



## Walk 76. Raleigh's Cross, Comberow and the Mineral Line.

- 6.5 miles, ascents and descents of 400 metres. 2 hours 40 minutes constant walking, allow 3½ hours.

Terrain: Mainly paths and tracks. This walk includes some (wide) paths above steep drops, but there is always vegetation or a fence between the path and the drop. Parts of the walk are quite steep.

Access: By car. Park at Raleigh's Cross inn (with permission) or in the layby on the B3190 just to its west (ST 037 344); there was another layby at the 10-minute point on the walk (ST 043 351), but this is currently closed. For the alternative walk there is a very small parking area next to the Winding House on the B3224 west of the Beulah Chapel (ST 023 344, near TA23 0LL).

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor; Croydcycle 14 Roadwater also covers most of the walk apart from the section south of the B3190.

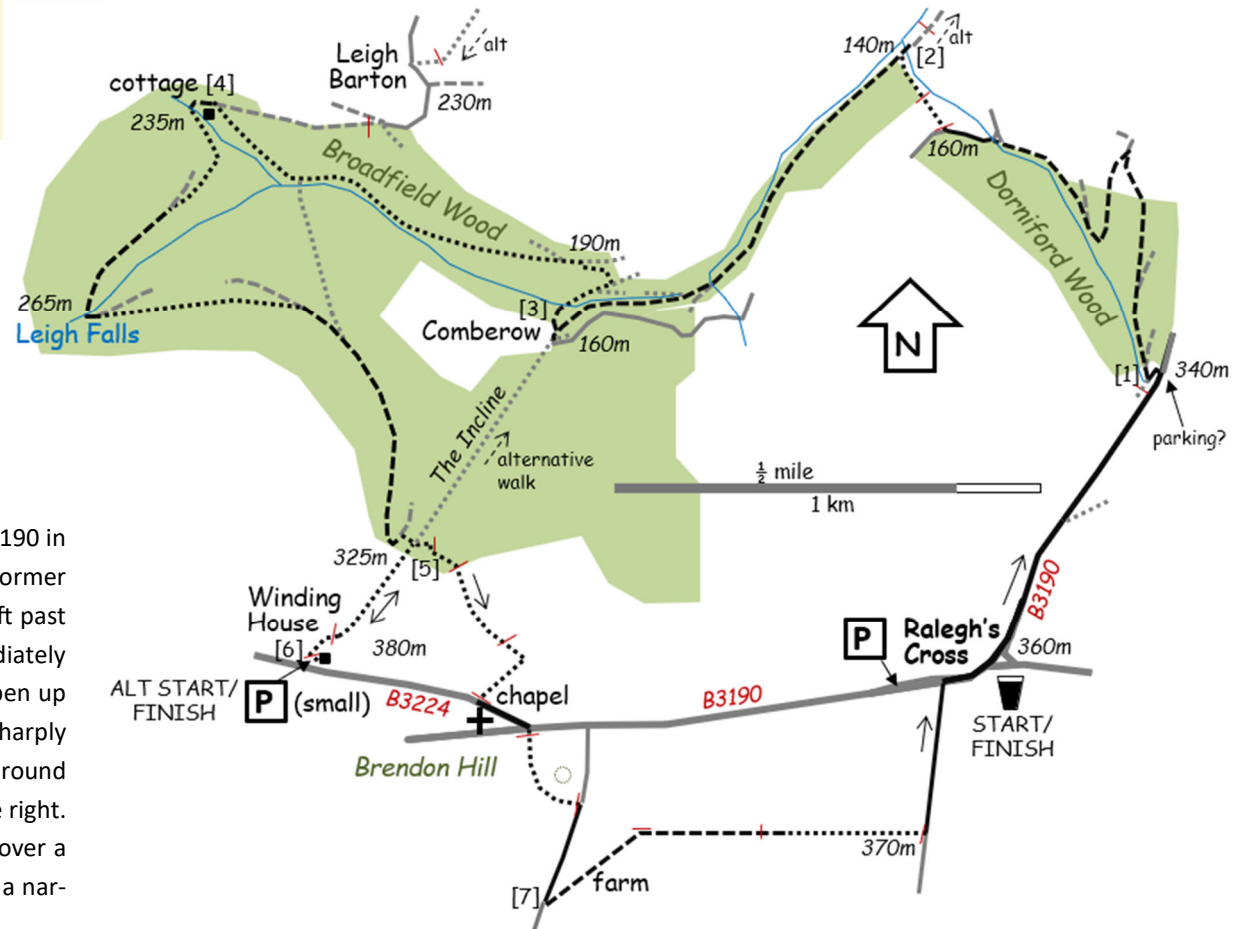
Refreshments: Raleigh's Cross Inn.

