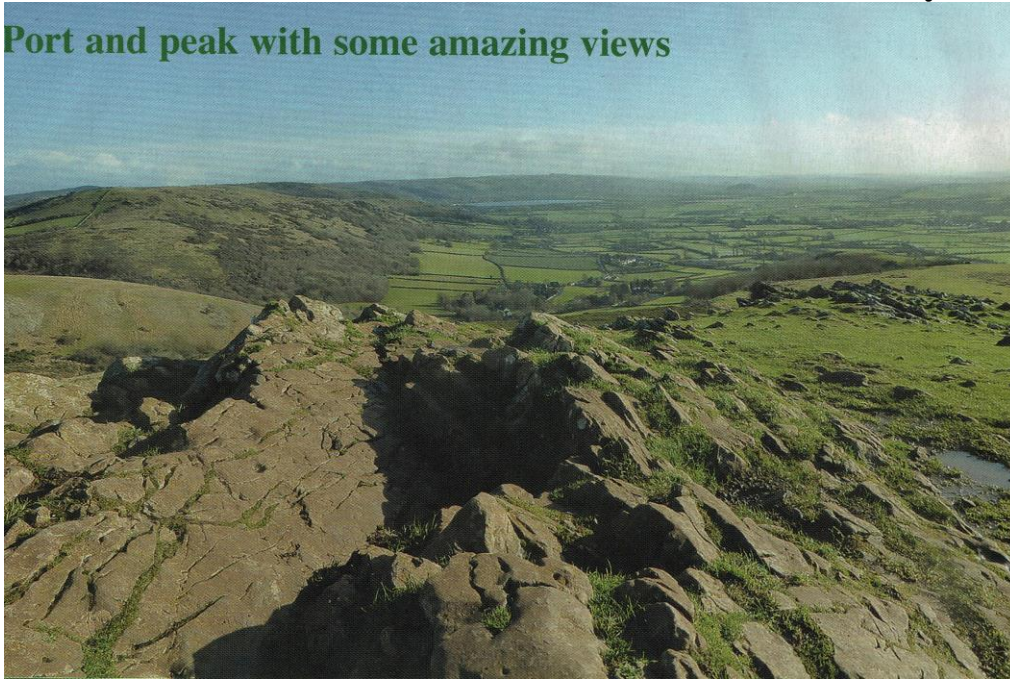


ADWalks - Crook Peak and Rackley

Port and peak with some amazing views



A SHORT circle but one surprising and hidden history that takes the walker on the flat by moorland and a river and then climbs up onto Crook Peak, the only pointed hill on Mendip, from where the views are amazing. To finish there is a beautiful gentle downhill section on a ridge with Wavering Down on one side and the Levels on

the other

Try to choose a good clear dry day, if possible!

I have designed the walk to be on the fairly good underfoot. Obviously after a lot of rain there will be wet sections, particularly near the start alongside the old River Axe as we follow the line of an ancient highway, but the rest should not be muddy. So our circle begins on the flat but then comes a steep uphill section onto the hill below Crook Peak - you can get up onto the Peak itself if you wish, which doesn't require much more effort., Wear good boots with grip as going up to Crook Peak on the stony path may be slippery and a walking pole could be handy.

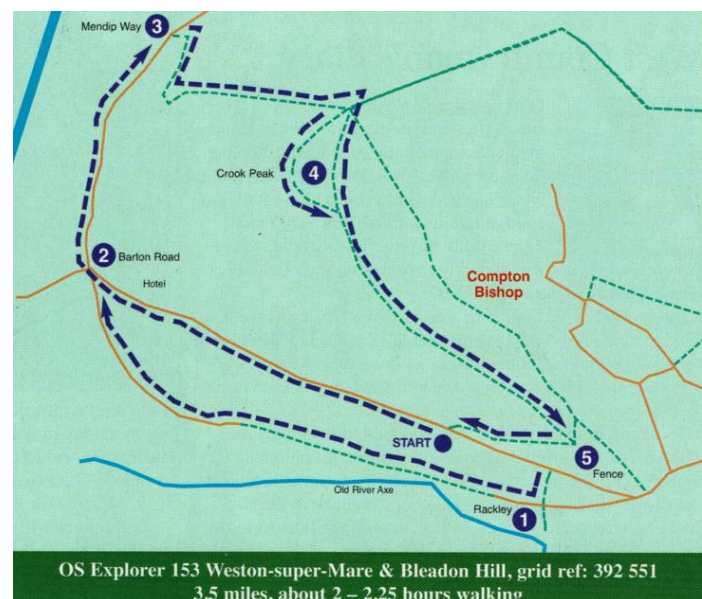
Park: On the west-east road that runs from the A38 at Cross, south of Sidcot, and goes along below the hill towards Loxton. Go through Cross and after about 1.8 miles in all, find a large stony lay-by on the left just before a sign saying "Parish of Loxton. the Wehbington". Opposite is a NT sign for Crook Peak A few yards further along the road is a smaller lay-by if the first one is full.

