

Edington

Distance: 5.5 miles / 8.9 km leisurely walking

Total ascent: 226 m

In Pursuit of Spring: Chapter 4 *From Dunsbridge over Salisbury Plain*

Refreshments: The Three Daggers, Edington 47 Westbury Rd, Edington BA13 4PG
Edington Farm Shop and Café 47 Westbury Rd, Edington BA13 4PG

Map: Landranger 184

Getting there: Westbury can be reached by train and various buses run to Edington between Westbury and Devizes.

If driving, take the B3098 from Westbury, pass through Bratton to Edington. Pass the The Three Daggers pub on the left and turn next into Long Hollow. Drive up this and park on the left-hand side of Long Hollow.

Thomas came off Salisbury Plain and, cycling along its northern face, went westwards through Erlestoke on his way to stay at Dillybrook Farm, a favourite retreat.

...Before Tinhead there were more vertical rolls and corresponding troughs on the hillside, and at the foot again three or four wide terraces, and below them a cornfield reaching to the road... Several times a hollow cleft in the slope below the road – a cleft walled by trees, but grass-bottomed – guided the eye towards it. ... But I was not going the same way, for I was tired and alone, and it was near the end of the afternoon, though still cloudily bright and warm. I had to go down, not up, to find a bed that I knew of seven or eight miles from Tinhead and Edington.

There are two typical downside villages of brick and thatch, built on the banks of the main road, a parallel lane or two, and some steep connecting lanes at right angles. When I first entered them from below I was surprised again and again how many steps yet higher up the downside they extended. From top to bottom the ledges and inclines on which they stand, and the intervening spaces of grass and orchard, cover about half a mile... Edington, almost linked to Tinhead by cottages scattered along the road, has a Plough and Old White Horse. They were beginning to advertise the Tinhead and Bratton inns as suitable for teas and weekend parties. Hence, perhaps, the prefix Old. For hereby is the first station since Lavington on the line that goes parallel to the wall of the Plain and a mile or two below the road, all along the Pewsey Vale to Westbury.

A motorcar overtook me in the village, scattering a group of boys.

'Look out!' cried one, and as the thing passed by, turned to the next boy with, 'There's a fine motor; worth more than you are; cost a lot of money.'

Is this not the awakening of England? At least it is truth. One pink foxy boy laughed in my face as if there had been iron bars or a wall of plate glass dividing us; another waited till I had started, to hail me:

'Longlegs.'

A string of springline villages, situated where the chalk hills meet heavy Kimmeridge clay, threads along the base of Salisbury Plain. Edington, steeped in history, is with its neighbour Bratton, among the finest. It is believed that Alfred, after grim retreat under Danish pressure, gathered his forces above Ethandun on the iron age ramparts near Bratton Camp in 878 and inflicted a heavy defeat on their leader Guthrum and reclaimed Wessex. The present Westbury White Horse cut in 1778 and having a period outline, may possibly have been cut over an earlier one created to mark the victory. The battle was not the only occasion when blood was shed on these heights. In 1450 the unpopular but powerful William Ayscough,

Bishop of Salisbury, who was close to the ineffectual Henry VI, was caught up in the turmoil of the Cade rebellion, a protest against corrupt mismanagement. He was dragged from Mass in Edington Priory by a turbulent mob and stoned to death on the top of Edington Hill. Edington Manor was granted to the Benedictine nuns at Romsey in Saxon times. William of Edington, born in the village in 1300, became a reformist Treasurer of the Exchequer, Lord Chancellor and an influential Bishop of Winchester. In 1361 he created a chantry to St Mary, St Katherine and All Saints at Edington which was given over to a community of *Bonhommes*, not canons as Thomas suggests, nor friars but a community of prayer and service following the monastic Augustinian rule. The Priory church and the monastery walls are all that remain of the medieval community. The area remains devoted to arable agriculture along with pasture and meadowlands.

1. Walk up Long Hollow.



Long Hollow

Long Hollow is Thomas's *rough cartway*, clearly a much-loved route: *All along, good roads led down to the vale, and an equal number of rough roads climbed the hillside up the Plain. I was to go down, not up, and I looked with regret at the clear ridge and the rampart of Bratton Camp carved on it against the sky, the high bare slopes, the green magnificent gullies and horizontal terraces, the white roads, and especially the rough cartway mounting steeply from Edington between prodigious naked banks. For I had formerly gone up this cartway on a day so fine that for many nights and afterwards I could send myself to sleep by thinking of how I climbed, seeing only these precipitous banks and the band of sky above them, until I emerged into the glory and peace of the Plain, of the unbounded Plain and the unbounded sky, and the marriage of sun and wind that was being celebrated upon them.*

2. Pass the entrance to West Down Farm on the right, and continue forward.

3. Continue along the road until the road and a track separate. Follow the road bends to the left along the White Horse Trail/Imber Way. Follow this for just over a mile.

