

Walk 2.

Southstone Rock and Temple Dingle

Distance: 7 miles

Ascent: 289 metres

Time: 3.5 – 4 hours

Terrain: Fields, woods, moderate, undulating.

Stout walking boots essential

This walk is best done in conjunction with Explorer Maps 203 Ludlow and 204 Worcester

This walk takes you through varying countryside including the spectacular 50 feet tufa cliff at Southstone Rock and the woods around Temple Dingle with interesting old building.

(1) From the Baiting House turn left and walk for 200 metres along the B4203. Turn right and walk up the drive towards Tippins Farm. After 150m cross a stile on your left just before the entrance to Tippins Farm and continue over two more stiles. Keep the hedge on your right and go through two metal gates.

Now this is where you could do with a map. If there are crops in the field and the farmer has reinstated the footpath you shouldn't have a problem but in winter with no crops in the field you will need to follow these instructions very carefully.

Continue ahead in the same direction, crossing a large field heading towards a farm on the distant hillside. You will see The Malvern Hills on your right in the distance and you need to aim for the left of them. As you cross the field look out for the remains of an old field boundary on your right. When you are level with the boundary you will need to bear slightly right. Now you should be heading towards some old farm buildings at Burton Court with two large trees on your right. Continue ahead until you come to a metal gate to the left of the buildings.

(2) Don't go through the gate but turn around and bear very slightly right in the same field with the two trees now on your left. When the path starts to level off and descend it bears more to the right to go over a stile. Turn left and go through a metal gate. Bear right keeping the trees on your right for 350m. Look out for a waymarked bridge on your right [can be difficult to see in summer] go over the bridge and through a wooden gate and follow the path through the wood for 1 kilometre. At the end of the wood go through a metal gate and continue ahead until you reach the B4204.

(3) Turn left and walk along the grass verge for 100m then turn right down a minor road until you pass Linehill House. Then continue along a track going through a metal gate. Continue until you come to a junction of paths and turn left going through a metal gate. Head diagonally right going downhill to a stile. Go over the stile and down 67 steps, turning right at the bottom. Continue heading downhill for 50m, passing the spring on the right which is the source of the tufa. At a waymarked post turn left which will take you in front of Southstone Rock to a bridge.

Southstone Rock is made of a soft grey rock called Tufa. Tufa is formed by the precipitation of water with a high dissolved calcium. The calcium carbonate deposits accumulate on to moss growing on the rock face. The moss continues to grow, pushing through the calcium carbonate. This new growth was coated again and so the process continued. Some of the tufa has been radiocarbon dated to at least 6700 years old.

People have been drawn to this site for thousands of years. It has been suggested that Southstone Rock lay on the important saltway from Droitwich to Leominster in Roman times. Several caves at its base were later used by travelling monks of Evesham for shelter and rest. The springs have been a focal point for human activity because they are thought to have both medicinal and spiritual properties. Southstone Rock was a retreat for hermits and pilgrims who travelled here to take the waters from a holy well. In Norman times a chapel dedicated to St John the Baptist stood on top of the rock. It is said that two monks from the Abbey of Evesham were located here as guardians of the chapel. The remains of a house can be seen atop the cliff.

Cross the bridge and continue on the footpath to a waymarked T-junction. Turn left heading uphill for 200m going up another 5 steps to a waymarked post. Turn right continuing uphill to a stile. Go over the stile and continue straight ahead going uphill to the left hand corner of some trees, then continue in the same direction with a hedge on your right until you meet a track.

(4) Turn left keeping the hedge on your right for 600m until you meet a minor road. Turn right heading down the road to the right of a house [Park Cottage.] Continue ahead going over a stile into a field. The footpath heads downhill about 30m to the right of a big tree. From this point you will be able to see Stanford Court. When you are parallel with the oak tree continue down into the right-hand corner of the field where you go through an open entrance onto a track. Turn left and continue through Temple Dingle until you see a derelict building in front of you. I think the building used to be a hunting lodge, but not sure. Continue left along the track in front of the building. After 400m the track starts to ascend and go back on itself, here you will meet a

T-junction.

(5) Turn left and follow the path for 500m, eventually passing a pheasant pen. Turn left at a crossroad of waymarked paths heading down through woodland. Continue ahead with the woods to your left and a pheasant pen on your left until you come to a metal gate with a stile to the left of it. Go over the stile and head uphill keeping the hedge on your right to a metal gate, there is a waymarker here which says to go straight ahead but you actually need go diagonally left. Go through what used to be a field boundary then turn right heading uphill to a gate, then continue down a track which leads to the B4204. Turn right and continue along the road for 400m.

(6) Turn left down a minor road passing Kiln Cottages and Yearston Court. Just past Yearston Court go through the farmyard on the right to a metal gate in the left-hand corner. Go through the gate and head to the right hand far corner of the field towards a white house in the distance and go through a kissing gate. Continue with the hedge on your right going through gates and over stiles to the B4203.

(7) Cross the road and go through a metal gate, then keeping the hedge on your right cross two fields going downhill over a stile in the right-hand corner then over another stile on the left going down a small bank towards a lake. This brings you to a drive by Sapey Brook. Turn left along the driveway and through a small wrought iron gate and continue down a track to the road. Turn left and continue up the road until you come to the B4203, then turn right [beware of the traffic] to bring you back to The Baiting House for a well-earned drink.

