

Features of the Walk

Beechenhurst Lodge has a shop, café, toilets, BBQ and picnic areas, and childrens' playground. It was built on the site of Speech House Hill Colliery, which closed in 1903, although the main shaft was retained as an emergency exit for nearby Lightmoor Colliery until 1937.

Speech House, dating from about 1676, was one of six lodges built following the Dean Forest (Reafforestation) Act of 1668, which was designed to protect the Forest from excessive timber cutting. It was rebuilt after being damaged by rioters, protesting against the enclosures, in 1688. The building still houses the Verderers' Courtroom, where disputes involving the vert (trees) and venison of the forest were heard. The mining industry was similarly controlled by gavellers, who granted 'gales': areas to be worked for iron, coal, or stone. Speech House was leased as an inn in 1841, and is now a hotel. The Bledisloe Monument opposite is said to mark the centre of the Forest.

The **Cyril Hart Arboretum**, which covers 15 acres, includes trees from throughout the world planted from 1915 from the collection of Frank Wilson. It was named after Cyril Hart, the renowned Forest historian, and Verderer from 1962 until 2009.

Dean Hall School is a special school catering for pupils and students with moderate learning difficulties.

Cannop Ponds were constructed in the early 19th century to supply water to power a 51ft diameter waterwheel at Parkend Ironworks, which closed in 1877. The area is now popular for walking, bird watching, and fishing. The nearby stoneworks was built by the Forest of Dean Stone Firms Ltd in 1900. Recently modernised it is still operational, mostly using Pennant Sandstone from Bixslade. The cycle track was the route of the Severn and Wye Railway's horse-drawn tramroad from Lydney to Lydbrook, which opened in 1810. Converted to a standard-gauge locomotive-hauled line by 1875, the line north of Parkend was finally closed in 1956.

Bixslade (slade means valley) was once a hive of industrial activity. The Bicslade (sic) Tramroad was a branch of the Severn and Wye Railway's main line. It was used to transport coal and stone, and was in use until 1946. The stone blocks which held the iron tramroad plates can still be seen. Mine Train Quarry works Pennant Sandstone, and there was once a small iron mine here. There is another large working quarry at the top of the valley (Bixhead). Union Colliery was worked intermittently during the 19th century, but was unexpectedly flooded in 1902, four men being drowned. The disaster is commemorated by a statue of two trapped miners, carved in sandstone from the nearby quarry. Nearby Monument Mine is a typical small Forest 'free mine', one of only a handful still operating. There were formerly several more in Bixslade.

Howlers Slade was once the location of another of the Severn and Wye Railway's branch tramroads, as well as sandstone quarries and collieries.

Hopewell Colliery Museum is still a working mine, which is open to the public for underground tours.

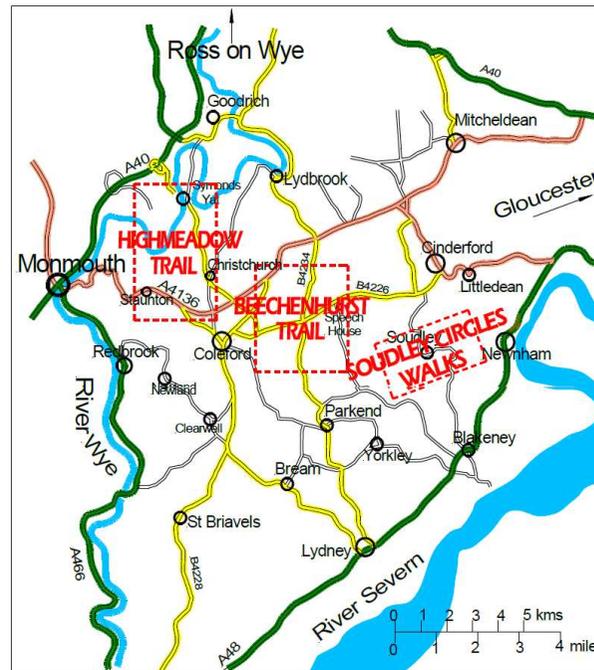
Pygmy Pinetum is a nursery, with a garden going into the woodland.

Wimberry Slade also had its branch tramroad, quarries, and collieries. There is still a working free mine here, and at the bottom of the valley was Cannop Colliery. The Cannop Coal Co. Ltd was formed in 1906 and winding of coal from the shaft began in 1912. By 1937 the mine was the largest in Dean, over 400 000 tons of coal being produced annually, and it was one of six deep mines taken over by the National Coal Board in 1947. Increasing costs, particularly for pumping, led to closure in 1960. The site is now a council depot, and a cycle-hire centre (Pedalabikeaway) occupies the mine offices.

