

Exploring

Dinmore Hill & Bodenham

a guided walk in the heart of Herefordshire
which links Queenswood Country Park and
Bodenham Lake by *Nic Howes*

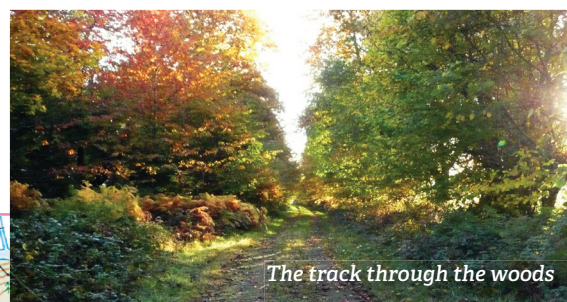
Distance: 4.5 miles**Time:** 3 hours**Terrain:** mainly farm and forestry tracks with some rough and muddy terrain, occasional inclines and some undergrowth to negotiate.**Start point:** Queenswood Car Park**Directions:** summit of Dinmore Hill on A49 between Hereford and Leominster.**Grid reference:** SO 50673 51494**OS Map:** Explorer 201*Please note, this walk passes through fields with livestock*

This partly circular walk links two large sites, both of which have interpretation boards and maps and deserve exploration in their own rights. The directions assume that walkers are starting at Queenswood although the walk can be started at the car park at Bodenham Lakes (point 4). The walk also links the two parts of the Earth Heritage Trust's Queenswood and Bodenham landscape and geology trail. Most of the route follows the crest of the inside of a large meander loop formed by the powerful downcutting of the river Lugg in a greatly enlarged state during the Ice Age. Access the northbound bus stop from

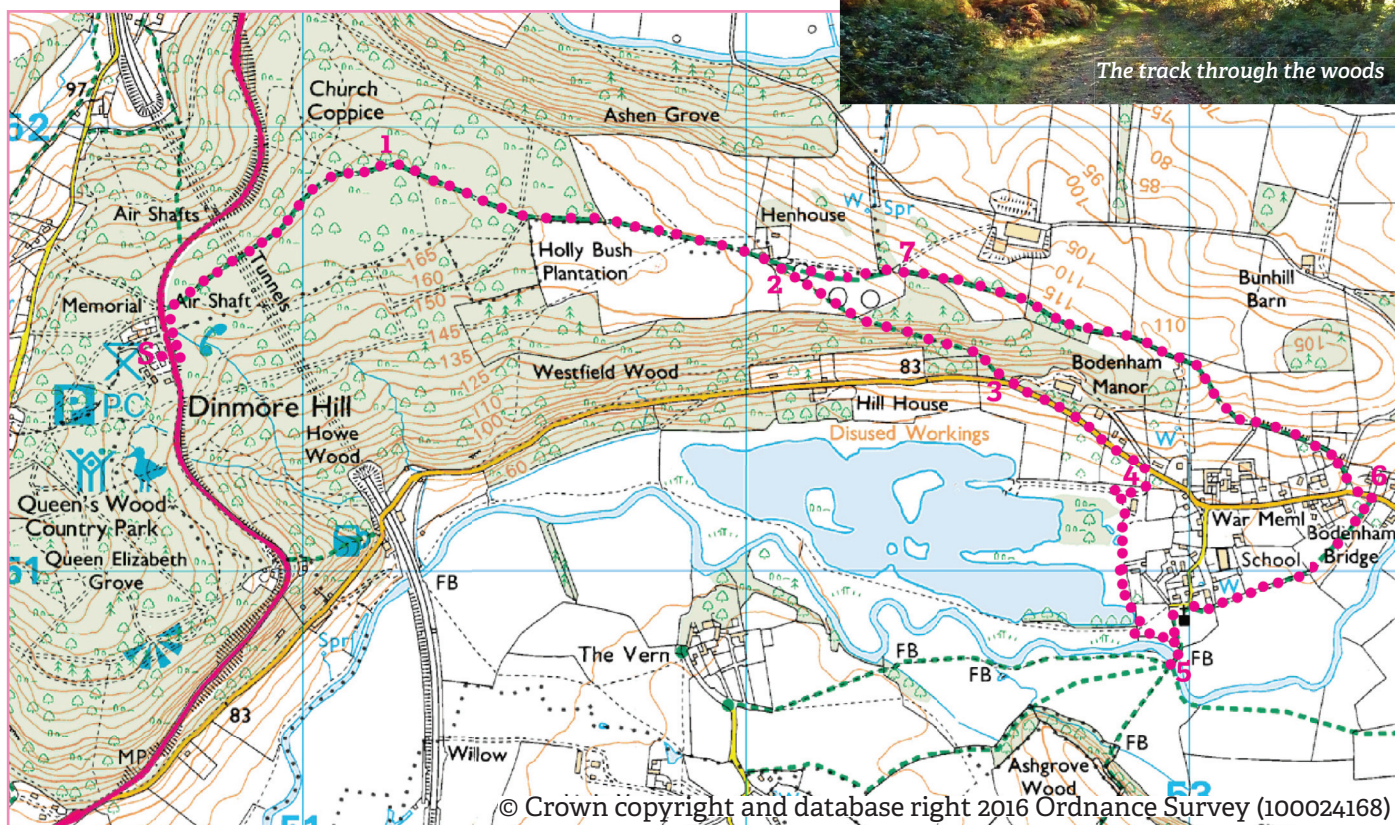
the corner of the Queenswood car park nearest the chalet with a wooden veranda. Cross the A49 via the central refuge to reach the bus stop opposite. Turn left and follow the grass verge northwards for 75 metres (care is needed here as the verge is narrow and the road busy) to access a gate on your right into the woodland, along the Wyche Way. This is a new (2015) long distance path that links two national trails: The Offa's Dyke Path and The Cotswold Way. After 150 metres along this path, scan the woodland on the right to spot a slim stone tower; this is an airshaft

