

10 Leisure Walks of Discovery A Boot Up THE QUANTOCKS

Brian Pearce

Quantocks means 'the headland of the waters.' The headland in this case is a ridge of hills running for twelve miles between Taunton and the Severn Estuary. Although never more than four miles wide and sandwiched between the Somerset Levels and the Vale of Taunton Deane, they rise to over twelve hundred feet (the highest point being Wills Neck) and afford sweeping views over much of Somerset.

The hills offer great variety for the walker: with ancient trackways over a gently-rolling summit of heath running down to deep shady combs and picture postcard villages of rich red stone. Coleridge and Wordsworth both made the area briefly their home. Wordsworth envied the way Coleridge's mind had become 'habituated to the vast' and both enjoyed almost daily walks in all weathers to see the endless views and vast skylines. All this in what has been described as a 'pocket-edition' range of hills, much suited to this pocket-sized hardback book. In it writer and photographer Brian Pearce describes ten circular walks. All are 'leisure walks' – ideal for families and groups of friends, moderate in both length and difficulty and with opportunities to stop for refreshments, take in the views and, like the poets, be inspired by the scenery. On each page photographs entice the visitor to explore and then hold on to the book as a souvenir of a gem of the English countryside.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

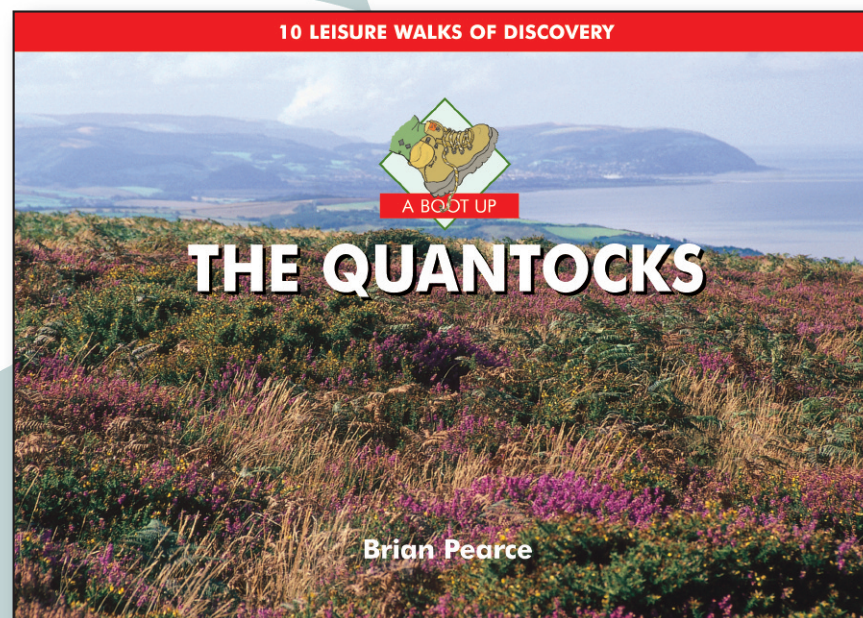
Brian Pearce has worked as a lecturer, guide and photographer as well as a writer. He is a qualified walks guide and photographer and is a member of the Outdoor Writers and Photographers Guild. Many parties have been guided over the Quantocks by him and his photographs of the Quantocks have been used to promote local food. Other photographs have been used widely in countryside publications, magazines, postcards and calendars. Interest in both walking and food led to his contribution to *AA Pub Walks and Cycle Rides*. Whilst he continues as a freelance writer and photographer, much of his time is now taken up with the running of *Exmoor: The Country Magazine*.

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A BOOT UP THE QUANTOCKS



Beach at Kilve



Hinkley Beach



Beacon Hill from Broomfield Hill



Dunkery Beacon
from Wills Neck



Minehead and Watchet from Staple Plantation

1 Bicknoller

6 Cross the stream and head up (W) thiscombe (Sheppard's Combe) for a mile. The path winds up to the main ridge of Bicknoller Post.

7 At the post bear sharp left running along the ridge and head for the top of a small rise, a hundred yards ahead. Continue over the top, cross another path and drop to the head of deep Bicknoller Combe. Turn right and drop down the bottom of the combe for a mile. This brings you back to the gate of Hill Lane. Go through and return down this lane to the car park.

Top
Bicknoller Combe
Right
Sheppard's Combe

2 Aisholt

A contrasting walk of variety with a gentle walk around a beautiful reservoir, a busy Quantock village and a climb into the forested and heath-covered hillsides.

The poet Sir Henry Newbolt called Aisholt "that beloved valley". He wished the village would remain unspoiled, and, tucked away without a shop, pub or parking area, it is. Coleridge described the valley as a "green romantic chasm" and would have lived there but for the lack of amenities his wife Sara wanted. He wrote to his benefactor, Thomas Pate of Nether Stowrey: "This situation is delicious; all I could wish, but Sara being Sara, and I being I, we must live in a town or other close to one, so that she may have neighbours and acquaintances. For my friends from not that society which is of itself sufficient to a woman."

From Bicknoller Post Hinkley Point power station commands the view to the NE. Beyond can be seen the mouth of the Parrett, Brent Knoll and the Mendips and, moving to the left, Weston-Super-Mare, the islands of Steepholm and Flatolm, the Welsh coast, Wiltshire, Minehead and Exmoor.

Length: 11 km, 6.5 miles but soon from two loops, so can be shortened.

Reservoir: A walk of two lakes, very good natural scenery and some stone walls around Aisholt Common, with paths. But no wet and muddy in winter.

Park and stann: See by back knowledge Reservoir: a road and a half south-west of Staple village.

Start ends: 5202381. Postcode TA5 1AA.

Public transport: None.

Website: www.quantockhills.co.uk/Aisholt/Aisholt.htm

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2 Aisholt

Example of a double-page spread