

The land on the left of Combe Road was previously part of the Hadley estate. The buildings here are all 20th century, though formerly this land had been given over to allotments, in 1852, for 'promoting the comfort and resources of industrious Labourers'.

- 8** BEAR RIGHT DOWN ROCK HALL LANE, PAUSING BY THE CAR PARK OF THE KING WILLIAM IV PUB.

Rock Hall Lane dips through the former quarry face. An entrance to the mine was situated just to the left, at the end of the buildings adjoining the yard. This was one of two entrances operated by Phillip Nowell into what is now termed the Byfield mine. The quality of stone extracted here was good, for Nowell was contracted to provide building stone for Longleat, seat of the Marquis of Bath. This caught the attention of the King, who commissioned work to be done on Windsor Castle (transportation of the stone had been made easier by the opening of the Kennet and Avon canal in 1810), and then on the construction of Buckingham Palace.

The original plans were for the whole Palace to be of Bath stone, but cost over-runs, changes of architect, and a tightfisted parliament all caused their share of problems. In the end the Palace frontage was built with Portland stone. The rest of the building, notably the garden frontage, was constructed of Combe Down stone, from Nowell's mine, and was completed in 1834.

Phillip Nowell also built cottages to attract the best masons, and a beerhouse for them to wash away the dust in their throats. These cottages are further down the Lane, on the left. Opposite is Rock Hall which incorporates the fine house Nowell built for himself, and which is now sheltered accommodation for the elderly. The beerhouse became Combe Down Brewery, but since the day Phillip Nowell was 'knighted' for his work it has been known as the King William IV pub. The buildings above the original mine entrance were constructed as a malt house for the brewery in the 1850s, after Nowell's death.

The Buckingham Palace project marked the high point of stone mining in Combe Down, and proved that the stone was indeed good enough for '...the palaces of the princes of Europe'.

- 9** GO BACK UP ROCK HALL LANE AND TURN RIGHT ALONG COMBE ROAD.

The stretch of road as far as the church follows the line of the quarry top as it was when it had reached its fullest extent, about 1835-40. Workers cottages still characterise this area of quarry workings, although after 1840 the people who lived here had less to do with the mines. Underground evidence suggests most of the stone had been quarried by this time, and the then newly discovered workings at Box and Corsham provided an alternative supply.

Passing Isabella Place and De Montalt Place again we are reminded of those who came to Combe Down to convalesce after illness. From about 1835 this tradition was revived and a construction boom begun for building large detached villas for the upper middle classes, many with 'private' incomes. Fine early examples include the Old Vicarage and Combe Lodge (1830s), followed by Belmont House in 1854. By the 1860s most of the prime sites here had been built upon and this fashionable road was renamed South Parade. The exception to these villas is the old junior school building at the top of Belmont Road, begun originally in 1830.

- 10** TURN LEFT AT THE PLAYING FIELDS ALONG THE FOOTPATH BESIDE GLENBURNIE. THIS BECOMES GLADSTONE ROAD, WHICH IS FOLLOWED TO THE JUNCTION WITH TYNING ROAD.

Although quarrying fell into decline after 1840 stone mining continued in some parts of the Down until well into the 20th century, and Upper Lawn Quarry, across the fields from Gladstone Road, continues to operate today. The people of Combe Down were no longer solely dependent on stone mining for their livelihoods, however, as the great diversity of housing types and ages along Gladstone Road suggests.

The postal directory of 1900 shows many retired military and clergymen living in the villas, and their households included a small army of local domestic helpers, gardeners and coachmen. Many women in the village took in laundry, or were dressmakers and seamstresses. Tradesmen were numerous, particularly masons, carpenters and painters. There were two smithies near the top of the road, alongside the old Turnpike, and elsewhere lived engine drivers, dentists, dairymen, as well as butchers and bakers and many cabinet makers (employed at De Montalt Mills).

- 11** TURN LEFT DOWN TYNING ROAD, THEN RIGHT ALONG TYNING PLACE. TURN RIGHT AT THE END TO NORTH ROAD, IN SIGHT OF THE PILLARS AT THE TOP OF RALPH ALLEN DRIVE.

The walk along Tynning Place takes one back again to the early 1800s – a time when the village as a community was just finding its feet and the seeds were being sown to create the vibrant spirit we see in Combe Down today.

The story of the extraction and use of Bath stone is told in detail in exhibits at the Building of Bath Museum, and at the Bath at Work Museum.



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• COMBE DOWN • HERITAGE TRAIL



THIS TRAIL OFFERS A WALK AROUND COMBE DOWN VILLAGE AND ITS SURROUNDS.

IT SHOULD TAKE ABOUT ONE HOUR.
CAR PARKING IN THE VILLAGE IS SEVERELY LIMITED, SO THE BEST WAY TO GET TO THE START OF THE TRAIL IS BY BUS. BUSES 2 AND 4 RUN FROM BATH CITY CENTRE TO THE HADLEY ARMS, COMBE DOWN.



