



Ross on Wye Walkers are Welcome

Joyce's Walk from Bailey Lane End

A lovely 4 mile circular walk with great views and interesting features, passing through woods and fields to Hope Mansell. The walk then follows a hilly route to the lane near Harechurch Wood and Horn Hill Farm.

Start: Park at Bailey Lane End, at the Forestry lay-by on the road between Ryeford and Drybrook. Do not obstruct access to the woodland.

Grid Ref: SO 643195.

Map: Outdoor Leisure 14.

Distance: 4 miles. **Grade:** Moderate. Stiles: 4.

1. Climb over the stile, or cross over, or around the forestry barrier and walk straight on, into the wood, for about 50 yards. At this point five tracks meet, including the one you are on. Take the second track on the left. It is the only one that goes downhill. Follow the track downhill into the conifer woodland. It can be a bit muddy in places. At the foot of the slope the track bears right and runs parallel to a small brook (Bailey Brook) on your left. There are glimpses of meadows through the trees on the left. After passing what looks like a holiday cottage, called Oak Tree, the woodland changes to broad leaf trees, mainly beech. Woodpeckers can be heard along this stretch of the walk.

2. Go left at the T-junction just after Oak Tree. After about 300 yards you come to another T-junction. Take a left turn, downhill past Lilly Cottage (a white cottage on the right). Head, downhill, towards Bailey Brook Cottage and pass to the right of it. Continue to descend the path to a stile and a small bridge over the stream.



3. After crossing the bridge go straight ahead, with the stream to your right, for about 50 yards and cross another small stream by an earth bridge. You are now at the foot of a short, but steep, hill with a fence and pedestrian gate on the skyline. Climb the short hill and pass through the gate. After the gate look to the right for a lovely view towards Weston under Penyard and beyond. Follow the path straight ahead through the field to another stile in the hedge. Cross the stile and descend the steps onto a lane.



4. You have now reached the village of Hope Mansell and are standing outside the Old School House and the small village hall, both on the left. Continue down the lane to a junction with a tarmacked lane. Immediately opposite is a prominent display cabinet containing information about the walks in and around Hope Mansell. Turn left and walk up the lane for about 150 yards to St Michael's Church.

St Michael's is an attractive stone church, probably built in the 12th or 13th century. According to the information in the church, existing Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths date from 1556 and it is interesting to note that English replaced Latin from about 1590. Other fascinating facts reveal that the font is about 700 years old and, "the sturdy rafters have survived six centuries".

5. After leaving the church, turn left and continue up the lane for about 400 yards to where a finger post points to the right up a short lane where two five-bar metal gates can be seen. Go up the lane and go through the gate to the right. Please remember to close the gate. Continue up the steep-sided lane and take time to look at the fascinating rock formations with trees growing from and between them.

Emergence from the sunken lane into a field, with good views over Hope Mansell to your right.



6. Follow the hedge on your left as it curves left up the field. Head towards a prominent five-bar gate with a new pedestrian gate alongside it. Go through the pedestrian gate (check that it had closed behind you, sometimes it does not) and continue up the field close to the fence with woodland on your right. Keep alongside the fence, under low hanging tree branches and alongside more interesting rock formations, many of which are covered in bright green moss. Towards the top of the slope, turn right through another new gate. Keep right across a small field and pass through another new self-closing gate into a field. Continue ahead, towards a 4-bar gate where a stile will be found leading onto a lane at a T junction. There is a cottage called High Stones on the junction. Take a moment to look to the right where an extensive view of the Black Mountains can be enjoyed on a good day.

7. Turn left down the lane, past the cottage. The lane goes down quite steeply. Walk for about 200 yards down the hill until you reach a bench seat (donated by M F Freeman) on the left.

From this seat you can see virtually the whole of the route so far. The view is wonderful and, as you sit in almost total silence, you can almost hear Elgar's Enigma Variations playing gently in the background. This is, truly, rural England at its best.

Continue downhill and along the lane for about 700 yards, past the entrance to Horn Hill Farm and the junction with the lane to Hope Mansell. Just after the road junction the lane goes slightly uphill. Pass Twizling Farm on your left and then, after 30 yds, turn left onto a byway. The byway sign is tight against the fence on the left and easy to miss, but the entrance to the byway is obvious.

8. Walk along the byway with fields and nice views on the left and the pleasant Harechurch Wood to the right. As you emerge from the woodland you arrive onto an open lane at Hom Grove Farm. On the right, a wonderful spring gushes from the hedge. Walk on along the track and, just before reaching the road, pause to admire one of the bridges over one of the many disused railway lines in the Forest of Dean. Where the track meets the road, turn left, and walk with care back to the start, as the traffic travels very quickly,



