

Blackdown Hills

Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

6 Circular Walks in the south western Blackdown Hills

Walk 5

A walk to the site of a 13th century abbey

The first two miles are on quiet lanes before crossing fields to the abbey site. The return is on a hilltop path with superb views. Approx 8 kilometres. 5 miles.

Park in Hemyock village, in or near the car park. Map ref: ST 136133.

Leave Hemyock on Culmbridge Road, passing the post office and parish hall. Just after the bridge, the road bends right. At Fourways Cross turn right, signposted for Madford. The road takes you along the attractive valley of the Madford River. Take the right fork at Fivebridges Cross and walk on to the T-junction at Madford Cross. Turn right and then immediately left. A short distance beyond some stone cottages and a barn take the footpath on your right, dropping down to a stile and bridge in the bottom left corner of the field.

Cross the next two fields to gates opposite and then over a wooden bridge on your left. Head towards the right hand end of the church and into the churchyard of Holy Trinity church, built in 1842 on the site of the former Abbey Church. What a lovely location for an abbey. The 'Short History' (available in the church) says that 'the claustral buildings covered 6 acres.' Sadly, very little remains, but it is well worth lingering to imagine the monks at work and prayer and to enjoy the atmosphere of tranquillity.

Walk along the box-edged path and through the gate to the Abbey hamlet, noting the former school on your right. At Abbey Cross, turn right and follow this lane to a T-junction, where you turn left. It's uphill for a while now.

When you are almost at the top of the hill, take the footpath signposted on your right and immediately fork left through a gate. This delightful hilltop path leads straight ahead, through several fields and gives wonderful views of the Blackdown Hills at their best. The path eventually bends a little and at a gateway with a large beech tree in front of you, turn sharp right down a wide stony track. This descends to a lane, where you turn left and then right to return to Hemyock, which itself contains features of historical interest.



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