



## Dark Hill

**SUMMARY** An easy walk around the remains of the Dark Hill ironworks. For a longer walk, follow the cycle track from Coleford (1½ miles) or from Parkend (2 miles). In either case you can then start and finish the walk at the vertically mounted railway lines [2].

**START** From Parkend, take the road to Coleford. After 1¼ miles turn uphill at the signpost to Ellwood. The car park is a further 400 yards on the right.

For more information see "Robert Mushet and the Dark Hill Ironworks" by Keith Webb (Black Dwarf 2001).

### WALK INFO

**DISTANCE** ¾ MILE

**No. OF GATES** 0

**No. OF STILES** 0

- Walk away from the road and car park [1] and turn right when you reach the gravel track. This is a branch of the Family Cycle Trail from Coleford to Parkend. Formerly it was part of the Severn and Wye Railway that ran from Parkend up this valley to a terminus at Coleford. Regular passenger traffic on this line ceased in 1929 but freight continued into the 1970's.

- Walk downhill on the cycle track until you see large railway lines set vertically in the ground to your left [2]. This is a monument to David Mushet and his son Robert, pioneers in metallurgy. The Mushets' findings from experiments on steel here and in Coleford were a real breakthrough. Unfortunately, their marketing expertise was not so good and it is Henry Bessemer that most people remember.

- Walk further downhill until you can see the restored remains of buildings in the valley to the left. These are the remains of Dark Hill Ironworks. Soon, you will see a Dark Hill Ironworks interpretation board on your left [3] that gives a good description of the site.

- Continue down the gravel track. The path will eventually go uphill and turn into a tarmac surface. Ahead, you will see a dirt path at a large rock on your left – turn left up that path. If you reach the road, you have gone too far [4]. Before the dirt track, you may be able to see a 'bear' from the ironworks, a large solidified mass of iron slag, off the track to the left.

- As you walk along the dirt path, look for stone blocks set into the ground, these are 'sleepers' that carried a 'dramroad' along this path. A dramroad is a lightweight narrow gauge railway on which ran small 'journeys' of trucks pulled by horses. In the Forest of Dean, they were used to carry coal and iron ore from the many mines found in this valley, and timber and stone from the quarries.

- Continue ahead past a fence on the left and a hedge on the right. Keep the hedge to your right. Stop along the fence to look at the Dark



Hill remains from this side of the valley [5]. The best view is just beyond the electrical pole on your left.

- Continue ahead through the large rocks placed to prevent vehicle access and uphill until you reach Marefold [6], a house on the right. You will see more iron slag on the large rocks at the gate.

- Take the track to the left at Marefold through the stones, downhill. At the bottom of the hill,

cross the shallow ford using the stepping-stones. Some of the scrub in the area has been cleared by volunteers to improve the habitat for butterflies. The Small Pearl-bordered Fritillary is a species that you may encounter here.

- When you reach the cycle track at the top of a slope, the path back to the car park is straight ahead.