1 START AT THE TOP OF RALPH ALLEN DRIVE, NEXT TO THE GATEWAY PILLARS, FACING THE HADLEY ARMS PUB.

In 1532 Leland described the journey into Bath from Midford as "all by mountains and quarre, littel woods in site". This treeless landscape was indeed barren: grazing sheep; an isolated farm building or two; and perhaps the chink of hammers in some small nearby quarry were the only signs of life.

Little changed for the next two hundred years. Then a man of extraordinary vision walked this scene and the landscape would change forever. That man was Ralph Allen. In company with John Wood the architect, Allen planned a complete rebuilding of Bath. The material to be used was Bath stone and the best source was here on the Down, or more precisely, just under the surface. In 1726 Allen began to purchase the land, and by 1744 he owned the entire area. Stone was to be extracted on a huge scale and to move it all he ordered the construction of a special tramway.

2 THE TRAIL FOLLOWS THE LINE OF THE OLD TRAMWAY. CROSS NORTH ROAD PASSING THE HADLEY ARMS ON YOUR RIGHT. CONTINUE ALONG THE AVENUE TOWARDS COMBE DOWN VILLAGE.

During the 19th century the Hadleys owned much of Combe Down and are remembered in the name of the pub. On the right hand side of The Avenue is Firs Field. Ralph Allen transformed the landscape not only with his quarrying activities, but also by planting as many as 55,000 fir trees and other species on his estates. Firs Field was one such grove and the trees remained a feature until they were felled for construction, in the early 1800s.

Clustered at the end of The Avenue is a group of buildings which forms the core of Combe Down village. There is no sign now of Ralph Allen's tramway which terminated here, but the newspaper shop and adjacent cottage were once the Carriage Inn, serving the loaders and crane operators who worked atop the stone quarries. Over time the number of trades and services offered in the village grew and some fine examples of purpose built stone buildings remain today including the former bank (c. 1890s), the Church Rooms (1897) and the Co-operative Society shop (c. 1930).

The first permanent buildings in Combe Down were the fine row of 'cottages' that Ralph Allen had constructed for his quarry workers in 1729. In the middle of this row, which stands opposite the church and is now known as De Montalt Place, was Dial House, home of Ralph Allen's clerk of works at the quarries.

By the end of the 18th century the south facing slopes here, with their clean and bracing air, had been recognised as an

ideal spot for convalescing after taking the waters in Bath. The Earl de Montalt converted the former quarrymen's cottages into lodgings for this purpose, and nearby Isabella Place was built in the 1770s for a similar clientele.

In the early 1800s the rapidly evolving village centre was still actually a part of Monkton Combe parish. In fact the 'Down' was bisected by the boundary between Monkton Combe and neighbouring Lyncombe and Widcombe parishes. Inevitably, as population continued to grow and, crucially, as spiritual (and educational) needs were being met by non-conformists who established a chapel in the village in 1815, pressure grew for Combe Down to become a parish in its own right. This was finally achieved in 1854, a few years after the completion of Holy Trinity church (1837) on a site overlying part of the former quarry workings.

3 CROSS CHURCH ROAD AND PROCEED DOWN THE DRUNGWAY BETWEEN THE CHURCH AND THE SCHOOL. CONTINUE ON, CROSSING BELMONT ROAD, UNTIL REACHING SUMMER LANE. TURN RIGHT, PASSING THE LOWER SCHOOL, UNTIL THE LINE OF QUARRY VALE COTTAGES IS SEEN BELOW AND ON THE RIGHT

You have just walked down and round the lip of one of the original Ralph Allen quarries. Quarry Vale Cottages lie along the foot of the quarry face. They were built after Ralph Allen's time, probably in the early 1800s. Although it is likely masons and other quarry workers occupied them it is clear that they were built after this part of the quarry had been abandoned. After carving out an area where stone could be shaped and stored, it was deemed more practical and economic to quarry the stone **under** the surface cap. In effect, the Combe Down stone mines are really underground quarries. The surface rockface here extends away to the west as far as Rock Hall Lane. 'Mine' entrances were excavated at various points into this face, and stone cut into large blocks was hauled out from them. Grapple cranes lifted these blocks to the top of the quarry, where they were loaded on to trolleys for transport via Allen's tramway to Widcombe.

*Please note that the following section climbs some steps. An alternative route follows the road, through the village, to rejoin the trail at The Firs.

5 FOLLOW THE DRUNGWAY THAT CUTS THROUGH THE CENTRE OF THE COTTAGES. AT THE END OF THE DRUNGWAY TURN LEFT ALONG CHURCH ROAD, THEN NEXT RIGHT ALONG ROCK LANE. PROCEED UP THE STEPS TO THE LEFT OF THE END HOUSE TO MEET ANOTHER DRUNGWAY. PAUSE HERE FOR A VIEW BACK OVER THE FORMER QUARRY.

