The background is an impressionistic painting of a river scene. It features a river in the foreground with reflections, and a line of trees with dense foliage in shades of green, yellow, and brown along the banks. The sky is a mix of light blue and white, suggesting a bright, slightly hazy day. The overall style is reminiscent of J.M.W. Turner's work.

River **WALKS**

20 walks in
Wales, the West
and The Marches

Volume 1

Andrew Francis

River **WALKS**

20 walks in Wales, the West and The Marches. Volume 1

by Andrew Francis

Copyright © 2011 by Andrew Francis

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010

All rights reserved.

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form or by any electronic or mechanical means including information storage and retrieval systems, without permission in writing from the author. The only exception is by a reviewer, who may quote short excerpts in a review.

Book design, artwork and photography by Andrew Francis

Andrew Francis

Visit my website at www.francis-emporium.co.uk/

Published in the United Kingdom by

Our Very Own Publishers

7 King Edwards Avenue, Gloucester, UK

First published in electronic formats in January 2011



Introduction

Exercise, good company, bird-watching, photography; whatever your reason for getting out and about in Britain's glorious countryside, you need a place to begin.

Me, I just love the few counties either side of the Wales/England border and have determined to explore them to the utmost.

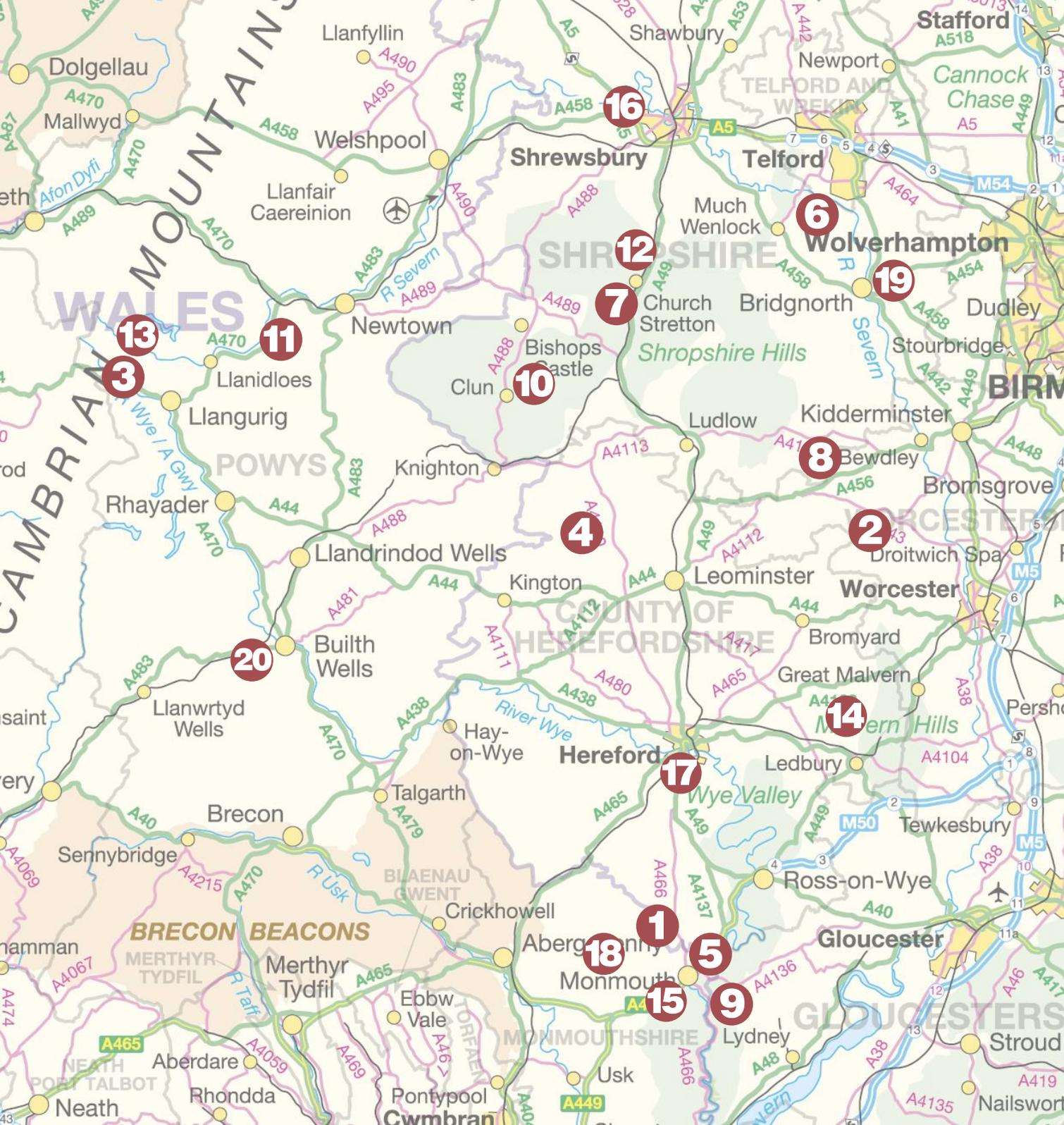
And what better way to get around than along the banks of the many water courses that make their way into the Severn basin?

It's not that easy to navigate British rivers for every mile of their course. Few public rights of way stick exactly to the riverside. In truth, on some of these walks you may only glimpse the water on a few occasions. But I hope they will give you a sense of the many environs throughout the Marches. Be it the mighty Severn, the intimate Rea or the beautiful Teme, I hope you come to love this country as much as I do. Enjoy!

These guides will give you a general idea of some brilliant walks. They don't give enough detailed directions to follow without the use of Ordnance Survey maps.

You will need to be equipped with decent boots and all-weather gear. Always carry a mobile phone - and don't forget to check the weather before you set off.

Contents



- 1 River Monnow - Tregate Bridge to Skenfrith Castle - p5
- 2 River Teme - Stanford Bridge to Ham Bridge - p9
- 3 River Wye - Pont Rhydgaled to source - p13
- 4 River Lugg - Upper Lye to Upper Kinsham - p17
- 5 River Wye - Monmouth to The Biblins - p21
- 6 River Severn - Ironbridge to Apley Forge - p25
- 7 Ashes Hollow Brook - Little Stretton to Pole Cottage - p29
- 8 River Rea - Cleobury Mortimer to Shakenhurst - p33
- 9 River Wye - Redbrook to Bigsweir - p37
- 10 River Clun - Clun to Clunton - p41
- 11 River Severn - Llandinam to Festival Bridge - p45
- 12 Cardingmill Brook - Cardingmill to Longbatch - p49
- 13 River Severn - Rhyd-y-benwch to source - p53
- 14 River Leaddon - Bosbury to Collier's Bridge - p57
- 15 River Wye - Monmouth to Redbrook - p61
- 16 River Severn - Bicton to Shrewsbury - p65
- 17 River Wye - Hereford to Breinton Common - p69
- 18 River Trothy - Llantilio Crossenny to White Castle - p73
- 19 River Severn - Bridgnorth to Apley Forge - p77
- 20 River Wye - Builth Wells - p81

About the Author



Andrew Francis is a self-employed artist and writer. He lives in Gloucester with his wife and teenage son.

Andrew works in a variety of creative and design

disciplines. His activities include: writing; cabinet design and making; graphic design; web design; 3D design; painting; playing and composing music; cartooning; letter carving; stained glass design; blogging and walking guides. Some of his work can be seen at <http://www.francis-emporium.co.uk/>

Acknowledgement

Contains Ordnance Survey data © Crown copyright and database right 2010

Disclaimer

Every effort has been made to make this book as complete and as accurate as possible. This text should be used only as a general guide and not as the ultimate source of writing and publishing information. The author and publisher have neither liability nor responsibility to any person or entity with respect to any loss or damage caused, or alleged to have been caused, directly or indirectly, by the information contained in this book. If you do not wish to be bound by the above, you may return this book to the publisher for a full refund.

Key



Type

There and back: You take the same route back to your start point
Circular: You take a different route back to your start point
One way: You arrange transport to get you to your start point



Location

Which counties



Maps

Which Ordnance Survey Explorer maps to take



How to get there

Road directions



Start

Latitude and longitude



Length

In hours



Duration

In kilometres - assumes an average speed of about 5kph



Severity

***** Expect rough ground and severe climbs
**** Some rough ground and climbs
*** Occasional rough ground or moderate climbs
** Shouldn't be a problem if you are reasonably fit
* Easy-peasy



Paths

***** Well marked and maintained throughout
**** Well maintained for the most part
*** Mostly easy to follow
** Some confused paths or overgrown country
* Wilderness



Stiles

***** Excellent
**** Very good
*** Mostly well maintained
** Some disrepair
* Useless throughout

1

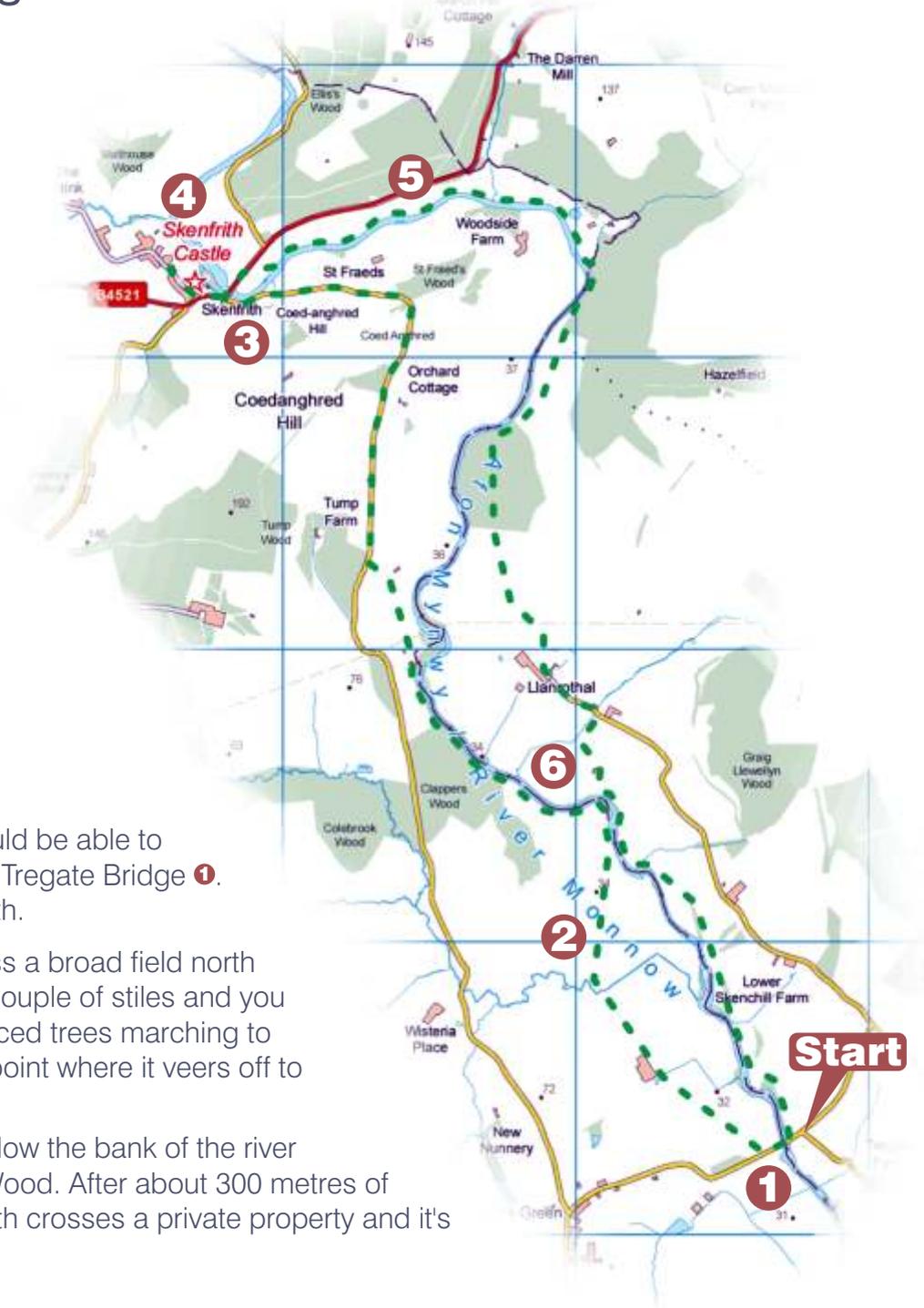
River MONNOW

Tregate Bridge to
Skenfrith Castle

Quiet farmland and woods with
a pub and a castle halfway

1 River Monnow - Tregate Bridge to Skenfrith Castle

	Type	Circular
	Location	Monmouthshire/ Herefordshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 14/ OS Explorer 189
	How to get there	B4233 and B4347 from Monmouth
	Start	51°51'7.05"N 2°45'37.83"W
	Length	10km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	****
	Stiles	****



This is a walk that straddles two countries. You should be able to park on a bit of verge on the English side (east) of Tregate Bridge 1. There's a good view of a weir if you are facing south.

On the Welsh side you will find a well marked path across a broad field north towards Blackmoor Farm. Pass the farm house, over a couple of stiles and you are into a poplar plantation 2 with spooky, regularly-spaced trees marching to the horizon. The path is well marked but don't miss the point where it veers off to the right towards the river.

Back at the river, you enter open farm country again. Follow the bank of the river around to the north and west until you reach Clappers Wood. After about 300 metres of uppy-downy paths you emerge into fields again. The path crosses a private property and it's



easy to miss the way. Yes, you do go down the steps and you do pass the chicken coops until you are back in fields again.

Carry on north towards a low converted barn but make sure you start climbing the bank on your left where you join the lane to Skenfrith. It's plain sailing all the way to the village with beautiful views of the gently curving Monnow valley ahead of you and Monmouth in the distance behind you. At Skenfrith **3** there's a decent sized pub or a little café

opposite the castle.

The castle **4** is one of the famous "Three Castles" (with Grosmont and White Castle) of the southern Marches. It dates from at least the 12th Century and is, allegedly, well preserved (although a bit of a roof wouldn't go amiss). If you want somewhere to picnic, make your way down to the river for a peaceful spot on the boulders beneath the castle walls.

Heading back, cross the Skenfrith Bridge and take a stile on the right

after some 50 metres into broad, meandering fields. As the valley curves **5**, you come to a bigish private property with tidy gardens. Stick to the river side, crossing the tiny footbridges. Ignore the loud dog that clearly hasn't been briefed about the public right of way. Towards the end of the lawns you need to veer to your left until you find another footbridge into the woods. You are now back in England. It's a short step though the woods to open fields again.

The path is well marked through

arable fields and pasture until you reach a new housing development in massive barns at Llanrothal Court. Pass down the gravel drive until you reach the lane. 200 metres later, after crossing a small stream, you will see a footpath to your right. Diagonally across the field you should see an old white chapel 6 – that's where you are heading.

The chapel is fairly repulsive on the outside but if you peer through the windows it appears quite a homely place. Now it's just a question of following the river back to Tregate Bridge. Watch out for a couple of points where the path climbs up the bank to your left rather than sticking to the river.

If you take the trouble to look under the bridge you will find a perfectly circular arch which I suppose provides some relief during floods (like the one in 1219 which wrecked the castle!).



Under the bridge at Tregate

2

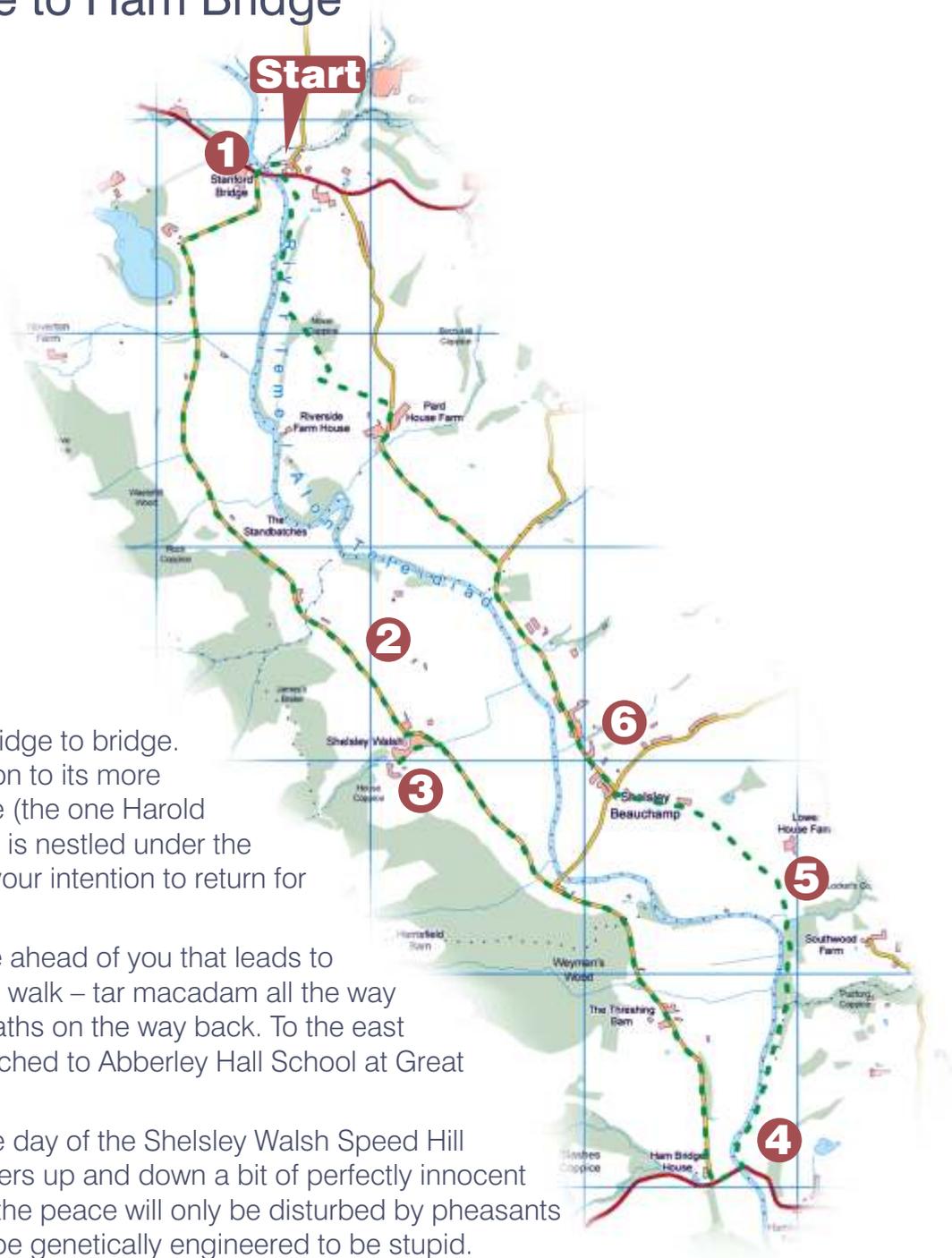
River **TEME**

Stanford Bridge to
Ham Bridge

Half lanes, half fields in the
beautiful Teme valley

2 River Teme - Stanford Bridge to Ham Bridge

	Type	Circular
	Location	Worcestershire
	Maps	OS Explorer 204
	How to get there	A443 and B4203 from Worcester
	Start	52°17'23.01"N 2°25'3.95"W
	Length	12.8km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	***
	Stiles	*****



Into the beautiful Teme valley for a rivery walk from bridge to bridge. Start at the tiny hamlet of Stanford Bridge – no relation to its more famous soundy-likey, the 1066 battlefield in Yorkshire (the one Harold won). There's a car park next to the Bridge Inn which is nestled under the new bridge. I'm sure they won't mind you using it if it's your intention to return for victuals.

