

Some important caveats:

- Whilst I have a long-standing interest in all things nature and have consulted some others, (fulsome thanks to those on “WCS” and “We love Watchet” websites who have already helped with some identification) there may well remain some mis-identification of items herein. Please accept my apologies in advance and advise WCS if you feel I’ve made a mistake.
- The data presented is a selection from the large total we collected. It is thus, by definition, not comprehensive on two counts. Firstly, we cannot possibly have collected information on all species along the Mineral Line, and secondly, the data we are presenting is itself a selection from that which we did collect. Thus, if you feel that we have missed something important, we will certainly be interested in your view and suggestions (and may include it/them in a future edition?), but it may be just that it didn’t appear on the days we went looking, so please be patient with us!
- One or two species – birds principally – avoided our camera, but we already had some pictures of them. In these cases, we have used common sense and included a picture from elsewhere. We have generally flagged these instances in the text. A particular example is of a blackcap. It just would not allow a decent photograph, but there is no doubt of the identification.
- Apologies, and we are trying to train the birds to behave more considerately, but, you’ve guessed it, they don’t seem very co-operative!

### 3. Where is the Mineral Line?

The Mineral Line (ML) is readily accessible on foot from all parts of the centre of Watchet town. ML is shown highlighted in blue in the map below, copied from Google Maps, and modified with the coloured lines.



The most easily explained access, though not necessarily the shortest distance (depending on your start-point!) - is to go to the southern end of Swain Street (main street in the town). From there, walk down Anchor Street (Note also that the junction between Swain Street and Anchor Street is directly opposite the railway station.) and, following the road around to the right, go on into Mill Street, then follow the road round to the left, cross the small river bridge (over the Washford River) and just follow the nearly straight road - as it straightens, the road’s name changes to Whitehall - in a SW direction.

After about a quarter of a mile, you will find the road forks, keep to the right here, entering a narrow single-track width domestic road (houses each side). After about 100-150 yards, go straight on, through a gate and under a railway bridge. You are now at the Watchet end of the Mineral Line. This access route is shown above in red. The red and blue lines combined are about a mile and a half in length.

There is no parking space provided (or available) at the start of the Mineral Line. The nearest public car park is in Anchor Street - on the right, 50 yards after leaving Swain Street walking/driving towards the Mineral Line. It is alongside the red line in the map.

The majority of the work done for this paper has been at the Watchet end of the Mineral Line - as shown in blue.

#### 4. Scene setting

This section tries to paint an overall picture of the environment of the Mineral Line. It is bordered on both sides; on the immediate North is the West Somerset Railway, whilst to the South, generally just as close, is the Washford River. Both of course contribute to this “long, narrow space” – more than a mile long (lots more in total!) and yet in places less than 20 yards wide. It is also flat – one time railway track bed – and very easily walkable, and yes, wheelchair-friendly too. Note though, that it is not possible to leave the walk at Kentsford Farm with a wheelchair.

So, some pictures to demonstrate the overall environment.



Kentsford Farm. This picture, only 150 yards from the one described above yet a very different country picture.



One of nature's natural bridges across the Washford River. Wonder who used it last!



A typical view across the fields towards the Washford River showing rose bay willow herb in blossom.



*West Somerset Railway passing by with people enjoying the countryside*





Washford River at a sluice gate at Kentsford Farm.



A couple of typical scenes from less friendly winters!





## 5. The seasons

Having outlined the environment, this section shows how much the scene changes with the seasons.

This chapter shows a selection of pictures taken in the autumn and into the winter. Long lengths of the Mineral Line are cloaked with trees and there are many opportunities to catch the sun shining through, highlighting the colours of the undergrowth and creating an almost “fairy-like spell”. Enchanting is an often-heard description.

It is worth remembering that the winter we studied was mild, with almost no frost throughout.





## A year-long look at wildlife and plants along the Mineral Line

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Now to the spring and summer.

A warm and friendly place, defined by its variety and shades of greens. The bright yellow-green of early spring matures into the typical intense green of midsummer, a very welcoming place throughout the summer.



A charming and attractive place to spend an hour or so, noticing the variety that nature has to offer.



## 6. Individual categories of life found on the Mineral Line

This booklet has not been written by an expert in biology, ornithology or even an expert in anything else related to nature! But it has been written by someone with an active interest in nature and a fairly keen eye. Nature can be absolutely fascinating – as well as frustrating and occasionally demonstrably cruel to the casual observer.

I/we have just walked along the Mineral Line and observed the things that have made themselves noticeable. No doubt there were/are lots of unobserved things “lurking” in the background. Fair to say of course, that this “hiding” is at least partly a result of the way we humans have treated many of the things that have as much right to be here as do we.

The categorisation has been very straightforward and not in any way scientific. The rules have been little more than arbitrary, and if looked at in detail, will probably fall short!

Let's say:

- If it's green (in summer at least) and stays in one place, it's been treated as a plant
- If it has wings and feathers, then, yes, you've guessed, it will be found amongst the birds
- If it has wings, but no feathers, then butterflies and insects have been our conclusion
- A fourth category is called “others”, this includes lichens, fungi, a (very hazy) trout and moss.

It is as simple as that, we have not sought detailed analysis or scientific detail, rather a friendly “this is what we found” approach that is easily read and hopefully encourages readers, rather than answering all of the questions.

As you look through this little booklet, you will also probably notice that we have tried to keep the words as few as reasonably possible. This has been intentional to “keep it simple” and allow the pictures to do the talking. We have identified (we think correctly – but you may know differently) all of the entries so that readers who wish to go further have a start point in the library or on Google. So, please note that this is much more a picture book than a reference work!

There are many trees and grasses along the Mineral Line (of course – did I really need to say that!). Ignorance on the part of the author(s) has denied any treatment of these, so please forgive – perhaps in a later edition?

In mid-summer, there are a generous number of stinging nettles in places, so whilst they are easily avoided, a little care won't go amiss.