

## Redbrook, The Kymin, and Staunton stones

A former industrial centre, views of Welsh mountains from The Kymin, attractive woodland, and massive rock outcrops. A hilly walk on field paths and woodland tracks, with some steep ascents and descents, but superb views; 4 stiles.

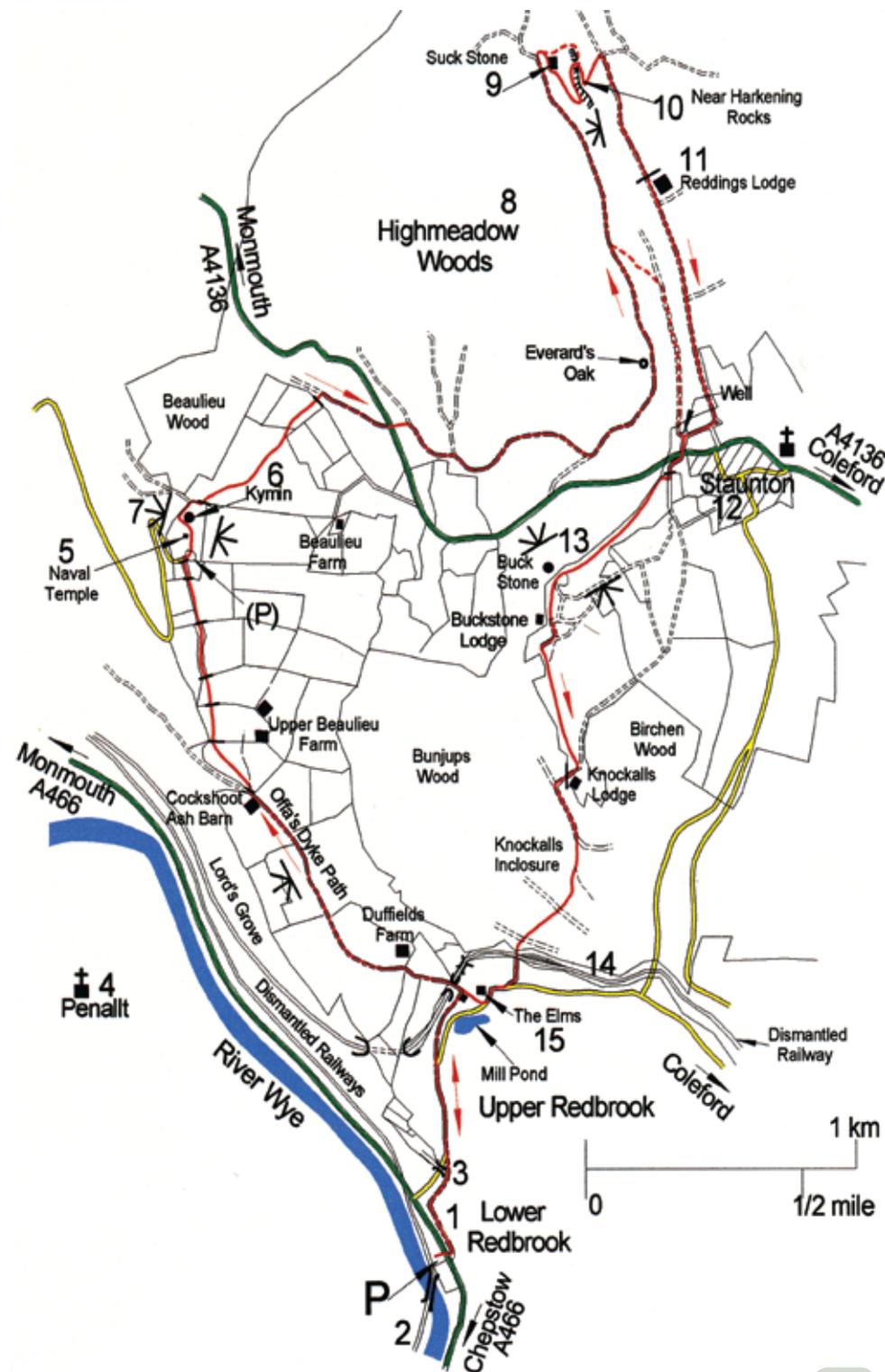
START at the car park by the River Wye in Redbrook, just north of the playing field, on the A466 Chepstow–Monmouth road: GR SO 536099. **Refreshments:** pub (The Bell) and shop in Redbrook; pubs in Penallt (The Boat) and Staunton (White Horse). **Bus:** 69 (Chepstow–Monmouth) to Redbrook.

