

## Tellisford

**Distance:** 7.16km / 4.4 miles, leisurely walking

**In Pursuit of Spring:** Chapter 7 Trowbridge to Shepton Mallet

**Refreshments:** Stowford Manor Farm, Wingfield BA14 9LH, cream teas, seasonally  
Café at Farleigh Hungerford Castle BA2 7RS, vending machine for hot and cold drinks

The Hungerford Arms, Farleigh Hungerford, Bath BA2 7RX

**Map:** Explorer 143 (Warminster and Trowbridge)

**Getting there:** Bus from Trowbridge to Poplar Lane (Dillybrook Farm) and walk down the No Through Road lane opposite in a westerly direction. Pass the caravan site at Vaggs Hill Farm on the left and, at the top of a gentle rise, tenanted by oaks and beech, is a long, unsurfaced layby. If driving, take the B3109 road to the junction with Poplar Tree Lane and take the No Through Road opposite to Tellisford and Vaggs and the layby as above.

A word of warning: after a promising start at Vaggs Hill Farm, the way to the farms along Pomeroy Lane and beyond can sometimes be muddy and, in due season, field crops may make it necessary to walk the field perimeter. It is worth persevering with the walk.

There is little point starting this walk from Tellisford as there is no parking in the village or along its narrow lane. This walk is via the Frome road from Bradford-on-Avon, B3109, which is Thomas's route. *We took the Frome Rd as far as Winkfield [now Wingfield] where we turned off westward to Farleigh Hungerford...* In Spring 1913 Edward drafted some of *In Pursuit of Spring*, staying at Dillybrook Farm a little further on from his Farleigh Hungerford turn-off. On 23 March he pencilled a note to Walter de la Mare, inviting him to join him. He directed him to walk from Trowbridge station by asking for *the Wingfield road, then at Wingfield turn to the left on the Road, Beckington & Frome road & Dillybrook stands by some firs on the left 1½ miles down*. The firs are still standing.

Towards the end of his writing, Helen went to join him at the farm and retained vivid and enduring memories of the place. *I shall never forget the kindness of those people – the farmer and his two spinster sisters who lodged us in their house and treated us as though we were honoured guests. The farmhouse was tall, and on the top floor Edward had two large rooms with sloping ceilings and wide windows. It was spring, and in both rooms great log fires burned... they treated us like children, and would not believe we had three children... They could not give us enough or do enough for us... They treated us as if we were a honeymoon couple, and made us feel that it was not at all inappropriate.* They visited Clifford Bax at Broughton Gifford. Helen found him and his set pretentious and felt thoroughly out of place, much to Edward's annoyance. Leaving them, she says, *I was glad to be out in the open air with my blackthorn, walking by Edward's side, back to our farmhouse by way of Bradford-on-Avon.* (Ch 11, World Without End.)

Helen remembered *Near the farmhouse ran a stream in which Edward bathed. The brother – who made as much of us as the sisters – got his men to clear away some boulders to make the pool more convenient. Down to this pool we both went each morning. I remember so well the path through the wood which at this time of the year led through a haze of bluebells to the river.*

*I remember as we walked side by side I did indeed feel like a young bride, and Edward said, as he put his arm round my waist and I mine round his, 'I don't believe, Helen, you'll ever grow up, or ever be too old to be made love to.'*

*'When I am, will you love me as you do now?'*

*'That's a question I won't answer before breakfast,' he said, teasingly, as catching sight of the river through the trees he began to take off his clothes, and ran to the bank. (World Without End.)*

**1. Walk back to the start of the layby; on the left is a footpath sign and kissing gate onto a field bordered by the woods of Vaggs Hill Bushes. Go through this and walk in a left diagonal direction towards Tipney Wood and a stile in the field corner.**

**2. Cross the stile and walk alongside the wood to another stile. Cross it and go over the field ahead to a yellow-topped post indicating a crossing on the electric wire fence. An insulating bar runs along the top; this being high, the only real option is to crawl under the wire.**

**3. Cross ahead – a mast on the far horizon will aid navigation – to a kissing gate on the farther side. Go through; walk to the right and cross the wooden bridge with stiles at either end, situated to the left of a field gate.**

**4. The path swings to the right towards Pomeroy Farm. Go over the low brow and pass through the kissing gate by a water trough, turning sharp right and crossing through the kissing gates on either side of the unmetalled farm lane.**

**5. Look to the right to see the next kissing gates –also flanking a farm track. Go through these and walk straight over to a building with**

This offers a fine view of the Frome Valley, with Tellisford and its church among the trees below. Farleigh Hungerford Castle is visible above woodland.