Ralph Allen had another crane in operation atop a second quarry situated at the end of Rock Lane (also known as Davidge's Bottom). Here the bricked up entrances of passageways

into the face can still be seen, and former labourer's and quarrymen's cottages are situated at the foot of the face, just as at Quarry Vale. The passageways led far underground, the stone being extracted by leaving pillars sufficient to support the roof. In fact a complex network of these passageways underlies Firs Field and much of Combe Down village.

6 CONTINUE STRAIGHT ALONG THE DRUNGWAY, BETWEEN THE HOUSES, TO THE FIRS. TURN LEFT, AND PROCEED TO NORTH ROAD. TURN LEFT AGAIN, AND CONTINUE UNTIL THE JUNCTION WITH COMBE ROAD.

Ralph Allen died in 1764. Lacking a direct successor, his Estates were eventually passed on to the Earl de Montalt, who took virtually no interest in the quarries. The tramway was broken up and sold off for scrap in the same year. Quarrymen now had to lease the mining rights for the relatively small plots of land that they worked. The stone had to be transported by horse and cart, but these heavy wagons were slow and they made a mess of the poor and narrow roadways.

The Turnpike Act of 1773 helped the transport situation by encouraging the building of new, surfaced roads – but at a price! Toll-gates were set up for all users to pay a fee towards the cost of construction and maintenance. There was even pressure on users to pay based on weight of load. When the 'Bradford' road was improved, tollgates were installed at both ends of Combe Down – at the top of Brassknocker Hill and near here at the junction with Combe Road. Unlike the shepherds who circumvented the toll-gates by leading their flocks along Shepherds Walk to the south of the village, the quarry-masters had no choice now but to pay up and lump it along the Turnpike.

Poor maintenance and over use of the turnpikes caused a major reorganization in 1827 and saw the establishment of a single Turnpike Trust with authority over all such roads. The white sign at the junction with Combe Road was set up as part of a survey by the new Trust, and marks the old boundary between Lyncombe and Widcombe Parish and Monkton Combe Parish.

7 TURN LEFT AND CONTINUE DOWN COMBE ROAD.

The Earl de Montalt died in 1803 and so began the break up of the original Ralph Allen estates. Individual quarry masters at last were able to purchase land of their own. A new phase of building took place, and construction began on many of the older cottages in Combe Down that we see today. The buildings along the right hand side of Combe Road represent an almost unique mix of the different styles of the 19th century. Brunswick Place is probably the earliest, with Spring Cottage built somewhat later, around 1830.

• COMBE DOWN • HERITAGE TRAIL



All this land was once pasture. Ralph Allen's farm, west of Prior Park, supplied the estate with fresh food. Later this area was also quarried.

Ralph Allen (1693-1764) was born in Cornwall and came to Bath in 1710. He reformed the postal service and, in partnership with John Wood and Beau Nash, started rebuilding Bath in 1726 using Combe Down stone.

Ralph Allen finished his great mansion at Prior Park in 1741. He built it to advertise Combe Down stone. It is now a co-ed Catholic school. The famous landscape gardens are open to the public (National Trust).

The white marker at the corner of Combe and Bradford Roads was put up by the Turnpike Trust in 1827 to show the boundary between Lyncombe and Widcombe and Monkton Combe parishes.

Stone was cut and sawn by hand into large blocks underground and hauled by horses or cranes to the surface. Large caverns and disused passageways extend under most of Combe Down village.

The remains of a Roman farmhouse were discovered near here in 1860. Nearby Vinegar Down quarry is so named because grapes were once cultivated here.

The tramway comprised a low-wheeled truck running on wooden rails.

Blocks of stone were carried down Ralph Allen Drive to the River Avon at Widcombe. The trucks ran under gravity, controlled by a brakeman, and then were hauled back uphill by horse.

Narrow passageways called drungways are a characteristic of Combe Down. The word is Old English for 'squeeze' or narrow way.

The Old School was founded in 1830 for junior girls and infants. It is now private residences.

De Montalt Mill was built in 1805 as a paper mill. Later used for cabinet making it is now being developed as housing.

Upper Lawn Quarry is the only working quarry to survive in Combe Down, although the workings are all above ground.

The Horseshoe Pub formerly a smithy.

Gladstone and Tying Roads were originally private carriageways to the villas on Church Road.

OTHER NEARBY WALKS

PRIOR PARK LANDSCAPE GARDEN
(National Trust - Entry fees apply)
With its famous Palladian Bridge, Prior Park is a superb example of 18th century design.

BATH SKYLINE WALK
(National Trust)
A six-mile circular walk can be joined in Claverton Down Road.

William Smith (1769-1839), the 'father of English geology', lived at Tucking Mill. He bought Kingham Quarry hoping to make enough to pay for publication of his great geological map of England. He was, however, disappointed.