Start

Turn right from the lay-by and walk back along the road for about four minutes. Opposite a terrace of cottages, find a stile down steps on the right. Cross and go straight down the field and over a stile onto a lane at Rackley.

1. Rackley

Near this very rural spot there was the ancient port of Rackley. No sign of the wharf still remains or of the many cottages that were here. It was from this once busy inland port that the Romans shipped lead ingots from Charterhouse and Priddy to Uphill and overseas. Rackley is actually at a point where the old Axe meets the Cheddar Yeo and in former days navigation to here was made possible because the river was tidal. The hills sloping up to Crook Peak provided a good landing place. Iron, fish and salt were brought in. the outgoing cargoes being chiefly of lead. There is evidence that in the 15th century stones were landed at Rackley and hauled to Wells: apparently at one time it served as the port of the cathedral city.



Turn right on the lane which soon becomes a footpath, but is following the route of the old road which served the port of Rackley. Go over a stile by a gate and into a field and follow the left hedge line through this large field and other fields always in the same direction through Bristol Gates, across a track, through kissing gates for about half a mile. On the gatepost at the second Bristol Gate notice a horseshoe memorial to a much-loved horse Sasha You come alongside the Axe for a while down on your left and UI) right are the lower slopes of Crook Peak. Eventually come onto a path that leads past a huge badger sett and comes to a harder surfaced section of the old Rackley route. Follow this on past homes and all the way to the Cross-Loxton road.



2 Barton Road

Cross straight over into Barton Road. Here you have joined the West Mendip Way, which goes along below Crook Peak with the M5 making itself known down on the left in the Lox Yeo Valley Over on the other side is the village of Loxton. Follow the road which carries little traffic for half a mile, ignoring a footpath, until you reach a metal communications tower.

3. West Mendip Way

Opposite this find the West Mendip Way sign and go right. Follow it gently Lip to the right and then it bends left and continues in the direction of Shute Shelve. Here comes the steel) and stony section. Eventually, after about a third of a mile come up to the grassy top with Crook Peak up on the right. Continue on to a signpost and a waymarked single post. Here begins the remarkable dry stone wall which continues on up Wavering Down and marks the county boundary.

Go on a few yards to another post and turn right on the grassy track.



4. Crook Peak

This takes you alongside Crook Peak itself up on the right with its rocky limestone top at 628 feet. If you want to go up to the top, which isn't much further, find the grassy swathe on the right which is the easiest route. On a fine day there are remarkable views but it can be windy and cold.

Crook Peak is one of the most important and distinctive features of the Somerset

landscape. It is believed to have been a beacon site, set up to signal the threatened arrival of the Spanish Armada to the West Country coast. For many people however, it's that distinctive, conical hill that they hurry past on the M5.

To continue, carry on along the path you were on, passing the Peak on your right and gradually you find you are on a grassy ridge and bear slightly left down this. As you proceed, Wavering Down is over on your left, the village of Compton Bishop nestling below and the Levels stretching away to your right. Glastonbury Tor should be easily seen ahead and to the right and, of course. Brent Knoll is very evident. It is the most beautiful section of this circle in my view.



5. Fence

Carry on down all the way to wooden fencing across the path. Go through and immediately turn right on a path which soon parallels the road and then comes out opposite your parking lay-by.

Hope you have enjoyed this short, varied and interesting walk.

Our thanks to Sue Gearing and the Mendip Times for sharing this article