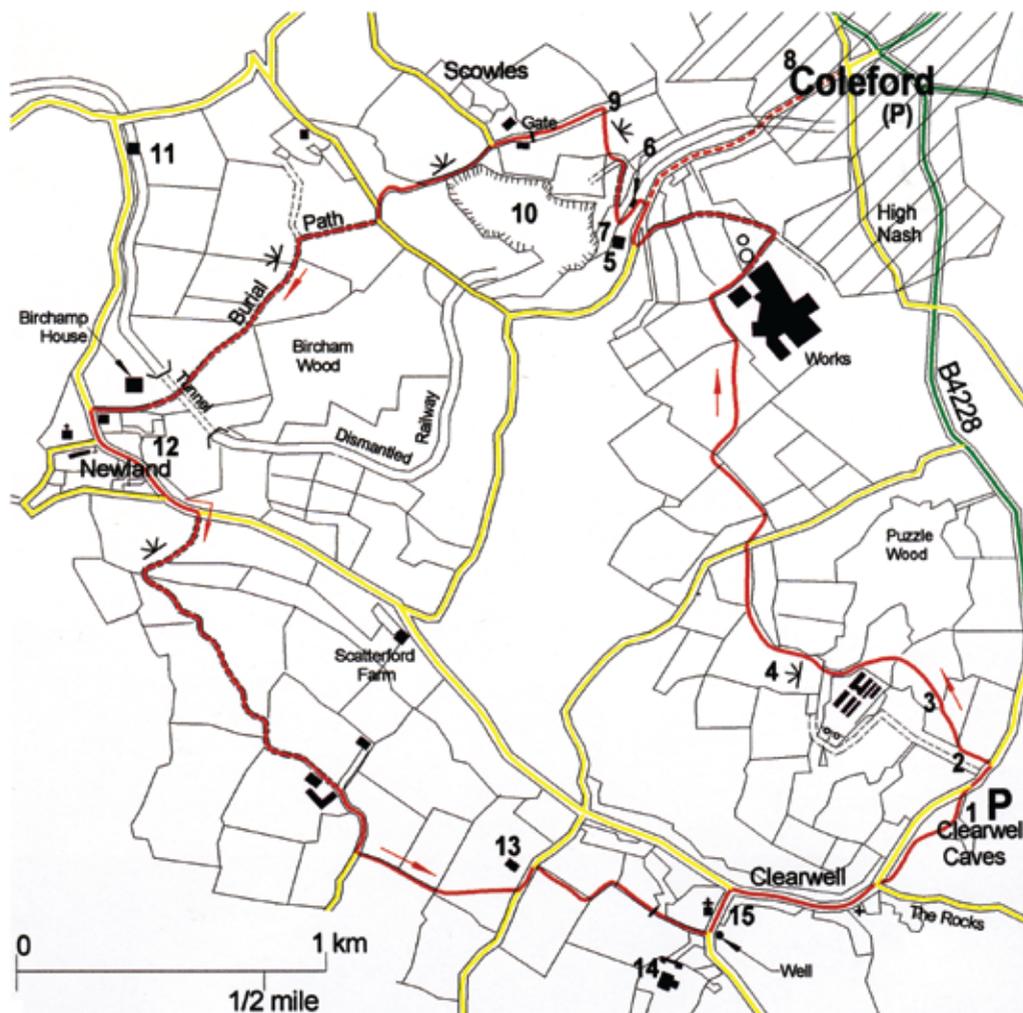


Clearwell, Whitecliff, and Newland

Two attractive villages, the 'Cathedral of the Forest', a historic furnace, and ancient iron mines. A hilly walk on field paths and green lanes; 23 stiles.

START at the Clearwell Caves car park off the minor road between Clearwell and Milkwall, about ¼ mile northeast of Clearwell village: GR SO 578083. Note that the car park barrier is closed when the caves close for the day (see signs or check at the caves for times). If parking outside the barrier, please take care not to obstruct access. If starting in Coleford, follow Newland Street from the Market Place to point 5. **Refreshments:** Café at Clearwell Caves; pubs in Clearwell and Newland; range of facilities in Coleford. **Bus:** 30, 31, 35, 721, etc. to Coleford.



