

# **WALKING THE SHROPSHIRE WAY**

**A TWO-WEEK CIRCULAR TRAIL INCLUDING THE  
WREKIN, STIPERSTONES AND WENLOCK EDGE**

**by John Gillham**

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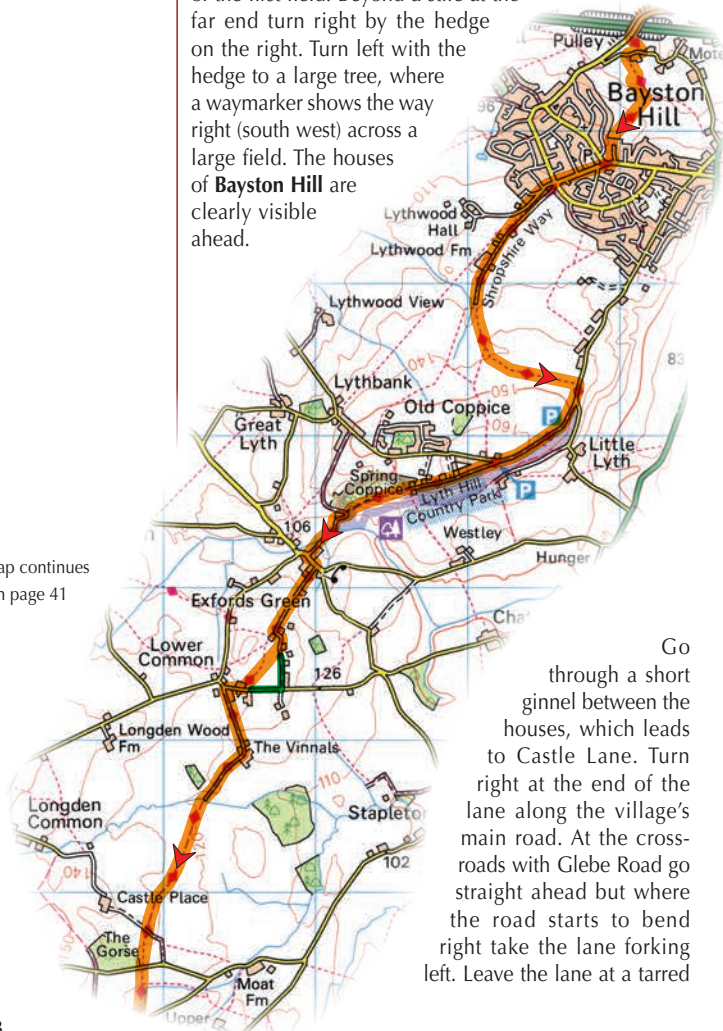
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Front cover: Passing the Devil's Chair on the Stiperstones ridge

the left and cross a field to a country lane at **Pulley**. Turn right, passing Pulley House before turning left over a stile, quickly followed by a gate before tracing the left edge of the first field. Beyond a stile at the far end turn right by the hedge on the right. Turn left with the hedge to a large tree, where a waymarker shows the way right (south west) across a large field. The houses of **Bayston Hill** are clearly visible ahead.

Map continues  
on page 41



Go through a short ginnel between the houses, which leads to Castle Lane. Turn right at the end of the lane along the village's main road. At the crossroads with Glebe Road go straight ahead but where the road starts to bend right take the lane forking left. Leave the lane at a tarred

parking area, keeping to the left of a youth centre building. The enclosed path passes some allotments. Watch out for a waymarked left turn onto a farm lane where you turn right. The lane soon passes through **Lythwood Farm**. This gradually curves left across huge fields. Where it ends, aim for the left side of a covered reservoir at the far end of the field.

## LYTH HILL



*Lyth Hill in blossom*

Although it is less than 170m above sea level, Lyth Hill, the first real hill on the walk, offers superb views over the surrounding hills and plains of Shropshire. Looking north among chequered pastures of grass, cereal crops and the odd bright gold of rape are the spires and rooftops of Shrewsbury, framed by the bold outlines of the Wrekin and the hills of the Welsh border. To the east the ridges of Lawley and Caer Caradoc dominate. The serrated outline of the Stiperstones lying to the southwest offers a promise of the day to come.

