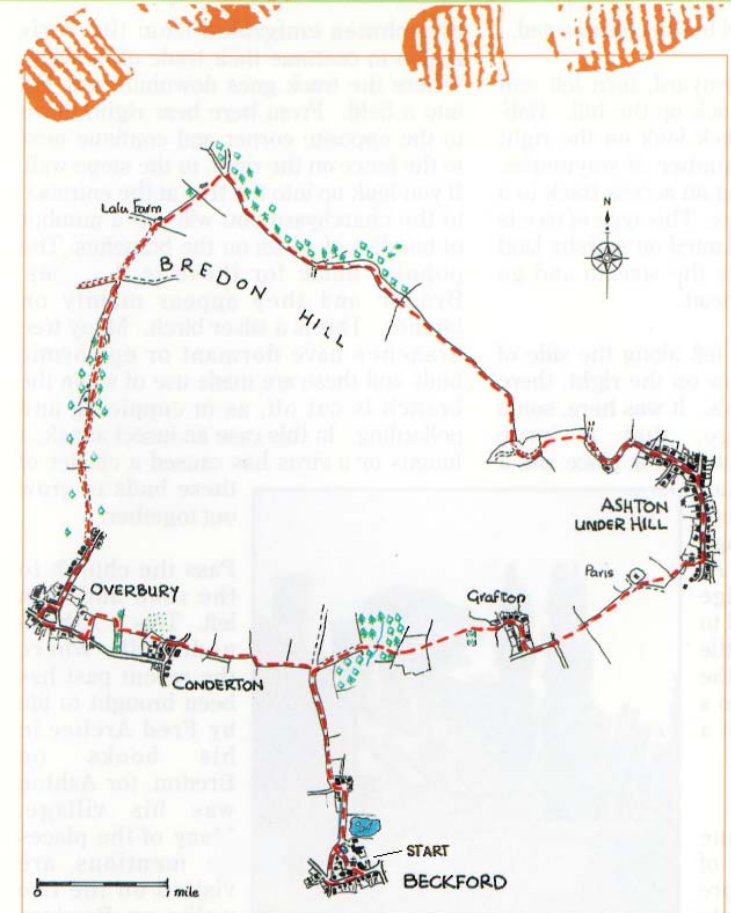


BECKFORD



This walk passes through five Bredon villages, each with its own charm and character. Taken steadily, the climb up from Ashton-under-Hill is not too strenuous and well worth the effort for the magnificent views.

Map reference of start SO 976 357

10 miles
OS maps:
Landranger 150
Explorer 190

Beckford is just off the A46 (T), midway between Evesham and Tewkesbury, one mile north of the Teddington Hands crossroads. The village lies at the foot of Bredon Hill and is one of a dozen settlements which used to share grazing land up on the hill. A car may be parked considerably on the main street close to the start, which also served Monday-Saturday by bus route 540 (timetable available at www.worcestershire.gov.uk/bustimetables).

Begin opposite the village stores at the entrance to the church. Go through the kissing-gate at the side of the lych-gate and pass around the end of the church, from where Beckford Hall can be seen. Most of the present site is Jacobean but it stands on the site of a priory of Augustinian canons which had been founded in 1128. Pass through another kissing-gate and along an enclosed path. On reaching a road turn right. As you go up the hill you can glimpse a large lake on the right which is now a nature conservation area. There are a number of similar lakes on this side of the hill where gravel has been extracted.

On reaching houses on right bend left through the farmyard then right, as waymarked (blue arrow), to walk uphill on a broad stony track. Ignore a joining path on right and continue on to reach a crossroads of paths about halfway up this long track. Here turn right and pass left of a coniferous wood. The path soon bends right through a stand of tall poplar trees to cross a stream and then uphill through a wood (Beckford Coppice) to a stile.