Cross the old bridge **1** and the B4203. You'll see a lane ahead of you that leads to Shelsley Walsh. This is the largely uneventful half of the walk – tar macadam all the way to Ham Bridge but you will be rewarded with country paths on the way back. To the east you can just make out the top of the clock tower **2** attached to Abberley Hall School at Great Witley.

If you are desperately unlucky, you will have chosen the day of the Shelsley Walsh Speed Hill Climb. This involves petrol heads revving their old bangers up and down a bit of perfectly innocent countryside. You won't escape the noise all day. If not, the peace will only be disturbed by pheasants jumping out of hedges and screeching. They seem to be genetically engineered to be stupid.



For the price of a small diversion you can visit the 12th Century St Andrew's Church **3** at Shelsley Walsh. Built in the local travertine stone, most of the restoration dates from the 1850s.

Carry straight on at the turning to Shelsley Beauchamp (a place with too many consonants in its first name and too many vowels in its second). After 500m you can see an ancient motte in the fields to your left, although to my untutored eye it looks nothing more than a mound.

As you near the junction with the

B4204 there's a footpath with a fingerpost to the left which appears to cut off the corner. Ignore it, you'll get bogged down in a muddy field.

Just on the other side of the Ham Bridge there's a footpath **4** that takes you up the east bank. Stick to the river bank until you reach the first set of stiles. The following fields get seriously damp on occasions and you may want to hoik your trousers up. The last field narrows to a point and a broad path takes you slightly up the bank and through some woodland.

When you next emerge into fields **5**, stick to the hedge to your right. The church at Shelsley Beauchamp is in front of you. The path turns into a stony lane past a neat little orchard – millions of apples destined for Bulmers!

When you reach the church **6**, you need to cross more or less straight over and follow the sign back to Stanford. There's a nice bench in the churchyard if you haven't eaten yet.

Easy going now until you reach Pard House Farm, some 2½km further on.

There's a white house on your left just beyond the farmyard (and the chickens). The onward path starts from a stile at the end of the house's drive. Cross the field diagonally. Turn right over the next stile, back up the drive for 50m and then left into a grassy lane. Stay on the right edge of the next field until you enter trees again. Two more stiles and you are back by the river. It's just a short stroll through a caravan park and you're at your starting point.

A stone milestone with a white sign. The sign is rectangular with a black border and is mounted on a large, rounded stone post. The text on the sign is in black, uppercase letters. The stone post is weathered and has some moss or lichen on it. The background is a dense thicket of green ivy.

TO
WORCESTER
CROSS
12
MILES

Milestone on the road to
Shelsley Walsh

3

River **WYE**

Pont Rhydgaled to source

A tough slog up rough country but the only way to follow the Wye to its source

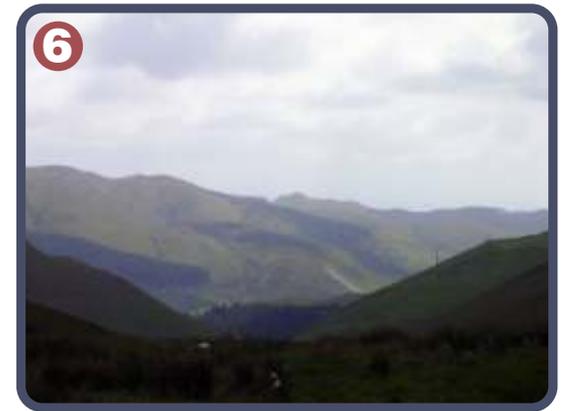
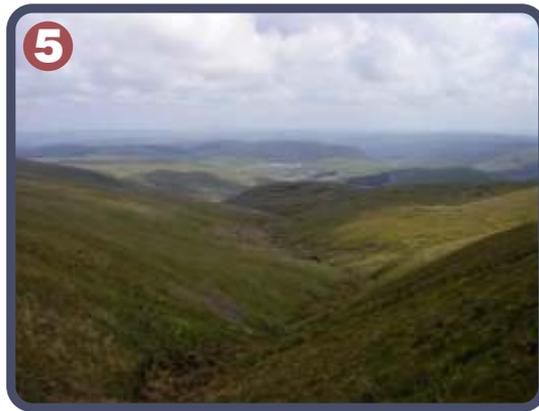
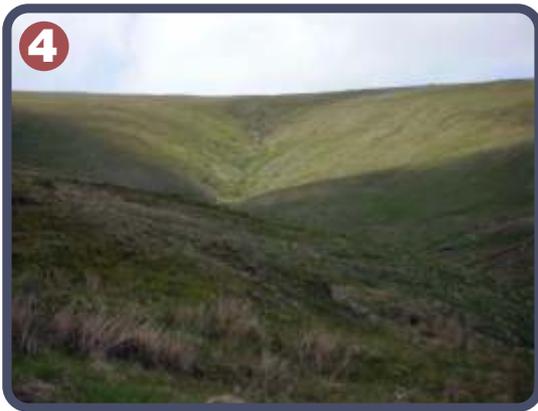
3 River Wye - Pont Rhydgaled to source



	Type	Circular
	Location	Powys
	Maps	OS Explorer 214
	How to get there	A44 from Llangurig
	Start	52°25'47.44"N 3°42'23.40"W
	Length	15.2km
	Duration	5hrs
	Severity	****
	Paths	*
	Stiles	n/a

This walk shouldn't be undertaken if you like organized paths and firm, level ground. Unfortunately, the official Wye Valley Walk doesn't actually go to the source (it veers off to join the Severn Way) so it's worth a bit of a scramble if you want to do the last leg properly. It's Open Access land so take the usual care not to disturb critters. You can park at Pont Rhydgaled.

Cross the A44 and take the track north past a small and slightly incongruous industrial unit. It's well marked as the Wye Valley Walk 1. There are also signs telling you to look out for rally cars – a portent of things to come if you are unlucky. Carry on



north and west through the beautiful if largely treeless valley **2**. You begin to get an idea of the climb ahead as Plynlimon swings into sight.

After 2½km the dirt track turns north, now with the river on your left. On a bad day you should be able to see dust rising and hear cars screeching ahead. The reason for all this activity is a rally driving school slap bang in the middle of the valley. There's lovely. As you approach the old lead mines, keep the rally buildings on your left and follow the signs north.

Another 300m and you see a path directly west, sloping slightly into the valley. When you reach the flumes (concrete water channels) you are leaving civilisation **3**. The path ahead peters out in no time and you have no choice but to trudge ahead through bogs and over scrubby ground. Keep higher up the right bank if you want to find a firmer footing.

By the time you get to the confluence with the Nant Gerrig stream you will probably be fed up with this. I decided to take to the ridge at this point,

crossing to the left bank of the Wye and heading up to where it says "shafts" on the map. It's a bit of a slog.

Where the ridge flattens slightly you come across a strange lunar landscape of banks and craters (hags and groughs) caused by water erosion. The black bits can be very boggy. From here you can see your destination – the source is in the furthestmost of the three gullies at the head of the valley **4**.

Make your way down to the faint sheep path that runs around the contour line at the base of the gullies and start scrambling up the last stretch.

Someone has kindly marked the first free-running water with a piece of wood with "SOURCE OF THE WYE"

scratched on it. A good time for a bit of a sit down and a pasty 5.

You can, of course, return the way you came. If you can't face all that ankle-turning terrain again, head south. You will, however, have a long stretch of busy A road to negotiate.

Follow the line of the fence until you

overlook the dirt track to your left. The views to the east from here are fantastic 6.

Make your way down to the path and follow it down the Nant y Maen valley to Eisteddfa Fach. Left here on the main road and 4.8km will bring you back to your starting point.

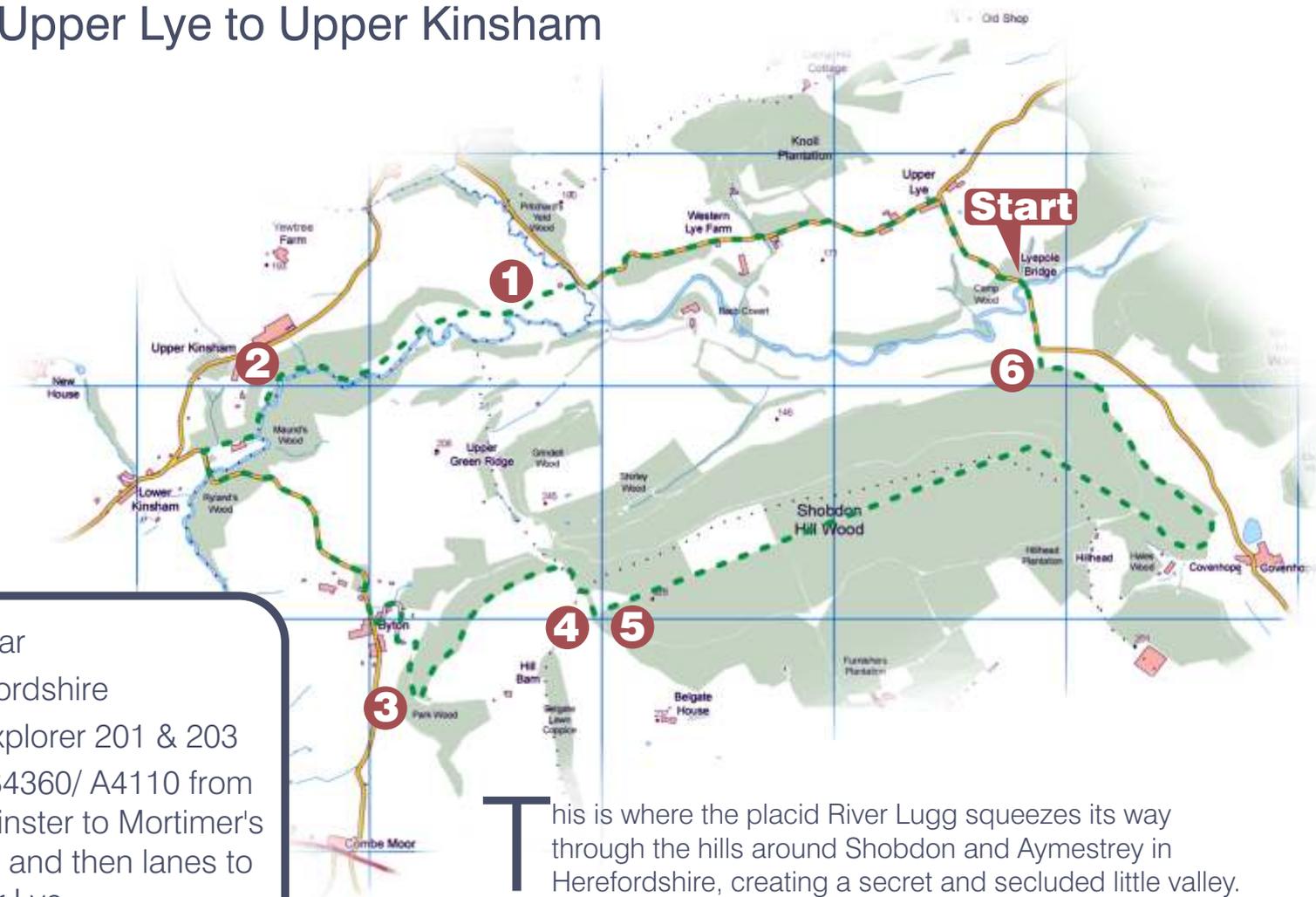
4

River **LUGG**

Upper Lye to Upper Kinsham

Valley and hill on
the Mortimer Trail

4 River Lugg - Upper Lye to Upper Kinsham

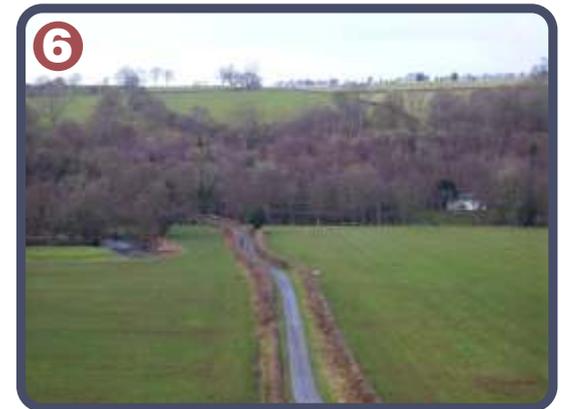
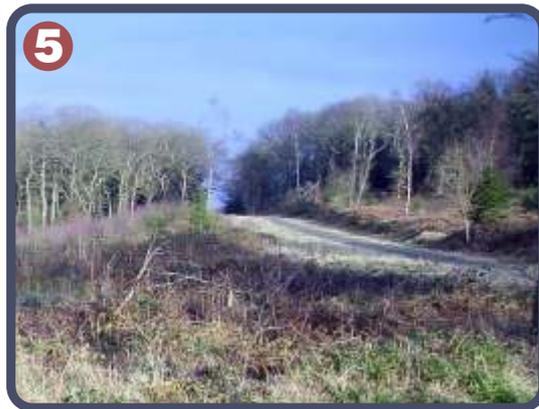
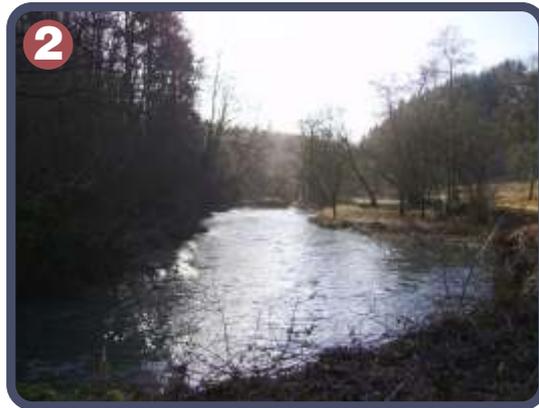
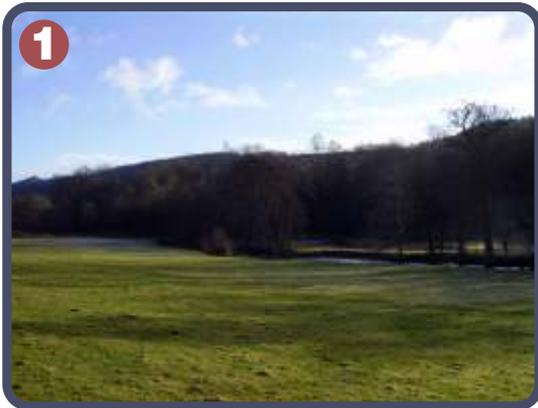


	Type	Circular
	Location	Herefordshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 201 & 203
	How to get there	A44/B4360/ A4110 from Leominster to Mortimer's Cross and then lanes to Upper Lye
	Start	52°17'2.25"N 2°53'2.16"W
	Length	11.6km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	***
	Stiles	***

This is where the placid River Lugg squeezes its way through the hills around Shobdon and Aymestrey in Herefordshire, creating a secret and secluded little valley. There's a wide space on the road at Lyepole Bridge where you should be able to park. The first leg is necessarily through lanes as there is no right of way along the river bank. Head up the hill (north) to the small village of Upper Lye.

Turn left here and follow the lane through quiet farmland until you reach the corner at Lower Yeld. The path carries straight on, down a short lane and presently into fields.

The river snakes around across the meadow on your left ①. After about 1km the valley narrows down to a shallow gorge and you enter Yeld Wood ②.



Upper Kinsham is up on the bank to your right. Where the river bends away, the path becomes a lane and, passing a house on your left, you emerge at the corner of the road to Lower Kinsham.

Go left towards the bridge. In 150m the road takes a right-angle left and climb through high-sided banks towards Byton. As you come out into open farm country, you begin to get a sense of the vale towards Presteigne, nestled in its circle of hills.

The road dips down through a stony,

tree fringed gully and you are in Byton. This is where the Mortimer Trail (from Kington to Ludlow) starts climbing Shobdon Hill. Take one of the lanes on the left up to the church and follow the road round until it runs out under Byton Common. The path climbs steeply across heath land **3** and then doubles left up the ridge, the views improving all the while **4**.

Where the bracken gives way for trees you turn right and follow the stony track up to the crest. From here you can see the Black Mountains 30km to

the south.

Head east along the ridge path **5** that cuts a break through the trees for 2km. The track bends right and starts to dip down the southern side of the hill.

Above Covenhope Farm, the forest road turns north again and you stick to the tree line, still on the Mortimer Trail, until you are facing Lyepole Bridge again **6**. A short scramble down the slope brings you back onto the road and then it's just a quick 300m to the finishing point.



Shobdon Hill; looking west

5

River **WYE**

Monmouth to The Biblins

Under the Seven Sisters
and over a rickety bridge

5 River Wye - Monmouth to The Biblins

This walk hardly needs directions for you to find the way – just follow the Wye Valley Walk up the west bank of the Wye, cross at Biblins and follow the old railway line back to Monmouth. Start in Monmouth. You can park opposite the leisure centre in Old Dixton Road.

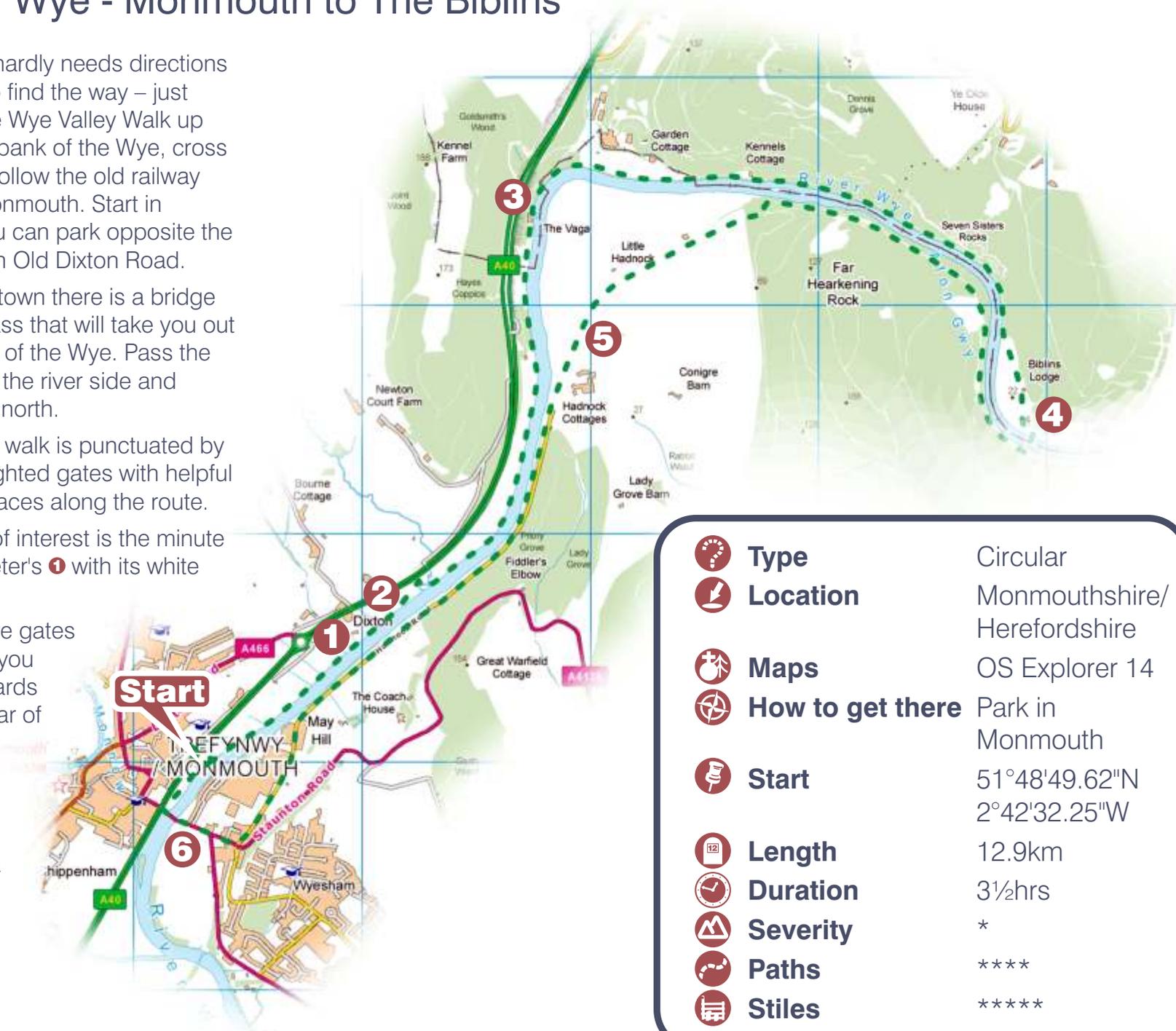
50m back into town there is a bridge under the bypass that will take you out onto the banks of the Wye. Pass the rowing club on the river side and follow the path north.