The Cannop Valley is part of a major north-south route across the Forest, from Lydbrook to Parkend and Lydney. The small forested 'hills' visible are actually the waste tips of Cannop Colliery.

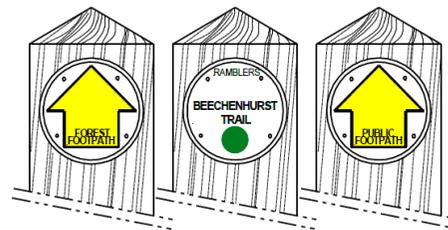
The Sculpture Trail was opened in 1986 and is a co-operative project between the Forest of Dean Sculpture Trust and the Forestry Commission. It comprises about 20 sculptures. The trail is 4.5 miles long, with shorter options, and a leaflet is available.

WALK LOCATOR MAP



Stout walking footwear is essential and it is advised to have a copy of OS Explorer Map OL14

All walks routes are waymarked by square posts with yellow arrow discs at all path junctions which state; 'FOREST or PUBLIC FOOTPATH'.



GPX file available from fodramblers.org.uk

This walk leaflet was produced by the Forest of Dean Group of the Ramblers' with the willing co-operation of Forest Enterprise.

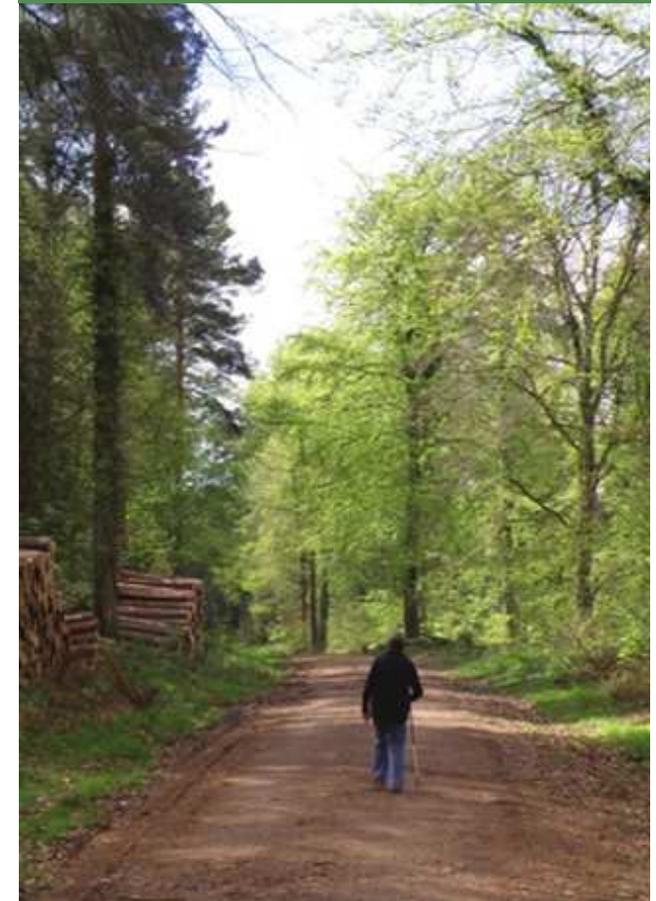
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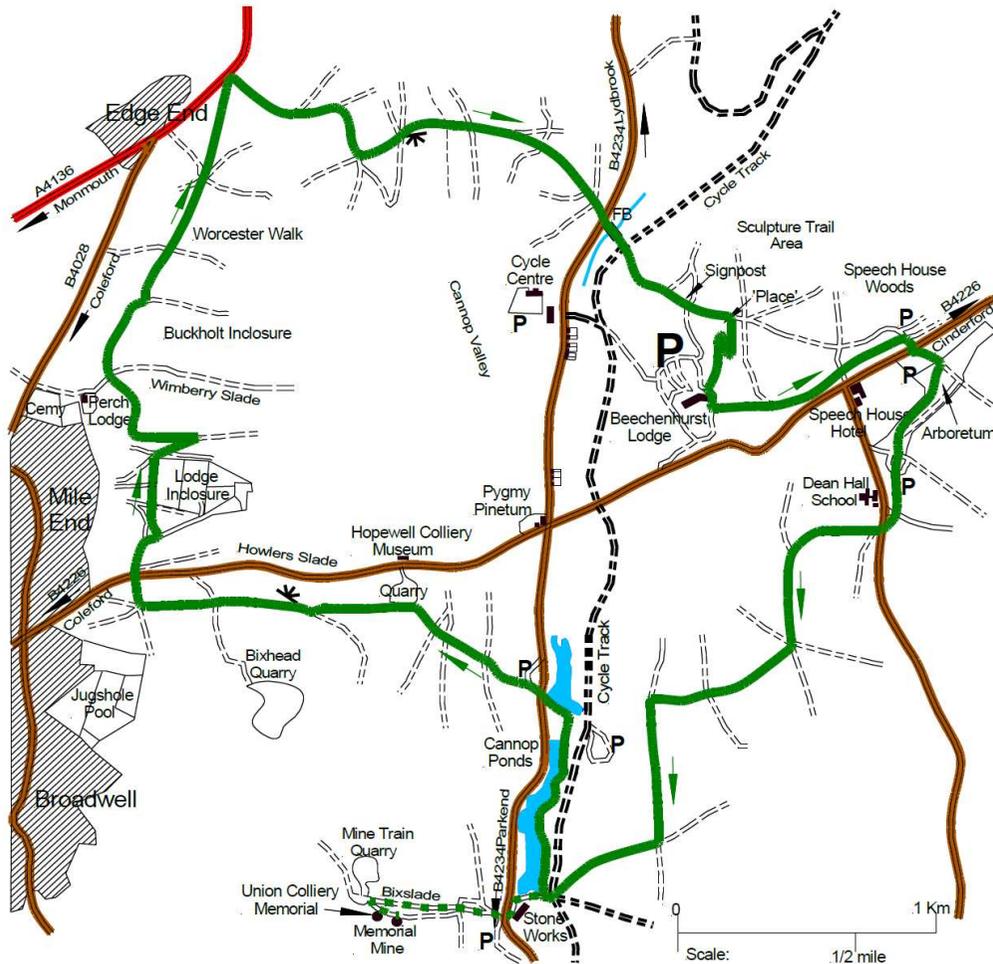
Forest of Dean Ramblers WAYMARKED WALKS



