

A railway ramble through time

By Tom Fisher of Leadon Vale Ramblers

This walk explores some of the remoter parts of Herefordshire, known to geographers as the Bromyard plateau. An added bonus is the chance to re-discover one of Herefordshire's lost railways.

1 From Edwyn Ralph village hall walk back to the main road and turn right towards Bromyard. Walk through the village and when you come to the de-restriction sign take a stile on your left. Walk across the field to a stile and then on to a gate into a lane. Turn right along the lane. At a T-junction turn left and follow the lane to St Michael's church, Edwyn Ralph.

The Domesday Book records an area by Bromyard, belonging to Osbern Fitz Richard called "Gedeven". This land passed to two families, the Ralphs and the De Loges, giving the names "Gedeven Ralf" and "Gedeven Loges" which have over time become Edwyn Ralph and Edvin Loach. Local legend tells of two noblemen, one from each parish, fighting a duel over a local beauty. Hearing of a duel, she rushed to separate the pair, only to be killed by the duelists who then fought to the death. All three are reputed to be buried at Edwyn Ralph.

Go through the lych-gate and cross a stile on the right. Turn left and go straight across the field. At the end of the field you come to a footbridge. Cross it and turn sharp right along the field edge. At the corner turn left along the hedge and find a double stile on the right corner. Now carry straight on across the field, maintaining your height (not going down into the dip), join the hedge on your right and reach a



Looking towards Bromyard Downs

stile/gate and then straight ahead to a gate onto the road at Tack Farm (Winslow Grange). Turn left and then take the Rowden turn on your right.

2 Walk along the lane for a mile or so, past Rowden Abbey and Rowden Mill. Soon after Rowden Mill, you cross the old Bromyard-Leominster railway.

This is the focal point of our walk. The Railway Act to provide a railway between Worcester and Leominster via Bromyard was passed in 1861 but the railway was not fully completed until 1897. The line always struggled economically but, socially, it provided an excellent method of getting produce to market. The Bromyard-Leominster section closed in 1952, although there

was one last nostalgic journey in 1958 before the track was pulled up. The Worcester-Bromyard section closed in 1964. At Bromyard there is a narrow gauge track along the first mile towards Worcester. It is not open to the public. At the next station, Rowden Mill, which we will soon pass, the station has been lovingly restored, complete with section of track and rolling stock. At Fencote, the next station, the owner Mr Matthews, has also done a wonderful restoration job. He welcomes visitors but you must ring beforehand on 01885 482390.

3 Now turn immediately right along a narrow lane, passing Rowden station. Soon you reach Great Wacton. Go



Lovingly-restored Fencote Station

WALK

Walk information

Start/parking: Park by Edwyn Ralph village hall, off B4214 Bromyard to Tenbury Road GR 643583

Maps: Explorer 202

Length: Seven miles

Grade: Moderate/energetic

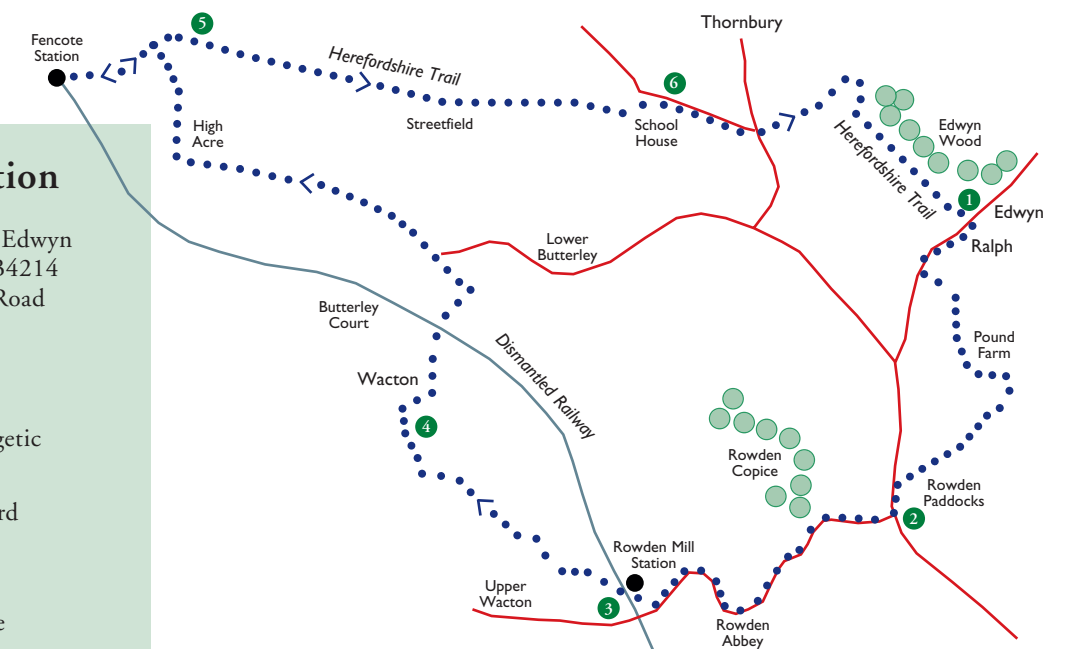
Stiles: Nine

Nearest town: Bromyard

Refreshments: None

Toilets: None

Public transport: None



through the farm and take the left-hand of two footpaths, climbing the gate if necessary. Go diagonally across the large field to reach the opposite corner by a stream and go through what can be a very muddy gateway. Carry on straight ahead and look out for a footbridge and stile in the trees on the right hand side.

Go up the field and through a gate, then up the field again to reach Wacton Grange.

4 When you reach a lane turn right and the lane then becomes just a track. Go through a gate and on reaching the bridleway, bear half-left down a large

open field. Admire the fine old railway embankment ahead and Wall Hills Iron Age fort beyond. There is no right of way along the old track but it would make a wonderful walking or cycle route. Find a gate in the trees at the bottom and cross under the railway line and continue along the bridleway. ▶