The start of the walk is punctuated by a series of weighted gates with helpful distances to places along the route.

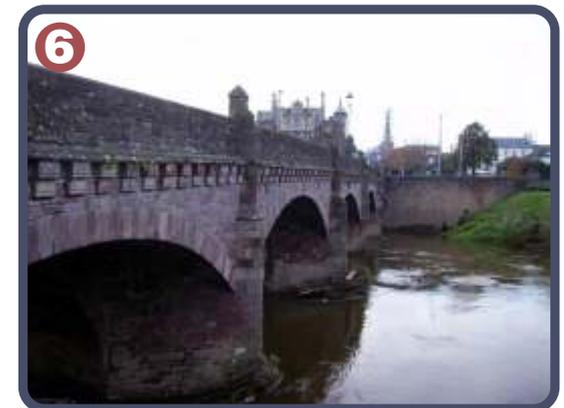
The first point of interest is the minute church of St Peter's 1 with its white stucco walls.

After a few more gates the path takes you diagonally towards the A40 (the roar of traffic will stay with you for a good few kilometres) 2.

As you round a small coppice you will see a footbridge behind you on the right.



	Type	Circular
	Location	Monmouthshire/ Herefordshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 14
	How to get there	Park in Monmouth
	Start	51°48'49.62"N 2°42'32.25"W
	Length	12.9km
	Duration	3½hrs
	Severity	*
	Paths	****
	Stiles	*****



This is the continuation of the Wye Valley Walk and, although it appears to be going backwards, it is the way on.

After a couple of kilometres the valley narrows and you enter woodland on a path squeezed between the A40 embankment and the river.

Technically, you will be crossing between England and Wales several times where the border wanders across the track. At the end of the broad path you will see a walled garden with a gate – stick to the river

side of the gate.

The path meanders along the bank in a fairly organised way until you reach the point where the river bends abruptly ③ to the east. Back on the straight, you emerge into a field with a big pink house and an enormous glass house up the slope. Stick to the river bank. Look over your left shoulder for a glimpse of a mock gothic pile on the bank (Wyastone Leys).

Back in the woods, the valley begins to deepen into a gorge and the

Severn Sister cliffs tower over you. You may occasionally be startled by loud splashing noises as if large animals have plunged into the river but it's actually caused by random eddies in the current.

Just west of the Biblins Youth Camp you enter a gently sloping pasture that curves round to the left. There are tables here if you fancy a break. At the turn of the river you will find the rope bridge ④. It may look spindly and precarious but it's good and solid.

Turn right at the end of the bridge and



follow the disused railway track (now a cycle path) to the west. There's plenty of evidence of the Forest of Dean's industrial past in the quarries and giant concrete structures decaying along the route.

Nearly 3km from the bridge, the cycle path doglegs to the left and you come out of the woods into a lane between fields.

The track curves round the wide shelf of land in the crook of the river until you pass Hadnock Halt 5 – evidently once a station. When you converge with Hadnock Road it's tarmac all the way into Monmouth.

At the junction of the A4136 turn right toward the old Wye Bridge 6. From here you should be able to see the rowing club and your destination.

South from Hadnock Halt

6

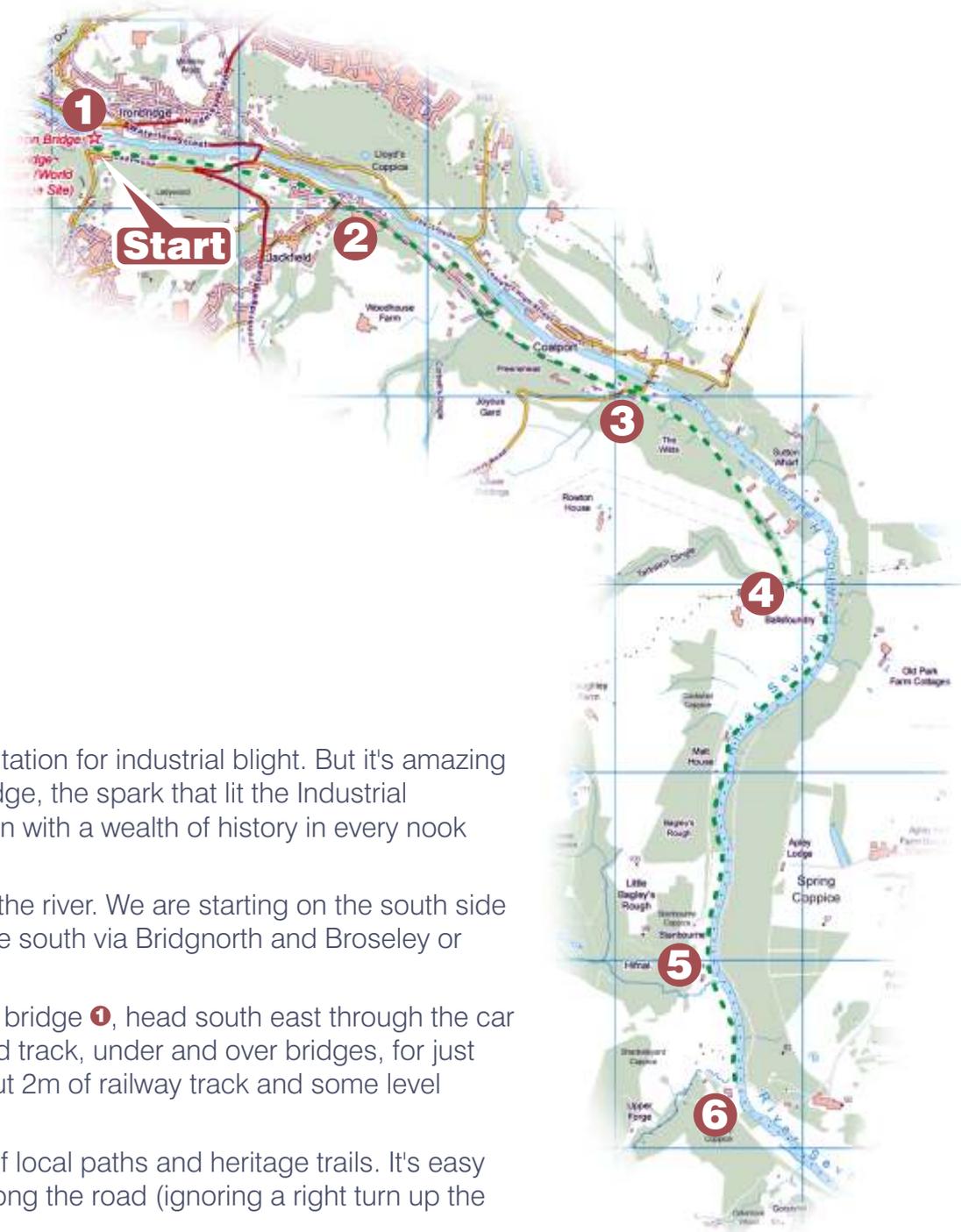
River **SEVERN**

Ironbridge to Apley Forge

From industrial heritage
to rural peace and quiet

6 River Severn - Ironbridge to Apley Forge

	Type	There and back
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 242 & 218
	How to get there	Ironbridge car park (south side of the river). Take the B4373 north from Bridgnorth
	Start	52°37'35.93"N 2°29'7.40"W
	Length	16km
	Duration	4hrs
	Severity	*
	Paths	***
	Stiles	***

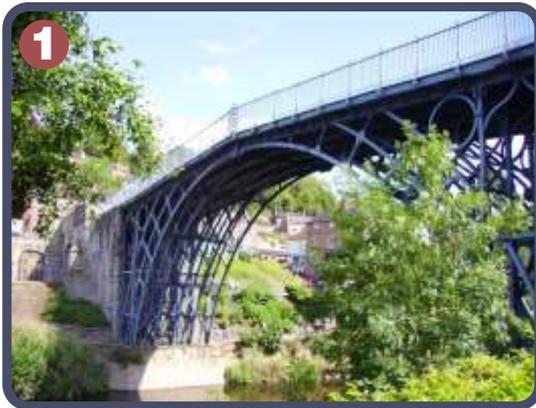


Parts of the West Midlands have a fearsome reputation for industrial blight. But it's amazing what a couple of hundred years can do. Ironbridge, the spark that lit the Industrial Revolution, is now a quietly beautiful gorge again with a wealth of history in every nook and cranny.

There are car parks on both north and south banks of the river. We are starting on the south side at Ironbridge Road car park. You can get there from the south via Bridgnorth and Broseley or cross the river from the north at Coalport.

Once you've had your fill of Abraham Darby's amazing bridge 1, head south east through the car park to where it morphs into a cycle path. It's a wooded track, under and over bridges, for just over 1km until you come out at Jackfield Sidings. About 2m of railway track and some level crossings have been preserved for your delectation.

This bit of the Severn Way is interwoven with all sorts of local paths and heritage trails. It's easy to miss the official route. From the sidings, head on along the road (ignoring a right turn up the



hill) until you come to the Jackfield Tile Museum. Carry on in the same general direction, past the old tile works 2 and down a bumpy road. For a worthwhile diversion, skip the cycle path ahead of you for now – take the road on its left for 100m until you reach the Maws Craft Centre. Turn left, down past the centre and onto the green at the bottom. The path in the downstream direction (right, to you) will fetch you up at the Boat Inn, via some cute workers' cottages. There's an ugly green girder foot bridge over the river to your left.

Beyond the pub, the road turns right up the hill. Just before the old railway bridge (100m), turn right and back on yourself until you find a gap in the hedge that takes you up onto the disused track – the cycle path you encountered earlier.

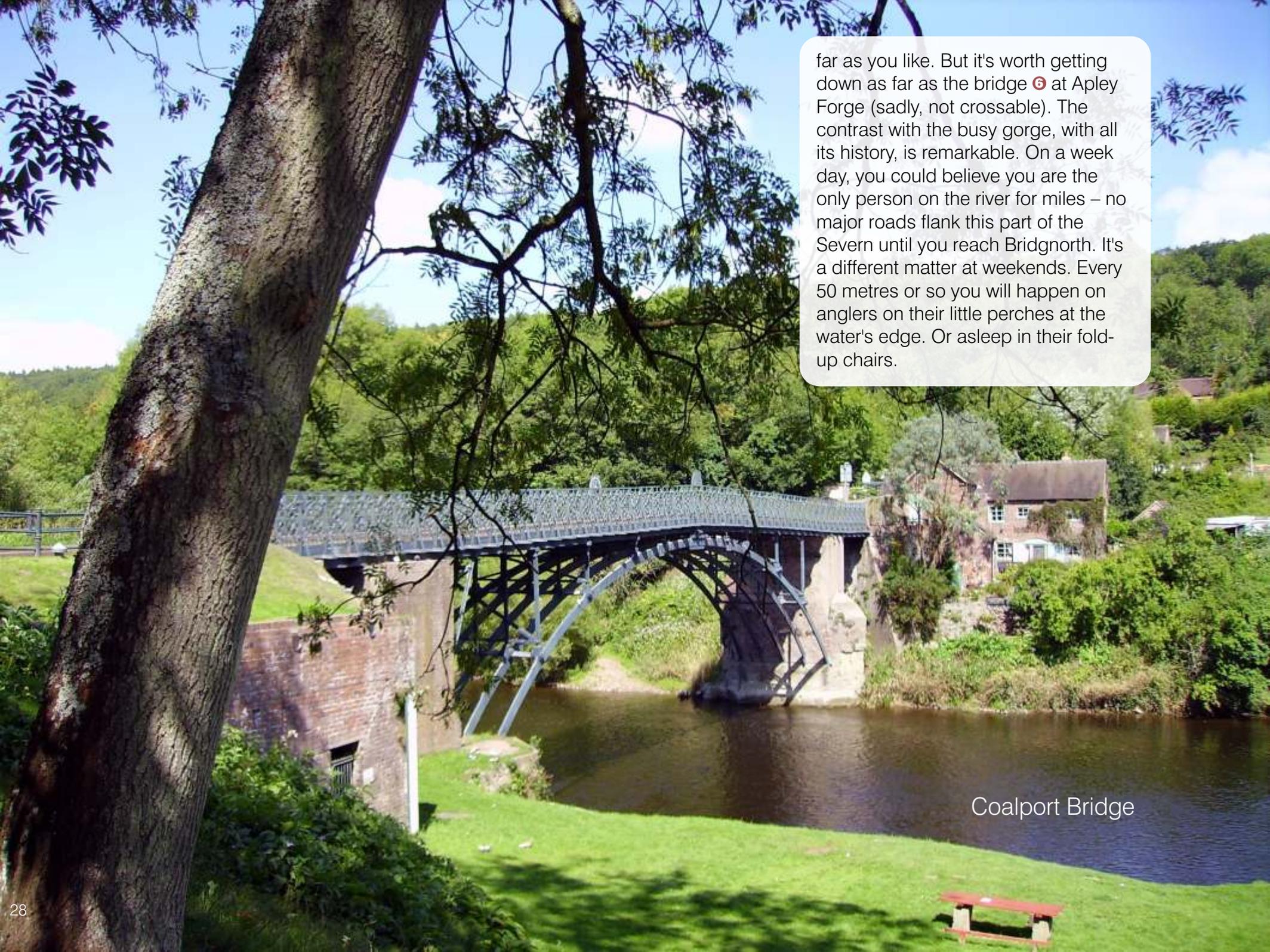
Now it's uninterrupted woody track for about 1km. The path detours to the left, down towards the river before you pop out at Coalport Bridge. The Woodbridge Inn is directly in front of you.

Turn back up the hill until you see a

lane on the left beside what is obviously an old station. Now a private house, its garden comes complete with a couple of British Railways carriages 3.

The concrete path leads on to the south east past various works it's best to ignore. Take a left where the path becomes a private road and follow it down some twisty turns until you come out into open fields. A cottage marked "Ballsfoundry" 4 on the map is ahead and beyond that the river.

Now you can head downstream 5 as

A scenic view of the Coalport Bridge, a cast-iron arch bridge spanning the River Severn. The bridge features a dark, textured metal deck and a complex lattice of arches supported by stone piers. The surrounding landscape is lush with green trees and grass. In the foreground, a large tree trunk is visible on the left, and a red wooden bench sits on the grass. In the background, a brick building is partially visible on the right bank. The sky is blue with some light clouds.

far as you like. But it's worth getting down as far as the bridge 6 at Apley Forge (sadly, not crossable). The contrast with the busy gorge, with all its history, is remarkable. On a week day, you could believe you are the only person on the river for miles – no major roads flank this part of the Severn until you reach Bridgnorth. It's a different matter at weekends. Every 50 metres or so you will happen on anglers on their little perches at the water's edge. Or asleep in their fold-up chairs.

Coalport Bridge

7

Ashes **HOLLOW**

Little Stretton to Pole Cottage

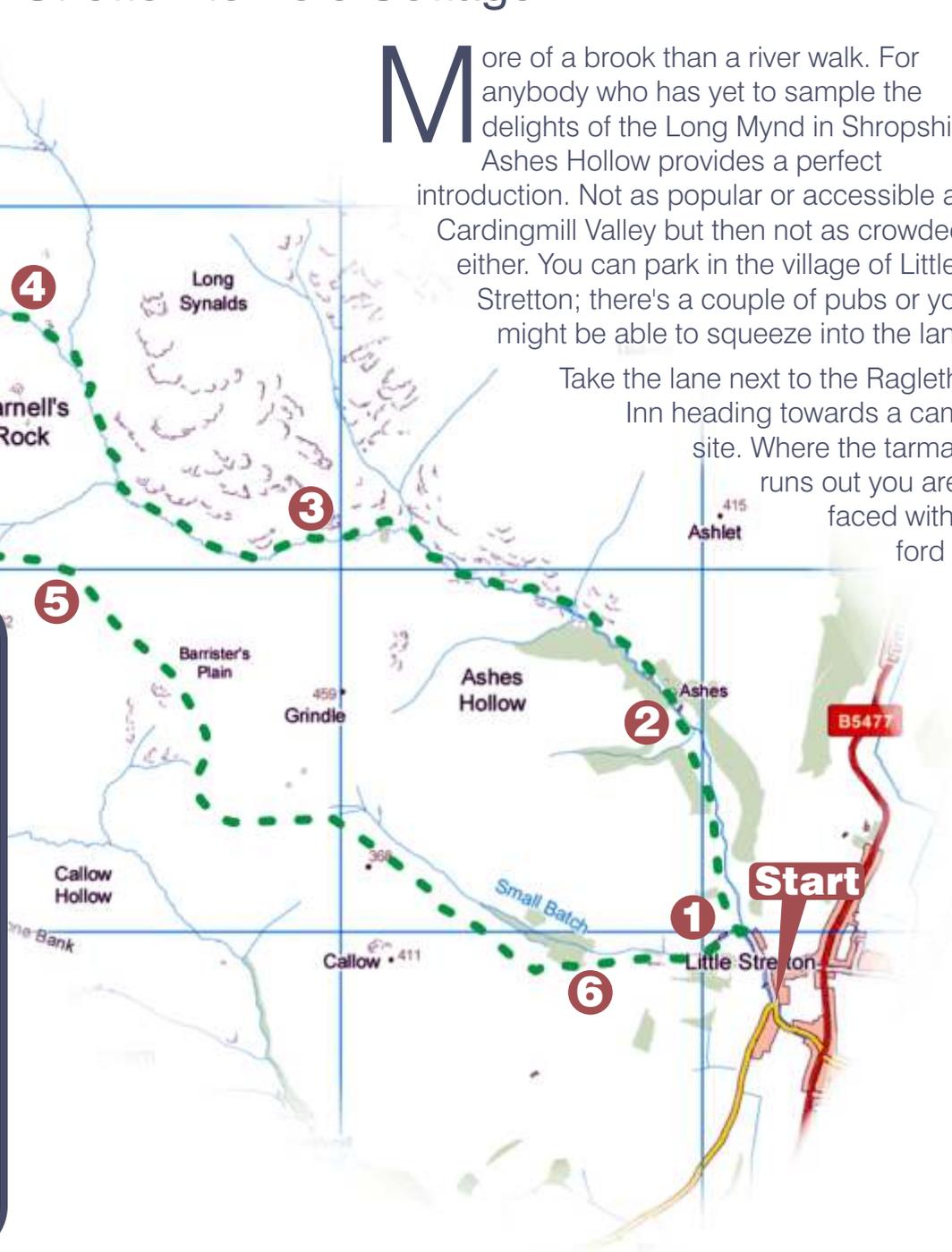
The Long Mynd at its best -
steep valley, beautiful
streams, great views

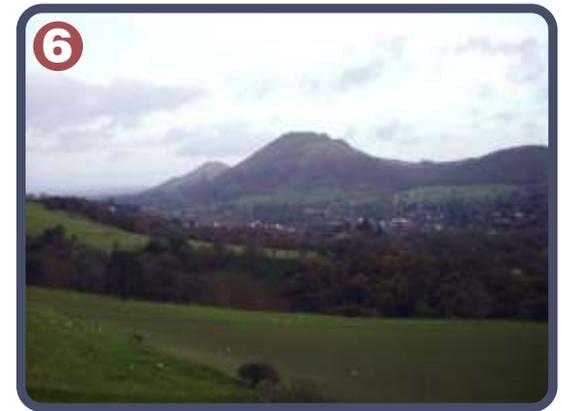
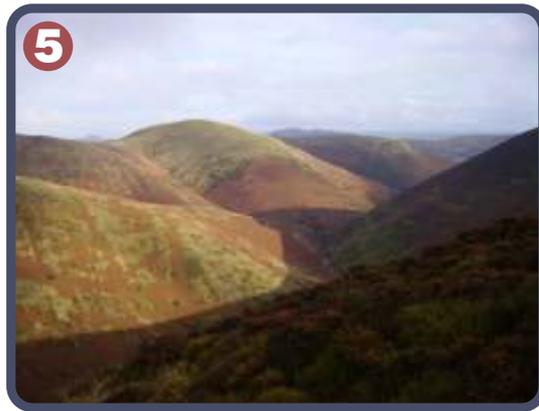
7 Ashes Hollow Brook - Little Stretton to Pole Cottage

More of a brook than a river walk. For anybody who has yet to sample the delights of the Long Mynd in Shropshire, Ashes Hollow provides a perfect introduction. Not as popular or accessible as Cardingmill Valley but then not as crowded either. You can park in the village of Little Stretton; there's a couple of pubs or you might be able to squeeze into the lanes.