4. At the T junction, the lane signed Byway to Edington is the old turnpike road to Salisbury – hence its name Salisbury Hollow. Turn right along the track, now designated as the Imber Range Path.

5. After about 400 yards a three-way junction emerges, with the Imber Range Path continuing to the right and an unclassified road behind and off to the right, and an

Thomas quoting Hazlitt: *'What I like best is to lie whole mornings on a sunny bank on Salisbury Plain, without any object before me, neither knowing nor caring how time passes, and thus, "with light-winged toys of feathered idleness" to melt down hours to moments... At length I rouse myself from my reverie, and home to dinner, proud of killing time with thought – nay, even without thought.'*

This path runs along Coulston Hill, 500 – 700 ft above sea level.

A little farther on, Coulston Hill was hollowed out into a great round steep bay which had once been a beech wood. Now all the beeches were lying anyhow, but mostly pointing downward, on the steep where they had fallen

Unclassified Road to Coulston ahead. At this point, take the signposted grass path sharp left. Walk along the field edge to a stile in the corner. Cross this.

6. Walk downhill through the beeches of Baynton Wood to the pasture below.

7. Go down to the and cross the A3098 to the lodge gates of Baynton House Park. Go through the gate on the left of the cattle grid; it is designed to look like part of the fence.

8. Go forward through the deer park, following the permitted path to the right of the lake and the cattle grid and down to the cress beds and spring line and through the kissing gate and on to St Thomas À Becket Church at Coulston.

or slid, some singly, some in raft-like masses. Not a tree remained upright. The bared, blackish earth and the gray stems – of the colour of charred wood and ashes – suggested fire. The disorder of the strewn debris suggested earthquake. All was silent...



From Coulston Hill

The Marlborough Downs can be seen off to the north east. *To the low, dark-blue elm country away from the Plain – that is, northward – and to the far wooded ridge on its horizon, the westering light was beginning to add a sleeplike softness of pale haze. Over the low hedges I saw league after league of this lower land, and the drab buttresses of Beacon Hill near Devizes on its eastern edge. It had the appearance of a level, uninhabitable land of many trees.*

In the deerpark dogs should be kept on a lead. Baynton House, U-planned and two storeyed, originated around 1658, was successively remodelled in the late 18th century. The lake may have once been the site of a watermill. It remains a private residence.

East Coulston is set among pasture and marshlands. Houses are scattered, many of them timber-framed and thatched. The church probably dates to the 12th century. It was originally dedicated to St Andrew; its link with Thomas à Becket goes to the 18th century. After serious decline, it was restored in 1842. Note the industrially-inspired stone grave to the left of the entrance. Francis Saville Kent, murdered in 1860 at the age of 3 at Road House (now Langham House) in Rode is also

9. Turn left along the village road. Between Font House on the bend and a right-hand telegraph pole is a drive. Just inside on the left is a brick shelter and a kissing gate. Go through this and successive gates, keeping in a straight line.

10. Go through the gates by Upper Baynton Farm and onwards until Baynton Lane is reached.

11. Continue along this between the houses.

12. Follow the passage way ahead between Mulberry House and the brick farm building

13. Continue on through the housing development along the road which is called The Weir. At the junction, with The Priory in front of you, take the way round to the left, using the raised pavement.

14. The pavement leads to Edington Priory.



Edward Thomas

buried here. The tragic story was the subject of Kate Summerscale's *The Suspicions of Mr Whicher* (2008)

This is the Baynton Way, named after the family who held the manor since the 13th century and held lands in the vicinity, as far as Orcheston St George on Salisbury Plain. Upper Baynton Farm, near the site of the manor house of Baynton, is midway between Tinhead and Coulston. Like Baynton, Tinhead was separate from Edington.

The way becomes Court Lane and leads to the Tinhead Road.

Thomas: *Tinhead has an Old George Inn of an L-shape, with a yard in the angle.* This house, now Mulberry House, is a former 18th century coaching house on the old Bath to Salisbury turnpike route through Tinhead.

