

WYE VALLEY AND FOREST OF DEAN

Outstanding Circular Walks

Pathfinder® Guides 



Britain's
best-loved
walking
guides

Bredwardine, Arthur's Stone and Merbach Hill

Start Bredwardine

Distance 6 miles (9.7km)

Height gain 855 feet (260m)

Approximate time 3 hours

Parking Verges along lane leading to church at Bredwardine

Route terrain Country lanes, field paths and tracks

Ordnance Survey maps Landranger 148 (Presteigne & Hay-on-Wye), Explorer OL13 (Brecon Beacons National Park – Eastern area)

GPS waypoints

-  SO 334 445
-  A SO 338 432
-  B SO 328 426
-  C SO 318 431
-  D SO 303 447
-  E SO 325 443

Merbach Hill and its associated ridge separate the Golden Valley from that of the River Wye and offer a grand but relatively undemanding walk that looks across to the northern fringe of the Black Mountains. Beginning from Bredwardine, with its pretty church and early castle earthworks it climbs onto the ridge where there is a Neolithic burial chamber. The open common of Merbach Hill is rich in wildlife from which the route makes a leisurely descent back to the river.

King Arthur's Stone



St Andrew's Church clearly incorporates work of many periods, the earliest portions perhaps dating to Saxon times. Of special interest is the herringbone masonry of the north wall and the carved lintels over the south and (now blocked) north doors. That in the porch carries a geometric design while the one in the north wall incorporates figures of what appears to be a bird and a grotesque, possibly a sheela na gig, an ancient fertility symbol.

The Victorian diarist Francis Kilvert spent the last two years of his life as vicar here before his untimely death in 1879 from peritonitis, a few days after returning from honeymoon. Kilvert's diaries were never intended for publication but his inquisitive eye for



carry on to meet a forest road. Follow that ahead going over a crossing, the way now signed as the Beechenhurst and Sculpture trails. At the crest of the hill is another piece of forest art, a skeletal chair fashioned from hefty logs that looks out over the valley.

