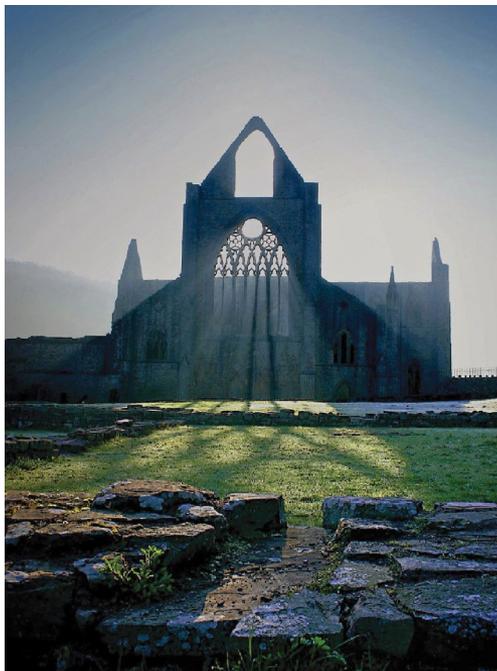


Tintern Abbey  
(Linda Wright)



of which we see the remains today. More information on the story of the Cistercian Monks in Wales may be found at the Information Centre attached to the abbey.

## TINTERN

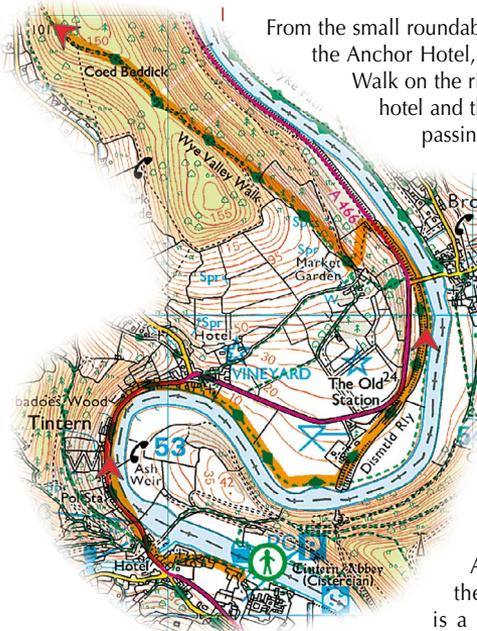
Tintern is a small village on the banks of the Wye, but has a long tradition of catering for the needs of travellers. Accommodation and food can be found here, but if intending to stay the night it may be advisable to book in advance as it can be busy, especially during school breaks. There are several pubs and all serve food as well as several different real ales, including some varieties produced locally within the Wye Valley. There is a doctor's surgery opposite the George Hotel and a number of hotels and B&B establishments.

## STAGE 2

### Tintern Abbey to Monmouth

<b>Start</b>	Tintern Abbey, SO 532 001
<b>Finish</b>	Wye Bridge, Monmouth, SO 511 127
<b>Distance</b>	16.5km (10¼ miles)
<b>Time</b>	4hr 30min
<b>Height gain</b>	340m (1116ft)
<b>Terrain</b>	Forest roads and woodland tracks; riverside paths mainly on pasture
<b>OS map</b>	Explorer OL14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean
<b>Refreshments</b>	Old Station Tintern (seasonal); pub at Brockweir Bridge; pub at Llandogo; two pubs and village shop at Redbrook; all facilities at Monmouth
<b>Public toilets</b>	Old Station Tintern (seasonal)
<b>Public transport</b>	Bus approximately every 2hr along A466 between Monmouth and Chepstow; stops on request but make sure it is safe to do so

This stage starts at Tintern Abbey, but could start anywhere in Tintern. The Wye Valley Walk passes through the village on the west bank of the river to Old Station Tintern, where there is car parking and facilities. The route then climbs steeply away from the river and continues climbing gently to the edge of the valley above Llandogo at 240m. The walk continues fairly level to Pen-y-fan before descending steeply into the Whitebrook Valley, but from then on it remains almost at river level through Redbrook to Monmouth. Parts can get quite muddy in wet weather and most of the route, although virtually barrier free, is not suitable for mobility buggies. There are three stiles, but two are by gates and can be avoided.



From the small roundabout adjacent to the river and the Anchor Hotel, continue on the Wye Valley Walk on the riverside footpath between the hotel and the river, after a short distance passing the site of Tintern Quay.

Note the archway in the wall of the Anchor Hotel. This was the access to the **Tintern Passage ferry**, and the remains of the ferry quays on both sides of the river can be seen at low water.

When the path emerges again on to the A446, turn right, staying on the right-hand footway. There is a restored waterwheel below the road to your right, and where the

Angidy River passes under the road look right and the Wirework Bridge is directly in front.