IRON ORE HAS BEEN EXTRACTED FROM THE BRENDON HILLS for two thousand years, though industrial mining only took place between the 1850s and the First World War. The West Somerset Mineral Railway was constructed between 1857 and 1864 to transport ore from the mines on the top of the hills to Watchet Harbour, where it would be shipped to Wales for smelting; in the 1860s a mining village grew up on Brendon Hill, now largely fallen into ruin apart from the roadside Methodist chapel which is still used. This scenic walk takes in part of the line, including the Incline where wagons were lowered by cable down a 1 in 4 slope, and returns via a hidden valley deep in the folds of the hills.

Start at Raleigh's Cross. With your back to the inn, cross the road and follow the B3190 in the direction of Watchet. Continue along the verge until you come to a small former parking area on the left just before a '17%' sign (10mins, [1]). Turn back to the left past the barrier, then right and downwards on a rough vehicle track. Almost immediately take the left fork. Ignore tracks heading off to the right as you descend. Views open up over the valley and on to the sea. Just before the track bends left, take a path sharply back to the left as indicated by a blue brideway sign. Follow the path down and around a hairpin bend and continue above a stream valley, again ignoring any tracks to the right. Bear left as you approach a house then turn left on to a surfaced lane. In a little over a minute turn right through a gate on a signposted footpath. Head into the field on a nar-

row path through bracken, then go through a gate to continue on a wide ledge. Arrive at a wide crossing track and turn left to walk on the bed of the old Mineral Line towards Comberow (30mins, [2]). Railway trucks full of ore were hauled along here by steam locomotive to Watchet (see walks 71 and 72), and brought back empty or with a few passengers.

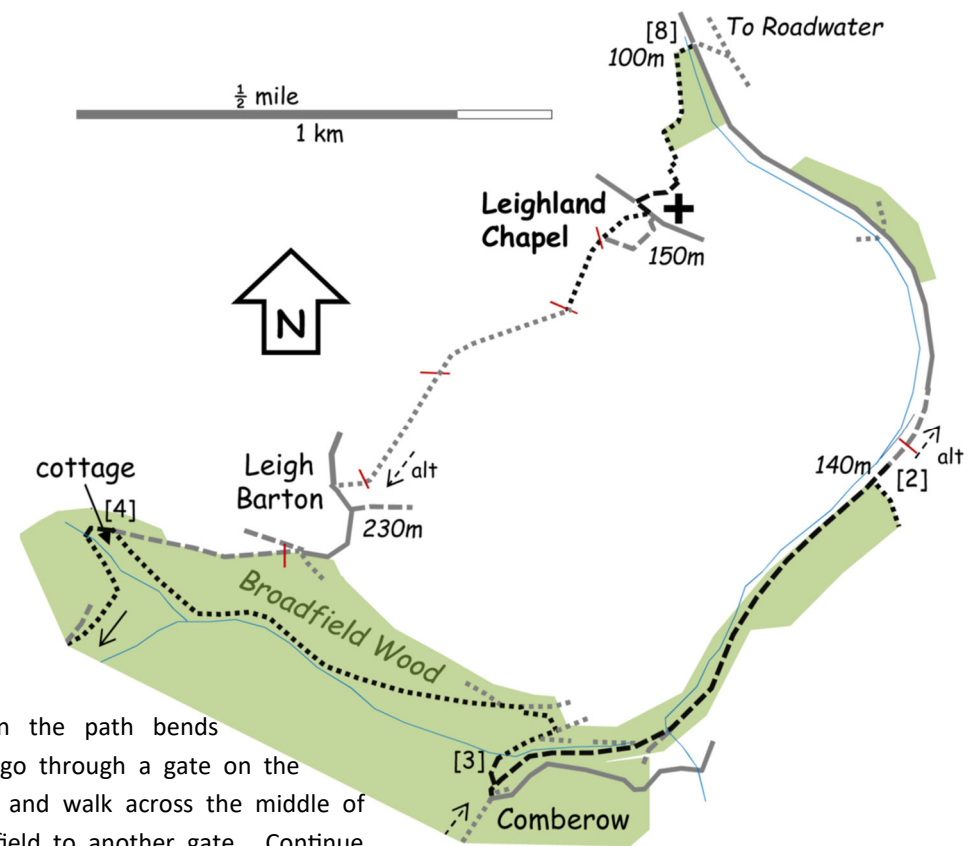
When the track divides take the right fork towards Leigh Barton, soon afterwards ignoring a path to the right. Go through a gate across the track and approach the tiny, secluded hamlet of Comberow. The onward route is to the right, but first continue briefly around to the left, where there is a railway arch; this is the lower end of the Incline (45mins, [3]); go up the steps to explore. Retrace your steps and turn left on a path marked Brendon Hill via Leigh Barton. Pass a house then in a minute or so the path forks; stay left and upwards then almost immediately turn left on a signposted narrow woodland path. Soon bear left to join a wider path, then ignore a right fork to continue towards Brendon Hill. The path soon joins a stream.



