

## **THE MENDIP RING. Leg 1b**

### **Walton Hill to Butleigh. 6 Miles.**

#### **Start from the car park at on top of Walton Hill Grid Ref. ST446530**

1. From the car park on Walton hill go through the kissing gate and walk along the ridge. The route from here through to Great Breach wood follows the Polden Way (PW) which is well marked with blue signs.  
Keep to the ridge with fine views on your right. When you come to the kissing gate cross the road and keep to the main track eventually passing the Youth Hostel. Take the right hand path at the fork. You will walk out of the woods onto an open grassy area by the side of the road. Walk down to the cross roads.
2. Cross over and take the kissing gate opposite to climb Collard Hill. This is National Trust land so you are free to walk wherever you wish. There is a track that keeps high and a public right of way a little lower these eventually come together at ST489340. You will come to pair of kissing gates either side of the road. At ST 494339 Cross the road and follow the track up to the Hood Monument.
3. Exit the monument on the PW you will then pass through a kissing gate and follow a gravel track to a stile. Here you are again on open grass land walking along a ridge. Continue following the PW along tracks through the woods to the view point that affords a fine view of Compton Dundon ST500330
4. Retrace your steps a few yards and take the right hand fork and again follow the blue PW signs. You will eventually come to a kissing gate with step steps down hill. Go down the steps, over the bridge and up the steps at the other side. Continue to follow the blue signs of the PW . You will pass Gilling Down and New Hill and Tanner. Go through a kissing gate marked PW into the woods and take the right hand track. You will come to a clearing in the woods take the left hand track and left again at the marker. Turn right and immediately turn left and you will see a marble monument at ST500 317

5. Turn right at the end of the track and then right again and cross the track into Great Breach Nature Reserve. Follow the track out of the woods and across a field. At the end of the field turn left towards farm buildings and pas the reservoir which is marked on the map. Follow the track through the farm and on to the road. Cross the road and go over the stile and head for the white gate. Cross the road and follow the sign to Higher Hill Farm and walk down to Butleigh Cross.
6. Turn left at the cross and take the right hand fork in the road. Take the stile on the left marked King Western Road Walk. Turn right and walk through the field towards the houses at the bottom. Cross the style and walk between a fence and a hedge to another style. Go through the garden and onto the road. Turn left and walk down to assign on your right marked High Street. Follow this road to the Post office.

## **Points of Historical Interest**

### **SECTION 1**

Between the windmill and Ivy Thorn Hill, ST 476 346 the walk coincides with part of The Samaritan Way. The Bristol Ramblers devised the route and profits from the sale of their Guide Book go to The Samaritans, in recognition of their support for the Farmers Help Line.

Teazle Wood ST 476 346 on the left is a reminder of the wool trade in Mendip. The hooked bristles of the teazle were used for raising the nap when cloth was being dressed. A teazle on the Coat of Arms of a town will always indicate the importance of wool in its history

Ivy Thorn Hill was given to the National Trust by the Clark family in 1919.

### **SECTION 2**

Marshall's Elm Crossroads. ST 484 344 In August 1642, during the Civil War, there was a serious skirmish here when a troop of Royalist horsemen under Sir John Stawell routed a 600 strong Parliamentary troop. The crossroads is a major junction of old trackways with roads to Somerton and Ilchester to the south and Glastonbury and Street to the north. It was turnpiked by the Langport, Somerset and Castle Cary Trust in 1778.

The Grade II Listed farmhouse on the crossroads is recorded as an Inn in 1844; as indeed it would be with that amount of passing trade.

Collard Hill ST487 341 is a National Trust property.

Below to the south is Compton Dundon. A settlement is recorded here in 800.

St Andrews church on Dundon Hill, possibly just visible, also has the pyramidal tiled roof. The Yew Tree in the churchyard has been dated by dendochronology as 1700 years old. In the 16th century there was believed to be a dragon living on Dundon Hill.

### **SECTION 3**

The Hood Monument on the ridge of Collard Hill was built in 1831. It commemorates the career of a local boy who left home when he was fourteen to join the Navy and went on to become Vice Admiral Sir Samuel Hood, Baronet. He died in Madras in 1814. Two of the three ships of the Royal Navy called HMS Hood were named after him, including the one sunk by the Bismarck in 1941. The monument was linked to the Hood family home at Butleigh Wootten by a mile long avenue of cedar trees, some of which still remain.

### **SECTION 4**

Great Breach Wood and New Hill Wood. ST 501 321 There is a marble obelisk by the side of the coppice track here. It requires some careful peering into the woods to find it. The inscription, no longer visible, says 'Here fell mortally wounded by the accidental discharge of a gun whilst shooting with some friends October 30th 1852, Hungerford Colston'. The woods themselves are managed by the Wildlife Trust and are 148 acres of mature woodland.

### **SECTION 5**

Butleigh Cross. ST 520 324 The crossroads are marked by an early 14th century cross, possibly a trackway marker, of which only the socket remains and is incorporated into the War Memorial. The road above the cross and on down into Butleigh, is across the eastern of the two fields of the medieval village. The point called 'Oddway' was earlier called 'Nodway' and seems to have been at the top edge of this field.

### **SECTION 6**

Butleigh ST 521 337 may originally have been Budeca's Leigh from the Saxon who first settled the land. At Doomsday in 1086 the lands belonged to Glastonbury Abbey. At the Dissolution they were granted to Edward Seymour.

The shape of the medieval village and the high incidence of listed cottages have led to a publication by the Somerset Vernacular Buildings Research Group. It is on sale in the Post Office and shop, as is 'Butleigh: a thousand years of a Somerset village' by the Rev E F Synge. This latter has a wealth of information including maps of the track ways and the medieval field system. Most of the village is now a Conservation Area.

The Primary School was built in 1845.

Robert Bolt, the author of 'A Man for all Seasons' and 'Laurence of Arabia' lived here while he was a teacher at Millfield School.