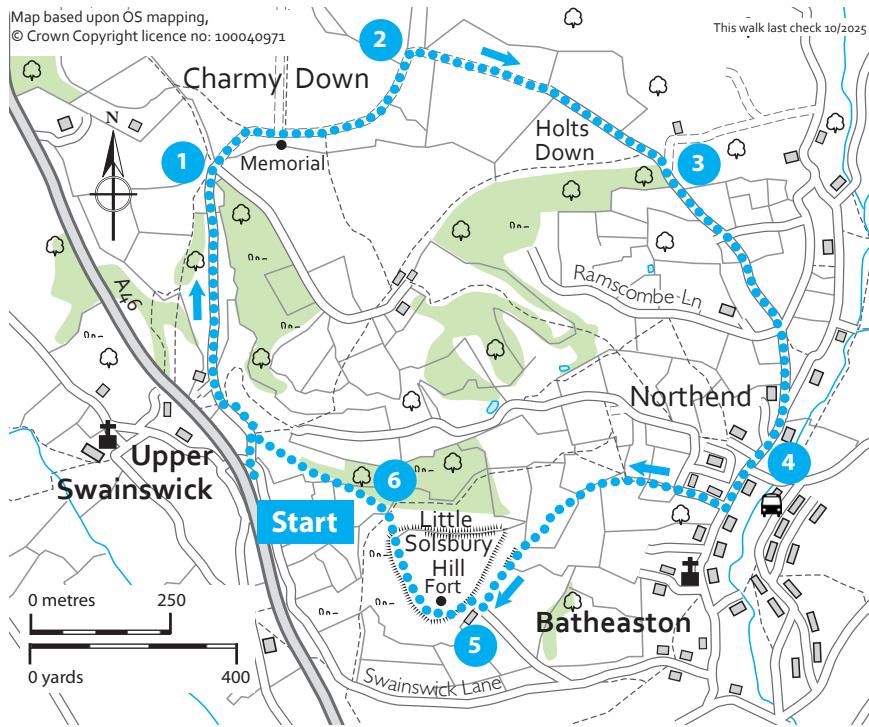


## Walk 7 Charmy Down up, down and over.

A circular walk climbing to an atmospheric ex-airfield, then offering stunning ever changing views as you descend before a second climb to the top of the scheduled ancient monument of Little Solsbury Hill.

# Route



## Start & Finish: Upper Swainswick

\*W3W - files.grant.goats

**Distance:** 4.75 mile / 7.6 km with an up and down of 994 ft / 302m

**Slopes:** Two ascents and descents.

## Steps & stiles: One stile

**Terrain:** Unpaved paths and minor roads

**Transport:** Difficult to access by public transport. Visit [travelwest.info](http://travelwest.info). Bus to Catherine Way bus stop in Northend, Bathampton. 350m from route at Northend (start at point 4 on the map). Free parking available in layby under A46 at Upper Swainswick.

**Public toilets:** No public toilets on route but

public toilets in Batheaston (20p) a short detour from Northend.

**Refreshments:** None on the route, take a picnic! Though shops and cafes of Batheaston are a short detour away.

**Rest points:** Plenty of points for an informal stop, no benches.

**Dogs welcome:** Yes, though livestock in some fields so please be prepared to put them on a lead.

### Wheel friendly: No

**Features on the route:** Charmy Down, Airfield Memorial, Little Solsbury Hill, Iron Age Hill Fort, Views of Bath and St Catherine's Valley

Standing on the pavement next to the layby, walk up hill so the road is on your right. Follow the road as it curves towards the left, just before you reach the A46 cross the road, into a minor road. You should be able to find and follow some Circuit of Bath way markers here.

Follow the lane up until you find a gate on your right. Pass through the gate into the field. Here you separate from the Circuit of Bath as it takes you right, you will later return this way. Instead, turn left and follow the footpath as it runs parallel to the lane. Soon you meet a field gate back onto the lane. Pass through the gate and turn right to walk along the quiet lane. Continue as the lane curves round to the right passing a building, and then continues steadily up hill, with good views to the right. At the top the lane gives way to a cross road of paths. 1 Go straight ahead over the stile next to a metal field gate to the right of the drive to Wingfield Farm.

Continue on this track as it curves right on to the top of Charmy Down. Charmy Down is a large flat expanse which was once an airfield, and some of the old buildings, including the control tower, can still be seen today. Now farmland, the area has quite a desolate feel to it. The airfield opened in November 1940 to provide vital fighter defence for Bristol and the surrounding area and was closely connected to Colerne airfield. It finally closed in October 1946 after a short stint as a gliding school.

