

MENDIP RING Leg 6B. Charlton to Farrington Gurney 5.6 Miles.

Start point G.R. ST682522

1 Opposite the drive to Waterlea take the rough lane leading to some cottages, at the top turn left into a field aim half right to a stile on the far side do not cross this but turn right and follow the path across several fields to enter into Snail's Bottom. Follow the path through the woods, crossing the stream on route until you come to a T junction of paths, turn right, through a tunnel of laurel bushes go over the stile on your right next to a gate, uphill to reach a grassy track turn left and follow this until you reach a gate turn left over a stile onto the lane.

2 Turn right through a bridle gate ahead, then turn right aiming for a stile next to Manor Farm, go up the drive turn left following it out to the A367, turn right then cross the road to follow the path across the fields to reach the B3139. Cross the road and take the path across the sports ground to cross the disused railway, drop down the hill, at the bottom of the field turn right following the path to the houses at Somer Lea continue onto The Street, turn left then immediately right down The Pitching with the River Somer on your left.

3 On reaching Church Lane turn left following the road round pass the church, then once past Manor Farm take the path on your left up the hill to reach Clapton, follow the lane into the village. On reaching The Crown pub cross the stone stile opposite follow the path across the fields to reach Langley Lane, turn right then take the path off to the left at White Bridge, follow this up two fields over a stile in the top corner then slightly right uphill to reach a stone track. Continue uphill and where the track turns left continue straight on to a stile into the wood, cross Langley Down Lane go through a kissing gate down

the field on the other side aiming for the bottom left hand corner, through two gates over the next field to reach the A362.

4 Turn left until you come to a Farm Shop here turn right into Main Street as the road bends go straight ahead following the path into a field with the Church away to your right, follow the path to reach the drive to the Church, turn left and follow the road straight ahead to reach the car park at the Village Hall.

Points of Historical Interest

SECTION 1

Ahead is the tower of Downside Abbey at Stratton on the Fosse. Dropping towards the river at Snails Bottom there are the faint remains of a Celtic field system in the slopes to the left. To the north is another Celtic field system which has been extensively ploughed and now only shows as low banks.

The lands of the Duchy of Cornwall in this area start about here. The Duchy Estate was created in 1338 by Edward III for his eldest son, the Black Prince. The primary function of the Duchy was to provide future Princes of Wales with an income. A charter ruled that each Duke of Cornwall should be the eldest surviving son of the Monarch and the heir to the throne. The Duchy comprises around 55,000 hectares of land mostly held in the south west of England. The income funds the public, charitable and private activities of the present Duke of Cornwall, HRH, the Prince of Wales and his family. The first land in this area to come into the Duchy was from the de Gournay family of Farrington Gurney, later in this walk. It was forfeited

to the Crown after Sir Thomas de Gournay was disgraced for his involvement in the death of Edward II in 1327.

SECTION 2

Manor Farm has sometimes been called Stratton House. On the west side of the house is a folly in the form of a sham façade. Originally at the front of the building, it has four Doric columns surmounted by a pediment. This has a fleur de lys and is inscribed with the motto 'Ich Dien', the date 1883 and the initials AE. It commemorates a visit by Albert Edward, the Prince of Wales who later became King Edward VII. Across the lawn at the front of the house is another folly; a Bell Tower. On the face are the initials WB and the date 1903. William Beauchamp, one time tenant of the house, was a local brewer and a member of the Beauchamp mine owning family. The house is itself is Grade II* Listed and is early 18th century.

Killings Knap, the name of the field behind the farm, is believed to derive from Kilning Knap. There was a lime kiln at the quarry on this site, where white lias stone was burned with coal to make lime. The improvement of much of the soil of Mendip was said to need copious applications of lime

On the right at the end of the drive coming out of Manor Farm is a memorial to a young man, Garry Workman, killed here in a motorcycle accident in 2005.

The A367 is the Fosse Way, the Roman road last crossed at Lydford in Leg 2.