Map continues on page 39

### THE ANGIDY VALLEY

The complex of buildings now housing shops, craft workshops and a café was once the site of the Abbey Mill. The grassed area was a tidal dock, into which small craft could be berthed and loaded between tides. Look across the road behind you towards the whitewashed cottages and note the line of a tramway which came down the Angidy Valley and across the bridge to eventually join the main Wye Valley Railway. The Angidy Valley, along with other side valleys of the Wye, were heavily industrialised from the late 16th century, making the area arguably the crucible of the Industrial Revolution. It was in Tintern in 1566 that brass was first produced in Britain by alloying copper and zinc. The Angidy iron furnaces, fuelled by locally made



the small wireworks. It closed in 1935. A circular five-mile walk, the Angidy Trail, brings the valley's history to life.

charcoal and driven by water power, produced cast iron and the Tintern Wireworks, located about 300m up the valley, was the source of most of the drawn wire manufactured in the British Isles until its closure in the 19th century. Wireworks Bridge carried the industrial railway into Tintern to serve

Follow the A466 northwards and cross the road to the footway. Tintern is perched on the western side of the River Wye, under a very steep slope, and several water-courses can be heard passing under the road, especially in wet weather. Follow the road through the village, and opposite the road junction on the left before the Wye Valley Hotel take the narrow road to the right and follow it to the entrance to St Michael's Church.

**St Michael's Church** was the location of a Celtic church long before the Cistercian monks arrived, and could well have been used by King Tewdric, a local Welsh chieftain, who came out of retirement as a hermit in Tintern to defeat the Saxons in a battle close by. Unfortunately he died of his injuries and was later canonised as St Tewdric.

Pass through the church grounds to the open riverside field beyond.

**Tintern Parva**, which in Latin means 'little' Tintern, was the site of a vineyard planted by the monks of Tintern Abbey. In recent years the vineyard has been

successfully re-established and can be visited. The visitor centre is directly across the road by the Wye Valley Hotel.

Continue along the path with the river on your right, and at the gate at the far end of the field climb the steps on to the old Wye Valley Railway track bed. The track bed takes you to **The Old Station** Tintern.

### THE OLD STATION

The former railway station on the Wye Valley Line became redundant in 1964, but after lying derelict for nearly ten years was taken over by the old Monmouthshire County Council and turned into a railway-orientated picnic site. Today there is a tearoom in the former station booking office, and the signal box usually houses an art or photographic exhibition. Public toilets are available during opening hours, and a Destination Wye Valley exhibition is based in the railway carriages. A small, basic campsite is situated between the car park and the A466; for rates and availability call 01291 689566.

Continue northwards on the old track bed, leaving the station behind. At the end of the track take the flight of steps up to the roadway on the approach to **Brockweir Bridge** (SO 538 011).

Across the bridge is the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail and the now quiet riverside settlement of **Brockweir**. This was once the busiest port on the Wye, where cargoes were transferred to and from the seagoing ships to the trows. Just north of where the bridge now stands you can see part of the old quay, recently restored.

Cross over the main road, with care, and directly opposite a bus shelter the Walk continues up a woodland path, ascending steeply at first and then more gradually.

The owner has cut a track through the wood to facilitate management of the woodland using the traditional practice of **coppicing**. The wood produced is used as

bio-fuel in their home and adjacent B&B. This was part funded by the Sustainable Development Fund through the Wye Valley AONB.

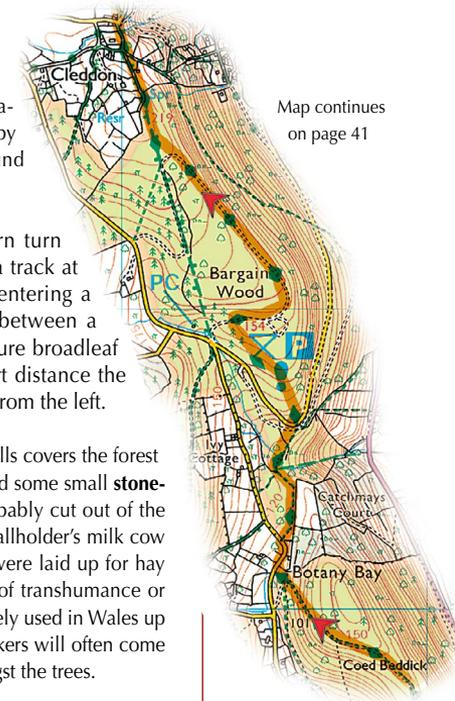
As you approach a small barn turn sharp right up a flight of steps to a track at the top. Turn right on this track, entering a larch plantation and continuing between a thinned area on the right and mature broadleaf woodland on the left. After a short distance the path joins a wider track coming in from the left.

In early summer a carpet of bluebells covers the forest floor here. Note the stone walls and some small **stone-walled enclosures**. They were probably cut out of the hillside to supply grazing for a smallholder's milk cow while the fields around the farm were laid up for hay during the summer, a basic form of transhumance or the 'hafod and hendre' system widely used in Wales up until fairly recent times. Quiet walkers will often come across fallow deer browsing amongst the trees.

