

Ross on Wye Walkers are Welcome

From Woolhope to Sollers Hope in stile

Parking/Start: In Woolhope village. There is some street parking by the wall of The Crown public house. The car park for patrons of The Crown is behind the pub. (GR: 612356)

Map: OS map; Explorer 189

Distance: 5½ miles

Grade: Moderate. **Stiles:** 13, or 16 if official route is followed at Hyde Farm, plus one footbridge that requires a high step over at either end

Refreshments: The Crown Inn, Woolhope (01432 860468) www.crowninnwoolhope.co.uk The Butchers Arms, Woolhope (01432 860281)

1. With the Crown Inn behind you turn left and follow the road, signposted Ledbury. Just past the last building on the right, called The Stonebarn, cross the stile on the right into a field. Keeping the fence on the right, head towards a gap in the hedge. In the next field, walk towards the telegraph pole and the edge of a line of trees. From this point, head diagonally left downhill towards a stile in the corner of the field. Go over this stile and another immediately on your right to enter an orchard. Bear diagonally left through the trees and cross a stream. Then head uphill across a field towards the Marcle transmitter visible on the ridge ahead of you. Following the same line, head towards a stile in the corner of the field.

2. Cross the stile and turn right into the lane. After a few yards turn left at the junction of the lanes. At the end of the metal fence on the right, cross a stile and head diagonally left across the field towards a line of trees marking a drainage ditch. With the ditch on your left walk along until you reach a little three plank footbridge (easily missed). Cross and head diagonally right across the field. Cross another stile and head straight towards the brow of the hill. OS maps show the footpath as following a field boundary, but this has been removed. From the brow of the hill head towards a corner of the fence and follow the fence downhill towards the wood. Cross the stile and find yourself in a delightful little dell with a bubbling stream on your right. Head in the same direction as before towards Sollers Hope church in the distance, over one stile and gradually towards the stream on the right. Go over the stile next to the pets' headstones in the meadow. Still keeping close to the stream go through a metal gate and then bear left through a wooden gate into the church yard of St Michael's Church, Sollers Hope.



The Sollers Hope (valley) belonged to the Whittington family from 1300 to 1546 and the 14th century church is believed to have been financed by Robert Whittington, elder brother of Dick, thrice mayor of London. It is worth pausing to take a look inside. Behind the church is a tump, the remains of a single elliptical camp which marked the most southerly fortification in the wars between the Romans and the Britons.

3. From the church door, turn left and follow the path through the gate. Walk past Sollers Court, cross the track, and go through a decorative archway and a gate into the grassy farmyard. Keeping the stream on your right follow the path through two walkers' gates into an old orchard. The stream goes off to the right, but the footpath follows the line of a fence (on your right), across a stile and towards a converted barn. By the converted barn, go through a wooden kissing gate into the lane and turn left. After a few yards, cross the lane, go through the gate and pick up a broad track running alongside the stream, now flowing through attractive ponds and waterfalls. Head towards a gap in the hedge and uphill across the field to a stile. Once over the stile, turn left and follow the lane over the stream. Shortly after the stream the lane splits into two.

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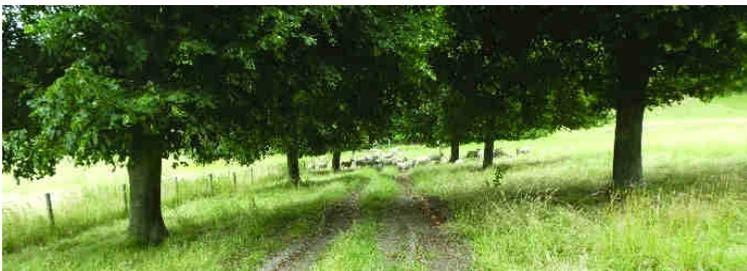
Note the amount of mistletoe on the trees. Mistletoe may be a rarity in other parts of the country, but it grows in abundance in the old orchards of Herefordshire.

4. Bear left up the stony track. Just past Greyhill Barn take the farm track on the left. Head towards the line of trees facing you and follow the track. Ignore the official footpath to the left through the fields since the route was obstructed at the time of writing. It is much easier to follow the farm track all the way to Sapness House after which you reach a lane.

5. At the junction with the lane, turn sharp left and go over the hill. Just before a T-junction take the footpath over the cattle grid on the right, using either the stile or the field gate. The path follows a broad track towards Hyde Farm. At the farm, the public right of way has been officially diverted to the left, over three stiles and a stream to the farmyard. As an alternative it is much simpler to stay on the farm track to the farmyard.



6. Turn left just after the two old barns and immediately, turn very sharp right (at waymarker) and up the steep path through Hyde Wood. When the path turns sharply to the left, carry straight on over a stile into a field. This is a large field and it is best to go straight ahead, ascending slightly, until you see a stile diagonally left in the field. Cross the stile onto a broad track through Busland Wood.



7. Leave the wood through a metal gate onto open pasture. Follow the same course towards the prominent limekilns in the field. The view from this point back towards Woolhope is spectacular. On a clear day Hay Bluff should be visible. Just before the limekilns go left with the woods on your right and through a field gate to a farm track.

Lime had many uses from medieval times; for sweetening the land, in building and in the leather-making industry for removing the hair from hides prior to tanning.

Keep downhill on this track for 800 m until it becomes a tarmac lane and then meets the road, with The Butchers Arms on your right. Turn left and proceed uphill, passing Blackhouse Barn and back to Woolhope village and The Crown Inn if you wish, where you can award yourself some welcome refreshment.



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