MENDIP RING Leg 7A. Farrington Gurney to East Harptree Woods. 5.5 Mile.
Start Point Community Hall Farrington Gurney. Grid Ref. ST631556.

1. On leaving the Community Hall turn right along the road to reach the A39, cross the road turn left, when you reach Pitway Lane turn right down the lane, at the end of the houses turn left onto the footpath, follow the path across the fields passing Easton Wood on your left. When you reach Hengrove Wood follow the path over the bridge then up the hill to cross a stile on your right into a field. Follow the right hand boundary to the far corner go on through the wood to a track. Turn left and follow this track through a gate to a T junction, turn right here then almost immediately left into Chewton Wood, follow this muddy path through the wood to reach a field.
2. Follow this path across four fields, in the fifth field keep to the right hand path to reach a lane, cross this and follow the path around the field to reach Litton. Follow the lane out to reach Coley Road, turn right then take the footpath on your left opposite Back Lane. Follow this path over the top of Hook's Hill then enter Litton Wood to reach a gate at the end of the wood, (the path here differs from the OS map) once through the gate turn right and follow the track through the yard to reach Ford Lane.
3. Head up the hill towards the cottage where you will find a stone stile on your left, cross this and follow the path across the fields to reach Bell Hill Lane. Turn right and follow the lane up the hill, this soon becomes a bridleway, ignoring the footpath on your right continue up the bridleway and after approx 300 metres you will find the Monarch's Way on your

right, turn here through the Bristol gate and follow the Monarch's Way to join the drive of Nett Wood Farm. Follow this out to the lane where you turn left up the hill, after 200 metres turn right into the car park of East Harptree Woods and the end of this leg.

Points of Historical Interest

SECTION 1

On Pitway Lane in Farrington Gurney, the cottages on the left display the Coat of Arms and the motto of the Prince of Wales with the date 1910; a reminder that these are Duchy of Cornwall lands.

The church tower at 2 o'clock is St Margaret's at Hinton Blewitt.

Easton, Hengrove and Chewton Woods are privately owned. Easton Wood was called Dry Leaze Coppice in 1839. Where the walk edges Hengrove Wood it touches the eastern end of an extensive medieval deer park that includes the area of Chewton Wood. Some existing earthworks and low banks here may be fragments of the original pale.

SECTION 2

Litton. The OE words "lyt" and "tun" are said to mean "settlement on a torrent". At Doomsday it is recorded as having three water mills. At that time the lands belonged to the last Saxon Bishop of Wells. Evidence of an expanding population and intensive farming before 1300 is visible in the extensive strip lynchetts on the surrounding hillsides. The first record of a church here was in 1176 but the present building, St Mary the Virgin, dates from the late

14th century. It is Grade I Listed. It has a Jacobean pulpit and lectern and memorials to the Salvidge and Trevelyan families. The village hall was refurbished for the Silver Jubilee in 1977 with a play area across the lane. The greater part of Litton is now a Conservation Area.

The Upper and Lower Reservoir lakes were created in1853 when Bristol Waterworks capped the local springs and piped the water to Bristol, at the same time damming the River Chew. Tiny by comparison with Chew Valley Lake and Blagdon Lake they are difficult to see even from the hills above.

On the right at the junction with the Coley Road is Thierry House. Local history and the present owner, record that a number of Huguenot refugees came into the area in the late 17th century, to work in the paper mills. Thierry is a name of Huguenot origin. It appears also at Hinton Blewitt. The house itself is about 150 years old.

Paper making was an important feature of the local economy, based on the fast flowing waters at the foot of the porous hills. During the17th and 18th centuries there were thirteen mills on the river Yeo at Cheddar, as well as those at Compton Martin and Sherborne. There is a working paper mill in the museum at Wookey Hole.

Hook’s Hill is a continuation of Hook’s Lane, which runs from the north of Litton to Hinton Blewitt. The name may derive from the OE

‘acs’ and ‘hyll’, meaning Oak Trees hill. The square church tower of Chewton Mendip is to the left. The Manor of Chewton has been from 1553, a home of the Earls of Waldegrave, one of the great post-Dissolution landowners in Mendip.
The shaft shown on the left of the footpath is one of several on the hill connected with local mining. No other details are known.
On Hooks’ Hill, above Ford Lane, around Wooten Hall, and later in the fields towards Green Down, aerial photographs show extensive and varied lynchetts and cultivation furrows with double banks and boundaries. They are thought to be the remnants of a medieval field system.