Come to a rock face, formerly a small quarry, ignoring the path to the left. Head uphill and come to a T-junction. Turn left here and pass an isolated stone cottage (1hr10mins, [4]). Follow the path around to the left and splash across a small stream. Bear left when you meet a wide track. The track brings you to a waterfall at a bend. Almost immediately afterwards turn right on to a narrower track marked as a bridleway. The track ascends steadily to bring you above the valley, with views to the hills opposite. The wider track soon comes back in from the left; keep right. The track soon crests and bends sharply left; follow it briefly before taking a narrow, stony path to the right. This drops to a grassy crossing path: you are two-thirds of the way up the Incline (1hr45mins, [5]). Turn right and head up to the Winding House ([6]), where the trucks were attached to cables and lowered to Comberow.

After exploring the building and its information boards, return down the Incline to the path crossing (2hr5mins, [5]) and turn right. Pass a mini-waterfall on your right and head up into the woods. Turn sharply right at a barrier, then left to walk beside a tree-topped bank. Go ahead through a field gate (not the pedestrian gate), keeping the fence on your right. Pass a pond on the left, go through a gate, then follow the path around to another gate to turn left on to a road: take care here as it is narrow and often busy. Pass the Beulah Chapel (still used as a Methodist church) and come to a T-junction; cross the road and go over a stile into a field. Pass a large circle of beech trees - Huish Champflower Barrow - then head left to a gate, which brings you on to a lane. Turn right here, pass a farm, then turn left on a vehicle track (2hr20mins, [7]) to walk back past the farm. When you come to a gate, bear right in front of it to walk on an enclosed grassy track. In about five minutes go through a gate into a field. At the end of the field another gate takes you on to a narrow lane; turn left, and in five or six minutes arrive back at Raleigh's Cross. The inn is on the right, the layby on the left.

**Alternative walk: The Incline, Comberow and Leighland Chapel** (● 5 miles, ascents and descents of 385 metres). Start from the Winding House on the B3224. Head down the Incline, ignoring the crossing path ([5]), and continue to Comberow at the bottom ([3]). Climb down some iron steps to the left, and turn right: don't go through the arch to the left, unless perhaps to explore briefly. Leave Comberow by the narrower, right-hand track ('permissive path to Roadwater'). This briefly reverses part of the main walk. Follow the almost level track through the woods for over a mile until it becomes a surfaced road. Pass a white-rendered house to the left, then a little further on a modern bungalow. The road runs beside a wire fence with the gurgling sound of a stream beyond. Immediately before the next white house ([8]) turn left on a narrow footpath (the signpost is only visible once you have passed it). The path swings to the left then winds its way steeply upwards, taking you above the valley that you have walked down. Come to some houses, then a road: turn left, then almost immediately right on to another path just before Leighland Chapel's sizeable red stone church.



When the path bends left, go through a gate on the right and walk across the middle of the field to another gate. Continue along the edge of the field, go through another gate, and cross a third field. The path continues through a narrow belt of woodland before arriving at Leigh Barton, an impressive farmstead with medieval origins. Turn left past the farmhouse, follow the track around to the right, and cross the farmyard. Two bridleways lead out of the yard, as well as a footpath back to Comberow. Take the left-hand bridleway, signposted to the Incline. This path leads gently downhill into woods and comes to an isolated cottage ([4]). Pick up the main walk here to return to the Winding House.

**Short walk: Comberow and the Incline** (● 3 miles, ascents and descents of 275 metres). From the Winding House follow the alternative walk to Comberow ([3] on the map). Now take the path towards Brendon Hill via Leigh Barton to follow the main walk back to the Winding House.

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