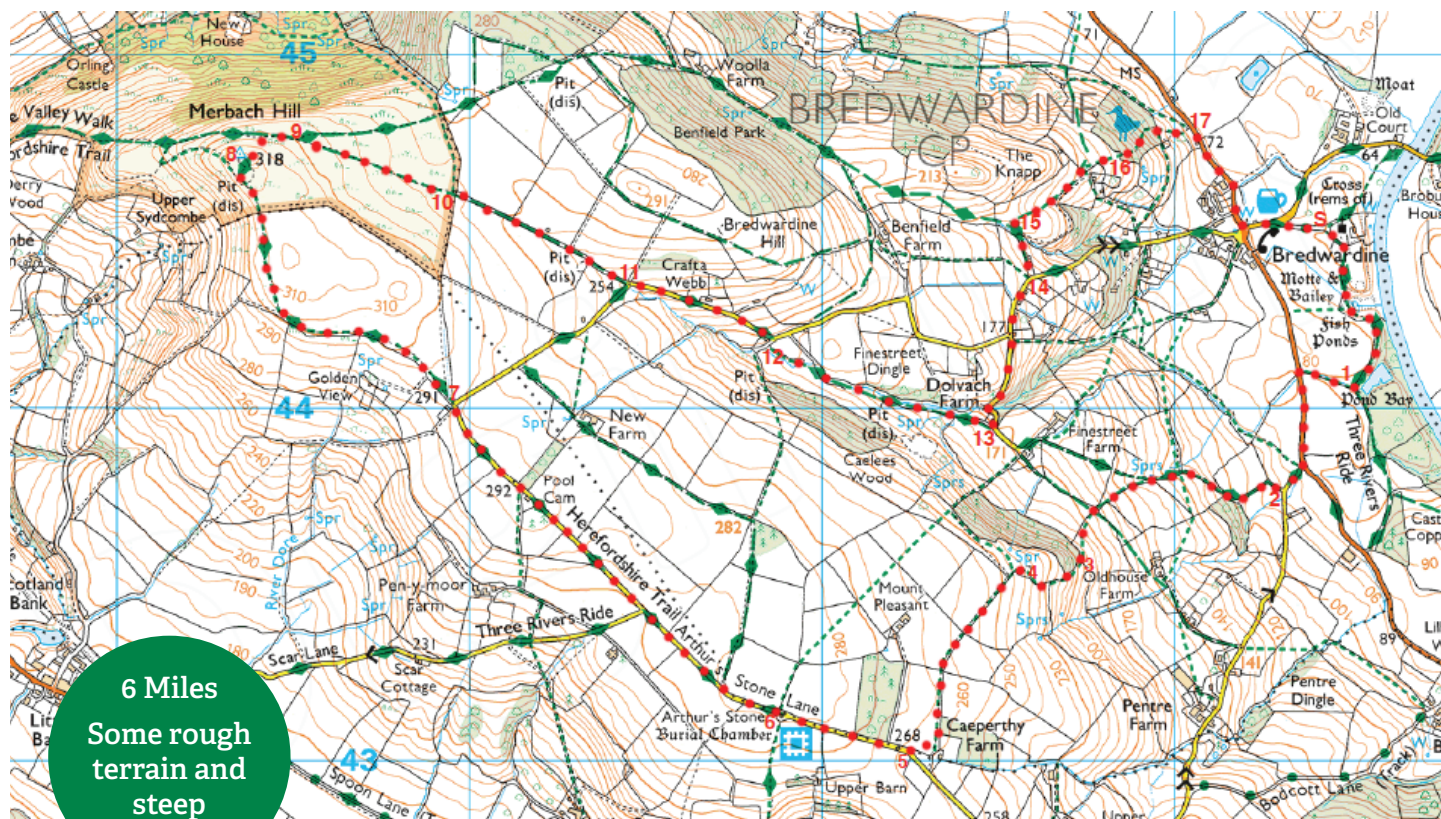
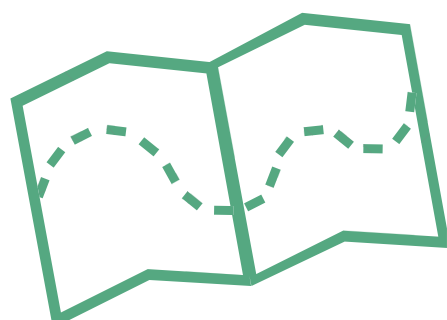


A fascinating tour around Bredwardine

BY NIC HOWES



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A walk steeped in deep history, with widely varied terrain and wildlife habitats and many great, wide views.