CLEARWELL CAVES (1) are ancient iron mines, open to the public for underground tours and well worth a visit. Leave the car park by walking down the tarmac entrance road to the main road. Turn right for about 100 yds, then go left over a stile at a footpath sign. Follow the path downhill and after 100 yds one of the entrances (gated) to Old Ham Iron Mine (2) can be seen under a tree on the left. Climb a stile and follow the path as it bears right into woodland, continuing over another stile into an area of ancient iron workings or 'scowles'(3). The path here may be rather indistinct, but is marked by yellow arrows. Note the yew tree on an isolated pillar of rock just before a short steep climb. Soon after this you bear left to emerge at a stile on a field boundary. Bear half left across the field to a stile by a gate at the left-hand edge of woodland. Continue past a chicken farm and over two more stiles into a field with lovely views of Newland and the Welsh mountains (4) on a clear day. Bear right to join the right-hand edge of the field going downhill. Keep bearing right, along the right-hand field margin, to climb a stile, before continuing down to a kissing gate.

Cross the road beyond, climb a stile opposite, and bear right diagonally uphill to a stile in the field corner. Follow the right-hand field edge for about 250 yds, past a gateway on the right and into the next field. After a few yards, turn right through a gap and follow the right-hand field edge for 150 yds to a marker post by some large rocks. The right of way goes diagonally left across the field here, towards a stile in the far corner just to the left of factory buildings. Cross this and continue by the fence to climb a metal gate/stile. Turn right and follow the field edge to a dirt track between a large storage tank and factory buildings. After 100 yds turn left at a T-junction onto a path between hedges, and later stone walls, which leads down to a gravel road. Taking the narrow path opposite will bring you onto a road, just opposite Whitecliff Furnace (5).

Turn right for 150 yds, then cross a stile by a footpath sign on the left. Go straight ahead and follow the path uphill, turning left at the top of the field, past overgrown limekilns (6) for about 80 yds to a marker post. Turn sharp right onto the old trackbed of the Coleford Railway (7), but after 30 yds bear left uphill on a rocky track. Immediately after the track bends sharp left, turn right onto an uphill path, aiming a few yards to the right of a power-line post to a stile in the field corner. Cross this and keep ahead across the next field (with good views of Coleford (8) on the right) to a stile and gate, which lead to a tarmac footpath about 40 yds ahead. Turn left here. This is the old Burial Path (9), which we will eventually follow all the way to Newland. The Path goes between houses onto a tarmac road. After about 60 yds, where the road bends right into the hamlet of Scowles (unsurprisingly there are more scowles here), turn left at a footpath sign. The Path passes Whitecliff Quarry (10) to the left, with more views of the Welsh peaks to the right. Cross a stile and follow the left-hand field boundary (the pathway has stone edging here), bearing left to yet another stile, which leads via steps to a tarmac road. Turn left and after 80 yds take the track on the right. Follow this uphill to a T-junction, where go left, ignoring (probably with relief) the stile ahead. There are further views into Wales from here, but also look back to the right after about 100 yds to where the former Newland Station (11) can be seen in trees in the valley bottom, just left of a white house and metal-roofed barn. The large Stowfield limestone quarry can also be seen. The track becomes increasingly sunken, and muddy, eventually becoming tarmac at the entrance to Bircham House. It soon emerges onto a road in the village of Newland (12).

Turn left to pass the Ostrich pub, with the church and almshouses on the right, and continue to the bottom of the hill at the end of the village. Just past the traffic bollards, turn right onto a sunken lane, which climbs steadily uphill. Just before a left-hand bend there is a nice view of Newland to the right.

