



Walk 36. Comberow and the Mineral Line.

- 6 miles, 2 hours 30 minutes. Ascents and descents of 430 metres.

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. There is a short ascent (avoidable) and longer descent on a grassy slope of 25% (1 in 4).

Access: By car. There is a small unmarked car park off the B3190 between Raleigh's Cross Inn and the Beulah Chapel (ST 031 346, no postcode; TA23 0LN takes you to Raleigh's Cross). From Raleigh's Cross, pass a small layby on the right then in less than a quarter of a mile take the first right turn, a narrow unmarked track with an orange gate. From the chapel, pass a lane on the right then take the first track left. When the track comes to a junction, park in the parking area on the right. Don't obstruct the access for forestry vehicles.

Map: OS Explorer OL9 Exmoor.

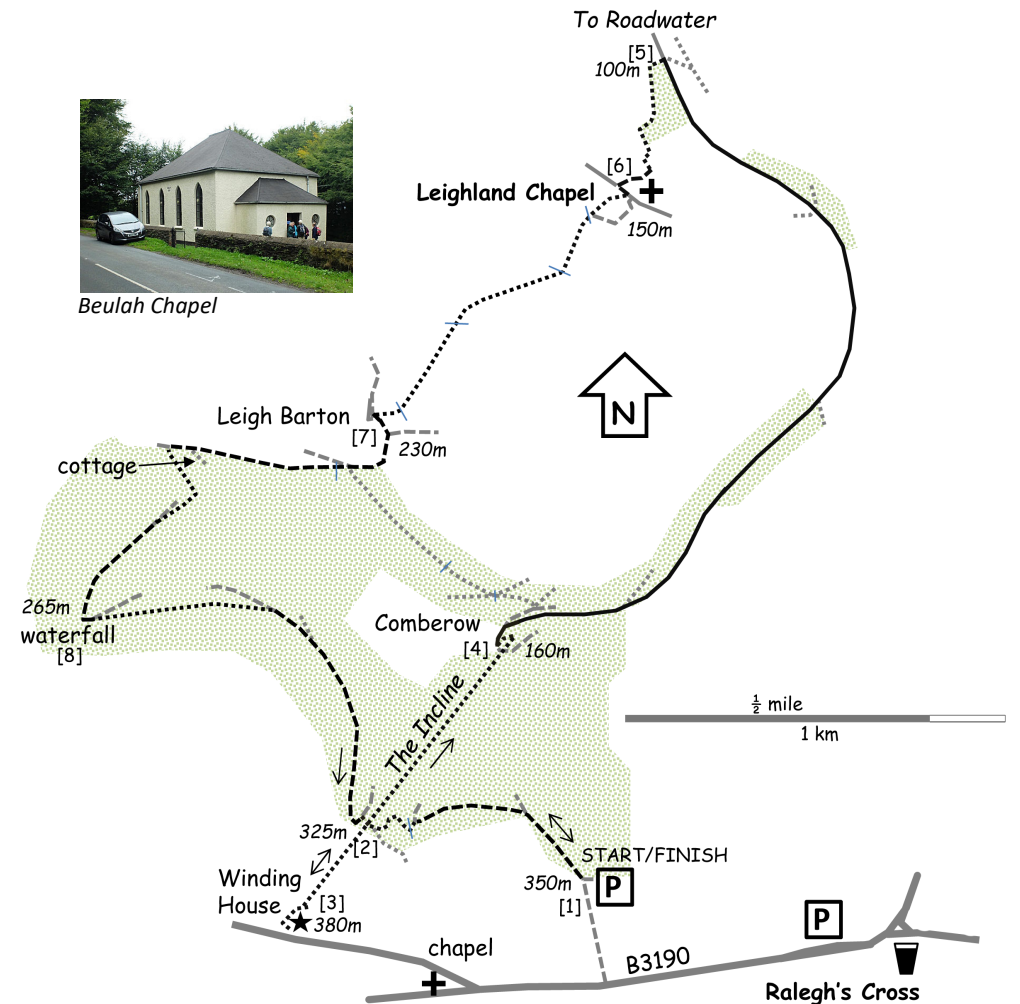
Refreshments: Raleigh's Cross Inn, close to the start of the walk.

THERE HAS BEEN A HISTORY OF IRON ORE EXTRACTION on 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.

From the parking area, start by following the continuation of the track that you arrived by ('permissive path to the Incline'). Keep left at the fork, then when the track swings sharply right (5mins) take a path uphill to the left to a wooden kissing gate. Go through the gate and follow the meandering path, ignoring a turn to the left for Brendon Hill. Splash through a stream then pass a waterfall and another small stream. The Incline – a grassy path heading downwards to the right – crosses the track soon after the waterfall (10mins, [2] on map). First head left and upwards for a little over five minutes. When the Incline comes to an end, the path continues down steps to the right; walk down to see the Winding House (20mins, [3]), where the trucks were attached to cables and lowered. Return down the Incline and continue to Comberow at the bottom, where there is a farm (35mins [4]). 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.



Beulah Chapel



Leave Comberow by the narrower, right-hand track ('permissive path to Roadwater'). This is the continuation of the Mineral Line, where the trucks coming down the Incline would be hauled to Watchet by steam locomotive. The remains of the platform at Comberow Station can be seen in a siding to the left. 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 (1hr 5mins [5]), 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 (1hr 15mins, [6]).

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 (1hr35mins, [7]). 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. Turn left on a narrow path after the cottage, crossing a stream and passing a pair of magnificent beech trees. The path now rises gradually to come to a waterfall (2hrs, [8]). Follow the path around to the left, then fork right and head upwards. The path continues rising for a while then levels out to provide panoramic views over the rolling hills and across to South Wales. When it turns left and downhill (2hr20mins, near [2]), look out for a narrower path to the right (signposted, though the fingerpost may be hidden by vegetation). This path soon crosses the Incline. Continue over, and retrace your steps from the 10-minute point back to the parking area.

Shorter walk: Comberow and the Incline (● 3.8 miles, ascents and descents of 320 metres). Follow the main walk to Comberow ([4] on the map), then take the left-hand, uphill track. In a couple of minutes enter a wood and turn sharply left on to a small path, rising and then swinging left. Turn left on meeting a path from the right, go through a gate, and immediately turn right and uphill. This path leads to the far end of the farmyard at Leigh Barton: rejoin the main walk just after the 1hr35-minute point [7].

Extension to Roadwater (● 7.5 miles, ascents and descents of 495 metres). At the 1hr 5min point [5] turn right rather than left. Where a track crosses your path turn left and use the instructions in Walk 35 to continue to Roadwater. Return on the old Mineral Line track to rejoin the main walk, turning right on to the path back at the 1hr5min point.