Start: Bredwardine church

Facing the church from the drive, follow the fingerpost along the brideway to the right. Pass through a gate of sorts and walk down the holloway; at the bottom, ignore the faint path off to the left, cross, and start a gentle climb, ignoring the path leading to a stile on the right. At the top of the rise, keep straight on through a metal farm gate, with the **River Wye** below on your left. Descend the path ahead beside oaks on your left with **Pond Bay ancient fishpond** beyond them. At the head of the pond cross a wooden bridge and then note a right turn over a stile (**Point 1**) before continuing ahead to a Natural England interpretation board that explains the interesting history of this site.

Retrace your steps to the stile noted before (**Point 1**) and cross it into a field. Turn right and keep the field boundary close on your right to reach the B4352 road. Turn left, cross the road to face oncoming traffic and proceed with caution towards the next junction, on the right. As you

walk into the junction, **Moccas Park Woodland** – National Nature Reserve – is straight ahead. Turn right at the junction, ignore the fingerpost pointing over a stile and continue uphill on the tarmac to a Public Bridleway fingerpost (**Point 2**). Follow this brideway, bend left to then pass through a wooden gate and ascend beside a field boundary to reach the edge of the Trust's **Wern Wood** reserve.

With **Wern Wood** straight ahead the brideway turns right and you should follow it in this direction (unless you wish to continue straight ahead through the metal farm gate into the reserve to explore it). Follow the brideway up to a wooden gate, pass through it and continue ahead along the right hand rim of a holloway; views now begin to open up to the north, across the flat expanses of a former pre-glacial lake bed that now contains the Trust reserve **The Sturts**. Pass through a wooden gate and follow the grass track uphill ahead, keeping the field boundary on your left. After a steep

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climb, pass through a waymarked wooden gate at the top corner of the field; the distinctive wedge-shaped **Clee Hill** is now clearly visible in the distance if you turn round to look behind you. Cross the next field with its boundary on your right and then follow the yellow footpath waymark through a metal farm gate and continue straight uphill towards the edge of the wood ahead, aiming to skirt round its left hand corner, at which point you will find and cross a waymarked stile beyond an overhanging hazel tree (**Point 3**). Once over the stile you curve right round the edge of the wood, climbing as you go and keeping the wood and then a field boundary close on your right. Cross a stile to the left of a metal farm gate and continue to curve right to find a waymarked stile, which you should also cross. Beyond the stile you will encounter the ruins of **Bottrell Farm** (**Point 4**), believed to be active up to the 1880s at least, and linked to the “**lost village**” of **Crafta Webb** nearby. Climb the gradient above the ruins, now keeping the field boundary on your left, and reach and cross a stile into a more level field where you should continue ahead with the field boundary still on your left. Pass through a metal farm gate and over a stile; on this section you can see the stone boundary wall of **Moccas Park** in the distance on your left. Once over the stile aim for Caeperty Farm and as you approach those buildings you should divert from the footpath marked on the map and turn right towards a metal farm gate to the right of the buildings and wind turbine. Cross the stile next to the metal farm gate and enter the surfaced lane (**Point 5**).

Turn right up the surfaced lane after crossing the stile, with great views of **Vagar Hill** and the **Black Mountains** on your left. The wood on your right has a distinct boundary ditch with yews growing along it at intervals. You will soon reach the ancient monument of **Arthur's Stone** (**Point 6**), a good spot for a break and to admire the view; an interpretation board recounts the history of this site. C.S. Lewis visited this area and was reportedly so impressed with Arthur's Stone that he used it as the model for the stone upon which Aslan the lion was sacrificed in his Narnia stories.

Continue along the surfaced straight ridgeway to a slight kink to the right and at this point you can look to the far horizon on your left to attempt to pick out the distinctive hilltop clump of trees at **The Roundabout** on The



Arthur's Stone - an inspiration for C.S. Lewis

Begwns, across the Wye Valley. The next section of the lane may inspire followers of **Alfred Watkins' "Old Straight Track" ideas**, although not all landscape historians agree with them. Continue straight ahead – ignoring the turn down to The Bage – to reach first Pwll Cwm and then Caemawr (**Point 7**).