Take the lane next to the Ragleth Inn heading towards a camp site. Where the tarmac runs out you are faced with a ford

	Type	Circular
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 217
	How to get there	Park in Little Stretton, 24km south of Shrewsbury on the A49
	Start	52°31'19.61"N 2°49'26.77"W
	Length	8.4km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	***
	Paths	**
	Stiles	***





and a little footbridge **1** which takes you into the fields and the start of the valley proper.

Head north with the stream on your right. Where the fields turn into a narrow valley path you come across a recently refurbished house **2** that used to sell ice cream when I was a boy (or did I dream that?).

A footbridge takes you onto the right bank of the stream. 700m from the house you cross to the left bank on a new stone bridge.

The valley here is squeezed between

the Grindle and Yearlet hills and gets quite narrow. It's tricky in wet weather but recent conservation efforts have made the path fairly pedestrian. You have to hop across the stream at one point but it's little more than a step these days.

When you see a rocky outcrop ahead, you have reached the first major fork. You need the left valley but the easiest route starts 20m up the right hand valley and climbs some steps to a high level path.

The lower path is more precipitous

and certainly more interesting but they both meet again in 200m **3**. The rowan trees (or mountain ashes) here are festooned with bright red berries until quite late in the year.

Round the next corner the valley widens and you will see Narnell's Rock directly in front of you. Take the more obvious fork to the right. After prolonged rain, lengths of the path turn into streams.

At the next big confluence you get a choice of route. The right valley takes you up the easier route to Boiling Well



Rounding Grindle

and a longer walk back along the road. I'm going up the slightly less used left valley towards Pole Cottage. Jump the stream where you see a grassy path stretching away to the left.

If you are here in August you are getting into whinberry territory – it will take you hours to pick even half a pint and they stain your hands purple but they are delicious with apple in a crumble. Stay with the path and the leftmost valleys from here on **4**. It's rocky, steep and muddy and sometimes it's not clear which side you should be on.

Bit by bit, the path levels off as you approach Pole Cottage – when pine trees hove into sight on the skyline you know you are on the right track. Watch out for boggy ground. If the

surface looks too green and flat to be true it's probably concealing a good welly's worth of quagmire.

Turn left along the road and past the car park. After 150m you see a green path to the left snaking over Round Hill. This is the route back. Ahead of you is the Midlands Glider Club and there are often para-gliders leaping off the edge. When you come to a big green junction, turn left and head east.

The smaller path on the left hugs the edge of Round Hill and gives you

spectacular views back into Ashes Hollow **5**.

As you round the corner the path ahead crosses a col and flips over to the right side of Grindle and skirts the edge of Callow Hollow (well worth a visit some other day).

Across another pass between Callow and Grindle and you enter Small Batch valley. Little Stretton lies below nestled under Ragleth Hill.

Through the gaps in the hills you can see the Wrekin far to the north, lined up with The Lawley and Caradoc hills **6**. Small Batch joins Ashes Hollow at the ford by the campsite where you started.

8

River **REA**

Cleobury Mortimer to Shakenhurst

Twisty valley, parkland and farms

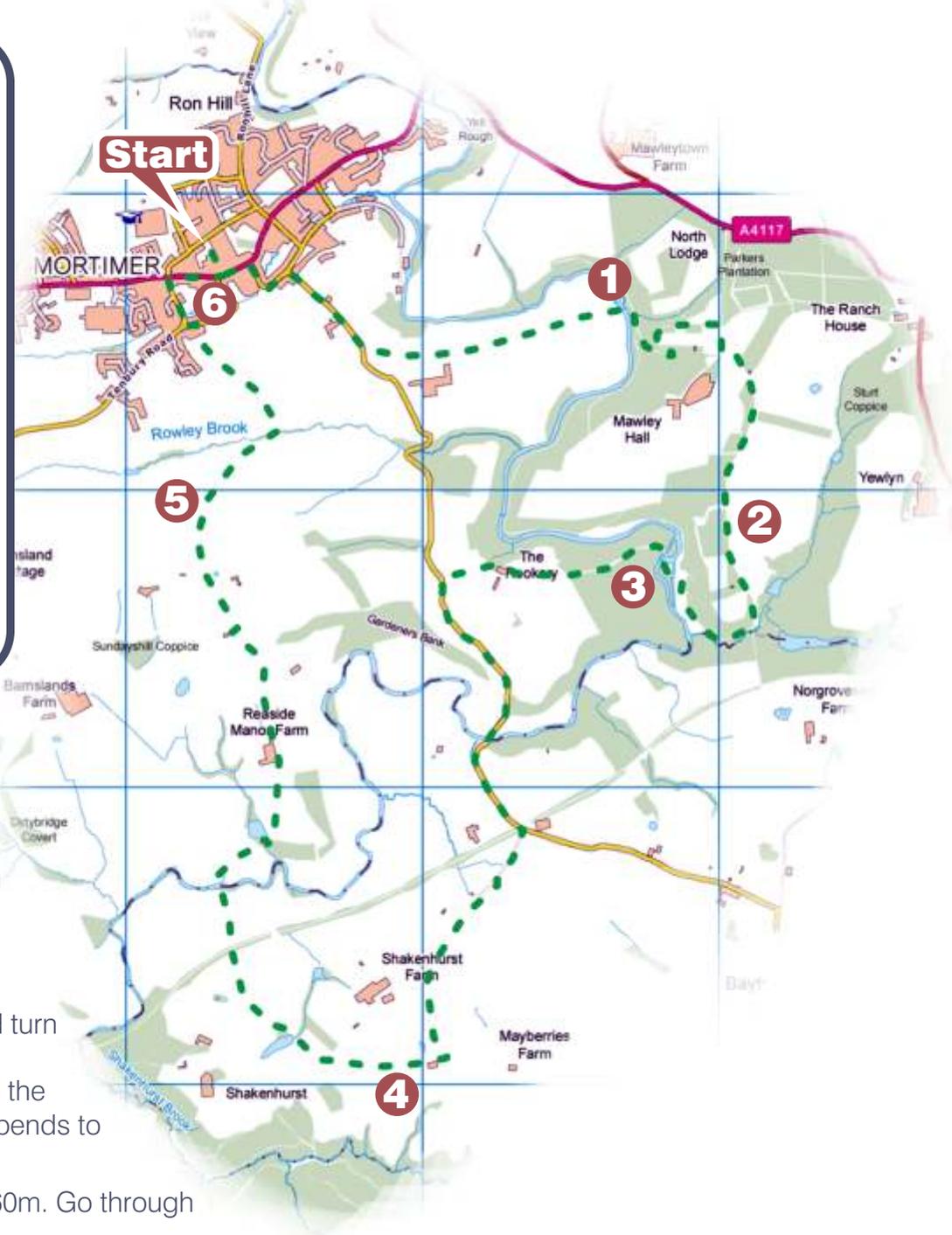
8 River Rea - Cleobury Mortimer to Shakenhurst

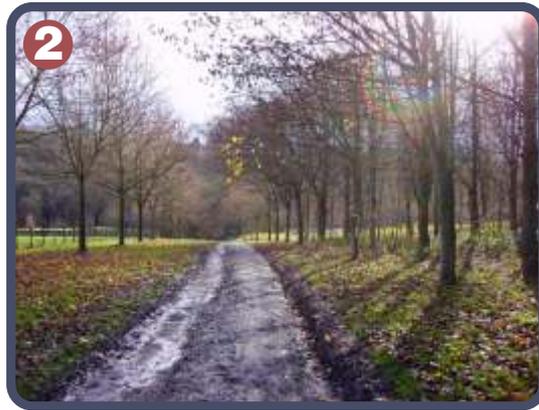
	Type	Circular
	Location	Shropshire/ Worcestershire
	Maps	OS Explorer 203
	How to get there	A4117 from Ludlow. Park in the town
	Start	52°22'45.89"N 2°28'55.64"W
	Length	10.6km
	Duration	3½hrs
	Severities	**
	Paths	****
	Stiles	***

Whilst there's precious little riverbank footpath down the Rea valley itself, this route crosses the river four times and takes in some varied and fascinating terrain. Start from the small town car park which you get to via back streets too tortuous to describe – suffice to say it's behind the Talbot Hotel.

Through a little covered alley by the side of the pub, you emerge onto High Street. Take the crossing and turn left. Turn right into Lion Lane, opposite the church (allegedly famous for its crooked spire but it's not in the same league as Chesterfield). After 100m, the lane bends to the left – take the next right up the hill.

The footpath towards the Rea is on the right after 360m. Go through





the gate in the electric fence and head for a similar gate opposite. You should see Mawley Hall on the hill in front of you. Now you are on the crest of a steep bank and following a line of ancient oaks.

A sturdy footbridge takes you across the Rea **1** and into the woods. Turn right, take the first fork to the left and follow the winding path up the bank. You will come to a walled garden that you have to circumnavigate (clockwise). At the top of the hill you meet a drive towards the big house

on the right.

Head towards the gates and then turn left into the stony road along the line of a privet hedge. Follow the blue bridlemway signs. As you round the redbrick hall you can see Bayton Church on the rise ahead of you.

Descending into the valley **2**, you enter a magical bit of wooded parkland. Stick to the main path. You will hear the rush of the Rea as you approach a complicated bit of water management with spectacular weirs **3**, channels and bridges.

The road comes to a ford – too treacherous to cross when the stream is in full spate – thankfully there is a footbridge on the left.

Rejoin the road and start climbing up the lane towards The Rookery. You get a good view of Mawley Hall over the wall.

After crossing a stable yard you turn left down the road to Nineveh.

The Rea River meanders round to join you at Houghtonspole Bridge. The road passes through the embankment of a defunct railway line. Turn

immediately right into a lane.

Opposite a small redbrick cottage on the right, there is a stile into the field.

Head for the near right hand corner and then stick to the right side of the next field, heading up towards a long low black and white house on the horizon. A gate near the top of the field allows you onto a short drive.

Back on the road, turn right past the house and cross the cattle grid onto the Shakenhurst estate **4**. We are looking for a path off to the right – after a shallow S bend in the drive. Keep scanning the fence for a stile and a way marker near a hollow oak tree. The path crosses a narrow bank separating a pool from the gully below.

Over the next stile you enter pasture land again. Head for the group of

three oaks just below the horizon.

As you pass them you can see the line of the old railway below you and a stile in the hedge at the bottom of the field. Across the sunken track way there's a double stile into the next field.

Directly opposite you can see the next footbridge across the river. Atop of the bank ahead of you there is a track that leads you right towards Reaside Manor Farm. A stile takes you across an old dyke and through a bit of rough coppiced land which appears to be a drained pond. Back in the fields, turn left and head for the manor house.

Once you are past the house, the drive starts to climb and bend to the left. Over the second cattle grid, turn right and through a gate into the

adjacent field.

Keep the barn conversion on the crest of the hill on your right and head for the skyline. In the middle of the hedge at the top of the field there is an easy-to-miss stile next to a sunken pool. Cross the next field on the right side.

At the next stile you catch a glimpse of Cleobury Mortimer church again **5**. Head in a two o'clock-ish direction down towards the oaks by the Rowley Brook. A muddy cattle path takes you across the stream and a stile into the next field. Head up towards the crest on the left side hedge. At the end of the next field a small path takes you between the houses and onto a residential road.

Turn left at the end into High Street **6** and Bob's your uncle.

Looking back towards Neen Sollars

9

River **WYYE**

Redbrook to Bigsweir

In the hills going south and
on the bank going north

9 River Wye - Redbrook to Bigsweir

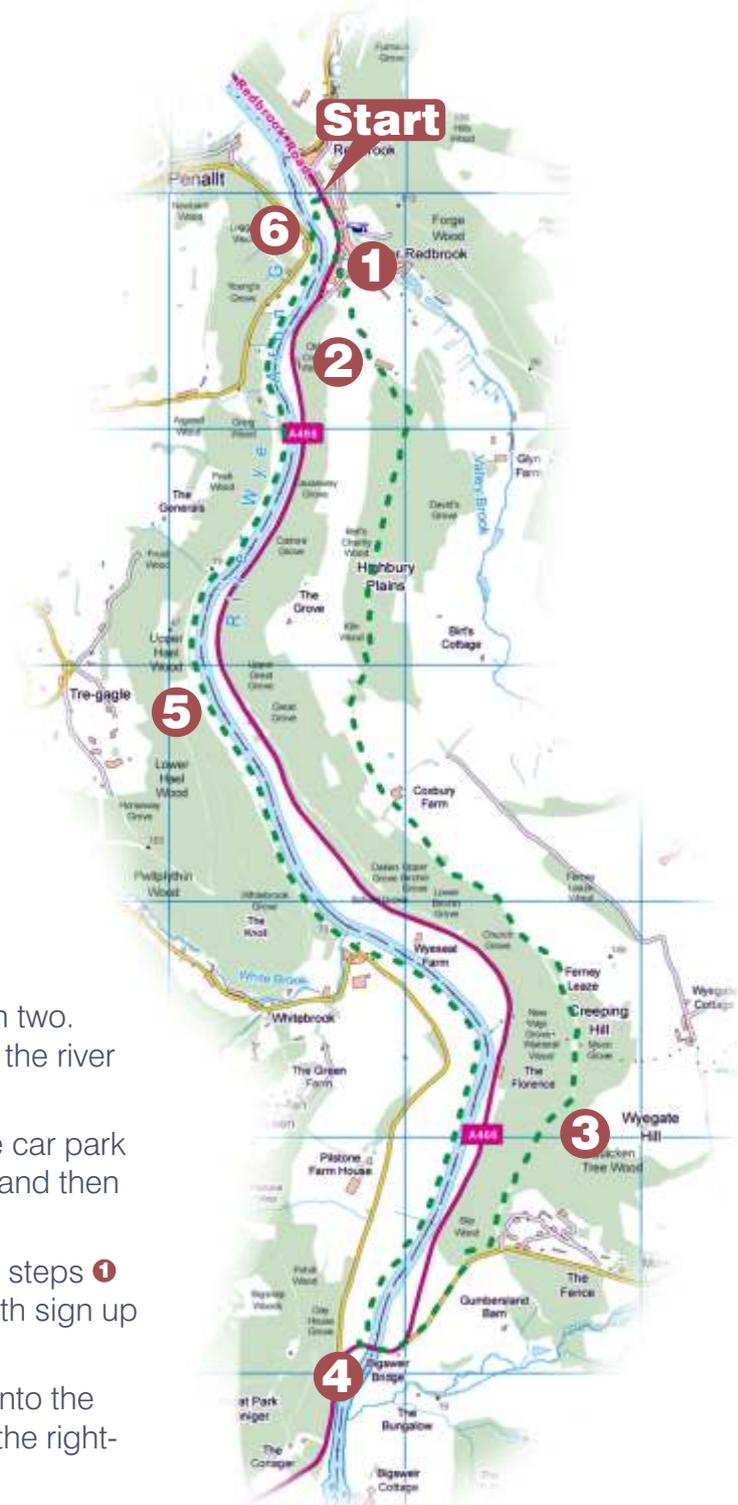
	Type	Circular
	Location	Monmouthshire/ Gloucestershire
	Maps	OS Explorer 14
	How to get there	Car park just off the road at Redbrook, on the A466 south of Monmouth
	Start	51°47'10.77"N 2°40'25.38"W
	Length	11.7km
	Duration	3½hrs
	Severities	***
	Paths	****
	Stiles	****

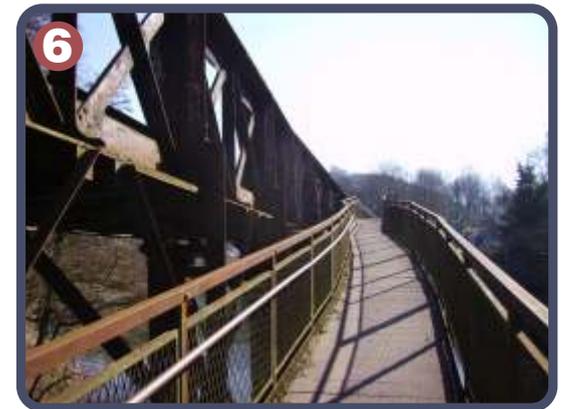
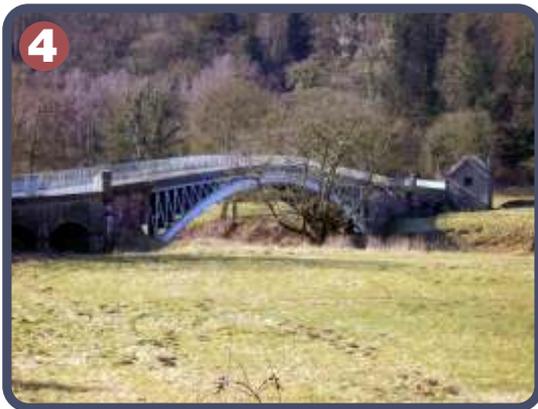
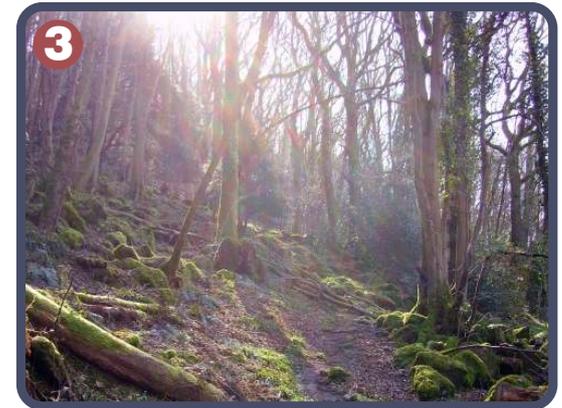
The southern half of the lower Wye gorge splits the Forest of Dean in two. This walk follows the Offa's Dyke path south along the ridge above the river and the Wye Valley Walk back along the river bank to Redbrook.

You can park in the town at Redbrook. Look out for boulders marking the car park entrance on the river side off the A466. Head south down the main road and then left just before the Bell Inn.

