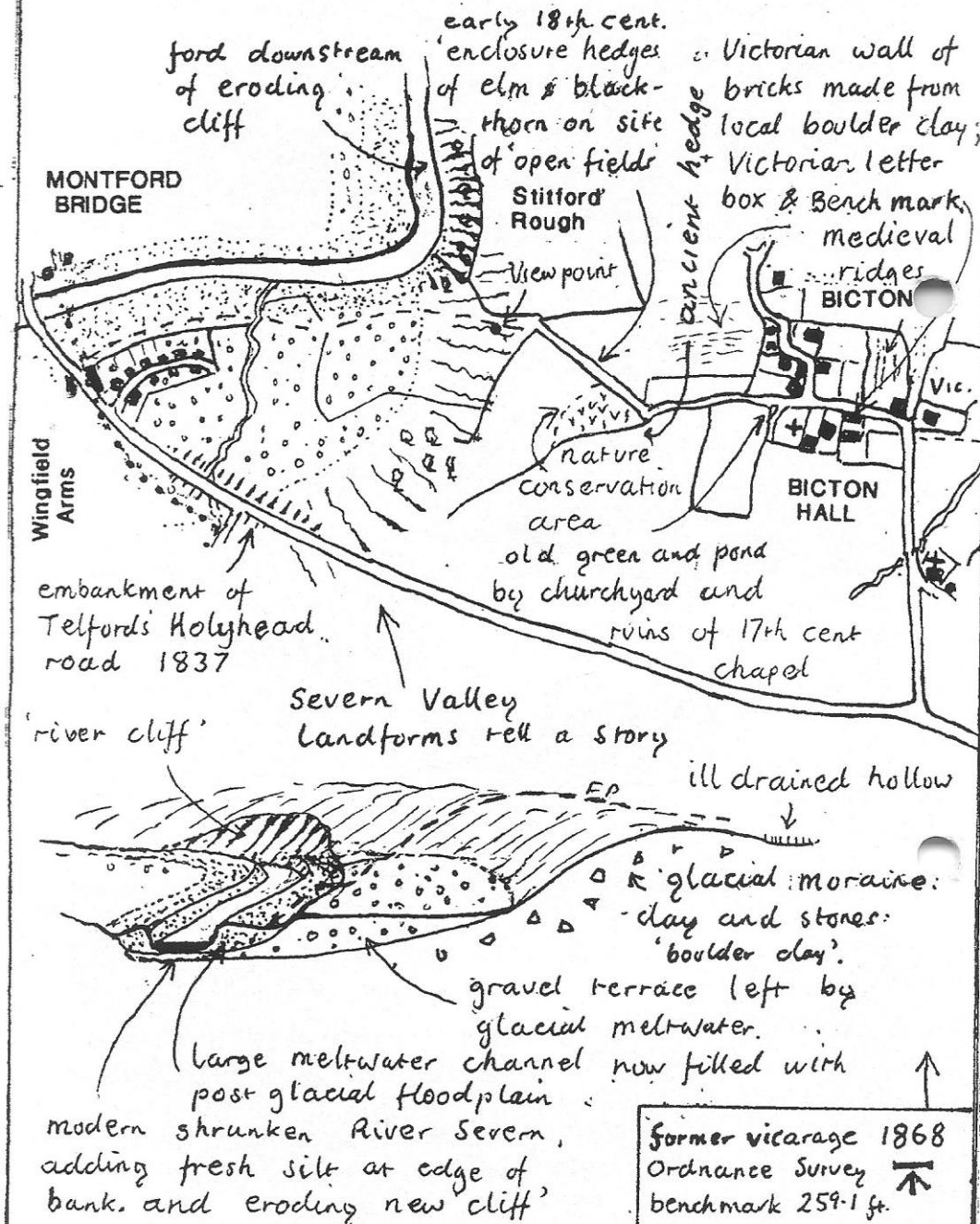


David Pannett's History of Bicton no. 27: Walking the Severn Way

With long Summer evenings and the approaching holiday season, why not take a healthy country walk! It so happens the 'Severn Way', one of our longest long distance footpaths actually passes through Bicton as it bypasses all those bends around the Isle. It is well signed and equipped with good gates and styles, all described in a published guide to the whole route from the Welsh Hills to the Bristol Channel. This guide, however explains very little about the river and associated landscape, so there is scope to rectify this for the Bicton section at least.

In practical terms, the number 70 bus can be used as part of a round trip and therefore it is convenient to continue our description as far as Shelton.