Bear right to continue in the same direction, following the waymarked path. ▶

At the forestry turning area continue straight on past a house to reach a road (SO 525 021). Turn right and walk uphill, taking care as this road can be quite busy. After about 100m the road bends to the left, but the Wye Valley Walk turns half-right and passes the entrance to the Scout Association's **Botany Bay Activity Centre**. Once in the wood, cross a wooden slatted bridge and follow the path along an avenue of conifers. After a short distance cross another two streams (sometimes dry). Cross a broad forestry track and continue in the same direction to reach a road.

Turn left and then right to cross the road (SO 525 026) and follow a waymarked path through a conifer plantation. On reaching a junction turn left along a well-surfaced path running parallel with the road to



Map continues on page 41

Notice the change underfoot from limestone at the start of the Walk to sandstone and quartz conglomerate here.

View from Whitestone



reach Whitestone picnic site access road (SO 523 029). Turn right to follow the forest road towards the picnic area and car park. Keep on the main track past a forest road barrier to pass three viewpoints overlooking the Wye. The path continues to the next junction and turns right (SO 521 034), following another track which eventually narrows to an enclosed track. Keep straight on to **Cleddon** and its falls.

### CLEDDON FALLS

This has been a local beauty spot for many years and public paths connect it to the village of Llandogo below, perched on the western slope of the Wye Valley. It was near here in 1798 that Wordsworth wrote his Lines Composed a Few Miles above Tintern Abbey. The land is privately owned, but permissive access is allowed to the picturesque Victorian paths which zigzag their way down the slope so visitors can admire the torrents falling over rocky ledges, particularly in winter and after heavy rain. The top of the falls can be viewed from a rather precarious path leading off the main track. Take care!

The route continues straight on, passing between two properties along the unpaved track. The track through the

woodland reaches a surfaced forest track (SO 521 046). Keep straight on along the track, noting the view overlooking the Wye Valley below, to a gateway and a narrow enclosed path which leads to a second gate emerging onto a surfaced lane adjacent to 'Moorside'. ▶

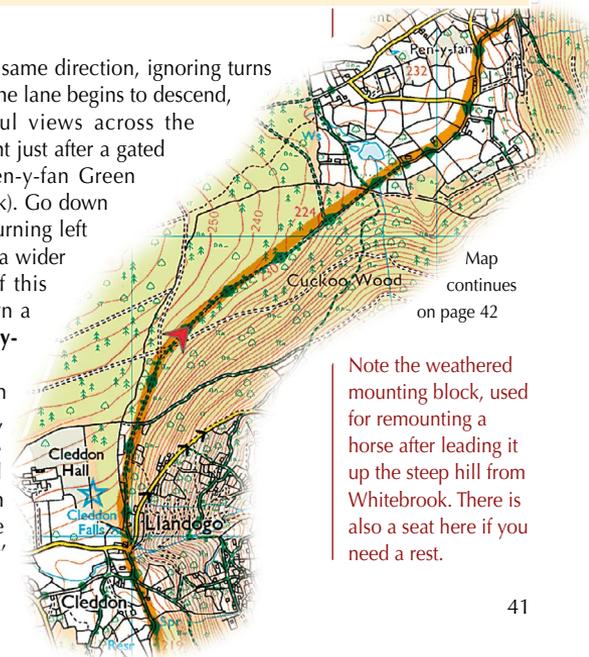
The track is known as 'Duchess Ride', supposedly one of the Duchess of Beaufort's favourite rides.

### PEN-Y-FAN

The community of Pen-y-fan, where each cottage has its couple of acres of land, is typical of many of the settlements along the Lower Wye Valley. Today many of the cottages show signs of considerable extension and improvement, but previously the small 'crofts' had just enough land to enable a family to be reasonably self-sufficient, with a house milk cow and a couple of fattening pigs, poultry and possibly some sheep. Most of the menfolk would have worked in the adjoining forest as woodcutters or as 'wood colliers' or charcoal burners, as agricultural labourers and even as 'packmen', carrying large loads from the riverbank up the narrow paths to the settlements on the rim of the valley. Some worked in the wireworks and paper mills of the adjacent Whitebrook Valley

Continue in the same direction, ignoring turns to right and left. As the lane begins to descend, providing wonderful views across the Wye Valley, fork right just after a gated entrance (signed Pen-y-fan Green and Wye Valley Walk). Go down this winding path, turning left at a junction to join a wider track. At the end of this track turn right down a lane alongside **Pen-y-fan Green**. ▶

Continue on the surfaced lane, downhill with views over the Wye and Bigsweir Bridge on your right. At the gateway to 'The Folly'



Note the weathered mounting block, used for remounting a horse after leading it up the steep hill from Whitebrook. There is also a seat here if you need a rest.

the path turns right and descends through a narrow pathway to an open area, then straight ahead down a set of stone steps and a very narrow path to the **Whitebrook Road** (SO 536 067).