Thomas notes other pubs: *Edington, almost linked to Tinhead by cottages scattered along the road, has a Plough and Old White Horse.* Both pubs, the former in Lower Rd, and the latter, rebuilt after a fire in 1928, are now in private hands. He does not mention The Lamb which has been refurbished and reborn as The Three Daggers

The house now called the Priory must, however, have originally been a part of the religious foundation, later modified as a manorial home. The exterior has undergone frequent adaptation but is thought to be of the late Middle Ages. Of the original priory, the heavy buttressed wall of the precinct, probably of the 14th century, also remains. A square monastery fishpond lies within the grounds.

Like Salisbury Cathedral, this church looks as if it had been made in one piece. All over, it is a uniform rough gray without ivy or moss or any stain. On first entering the churchyard, what most struck my eye was the name of the Rev. Hussy Cave-Browne-Cave, for his name is on the fifth step of the cross erected during his vicarship; and next to that a prostrate cross within a stone kerb, six yards long by three yards wide, in memory of a member of the Long family.



Edington Priory, BM

The vicarship of Henry Cave-Brown-Cave (1840–1890), ran for ten years from 1880 and he was responsible a major restoration of the church. The Priory Church is just over 150ft in length and is an exemplar of the transition from Decorated to Perpendicular style.

The church is the centre of a village of big box tombs, some ornamented by carving, one covered by a stone a foot thick, mossed, lichened, stained orange and black, pitted deep by rain, and retaining not a letter of its inscription. I saw the names Pike, Popler, Oram, and Fatt. Inside, out of the rain, lie the Longs, Carters, and Taylers, the days of their lives conspicuously recorded, and more than this in the case of, George Tayler, since he died in 1852, and left money for a sixpenny cake to be given to each Sunday-school teacher, and a threepenny one to each scholar, once a year, "immediately after the sermon" (I think, at Easter). Mr. Tayler was either an enemy to sermons, or did not know as much as Sir Philip Sidney about schoolboys. One transept is the exclusive domain of an Augustinian canon, his head on a cushion, his feet against a barrel, while the coping-stone of his monument is capped by a barrel and a tree sprouting from it. The locked chancel is peopled by effigies of great or of rich men lying on their backs or kneeling and clasping their hands in prayer, as they have done for centuries; one of them a Welshman from Glamorgan, Sir Edward Lewys.



The Lewys tomb, BM

The fine alabaster tomb with effigies of Edward Lewis and his wife Anne, Lady Beauchamp, who, befitting her higher family connections reclines above her husband. A youthful angel proffers a crown and their four praying boys and one girl are flanked by angels. They leased Edington manor which was largely destroyed in the late 18th century. The depiction on the Tayler family echoes the family line-up of Lewis family portrayal. Imber, one of Edward Thomas's favourite villages, was requisitioned in 1943 as a training ground for Normandy-bound American army. The village's name will have been noted on Salisbury Plain. The army has retained possession and Edington Priory has two effigies and a fragment of medieval glass, removed from the abandoned church and set up in the south aisle. Linked to the arcade is



From Imber Church, BM



Tomb of the unknown cleric, BM

15. Leaving the Priory, walk to the seating and picnic area called Ralph's Seat opposite the priory and go up the steps and up a steep knoll passing through a small wooded area to reach a stile. Cross and walk diagonally across the field to the far corner where it joins a footpath giving access to a playing field or farm shop and the Three Daggers pub.

16. Carry on eastwards until the start point in Long Hollow is reached.

the Cheney tomb; the family owned Brook House in nearby Rudge which Thomas knew well. Its latten images have been torn from the Purbeck marble slab. The unknown recumbent figure on the canopied 15th century altar tomb in the south transept has an angel holding a shield with a repeated punning rebus – a sprig (of bay) growing out of a barrel (tun). The chancel shows signs of ant-papist mutilations of stonework.

In the reredos is a statue of the metaphysical poet George Herbert who married Jane Danvers of Tinhead here in 1629.

Cobbett said of this village (Sept 1826), 'The church in this village would contain several thousand persons; and the village is reduced to a few straggling houses'. He was more admiring of the land and its produce. He complains of the multiplicity of churches in the Stapleford valley; a utilitarian view seems to have trumped medieval religious aspirations.



The Lamb, now the Three Daggers

On the far side of the houses on the left, note Salisbury Hollow where the 18th century turnpike road ran uphill to Salisbury. The gradient was so steep that four or more horses were needed to drag the coaches uphill to Coulston Down.

With thanks to Lesley Insall and Carol Nicholls, Bristol Ramblers
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