



The North Dorset Trailway

Sturminster Newton to Blandford



Revised April 2025

This feature of the town newsletter (April 2025) is an update on places to visit and refresh along the Trailway. More details and downloadable maps (click 'linked routes') on the Trailway web site; northdorsetTrailway.org.uk .

The Trailway runs for 8 miles on hard surfaces along the former railway track and entirely off road except for a short section in Stourpaine Village. It crosses two minor roads.

Sturminster Newton

The Trailway starts directly from the main – Station Road – Car Park. Toilets, EV Charging and Bus stop for direct services to/from Blandford, Sherborne, Yeovil and Gillingham all at the car park.

Refresh at the town's seven cafés, three Inns and five take aways before or after your walk/ ride. Visit the Mill with a 1000yr history, the museum and see the

Forge sculptures either side of The Exchange community and theatre venue. 40 Independent shops include 1855 housing 100+ local traders and the famous Harts of Stur with 50,000 sq. feet of retail space and garden centre.

Open on Sundays are Oxfords Bakery/Café, One-Stop, Co-op. Also, The Mill, 1855 and Sur of the Moment Café (seasonally). Town Website: sturminster-newton.org.uk Town Newsletter & Shopping Guide: snclc.org.uk – [What's Happening in Stur. Heritage Trust \(Mill & Museum\): sturminsternewton-museum.co.uk](http://What's Happening in Stur. Heritage Trust (Mill & Museum): sturminsternewton-museum.co.uk)





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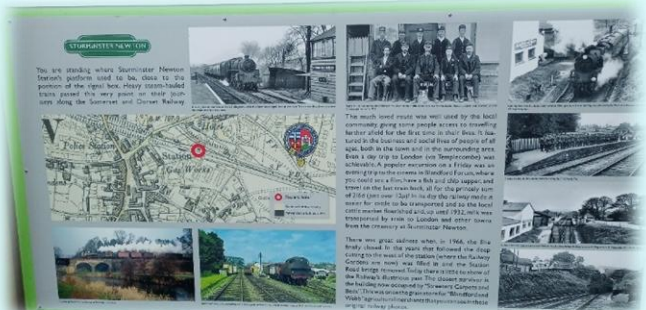
The Railway starts at the bottom of Station Road Car Park, marked by level crossing gates and old railway signal.



Pause to check out the information boards about the town, railway and railway history – all alongside the entrance.



Our thanks to Rutters Law, Chaffers Estate Agents and Blackmore Vale Vets whose advertisements funded this guide.





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Fiddleford – 1 mile Leave the Trailway at the river bridge. A footpath along near bank to the right leads to mill pond, weir and river crossing on mill races. Mill buildings (not open) & Archimedes Screw on the far side.



Continue along lane to junction. Continue left for Fiddleford Inn (half-mile) or right then immediately right through Fiddleford Manor car park to the Manor – English Heritage – free entry. Take a break in the manor grounds by the river.

Fiddleford Manor: [Search Fiddleford Manor for English Heritage page.](#)

Fiddleford Inn: thefiddlefordinn.net Opens midday, closes 8pm (sun 6pm)

Shillingstone 3-4 miles

- Trailway car park just off A357 on Child Okeford Rd & before the bridge
- Bere Marsh Farm & Angela Hughes nature reserve
- The Buzz Cafe and Barn Shop at Bere Marsh Farm
- Shillingstone Station – Museum, Café
- Old Ox Inn
- Recreation ground with children's play areas & bookable tennis courts
- Willows Tea Rooms
- Lavender Farm & North Dorset Honeybee Centre
- Big Yellow Bus Project – Community Garden, Orchard & Growing areas.
- The Black Cat Café at Gains Cross

Enjoy the Buzz on the Trailway

The Buzz Cafe near the Trailway at Bere Marsh Farm, Shillingstone, proved popular last year with walkers, families and cyclists. Reopening late spring / early summer, The Buzz offers delicious coffee and a range of other drinks and tasty treats.

Take a moment on your Trailway journey to enjoy a drink in the barn whilst taking in the countryside views. To find out more about opening times visit www.thecrt.co.uk/thebuzz.



Whilst in the barn seating area, take a look at our selection of wildlife boxes, all handmade by the wonderful CRT volunteers at Bere Marsh Farm and reasonably priced.



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Shillingstone Station -

The station building at Shillingstone accidentally escaped demolition when the old Somerset and Dorset line was closed in the 1960s but fell into dereliction. It has been lovingly restored by volunteers, and is now home



to a variety of locos, wagons, a museum of railway artefacts, model railway, gardens and a play area for children. Not to mention a popular café where you can enjoy a pasty, cake or ice cream at one of the platform tables or in a vintage railway carriage, both with possibly the best view of the entire Trailway, across the Stour Valley to the archaeologically famous Hambledon Hillfort.

The station building has a wealth of history of its own. The canopy was built especially to shelter the future King Edward VII when he came visiting local aristocratic chums for a spot of shooting, so that he wouldn't get royally damp while he waited for the train home.

The railway track is currently being extended a quarter of a mile north across Lamb House Bridge, with the aim of carrying passengers in 2026. Meanwhile, restoration of locos and wagons is ongoing.