You will see a signpost marked Offa's Dyke Trail which leads to a flight of steps **1** up the terrace. At the top of the steps, cross a lane and follow the footpath sign up the hill.

After 80m, a few steps take you up the bank to the left, over a stile and onto the bracken-covered hill **2**. After a bit of a slog you meet a farm track - take the right-most path as signposted.





You enter Highbury Wood Nature Reserve where at last the climb becomes less severe. Stick to the right-hand path that winds along the wooded ridge south for about 1km. Where the track starts to dip again, take a sharp right (following the acorn signs) through the woods and down to double gates.

You are presented with two stiles – take the newer metal one into the open field. Turn left along the contour of the hill.

Pass below Coxbury Farm and into

Oaken Grove Wood.

A stile takes you back into the fields again and you follow the gentle curve of the escarpment around to Bigsweir between two tree lines, the lower one immediately on your right.

There's a bit of a climb after you enter the beech wood under Creeping Hill and then the path narrows and dips back down to the right towards the river ③. As you near the end of the woods, follow the Offa's Dyke signs. Older maps may take you straight out onto the Clearwell road but a new trail

stays in the woods for a few hundred meters and emerges just below the Cadora Woods car park.

Then it's one of those rare bits of the Offa's Dyke trail that can't avoid a bit of road (although I can't see what's wrong with the field next to it myself). Bigsweir Bridge ④ is directly ahead of you.

At the end of the bridge, pass the spooky dilapidated house, take the steps down into the field and head north along the riverbank. After 300m you join the old cinder track of the

dismantled Wye Valley Railway.

Look out for the point where the path parts company with the railway track and sticks to the river side (shame about the constant noise from the road on the other bank!). As you meet the trees again, cross one last stile

and head for the gate between a house and a bungalow. Turn right onto the wide cinder path and it's a straightforward run all the way back to Redbrook.

Or you may prefer to take the lower bridal path along more open country

right next to the river **5**.

The path fetches up right under the old metal railway bridge **6** and you have to double back up the lane to find the walkway. On the other bank, you pop up only 50m from the car park.



Looking north from Bigsweir Bridge

10

River **CLUN**

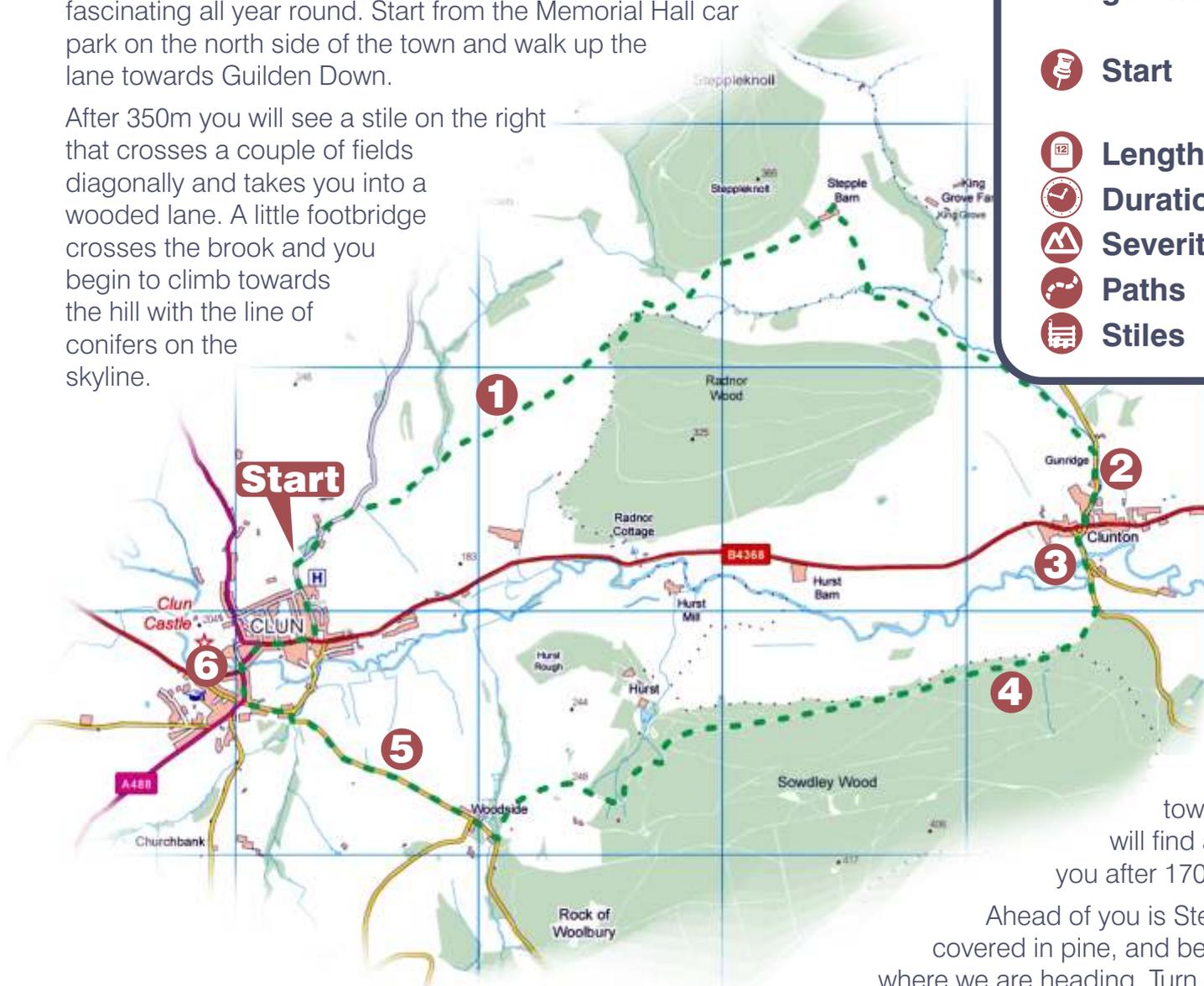
Clun to Clunton

Woodland trails and remote combes

10 River Clun - Clun to Clunton

A.E. Housman said something about Clun and its neighbours (Clunton, Clunbury and Clungunford) being the quietest places under the sun and it's still true today. You only get to see the river twice on this walk but the valley and surrounding hills are quietly fascinating all year round. Start from the Memorial Hall car park on the north side of the town and walk up the lane towards Guilden Down.

After 350m you will see a stile on the right that crosses a couple of fields diagonally and takes you into a wooded lane. A little footbridge crosses the brook and you begin to climb towards the hill with the line of conifers on the skyline.

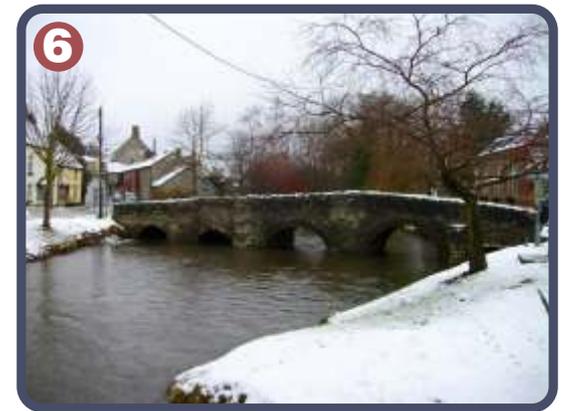


	Type	Circular
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 201
	How to get there	Park in Clun, between Knighton and Bishop's Castle on the A488
	Start	52°25'26.82"N 3° 1'39.10"W
	Length	10km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	***
	Stiles	****

When you get into open fields **1**, stick to the left side, through a short sunken lane and on up to the tree line.

As you enter the woods the path forks almost immediately. Take the left path down the slope towards a hidden combe. You will find a stile into the field below you after 170m.

Ahead of you is Steepleknoll, a hummocky hill covered in pine, and below it a farm track. That's where we are heading. Turn right along the line of the



woods, through a gate and diagonally down the next field to a small footbridge. Join the track through the metal gate to the north east. At Steeple Farm, the right of way takes you straight through the main farm complex until you get to the last barn. Turn right here back down into the valley. Shortly after leaving the farm you will see a gate on the right. Follow the track down to the brook. At the bottom of the field you cross a bank holding back some marshy ground and a pipe bridge takes you

over the stream. Turn immediately left and follow the obvious path down to the main road at Clunton ②. You join the lane just above Fold Farm. Cross straight over the main road to Purslow, past the Crown Inn and down to your first sight of the Clun. Over the bridge ③ and past Bush Farm, look out for a track on the right up into the woods. After a stiff little climb you join a

woodland track ④ that follows the line of the trees back towards Clun. At last, you hit tarmac again and it's only a short walk down into Clun ⑤. As you enter the town, the road crosses a bridge, climbs and bends sharply to the left. Follow the sign saying "Clun ¼ m". At the Knighton road (Church Street) turn down the hill towards the bridge ⑥. Turn right across the bridge and follow the Clunton road east. The turning back to the car park is just past the bus stop.



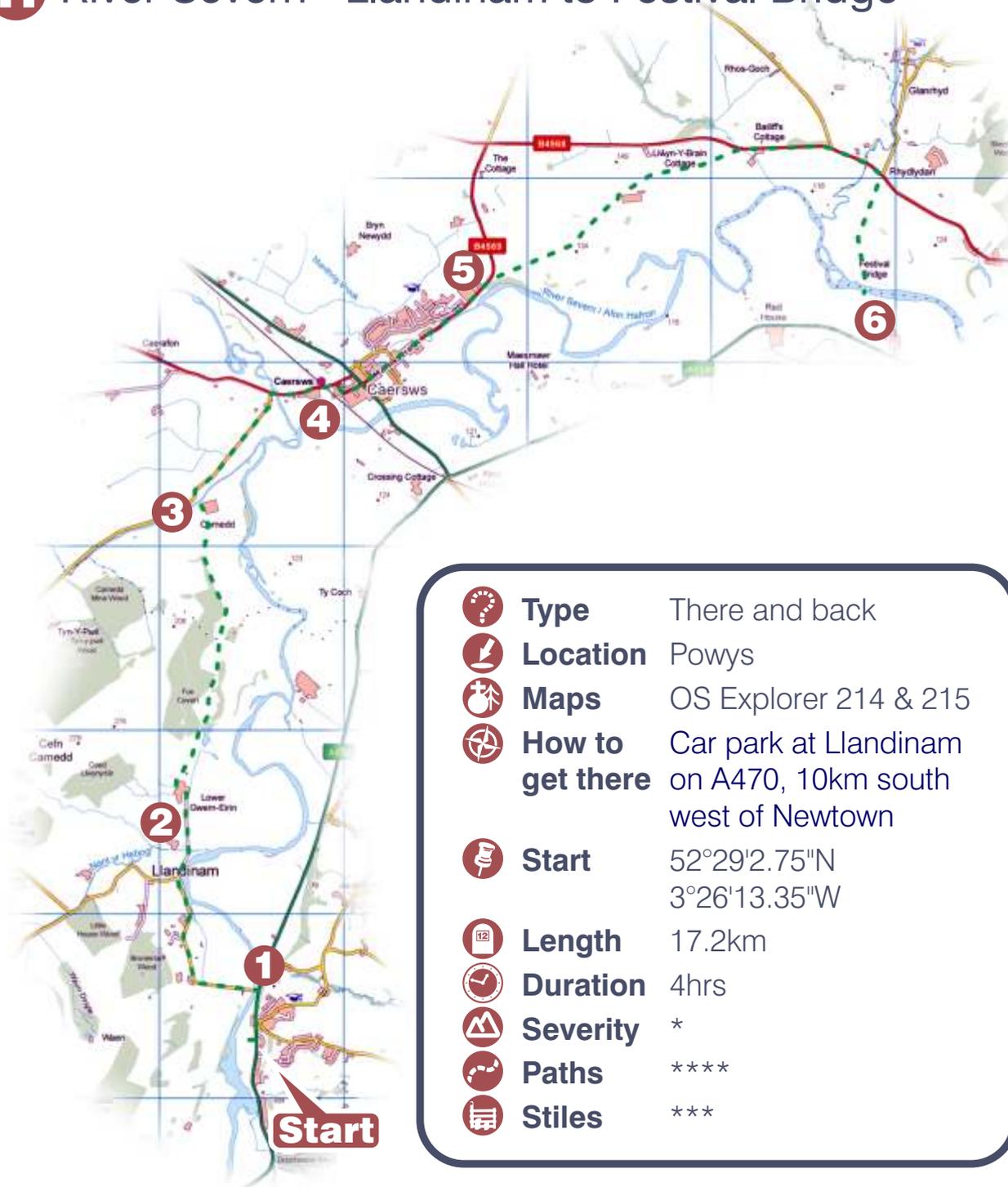
11

River **SEVERN**

Llandinam to Festival Bridge

Easy-going lanes and fields
in the young Severn valley

11 River Severn - Llandinam to Festival Bridge



	Type	There and back
	Location	Powys
	Maps	OS Explorer 214 & 215
	How to get there	Car park at Llandinam on A470, 10km south west of Newtown
	Start	52°29'2.75"N 3°26'13.35"W
	Length	17.2km
	Duration	4hrs
	Severity	*
	Paths	****
	Stiles	***

One side of this great bend in the Severn is occupied by the never-resting A470/A489; the other is quiet and lovely. The roman settlement of Caersws stands at the junction of the Severn, Cerist and Carno valleys – the resulting topography creating great views in every direction.

There's a car park in Llandinam, just south of the pub. Walk up the A470 (pavement provided) and turn left over the bridge 1 just before the imposing David Davies statue (a civil engineer of note). The tree-lined avenue takes you across the flood plain towards a conference centre (a nice one) on the hill. The road turns sharply north and nudges up against a crook in the river. Head straight on at the first junction, past the water works and on to the farm at Lower Gwern-eirin 2. The path wiggles round the back of the farm and then climbs around the side of the hill. It can get a bit squelchy in places.

At last, you hit a farm track that takes you down to the small bridge over the Afon Cerist at Carnedd 3. Turn right along the road into Caersws. Just after you join B4569 on the outskirts



of the village, cross the bridge over the Carno and then the level crossing by the station **4**. I'm pretty sure I had this station in my Hornby 00 train set – it can't have changed much since the 50s.

Right at the junction with the A470 and then left at the town crossroads. Head east(ish) down a long straight road, past the strangely curvy village hall and back into the countryside. Just beyond the point where you overlook a bend in the Severn **5**, look out for a lane to the right and a stile

heading across the fields ahead of you. Through a gate and down dip slightly until you join a farm track. The track zig-zags round the left of the farm but is well marked. Double gates take you across the farm's drive and on eastward. Over a few fields until you meet the B4568 in the far corner of the third.

The road here cannot be avoided, so take care (facing oncoming traffic, crossing to the other side before sharp right-hand bends, etc.). After 800m you come to the second

junction on the right. Directly opposite is a path across the fields, heading south. You should be able to see Festival Bridge **6**. It's a cable suspension footbridge, connecting two fields and apparently not much else. It was built in 1951 to celebrate the Festival of Britain. But it's worth a look if you like bridges.

You could return by the main road but I wouldn't recommend it. You could call for a taxi but that would be cheating.

Looking south from Lower Gwern-eirin



12

Cardingmill **BROOK**

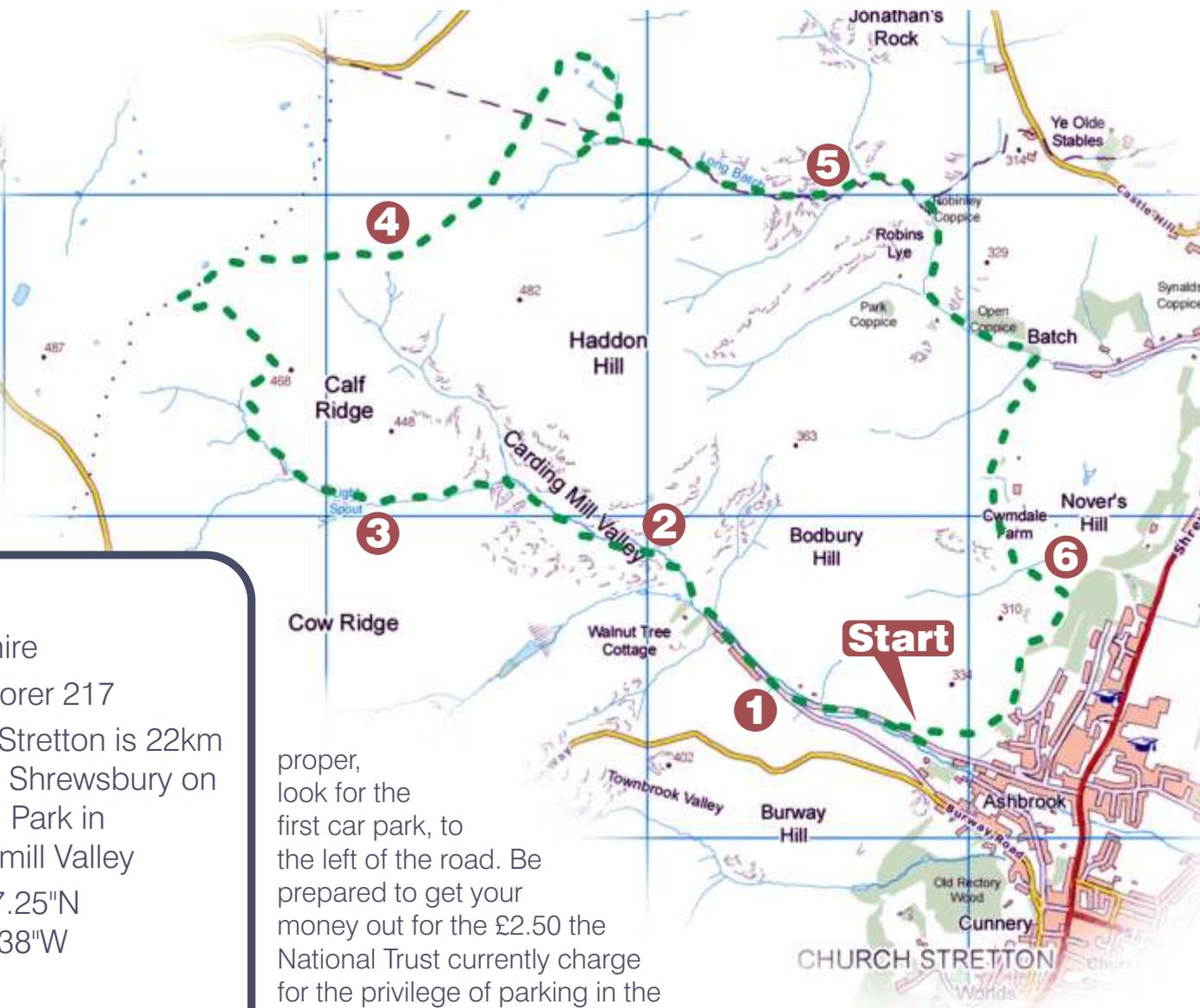
Cardingmill to Longbatch

Up to the famous Lightspout
and down the wilder
Longbatch on the Mynd

12 Cardingmill Brook - Cardingmill to Longbatch

Church Stretton, or 'Little Switzerland' as it's sometimes called, nestles under the Long Mynd - a ten-mile range of hills of outstanding beauty and unique character. Park in Cardingmill Valley. The turning is on the north side of the town on the road to All Stretton.