A step aside moment.

Downside Abbey is in the village of Stratton on the Fosse, a little to the south.

A Benedictine monastery, it is also one of the leading Roman Catholic schools in the country. The buildings themselves are said to be among the largest and finest Gothic Revival buildings in England. The church of St Gregory is usually open for public viewing. There is a small book shop on site and an Introduction and Guide to the Abbey available.

In May 1943 a Hurricane aircraft on a training flight killed nine boys when it crashed into a cricket match here. The pilot is buried in the school cemetery beside the boys.

Above Killing's Knap Farm a skeleton wearing hob nail boots was found in a rock cut grave at a quarry in 1890. Roman pottery, sherds and coins were also recorded from the site. The finds are in Somerset County Museum in Taunton.

The Joliffe column at Ammerdown Park is now visible to the rear. This 150 foot tower was built for Thomas Joliffe in 1853 in memory of his son, John Twyford Joliffe. It is said to be in the style of the Eddystone Lighthouse.

The new hall on the Chilcompton Recreation ground was built in 2006 with Heritage Lottery funding.

At the top of the embankment of the old railway line there is the concrete base of a railway workers hut. The line was cut in 1874 for the Somerset and Dorset Railway and closed in 1966.

The field between the disused rail track and the brook was used in WWII as a rifle range by troops stationed in the village. Local oral history suggests that it is full of spent bullets and cartridge cases.

Chilcompton on the Wellow Brook was Comtuna at Domesday. The earliest village was around the Manor House and church, which were then on a crossroads. The painter Gainsborough owned a house in The Street, now two dwellings numbered 1 and 2 Gainsborough. The Pitchin is, historically, an area used by the men of the village for playing Pitch and Toss.

SECTION 3

The 15th century church of St John the Baptist was restored in 1839. There is a guide on sale in the church. The Yew Tree at the far end of the churchyard was first recorded in 1796 and is now listed as Ancient and Venerable in the Tree Register of the British Isles. The Link Building, built in 1992, is the village hall. The car park opposite is on the site of the Mill pond and the iron gates alongside mark the entrance to the Mill itself, which was demolished in 1905. Mill Cottage opposite has the date 1596 over the door. On the end of the next barn are the initials of Anthony and Margaret Stocker and the date 1611. One of the nearby fields is called The Park.

At Clapton, the Zionist Chapel, now a private home, is described as a fine example of the Victorian Byzantine. The earliest farmhouses and cottages here are from the 17th century. The Crown Inn was a farmhouse until the 19th century. Recently a small quarry was opened and is now a manufacturer of cement block. Oral tradition says that the stream between here and White Bridge was once known as Black Water because of the contamination from the local coal pits.

On the fields sloping down to Langley's Lane there are extensive earthworks indicating former strip fields and lynchetts running roughly north to south.

Langley's Cottages are two terraces of miners' houses built in the 19th century.

The ruined building ahead at White Bridge is a barn that has fallen down within living memory. A reverse view of the batch at Old Mills should be visible from the top of the hill.

Langley Down Lane is a very old trackway from the Mendip Hills in the west, to the junction with the Fosse Way near Clandown on the east. The WWII pill box look-a-like in the field below Langley Down Lane is a water pump.

Farrington Golf Course, previously part of Hilltop Farm, was opened in 1992.

SECTION 4

Farrington Gurney. The site of the original medieval village, abandoned at the time of the Black Death, is shown by the isolated position of the church of St John the Baptist out in the fields behind the Manor House. The church was rebuilt in 1844. The unusual group of statuary of The Trinity over the west door, and the village cross in the churchyard are from the medieval building. The school is dated 1894.

At the junction of the A37 with the High Street is one of the finest houses in Mendip. Called The Old Parsonage it is believed to have

been part of the Glebe lands. Early 17th century, it has wings in the Elizabethan manner.

The Farrington Farm Shop and café is just off the A362. It is open every day.