

Ross on Wye Walkers are Welcome

Fownhope and Capler Camp

A superb 6 ml circular walk, taking in two nature reserves, an iron age hill fort and the banks of the River Wye.

Park at the Fownhope pavilion at the recreation ground.
Grid Ref. SO 579 341. Alternatively, if you like to enjoy excellent pub fare you could park at either the New Inn or The Green Man. Both are in the centre of the village and on the route of this walk.
Distance: 6 mls **Grade:** Moderate, with some short but steep ascents, 13 stiles.



1. From the pavilion walk towards the village along the right hand edge of the recreation ground and then turn left in the recreation ground with the village on your left. Leave the recreation ground over a little wooden bridge and continue ahead until you go over a stone stile at the entrance to a narrow alleyway on the right in an old brick wall.

2. The alleyway leads straight onto the village road where you should cross the road with extreme caution. Go left on the pavement and turn right into Biggs Lane at the red mailbox. On reaching a road, turn right and keep to the right to leave the road on a footway past Faulkner House. Continue ahead through a development of small bungalows until you reach a T-junction where you turn left and immediately fork right up a grassy footpath at a finger post. At a field gate leave the footpath over the stile into a field. Go across the middle of the field, enter the woods at a rather poor wooden stile and go uphill through the woods.

3. At the crossroads in the tracks, turn right slightly uphill onto the Wye Valley Walk. Where the track levels out, fork left onto a narrow footpath marked Wye Valley Walk and continue uphill. Pass a stone and brick house on your right with views on the left into the valley and further north. Pass the cottage Morning Star on the left and continue slightly downhill on the track to a point where many tracks meet near Pump House on the right. Carefully select the narrow track going half right uphill into the trees with a Wye Valley Walk sign on the post a few metres up the track on the right. At the post, turn right through a gate to enter the Common Hill Nature Reserve.

4. Turn right uphill in the nature reserve. Take a rest at the wooden bench and enjoy the view, before leaving this section of the nature reserve through a wooden gate.

Common Hill Nature Reserve.

Common Hill was common land until the early 19th century, by which time most of it had been enclosed into small holdings and now is a mosaic of old orchards and ancient grasslands. Limestone grasslands and old orchards have declined across the country in the last 100 years mainly due to intensive modern farming practises. The reserve lies on the north slope of a limestone ridge where the thin, free draining and nutrient-poor soil produces a spectacular herb rich grassland. Some of the plants found here will only grow on land which has never been ploughed or improved with fertilisers and herbicides. Look for cowslips, marjoram, dyer's greenweed and twayblade. For geologists, the walk through Common Hill follows a sharp ridge which is part of the Woolhope Dome.



Common Hill Ridge Walk

5. Go straight across the footpath and enter the second part of the nature reserve through another wooden gate. Continue uphill, diagonally across the field and leave the field at some wooden steps to go left on a path with a marker post. Go past a wooden bench and through a wooden kissing gate and continue left uphill on the path. Pass through a gap in a wooden fence (nice views to the left towards Haugh Woods). Pass through a wooden gate and go left down the hill to reach a road at Common Hill Farm.

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Lea & Paget's Wood Nature Reserve

This ancient woodland has a complex structure, with sessile oak as the dominant canopy tree in some places and ash in others. Carpets of bluebells with wood anemone, primrose and yellow archangel make a spectacular sight in spring. Birdlife is abundant with all three species of woodpecker appearing here. The wood is also an excellent place for mammals, including dormouse, woodmouse, yellow-necked mouse and bank vole.

Keep to the right going down a field with views to Sugarloaf, Black Mountains and Hay Bluff. Continue downhill through a wooden field gate with a shepherd's hut on your left. Keep right and leave the field through a walker's gate. Go right, down the hill and through another walker's gate with views to Marcle Ridge on your left. Keeping to the right continue down the hill in the next field and over a stream at a broken field gate, where it can be quite muddy. The path then continues uphill through the middle of the next field with farm buildings over to the right. Go through a steel kissing gate and straight ahead through the middle of the field. Leave the field at a steel kissing gate and go left on the track a little way to the Fownhope Road.



Padgets Wood

6. Go very carefully left down the road for about 50 m and cross into the road with a footpath signpost and signs "Caplor". Turn left off the road towards a barn and around the back of the portacabin signed Caplor Horizons and go slightly uphill through the trees. Emerge from the trees and follow the fence on the right and go through another wooden gate into the next field. Keep to the right of the field and enter Capler Woods through a wooden gate. The steeply ascending path leads to some very steep steps and a stile into the Capler Camp site.