Nettlebridge Valley, BM



Pomeroy Farm, BM

solar panels to the kissing gate at the gap between Pomeroy Farm on the right and Matthews Farm on the left. This is the metalled Pomeroy Lane.

6. Go left, past Matthews Farm and the cottages that front Belle Coeur Farm until a footpath sign is reached on the right; walk immediately beyond the farm entrance. Ahead is a barn. Go to its right towards a gabled building and a wooden footbridge with stiles at either end.

7. Cross this footbridge and walk along the righthand hedgerow. Go through the kissing gate onto the farm drive. Turn right onto the Braford on Avon Walking Wheel and take the kissing gate immediately on the left.

8. Walk diagonally across the field to the stile next to a trough, on the left hand of a hedge with a single tree. Continue on the same direction to cross another stile at the end of Snarlton Farm drive. Turn left onto the A366.

9. Walk carefully on the righthand side of this busy road. Before the blind corner, cross to the left and walk on the verge to Stowford Manor Farm.

10. Inside the farm entrance, turn right on the permissive way through the field and over a stile and follow the River Frome on the left. Go along the field and through the kissing gate by the weir of Farleigh and District Swimming Club. Go straight across the field to a stile onto the road.



Matthew's farm, BM

Farleigh Hungerford Castle, St Leonard's Church and Farleigh House may be seen ahead.

*In half a mile we were in Somerset, descending by a steep bank of celandines under beeches that rose up on our right towards the Frome. The river lay clear ahead of us, and to our left. A bushy hill, terraced horizontally, rose beyond it, and Farleigh Hungerford Castle, an ivied front a hollow-eyed round tower, and a gateway, faced us from the brow.*

Stowford Manor Farm is a delightful collection of buildings and offers cream teas in season. An interesting wall plaque bears testimony to local swimming club members who died at war.



Farleigh Hungerford bridge, BM



Farleigh and District Swimming Club site, BM

**11. Turn left over two bridges and follow the road round to the right uphill to Farleigh Hungerford Castle.**



Reconstruction of Farleigh Hungerford Castle

**12. Go left up along the lane signed variously to Farleigh House, Tellisford and Rode.**



Victorian water tower, BM

*From the bridge and the ruined cottages and mills collected round [Farleigh Hungerford], we walked up to the castle, which is a show place.*

The castle is an attractive site and worth a visit to its many buildings set in an expanse of green. It has a drinks dispenser and a toilet.

The Hungerford Arms lies a short distance onwards and on the righthand side of the road. In 1369 the medieval Ferlege passed to Thomas Hungerford, steward of John of Gaunt. His family created Farleigh Hungerford Castle, quadrangular in original design, constructed over a manor house and set in a park which necessitated the destruction of local villages, the mounds of Rowley being visible in fields north of Stowford and the A366 road. Outer walls, towers and a gatehouse were added. The Hungerfords fought for Parliament in the Civil War and the castle was seized and held for much of the duration by the royalists. The prodigiously gambling Edward Hungerford lost the property in 1686. It fell into disrepair, was sold and much of the stone was cannibalised by its owners, the wool industrialist Houltons, for local buildings, including nearby Farleigh House. Interest in the ancient castle site was revived in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, excavations were undertaken and visitors came to inspect it. It is now run by English Heritage.

After the castle, Thomas says *From here the Other Man would have me turn aside to see Tellisford.*

This is part of the Macmillan way. The route passes St Leonard's parish church, a 1443 replacement for the castle church which had been set aside for use by the castle's owners. Like Farleigh House, it once stood within the castle domain. It was remodelled in 1856.

Having passed the church note, opposite it, the Victorian water tower. In the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Houltons piped water from castle grounds to waterwheels in what is now Castle House, by which it was lifted to the water tower and so supplied houses in Farleigh and Tellisford. It was in use till mains water arrived in the 1970s.

Farleigh House, is a Gothic fantasy set in 120-acre grounds and created in the 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries by the Houltons who owned it till 1899.



