

MENDIP RING LEG 4. Section 1. Deerwood Common – East Woodlands Church. 5 miles or

6.5

Grid Ref ST 771389.

1. With your back to the car park follow the main track through the woods until you reach the road on your right. Turn left, then when the road forks take the right hand one, follow this round until you come to a metalled lane on your left next to Churchfield House, turn here, then just after Yew Tree Cottage take the grassy track on your left through a small gate into a field, aim for the bottom left hand corner where you cross a stile onto the road.

2. Follow the road for approx half a mile until you come to a bridleway on your right, turn here then shortly turn left follow the line of the bridleway along the left hand field edge until you emerge onto Bunn's Lane. Turn right and follow the lane to reach the B3092, cross with care into the lane opposite. * Follow the lane past Brambles Farm and the woods on your left, then when you meet the woods on your right take the first turning on the left, follow this track ignoring all others until you come to a metal barrier after which you turn left to reach East Woodlands Church.

*This is a permissive path through the grounds of Longleat and could be closed at any time. Beneath you will find an alternative route.

From emerging onto Bunn's Lane still turn right then after approx 200m go through a kissing gate on your left, follow the field edge over a stile to cross the railway line then down a track to reach a metalled lane, keep straight on to reach a T junction, turn right along Tuckmarsh Lane to the next T junction, turn right again going under the railway bridge to reach the busy B3092. Cross the road with care, turn right and take the first stile on your left, follow the path across the garden over a bridge into a field, follow the hedge on your right through a gate, now follow the hedge on your left into a larger field, keep the hedge on your right and follow this until you come to a stile in the top corner of the next field. Cross this and aim for the woods at the top of the hill, follow the path through the woods to cross a stile at the side of East Woodlands Church.

Points of Historical Interest

SECTION 1

Bradley Lane, on the right, is on the course of a Roman road. It passes across the approach road to the hamlet of Gaer Hill just before the edge of the church grounds. This road from Old Sarum (Salisbury) continues across the Mendips, through the lead mines (Leg 8) and on towards Sea Mills, the Roman port near Bristol.

Gaer is from the Old English *gara*, a triangular piece of land.

St Michael's Church was built in 1858 by the Revd and Hon Richard Cavendish Boyle, Vicar of Marston and youngest son of the 8th Earl of Cork and Orrery. The church seated 150, the community being a thriving one with its own school. In 1981, owing to a dwindling congregation, it was declared redundant and is now a private home.

The old oak trees in the field below are a reminder that one thousand or even five hundred years ago, this entire vista would have been forest. Immediately to the north was Marston Forest and Tadbesson wood was so called in a grant of lands between the Earl of Cork and the Duke of Somerset in 1667.

To the right is the town of Frome, of which more later.

The Rev. Boyle built several houses at Gaer Hill replacing the old hovels with spacious and comfortable cottages. The old school is down the lane beside the church and the now defunct Methodist chapel is in the rank of cottages on the left of the roadway.

Honey Pot Lane is a continuation of Huntersway, the ancient track described in Leg 3.

The word 'honey' is a reminder of the importance of bees in the domestic economy. Of equal importance with honey was beeswax, which was used in candles, seals and many domestic items. *Until the early 19th century bees were mostly kept in plaited straw baskets or skeps and few beekeepers had framed hives. There was little knowledge of diseases or of the role of bees in pollination.* During the Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1874 the British Bee Keepers Association was formed. The Somerset Branch was inaugurated the following year.

On the right is an information board on the lands of the Duke of Somerset. The bank and ditch of the original boundary are very obvious here. The present Duke of Somerset has a home at Maiden Bradley, the village immediately to the south.

SECTION 2

Crossing the B3092, the Frome to Maiden Bradley road, there is a metal plate on the bridge that marks the county line between Somerset and Wiltshire. In 1630 this crossing point was called Mallards fforde. The stream is Langley Water which eventually flows into the River Frome.

Forest Cottage was the toll house when the Frome Trust turnpiked this road in 1772. Continuing on the Huntersway behind Forest Cottage, the walk is now on the Longleat

Estate of the Marquis of Bath (Thynne). Longleat House is less than a mile to the east. The House and grounds are open every day except Christmas Day.

After the Monmouth Rebellion, the last man to be executed on The Cob at Lyme Regis was John Kidd, a gamekeeper from the Longleat Estate.

The walk leaves the Huntersway at OS 797 425

The woodlands here were called Brambles Forest on the Day and Masters map of 1782 and the walk follows coppicing tracks through the woodland sections. *There was a WWII anti tank ditch, part of the Salisbury South West stop line, between O.S. 777 445 and 793 430.* The stream at the bottom of the woods was alternatively called Giggs Lake or Lottesburn. At the top of the hill at a 'T' junction with a track edging open fields, the curve of the woodland to the right is marked by a prominent bank. This was the edge of the Royal Forest at this point.

East Woodlands is a recently shrunken village. The 1839 Tithe map shows several more cottages in the area of the church. St Katherine's was built between 1712-1714. The Yew Tree by the gate is classed as Ancient and Venerable in the Tree Register of the British Isles. The village hall on the right was once the school. The church and the hall are supported by Trust Funds from the Thynne family.

Down from the church, the name of the field on the left is The Park. Just south of the church there is an area recorded in the 17th century as Lambert's Lodge. Together these would suggest the parklands of a large Estate on the edge of the forest at this point.

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