

Exploring

# The Golden Valley

a guided walk by Nic Howes

Begin the walk from the centre of Ewyas Harold, (look for the native black poplar near the fish and chip shop) and head north east along School Road, past the primary school and turn left at the T-junction at the end of the road.

Climb along a surfaced road, ignoring all turnings until you reach a cattle grid and gate (**point 1**). Follow the bend round to the left after this and climb the track ahead.

At the first fork take the right hand branch and ascend this path to join a vehicle track. Turn left along this, pass a bench and look out for a path branching off on the right as the track begins to bend left. Take the path,

which emerges onto open land at **point 2**. Keep straight ahead (bearing 335 degrees if you have a compass), climbing the gently rising crest of the ridge upon which Ewyas Harold Common lies. Superb views of the Black Mountains open up on your left.

Pass slightly to the right of the knoll with benches and trees to reach **point 3**, where a house with a conservatory comes into view ahead. Aim for this house along a grass path, with fine views of Gilberts Hill Wood and beyond to your right.

Sweep gently to the left as you approach the house (**point 4**) and pass through a section where the trees close in before emerging onto open common

**Distance:** 5.5 miles

**Terrain:** Very muddy in places, some uneven ground & stepping stones across the brook. No steep climbs.

**Time:** approx 3 hours

**Start point:** Ewyas Harold village centre

**Grid reference:** Start: SO 38722 28660

**OS Map:** 161 Landranger

**Additional information:** Reserves Guide for The Parks and a booklet on Ewyas Harold Common, written and produced by the Trust's Community Commons Project available from the Trust's Offices.

land again. Turn right to meet a vehicle track by a cottage near a large willow tree.

Climb this concrete track. It soon turns into concrete sleepers laid during WW2 to provide access for lorries carrying waste from a nearby munitions site to a disposal site known as the Burning Ground. Keep climbing the curving track, passing a tree, bench and marker post on your left. If you turn to look behind you there are great views of Orcop, Garway, Saddlebow and Graig hills.

Leave the Common at its highest point (**point 5**), via a cattle grid. Follow the







Turn left along the lane until you reach Dulas churchyard (**point 11**). This is managed as flower-rich grassland and has an interpretation board where you can find out more.

Turn right out of the churchyard and continue 300 metres along the lane to a

the concrete vehicle track beyond the railings and cross the metal footbridge beyond that. Walk level across the field to pass to the right of an old railway goods van near Great Walk Mill Farm (**point 13**). Keep the orchard hedge on your left and continue ahead along the tractor way, through several fields until you pass through a farm gate on your left, close to the outskirts of Ewyas Harold (**point 14**).

Keep the next hedge close on your right, with playing fields beyond it. After crossing two stiles, emerge among the closes of bungalows of the Priors Field development.

Keep straight ahead, follow the bend to the right then turn left round number 1A. Turn right at the T-junction and return past the school and back to the start.

surfaced lane ahead to a junction, where you should turn left along the ridge top. Immediately before Cwm Hill Cottage you should take the footpath off the road (**point 6**), across a stile and into a field. As you cross the field, a gap and stile appear in the hedge ahead. From this elevated position you have a good view of the Skirrid hill to your left.

After crossing the stile, bear slightly right towards the next – wide – hedge gap and stile. Once over this, walk on the level with the hedge close on your right; pass through a gap and keep the next hedge close on your left.

The Black Hill comes into view ahead and you emerge over a stile into a surfaced lane opposite the drive to Battlefield Paintball (**point 7**). Descend the steep surfaced lane, cross the ford over the Dulas Brook at the valley bottom and continue to meet a busier lane opposite the former Trout Inn (**point 8**).

Turn left at this junction and walk south along the lane. Care and alertness will be necessary for this short section of road walking. After crossing a bridge with white railings, look out for a gate in a small opening in the hedge on your left (**point 9**) that will lead you into **The Parks**, a Trust reserve.

Bear right after passing through the gate and walk southeast across The Parks, keeping the brook on your left and the road on your right (hidden beyond the hedge) until you approach a wood and see a field gate on your right with a kissing gate where you leave The Parks and rejoin the lane (**point 10**).

Future works at The Parks may include a western footbridge across the Dulas Brook that provides access to its left bank soon after entering the reserve at point 9.

footpath on your left (**point 12**). Follow the fingerpost through the gate and aim left to another small gate that you should pass through to descend a path to ford the brook again. *\*(If the brook is in spate you will have to retrace your steps and follow the lane into Ewyas Harold).*

As you cross the stepping-stones, look for ripple marks on the surface of some of the rocks in the bed. These were created in the sand of millions of years ago and then fossilized.

Bear half right from the top of the bank and pass through a gate. Aim for the hedge gap to the left of a brick house with a distinctive circular window. When you reach the gap, pass through a gate next to a wall and keep the wall – and then a fence – close on your right.

Cross the next stile and walk level across the field beyond towards green railings. Cross

## The Parks

The Parks' wide sweep of grassland is the perfect site, in spring and summer, to brush up on your botany and spot many beautiful butterflies.

Look out for:

### Wildflowers

- bluebell
- primrose
- cowslip
- wood anemone
- pignut
- meadow vetchling
- tormentil
- common bird's-foot trefoil
- common spotted orchid
- heath spotted orchid
- bugle

- wild daffodil
- sneezewort
- meadow saxifrage
- devil's bit scabious
- meadow cranesbill

### Butterflies

- brimstone
- orange tip
- meadow brown
- ringlet
- small skipper
- large skipper
- marbled white