REDBROOK (1) WAS ONCE an industrial village, although few traces of this now remain. The car park is on the site of the goods yard adjacent to Redbrook Station on the former Wye Valley Railway (2). Cross the main road by the car park entrance and bear left up the gravel lane in front of houses, indicated by an Offa's Dyke Path sign. (We will be following the Offa's Dyke Path for about 2 miles.) Note the old railway embankment in the garden across the main road on the left. The lane bends right, passing Brewery Terrace on the left and some industrial remains (possibly part of the Upper Redbrook Tinplate Works) on the right, before emerging onto a main road at a tramroad incline bridge (3). Turn right and follow the road uphill with care, as there is no footpath. (The stream marks the boundary between England and Wales here, and the first part of the walk is actually in Wales.) After about 350 yds take a tarmac lane which forks left uphill in front of a house and is signposted to Monmouth. Just opposite here was the site of one of the early 17<sup>th</sup> century forges, with a large mill pond above.

Follow the lane (Duffield's Lane, an 18<sup>th</sup> century turnpike road) steadily uphill past Cobbs Tump, after which it bends left, passes Duffield's Farm, and becomes a stony track. Views of the Wye Valley and Penallt Church (4) on the opposite hillside open up on the left. Continue ahead onto a grass track beside a barn, just past which you go through a kissing gate on the right. Bear left to cross the lower part of the field below Upper Beaulieu Farm to a gate, and

then keep right of the trees through two more gates onto an enclosed path by a fence. This leads to another gate, after which you follow the left-hand side of the field to a metal kissing gate. The path then follows a wooden fence to another gate, which leads to a National Trust car park. Bear right across this towards the Naval Temple (5) in the trees ahead. Just beyond this is The Kymin (6), and glorious views of Monmouth and the Black Mountains (7). In the opposite direction (southeast) are good views of Newland Church and the Forest of Dean.

About 100 yds past The Kymin, turn right at a track junction. Bear left past a house to a kissing gate, which has a Wysis Way waymark. Head diagonally right across the field into trees, and follow a gravel track which curves left to a gate and stile. Cross this and follow a path downhill to a wooden kissing gate on the edge of woodland. Turn right onto the gravel track beyond the gate and follow this down to a main road. Carefully cross the road and take the footpath just to the left (still signed Wysis Way) which descends through woods to a gravel track, where you go right. The next part of the walk is through the attractive Highmeadow Woods (8). Bear right at the next junction and follow the track, now more of a gravel road, as it bends left and then right, ignoring a waymarked path on the right. Turn left at a T-junction, following a yellow arrow, eventually passing a plaque on the left marking the Everard Oak, dedicated to John Everard, a former Deputy Surveyor.



About 400 yds after the oak, look out for a stone marker with a yellow arrow which marks a path going sharply right uphill. This is a possible shortcut, albeit rather steep and often muddy. It comes out onto a broader path where you bear right and continue to St John's Well. Otherwise, continue on the gravel road to a cleared area with large rock outcrops uphill to the right. A wooden post just beyond the clearing marks a narrow path (Highmeadow Trail) which goes steeply up to the right. The waymarked path (yellow arrows) bends right to pass immediately below a huge fallen block, the Suck Stone (9), then zig-zags upwards, passing below an outcrop of conglomerate rock to emerge onto the cliff top. Just ahead, right on the cliff edge, are Near Harkening Rocks (10), which provide more good views of the Welsh Hills, and would be a good place for lunch, or at least refreshments.

An obvious path leads directly away from the cliff edge through the trees to a dirt track. Turn right here and follow the track past a barrier, with Reddings Lodge (11) on the left, until you come to a small housing estate. Keep right onto a short tarmac road and at the end take the byway on the left of the house ahead. Just behind the house is St John the Baptist's Well, past which the shortcut comes in on the right. The path bends left to emerge at a main road in Staunton village (12), which can be visited by turning left. However, the route continues up the lane opposite. After 100 yds, just beyond a gate, take the path (Highmeadow Trail) on the right, which heads uphill. Keeping the stone wall on your right, you eventually come to the Buck Stone

(13), from which there are good views of the Welsh and Herefordshire Hills.