Farleigh House

**Continue downhill, ignoring the road on the right.**

**13. Continue beyond the entrance to Farleigh House. After crossing a low bridge in a dip, and, almost immediately, follow the Macmillan Way through a kissing gate on the left.**

**14. Follow the Way in its right curve up to the gate on the edge of the woods ahead.**

**15. At the farther end of the wood, go through the gate and, turning right, follow the Macmillan Way uphill and through the gate at the top. Ignore the footpath on the right.**

**16. Track the path's curve to a complex of gates and turn through the gate on the right.**

**17. Walk straight ahead, passing Manor Farm and go through the lefthand gate down to a signposted lane on which we turn right.**

**18. Go past the cottages and up to the junction with Crabb Hall.**

**19. Go left across Crabb Hall and down the handrailed ancient cobbled steps to the river.**

Since then it has been a preparatory school, special needs college, an optical company's HQ, and is currently the training ground for Bath Rugby Club. It has associated conservatories, a chapel, stables, six lodges and a restored medieval fortified tower. Cley Hill is visible on the horizon.

The route from point 13 leads to **Tellisford**. ... *a hamlet scattered along half a mile of byroad, from a church at the corner down to the Frome.*

Tellisford lies on the boundary of Somerset and Wiltshire. The church, seen only in the distance at the start of this walk, goes back to the 12th century; its tower dates from 1490 and extensive restoration was carried out in 1854. At its entrance is a plaque marking Tellisford as a Thankful Village, none of its soldiers having died through action in WWI. Estimates say there are 32 such English villages – and nine of them are in Somerset. The hamlet was known as *Tefleford* in Saxon times and *Tablesford* in Domesday. The Hungerfords owned it in the 15<sup>th</sup> century and rebuilt its Domesday fulling mill, the tithe from which financed their castle chantry chapel. Tellisford was a centre for agriculture and milling. Upper floors of some houses were used as cottage industry weaving sheds. In 1785 a fire wasted about a third of the village properties.



Crabb Hall



Tellisford steps, BM



Tellisford, 1912

**20. Walk past the restored mill on the right and the culvert on its left and cross over the bridge and up the hill past Vaggs Hill Farm House**



Tellisford packhorse bridge

Crabb Hall is named after a family which made its fortune in the wool trade, mentioned variously in documents as 'broadweaver', 'fuller' and wool dealer'. The higher status of the house is indicated by the dressed stone, other buildings having random rubble walls. Its panelled doors, as opposed to vertical plank doors, were also a sign of gentility. The Crabbs were involved in building many of the village houses and in setting up a local school for poor children. They have table top tombs in the churchyard.

Thomas says of these packhorse route that the *steps between the walls were lovely with humid moneywort, and saxifrage like filigree, and ivy-leaved toadflax.* These plants can still be found growing in the wall. Of the scene ahead of him as he stood on the level, he writes, *Once there was a ford, but now you cross by a stone footbridge with white wooden handrails. A ruined flock mill and a ruined ancient house stand next to it on one side; on the other the only house is a farm with a rounded tower embodied in its front. Away from this farm a beautiful meadow slopes between the river and the woods above. This grass, which becomes level for a few yards nearest the bank, was the best possible place, said the Other Man, for running in the sun after bathing at the weir – we could see its white wall of foam half a mile higher up the river, which was concealed by alders beyond. He said it was a great haunt of nightingales. And there was also a service tree; and, said he, in that tree sang a thrush all through May – it was the best May that ever was – and so well it sang, unlike any other thrush, that it made him think he would gladly live no longer than a thrush if he could do some one thing right, as crisp and rich, as the song was.*

In medieval times, the Frome valley was one of the wool trade's main industrial areas, as indicated by the presence of weirs, mill streams and fulling mills at Tellisford as well as at nearby Farleigh Hungerford, Rode and Stowford. The Tellisford weir dates back to Saxon times. Fuller's Earth was kneaded into wettened woollen cloth; it was a finishing process, absorbing lanolin and other

impurities. It also helped to matt the cloth fibres to increase its strength. Such mills had water-driven hammers which pounded the fibrous wool before it was stretched on tenterhooks or frames. The ruined mill that Thomas saw was what remained of one destroyed by fire. It was transformed in 2007 by Rachel Fielden and Anthony Battersby into a 55 Kilowatt turbine-driven micro hydroelectric plant generating 60kW for more than 50 homes in the village. Thomas's *ruined ancient house* stands to the left of the steps. The Battersby family have owned it since the 1950s and have sympathetically restored it in the vernacular style to its 1860 appearance. It goes back to the 14<sup>th</sup> century. The packhorse bridge, important for the transit of woollen goods, was rebuilt by a Tellisford Mason in 1692. spans over three arches with two cutwaters. Thomas's thrush-blessed service tree died but has been replaced by one of the same species as a memorial.