Three hundred years ago flax and hemp ropes for ships, mines and factories were built here and exported all over the world.

Spring Cottage on the edge of the hill was once home to Mary Webb and her husband Henry. After their separation and in ill health she returned to the cottage. She died in the same year.

Turn right along the lane then at the **Lyth Hill car park** take the track on the right. This rises along the crest of the hill.

The most beautiful part of the path descends and rakes along the southern side of the ridge, across slopes where gorse, broom and bluebells thrive alongside fruit trees. It continues through the trees of **Spring Coppice**, which were planted to commemorate the Queen's Jubilee.

By a red-bricked dwelling take the left fork lane and follow it down to a junction, where you turn left, then right on an unsurfaced lane leading to **Exfords Green**. Stay with the lane as it bends left, then right to round a farm, then, opposite a whitewashed house, turn right through a pedestrian gate following SW waymarks on an enclosed path, which can be overgrown with nettles and brambles in summer. Another gate leads into a large field. Turn left into a field and aim half-left to follow the hedge on the left side. At the far end an enclosed path over a stile on the left leads out to the road near Little Vinnals.

If the above route is too choked with vegetation, stay with the unsurfaced lane to meet the road near Little Vinnals 250m east of the previously described route.

Turn right along the road and left along a farm track by the Hollies (cottage). At **The Vinnals** (farm) go through the farmyard and turn right on a stone and dirt track. Where the track fords a stream, use the footbridge on the right.

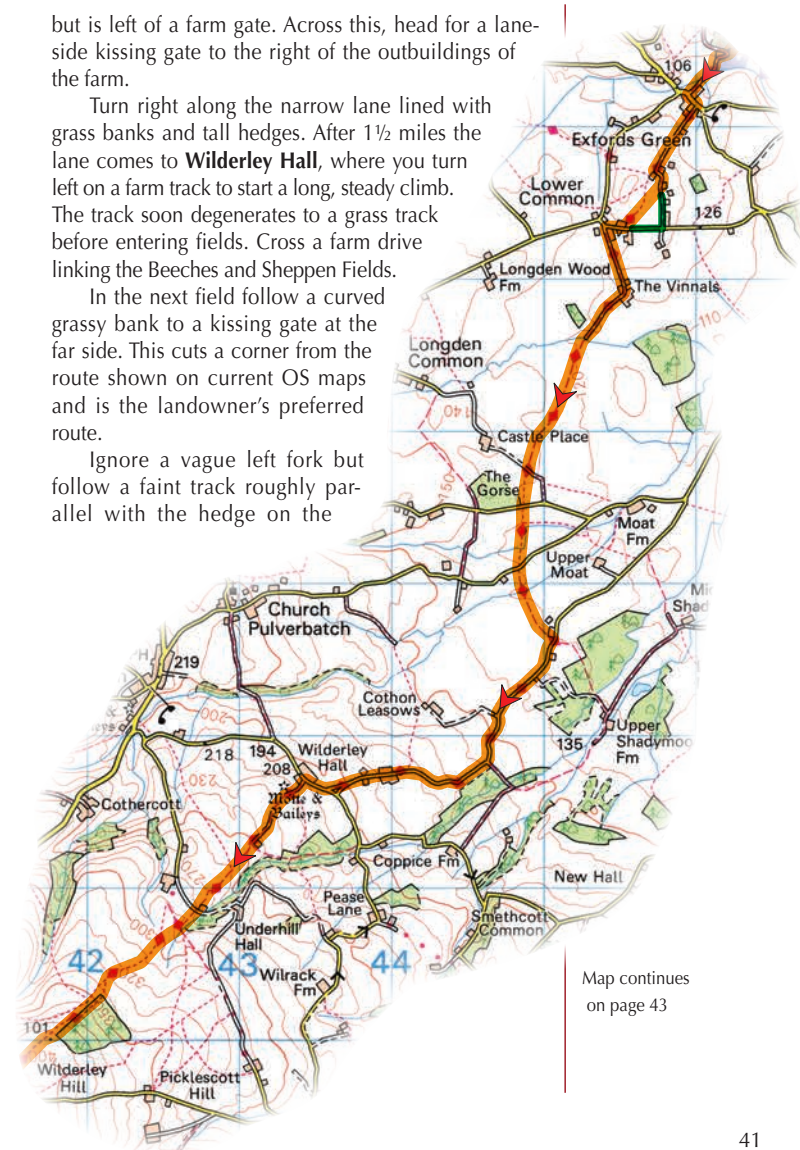
Beyond the stream and what can be a muddy area, the Shropshire Way continues along a hedge-lined green lane. Cross the track from **Castle Place** and head south across a field towards the woodland of **The Gorse**. The route meets a country lane at a kissing gate just to the left of the woodland perimeter. Go through the kissing gate on the far side of the lane and continue south across a field. Go across a footbridge at the halfway point before coming out at another country lane with the ongoing footpath staggered to the right beyond another gate. The cross-field path follows field-edges on the left and crosses the first of two footbridges. Keep the bungalow of Cottage Farm well to the left as you cross the next field towards the second footbridge which is slightly obscured by trees

