

A BOOT UP THE BLACKDOWN HILLS

Rodney Legg

The Blackdown Hills remain a well-kept secret. Though straddling the central boundaries of Devon and Somerset the area is unknown to many in each county. Despite being crossed in the south by the A30, the A303 and the A35, much of the area is truly remote. It more than justifies designation as an area of outstanding natural beauty though official confirmation was a long time coming.

This is a lush landscape that can boast all shades of green, from virtual yellows in spring through to the deep greens of its ancient woods. Although this can sometimes make pastures, valleys and woods blend almost imperceptibly into each other, expect some superb walking country across the Blackdown Hills.

The ten circular walks, ranging from 4 to 9 miles, suit the needs of families, groups of friends or individuals looking for a gentle stroll or a longer walk, and reflect the many varied facets of the area – its people, its history, and its working landscape and will help first time visitors to experience some of the great scenery the area has to offer. Many of the walks feature a pub along the route.

Halsgrove's new-format guidebook, containing maps, photographs and useful information will ensure a great walking experience. Packed with colour, the book is an ideal reminder of a visit to the area.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rodney Legg is a prolific author and historian who has published hundreds of country walks. Nationally he is active in the environmental movement having been chairman of the Open Spaces Society since 1989 and a member of the ruling council of the National Trust from 1990.

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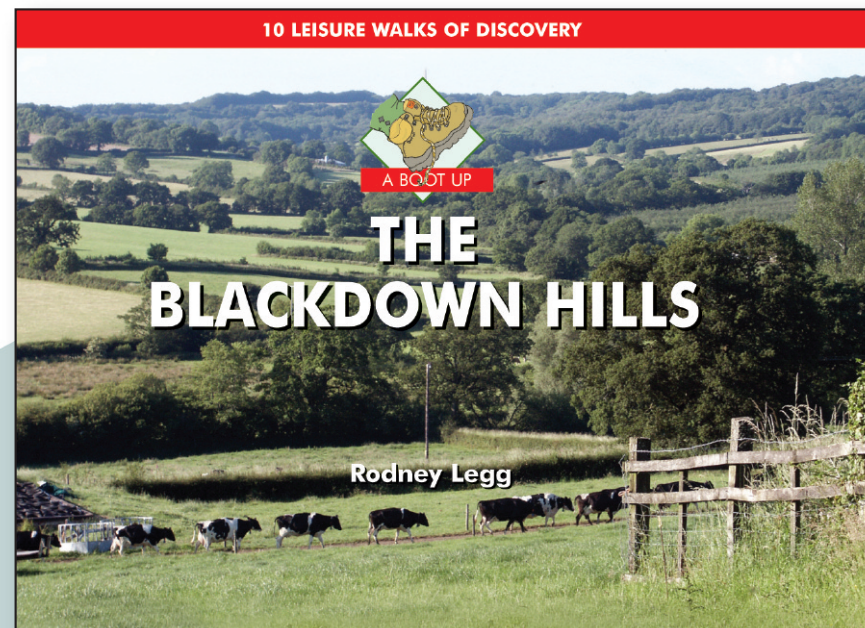
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A BOOT UP THE BLACKDOWN HILLS



Dunkeswell village.



Churchstanton Church.



Wellington Monument.



Quarts Moor.



Culmstock Beacon.

1 Culm Dory and Black Down

11 Continue straight ahead, by effectively looking left, in 700 metres. The bridleway takes the right-hand fork but our route across across-land is a big grassy loop of 900 metres which formed the major part of a Victorian racecourse. There is a communications mast to the right and the grassy strip eventually turns towards it. Then we follow the path towards trees to the right of the mast.

12 Rejoin the hilltop bridleway and turn left along it. Go through the gate into a wide and muddy track beside the canals of Whitehall Plantation which is also access land. Brownfield brash, a fenced area of rough ground, is to the left. In 250 metres we pass the mast and follow its access road down to Crossways Farm in 400 metres. Continue straight ahead to return to your car in 150 metres.

2 Wellington Monument and Quarts Moor

Monument-based 4-mile circuit of the wooded 900-foot toplands and its slopes.

The Wellington Monument is synonymous with the Blackdown Hills. The landmark that is shared with drivers on the A5 motorway. It represents a direct link with the Anglo-Irish victor of Waterloo who adopted the name of the Somerset town for his dukedom though he visited just once. Three areas of conservation land are crossed en route. There is also a Wellingtonia – the great American redwood named in honour of the Iron Duke – in the vale of Longlands. The views are northwards over Quantock Hills and the Bristol Channel. South Wales forms the distant horizon on a clear day.

Scale 1:500m

Levels: 100m

Length: 4 miles

Terrain: Hilly to places with a long, steep climb.

Park & start: In the National Trust car park for the Wellington Monument, above Wellington.

Start ref: SJ 143 127

Postcode: TA21 9PB

Public transport: Buses from Wellington to Hartwood.

Website: www.blackdown.org.uk
www.wellington-circuit.com

Example of a double-page spread.