Keep ahead here, following a path signposted 'Redbrook Spur Trail', which we will follow most of the way back to Redbrook. This initially continues to follow the wall on your right, before curving slightly left and emerging from the trees near Buckstone Lodge. There are lovely views of Newland, St Briavels, and the forest from here. Just beyond the lodge, turn right along a tarmac road, then, immediately in front of the gate to the Buckstone Adventure Centre, take a waymarked path to the left. The grass path descends to the right of a house to a track junction, where you turn right to pass Knockalls Lodge and a barrier. Turn left at the T-junction and after about 200 yds, where the track bends left, take a waymarked downhill path on the right. Go right at a fork on the waymarked, but less obvious, path. Continue downhill, crossing over a gravel road, and then carefully down a steep section, which can be quite slippery in wet conditions. Cross another track and descend steeply to a stile. The cutting (left) and embankment (right) mark the trackbed of the Coleford Railway (14). The path continues between wire fences, over two more stiles and steeply down to a road. Turn right past The Elms (15), just beyond which is a signposted (to Kymin) rocky footpath going uphill to the right. Taking this avoids walking along a stretch of busy narrow road. Look out for a view of a well-preserved stone railway bridge on your right. You soon come out onto a stony track, where you turn left and descend back to the road. Bear right and return to the starting point via your outward route.

### Redbrook (1)

Redbrook was once an important industrial centre due to the ample supply of water which powered mills in both the Red Brook (in Upper Redbrook) and Valley Brook (Lower Redbrook) valleys. From Swan Pool, on the former, down to the Wye, leats, dams, and reservoir ponds were built to supply water to several corn mills, blast furnaces, tinplate works, and copper works, although not all of these were working at the same time. King's Mill, a corn mill, was first recorded in 1434 and remained in use until 1925. Two charcoal blast furnaces were built in Upper Redbrook in about 1604, and one of these lasted until the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. Lower Redbrook Copper Works was founded by the Company of Copper Miners in England in about

1690, and an Upper Copper Works was established by John Coster of Bristol at about the same time. They used local charcoal and coal, with ore brought from Cornwall via Chepstow. For a while Redbrook was the largest producer in the country, but by 1735 it had become cheaper to smelt copper ore in the Swansea area using local coal, and the works closed. By the late 18<sup>th</sup> century, both sites were being used for tinplate manufacture. That at Upper Redbrook closed in 1818, but the works at Lower Redbrook survived until 1961, and was world famous for the high-quality product it made.

Today the manager's residence, dating from c.1700, survives as a private house, but there is now little evidence of the industrial past. The Upper Redbrook site was taken over by the Redbrook Brewery Co. in 1825, and this closed a century later. Brewery Terrace, built to house the workers, still exists. There was another brewery (Ansley's) further up the valley, lasting from before 1848 until demolition in the 1940s. Another local industry along both sides of the Wye Valley south of Redbrook was manufacture of millstones from Quartz Conglomerate rock (see 9 below) which was quarried here. Unfinished or broken millstones can still be found in the woods and on the river edges. Redbrook was also a port where the various products of local industries were shipped out, but this declined in importance once the Monmouth Tramroad was built. One of Redbrook's claims to fame is that it once had five pubs, three of which had four-letter names beginning in 'B', the Bell, the Boat, and the Bush. The first two survive, although the Boat is actually across the bridge in Wales (Penallt), but the last (Bush House) is now used by an osteopath. It is noteworthy for being partly constructed of slag blocks (see Walk 12). St Saviour's Church was built in 1873 to a design by J.P. Seddon. Like many villages, Redbrook has lost most of its tradesmen and shopkeepers, but a village shop was recently re-opened. Today, it is on the routes of walkers on both the Offa's Dyke Path (see Walk 14) and Wye Valley Walk long-distance footpaths. The latter runs for 136 miles from Chepstow to the source of the Wye on the slopes of Plynlimon in mid-Wales.