but is left of a farm gate. Across this, head for a lane-side kissing gate to the right of the outbuildings of the farm.

Turn right along the narrow lane lined with grass banks and tall hedges. After 1½ miles the lane comes to **Wilderley Hall**, where you turn left on a farm track to start a long, steady climb. The track soon degenerates to a grass track before entering fields. Cross a farm drive linking the Beeches and Sheppen Fields.

In the next field follow a curved grassy bank to a kissing gate at the far side. This cuts a corner from the route shown on current OS maps and is the landowner's preferred route.

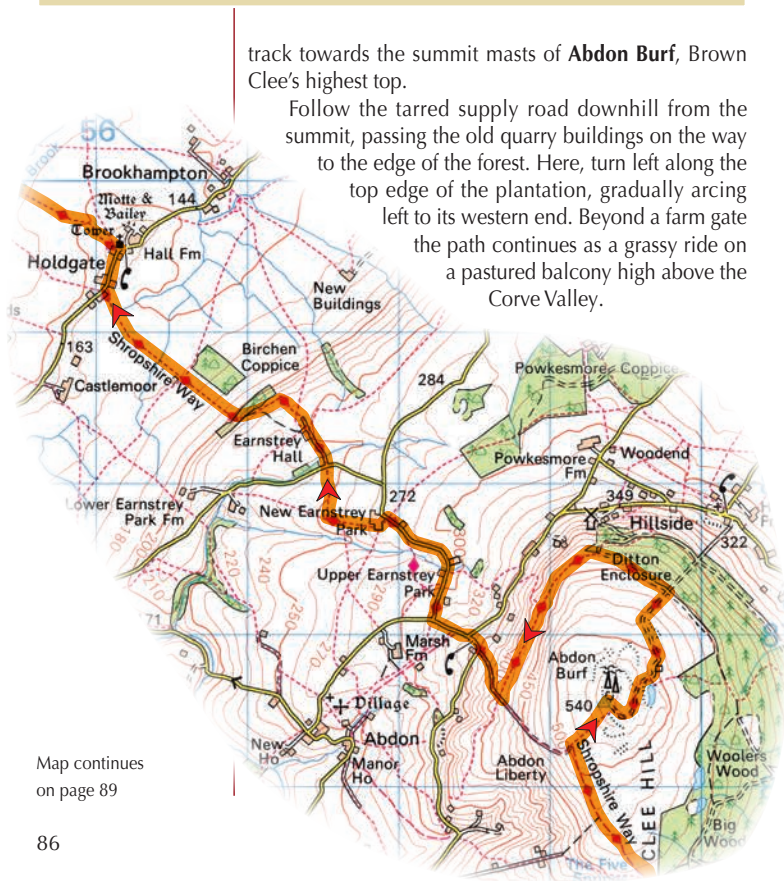
Ignore a vague left fork but follow a faint track roughly parallel with the hedge on the



such tragedies. The summit is crowned by a trig point and a view indicator. Being the highest point of Shropshire, Brown Clew has uninterrupted views of all the county and its hills, including the Stretton Hills, the Long Mynd and the spiky crest of Stiperstones, with Snowdonia, the Malvern Hills and the Brecon Beacons appearing if conditions are clear enough. To the east across the Wyre Forest, the horizon pales to the flatlands of the Black Country. Nearer to hand you'll be able to see the views over pastoral Corvedale and Wenlock Edge where you may well be spending the night.

track towards the summit masts of **Abdon Burf**, Brown Clew's highest top.