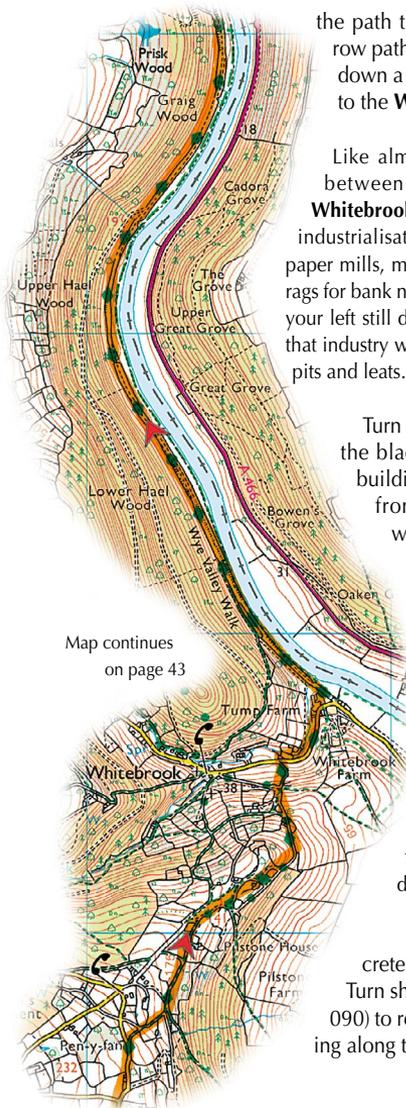
Like almost every other tributary of the Wye between Chepstow and Ross-on-Wye, the **Whitebrook Valley** was once the scene of intense industrialisation. Early wireworks were turned into paper mills, making high quality paper from imported rags for bank notes and wallpaper. Whitebrook Farm on your left still demonstrates the size and importance of that industry with the remains of old walls, waterwheel pits and leats.

Turn right and continue past Tump Farm. Note the black shiny blocks in the wall of the farm building alongside the road. These were waste from the copperworks at Redbrook and will probably outlast the softer sandstone blocks used around them.

On the bend turn left (SO538067), and follow the track bed of the Wye Valley Railway until you reach a stile on the right.

The **Wye Valley Railway** closed in 1959 after 83 years of carrying passengers between Monmouth and Chepstow. The opening of the railway in 1876 quickly brought an end to the former mainstay of transport up and down the valley – riverboats and trows.

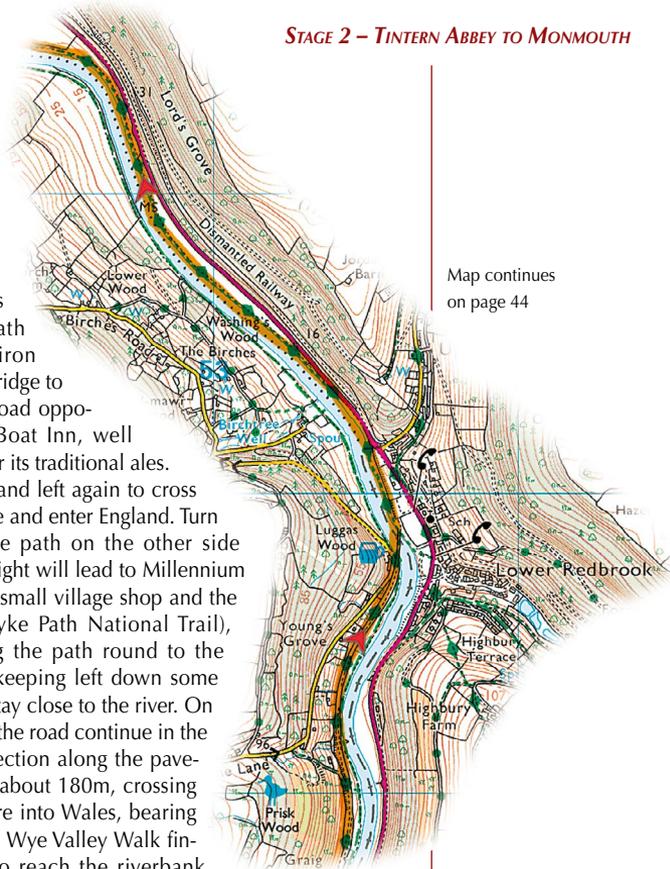
Continue for about 2.4km when a concrete forest road ascends steeply on your left. Turn sharp right over a stile on the right (SO 534 090) to reach the riverbank, and bear left continuing along this path for the 800m or so to **Redbrook**.



