

Ups and Downs *Bromyard*

Bromyard makes a wonderful walking centre. There is varied walking country on your doorstep, with two fine commons in Bromyard Downs and Bringsty Common, a great range of places to eat and drink and there are plenty of places to stay. Bromyard also has good public transport, in particular the 420 bus which runs between Hereford and Worcester. As well as getting into Bromyard itself, you can use the 420 for many linear walks: catch the bus to Whitbourne, Brockhampton School (for the Downs) or Bringsty Common and walk back. There is also an excellent

Tom Fisher of Leadon Vale Ramblers leads a haunting five-mile town and country walk

book of walks called Walks Around Bromyard. It costs £3 and is available from the Bromyard centre or Food for All (01885 483359). Bromyard is hoping to gain national recognition as Walkers Are Welcome town, following in the footsteps of Ross-on-Wye, already featured in Herefordshire Life, and more than 40 other towns in Great Britain.

This walk takes you from the middle

of Bromyard – with many buildings of great historical interest – on to the magnificent Bromyard Downs, and then explores the haunted church of Avenbury, the river Frome and finishes on the Herefordshire Trail. Not bad for a five mile walk.

1. From the Conquest Theatre car park, go down the alleyway by the Bromyard Centre. Turn left into Cruxwell Street



Pass through St Peter's churchyard before heading for the open road

A WALK AROUND BROMYARD

Start/Parking: Park in the Conquest Theatre car park on the B4214 Tenbury Road. GR 653548

Maps: Explorer 202

Distance: Five miles

Grade: Moderate

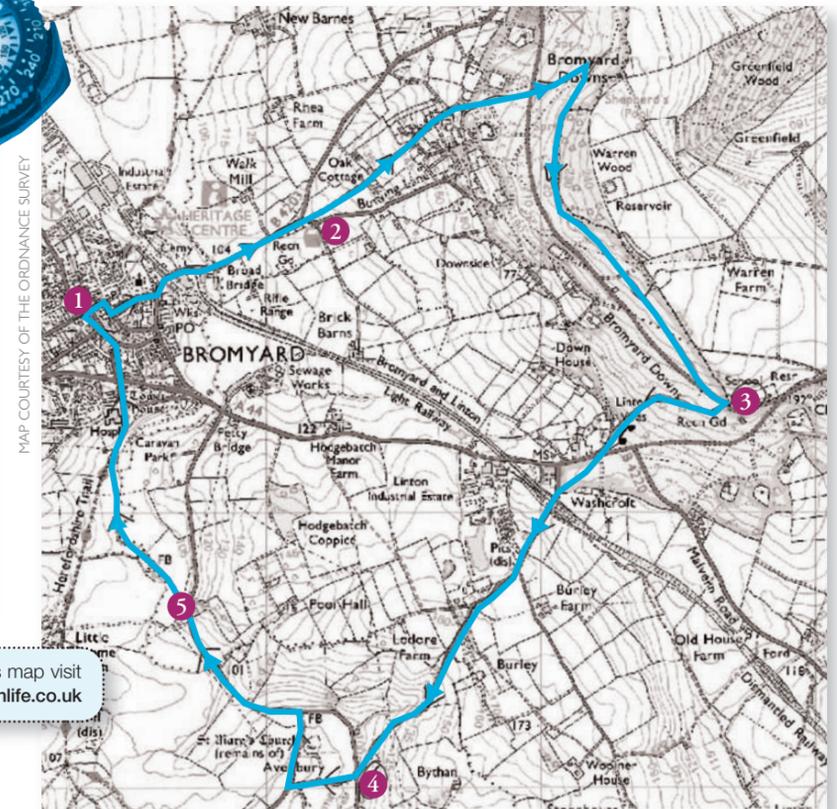
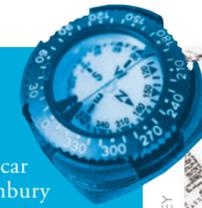
Stiles: Four

Nearest town: Bromyard

Refreshments: Bromyard has a wide variety of pubs, bars, cafés and restaurants

Toilets: In the car park

Public transport: 420 bus route connects Bromyard with Hereford and Worcester. Details from Traveline 0871 2002233



To view a larger version of this map visit www.herefordshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk

and right down Rowberry Street. Then take the footpath on the left, just past the public hall. Pause to admire Ann Campbell's Resting Sheep sculpture and go through St Peter's churchyard to the Stourport road. Cross to the other pavement and turn left along it until you reach the Holly Tree pub at the bottom of Burying Lane.