Follow the tarred supply road downhill from the summit, passing the old quarry buildings on the way to the edge of the forest. Here, turn left along the top edge of the plantation, gradually arcing left to its western end. Beyond a farm gate the path continues as a grassy ride on a pastured balcony high above the Corve Valley.



Map continues on page 89



*Descending Brown Clew Hill towards the Corve Valley*

The path is clear for most of this section but beyond a gate at SO 588 869 it fades. However, the raised earthworks of an old wall above and left run parallel to the correct line and take it to a delightful sunken brideway track, which descends the hillside of Abdon Liberty to a country lane.

On reaching the lane turn right down to a junction, where you turn left along a lane signed 'Abdon Village Hall', then right, on one signed 'Earnstrey'. After 200 metres go over a step-stile on the left and follow the hedge on the left, round the side and back of a sloping field. Cross two footbridges over streamlets and, over another stile by a gate, climb on a grass and dirt track back to a lane. Turn left along the lane, passing New Earnstrey Park Farm before turning left at the next junction.

Follow the stony, grass-islanded track to **Earnstrey Hall**. This degenerates into a grassy, hedge-lined track beyond the houses. Where the track turns left, go straight on through a gate, then over a stile into fields.

## STAGE 12

*Wem to Ellesmere and Whitchurch*

<b>Start</b>	St Peter and Paul's Church, Wem
<b>Finish</b>	High Street, Ellesmere
<b>Distance</b>	14½ miles (23.4km)
<b>Ascent</b>	120m
<b>Descent</b>	105m
<b>Time</b>	6hr
<b>Terrain</b>	Field paths, country lanes, canal towpath, town streets
<b>Map</b>	OS Explorer 241
<b>Supplies</b>	Wem, Ellesmere
<b>Note</b>	Section 12 has two main route alternatives from Welsh End Corner. One continues the circle to Ellesmere while the other visits Whitchurch and Grindley Brook Locks, which links with the Sandstone Trail. The Whitchurch route is written in both directions, enabling the historic market town to be used as both a finishing point for those who want to cut short the route or for a starting point for those who want to do the whole. For distances and height gain to Whitchurch see box on P134.

The Ellesmere route is highlighted by glacial mosses and meres, fascinating places for flora and fauna. The route also joins the Llangollen branch of the Shropshire Union Canal, which offers a well-paced walk into Ellesmere.

Starting from St Peter and Paul's Church on the High Street in **Wem** head east past the town hall to the Castle Inn. Turn left along a little ginnel on the far side of the inn and follow it for around 400 metres. On reaching Pyms Road cross it and go up Wemsbrook Road, which is opposite and staggered slightly to the right. Turn right on Marlcroft, the third road on the right. Ignore the first left but follow the road around the left-hand bend, which soon comes to a cul-de-sac. Go through another ginnel ahead, highlighted by a Shropshire Way post, to reach

Barnfield Avenue, where you turn right for a few paces before continuing through a hedge-lined passageway which soon turns left into fields on the edge of town.

Map continues on page 131

A clear path, enclosed by hedges and a fence at first, heads north across the fields to a lane at **Ryebank**, along which the route turns right. At the T-junction the Way goes through a kissing gate staggered slightly to the left across the road and follows the hedge on the left at first. In the second field it aims for the left side of a tree-surrounded pond before angling left across the corner of a field. The orange Shropshire Way signs highlight the route across more stiles as the route heads north across a huge field, which often has crops in it. Aim slightly to the right of a large tree among some bushes and towards a distant white house. The trees turn out to be the surrounds of a large pond. Continue towards a white house to the left of which a track will lead out to the road opposite St Mary's Church on the edges of **Edstaston**.

**St Mary's Church** is a Grade I listed 12th-century church, built with local sandstone. It has been described as one of the most complete Romanesque buildings in Shropshire. The church's combined nave and chancel including the three doorways are all Norman, while the bellcote and vestry were added in the 19th century.