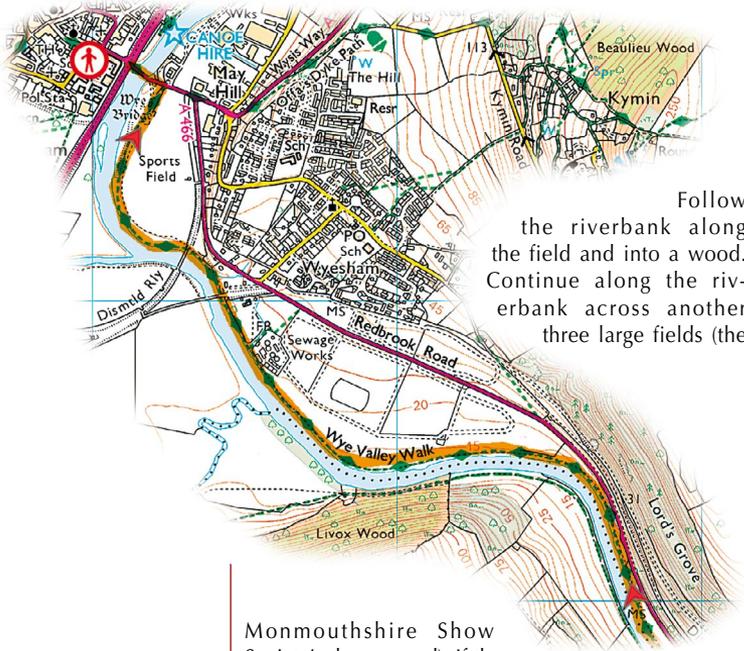
Map continues on page 43

Pass underneath the old iron railway bridge to reach a road opposite the Boat Inn, well known for its traditional ales. Turn left and left again to cross the bridge and enter England. Turn left at the path on the other side (turning right will lead to Millennium Green, a small village shop and the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail), following the path round to the left and keeping left down some steps to stay close to the river. On reaching the road continue in the same direction along the pavement for about 180m, crossing once more into Wales, bearing left at the Wye Valley Walk fingerpost to reach the riverbank (SO 533 103).

The name 'Red Brook' originated from the colour of the tributary which passes through natural iron ore deposits. **Redbrook** is now a quiet little village, but at one time this was also a heavily industrialised area, with a copperworks dating from the late 17th century, later converted to an ironworks and then a tinplate works. The Redbrook Tinplate Company was world famous for its high quality product and did not close until 1962.



Map continues on page 44



Follow the riverbank along the field and into a wood. Continue along the riverbank across another three large fields (the

Monmouthshire Show Society's showground). If there is an event taking place, keep to the path.

The path continues northwards, passing under the eastern buttress of the Wye Valley Railway Monmouth Viaduct and under the Duke of Beaufort Bridge, which once carried the Ross-on-Wye-to-Monmouth railway. Follow the path around the Monmouth Boys' School playing field. Pass through a kissing gate by the hedge to the left of the pavilion to reach a car park. Go straight up to reach and cross the main road (SO 512 127), turning left to cross the **Wye Bridge**. ◀ At the end of the bridge you have the choice of using the underpass on the A40 to enter **Monmouth** (follow the Offa's Dyke Path signs) or continuing northwards on the Wye Valley Walk, now on the west bank of the Wye, towards Symonds Yat.

The attractive market town of Monmouth lies just off the route and makes an excellent stopping place on both the Wye Valley Walk and the Offa's Dyke Path.

Here you briefly share your route with the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail.



View of Monmouth Viaduct from the Duke of Beaufort Bridge

## MONMOUTH

Monmouth's history stretches back to pre-Roman times; ongoing archaeological excavations have revealed multiple layers of occupation. The Romans called it Bestium and established a fort; the Normans built a castle where the future King Henry V was born, which later featured in the English Civil War. There is a unique medieval gated bridge over the River Monnow, and the trial of the Chartist leaders captured after the abortive Chartists' Rising in South Wales in 1839 was held in the Shire Hall the following year. Three were found guilty of high treason and sentenced to death by hanging and quartering, the last time this sentence was given in Britain. Fortunately, it was changed to deportation for life to Van Diemen's Land (Tasmania).

The Nelson Museum in Priory Street houses a large collection of Admiral Horatio Nelson's love letters and gifts to his mistress Lady Emma Hamilton as well as much information on the history of Monmouth and the surrounding area. Nelson's only other connection with Monmouth was a visit in 1802 to the Naval Temple and the Roundhouse, the whitewashed building on the summit of the 250m-high Kymin overlooking the town.

It is also the home of Charles Stuart Rolls, an early pioneer of aviation and the co-founder of the Rolls Royce Company, who has the rather dubious 'honour' of being the first Briton to die in an air crash.

The town is well supplied with visitor information in the Shire Hall, accommodation of all types, restaurants and cafés, shops, a bus station, banks and ATMs, doctors, dentists and religious centres of most denominations all within a compact area.

## STAGE 3

## Monmouth to Symonds Yat

<b>Start</b>	Wye Bridge, Monmouth, SO 511 127
<b>Finish</b>	Symonds Yat East, adjacent to ferry, SO 561 158
<b>Distance</b>	8.8km (5½ miles)
<b>Time</b>	2hr
<b>Height gain</b>	Negligible
<b>Terrain</b>	Riverbank for most of way, narrow in places and muddy in wet weather; last section on old railway track
<b>OS map</b>	Explorer OL14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean
<b>Refreshments</b>	None on route
<b>Public toilets</b>	Biblins Campsite (seasonal), Symonds Yat East
<b>Public transport</b>	None



On this stage the Welsh–English border is crossed no fewer than four times. The route follows the west bank of the River Wye for much of the way; it is relatively flat, and there are no barriers other than gates. Parts can get very muddy in wet weather and others may be inundated at times of flooding. At Biblins there is a suspension bridge with access ramps. The route continues on the east bank on a former railway track to Symonds Yat East. There are no public toilets between Monmouth and Biblins Campsite, and no refreshment opportunities.