The Severn Way

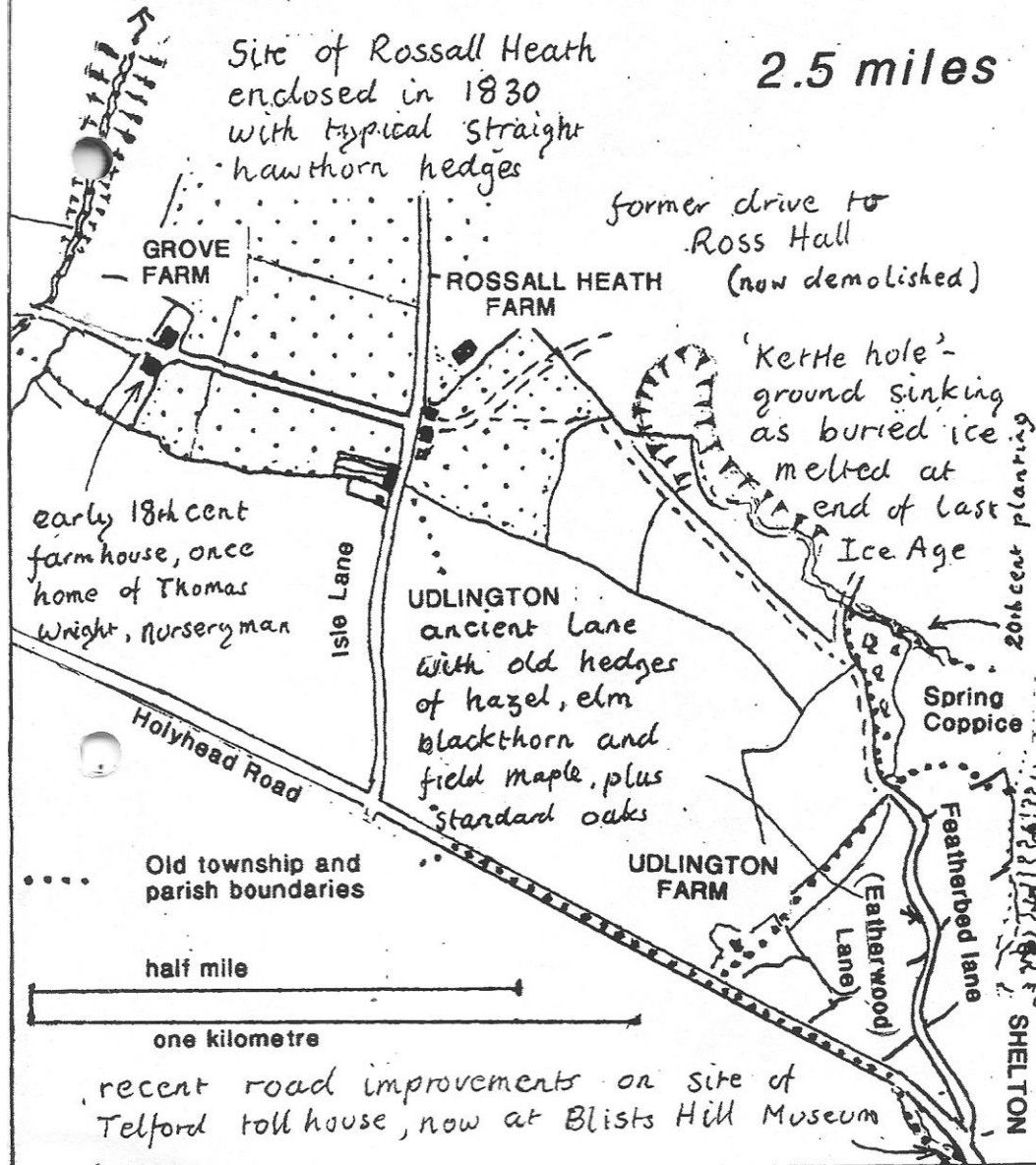


through Bicton

and part of
Shelton

Stream cutting deep
narrow valley to reach
level of R-Severn

2.5 miles



The path enters Bicton Parish across Monford Bridge and sets off across fields through a gate opposite the Wingfield Arms (The history of this area has already been discussed in several installments of this history series). As it passes from one field to the next it also crosses several features which record the development of the valley since the last Ice Age – flood plain and terrace – before climbing a ridge which was a terminal moraine of the last ice sheet. The views westward from the crest include the Long Mountain and the Briden Hills on the skyline and the gaps through which that ice once poured down from Wales 20,000 years ago.

The remainder of the route includes a variety of green lanes whose shape and hedgerow flora reflect their different origins : early eighteenth century enclosure of Bicton's medieval 'open fields'; nineteenth century enclosure of Rossell Heath and medieval woodland clearance at Shelton. (Featherbed Lane was once called Eatherwood Lane).

Where the path enters the old village of Bicton, the walker will meet a very sorry sight: a small green lost in weeds, a wet rutted road, but a dry village pond, an overgrown graveyard and ruins of a chapel closed for safety. (Compare all this with Shawardine Millennium Green and Montford Green!)

Nevertheless, there is still plenty of interesting historical detail here: study the local bricks in a restored barn wall, while hunting for the Ordnance Survey benchmark. The lone pillar was one of a pair flanking the carriage drive to Woodlands Farm. Although the victorian vicarage is hidden by trees, these are also of interest.

These are but some of the features to observe along the way – do keep your eyes open. If you have lost those past editions of this Village News which explain them, offprints are available on request.