Shillingstone Station is open on Wednesdays, Saturdays and Sundays, between 10.00am and 4.00pm, when there is direct access off the Trailway. Entry is free. If you're not arriving on foot, there's a car park by the trailway where it crosses the road to Child Okeford, or accessible parking via Station Road.

For more information, and to check out special events, visit the station's website www.northdorsetRailway.co.uk, Facebook page 'S&DJR Shillingstone' or call 01258 860696 during station open hours.

Recreation Ground, Old Ox Inn, Willows Tea Room

The recreation ground runs alongside the Trailway. For the Old Ox, cross the rec to a lane on



the far side, turn right for 50m and look out for sign and footpath on the left alongside new houses. Check opening and food times: theoldoxinn.co.uk



100m past the recreation ground on the Trailway is a footpath right, through a gate, the cottage on the right at the end of that path is The Willows Vintage Tea Rooms, B&B, breakfast, lunches & teas. Check opening times Tel: 01258 861167 willowstearoomdorset.co.uk

Lavender Farm / North Dorset Honeybee Centre

The Lavender Farm has moved from its old site at Fiddleford and is in the process of establishing itself at Holloway Farm. 300m past the recreation ground and just before passing over a railway bridge take a path sloping down to the right and pass under the bridge (this is the Wessex Way). The lavender farm is in the second field on the left. Check progress and events: Facebook – [Dorset Lavender Farm Project](#).

The North Dorset Beekeepers Association are building a new Apiary on the same site.

Lots of talks, workshops and apiary visits see:

northdorsetbeekeepers.org.uk



Big Yellow Bus Project

Another 300m and alongside the Trailway is the Big Yellow Bus Project (access also from A357). Produce from the orchard (dozens of varieties) and the growing area is donated to Blandford food bank and Vale Pantry in Sturminster. Enjoy a wander and a rest in the mystical garden. View the site from a gallery and bench on the Trailway. Bike loans available. Check for news and events: bigyellowbus.co.uk



Black Cat Café – at Gains Cross

Wed-Fri 9:30am to 2:30pm. Sat-Sun 9:30am to 3:00pm.



Cycle & Dog Friendly. Local suppliers. Seating inside and out.

Car Parking from A357.

Turn off the railway at this sign at Gains Cross. The Café is then 100 meters on the left.



Stourpaine 6 Miles

The Trailway has passed up a steep hill (where the railway was in a cutting/tunnel now filled in) to Gains Cross, now down to a new river bridge crossing. An avenue of new trees (not to be missed in spring and autumn) leads into Stourpaine.

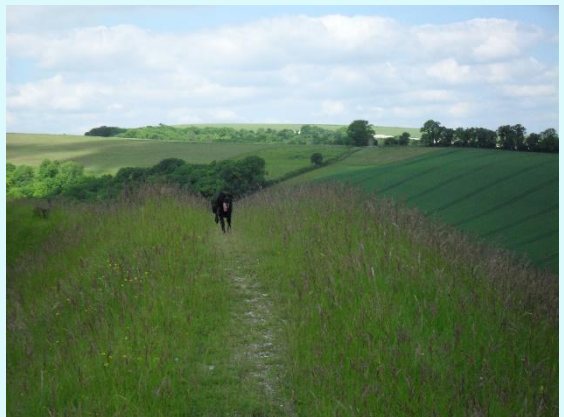
Entering Stourpaine, there is a recreation ground with parking and play area. The Trailway gives way to village streets and continues right at the crossroad.



Straight on at the crossroad for 100m is the A350 and immediately on the right is The White Horse Inn – as Visited by King (then Prince) Charles. Open every lunchtime and evening, food every session except Monday

evening: whitehorse-stourpaine.co.uk

Walkers with both time and energy on their hands might like to divert up to the very well-preserved Hill Fort on Hod Hill. Turn left at the crossroads and follow the road keeping left, then petering out into a lane and a footpath beside the River Iwerne. Follow the river for 200m then turn left to start climbing the hill. Pass through a gate at the top. Walk one of the three levels of ramparts for superb views in all directions. Going right from the gate there is the clear outline of the roman fort just inside the rings by the fourth entrance.



Blandford Forum 8 Miles

The Trailway leaves Stourpaine by the church passing under the A350 to the east then back under the Blandford bypass. The section to Milldown has several art works.

Milldown to the left of the Trailway is an award-winning open space on the edge of Blandford. Children's play area with zip wire.



The remaining section is a green corridor (long cutting) oblivious of dense housing either side and passing under roads leading into Blandford.

The Trailway terminates in the old station yard area.



Sections continue from Blandford St Mary to Spetisbury.

Blandford Town centre is almost exclusively Georgian after the fire of 1731 destroyed the older centre.

- Town Museum blandfordtownmuseum.org
- Fashion Museum (with lovely tea room) blandfordfashionmuseum.co.uk
- Riverside parkland
- Brewery Tours, shop, restaurant – Hall & Woodhouse
- Full range of shops, cafes, inns, take-aways & restaurants, even a bank!

Nearest car park to Trailway terminus – long term section of Langton Road (Marks and Spencer). Also, Marsh & Ham (Morrisons) car park near the Market Place (toilets and EV charging).

Up for more? Check out the 'White Hart Link' a circular route around North Dorset sharing sections with The Trailway.