

Mendip Hills AONB



TRAIL TYPE

Walking

GRADE

Moderate

DISTANCE

8.5km (5 miles)

TIME

2-2½ hours

OS MAP

Explorer 141:
Cheddar Gorge &
Mendip Hills West
Landranger 182:
Weston-super-Mare

CONTACT

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FACILITIES

Pubs at the bottom
of Burrington Combe,
at Rickford and in
Blagdon.

Village post office and
stores in Blagdon.

Free parking at the
Blagdon village club car
park.

Black Down

Heathlands are such important habitats that in 1986 all European heathlands were given the protection of the European Union (EU) Habitats Directive.

Heathland is typically a dramatic, open landscape characterised by dwarf shrubs, primarily of the heather family. Black Down, like most heathlands, is formed through a combination of factors – soil type, rainfall and human activity.

The underlying Old Red Sandstone rock together with high rainfall created a waterlogged and acidic soil. The removal of tree cover by our Bronze Age ancestors 2,000 years ago helped to make sure that the soil stayed damp and acid. Only certain plants can survive in this type of ground. The key species include heather or ling, bell heather, bilberry, purple moor grass and European gorse, along with mosses and lichens. Heather cutting and grazing kept the heathland vegetation unchanged for thousands of years.

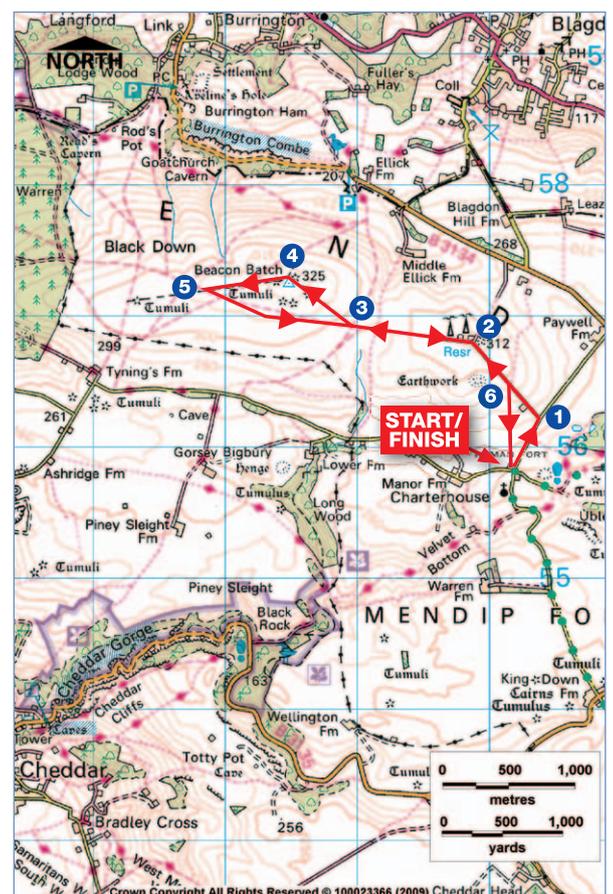
With the abandonment of this traditional management, an invasion of scrub and bracken has reduced the ecological value of this area.

Now with assistance from an agri-environment scheme, the bracken is managed by harvesting and grazing by cattle and wild ponies to allow the heathers and grasses to flourish again.

Black Down supports a wide variety of birds, mammals, reptiles and invertebrates.



Mendip Hills AONB Unit



Mendip Hills AONB



START/END

Blackmoor Reserve
car park
OS Grid Ref ST 505 557

HOW TO GET THERE

BY BIKE

The car park at the Blackmoor Reserve is 2 miles off the Sustrans National Cycle Route 3 www.sustrans.org.uk

BY BUS

Service 683 Keynsham to Wells (Monday to Friday) stops ½ mile from point 1 on the walk route (Tuesdays only).

BY CAR

Charterhouse is signposted off the B3134. Blackmoor Reserve is signposted from the Charterhouse crossroads.

DIRECTIONS & INFORMATION

Waymarking: Look for the waymarkers wherever there are stiles, gates or changes of direction.

From the car park walk up the road to the crossroads (by the Charterhouse Centre), turn right and walk north up the lane and take the next turning left up Rains Batch **(1)**. The lane becomes much steeper here passing a house on the left.

From the transmission masts **(2)**, continue west with the masts on your right, and follow track through the gate **(3)** and up to the trig point on Beacon Batch **(4)**.

Continue west on this track until you reach the second intersection **(5)**, then turn sharp left (back on oneself) and head back on the bridleway to the gate you went through earlier **(3)**.

Retrace route past the transmission masts **(2)** into Rains Batch.

Take the field entrance just before the house and follow permissive footpath **(6)** across the fields.

Go over the wall stile, through a gate and head south east to the field corner.

Go through a gate to the lane opposite the Charterhouse Centre.

From the crossroads walk back down the lane to the car park.

Things to look out for on Black Down

- Bronze Age burial mounds on Beacon Batch
- Rows of tumps (small mounds) created in World War II to prevent enemy aircraft landing.
- Exmoor ponies (*right*)
- Devon ruby red cattle