Where the tarmac lane bends right angle right you should proceed straight ahead through the metal farm gate onto open grassland. Keep the field boundary nearby to your left and do not

turn left down the track passing through it to Golden View but keep ahead. The lie of the land gradually curves you right, swinging you from a generally west direction to a more northern one; you will arrive at a wooden gate that gives access to the access land of **Merbach Hill Common**, with an interpretation board nearby. Cross the short patch of rough land, pockmarked with abandoned limestone quarries, to reach the white concrete



Views from Merbach Hill Common



triangulation pillar. You are walking above a “glacial diffluence col” on your left, the point at which ice from the huge Wye glacier ahead of you spilled over the low point of Scotland Bank to flow southeast towards Peterchurch as the small Golden Valley glacier. At the triangulation pillar you can see the flat floodplain of the River Wye below you; in the last Ice Age a broad ribbon of ice – the eastward-flowing Wye glacier – covered this.

Temporarily turn your back to the Wye valley and proceed to your left, along the top edge of a steep bank clothed in bracken, bramble and gorse and in a short distance descend through this on a path to your left. You will shortly arrive at a scissor-shaped crossing of paths with a Wye Valley Walk waymark; you should turn right here, climbing gently uphill on a grass path and thus ignoring the WVV ahead. The accompanying map shows the path across the remainder of the Access Land as a straight line, whereas the following text is a more accurate description of the path's route: as you reach the top of the climb, turn left off the path at a right angle along another grass path through bracken. Fork right at a small junction and pass through a small stand of ash and birch. Continue on the path to a waymarked wooden gate that leads off the Access Land and into an overgrown but walkable bridleway that leads eventually to a sharp bend on a surfaced lane. Continue ahead and downhill along this lane; as you approach the grit bins on the left, look out for a flat ledge on your right, beyond the hedge. This ledge marks a lost part of the much shrunken settlement of **Crafta Webb**; for more detail on the fascinating history of this “lost village” refer to Herefordshire Archaeology

Report number 227 (2007): https://ht.herefordshire.gov.uk/media/1066/ha227_17196_craftawebb.pdf. There is also a 40-minute film available, produced by Rural Media in a community film project in the same year as the Report: <https://www.ruralmedia.co.uk/charity/projects/crafta-webb>

Continue to descend the surfaced lane and where it kinks to the left by a cottage you should turn right off it, up a track (**Point 12**). After a short distance turn left at the end of the cottage garden, through a waymarked gate beside a metal farm gate. Cross the stream and follow above its right hand bank, down towards Pistil Gwynne (**Point 13**); on the way you will notice that the stream is deeply incised into the “periglacial head” of the valley bottom. “Periglacial” is the term applied to the extremely cold zone that fringes a glacier or ice cap but is not actually covered by ice; “head” started as thawed soil and rock that slid downslope across unthawed, frozen ground beneath it, building up in valley bottoms across much of the British Isles. Between the easy path of the field and the incised stream there are scars of an old, disused sunken lane. The public footpath follows this lane awkwardly through a waymarked wooden gate below an easier metal farm gate. Cross a tributary stream and immediately go through a metal farm gate; bear left to a wooden waymarked gate and go through this into the garden of Pistil Gwynne; walk along the edge of the garden with the hedge close on your right to reach a metal farm gate that gives access onto a rough surfaced lane.



Turn left down the lane, cross the stream at a sharp bend and climb to a junction with a road sign at which point you should keep ahead, downhill. Where the lane bends right at a 1:4 gradient sign (**Point 14**) you have a choice to either continue straight down the lane to the Start at Bredwardine, or add a loop that takes in the Trust's **Court Wood** reserve.

To take in Court Wood reserve, turn left off the lane from Point 14, along the track towards Knapp Cottage. Where the track bends sharply right keep straight on through the metal farm gate and follow the twin ruts up to the next crest (**Point 15**) where you should ignore the metal farm gate straight ahead and instead curve right and follow the side of a small valley towards the track and Knapp Cottage again. Pass through a metal farm gate above and to the left of the Cottage and descend the field – keeping the property boundary on your right – to a signed stile into Court Wood reserve (**Point 16**).

As the Reserve Guide makes clear, the paths in Court Wood are steep and often slippery, so you should proceed with caution. After crossing the stile keep ahead on a faint path that winds steeply downhill to eventually reach a wooden kissing gate beneath a large oak tree. Once through the gate, descend the field to the road below on a right hand diagonal, passing through an overgrown area as you approach and cross an obscured stile in the field's bottom right hand corner (**Point 17**). Enter the B4352 with caution, turn right and continue with care along the road into Bredwardine, turning left at the junction to reach the **Start** point.