

MENDIP RING Leg 7B. East Harptree Woods to Burrington Combe. 7.8 Mile.

Start Point East Harptree Woods Grid Ref. ST557 541.

1. Walk down the track into East Harptree Wood. Stay on the main track as it twists and turns, eventually heading in a north easterly direction. After about $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile you come to a chimney at ST 554 546. Continue through the woods passing a house on the right. Go through a yard with farm machinery and continue down the track. Turn left (before the road) and pass through the gate into the field. Follow the Monarch's way across two fields to the road. Turn left and take the first path on the right. Take the left hand path up hill and across three fields to reach a track. Turn left and follow the track to the road (Ridge Lane). Turn left towards Ridge and turn first right towards Beaconsfield farm.
2. Take the Monarch's Way on the right, drop down half left to the left back of the barn and walk towards the house. Go through the gate to the right front of the house and cross the field to a kissing gate in the bottom left hand corner. At the road turn left up the hill and take the first right into the field. Take the left hand gate and keeping to the left hedge line, go uphill through the gate in front of you in the left hand corner and then over a stile. Continue through the field to emerge on to a track. Turn right past houses. At the junction take the path opposite slightly on your right. Go through the gate and walk to the right hand corner of the field. Go through the kissing gate on the right and down to another kissing gate. Go steeply down through woods to a white house and emerge onto a

track. Cross over to take the Limestone Link steeply up through woods. Eventually you come to a tall gate in a fence. Go through the gate and continue up hill and then to the left by a stone wall and a barn. Pass Hazel Farm and continue down the Limestone Link. Walk down the drive through an avenue of trees. Through the tall gate turn right and continue down Green Lane.

3. Follow Green Lane north-westerly to Ubley Hill Farmhouse. Cross Ubley Drove and go through the gate ahead into the field. Follow Leaze Lane to Leaze Farm (join tarmac road) and Blagdon Farm. Turn right down Two Trees Lane and take the path on the left to Ellick Road. Turn left and walk past houses. Turn right by the wall with the post box and take the path on the right just before the first house. Go over two fields and turn left on Luvers Lane. Continue straight ahead when the lane ends and turn next left over a stile to reach Lower Ellick Farm. Up the farm drive away from the farm house, emerge onto the main road and turn right to the car park at Burrington Combe

Points of Historical Interest

SECTION 1

On Smitham Hill, in the Forestry Commission woodland of East Harptree, there is a Grade II Listed chimney at OS 5542 5461. A tall, tapering rubble stack, it has been recently restored by the Mendip Society. It is part of a former lead mine closed in 1875 and is the only such chimney left on Mendip.

Western Lane may reflect the western portion of the village lands after the enclosures.

Garrow Bottom was Gor Well in the 16th century and there are still several springs in this area.

On the left at the junction of Western Lane and Ridge Lane is an archaeological site called Pitcher's Enclosure. It is an Iron Age settlement within a single ditch with seven hut circles inside the banked enclosure. There are associated field systems nearby.

Ridge is shown as a hamlet on the 1745 map of Mendip Forest.

SECTION 2

A step aside moment

Compton Martin derives its name from Robert Martin, the Norman French landowner. A spring rises above the church and feeds the village duck pond, which until 1840 powered a paper mill. This spring eventually becomes the River Yeo, feeding the Blagdon Lake and flowing into the Bristol Channel. The area was noted for the mass production of teazles for the woollen trade (Leg 1).

The church of St Michael the Archangel is largely Norman with an unusual twisted pillar of the type often associated with apprentice pieces. There is an effigy of Sir Thomas Mortone, who held the Manor of Moreton in the 13th century, a village which is now under the Chew Valley Reservoir.

This is the only parish church in Somerset that has a pigeon loft. Pigeons were domesticated by attracting them with food, so that the young birds, called squabs, could be culled for the table. The practice is believed to be very ancient and associated with early

settlement and the growth of grain farming. Older birds were called culvers, a word which has passed into many present day place names.

There is a very good short history of the church and the village on sale in the church.

Compton Martin has a Post Office.

The Combe is said to be the birthplace of St Wulfric, an 11th century saint.

The foot of Compton Wood was called Strawberry Close in 1883. Strawberry growing on the Mendips is described in Leg 8. The field at the top of the wood was called The Brisket, probably because of its shape and the walk crosses an area here containing the earthwork remains of seven post-medieval quarry pits.

The recent re-forestation at the top of the hill is the work of the Will Woodland Trust a Scottish based National Charity concerned with the replanting and management of deciduous woodlands.

The Limestone Link is a 36 mile route from the limestone of the Cotswolds to that of the Mendip Hills. It was devised by the Yatton Ramblers of Bristol.

The site of the Elizabethan Hazel Manor is on the right here. The Hazel Manor Estate was the property of the Hill family from 1872. A description of the house in Morris's Directory of Somerset in 1871 says 'an ancient Gothic building, the hall and library contain fine oak ceilings...and in the staircase is a fine oriel window of

stained glass with family arms in the centre'. It was latterly used as a shooting lodge. The house and lands changed hands in 1927 and in March 1929 it burned to the ground, partly at least due to the lack of water in the vicinity. There are now farm buildings on the site.

The owners of Hazel Manor, the Hill family, gave the land for the village hall at Compton Martin in memory of a son killed in the First World War.

SECTION 3

The open land on top of the Mendips was enclosed some two hundred years ago and the trackways introduced. Some of these, now lanes, are between Hazel Manor and Blagdon. The avenues of Beech trees on Green Lane and Leaze Lane were planted at about this time. They are shown as mature trees on the 1883 O.S. map.

The Bronze Age bowl barrow at the junction of these two lanes is a Scheduled Monument. There are over four hundred Bronze Age Barrows or Burial Mounds across Mendip, frequently on a false crest or the highest ground in a particular area. Where the barrows are in groups they are often arranged in linear cemeteries.

Ubley Drove, which is crossed by Leaze Lane, is a very old trackway used from at least early medieval times for the seasonal movement of sheep from the lowland to the upland commons. Wool was the great industry of the medieval period and relied heavily on the sheep pastures of the common land. To the west of

Ubley Drove, aerial photography shows a large area of complex but indistinct archaeological features.

The original Two Trees commemorated by this road were at the junction with Broad Road to the south.

A step aside moment

Blagdon. The name comes from the OE bloec and dun meaning black or bleak down.

Rhodyate, at the top of the hill, means Red Gate and it identifies the old entry into the common ground. Before the Dissolution, much of the land in this area belonged to the Priory of St Augustine in Bristol. Later some passed to the Seymour family, hence The Seymour Arms in the village. The Wrington Vale Railway Line from Blagdon to Congresbury opened in 1901 and closed for passengers in 1931. The remains of the station survive as part of a private house near the lake.

Blagdon Lake covers 440 acres and has a seven mile perimeter. The river Yeo enters at the narrowest end to the east. Construction of the lake began in 1899 and was completed in 1904. It is now considered to be one of the finest trout lakes in the country. The Wessex Water Visitors Centre on the lake is open in the afternoons between May and September.

Blagdon has several shops and a Post Office.

Louvers was the name of the landowner at Lovers Lane and sadly not a known trysting place; although of course, it still could have been.

Broad Road is, as the name suggests, an old droveway.
Burrington Combe is to the west.