Stay on the track, passing the Charmy Down Airfield memorial, head towards the communications tower, keeping it on your right, as the track takes a wide curve to the left passing fields on both sides and passing the mobile mast on the right. Electric fencing may cross the route at points, use the plastic hook to safely pass through. Please make sure to leave all fencing as you found it.

The track suddenly stops **2**. Turn right through a metal gate, next to a metal field gate. The path from here can be muddy and is not always clear due to the positioning of feeding stations for the grazing animals along the route. But you are on the right track! Keep the fence on your left and continue until another metal gate on the left. Go through the gate so the fence is now on your right, and continue. The path soon looks to be heading towards some slurry heaps, divert round to the right here, around a small grass mound so you are walking with a dry-stone wall and trees on your right. *Continued on the next page.*



## Walk 7 Charmy Down up, down and over.

The track continues, through a metal field gate **3**. You now have a dry-stone wall on each side. Follow it along, enjoying the views as they open up in front of you over St. Catherine's Valley. The track soon starts to head down hill to a barrier. On the other side of the barrier, you will be back on a tarmac road, Hollies Lane. Continue steadily downhill on this minor road, ignoring a footpath on the left. At the cross roads with Ramscombe Lane continue straight over and down. Soon you will be in Northend, on the outskirts of Batheaston.

At the T junction with 'Northend' turn right **4**, and continue down some more until you see a new housing estate on the left and a road on your right which has a grass island in the middle of the junction next to a large stone house.

Cross the road here to pick up the pavement on the other side, staying on Northend. On your right you will pass Eagle House which has a purple sign outside on the railings. It is a Grade II listed building, in the grounds is Garden Villa a summerhouse that was used as a refuge for suffragettes who had been released from prison after hunger strikes between 1909 and 1912. Eagle House was owned by Emily Blathwayt, who herself was a suffragette, and her husband Colonel Linley Blathwayt.

Continue along the pavement, crossing Eagle Road. The next road on your right will be Seven Acres Lane. Follow the lane up passing houses until it takes a sharp right. At this point, continue straight ahead onto the path that runs uphill along the edge of a field. Follow it up to a metal gate into a meadow and head uphill to the corner. Go through the wooden gate here, and continue upwards along the hedge of the next field and through another gate. Now turn diagonally left to follow the path up once more, though at a much shallower angle. Make sure you turn around to enjoy the views.

Go through the wooden gate here **5** onto a track and turn left passing a building on your left. Little Solsbury Hill is now on your right. Follow the track until you come to a cattle grid. Just before the cattle grid turn right and follow the path up to the top with an altitude of 191m, next to a National Trust sign. Turn left to follow the edge (ramparts) where the old defensive wall would have been. Solsbury Hill was occupied as a hill fort during the early Iron Age, between 300BC and 100BC. It is one of the southernmost fortifications in the Cotswolds.

You have now re-joined the Circuit of Bath (and can follow the way markers back to the start). Keeping the plateau on your right, follow the edge of the ramparts round as the views over Bath open up. Pass the trig point and listen out for skylarks singing high in the sky if you are visiting in spring or summer.

When the city is mostly behind you keep a look out for a path down off the ramparts. This is easy to miss, but is close to the point where the ramparts start to bear right. In front of you, your view should be only fields. Once you find it, head down the first slope (the ramparts of the old hill fort), there is then a small plateau where if you look to the left you can see a small turf maze cut into the hill. This was created in the mid-1990s when people were

protesting about the construction of the A46 which you can see beyond.

Continue down the next steep slope and then down again though the wooden gate ahead of you **6**. From here it is an easy downhill, through a field, followed by a small copse area and into another field. This is the field you started in. Look for the gate onto the lane on your left and retrace your footsteps back to the parking area.

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Bathscape is a National Lottery Heritage Fund supported scheme overseen by a partnership of local organisations and led by Bath & North East Somerset Council. The Scheme was launched in October 2018 to promote better management and use of the Bathscape, the beautiful natural landscape surrounding the historic city of Bath. It delivers a range of projects, including practical volunteering, advice to landowners, meadow creation, learning and skill projects and encourages the active enjoyment of the landscape.

In addition to the Circuit of Bath the scheme promotes a range of shorter local walks, runs the annual Bathscape Walking Festival each September and a series of weekly walks throughout the year.

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\*W3W stands for What3Words, which is an alternative way of specifying precise locations. You can use the W3W app or website for free to see these locations on a map.