### Wye Valley Railway (2)

The Wye Valley Railway ran from Wye Valley Junction on the former South Wales Railway (by then part of the Great Western Railway) at Tutshill near Chepstow, to Wyesham Junction on the Coleford, Monmouth, Usk and Pontypool Railway near Monmouth, a distance of about 13 miles. The Act of Incorporation was passed on 10 August 1866, but construction, by Reed Bros & Co. of London, did not begin until May 1874. The line was opened on 1 November 1876, and was worked by the Great Western Railway from the start, although formal amalgamation with that company did not take place until 1 July 1905. Stations were provided initially at Tidenham, Tintern, St Briavels, and Redbrook-on-Wye, and halts were opened in 1927-32 at Netherhope, Brockweir, Llandogo, Whitebrook, and Penallt, as well as Wyesham on the old CMU&PR section. There were four daily (except Sundays) passenger trains each way between Monmouth



Lower Redbrook Tinplate Works in about 1850.



View of Redbrook and the Wye, showing the Wye Valley Railway's viaduct.

and Chepstow in 1910. Although very scenic, the Monmouth–Chepstow line was never very profitable, and closure to passenger services occurred on 5 January 1959, and to goods in January 1964. The southern part of the line then remained in use as a private siding to serve Tintern and Dayhouse quarries (*see Walk 14*), the last train to the latter running in September 1992. Redbrook-on-Wye (known simply as Redbrook before 1935) Station opened with the line on 1 November 1876. The platform, stone station building, and signal

box were on the down (eastern) side of the line. There was a goods yard, with a loop, sidings, goods shed, and both 5 ton and 30 cwt cranes, to the south of the platform. By 1925 the goods facilities were only used occasionally, although there was some traffic associated with the local tinsplate works. The station was well known for its displays of flowers, and many prizes were won. The much-modified goods shed is now a private house. The old railway bridge across the Wye now provides a convenient footpath for customers of the Boat Inn, as well as users of the Wye Valley Walk long-distance footpath.



### Tramroad Bridge (3)

The Redbrook Branch was part of the Monmouth Railway, a horse-drawn tramroad which ran from Broadwell to May Hill, near Monmouth, via Coleford, Newland, and Redbrook. This 3 ft 6 in. gauge line opened on 17 August 1812 and the Redbrook Branch appears to have gone into use about the same time. It was about  $\frac{3}{4}$  mile long and incorporated a double-tracked, rope-worked, self-acting incline, which crossed the Redbrook–Newland road on a stone bridge.

The branch was mainly used to

supply coal to the Upper Redbrook Tinplate Works, near the bottom of the incline, and the Lower Redbrook Tinplate Works, towards the end of the branch, but the Wye Valley Corn Mill and Redbrook Brewery were also served. There was a short spur to a wharf, owned by the company, on the River Wye, and the line extended another 400 yds to some waterside steps. The newly-formed Coleford, Monmouth, Usk, and Pontypool Railway agreed to purchase the Monmouth Railway in 1853, although this was never formalised and little was done to improve the tramroad. There was little traffic on the Monmouth Railway by 1872, by

which time the Redbrook Branch had probably been abandoned. Much of the trackbed of the main tramroad was utilised by the standard-gauge Coleford Railway, which opened on 1 September 1883 (*see 13, and Walk 9*).

### Penallt Church (4)

Penallt Church (of unknown dedication) is about a mile north of the village centre, and there is only a handful of houses and farms nearby. It is set in a lovely position overlooking the Wye Valley. The church probably dates back to the 12<sup>th</sup> century (north wall of the nave), although the chancel is 14<sup>th</sup> century and the south aisle and tower are mid-16<sup>th</sup> century. The tower has a saddleback roof. Inside, the wagon roof has some interesting carved bosses, and the pulpit is dated 1634.

### Naval Temple. (5)

The Naval Temple was built by gentlemen of Monmouth and dedicated to Her Grace the Duchess of Beaufort, daughter of Admiral Boscawen, in August 1800 in memory of admirals who had distinguished themselves in past wars: 1759–1801 (Admirals Boscawen, Bridport, Cornwallis, Duncan, Gell, Hawke, Hood, Howe, Keith, Mitchell, Nelson, Parker, Rodney, Thompson, Vincent, and Warren). A statue of Britannia surmounts the temple.