As soon as you've crossed the cattle grid into the valley

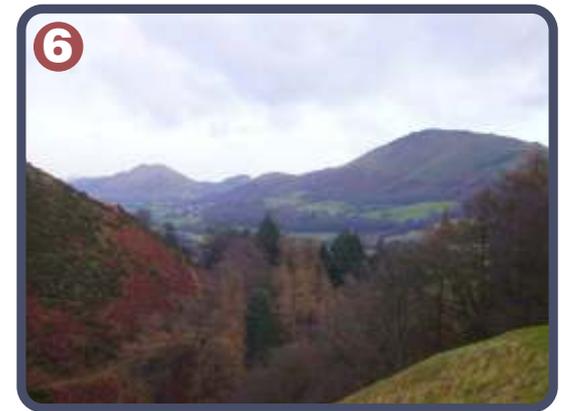
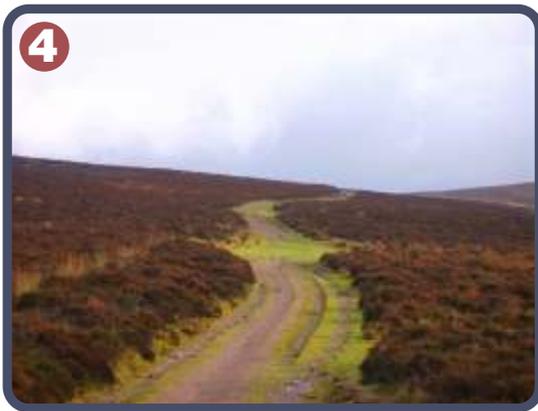
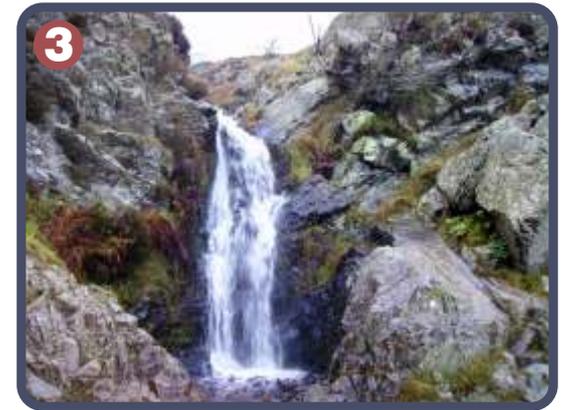
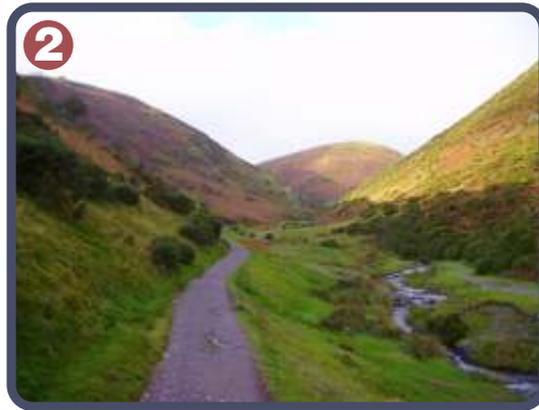


	Type	Circular
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 217
	How to get there	Church Stretton is 22km south of Shrewsbury on the A49. Park in Cardingmill Valley
	Start	52°32'37.25"N 2°48'52.38"W
	Length	9km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severities	***
	Paths	***
	Stiles	***

proper, look for the first car park, to the left of the road. Be prepared to get your money out for the £2.50 the National Trust currently charge for the privilege of parking in the valley.

Head straight up the valley, past the NT shop and café **1**. Just beyond the strikingly yellow Long Mynd House, you will see a little footbridge on the right. Take this path if you don't want to get your feet wet in a ford.

After 200m you come to the junction with New Pool Hollow. Carry on up the



road for another 100m or so to the top car park. This used to be a swimming pool many years ago.

There's a footbridge on the left – again, take this path to avoid a ford further up. Head straight up Cardingmill ② until you come to an obvious junction.

Straight on is Mott's Road which takes you directly onto the Mynd. To the left is Lightspout Hollow and that's where we are going. Pass the old sheep dips and on up the rocky path until you reach the waterfall ③.

Except in very dry times, the Lightspout is quite spectacular. The

④

bank.

Just before you dip into Longbatch itself you cross a bigger path. Here you need to go west up the valley until you find a sensible path into the batch. Longbatch is considerably less refined than Cardingmill, with rougher paths and boggy patches. But its relative wildness can be rewarding.

You will need to switch banks frequently to find the best route (mostly the left on the way down), pushing past gorse bushes all the while.

When you see a path climbing up the bank ahead **5**, you'll notice that the valley does a considerable dogleg to the right to accommodate a long ridge. Follow the main valley path to the right.

400m after the valley straightens out again, turn back on yourself to the

right, up a path between trees. After the gate, turn left and start climbing up the path that follows the fence towards Cwydale.

Once you are past the houses in the combe, the footpath takes you to a gate down to the road. Carry straight on here and climb up the edge **6**.

You pass the foot of the golf course. The path comes out opposite the black and white house in Cardingmill and your car is down below you.

13

River **SEVERN**

Rhyd-y-benwch to source

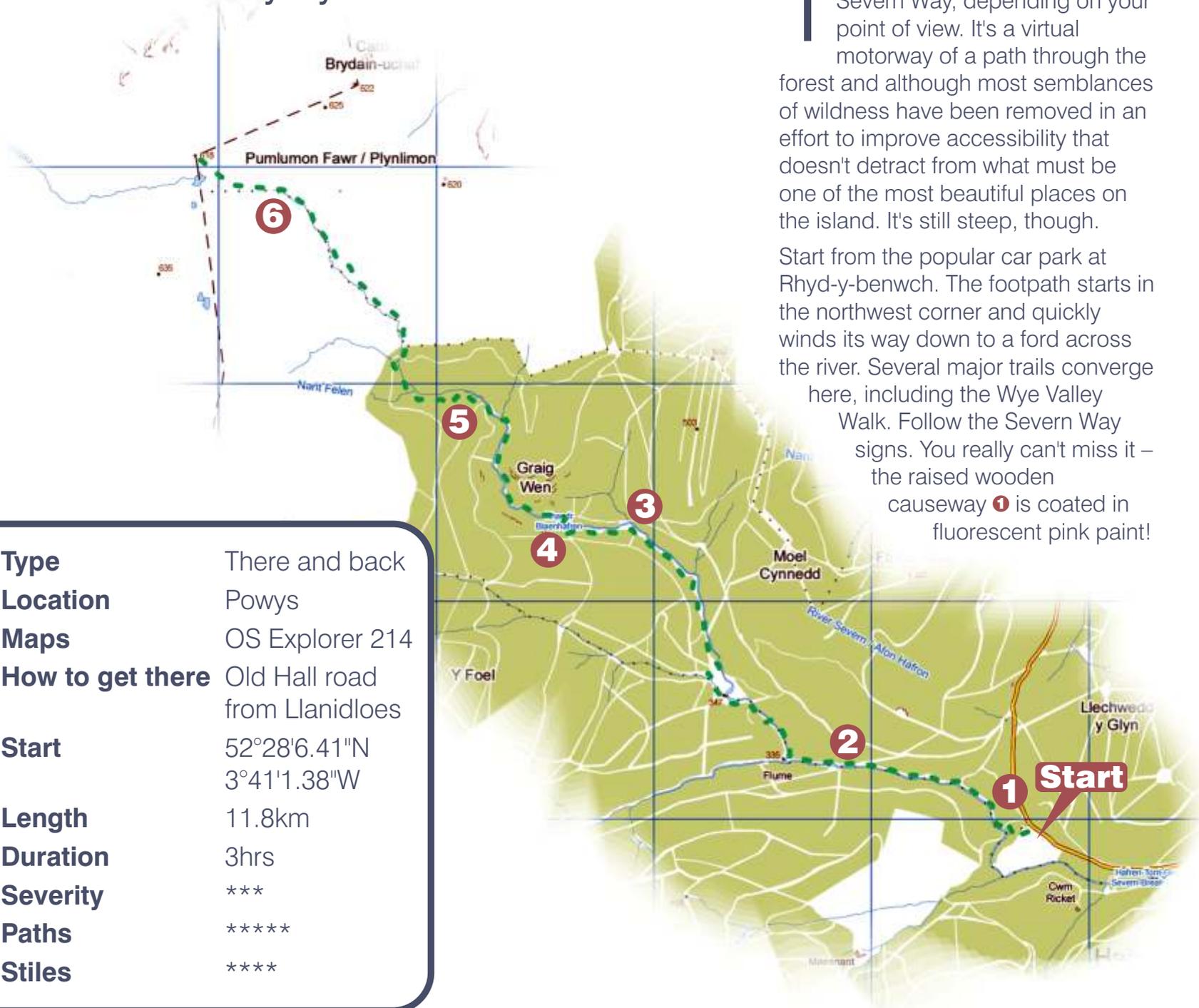
Moors and waterfalls -
stunning valley, stunning views

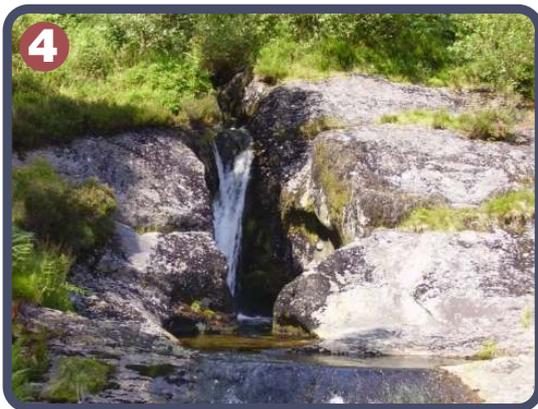
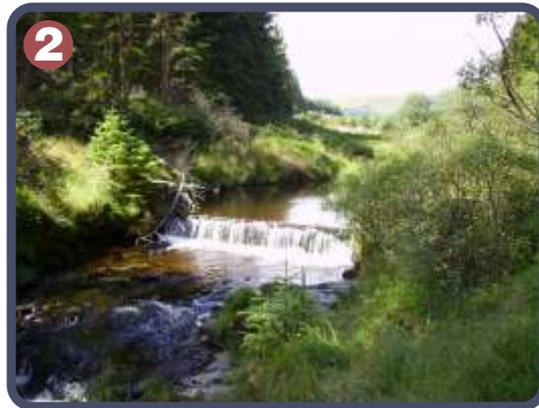
13 River Severn- Rhyd-y-benwch to source

This is the first or last leg of the Severn Way, depending on your point of view. It's a virtual motorway of a path through the forest and although most semblances of wildness have been removed in an effort to improve accessibility that doesn't detract from what must be one of the most beautiful places on the island. It's still steep, though.

Start from the popular car park at Rhyd-y-benwch. The footpath starts in the northwest corner and quickly winds its way down to a ford across the river. Several major trails converge here, including the Wye Valley Walk. Follow the Severn Way signs. You really can't miss it – the raised wooden causeway **1** is coated in fluorescent pink paint!

	Type	There and back
	Location	Powys
	Maps	OS Explorer 214
	How to get there	Old Hall road from Llanidloes
	Start	52°28'6.41"N 3°41'1.38"W
	Length	11.8km
	Duration	3hrs
	Severity	***
	Paths	*****
	Stiles	****





The walkway runs out in 300m at a picnic table by a pleasing cascade. In another 200m you are back in the sunshine/rain as the cleared ground on the left side of the stream affords a good view of the hills. It's due west ② until you reach the meeting with the Afon Hore where the path takes you northwest into the forest again. Cross the footbridge over the Severn and carry on in the direction of the river.

The valley shortly broadens out into scrubby open country and you find yourself alongside the Nant Tanllwyth

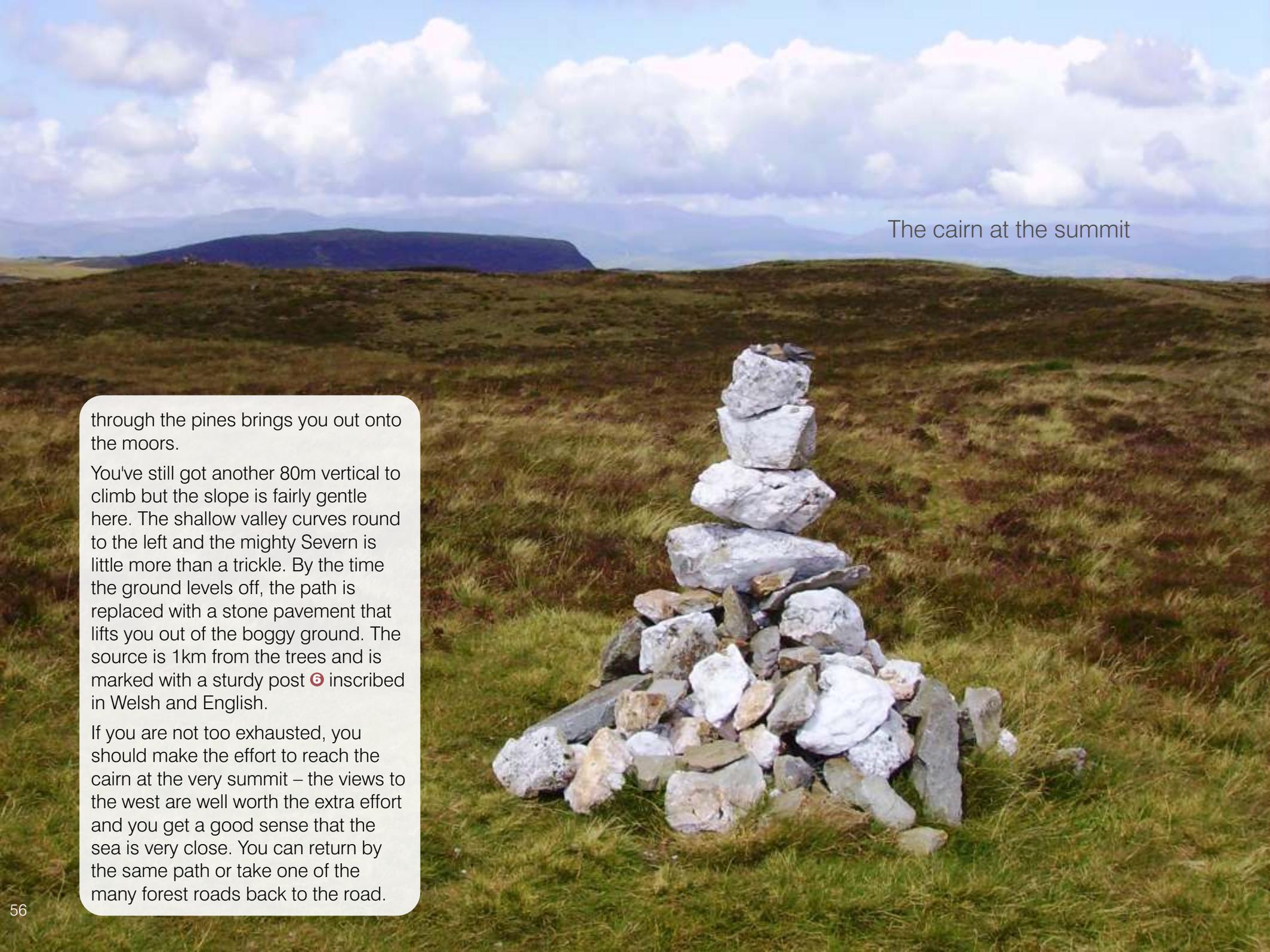
rather than the Severn. Fear not, the path doubles back after another footbridge and joins the main river again near a metrological station and concrete sluice. 200m ahead, the main path turns back to the left whilst the smaller Severn Way forks slightly to the right. The path twists and turns and climbs gradually ③ through ferns and bilberry bushes, always accompanied by the babbling of the river.

When you eventually hit a forest road you will see the small waterfall at

Rhaeadr Blaenhafren ④, somewhat spoilt by the gravel bridge only yards below it. Take the small path to its right. This is where the real climb starts.

The valley walls grow steeper and countless waterfalls and runnels keep you company for the next 800m until you reach a footbridge.

Now on the left bank ⑤, you zigzag up the ridge toward the tree line. Cross one more forest road and follow it to the right for 50m until you pick up the Severn Way signs again. A short walk

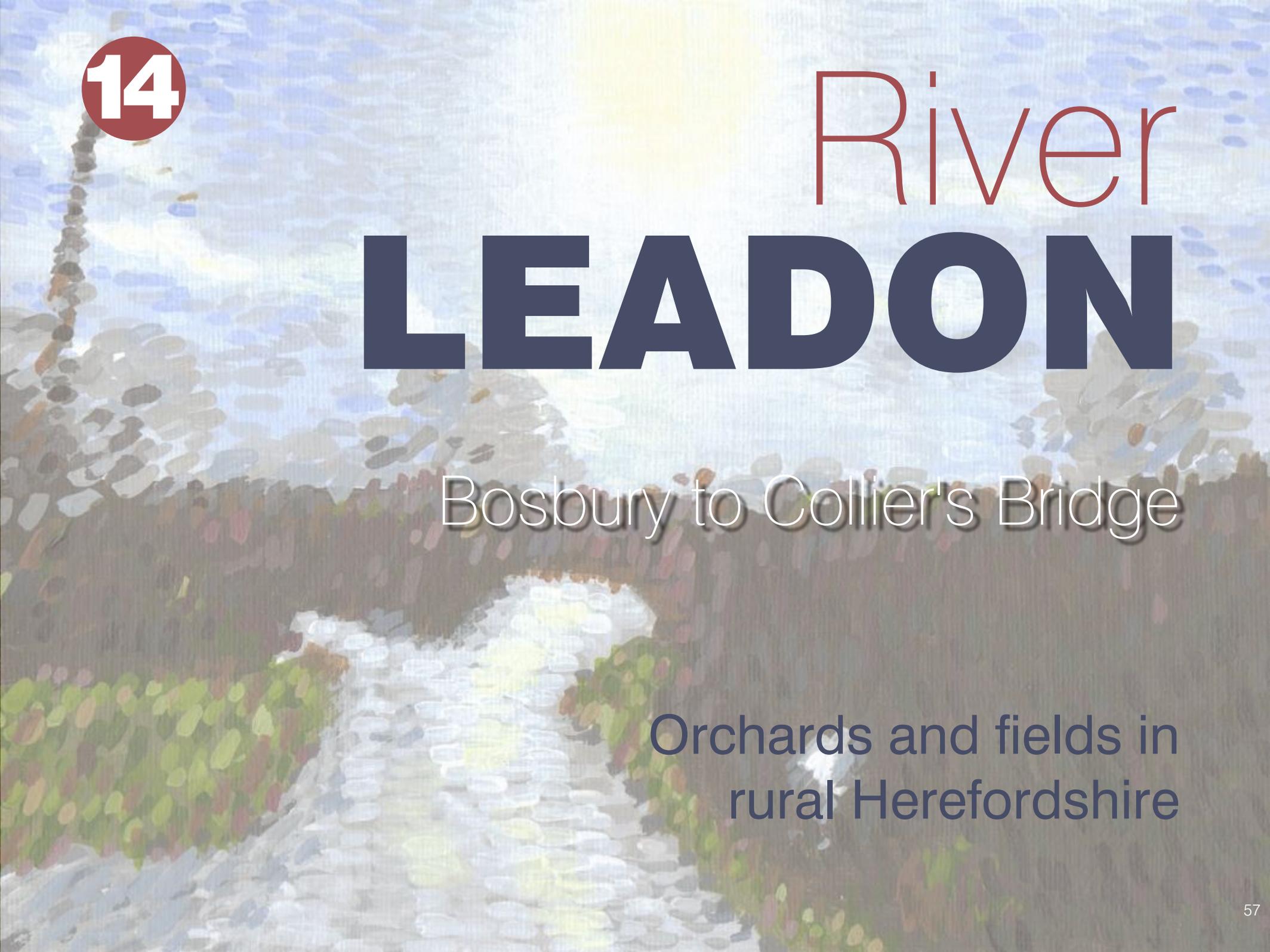
A stone cairn, a stack of rocks, stands on a grassy moor. The background shows rolling hills and a cloudy sky. The text 'The cairn at the summit' is overlaid on the right side of the image.