The route is only usable by mobility buggies as far as the Welsh–English border, north of Monmouth, and between Biblins Bridge and Symonds Yat East. See ‘Easy Access Routes’ on [www.wyevalleywalk.org](http://www.wyevalleywalk.org).

Note the **floodgates** on the underpass by Monmouth Rowing Club. These can be closed at times of high water levels to prevent flooding in Monmouth, and under such conditions it would be prudent to check

predicted water levels for the route ahead, and not leave cars parked adjacent to the riverbank and rowing club.

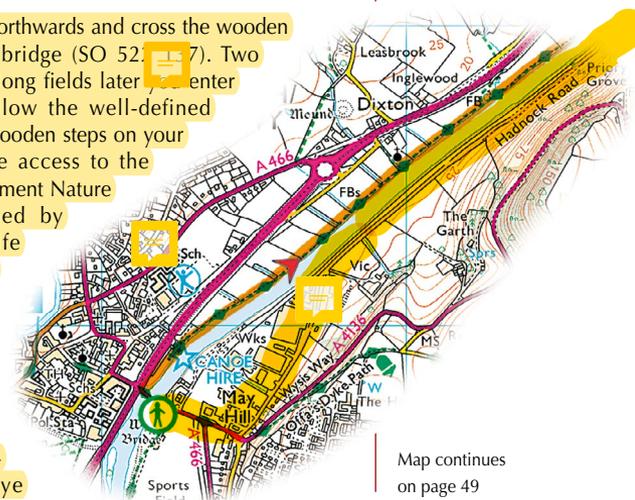
From the Wye Bridge continue along the riverside path, passing Monmouth Quay, once a bustling quayside, keeping Monmouth Rowing Club boathouse on your left. Continue along the riverbank, passing through a series of gates and bridges to St Peter’s Church, **Dixton**.

## ST PETER’S CHURCH

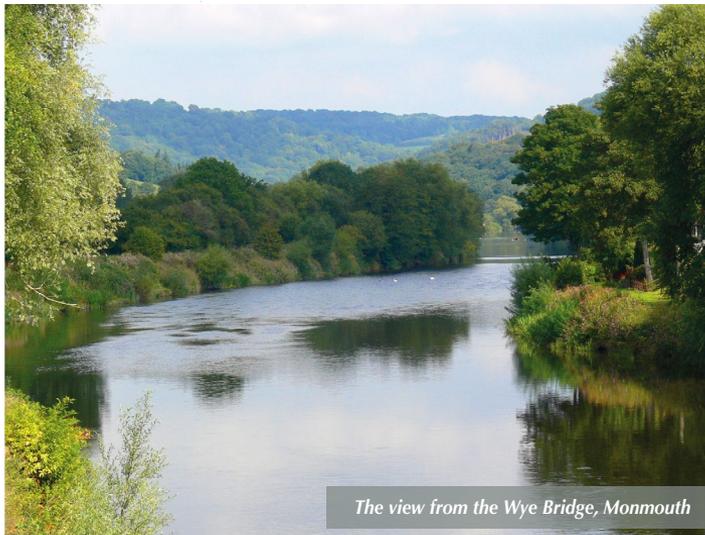
At one time a ferry crossed the river at this point, and the metal gates and steps leading down to the river’s edge are the only reminders that the vicar used to regularly cross the river from the vicarage on the opposite bank. St Peter’s Church serves the parish north of Monmouth, and although in Wales is in the Church of England diocese of Hereford. The site was probably early Christian; the present church dates from the 12th century, but inside there is masonry which indicates it may have been Saxon. This little church is in active use despite regular inundations from the River Wye, indicated by brass height markers.

Continue northwards and cross the wooden ‘Mally Brook’ bridge (SO 52 17). Two gates and two long fields later enter woodland. Follow the well-defined path, passing wooden steps on your left which give access to the Dixton Embankment Nature Reserve, owned by Gwent Wildlife Trust. This was formed when the present A40 was constructed and the route of the old Monmouth-

Ross-on-Wye



Map continues  
on page 49



The view from the Wye Bridge, Monmouth

If the weather is hot, you may come upon adders basking in the sunlight.



road abandoned, making the area available for a Nature Reserve. ◀

Sixty metres on and you cross the border into the county of Herefordshire. Continue into England and the path narrows alongside a cottage and follows the boundary of the cottage to a path overlooking the river through the woods. Pass a footpath on your left which rises steeply uphill towards the old road and beyond to the A40.