### The Kymin (6)

The Kymin tower was built in 1794 as a banqueting house for members of the Kymin Club, who met on Tuesdays. It was visited by Nelson in 1802. It is now owned by the National Trust, and is open to visitors at certain times. The name is thought to be derived from the Welsh 'Cae Maen', meaning 'stone field'. This is where the walk leaves the Offa's Dyke Path, which descends left towards Monmouth, but we join the Wysis Way for nearly 2 miles to Near Harkening Rock. This 55-mile long-distance footpath links the Wye Valley Walk and Offa's Dyke Path by the Wye at Monmouth to the Thames Path near Kemble. The name comes from Wye and Isis (or Thames).



### Monmouth Viewpoint (7)

Monmouth is an attractive market town, situated at the confluence of the Rivers Monnow and Wye. Much of its history has been connected with the Wye, so it is unfortunate that rebuilding of the A40 trunk road in the 1960s has virtually cut off the town from the river. The town was the birthplace of Henry V, whose statue appears on Shire Hall (1724) in Agincourt Square, close to a statue of Charles S. Rolls, founder of Rolls-Royce and pioneer airman, who lived nearby. Monmouth's greatest treasure is the 13<sup>th</sup> century fortified bridge over the River Monnow. The present Norman castle dates from the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century, but it was badly damaged during the Civil War, and only the ruined Great Tower and Hall survive left. Great Castle House dates from 1673. The parish Church of St Mary



View of Monmouth and the Welsh Mountains (Bloreng, Sugar Loaf, etc.) from The Kymin.

has a 14<sup>th</sup> century tower, but was largely rebuilt in the 1880s. However, St Thomas Becket Church, near the Monnow Bridge, dates back to Norman times. There are many fine Tudor and Georgian buildings in the town. The Nelson Museum commemorates the Admiral's connections with Monmouth. The large building on the hill is part of the Haberdashers' School, founded in 1614. Of the two railway bridges crossing the Wye, that on the left was on the Chepstow line, and that on the right was on the line to Ross-on-Wye. Monmouth

Troy Station was just beyond the junction of these two lines, but after closure the station building was moved to Winchcombe on the preserved Gloucestershire Warwickshire Railway near Cheltenham. Just beyond Monmouth is King's Wood, and in the distance can be seen some of the Welsh hills (The Bloreng, Brecon Beacons, Sugar Loaf, Skirrid, and Black Mountains, terminating in Hay Bluff).

### Highmeadow Woods (8)

Highmeadow Woods are perhaps one of the most attractive areas of woodland in the country, particularly during the bluebell season and in the autumn. They are mostly ancient semi-natural woodland (oak, ash, beech, lime, etc.), but have been historically managed through coppicing and timber growing. Coppicing was once carried out on an industrial scale in many parts of the Forest to feed the iron works and lime kilns, but now continues only in wildlife reserves and some Forestry Commission woodlands. From the 1960s modern forestry was largely based on plantations of softwood species (larch, spruce, Douglas fir, etc.), which were eventually clear-felled and the ground replanted. Hence, much of the Forest is now a mosaic of mature deciduous trees and younger conifers, divided by forest roads and rides. However, the distinct contrast between traditional management and modern forestry is now being broken down, with considerable efforts being made to create management systems based on native tree species. Foresters in the Wye Valley and Forest of Dean have been at the forefront of these pioneering techniques, and are working towards a multi-purpose form of forestry.

### Suck Stone (9)

Quartz Conglomerate, together with the overlying (i.e., younger) Tintern Sandstone Group, makes up the Upper Old Red Sandstone, of Devonian age, in this area. It forms a line of crags, 20 to 25 ft high between little Doward and Staunton. The rock layers dip to the ENE, i.e., into the hillside, as can be seen in the overhanging crags above. A number of large blocks have fallen down the hillside, of which the largest is the Suck Stone. Although reported to weigh well over 10 000 tons, we estimate that it is actually no more than a quarter of this. A close look at the conglomerate ('puddingstone', also known locally as 'jackstone') shows that it contains conspicuous pebbles of quartz in a sandy matrix. You might also be able to see cross-bedding, where small-scale sandy layers are truncated by

others which dip at a different angle. These features were produced as the sand was deposited under water with varying current directions, probably in a river bed during floods in the generally arid landscape. The overlying sandstones were also probably deposited in ancient river systems. Similar, but much larger-scale, features were formed in desert sand dunes, where the sand was wind-blown (as shown by the well-rounded shapes of the grains).