The cairn at the summit

through the pines brings you out onto the moors.

You've still got another 80m vertical to climb but the slope is fairly gentle here. The shallow valley curves round to the left and the mighty Severn is little more than a trickle. By the time the ground levels off, the path is replaced with a stone pavement that lifts you out of the boggy ground. The source is 1km from the trees and is marked with a sturdy post  inscribed in Welsh and English.

If you are not too exhausted, you should make the effort to reach the cairn at the very summit – the views to the west are well worth the extra effort and you get a good sense that the sea is very close. You can return by the same path or take one of the many forest roads back to the road.

A painting of a stone path leading through a rural landscape with fields and a bridge in the distance.

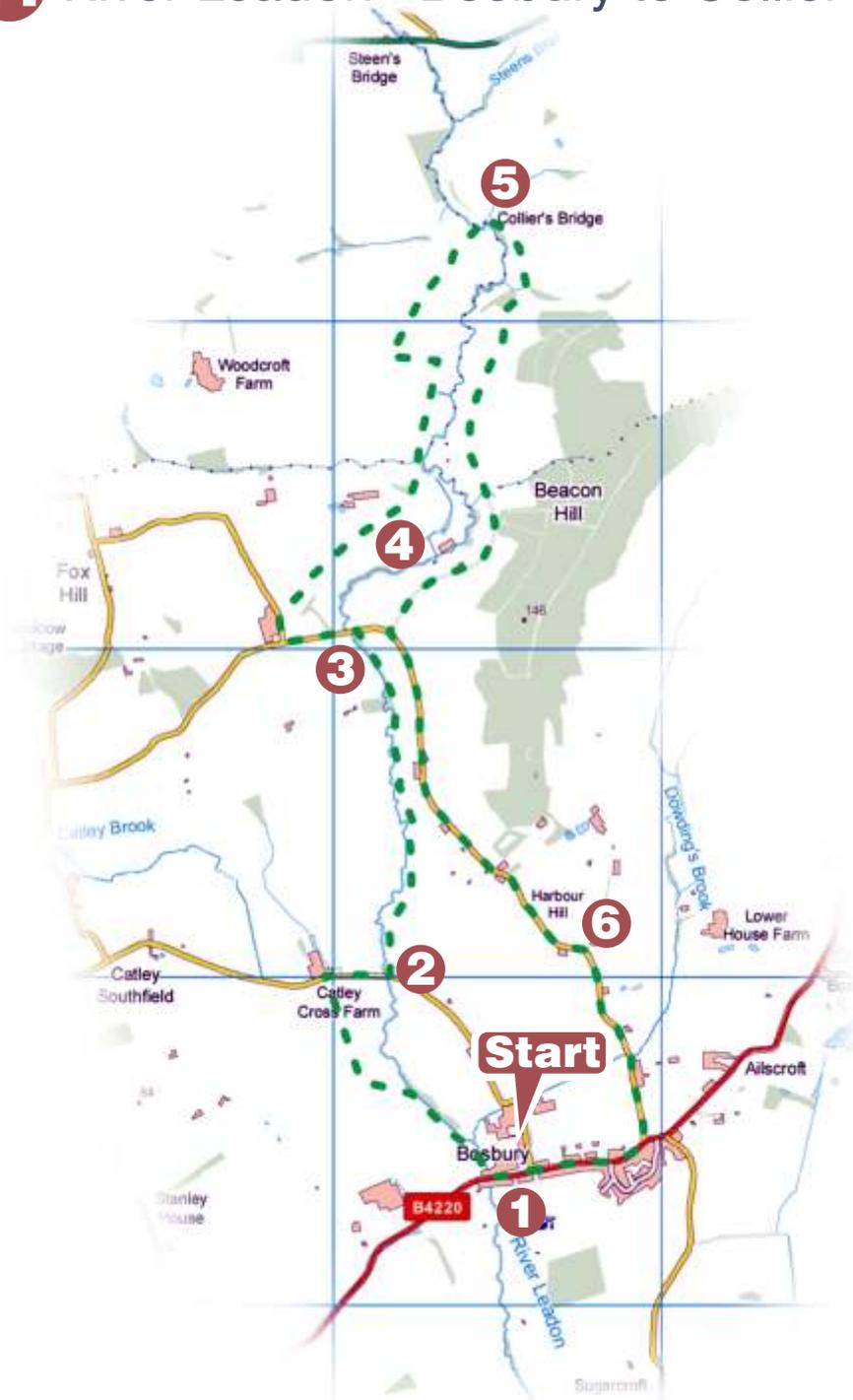
14

River **LEADON**

Bosbury to Collier's Bridge

Orchards and fields in
rural Herefordshire

14 River Leadon - Bosbury to Collier's Bridge



	Type	Circular
	Location	Herefordshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 202
	How to get there	15km north of Junction 2 on the M50. Park by Bosbury Church
	Start	52° 5'17.42"N 2°26'43.38"W
	Length	8km
	Duration	2½hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	***
	Stiles	***

The Leadon trickles its way south from its source towards the contented little town of Bosbury in Herefordshire. **WARNING:** Don't attempt this walk on Boxing Day if you want to avoid a bunch of rabid, red-coated barbarians on horses, intent on terrorising foxes.

Park (if you can) opposite the pub. Head west past the church **1** until you come to a barber shop on your right. Just beyond is a little lane that runs north along the river bank.

After a short tree-covered walk you emerge into an orchard. Head along the right-hand hedge. Cross a stile into a field and make for the opposite corner where you join a lane that leads towards Catley Cross Farm.

When you reach the road, turn right and walk 200m back towards the Leadon **2** where it's crossed by England's Bridge.



Immediately after the bridge, there's a stile on the left into a young orchard. Stick mostly to the line of the river, travelling north past Bentley's Farm until you come out into a long field.

There's a stile at the end **3** that takes you back onto lanes. Turn left and up the slope to Notehouse Farm. Then right into the farm and when you reach the main buildings you will see the path back into the valley on your right. Head into the fields and follow the obvious track around the curve of the valley.

When you pass Dodd's Mill **4** in the valley below you, go through a gateway and down the next field towards the river.

There's a small pool ahead; pass it on the right and turn left into the adjacent field and climb up the slope along the line of the hedge.

Find a gap with a stile and turn north towards a line of oaks. Head in this direction and then veer right down the slope to Collier's Bridge **5**.

This is the halfway point. Cross the Leadon and head south again on the

stony path that runs around the edge of the valley.

At the first cottage, go through the five-bar gate and head on down to the lane. When you come out on the road you are only a few metres from the path you used to come up the valley. You can either retrace your steps or go back down the lane to the left towards Bosbury **6**.

If you take the latter, you will come out at the top of the village. Turn right at the main road and back down to the church.



15

River **WYYE**

Monmouth to Redbrook

Down one side and up the other

15 River Wye - Monmouth to Redbrook



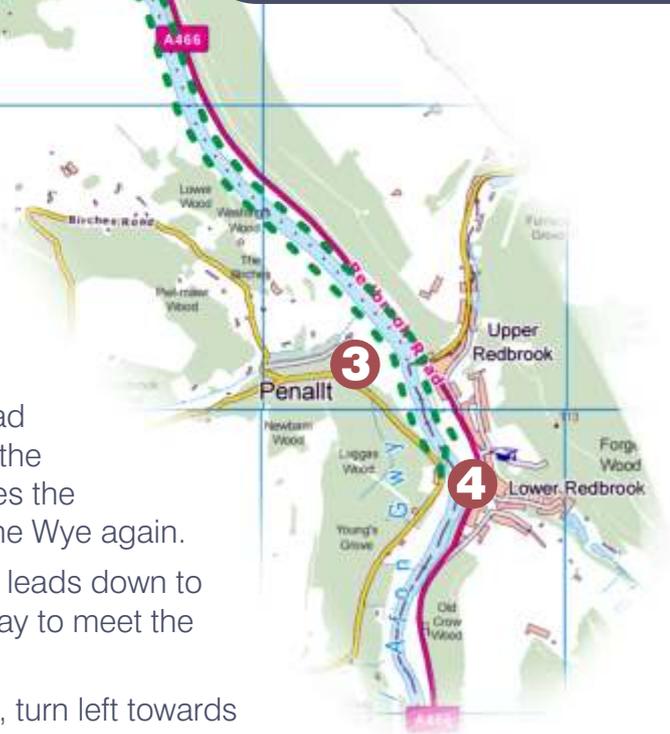
	Type	Circular
	Location	Monmouthshire/ Gloucestershire
	Maps	OS Explorer 14
	How to get there	Park in Blestium Street car park, Monmouth
	Start	51°48'31.47"N 2°43'7.96"W
	Length	10.9km
	Duration	3½hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	****
	Stiles	****

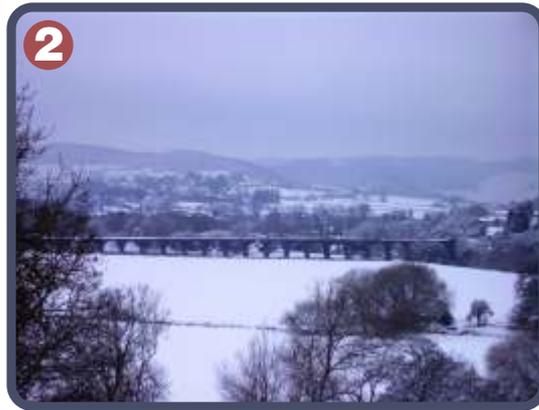
Monmouth is the civilized bit in the middle of the Wye gorge, with broad, flattish farmland on the western side. From here south, the river cuts a more precipitous swathe through the Forest of Dean.

Park in the Blestium Street 1 car park (opposite Waitrose) and head out of town on the new bridge over the Monnow. Turn left towards the A40 and then right up the hill on the Trelleck road. The road crosses the bypass just above the twin road tunnels and dips down towards the Wye again.

At the first sharp corner leave the road via the track on the left that leads down to Troy Farm. Just before the farm you cross the Afon Troddi on its way to meet the larger river.

Go straight through the farm and, just before the buildings run out, turn left towards





the gate to a farm track heading east. After a couple of zigs and zags you come out into open fields **2**. Down the slope you should be able to see a gate into the broad field that runs down to the river.

Follow the line of the fence towards the Livox Woods and your first sight of the river. The path bobs up and down a bit for 360m and then emerges into a long curving field.

Then through a small gate into scrubby ground where the trees start to march down the slope towards the

river. Round a stile and into Washing's Wood. Carry on along the bank and the obvious path into Redbrook **3**.

Pass the Boat Inn (if you must) and take the metal walkway that clings to the side of the old railway bridge **4**. At the other end, the walkway dips down and passes under the old rail track.

You are now, however briefly, in England. Turn left and look for a couple of benches which mark the gate which leads back down to the riverside. This is the official Wye Valley Walk.

Head north along the river until the path brings you out onto the main Chepstow to Monmouth road which, alas, you have to brave for 250m. At the first opportunity, turn left down a track that leads into a long pasture.

800m further on, you pass in front of a river monitoring station building and then enter a short bit of woodland. Back in open fields again, the path curves round with the river towards Wyesham.

Past the sewage works and into a wooded track close to the river, you



walk under two bits of industrial heritage; a stone viaduct 5 (with the span missing) and a metal railway bridge. Now on the edge of Monmouth School playing fields, you should be able to see the old Wye bridge 6 on the left.

At the Coleford road, turn left over the bridge and cross to the north side.

Take the subway under the bypass and on to Wyebridge Street. Turn left into Almshouse Street and right at the end past the Blake Theatre. Pass the Glendower Street car park and the music school into Saint John's Street and make your way along to Monnow Street. A left here will take you back to your start point.

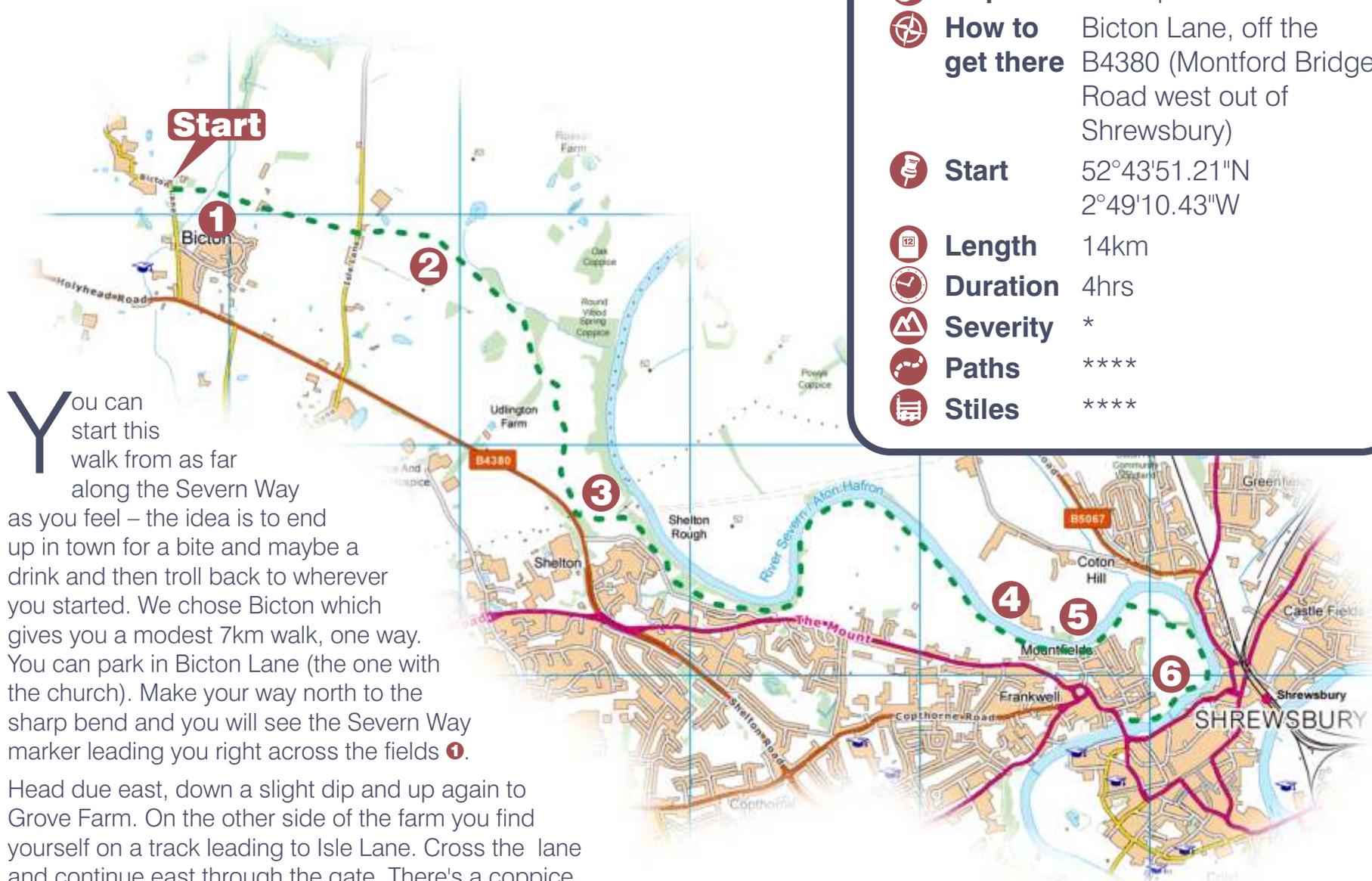
16

River **SEVERN**

Bicton to Shrewsbury

Quiet fields and lanes give way
to river bank walks and parks

16 River Severn - Bicton to Shrewsbury



You can start this walk from as far along the Severn Way as you feel – the idea is to end up in town for a bite and maybe a drink and then troll back to wherever you started. We chose Bicton which gives you a modest 7km walk, one way. You can park in Bicton Lane (the one with the church). Make your way north to the sharp bend and you will see the Severn Way marker leading you right across the fields ❶.

Head due east, down a slight dip and up again to Grove Farm. On the other side of the farm you find yourself on a track leading to Isle Lane. Cross the lane and continue east through the gate. There's a coppice ahead of you – keep the trees on your right until you find the gate leading south east down the side of a couple of fields ❷. At the bottom, you cross a dirt track and continue skirting the thicket on your left. Back on a shady track, you climb slightly until you emerge onto the B4380 into town. Turn left along the pavement and look for a woodland track ❸ in 100m or so.

	Type	There and back
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 241
	How to get there	Bicton Lane, off the B4380 (Montford Bridge Road west out of Shrewsbury)
	Start	52°43'51.21"N 2°49'10.43"W
	Length	14km
	Duration	4hrs
	Severity	*
	Paths	****
	Stiles	****



The track takes you down towards the river and around and below the various suburban roads that make up Shelton. After a short climb you join a lane with houses on the right. Keep an eye out for the Seven Way sign that takes you down a narrow track on the left. You're on top of the bank that marks a sharp left turn for the river below.

Down a steep slope and into the meadows beside the Severn. From here it's river bank all the way with sandy slopes leading down to the

water's edge. As you near Shrewsbury you start to see its spires beyond the trees. Below the Mountfields part of the city, the track broadens **4**. Just where the river bends north you will find some steps taking you up to a terrace. The path onwards leads you along the back of the riverside houses. Look out for Darwin House **5** and the blue plaque that tells you that this is not the birthplace of the great naturalist (in case you were confused).

Down some steps to the river again and you soon emerge on the playing fields that nestle in the crook of the river. A track cuts the corner off and takes you through some scrubby trees and into park land. Stick to the river side on your left and you will soon find yourself heading past the footbridge **6** and on to our destination – the Welsh Bridge.

How you get back is your own business but the path looks just as good in reverse.



17

River **WYE**

Hereford to Breinton Common

City to country in seconds flat

17 River Wye - Hereford to Breinton Common



Hereford is not the biggest metropolis in the Western World but it is a bustling market city with a population of 55,000. So it's remarkable that you can get from Cathedral to open fields in about 20 minutes as you head west along the Wye.

There are plenty of suitable car parks in town. Try Bath Street (north east of the Cathedral). Walk south through the alley way, across St Owen's Street and down Mill Street towards the river. Castle Green is on your right – a rampart and a bit of a moat giving further clues to its history.

At the end of the road you can see Victoria Bridge 1, an elegant suspended walkway into the park land at Bishop's Meadow. Cross and turn right along the tree-lined path 2. As you near the old Wye Bridge you get a graphic reminder of one of the realities of living on a flood plain – chunky flood barriers border the river to protect bank-side houses. It's possible to walk along this stretch and be below the water level when the Wye is in full spate.

The old bridge is followed by the less pleasing but more practical Greyfriars Bridge with its four lanes of traffic. Once you're under this structure you are almost clear of the city. Half a kilometre further on, climb the embankment onto the old railway line and cross over the triple-span girder bridge 3 to the right bank.

	Type	Circular
	Location	Herefordshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 189
	How to get there	Bath Street car park, Hereford
	Start	52° 3'16.77"N 2°42'35.79"W
	Length	14.7km
	Duration	4hrs
	Severity	*
	Paths	****
	Stiles	***



Continue west and upstream along the Wye Valley Walk. In 600m or so you can peer over the fence at the miniature railway at Broomy Hill. Now truly out in the fields, the only sign of habitation is the occasional glimpse of houses on the other bank.

The path sticks to the river bank until you get to Lower Breinton. Where the field narrows, follow the rutted path up through the woods towards the village. Pass the church 4, into the lane and in 80m look for a gate through a hedge on the left. You cut

diagonally across a paddock, skirting a tennis court, and take the gate in the opposite corner. Up a track past some houses and then left into fields. Stay on the left edge of the fields until you see a stile that takes you steeply down into the sunken lane at Upper Breinton.