The Chew Valley Lake is Bristol Water’s biggest lake with a perimeter of some ten miles and a capacity of 20,000 million litres. Plans to build the Reservoir were started in the 1930’s but were interrupted by WWII. Construction began in 1950 and took just over 5 years to complete. Sixteen farm houses, eleven other houses and 2,000 acres of land were bought up – none compulsorily purchased – and completely cleared before the water was allowed to enter. Three and a half miles of road were diverted or widened. The lake provides water mainly for the City of Bristol but also for other local towns like Shepton Mallet. The many facilities for sailing, fishing and nature walks create the impression of an entirely natural lake.

The pond to the west of Litton Wood has a curving bank which may have been part of the boundary of the medieval field system.

SECTION 3

Wooten Hall is a degradation of Wooten Hole, a stone quarry, a name reflected in the adjacent Stoneyard Lane. This old track, in places a deep Hollow Way (see Leg 3) is an extension of Ashel's or Ashes Batch. The field behind Wooten Hall was called Earlong in 1839.

The walk is now entering the eastern edge of the lead mining area Of the many forms of mining in Mendip, lead seems to have been the most ancient. Lead fishing weights were found at Glastonbury Lake Village (Leg 9), which itself has been dated at about 250BC. The Romans made straight for the lead mines and by 49 were exporting from this area. The great Roman bath in Bath is lined with Mendip lead and 'pigs' or blocks of Mendip lead have been found on the continent. Silver was also extracted from the ore. The history of the industry after the Romans is obscure, but it developed again in the 16th century and peaked in the 17th. It was organised into Liberties and administered by the four Lords Royal of Mendip. They were the Bishop of Bath and Wells and the Lords of Harptree, Chewton and Charterhouse. Permission to mine was through the King, because the mines were within the Royal Forest of Mendip (Leg 8). Each Liberty had a Minery court with laws similar to those in the stannaries of Devon and Cornwall. These proscribed the process by which the miner worked along the 'groove' or seam. Running water, scarce on the porous high ground and necessary for washing the ore, determined the location of the works.

By about 1670, the mines had passed their prime and output was falling. Briefly in the mid 19th century, Cornish miners coming into the area re-worked the old tips, but the industry had collapsed by 1908.
A record of lead mining and a collection of finds are in Wells Museum.

Green Down is Grendon in earlier references. The land in this area belonged until the mid 19th century to the Hospital of St Cross at Winchester, hence the name of one of the houses on the left. A local informant reports that the sons of the tenant farmers at that time were entitled to free schooling at Winchester College.
Holmwood Farm is an 18th century Grade II Listed building.
On Greendown Batch the walk joins the Monarch's Way, last seen near Wake's Covert in Leg 2 of this walk. The line of the Batch is the old boundary between the Liberties of Chewton Mendip and Harptree. A medieval drove road, it is a Hollow Way, in places 7 feet deep.

In the first field on leaving Green Down Batch there is a possible deserted medieval farm site. The remains of two field boundaries are visible in aerial photographs.
In the following field there are random scatters of stone, including one which is described as a leaning earthfast standing stone.

To the right are the villages of East and West Harptree, the latter with the steeply pointed church spire. The name is said to come from the OE word here-paeth meaning the military road by the

wood, and indeed a Roman road is known to have crossed the valley which is now under the water of the Chew Valley Reservoir. The route of this walk will converge briefly with this Roman road just above Compton Martin.

Nett Wood Farm. Richard Gough who discovered the cave that bears his name at Cheddar, reports that there were in Chewton manor, certain messuages or tenements that were called ‘Neate’ places, others were called ‘Fardell’ places and others ‘Landless’ places. Tenants of ‘Neate’ places paid higher rent than the other two. ‘Neate’ and ‘Nett’ being interchangeable in old records it seems likely the name here derives from being one of these more attractive sites.

At the road junction with the entrance to Nett Farm, there is a pronounced double earthwork bank, which may have been a trackway.