### Near Harkening Rocks (10)

The Quartz Conglomerate rocks at the top of the hill are more resistant than both the over- and underlying sandstones, and hence form an obvious escarpment. The rocks beneath the conglomerate — sandstones (termed Brownstones) of the Lower Old Red Sandstone — have been eroded away to allow blocks of the former to tumble downhill. They are separated from the Quartz Conglomerate by an unconformity, which means that there was a long period of erosion before the conglomerate was deposited. In other words, there is a time gap in the rock sequence here. The name Near Harkening Rocks is said to be due to the fact that the gamekeepers and bailiffs could sit below the crags and listen out for poachers of deer or fish. Far Harkening Rocks are about ½ mile to the north, just above the Wye. The view from here takes in the Welsh hills, including the Bloreng, Skirrid, Sugar Loaf, Black Mountains, and even, on a particularly clear



Cross-bedding in Quartz Conglomerate.



View from Near Harkening Rocks on a misty autumn day.

day, the Brecon Beacons. The Kymin hill can be seen to the left, and Hayes Coppice, just beyond the A40, to the right.

### Reddings Lodge (11)

After excessive timber felling by Sir John Wynter in the mid-17<sup>th</sup> century, the Dean Forest (Reafforestation) Act of 1668 allowed the enclosure of 11 000 acres, divided into six Walks, each with a lodge, which housed a keeper (*see Walk 5*). However, further problems, including neglect, theft of timber, and illegal grazing of animals, continued throughout the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Admiral Nelson visited the Forest in 1802 and his report of 1803 led to a new Enclosure Act in 1808. This allowed construction of 24 new lodges, and several more were built later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Reddings Lodge probably dates from around 1820 and seems to have been little altered since then. Also passed on this walk are Buckstone Lodge (built in 1897, possibly to replace Knockalls Lodge) and the early 19<sup>th</sup> century Knockalls Lodge. Other Forest lodges are seen on Walks 5 and 7.

### Staunton (12)

Staunton, “the place of the stones”, was the ancient name given by the Anglo-Saxons. There are several ancient stones in the area, including the Longstone, by the A4136 about ½ mile southeast of the village, a standing stone which probably dates back to the Bronze Age. All Saints Church is one of the oldest bordering the Forest of Dean, dating in part from the 12<sup>th</sup> century, although much of the building is 13<sup>th</sup> to 15<sup>th</sup> century. Inside the church is a corkscrew staircase leading to an unusual c.1500 stone pulpit, as well as a font which is believed to be a hollowed-out Roman altar. Some medieval glass survives in a tiny upper window in the chancel east wall. In the churchyard is the grave of David Mushet (1772–1847), metallurgist of Coleford, whose experiments revolutionised the steel industry (*see Walk 7*). By the churchyard is an almshouse given to the village by Benedict Hall in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Nearby is a 14<sup>th</sup> century stone cross, Church Farmhouse (late 16<sup>th</sup> –17<sup>th</sup> century), with its adjoining 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> century barns, and a stone-walled animal pound. The original White Horse Inn of 1813 was rebuilt later in the 19<sup>th</sup> century to accommodate the turnpike road. It advertises itself as “the last in England”.

### Buck Stone (13)

Yet more outcrops of Quartz Conglomerate are seen here. The Buck Stone once bucked or rocked, but it was rolled down the hill by vandals (clearly not just a modern phenomenon) in 1885. It was repositioned, but is now fixed in place. More evidence for the use of conglomerate to make millstones can be found in the woods near here. The view includes the Black Mountains (Waun Fach, Hay Bluff), Graig Syfyrddin, Garway Hill, Orcop Hill, and Aconbury Hill (near Hereford). Just beyond Monmouth is Buckholt Wood.

### Coleford Railway (14)

The 10-mile Coleford Railway was opened on 1 September 1883, replacing an earlier tramroad (*see 3*). It was worked by the Great Western Railway from the start, and was amalgamated with that company on 1 July 1884. The line climbed some 500 ft between Monmouth and Coleford and had some sharp curves, so it was a difficult one to work. Stations were provided at Newland and Coleford. Traffic was never very plentiful, and the line closed as from 1 January 1917 (*see Walk 9 for more details*).

### The Elms (15)

This is a large house with a walled garden, dating back to at least the early 19<sup>th</sup> century. There are good views of the railway embankment, bridge, and tunnel entrance behind.