Turn left and follow the wiggly lane in a more-or-less westerly direction (fine views down towards the river) until you reach the small settlement of Breinton Common. The road climbs gently through the village. You're

looking for a lane on the right past some bungalows. At the top of the wooded track you come out into fields. From here you can see clear up the Wye Valley towards the Welsh border 5.

Head due east across the fields and down a track towards Upper Breinton again. When you hit the road, you can decide on the manner of your return. Turn right and then left at the first fork in the road. At the next junction, go right to return via Lower Breinton and the route along the riverbank.

Church Street, Hereford



Or straight on to return to Hereford via the lanes. If you choose the latter course, just head east until you hit the outskirts. You fetch up on Barton Road and then, after crossing the inner ring road (A49), you can see the Cathedral ahead of you.

At the north edge of the cathedral green there's an alley way (Church Street) leading onto High Street and the bigger shops. The "Old House"⁶ – an impressive black and white timber affair – stands in the middle of the street. Pass it on the right and back onto St Owen's Street. Another 400m and you're back at your car.

MOKA
BAR

OPENING HOURS
9.00AM - 5.30PM
Monday - Saturday

CLOSED

18

River **TROTHY**

Llantilio Crossenny to White Castle

Trip round the Trothy valley taking in one of the “Three Castles”

18 River Trothy- Llantilio Crossenny to White Castle

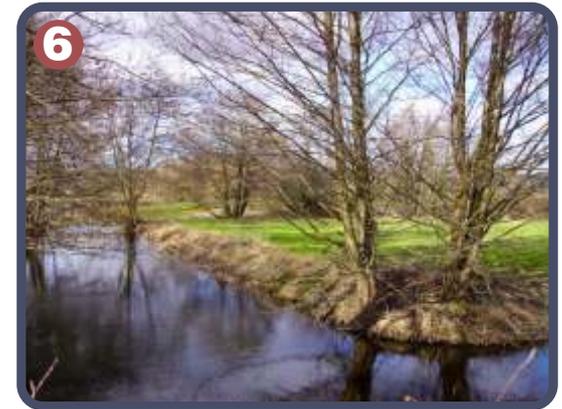


To be honest, you don't get to see much of the Afon Troddi on this walk. But it's a good excuse to get out in the quietest corner of the quietest of counties. And there's a real live castle in the middle.

You should be able to park on the road (B4233) near to one of the two turnings into the village of Llantilio Crossenny. Then set off to the south and west in the direction of the Sugar Loaf and Blorenghe Hills, either side of Abergavenny on the horizon. It's not a busy road but it has plenty of corners and brows, so take care.

The first objective is the village of Llanvapley. After 1300m on the road you come to a junction on the left. Our path takes you down this lane and towards the Trothy. You can skip this

	Type	Circular
	Location	Monmouthshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 13
	How to get there	Take the B4233 west from Rockfield (north west of Monmouth). Park by the turning into Llantilio Crossenny village
	Start	51°49'49.16"N 2°52'44.47"W
	Length	13.8km
	Duration	4½hrs
	Severity	**
	Paths	**
	Stiles	***



loop and just sail on along the road to Llanvapley – it's not the most epic of diversions but it does get you off the main road. Assuming you are still with me, walk south down the lane until you come to the bridge over the river. Another 150m takes you to the turning into Llwynderi Farm on the right.

At the end of the short drive, turn right across the small paddock, past the pond and over the gate in the corner diagonally opposite. It's very easy to get lost in this maze of fields (at least, I did!) so keep checking the map.

There's a gap in the hedge opposite. Veer right towards the corner of the next field and over the little brook. Keep the hedgerow on your left until you find a gap into another large field. Head for the tree in the middle of the field and keep straight on until you find the next gate. One more field and you're at the end of a farm track (heading West North West). Under the shadow of the giant electricity pylon and through the farm buildings at Lower Ton. The track swings north until you hit the road again at Llanvapley.

Turn left and past the pink (last time I looked) church **1** and then a right turn north and up the hill out of the village. After a steady climb for 650m, the road bends slightly to the left and you carry straight on over the fields towards Manor Farm. Stay on the right of the first field until you find a gap. Straight over the next field, heading for the trees. Then right hand side of the next two until you reach the farm. The path takes you left and then right into the farm yard. On the other side, turn left and look for a gate into the

plantation ❷. Follow the path to the middle and then turn due north down the slope and the line of the trees. There's a footbridge at the bottom. Keep going northish until you reach the road near Pantcolyn Bridge. Left here and up the hill towards Llanvetherine. Where the road bends sharply left, there's an old sunken track ahead of you that takes you down to the back of the church. Last time I went it was a bit of a muddy

flume so you might want to consider the road instead. Anyway, through the churchyard ❸ and onto B4521.

Turn left towards Caggle Street where you should be able to pick up the Offa's Dyke Path where it crosses the road. Turn right and south. After a couple of fields, the trail leads to a footbridge ❹ over the Trothy and up the bank towards White Castle ❺. Don't skip the castle – it's certainly one of the finest in the Marches. Every bit

the Hollywood ruin with its huge moat and imposing gate towers. You can even climb one of the towers for a stunning view of the path you've just forged.

It's down the lanes now to get back to Llantilio Crossenny. Just before you arrive at your starting point, have a look for the Old Court Moat ❻. It's on your left as you near the junction with the B4233.

Looking south from the Gatehouse, White Castle



19

River **SEVERN**

Bridgnorth to Apley Forge

Up the river through golfing
and angling country
and into a wooded gorge

19 River Severn - Bridgnorth to Apley Forge

Bridgnorth is a bit of a surprise. The Low Town, once a busy port, stands on the east bank of the Severn. It's overlooked by High Town on the hill opposite. The two are connected by a splendid bridge and a funicular railway. Definitely worth poking around its narrow streets and wonky castle.

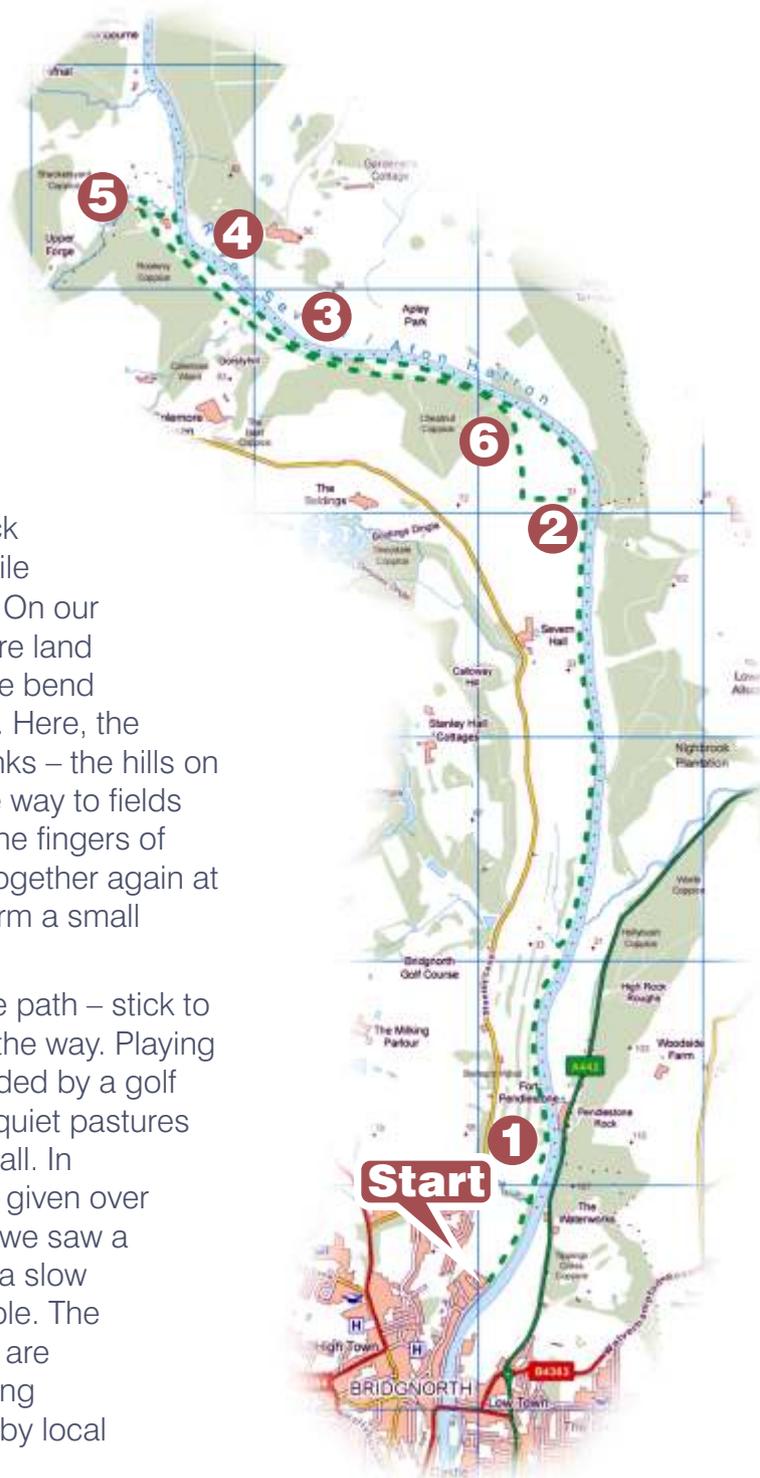
But we're going upstream. There are a few parking spaces at the end of Southwell Riverside (turn right at the end of the Severn bridge, going west). The road gives way to the recreation ground that flanks the river.

Ahead, on the east bank, the skyline is dominated by the craggy High Rock

1. The strangely crenulated Fort Pendlestone (really an old sandstone textile

mill) sits below it. On our side it's flat pasture land until you get to the bend before Apley Hall. Here, the terrain swaps banks – the hills on the east side give way to fields and vice versa. The fingers of high land come together again at Apley Forge to form a small gorge.

You can't miss the path – stick to the river bank all the way. Playing fields are succeeded by a golf course. Then it's quiet pastures up past Severn Hall. In summer, they are given over to cereal crops – we saw a grass snake and a slow worm in the stubble. The banks of the river are colonised by fishing platforms owned by local



	Type	There and back(ish)
	Location	Shropshire
	Maps	OS Explorer 218
	How to get there	Turn right at the end of the Severn bridge heading into Bridgnorth (B4363) and drive along Riverside towards the playing fields

Start 52°32'20.40"N
2°24'49.67"W

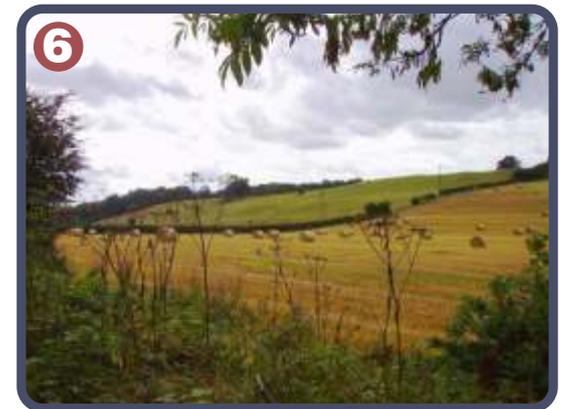
Length 12.4km

Duration 3½hrs

Severity *

Paths ****

Stiles ****



angling associations. The ubiquitous Himalayan Balsam with its pink blooms dominates until mid autumn, whereupon it forms seed pods which explode when jostled, scattering seeds in every direction. Endlessly entertaining.

As the river bends ②, the fields give way to woods and the path is squeezed between the hills and the water. Look out for the gothic mansion that is Apley Hall ③ on the opposite bank. The lack of roads on either bank here means that walking is the only

way into the gorge. Unless you are an angler - they seem to have vehicular access along the old railway track.

After about 6km you catch sight of Apley Forge Bridge ④ through the trees (see Walk 6 for the path down from Ironbridge). As an alternative to retracing your steps, turn left just beyond the bridge and walk 50m or so up to some cottages and the road onto the bridge. Barely a cart's width wide, the bridge is gated so you can't access the other bank. So carry on up the track until you reach the disused

railway line. The track runs back south, past the lovely old station signed Linley ⑤. In two and a bit kilometres you are back in the open fields again ⑥. You can follow the track back into town if you want to (involves a fair bit of road). Or cross over to the riverside and retrace your original path.

Looking north from the golf course



20

River **WYYE**

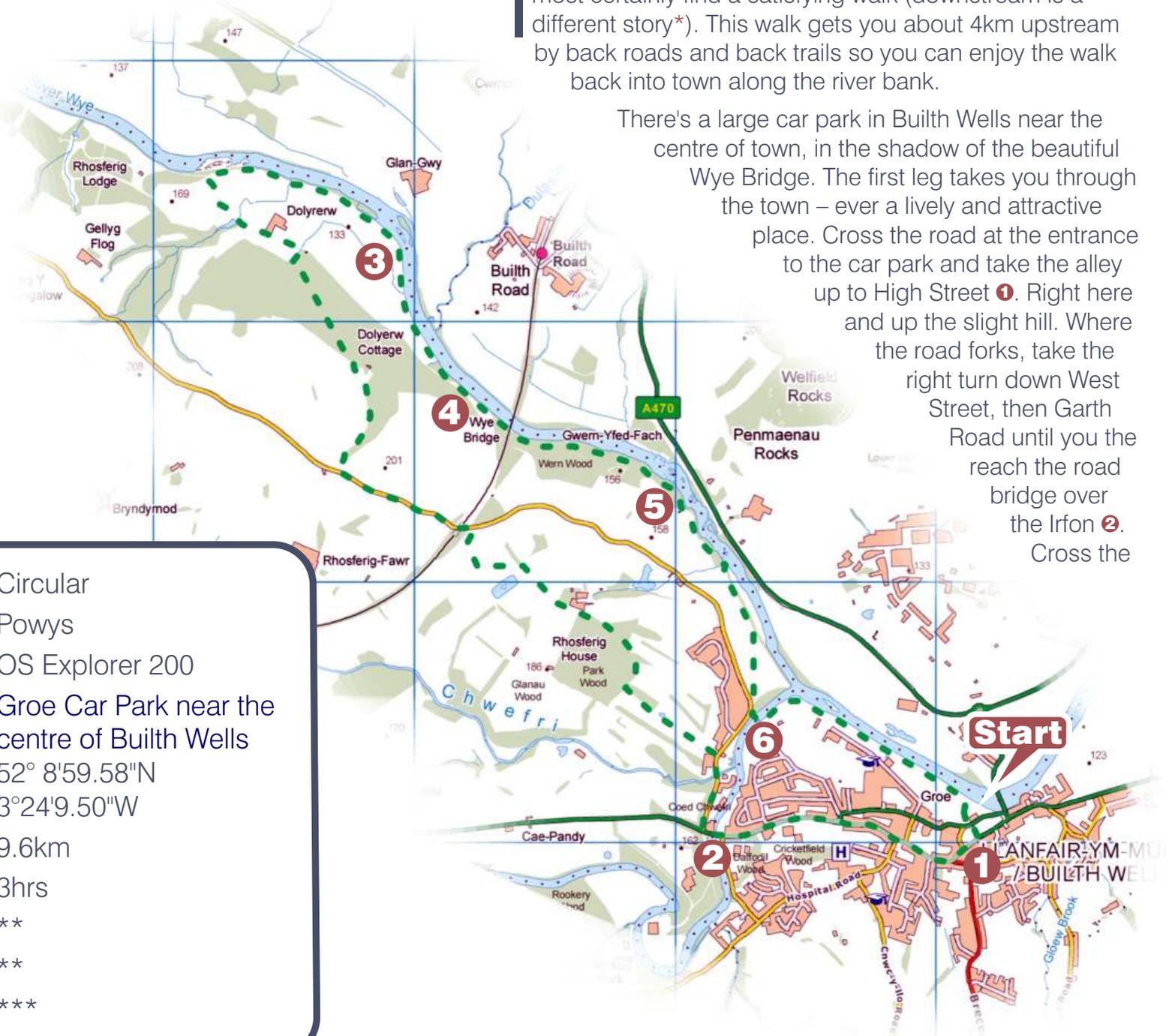
Builth Wells

Out of town, north through farms,
lanes and woods, back on the river

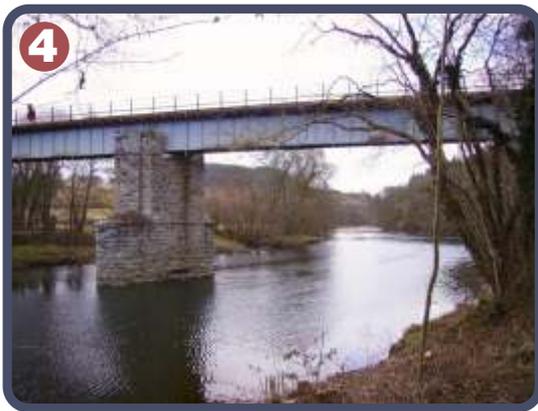
20 River Wye - Builth Wells

If you set off north along the Wye from Builth Wells you will most certainly find a satisfying walk (downstream is a different story*). This walk gets you about 4km upstream by back roads and back trails so you can enjoy the walk back into town along the river bank.

There's a large car park in Builth Wells near the centre of town, in the shadow of the beautiful Wye Bridge. The first leg takes you through the town – ever a lively and attractive place. Cross the road at the entrance to the car park and take the alley up to High Street 1. Right here and up the slight hill. Where the road forks, take the right turn down West Street, then Garth Road until you reach the road bridge over the Irfon 2. Cross the



- | | | |
|--|-------------------------|--|
| | Type | Circular |
| | Location | Powys |
| | Maps | OS Explorer 200 |
| | How to get there | Groer Car Park near the centre of Builth Wells |
| | Start | 52° 8'59.58"N
3°24'9.50"W |
| | Length | 9.6km |
| | Duration | 3hrs |
| | Severity | ** |
| | Paths | ** |
| | Stiles | *** |



bridge and turn right along Golf Links Road.

Turn into the golf club (on the left) and follow the path west towards the hill along the avenue of stumpy trees. At the edge of the links, follow the path to the right around Park Wood hill. Pass the buildings at Park Wells on your right, across a small heath and round the north east corner of the ponds ahead. Follow the path across the next field – head for the tree where the track intersects with a drive. Turn right along the drive and in 150m you

will come out on the road. Go left and cross, almost immediately, the railway bridge – a single track in a steep cutting. Climb the steepish hill for half a kilometre until it levels out a Rhoscwm. There's a wooded track that runs north along the ridge and into the woods at Dolyewr Cottage. Stay on the left side of the woods until the track starts to wind to the west. Then it cuts down the scarp until you emerge at Dolyewr Farm. The bridle path runs along the metalled lane, east and north until you reach the banks of the Wye.

At Plum Tree Pool, turn east and follow the track along the edges of the fields butting up against the Wye ③. The river here is fast and shimmering and absolutely gorgeous. The shelf next to the river narrows, with trees marching down the slope, and you get a sight of the railway bridge ahead ④. Pass under the solid footings of the bridge and climb the track up to a higher path through a pine plantation.

In 750m you arrive at the spectacular Pen-ddol Rocks ⑤ where the river crashes and twists through an

outcrop of harder stone. Now it's meadows and playing fields until you meet an obstacle in the form of the River Irfon where it joins the Wye 6. Cross the last field diagonally, heading for the road in the right hand corner. Shortly thereafter you will see the handsome footbridge that takes you over the Irfon and into the park. As you round the corner and rejoin the Wye, you can see the town bridge in front of you. Follow the path through the park, down the avenue of trees and past the rugby pitches until you reach the car park once more.

* *Beautiful gorge but roads on each side and no footpath. Shame.*