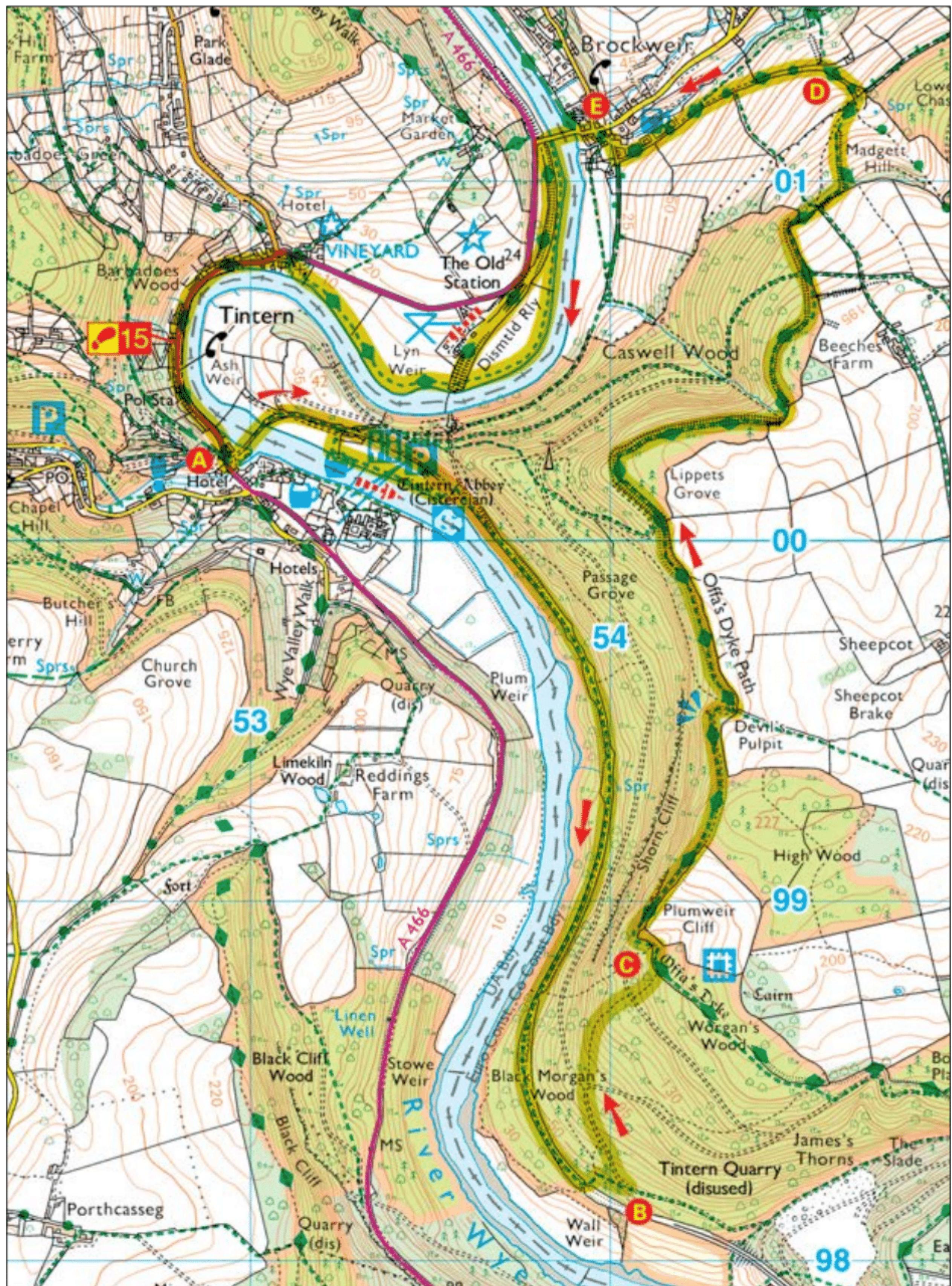
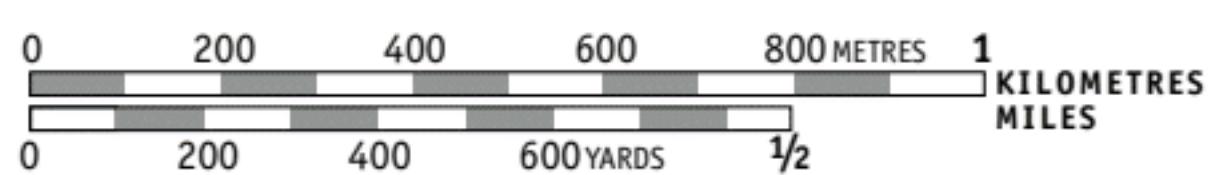
Keep going on the main trail, following yellow waymarks ahead when you reach a five-way junction. Later coming to a T-junction, go right, climbing beside a fence to a gate **A**. Pass through and retrace your outward route to the car park.

emerging from the trees to a fork. Branch left, rising to a junction with a broad forest track **B** and go sharp left, climbing more steeply to a second junction.

Opposite to the right, a narrow path rises enthusiastically through the dense wood. Meeting a crossing path turn right, but after a few yards, go left to resume the upward pull. At the top, it broaches the defensive ditch and embankment of Offa's Dyke **C**. One of the great Anglo-Saxon kings, Offa ruled Mercia from 757 to 796. The dyke

marked the western limit of his kingdom and ran for 150 miles (240km) from the River Dee to the River Severn.

Turn left, gently weaving through the trees above the steep bank of Shorn Cliff. Later, at the crest, ignore the path off right, descending beyond to a partial clearing where the trees straddling the earthwork have been felled. Below to the left is a free standing pillar of rock,



Newnham and Soudley Ponds

Start Newnham

Distance 8½ miles (13.3km)

Height gain 885 feet (270m)

Approximate time 4 hours

Parking Newnham – long stay parking area

Route terrain Farm and woodland tracks,
field paths

Ordnance Survey maps Landranger 162 (Gloucester & Forest of Dean), Explorer OL14 (Wye Valley & Forest of Dean)

GPS waypoints

-  SO 693 120
-  A SO 691 118
-  B SO 670 121
-  C SO 662 106
-  D SO 665 103
-  E SO 669 088
-  F SO 686 098
-  G SO 688 113

Beginning from the former Severn shipbuilding port of Newnham, the walk climbs to the eastern fringes of the Forest of Dean to follow the course of Soudley Brook, whose upper reaches have been dammed to create a sequence of ponds. The Dean Heritage Centre offers an opportunity for an interesting break in the ramble before returning across the fields and an attractive finish beside the River Severn.

