

## A BOOT UP BLACKMORE VALE

Rodney Legg

The name Blackmore Vale sums up the historic character of this area, once a royal hunting ground – a “forest” for sport rather than trees. This undulating landscape of the River Stour and its main tributaries forms the heart of northern Dorset, below the escarpments of the Dorset Downs to the south and Cranborne Chase to the east. Doyen of Dorset walkers Rodney Legg has chosen ten of his favourite walks in the area, ranging around Stour Provost and Fifehead Magdalen, Marnhull and Hinton St Mary, Lydlinch and Stock Gaylard, Fifehead Neville and Plumber Manor, Sturminster Newton and Cutt Mill, Fiddleford and Hammoon, Okeford Fitzpaine and Shillingstone, Habledon and Hod, Hazelbury Bryan and Mappowder, Bulbarrow and Woolland.

The ten circular walks, ranging from 3 to 8 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

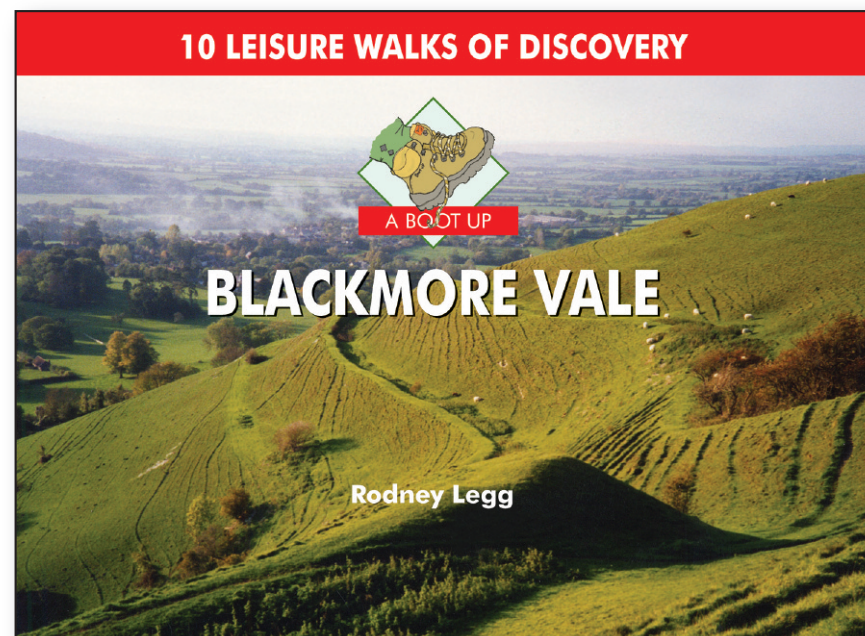
Rodney Legg is a prolific author and historian who has published hundreds of country walks. Nationally he is active in the environmental movement having been chairman of the Open Spaces Society since 1989 and a member of the ruling council of the National Trust from 1990 until 2009.

### HALSGROVE CATALOGUE

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Wisteria at Fifehead



Cutt Mill idyll



Shillingstone Hill



Hinton St Mary Manor House



Mappowder Manor



King's Mill

**1** Stour Provost and Fifehead Magdalen

**11** In a further 300 metres, after the third stile, bear right (NE) away from both the river and Fifehead village. Our target is the lower end of Stour Provost. Cross the pasture and then go through the gap in the hedge

to the left of the lower house in 500 metres. Keep to the left of the first part of **Meads Farm** and then turn right, into it, to pass above the left-hand barns.

**12** On reaching the asphalt road in 100 metres, we turn left (N), across the pasture, to see **Stour Provost Mill** and its 1886-dated

**2 Marnhull and Hinton St Mary**  
A 7-mile circuit of undulating landscape close to the river

Later countryside widens after Marnhull where the Stour begins to justify its river status by gathering the Cals from Wincanton

**Marnhull**  
Marnhull village comprises multiple lanes, and even more public paths. At times there is too much of a good thing with a confusion of options. The road village downstream, at Hinton St Mary, has a very different character. Its historic parts cluster beside an evocative Manor House. Later additions line each side of the tangle road that passes through. There is no visible sign of its great treasure - a

**Levels:** 40' up  
**Length:** 7 miles  
**Terrain:** low hills, gentle hills and moorland  
**Park & start:** In New Street, opposite Saxon's Farm and the Primary School, at Marnhull  
**Start ref:** S1780 187  
**Postcodes:** DT10 1P1  
**Public transport:** Buses from Sherborne, Dorchester and Shaftesbury  
**Websites:** www.hintonstmary.com  
www.marnhullcountryside.org.uk

Roman villa dating from 350 AD - which had a fine mosaic floor. Its centrepiece, with a mosaic featuring the head of Christ, is now displayed in the British Museum.

**12**

Example of a double-page spread.