Capler Camp

This Iron Age Hill Fort dominates the surrounding countryside with expansive views South and West. It is oval in shape and has a double set of defensive ramparts on its southern side, but only a single rampart on its steeper northern side. The camp was occupied from around 500 BC until sometime in the mid to late Romano-British period (2nd or 3rd century AD).

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7. After the steps, keep right and then go ahead with the old barn immediately on your left. Go right and continue with the steep sided ramparts to your right and the second lower ramparts on your left. Fabulous views to the left including Mayhill and Chase Hill just behind Ross on Wye. As you continue through the ramparts you can diverge slightly up the bank to the right to view the huge open space at the centre of the camp. Continue on the path through the ramparts. Go through a wooden gate onto a downhill track in the woods. Leave the track and go half left down into the woods at the rather poor finger post, leaving the camp behind you. Reach a track and go left and then meet another track where you go straight ahead down the hill to a road.



Capler Camp Ramparts

8. On reaching the road you go right, but firstly it is worth going 30 m to your left to the viewpoint overlooking the River Wye with an interesting timber carving and guide map. Go back up to the top of the hill to continue the walk, staying on the tree-lined road downhill for 600 m. At the bottom of the hill cut back to the left at a finger post going down a track. After 30 m, fork right onto a path at the marker post and go steeply downhill into the trees to suddenly find yourself on the banks of the beautiful River Wye. Turn right over the stile into a field. Follow the riverbank 1.2 km (0.75 ml) going over a steel bridge, a wooden stile and through two field gates to reach the pretty cottage at Mancell's Ferry. Use the two stiles to pass through the garden. Please do not linger in this private garden.



River Wye from Viewpoint



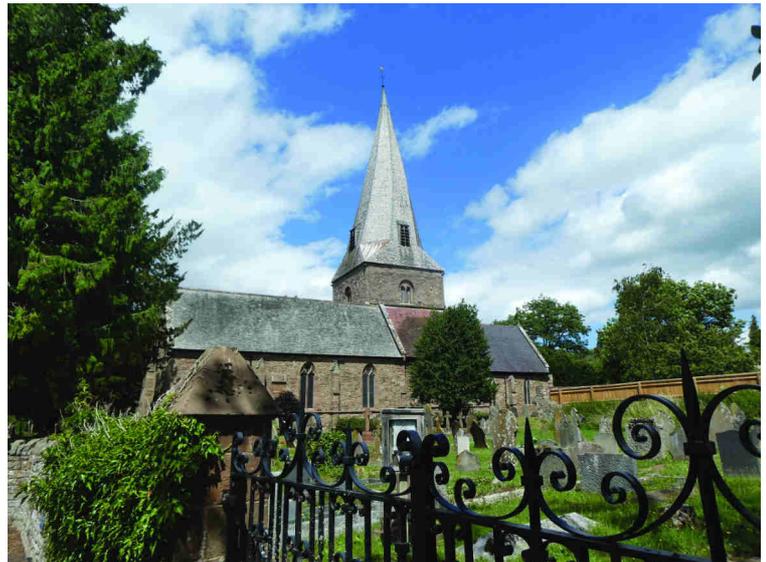
9. Leaving the riverbank go right in the field slightly uphill and follow the right-hand edge of the field. Leave the field through two steel walker's gates high up in the hedge. Continue ahead and after about 25 m cross a track and go slightly uphill and then follow the hedgerow on your right again. At the end of the field go up to the right, through a steel field gate, or over the dilapidated stile if you can. Go up the field following the right hand hedgerow until you come to a marker post by the hedgerow indicating turn left. Walk across the field up to the old barn. Pass to the left side of the barn and go ahead to pass through a steel field gate under an oak tree. Go through a series of two field gates with stiles into a field. Go half right across the field and leave through a wooden kissing gate in the hedgerow. Go diagonally across the next field with the Fownhope church spire appearing in front of you. Continue down the field to cross a stile in the bottom corner next to a field gate. Walk along the left side of the field, through a steel kissing gate and turn right on the road to return to the recreation ground at Fownhope.



View from Mancell's Ferry

Mancell's Ferry

In 1800 this was one of the 25 hand ferries operating between Ross and Chepstow. Inside the cottage is/was a copy of a deed of Jan. 1837 for John Mancell's boat, cottage, and land.



St Mary's Church, Fownhope

The Norman tower dates from the early half of the 12th century. The fascinating broach spire is clad with shingled oak and is noticeably twisted due to the uneven heating of the sun over the years. On the roadside outside the church are the stocks, together with a whipping post, which makes them unique within the county.



John Mansells Cottage

