

**WALK:** Coldrum Long Barrow, Kent

# NEOLITHIC NORTH DOWNS

Discover a Megalithic long barrow overlooking the meandering River Medway, says **Adrienne Wyper**

**O**n a natural terrace overlooking rolling Kent farmland sits Coldrum, the most complete of the early Neolithic 'Medway Megaliths' – a group of monuments and barrows in the river valley below the North Downs.

Dating back some 3,000 years, the site was thought to be a stone circle until the mid-20th century, when scholars finally determined that it was actually a rectangular long barrow.

## 1 WOODLAND WANDER

To discover the site on foot, park at Trosley Country Park. Kick through fallen leaves as you head east on the North Downs Way through 68 hectares of wooded chalk downland. Keep an ear out for tawny owls and three species of woodpecker as you wander beneath the chestnut, oak, ash and beech canopy, admiring the Weald's fields and forests below.

After 400m, turn right down the escarpment, then left on to Pilgrims' Way road.

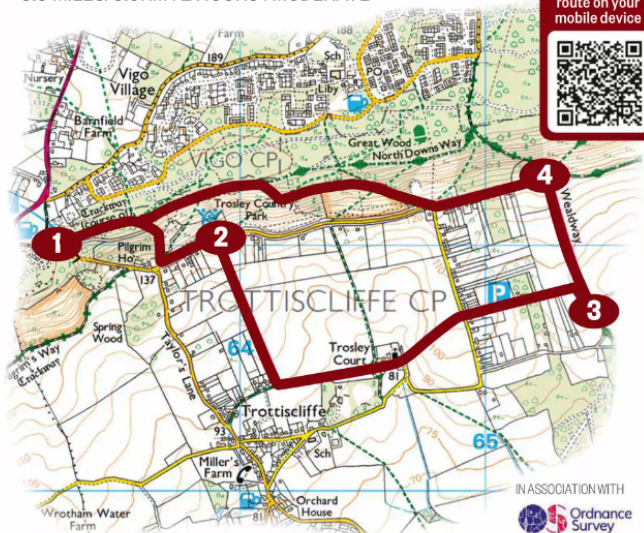
## 2 HISTORIC CHURCH

Look out for a footpath on the right, take it and walk for half a mile, turning left just before Trottiscliffe. Pass square-towered St Lawrence Church, with a pulpit from Westminster Abbey. It's a Saxon site, and passing pilgrims are welcome to picnic. Cross the lane and pass the barrow's car park. The alpacas and rare-breed sheep here belong to a community farm.



## THE ROUTE

3.5 MILES/5.6KM | 2 HOURS | MODERATE



## 3 LONG BARROW

At the T-junction with the Wealdway, turn right. After centuries of its stones being carted away for building, chalk-digging and medieval dismantling of 'un-Christian' sites, Coldrum

wasn't recognised as a long barrow, or communal tomb, until the mid-20th century. Originally rectangular, edged with massive stone slabs, it contained the bones of 22 related men, women and children, initially buried

elsewhere and moved here years later, from 3,985BC.

Now, this secluded spot evokes stillness, with fluttering ribbons and clothes tied amid the coppery beech leaves of a 'wish tree', to seek healing. As the fabric disintegrates, the ailment is believed to fade.

## 4 PARK PROMENADE

Head back up the Wealdway, turning left on Pilgrims' Way. Soon, leave the road through a gate on the right to ascend diagonally, via steps, back into the Country Park.

Clean your boots outside the Bluebell Café, an award-winning 'green' building with a living roof, where you'll be ready for cake and a cuppa (homemade dog biscuits, too).



**Adrienne Wyper**

lives in Kent and loves walking, cycling and kayaking.

