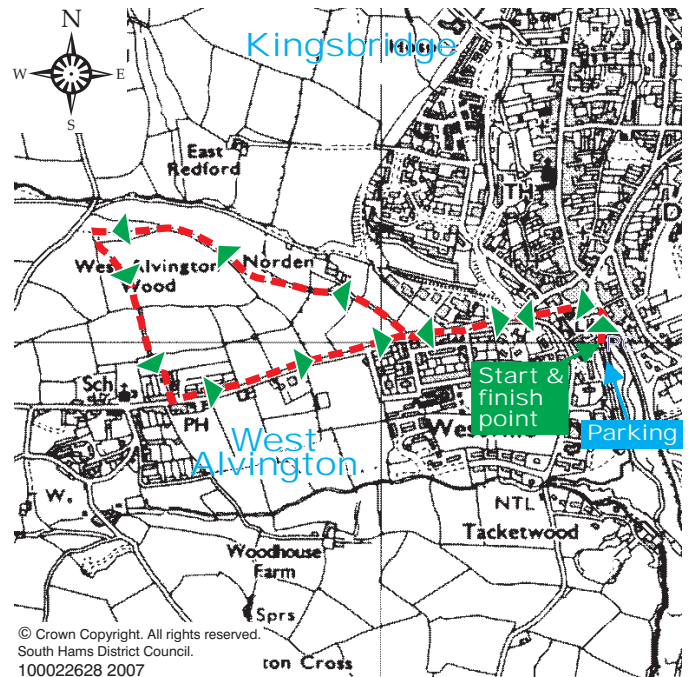


## Kingsbridge to West Alvington

Stroll out of Kingsbridge for a tranquil dawdle through parkland meadow and dappled woodland, just a hop, skip and a jump from the town – an unexpected delight.

Start:	Quay St Car Park, Kingsbridge
Distance:	2 miles
Circular Walk:	Yes
Grade:	Easy
Terrain:	Surfaced roads; field and woodland footpaths, fairly even underfoot, some mud in wet weather.
Obstacles & Steep Gradients:	3 stiles (1 can be bypassed). This route is not suitable for wheelchairs or pushchairs.
Public transport:	Kingsbridge is served by buses from Plymouth, Exeter, Totnes, Salcombe, and many other locations throughout the South Hams.
Refreshment stops:	Many pubs, cafes, and restaurants in Kingsbridge. Ring O' Bells pub, West Alvington 01548 852437.
Toilets:	Public toilets by entrance to Quay St Car Park in Kingsbridge
Parking:	Quay St Car Park, Kingsbridge. Pay and display.
Accommodation:	Please contact Kingsbridge Tourist Information Centre 01548 853195 <a href="http://www.kingsbridgeinfo.co.uk">www.kingsbridgeinfo.co.uk</a>
Other facilities:	Many shops in Kingsbridge. Tourist Information Centre and public payphones at the Quay. Public payphone on main street, West Alvington.
OS map:	Explorer 0L20
Grid Ref:	SX 735439



### Directions

1. By entrance to car park, pass to left of the Tourist Information Centre to the road. Turn left and head up road past the filling station.
2. Cross road above the roundabout and continue uphill.
3. Just before a long ramp of steps, turn right down a green lane signed 'Public Footpath'. By the gateway pillars, bear left along footpath.
4. Follow path down through field around edge of wood. Enter the wood where you see the stile and follow the path straight on.
5. After 200m turn left in front of the waymarker post and follow path up to a stile at the top edge of the wood. Follow the green lane leading down into West Alvington.
6. Turn left along pavement and then follow path above the road back to Kingsbridge. Cross road above the roundabout. Continue down past filling station and turn right past Tourist Information Centre to car park.



## Further Interest

### Heritage

The name West Alvington means 'Aelfwynn's Town'. Like many other settlements in the South Hams, it takes its name from its one time Saxon chief. Times have changed rapidly since, but only a hundred and fifty years ago this village was a thriving and independent little hub. Back then West Alvington had blacksmiths, carpenters, masons, plumbers, a shoemaker, tailor, and general shopkeeper. The parish was a largely self-sufficient world of its own, despite being so near to the main town.

As you walk up past the filling station, you pass the end of a road called 'Ropewalk'. This marks a place where fibres were twisted and stretched into rope in vast quantities for the vessels which were built in the shipyards of Kingsbridge.



A little further up the road, the distinctive roof of the old Kingsbridge railway station can be seen over the fence of the industrial estate on the right. This was the terminus for the 'Primrose Line' running from South Brent. It was the fashion among Victorians to come down to Kingsbridge by steam train and take a paddle steamer trip around the estuary. Eventually the railway met the fate of so many rural branch lines, being closed in 1963.

### Landscape

Looking into the creek from the quay at the start of the walk, you can see seaweeds flourishing. This is a rarity. Such a variety of seaweeds seldom survive so far 'upriver'. They are only able to thrive here because the estuary is not fed by any major river, and so the water remains very salty even up here at the head of the creek.

The land on which you stand on the quay was once also a part of Kingsbridge Creek, and lay underwater. Over the centuries the area was reclaimed and quays built over the original mudflats.

### Wildlife

A buzzard is often to be seen circling above the parkland meadow by West Alvington Wood. The biggest of our common birds of prey, it is a majestic sight sailing the thermals on its broad, 'fingered' wings. Buzzards hunt rabbits, small



rodents and birds, but they're not above picking around in the fields for earthworms too, particularly in the winter.

West Alvington Wood is a wonderful little pocket of old woodland. Its trees are mostly oak, beech and sweet chestnut.

Below these taller trees grow many-stemmed, silvery-barked hazel. Their catkins – known as 'lamb's tails' – come out very early in the spring, and if you look closely you can see the tree's tiny

red female flowers poking out of the end of some of the buds, looking a bit like miniature sea anemones.

Later in the year, their nuts feed many woodland creatures. If you come across a hazelnut shell on the ground that has been split right through, the nut will have been eaten by a squirrel. A neat round hole gnawed in the shell, on the other hand, is the telltale sign of a mouse.

The tussocks of downy green blades carpeting the woodland floor are great woodrush, which throws up sprays of chestnut brown flowers in the late spring. Spring also brings washes of bluebells to the wood, along with the bright white star-shaped flowers of wild garlic with their pungent, oval leaves.