The Beechenhurst Trail

The Beechenhurst Trail

ROUTE DESCRIPTION



Beechenhurst Trail is an 8 mile circular walk in the east of the Forest of Dean through some of the oldest and most varied woodland. A moderate walk with some ups and downs which may be muddy in places. It is followed in a clockwise direction. The trail is not suitable for wheelchairs. Parking is recommended at Beechenhurst Lodge car park, (Pay and Display), although other parking can be found around the route. (Note: Spur trails are not now included)

With the front (picnic table side) of **Beechenhurst Lodge** behind you, look for a sign to Beechenhurst Trail (yellow) and Speech House (white) to your L. Follow this track uphill, through the RH gate in the fence and then keep ahead uphill. Turn R at T junction with another path to clearing with **Speech House** on R. Continue ahead and then turn R to a barrier by car park, and then diagonally R across grass area to road. Cross with care, and follow path to **Cyril Hart Arboretum**. Just inside entrance gate, turn R to follow path through arboretum, leaving through another gate. Go straight ahead to cross car park and picnic area, keeping parallel to road on R. Bear R to cross a path after about 200 yds, then cross main road to gate opposite, a little to the L of **Dean Hall School**.

Follow track downhill, bearing L and then R at 5-way junction. Continue over crossing track to T-junction and turn L. Turn R at crossing track, go through gate and diagonally L over cycle track (a former railway line) onto path which leads to **Cannop Ponds**.

(A short optional detour from here visits **Bixslade**, with several old industrial features. Follow the track between the pond and stone works to cross main road. Take forest road opposite, keep ahead onto footpath after 100 yds, cross forest road, and continue to clearing. Return to Cannop Ponds.)

Turn R on near side of pond along path, which can be muddy, and eventually emerges at picnic area. Turn L over footbridge, with upper pond on R. Cross main road, go through car park and past barrier. Follow uphill path over several crossing tracks, past sandstone quarry on R, and at a T-junction with forest road, turn R, with views across **Howlers Slade** valley to the forest beyond. Cross track onto path ahead. Turn R at crossing path, and descend to cross main road with care. Follow tarmac track ahead through gate. Just after track bends R, turn L onto a rather indistinct path through trees, aiming a few yds to L of open area. Continue with field on R, bearing R near far corner of field to follow power lines. Turn L onto forest road, which is followed for about 700 yds. The valley on the R is **Wimberry Slade**.

Just before a RH bend, turn L onto footpath. Keep straight ahead over crossing paths and a 6-way junction, to emerge at junction of forest road and main road. Turn R, following forest road for approx 600yds, and then turn L onto footpath with views of the **Cannop Valley** from here. Cross forest road taking downhill track. Continue over two crossing tracks, then uphill to fork R, cross forest road and track, and descend to main road. Cross road with care, go over footbridge, and climb slope ahead. Cross cycle track via a style and gate to follow path (and then track) generally ahead, ignoring side tracks, to emerge at an open viewpoint, part of the Sculpture Trail (a separate leaflet is available). Just beyond this, bear R and R again to follow zig-zag path back down to Beechenhurst Lodge.