After $\frac{3}{4}$ mile the lane comes out onto a road, where you keep ahead past barns on the right. After 200 yds turn left through a gateway at a footpath sign and follow the left-hand hedge to the field corner, with a stile (and gateway). Cross this and the field ahead, aiming just to the right of some buildings (and a mast on the hill beyond) to reach a stile, which leads onto a road. The building on the left was once a tithe barn (13). Turn left on the road for 80 yds, then climb a particularly high stile on the right. Follow the wire fence on the left, with nice views of the Clearwell valley, to a stile in the far left-hand corner of the field. Cross this and

follow a stone wall to climb another stile on the right, continuing with the wall, and then a fence, on your right. There is a good view of Clearwell Castle (14) from here. Climb one last stile and follow a track, and then a lane, down to a main road in Clearwell (15). Turn left past the church, then right at the Cross into High Street, passing Tudor Farmhouse and the Butcher's Arms. The road bends left past a chapel, then, immediately after 'The Rocks' lane on the right, take a footpath bearing right uphill. Keep ahead above the road and bear slightly left onto a gravel track, which goes past the Clearwell Caves café and up to the car park.

Clearwell Caves (1)

In the 1960s some of the shallower workings of Old Ham Iron Mine (see below) were made accessible for public tours by Ray Wright. Much of the iron-ore was deposited in ancient cave systems in the Crease Limestone, part of the Carboniferous Limestone Series (see 3). Several of these old caverns, known as 'churns' and now largely mined out, can be seen on the tour. A visit to this genuine Forest iron mine is highly recommended.

Old Ham Iron Mine (2)

In 1841 Old Ham, together with Old Bow, was galed to Benjamin Hutchings. It had passed to William Talbot by 1856, but the pit was idle by 1859. It was worked by the Talbots from 1870–4, but was then leased to William Fryer, who constructed a tramroad connection to sidings on the Severn & Wye Railway's Sling Branch in 1876. The Forest Hematite Co. Ltd was formed in 1891 by Messrs Bonsor and Scrutton, who had acquired the Old Ham and Lambsquay pits from Fryer. The gales were surrendered in 1903. Old Ham was re-granted to Amos Morgan and 16 other Free Miners in 1909, and they sold it to the Coleford Iron Co. in 1917. Between 1846 and 1900 it produced some 62000 tons of ore, with 3000 tons coming from outcrop workings between 1909 and 1916. Only 18 tons were produced in 1925. Old Ham Pit was acquired by the British Colour & Mining Co. Ltd in 1927, who worked ochre from Old Ham and Lambsquay. It was one of the 'Land' or shallow pits, and had connections underground with New Dunn, Old Sling and Old Bow pits. In the 1960s some of the Old Ham workings became the tourist mine called Clearwell Caves.

Scowles (3)

Here in Lambsquay Wood are good examples of the earliest, near-surface, iron-ore workings in Dean, known locally as 'scowles'. These consist of hollows, channels, quarry-like rock faces, and rock pillars, as well as underground workings. They generally follow the outcrop of the Crease Limestone (part of the Carboniferous Limestone Series), which is the main host to the iron-ore deposits. It is thought that the iron was derived from eroding Coal Measures rocks, rich in iron carbonate and pyrite, during Permo–Triassic times. Descending iron-bearing solutions then deposited most of this iron in the open-textured, relatively cavernous Crease Limestone, with smaller amounts in the Lower Dolomite and in dolomite units within the Drybrook Sandstone.

The presence of iron ore at the surface would have attracted the first miners to the area. Recent detailed studies have shown that scowles are, to a large extent, natural features, representing ancient cave systems in the Crease Limestone. Nevertheless, significant modification of such ancient 'karst' topography (see Walk 14) during mining activity over many hundreds of years is evidenced by the presence of pick marks, drill holes, and spoil heaps, as well as the volume of material which must have been extracted. Although direct evidence is scanty, it is likely that some of the workings may date back to Iron Age or Roman times. Royalties from mining were being paid to the Crown in the 13th century, and there were six small pits in the mid-1700s. Once the near-surface ore was worked out, mining was extended underground. Lambsquay underground mine was a relatively small 'land' or shallow pit, and produced only small amounts of iron ore (around 3000 tons) in the 1800s. However, some ochre was obtained from old outcrop workings after 1927. In the late 19th century, some of the scowles in Great Lambsquay Wood were converted into an area of scenic walks named 'Puzzle Wood', still open to visitors. Probably the most spectacular and best-preserved examples of scowles are in Noxon Park, near Bream. They are now home to ancient beech and yew trees, as well as a variety of ferns.