2. Immediately take the footpath on your left via a kissing gate and continue up the hill through a metal gate, a kissing gate and another small gate. When you emerge on a track, continue up the hill, and when the track veers left, continue straight ahead on a grassy

track/path. Soon you reach the Downs road. Cross it and, bearing half-left, climb to the top of the ridge, choosing whatever route suits you.

Once you have gained the ridge, pause to enjoy the views of Titterstone Clee (easy to spot because it has a golf ball on top), the Bromyard Plateau, the Black Mountains and the Malverns. Bromyard Downs is an exhilarating area of 800 acres of common land, and so you can walk anywhere (except through

“ Bromyard Downs is an exhilarating area of 800 acres of common land ”

The Frome Valley is full of geological interest



The Ramblers

The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and improve conditions for all walkers. In Herefordshire there are four groups: Hereford, Mortimer, Ross-on-Wye and Leadon Vale.

For more information contact Tom Fisher, tel: 01886 821544 or email: tomfisher@virgin.net



private gardens). Now you meet few people except for dog walkers but in the 19th century there was a racecourse on the Downs which attracted up to 7,000 people, many coming by train from Birmingham. The races ceased in 1905.

Turn right in front of the wood and maintain your height. You feel on top of the world as you stride along (in fact you are only 230 metres above sea level). Follow the ridge to the end as it descends gently to Brockhampton School. ▶

WALK

Right The road to Bromyard Downs

Below (left to right) The Heritage Centre; The Bay Horse Inn; Avenbury Church; Tower House



3. Opposite the school, cross the Downs road and, by a telegraph pole, take the grass path downhill. Soon the path bends to the right and flattens out. Carry on until you come to an intersection of grass paths. Turn sharp left down the hill and you will eventually emerge on the A44. Cross the A44 with care and take a diagonal route across grassland to join the lane by a block of apartments. This was Bromyard Workhouse. It was built in 1836 to house 160 people who until then had housed, clothed and fed by their own parishes. Later the building became a hospital and then an old people's home.

Follow this quiet lane for almost a mile towards Avenbury till you come to a cross-roads.

4. Go straight across towards Munderfield, cross the Frome and after 200 yards take a stile on your right which is well concealed in the hedge. The Frome valley is full of geological interest, which is fully described in the Frome Valley Discovery Guide,

published by the Earth Heritage Trust (01905 855184). Follow the path past the deserted church of St Mary Avenbury.

The church is said to be haunted – by no fewer than three ghosts. First, you can still hear the organ playing (I'm not sure of the tune). Secondly, the ghost of Nicholas Vaughan is said to haunt the churchyard. He was said to have burned one of the Bishop's houses and was executed for his crime, and haunted the area until caught and buried in a silver box, under a large stone in the river. The huge stone in the river also features in the final ghost story. An elderly brother and sister who lived in Avenbury since the beginning of the 20th century believed that the stone covered the grave of a wicked woman who was thought to be a witch. The villagers refused to let her be buried in the churchyard and so she was laid to rest within site of the church.

5. Continue along the path, re-cross the Frome and join a lane. Turn left along

the lane for half a mile before taking a path on the left across a stile, and down to the river Frome (again!). Turn right along the bank, then cross the river and keep to the left bank until the path joins a track, which is also the Herefordshire trail. The Herefordshire trail is a 150 mile circular route, devised by the Hereford Group of the Ramblers, and it takes in all the market towns in the county and is an excellent way to get to know the county. Turn right along the track and you soon reach Bromyard hospital. Carry straight on past the splendid timbers of Tower House, where King Charles 1 is reputed to have stayed on his way to relieve Hereford in 1645. Cross the A44 by the underpass, walk down Pump Street, then turn left into the High Street and you are soon back at the Bromyard centre. ■