The Romans exploited the Forest of Dean for its iron, bringing some of it to Newnham, where there was a low-water

Soudley Ponds

ford across the river. A Roman road came down the hill from Littledean, where the foundations of a Roman temple have been discovered. After the Norman invasion, the place grew to be a



Newland

Start Newland

Distance 3 miles (4.8km)

Height gain 425 feet (130m)

Approximate time 1½ hours

Parking Limited roadside parking in village

Route terrain Woodland paths and farm tracks

Ordnance Survey maps Landranger 162 (Gloucester & Forest of Dean),
Explorer OL14 (Wye Valley & Forest of Dean)

GPS waypoints

 SO 553 095

 SO 550 093

 SO 547 091

 SO 549 079

Beginning from one of the Forest of Dean's prettiest villages, this short walk explores a secluded side valley off the River Wye. Twisting in a tight loop overlooked by thick woods bristling the high bluffs, its lower pastures exude an almost alpine character. After mounting the ridge separating the arms of the horseshoe-shaped vale, the route follows the stream, known simply as Valley Brook, before climbing back into the village.

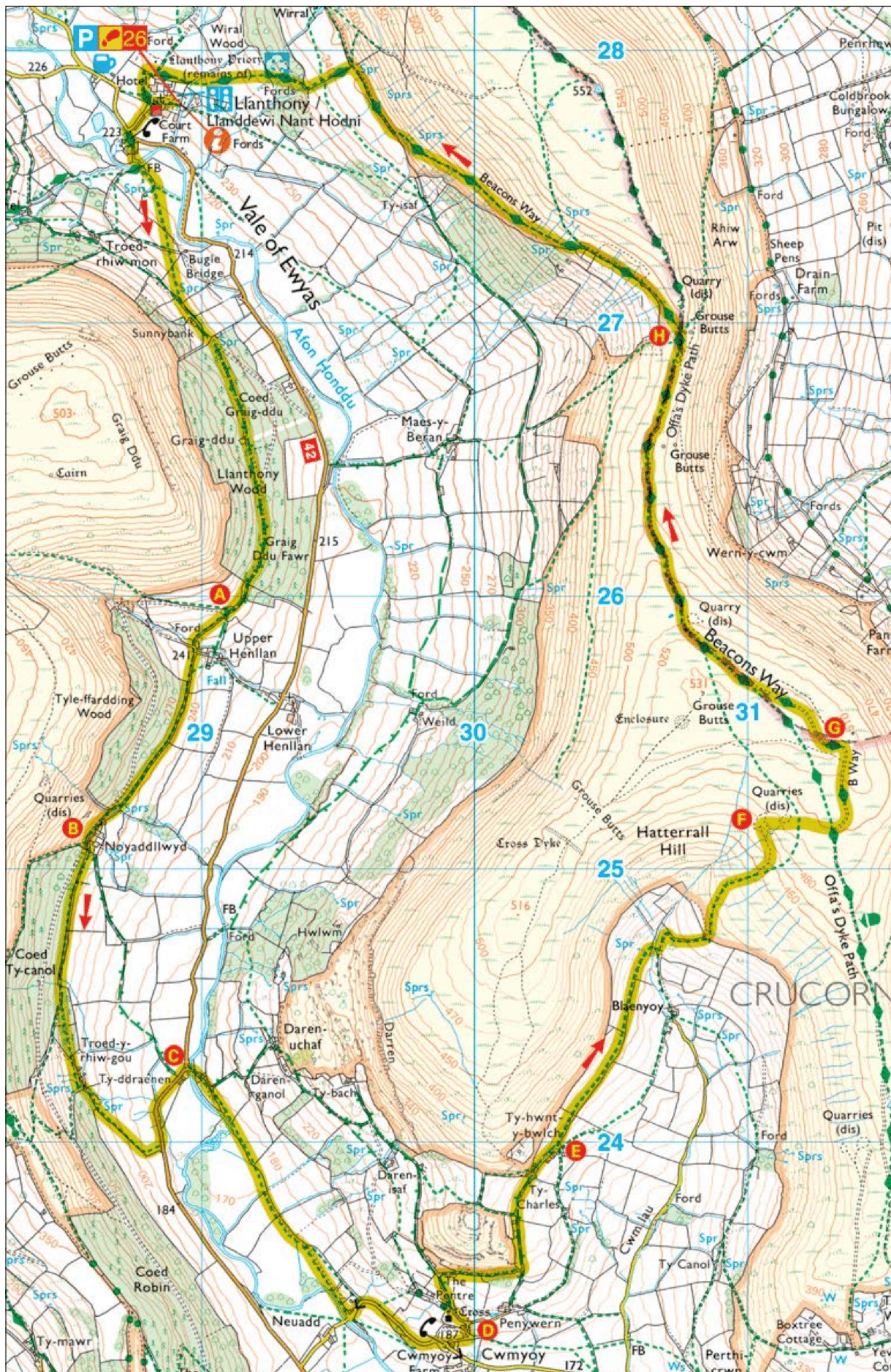
One of the oldest villages in the forest, Newland drapes across a steep hillside,