Viewpoint (4)

The view from here includes several Welsh peaks, including the Sugar Loaf, Skirrid, Black Mountains, and, on a particularly clear day, the Brecon Beacons. Newland Church can be seen ahead, and somewhat closer is the white-painted late 17th century Scatterford Farm.

Whitecliff Furnace (5)

This coke-fuelled blast furnace for smelting iron ore was built in 1798–1810. (A datestone appears to read 1806.) Coke was made on site and, together with the ore, was fed in at the top. The surviving furnace, with its charging bridge, is thought to be the second, built when an earlier uncompleted furnace was swept away by floods. The ironworks attracted metallurgist David Mushet to Coleford in 1810, although he soon opened his own works at Dark Hill (see Walk 7). A little way up the road towards Coleford is Whitecliff House, which is partly late 16th century, but enlarged in 1790. It was bought in 1816 by industrialist James Teague, but he died before he could take up residence. Not far beyond this the stone bridge of the former Coleford Railway (see 7 below), and just beyond the bridge is the mid-19th century folly called Rock Castle (now a dental practice). Coleford town centre is only a short distance further along this road.



Limekilns (6)

This is typical of the many limekilns which survive in the Dean area near limestone quarries, most of which worked various units of the Carboniferous Limestone Series. Many are built entirely of stone, but this one has brick-lined arches. The charge (limestone, which is essentially

CaCO₃, and a fuel such as coal) was loaded into the top of the kiln, which was commonly built against a hillside or embankment to facilitate this. The product was quicklime (CaO), which was raked out of draw-holes, usually protected by arches or recesses. The quicklime would be slaked by mixing with water to form slaked lime (Ca(OH)₂) before it was spread over the fields. At one time quicklime was sometimes dispersed in small heaps over a field and allowed to slake there before being ploughed in. Transport of quicklime in wooden carts was somewhat dangerous, as the heat generated when quicklime is wetted generates considerable heat, with the risk of setting the cart on fire! Lime was also in demand for mortar and limestone was also quarried for building purposes. The few surviving limestone quarries in Dean produce crushed aggregate for use in road construction and concrete manufacture.

Coleford Railway (7)

This replaced the Monmouth Railway, a horse-drawn tramroad, which ran from Broadwell, via Coleford, Newland, and Redbrook, to May Hill, near Monmouth, and which was opened in 1812 (*see also Walk 13*). The Coleford Railway Act, authorising construction of a standard-gauge line from Wyesham Junction (where the Coleford, Monmouth, Usk and Pontypool and the Wye Valley Railways met), near Monmouth, to Coleford, was passed on 18 July 1872. However, construction did not begin until 1880, with Reed Bros & Co. of London as contractors. The 5-mile line was finally opened on 1 September 1883. It was worked by the Great Western Railway from the start, amalgamation with that company occurring on 1 July 1884. The line followed much of the old tramroad track, but deviated to avoid the sharper curves of the latter. It climbed some 500 ft between Monmouth and Coleford on gradients mostly between 1 in 40 and 1 in 67, and it had several sharp curves, so it was a difficult one to work. Stations were provided at Newland and Coleford, the latter adjacent to, but initially quite separate from, the Severn and Wye Railway's establishment. There were 3 or 4 passenger trains each way per day in 1900, but traffic, even goods, was never very plentiful, and the line closed as from 1 January 1917, most of the track soon being lifted for the war effort. However, the section from Whitecliff Quarry to Coleford and the former S&WR line continued in use for carriage of limestone until 1967.

