

Mendip Hills AONB



TRAIL TYPE

Walking

GRADE

Moderate. May be boggy and rough underfoot in places

DISTANCE

4.0 km (2.5 miles)

TIME

1.5 hours

OS MAP

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

CONTACT

01761 462338
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FACILITIES

Lilypool Café and Farm Shop is next to turn for Tynings Farm off Shipham to Cheddar Rd

Usually open 7am – 3pm daily - check first:
01934 741244

► *One of the types of special fires at Black Down – made by mixing fuel with water*

Black Down War Walk

In World War II (1939-45), Black Down became a key site in the defence of Bristol.

Firstly, in the summer of 1940, the approximately 1800 tumps that are still visible today were built in a grid formation at carefully calculated intervals to prevent enemy aircraft landing and taking off again.

After the heavy bombing of Coventry and the Bristol Blitz in November 1940, more needed to be done. A top secret national programme of decoy sites was soon developed to protect cities as well as airfields and naval sites.

Black Down actually invited enemy bombs by becoming one of these decoy targets. Enemy bombers approaching from the south would reach Black Down before Bristol. It was hoped that by making the site resemble a poorly blacked-out Bristol at night, bombs would be dropped here instead. Black Down became a QL site (Q=night; L=lit).

Black Down was then to become a QF site (F=fires). The Luftwaffe typically first sent pathfinder bombers to mark the target for the bombers that followed. If the pathfinder's bombs were extinguished at the same time as controlled fires were lit on Black Down, perhaps the second sortie would be fooled into bombing the wrong target.

In a further development of the decoy, different types of fire to imitate different ground conditions were lit. These were called Special Fires – code named Starfish. Black Down was one of 12 decoy sites around Bristol and over 800 nationwide.

The final development, controlled from a bunker at Tynings Gate, was the installation of launch pads for anti-aircraft rockets known as a Z battery.

Black Down is now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument. This walk takes you through some of the remaining features.



Robert King

Mendip Hills AONB



START / END

At the roadside either side of the bend at Tynings Farm (please do not park or obstruct farm entrances)

Post code: BS40 7XU
OS Grid Ref ST470564

HOW TO GET THERE

BY BIKE OR CAR

Turn at Lillypool Café on Shipham – Cheddar Rd

BY BUS

No easy route, but you can walk from Cheddar (approx 2 miles).

PLEASE NOTE –
THIS WALK IS NOT
WAY-MARKED

DIRECTIONS & INFORMATION

From Tynings Farm, go north-east up fairly steep path towards Black Down (1).

Enter onto Black Down at gate, beside the decoy control bunker to your left (2). To the right you see the double rows of tumps.

Continue on path in same direction taking one of the tracks to the right (toward Beacon Batch) (3). The track marked takes you through the position of the Special Fires that were decoys for Bristol Temple Meads Station although no visible remains are present.

Carry on to the Beacon Batch trig point (4) (where you can see several Bronze Age burial mounds).

Look east to the two masts. The field this side of them hosted the decoy activity that represented the Eastern Depot. Canon's Marsh was decoyed at a site in Rowberrow Forest.

Return along the path and bear left (5) to walk back to the bunker.

From the bunker (2), look south to the buildings at Tynings Gate beyond Tynings Farm. Another bunker here housed more control switches and detonators for the decoys. This also became the site for launching special anti-aircraft rockets known as a Z battery.

Return to start.

www.discoveringblackdown.org.uk

OS GRID REFERENCES TO DECOYS

Burrington a (QL)
Canon's Marsh: ST 467578

Burrington b (QL)
West Depot: ST 465557

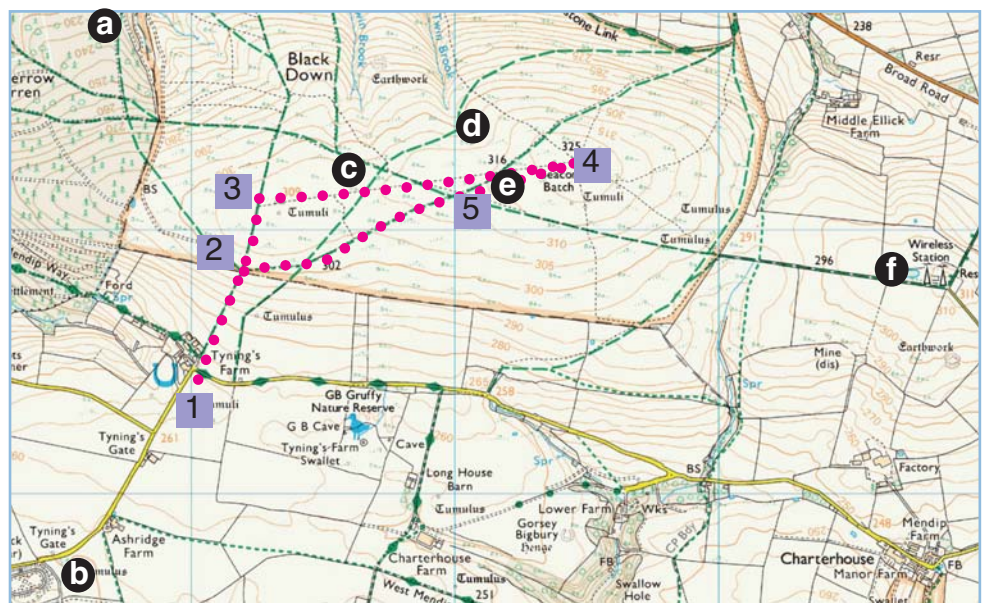
Burrington c (QF/QL)
Temple Meads: ST 475574

Burrington d (QL)
Pylle Hill: ST 481575

Burrington e (QL)
Kingsland Road: ST 482572

Burrington f (QF/QL)
East Depot: ST 497570

Q=Night
L=Lit
F=Fires



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