

A BOOT UP THE QUANTOCKS

REPRINT

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 post-card 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 skylscapes. 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.

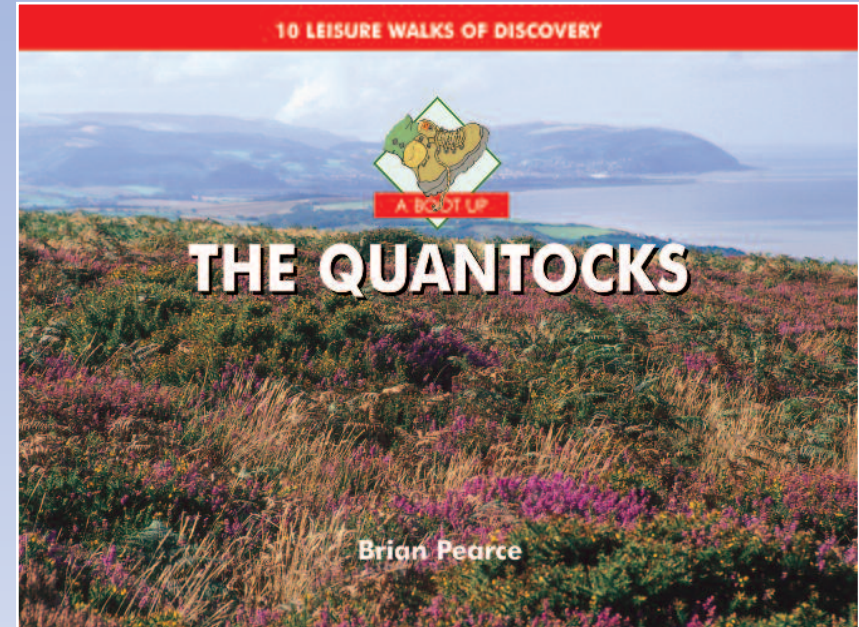
ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Brian Pearce worked as a lecturer, guide and photographer as well as a writer. He was a qualified walks guide and photographer and 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*, as well as many other books and periodicals.

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Dunkery Beacon from Wills Neck



Above: Minehead and Watchet from Staple Plantation

Left: Beacon Hill from Broomfield Hill

Below: Beach at Kilve



Left: Hinkley Beach



1 Bicknoller

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

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

Top: Bicknoller Combe
Right: Sheppard's Combe

2 Aisholt

A contrasting walk of scenery with a gentle walk round a beautiful reservoir, a trip to Quantock village and a climb into the wooded and hair-raised hillsides.

The great Sir Henry Newhall called Aisholt "the loveliest valley". He wished the village would remain unspoiled, and, sadly away without a shop, pub or parking area, it is, as Coleridge described the valley as a "glean romantic chasm" and would have had there but for the lack of amenities for wife Sam wanted, as he wrote to his benefactor, Thomas Poxon of Methra Stoves: "The situation is delicious; all I could wish, but Sons being Sons, and being I, we must live in a town or else close to one, so that she may have neighbours and acquaintances. For my friends form not that society which is of itself sufficient to a woman."

Level: 111m, 357m
Length: 11.1km, 6.9 miles
Start: 501030, Postcode BS14
Public transport: None
Website: www.quantockhills.co.uk/quantockhills/ www.westonleaze.co.uk

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