Coleford (8)

Coleford (pop. 8351 in 2001) is a thriving community and is now the administrative centre of the Forest of Dean. It was first recorded as Coleverde in 1275, when it was part of the Royal hunting forest. Coleford was the scene of a battle during the Civil War. On 20 February 1643, the townspeople fought 1500 cavalry and foot soldiers allied to Royalist Prince Rupert, and the market hall was burnt down. There were 160 houses in 1710, but it was only in the later 18th and 19th centuries that increasing industrialisation (particularly production of stone, coal, and iron) transformed Coleford in an important market town. It was served by two railways: the Severn & Wye Railway (opened 1875), and the Coleford Railway (opened by the GWR in 1883), which initially had separate stations. The former GWR goods shed is now an interesting railway museum. The market place is dominated by the tower of the original octagonal parish church, built in 1821 and mostly demolished in 1882. Around the square are some attractive 18th and early 19th century buildings. Of the many pubs, the King's Head, Angel, and Old White Hart (17th century) are still in business. Also noteworthy are the classical late 18th century Bank House off Bank Street, now the Forestry Commission offices, and the early 17th century Poolway House in Gloucester Road. Tump House, now the Forest House Hotel, was leased by David Mushet in 1810. The present Parish Church of St John was built in 1880 to a design by F.S. Waller. The Baptist Church dates from 1858. The large factory passed on the walk is owned by GlaxoSmithKline and makes the well-known drinks *Lucozade* and *Ribena*. A number of

famous people have lived in Coleford: Robert Mushet, industrialist (*see Walk 7*); James Teague, industrialist (*see 5 above and Walk 8*); Mary Howitt, Quaker and Victorian writer; Angus Buchanan VC, World War 1 hero; and Dennis Potter (1935–83), author and playwright.

Burial Path (9)

Before Coleford had its own parish church, burials took place at Newland, nearly two miles from the centre of Coleford. This necessitated the carrying of coffins along the 'burial path'. There are several such burial paths (known elsewhere as 'corpse roads') around the Forest, linking outlying communities with their parish church.

Whitecliff Quarry (10)

Limestone was quarried near Whitecliff before the 17th century, and limekilns are recorded here in the 18th. The opening of a tramroad from Coleford to Monmouth in 1812 stimulated quarrying, and there were three new kilns in 1836. The tramroad was converted to a standard-gauge railway by the Great Western Railway in 1883, and there was an agreement between the GWR and the Whitecliff Lime Co. for a private siding in 1885. Monmouth Steam Sawmills Co. Ltd took over the quarry in 1904, Thomas Swan & Co. Ltd in 1930, and Fred Watkins (Whitecliff Quarries) Ltd soon after World War II. Ownership passed to Man-Abell (Whitecliff Quarry) Ltd in the mid-1960s, stone for tarmac, aggregate, blast-furnace flux, and railway ballast being produced from the massive Lower Dolomite, part of the Carboniferous Limestone Series. After the line to Monmouth was closed in 1917, stone was transported onto the Severn & Wye Railway's branch at Coleford until that closed in 1967. The quarry was disused by the 1990s, by which time it was quite extensive (500 yds across). Part of the site now houses some light industrial units, but most is a 4-wheel drive training centre.

Newland Station (11)

The only intermediate station on the Coleford Railway (*see 7*) was at Newland, although this was situated ½ mile north of the village near Cherry Orchard Farm. The main station building included the booking office and was on the western (down) side of the line. It was constructed of stone with a small canopy, and was similar to that at Coleford. The up platform was on a loop and had a small stone, canopied shelter. Behind this was a further loop, and two short sidings serving a platform supporting the stone goods shed and a crane. A wooden signal box was situated to the east of the running line by the level crossing over the Berry Hill road, and the station master's house was almost opposite. The station closed with the line from 1 January 1917, but the site was used by the Royal Air Force (59 Maintenance Unit) during World War II, the tunnels at Redbrook and Newland being used for storage of ammunition. Most of the station buildings have been preserved. The two passenger station buildings have been much modified and incorporated into a private residence, but the goods shed (and platform) is, externally at least, in near-original condition. Two of the level crossing gates survive, but the signal box has gone. The former station master's house is still lived in.

