

Continue along the road looking out for buzzards taking advantage of the valley thermals.

C1. By Holly Bush Cottage turn right and then left following the bridleway signs, cross the bridge over the brook and follow the worn path across the field close to the brook. Watch out for large black ravens in Caelees Wood to your right, and listen for their loud distinctive 'pronk pronk'-ing call. The hazel coppice and trees along the brook are attractive to a range of birds; take time out to sit and watch for a while.

Go through the lower bridle gate (not the main field gate) and follow the path with the brook below you on the left. Cross the stream flowing into the main brook and go through another bridle gate. Another gate leads you between a hedge on your right and a house on your left, onto the tarmac road.

Go straight ahead to the junction with a house in front of you, go right and right again over a stile then head straight up the steep bank beside the wood. Following waymarks keep going straight across the next fields and stiles until you reach the road and the famous Arthur's Stone. Continue route from t above.



HISTORY AND FABLES

Dorstone Church

The present building is the third church on this site. The first church was built before the C12th and legend has it that Richard de Brito, one of the four knights who killed Thomas-à-Becket at Canterbury Cathedral, built a chapel here in 1256 to make amends for his crime on return from his 15 years in exile in Palestine. More recently, the Prosser/Powell family were vicars of Dorstone in an unbroken line from c.1660 until 1953. The present church dates from 1890 replacing the one built in 1827.

The Castle

The castle bump can be seen close to the church. It was still in use as a castle in the C17th and may have been used as an overnight shelter for King Charles I before he marched with his army to Holme Lacy the following day.

Arthur's Stone

Arthur's Stone was probably named 'Thor Stein' (the altar of the God Thor) becoming 'Thor Stone' and hence the name of the village of 'Dorstone' originated. "D'or" in French means 'golden' and as the River Dore runs through the valley, the name 'Golden Valley' was given.

Arthur's Stone is a multi-chambered burial tomb of the Neolithic period (New Stone Age) dating from about 3700 to 2700 BC. Flint tools and pottery were found nearby. The stone has given rise to many legends. Arthur is supposed to have fought a desperate battle here with another king. Arthur broke his back and was reputed to have been buried under the stones.

Others say it marks the site where a giant was slain by Arthur; the stones on the left approaching from Bredwardine, (under the hedge) are reputedly where the giant fell. The hollows on the stones are said to be the marks of the giant's elbow, whilst others say that the impressions were made by the knees of Arthur when he knelt on the stones to pray.

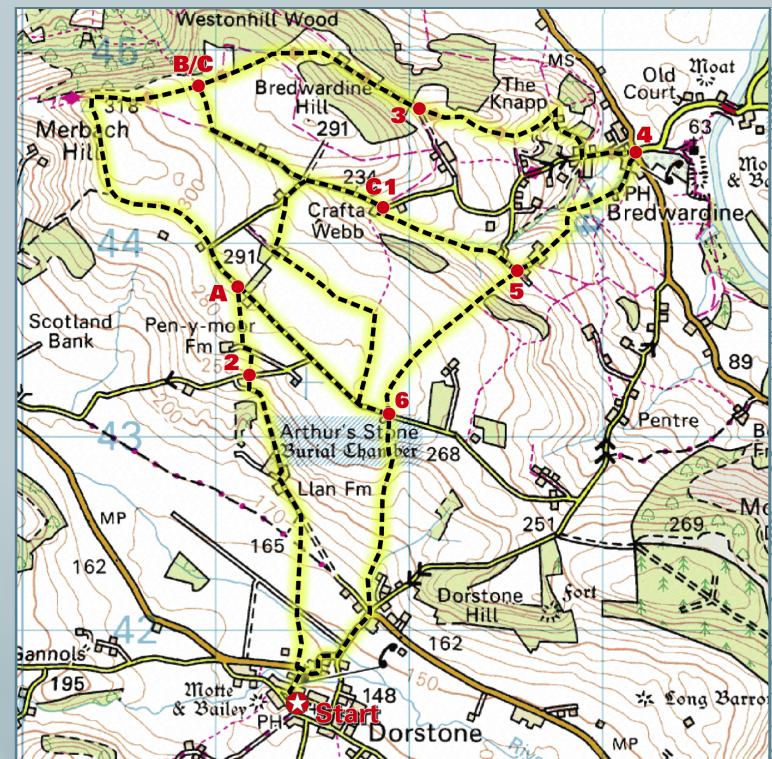
Kilvert and Bredwardine Church

The famous Victorian diarist, Francis Kilvert, was vicar of the Norman church of St Andrew, Bredwardine and is buried here. He died in 1879 and sixty years later achieved world wide fame through the publication of his diary. The Kilvert Society has placed a seat in the churchyard to his memory. The village with its attractive stone bridge and pub have remained virtually unchanged from Kilvert's time.

For bus timetable information contact Traveline 0870 608 2 608 (open 07.00-22.30 daily).

Golden Valley Walks

Dorstone



This walk climbs out of the Golden Valley onto Merbach Hill which gives glorious views in all directions including to the Black Mountains, Malvern Hills and the Wye Valley and North Herefordshire beyond, before descending to the village of Bredwardine, resting place of the Victorian diarist, Francis Kilvert, then rising again to the famous burial chamber of Arthur's Stone.

OS Map no: Explorer OL13

Distance: 10 ½ km (6 ½ miles) Various routes



Distance: Long route: 10 ½ km (6 ½ miles)
Short route A: 4 ¾ km (3 miles)
Short route B: 8 ½ km (5 ¼ miles)
Short route C: 9 km (5 ¾ miles)

From the car park by the Post Office turn right and right again and follow the 'No through road' to Dorstone church. Follow the footpath round the left of the churchyard, cross the main road and take the signposted kissing gate into the playing field. Follow the right hand side of the field, then go diagonally across to the footbridge. Cross this, a stile in the hedge, the track (disused railway line), another footbridge and then the field to the top left hand corner. A stile takes you into the curiously named 'Spoon Lane', an old drove road.