### WYASTONE LEYS

Wyastone Leys was originally built in 1795 and rebuilt in the 1830s by industrialist Richard Blakemore. He extended the estate to include the Little Doward hillfort behind enhancing it with landscaped viewpoints, an iron tower folly, carriage drives and a walled deer park. A later owner extended the house further in 1860–61 by the Scottish architect, William Burns. A small herd of fallow deer are still kept in a reserve on the edge of the Little Doward. Since the early 1970s the Wyastone Estate has been the

home of Nimbus Records, one of the pioneers of Compact Disc manufacturing and recording.

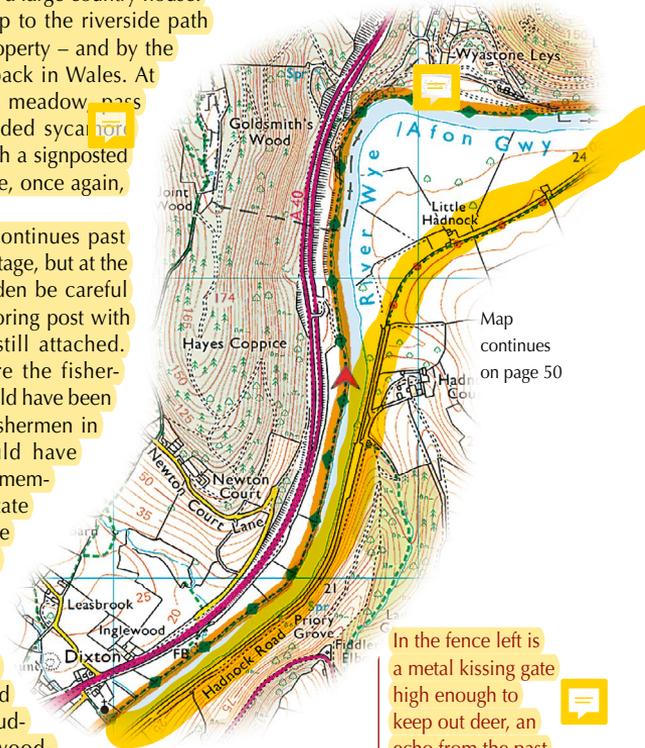


The path eventually emerges on to a meadow under **Wyastone Leys**, a large country house.

Please keep to the riverside path through the property – and by the way, you are back in Wales. At the end of the meadow pass under a pollarded sycamore tree and through a signposted gap and you are, once again, in England.

The path continues past Fishermans Cottage, but at the end of the garden be careful of the iron mooring post with mooring ring still attached. This was where the fishermen's boat would have been moored. The fishermen in this case would have been guests or members of the estate fishing for the prime salmon the Wye was once famous for. ▶

You now enter Woodland Trust land including 82ha of woodland and the Little Doward hillfort (open to the public). At this point you have a choice of routes: continue straight on following the riverside path or deviate to a kissing gate to your left. This path runs inside the wood but parallel



Map continues on page 50

In the fence left is a metal kissing gate high enough to keep out deer, an echo from the past when the deer park extended this far.



to the riverside path and leads up to a recently restored limekiln. The paths converge further on at a kissing gate adjacent to an old iron field gate. Note the size of the stone gateposts.



Continue along the riverside path until you reach the site of old quarries on your left. Old tailing (waste rock) heaps are very evident and a short walk into the quarries will take you to the rock wall. This rock face is known as the 'Seven Sisters Rocks'. Limestone from this rock face was shipped down stream by riverboats, for building purposes and for making lime.

Above are **King Arthur's Caves**; although links to the mythical king are unlikely, evidence has been found of man's presence from 12,000 years ago, before the last ice age, along with the remains of mammoth, woolly rhinoceros and sabre tooth tiger. Today these caves are home to some of our most endangered bats, the lesser and greater horseshoe.

Continue along this path to a split in the route. Take the right-hand path and this takes you almost immediately into the open space of the Forestry Commission's **Biblins Campsite**. This site is for use by youth groups and during summer becomes very busy, so follow the route towards a hard-surfaced path which passes a toilet block for the campsite.

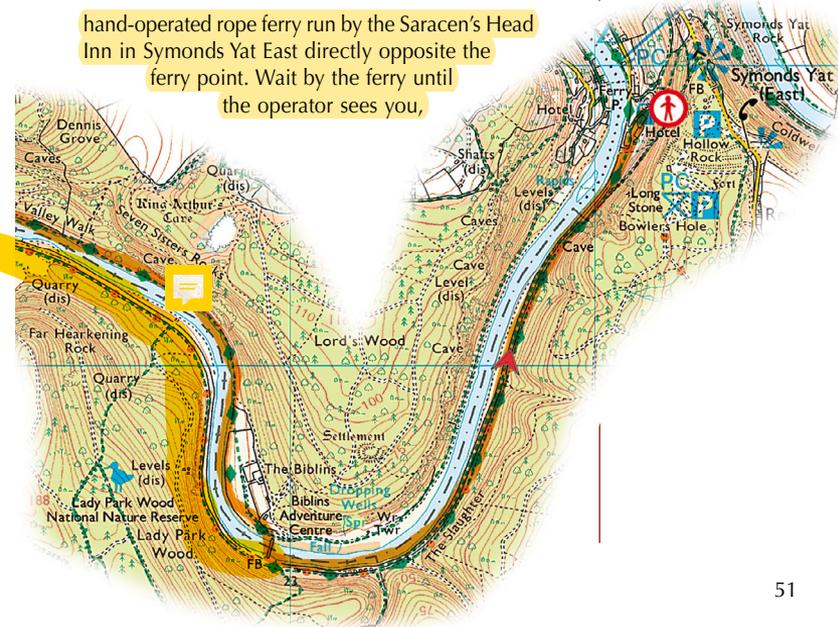
Part of the block is open to the public from March to October.