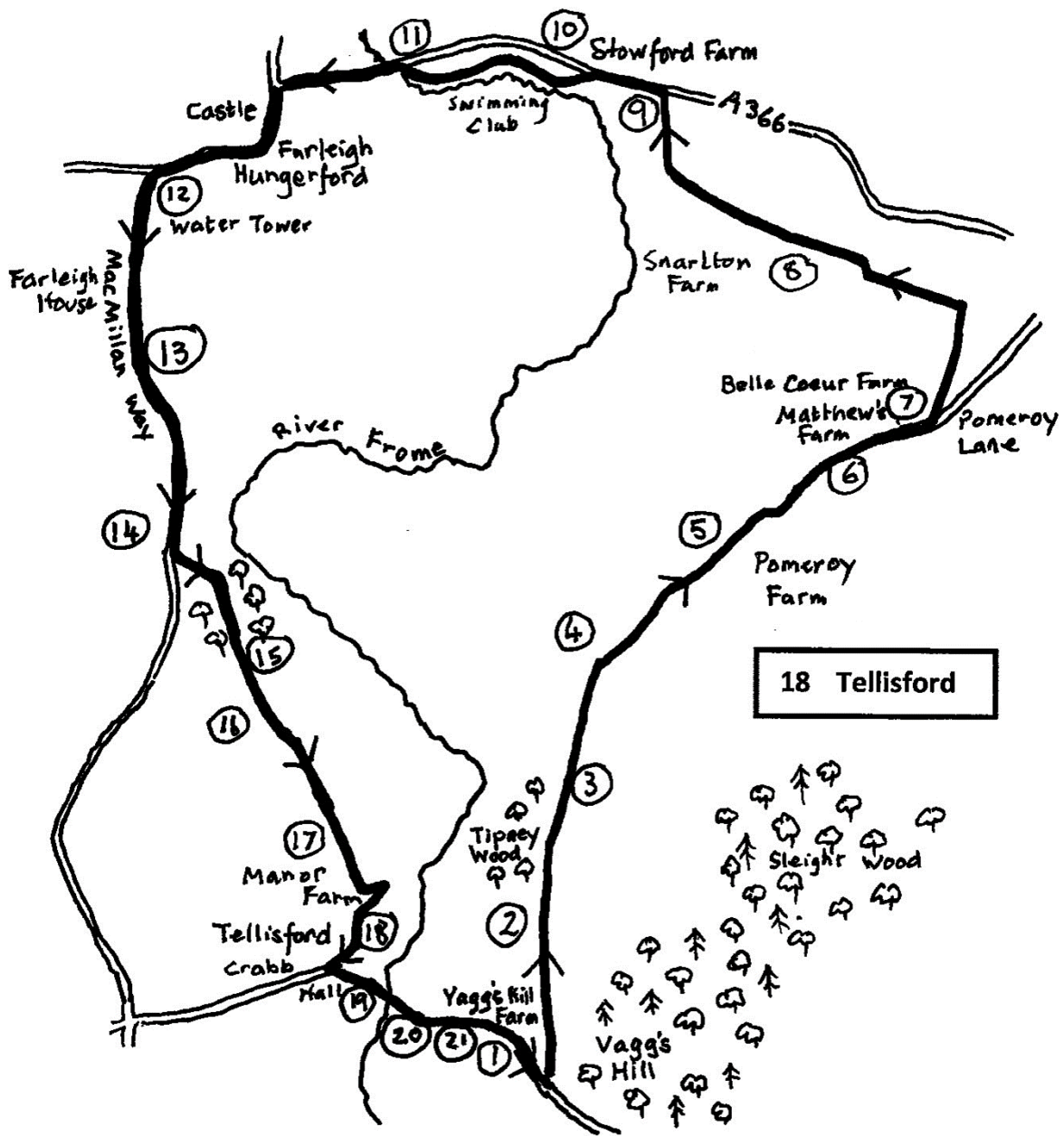


Vaggs Hill Farm, Edward Thomas

**21. Go on up the slope to the starting point.**

At the end of his day and of this chapter, Thomas wrote *with the aid of maps I travelled my road again, dwelling chiefly on Tellisford, its white bridge over the Frome, the ruined mill and cottage, the round tower of Vaggs Hill Farm, and the discreet green valley which enclosed them...* with its *rounded tower embodied in its front*. The building dates from 1618 and is believed to have been a hunting lodge. The rounded tower holds an impressive staircase – a possible demarcation between the owners' quarters and those of the servants.

With special thanks to Wendy Britton, Patsy Hudson, Stephen Draper, Bristol Ramblers, Claire Reddeman, Edward and Nicholas Mackay  
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Approximate scale: 1 mile