to ventilate the older (1853) of the two parallel railway tunnels under Dinmore Hill.

At **point 1** you emerge onto a forest track by a blue waymark and should turn right along it through the woodland, ignoring any subsequent turnings to left or right. The track eventually emerges from the woodland



The track through the woods



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The path follows a line of young oaks

into open fields, with a line of young oaks on the right. At the gate by the cattle grid in front of farm buildings (**point 2**) you should branch right off the Wyche Way and across the field, passing to the right of two distinctive circular plantations. The second plantation and field boundary funnel you towards a wooden stile ahead (the only one on this walk), which you should cross into woodland. Descend the woodland path to reach a short flight of steps and a waymarker at which you should turn left and soon afterwards fork right, continuing downhill along the path. Please note, this path is narrow and fairly steep.



A narrow path descends through the woodland

You will eventually emerge on a surfaced lane next to the entrance gateposts of Bodenham Manor (**point 3**). Turn left along the lane, pass some houses on the left and turn right onto the drive into Bodenham Lake nature reserve car park (**point 4**).

From Bodenham Lake car park a spur walk is possible through the two fields

planted as orchards and on to the hide; there is an interpretation board with a map to guide you along this spur walk.

To continue the link walk you should exit the car park via the gate and follow the fingerpost towards the church, along a gravel path and through another gate after passing some old gravel works sheds. After Bodenham church comes into view, pass through a gate and follow the fingerpost left through another gate and along a muddy path towards the church. After a gate with a turnstile turn right onto the metal footbridge across the river Lugg (**point 5**). This is a good place to pause and wait quietly to see what wildlife may be about, a kingfisher being one possibility.

After crossing the footbridge there is another optional spur walk to the right, along the left bank of the River Lugg and back, watching for wildlife in this peaceful location.



St Michael and All Angels' Church, Bodenham Village

Cross back over the footbridge and keep straight on to enter the churchyard via a metal gate. Walk to the left of the tower, bear right past the porch, ignore the lych gate on your left and continue past a line of tombstones to a metal gate into a field. Continue straight ahead with the field boundary close on your left. When the field boundary turns away, keep on your previous line to pass through a gap in the hedge line ahead and carry on to a wooden gate beyond. Pass through the gate, under trees and emerge into a field through another wooden gate; keep the field boundary close on your right. Emerge onto the surfaced lane via a gate; cross the road with care and turn left along the pavement opposite (**point 6**).

Just before the crest of the pitch turn right up a dirt track bridleway. Take the far left fork in front of a garden

retaining wall, as indicated by a low-level bridleway fingerpost. This section of the Wyche Way follows an ancient sunken lane and can be muddy and overgrown. Go through the farm gate across your way, following the blue waymarker upslope to the left of the thickly vegetated cutting ahead in the field. Aim towards the highest point of the field, with fine views of the Lower Lugg Valley to your left and behind you. You will find a farm gate and a blue waymarker in the corner of the field; follow this through the gate and continue along the sunken lane to another farm gate and waymarker. Keep straight ahead with the field boundary close on your left; wide views to the north begin to open up on your right.

Go through the next farm gate and follow the waymark to pass a pair of oak trees close on your right. After passing through another farm gate you will soon join a farm track merging

from the right (**point 7**). Continue straight ahead along this track with a line of young oak trees on your left, with circular plantations behind (that you passed earlier on the walk). To the north you should see the factory at Marlbrook beside the A49; on the horizon above the factory you may pick out the distinctive edge of Croft Castle woodland where it meets the open grassland of Bircher Common. On the more distant horizon to the right you may also pick out the distinctive wedge shape of Titterstone Clee.

After a short distance along the track you will meet the cattle grid that you crossed earlier (**point 2**). From here you should retrace your earlier steps back to Queenswood, taking great care and using the refuge when crossing the A49.