Go up the steps in the bank opposite, over the stile and cross the field to the top left hand corner. Then turn left and follow the track passing the farmhouse and buildings. Stay on this track up the hill until you nearly reach the lane. Head off right to cross stile in hedge, cross lane and cross the stile opposite.

2. Walk up the right hand side of the field to stile into another lane. Turn left along the lane and take the first stile on your right. Follow the right hand field boundary for two fields (crossing one stile) until you come to the road. *Note view of Hay Bluff to southwest.*

(Short route A starts here)

Turn left and follow the road until it turns right at Caemawr. Go through the gate and follow the hedge line on your left.

The windswept bent and twisted old trees in the hedge are very old, stunted by exposure to the weather. As the fence drops away keep to the upper side of the scrub following the contours of the hill. As you pass the mast at the top of the field you can see ahead the tump on top of Merbach Hill, a registered Common. Go through the gate onto Merbach Hill and cross to the trig point.

'Common land' is a misnomer as all common land is owned by someone even if it is the local council; in the case of Merbach Common, one private individual. There are a number of Commoners with various rights including the grazing of sheep, cattle and horses, and two rights of estovers: to collect fern, traditionally for animal bedding.

Go past the trig point following an obvious grassy path to the right and join the Wye Valley Walk (as marked on map) following this to the gate at the edge of the Common. You will see that some bracken and scrub management is being undertaken to keep the open feel of the Common. Traditionally Commons were managed by grazing sheep and cattle; when this stops scrub and bracken soon take over and shade out many of the grassland flowers. Clearing the scrub allows more sunlight to reach the ground, encouraging fine grasses and herbs.

(Short routes B and C start here)

At the edge of the Common take the path to the right and then take the small path to the left to a stile in the hedge with Wye Valley Walk waymarks. Cross the stile and follow the field boundary through the bridle gate and across the next field. Cross the stile and follow the short track; go across the next field with the wood on your left. Go through the gate beside the barn, then through the gate marked 'bridleway' left of the ancient hollow ash tree.

Stop here a while, especially on a clear day, to enjoy the fabulous views over the loop in the River Wye out over to the Clee Hills in Shropshire.

Follow the farm track down; before the farm house take the wooden gate on the right into the wood, following this path until it returns to the track and turn right.

3. Cross the first cattle grid and continue along the track, watching out for Wye Valley Walk waymark on telegraph pole (well before second cattle grid) leaving track and heading diagonally left across field to waymark in old hedge. Head straight on to gate at field corner. Go through gate and across to next gate. Turn left after gate, over cattle grid and follow track. Before reaching house leave track and head off diagonally right across field to stile. Crossing stile, continue down track and go through gate to road. Turn left down the steep road to Bredwardine and the Red Lion Inn.

4. After suitable refreshment take the track to the left of the pub up the hill. Go to the right of the converted barn, cross stile then cross another stile beside the field gate. Go to the stile in the top right hand corner of field and then up the steep grassy field, keeping to the right of the large solitary multi-stemmed oak tree. Follow the hedge on left to the stile, cross it and bear left. Cross the stile to the right of the field gate, and follow the stream on your right, going behind the farm buildings to another stile; cross this and then go through the farm gate onto the farm track. Turn left along the road to the house on the left opposite a stile.

5. Cross stile then head straight up the steep bank beside the wood. Following waymarks keep going straight across the next fields and stiles until you reach the road and the famous Arthur's Stone

† Route back to Dorstone from Arthur's Stone

6. Take the path directly behind Arthur's Stone and follow it downhill across two fields and stiles; the hedge will now be immediately on your right. Continue down through two more fields then cross the stile on your right and follow the hedge on your left for two more till you reach the farm and track down to the road. Go straight down the road, being careful, facing oncoming traffic as much as possible, until you come to the church. Go into the churchyard through the small gate and follow the path round the church (taking five minutes to look at the well kept interior) and out through the kissing gate into the old village. Walk past the old fashioned red telephone box and on to the Pandy Inn.

Short route A (Point A on map): Turn right and walk along the road to Arthur's Stone. Continue route from † above.

Short route B (Point B on map): At the edge of the Common take the path to the right, following the fence line on your left. *Note a large badger set next to the path. Badger sets are much bigger than rabbit warrens and the entrances are wider than high (rabbit holes tend to be round), and you will often find bedding outside the holes, especially in the spring and summer.*

Continue to the crossroads and turn left through gap in the fence into the enclosed muddy lane and follow this rough track to the road. Turn right and follow the road for a short distance and at the footpath signpost on the left hand side go through the field gate. Head diagonally left across the field towards the farm and go through the waymarked field gate onto the farm drive. Turn left past the farmhouse and leave the farmyard through the waymarked field gate into the field. Follow the hedge on the left hand side through two fields and gates. At second gate walk slightly diagonally right past the clump of Scots Pines to the waymarked field gate. Go through gate and follow the hedge on the left hand side to the roadside gate. Turn left along the road to Arthur's Stone. Continue route from † above.

Short route C (Point C on map): At the edge of the Common take the path to the right, following the fence line on your left. *Note a large badger set next to the path. Badger sets are much bigger than rabbit warrens and the entrances are wider than high (rabbit holes tend to be round), and you will often find bedding outside the holes, especially in the spring and summer.*

Continue to the crossroads and turn left through gap in the fence into the enclosed muddy lane and follow this rough track to the road.