Newland (12)

Newland is an attractive village, dominated by its magnificent All Saints' Church, known as the 'Cathedral of the Forest'. The church was founded by Rector Robert de Wakering (1215–37), but the present church dates mostly from c.1280–1300, when Edward I's historian, John of London, was rector. In 1305 Edward I added the small chapel adjoining the porch to contain the chantry of King Edward's Service. The church comprises a west tower,



nave with five arches, very large north and south aisles, south porch, chancel, and chapels. There are many interesting monuments within the church. An effigy of Jenkin Wyrall, Forester of Fee (d. 1457), shows details of hunting costume of the time. An early 17th century forester with bow and horn is shown on an incised slab. On a tomb in the south chapel is the famous 'Miners' Brass', showing the figure of a medieval miner, with his hod and pick in his



hands and candlestick in his mouth. This has become the symbol of the Forest Free Miners. The steps of the cross in the churchyard are 14th century, but the rest is Victorian. Near the churchyard is a row of almshouses with a panel inscribed: "These Almshouses for eight men and eight women Parishioners of Newland and the habitation adjoining for a lecturer, were founded A.D.1615 by Mr. William Jones, Citizen and Haberdasher of London; and he appointed the Worshipful Company of Haberdashers Governors". The Ostrich Inn dates back to at least 1694. Other listed buildings nearby include Bell's Old Grammar School (c.1638), Dower and Spout Farm Cottages (early-mid-17th century), Dower House, the



Lecture, and Tanhouse Farm (late 17th-early 18th century), and Birchamp House (early 19th century). In the fields north of the church is the Great Oak of Newland, which is claimed to be one of the biggest in England

Tithe Barn (13)

This is an L-shaped 17th century stone tithe barn with two extensions. There were two opposed cart entries, originally with large double boarded doors. Like many

other barns in the area, this one has been converted into a private residence.

Clearwell Castle (14)

Clearwell Castle was built in Gothic style on the site of a Tudor manor by Roger Morris for Thomas Wyndham in 1727. Built of Forest stone, it was England's first neo-Gothic mansion, but was burnt down in 1929 and left in ruins until 1953. It was known as Clearwell Court until 1908. The entrance front has a 2-storey central portion flanked by symmetrical 3-storey towers, all with embattlements alternately carved with the Wyndham lion. The house was restored after the fire, and many of the ceilings are facsimiles rather than original. It has had several owners who have used it for various commercial ventures, including a recording studio, and is presently available for hire, being especially popular as a wedding venue. The adjacent Castle Farm includes a particularly handsome early 17th century stone barn, which may have been a tithe barn. One of the cart entries is a gabled projecting structure with pointed archway.



Clearwell (15)

Nestled in a pleasant valley, it is hard to imagine that this quiet village originated in Saxon (or maybe even earlier) times as an iron-mining settlement. The presence of abundant clear water from springs encouraged the development of tanning and nail-making industries and gave the village its name. That considerable wealth was generated is shown by the many fine buildings in the village, many built of local reddish sandstone. Some date back to the 16th century (Baynams, Platwell House, Tudor Farmhouse, and the Wyndham Arms), whereas others are 17th (Stank Farmhouse) or 18th (Cross House) century. The base of the cross in the centre of the village is medieval, but the rest is mid-19th century. There are three pubs: the Butcher's Arms, the Lamb, and the Wyndham Arms. St Peter's Church, designed by John Middleton of Cheltenham (who also restored the medieval cross), was built in 1866. A 19th century stone wellhouse is tucked away behind the Wyndham Arms, and there is another wellhead opposite the entrance to the castle.