Follow the track till you reach **Biblins Bridge** (SO 549 144). This suspension bridge replaces an earlier version and is now approached by ramps, but the bridge is still narrow and does sway. (If you feel uneasy about using the bridge, the **alternative** is to continue along the path towards Symonds Yat West, past the ruins of the New Weir forge and take the road right, down to the ferry to cross the river. The ferry is a



Biblins Bridge

hand-operated rope ferry run by the Saracen's Head Inn in Symonds Yat East directly opposite the ferry point. Wait by the ferry until the operator sees you,





or if at night, shine a torch and they will come for you, but beware they do not operate after 11pm or in high river conditions. There is a modest charge for the ferry.)

Cross the Biblins Bridge and turn left. You are now back in Monmouthshire, Wales.

Directly opposite the end of the bank is **Lady Park Wood**, a National Nature Reserve. The form of 'management' is 'non-intervention', and since the 1940s it has been left alone and studied to see how natural woodland develops over a period of time.

Immediately on turning left on to what was the Monmouth-to-Ross-on-Wye Railway track bed – and is now the Peregrine Path cycle route – is the Roger Withers Memorial seat. ◀

Continue along the track bed, crossing into England and Gloucestershire then Herefordshire yet again, until you reach a car park, once the old **Symonds Yat** railway station.

Roger was the Wye Valley AONB Cycle Routes Officer who tragically died aged 59, before the cycleway was completed.

### NEW WEIR IRONWORKS

The river here is very popular with canoeists, the rapids being ideal for training novices. In the 17th century a weir was built here to divert water to an ironworks on the opposite bank. The New Weir ironworks were in use from at least the 1590s up until the 1800s. It had various forges, mills and hammers powered by water wheels for refining iron from nearby furnaces. The rapids are formed from the collapsed weir and slag heaps from the ironworks. The rapids have been purchased by the British Canoe Union and were remodelled in 2009. The site was surveyed in 2009 and consolidated in 2010 as part of the AONB 'Overlooking the Wye' scheme funded by the Heritage Lottery Fund.

Continue through the car park, but if you wish to visit **Yat Rock** viewpoint take the very steep footpath between the entrances of the Royal Lodge and Forest View Hotels. The Wye Valley Walk continues through Symonds Yat East.



### SYMONDS YAT (EAST)

There are several hotels, cafés and the Saracen's Head Inn for accommodation and refreshments. There are public toilets adjacent to the car park opposite the Saracen's Head, but these may not be open between November and April. Similarly some of the cafés close for the winter. Note both car parks are Pay & Display.

## STAGE 4

*Symonds Yat to Kerne Bridge*

<b>Start</b>	Symonds Yat East, adjacent to ferry, SO 561 158
<b>Finish</b>	Kerne Bridge car park, adjacent to Bishopswood Village Hall, SO 581 189
<b>Distance</b>	12.3km (7½ miles)
<b>Time</b>	3hr 20min
<b>Height gain</b>	50m (155ft)
<b>Terrain</b>	Steep climb to Huntsham Hill; descent to riverbank, then riverbank path to Kerne Bridge
<b>OS map</b>	Explorer OL14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean
<b>Refreshments</b>	Youth Hostel at Welsh Bicknor (opening times vary); pubs at Kerne Bridge and Lydbrook (just south of route)
<b>Public toilets</b>	Symonds Yat East, Bishopswood Village Hall
<b>Public transport</b>	Buses between Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth pass Kerne Bridge

This stage starts with a steep climb to a forestry access road around Huntsham Hill, followed by a steep and sometimes slippery and rocky path down to the banks of the Wye. A gentle walk along old railway line and field footpaths alongside the river leads to a little woodland stretch towards the end at Kerne Bridge.

From the Saracen's Head Inn by the ferry the route turns left into a car park and campsite, and follows the riverbank, continuing through fields to reach a **ferry point** opposite The Old Ferry Inn. Turn right across the field towards the road, then left along the road for just under 40m, before taking the path right, uphill, through woodland.

There is a large outcrop of quartz conglomerate above the path, where it emerges on the next road. This rock looks like concrete and consists of small pebbles of

The view from Huntsham Hill