Newland church, the 'Cathedral of the Forest'

its neat cottages lining narrow lanes that radiate from the church and pub. Dubbed the 'Cathedral of the Forest' and set within a spacious graveyard bounded by an attractive row of 17th-century almshouses built to accommodate eight men and eight women of Newland together with a lecturer, is All Saints Church. Dean was a royal forest and this imposing church emphasises the importance of those involved in its building, which included Edward I who added a small chapel in 1305.

The many funerary monuments reflect forest society: local aristocracy, foresters, miners and farmers. Among them is

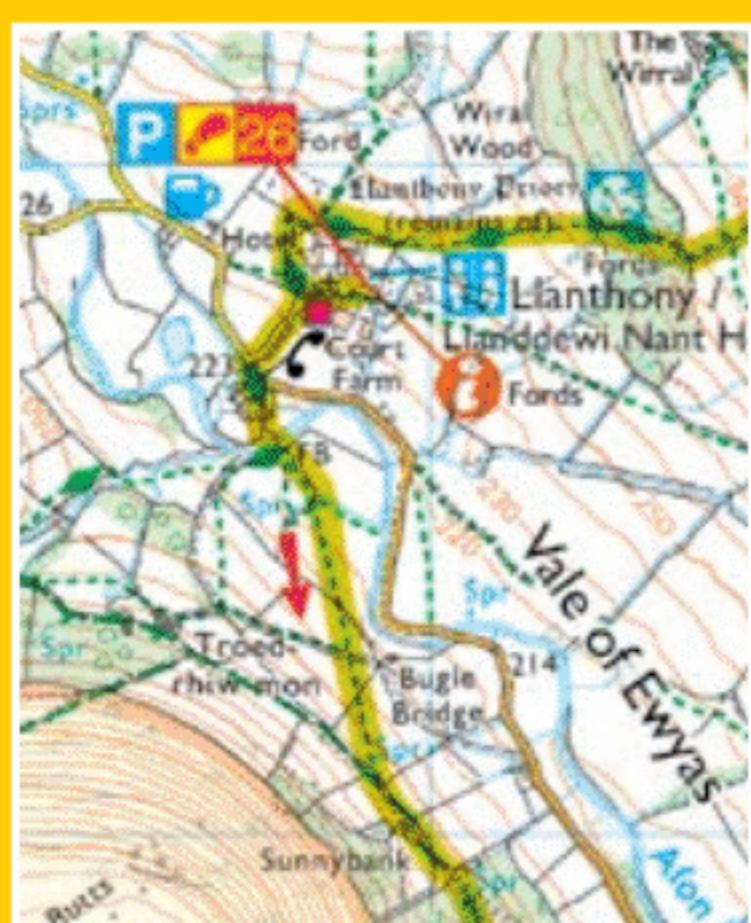




Outstanding Circular Walks in the WYE VALLEY AND FOREST OF DEAN

175 miles of gorgeous walking through the beautiful valley of the Wye from Hereford to Chepstow, amid sylvan splendour in the Forest of Dean, and along Offa's Dyke and the eastern fringes of the Black Mountains from Hay-on-Wye to Abergavenny and Monmouth. Discover the Golden Valley, take in the romantic ruin of Tintern Abbey, and view the striking spectacle from Symonds Yat Rock.

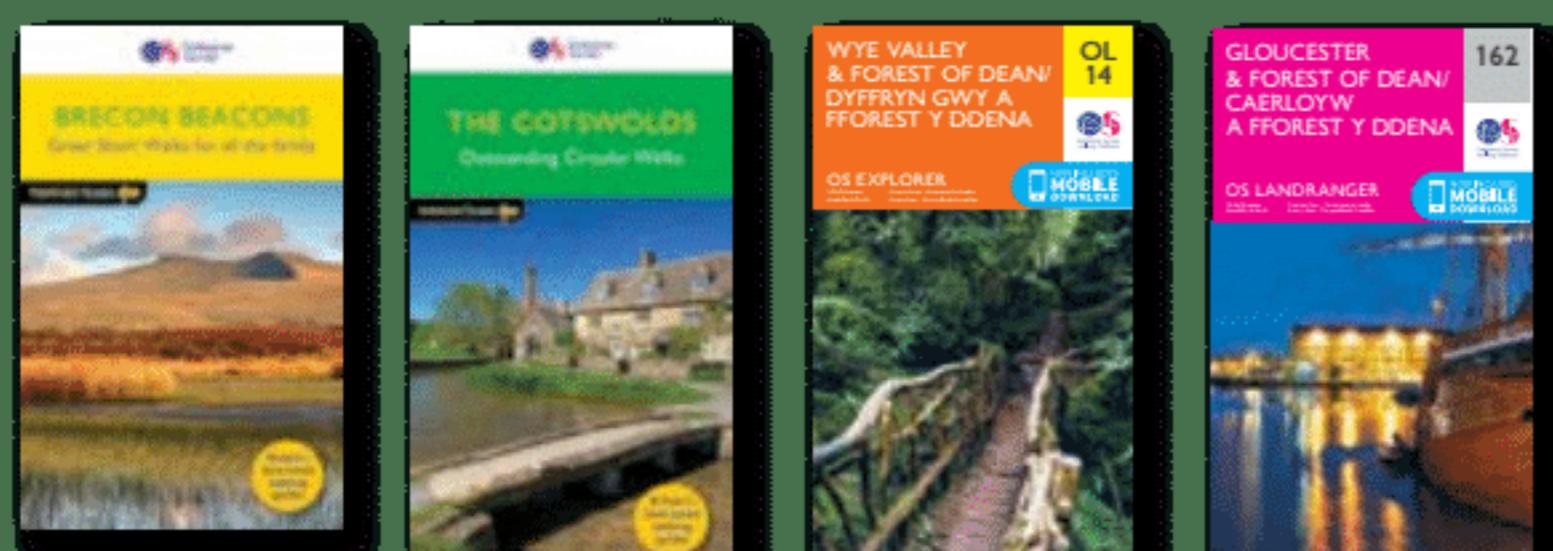
Pathfinder® Guides



- ▶ 28 great country walks from 2½ to 10 miles
- ▶ Clear, large scale Ordnance Survey route maps
- ▶ GPS references for all route waypoints
- ▶ Where to park, good pubs and places of interest en route

www.pathfinderwalks.co.uk

OS maps and walking guides for the surrounding area



9 780319 090442

£12.99