Cross and bear left along the side of the open hill to a pedestrian gate in the fence ahead. Continue on over uneven ground to pass left of an upright stone adjoining a fenced enclosure. Go ahead downhill and straight on past a house and garden to enter the pretty hamlet of Grafton. Walk down the lane. Just before a telephone kiosk notice the former water supply to the houses. Thankfully it was replaced by piped water to each house. At the 'T' junction turn left. When the road turns sharp right go straight on to cross a field and a footbridge in the hedge ahead. Continue on with a hedge on left, later joined by one on right. Where the left hand hedge stops stay with the right hand one and cross a rough track to a signpost and metal gate.

The settlement up to the left is known as Paris. It got its name when a group of Frenchmen emigrated from the Paris region to continue their trade of weaving. From the gate bear right down to the opposite corner. Go through a gateway ignoring a joining path on right. Continue next to the fence to reach a stone wall and arrive at the attractive parish church of St Barbara,

which is well worth a visit. Go down the path alongside the church and through the lych-gate to reach the main street of Aston under Hill, where bygone farm and village life on and around Bredon Hill was vividly portrayed in a renowned series of books by the late Fred Archer (see www.fredarcher.co.uk for details of his books and much more). Note the fine village cross of probably early C15 date before turning left, passing 'The Star' PH, to walk through the village.

Opposite the Manor House of c.1700 turn left up Cottons Lane. Keep ahead uphill at a path junction and follow the track past the stables at Shaw Green. Go through the gate by the cattle grid and 50 yards past the next gate, where the track forks, bear left up to another gate. Walk up

the field right of a ditch parallel to the hedge on right. Bear left near the top to join a rough track and go through a gate. Continue ahead on the track but where it bends left leave it right to join the waymarked Wychavon Way. Follow this bridleway to reach a gate at the ridge top.

Turn right, and in a few yards left, to walk next to a wall with glorious views beyond it. As you near the hill top there is a good view down to the remains of the castle at Elmley. The castle became the principal seat of the Beauchamps from the early C13 until they were made Earls of Warwick and moved there. Had they decided to continue to live here you could be looking down on an enormous 'Warwick Castle'.

From the mould near the gateway at the top it is possible to see to the south the Severn Valley, to the east Cleeve Cloud on the Cotswolds and to the north the top escarpment as far as Meon Hill. Continue the walk next to the wood on right (Long Plantation).

On reaching a junction of bridleways ignore crossing paths and keep ahead alongside the wood. Continue on beyond the telecoms tower seen in coniferous woodland left. At the next junction of bridleways turn left through a bridlegate and go up and over the field passing on old quarry pit to a gate. Walk on down to Lalu Farm. Pass through the gates and out to the track. Keep the same direction down to a cross-track.

Still going downhill walk through delightful Overbury Park to arrive at the top of equally delightful Overbury village. Turn right down the road to where it bends slightly left. Here turn right to pass the row of cottages built for the retainers of the great house seen ahead – Overbury Court rebuilt after a major fire in 1739-43. Next pass the parish church of St. Faith – again well worth a visit – with its monumental lych-gate and catafalque. Turn left at the main road past the village pond.

Continue along the road to the far end of the sports field. Opposite the turning to the right is the old toll house. Here turn left into the playing field. Follow the fence up to the top right corner and beyond the stile turn right. Follow the path into the wood. In about 50 yards turn left through a gap in the trees to a stile in a wire fence. Cross the field to another stile leading into an orchard where the trees and planted on top of the old ridges made by the medieval ploughs, a technique once used around here to encourage the roots to spread out and grow down to the wetter furrows and so stand up to gales better.

Now keep ahead to cross an old step-stile in a wall then across the next field to a gate and another interesting stone stile in the corner. This is now Conderton. The walk continues ahead but those interested 100 yard down to the right is 'The Yew Tree' PH. At the 'T' junction, opposite the late C17 Manor House, turn left. In a few yards turn right to go by the back of the Manor gardens. The path then goes ahead along the bottom of the field to reach a small gate. Beyond, turn right and, in the corner, left to follow the hedge on the right. This will bring you to the track you came up at the beginning of the walk. Turn right and retrace your steps. (As an alternative to going through the churchyard simply stay on the road and when you reach the main street turn left to the start).