

Herefordshire Wildlife Trust



A Slow Way from Hereford to Ross

BY NIC HOWES

Slow Ways is a project to create a network of walking routes that connect all of Great Britain's towns and cities as well as thousands of villages. Slow Ways was started by geographer, Dan Raven-Ellison. Using existing footpaths, people will be able to use the Slow Ways routes to walk between neighbouring settlements or combine routes for long distance journeys.

During "Lockdown 1" 700 volunteers from across the country collaborated to produce a first draft of the Slow Ways network. The launch of the first draft for trialling was planned for the last week of January 2021, but due to the prevailing situation with Covid-19 the launch was delayed pending an improvement in conditions.

For more information and to sign up to the newsletter, please go to <https://slowways.uk>. An inspiring briefing by Dan Raven-Ellison from December 2020 is available on YouTube: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=bTu030Nw6XE&feature=youtu.be>

Every Slow Way has its own name. This is created by joining together the first three letters of the two neighbouring places they connect. The route described here is thus one variant of "Herros" that I have shared with Slow Ways, and it passes through wonderful living and historical landscapes, rich in wildlife, including the northern part of the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.

At 18 miles, the complete walk is a long one (the average length of a Slow Way in England is less than half of this distance); several sections make particularly fine, shorter point to point or shuttle walks: Hereford to Dinedor ridge, Little Dewchurch to Hoarwithy, Hoarwithy to Sellack and Sellack to Bridstow. Space limitations in *Wildside* mean that the full walk is described there in less detail than usual for Wild Walks, and the map is 1:50000 scale rather than the usual 1:25000 scale; walkers requiring more detailed guidance should download the 1:25000 maps and these step by step instructions that appear on the Trust website at: <https://www.herefordshirewt.org/explore/landscape-wildlife-walks>

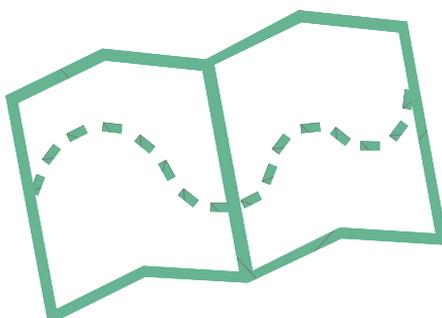
Distance: 18 miles

Estimated time: At least 8 hours

Underfoot: mostly on paths, tracks and fields that can all be muddy; some short sections on quiet surfaced lanes

Gradients: undulating with some steep climbs, particularly 100 metres over Dinedor Hill

Food and drink: pubs in Little Dewchurch, Hoarwithy and Peterstow, which also has a shop; teas and cider at Broome Farm on Wellsbrook Lane.



Leave the City of Hereford at the southern end of Green Street (**point 1**) via a metal gate beside a metal farm gate. Keep straight ahead with power lines, fence and hedge on your left to reach a gateway; go through this and then half left through a metal gate and diagonally along a field path towards the near end of the white Greenway Bridge/

Canary Bridge. The newly formed Friends of Bartonsham Meadows support environmental and socially beneficial land-use practices on this part of the River Wye's floodplain: <http://www.friendsofbartonshammeadows.org>. Go through a metal kissing gate and ascend to the surfaced road, cross it and then walk up the ramp onto the Bridge. Once over the Bridge follow the surfaced Greenway by the railway and turn left under the lines at the fingerpost to meet the industrial estate service road and turn right along this road at the crossing, past the truck depot on your right. The industrial estate was once the site of the Rotherwas Munitions Factory; for a thorough history, read John Edmonds' *The History of Rotherwas Munitions Factory Hereford*, available from Hereford Archive and Records Centre (HARC) and elsewhere.



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Bear right at the next junction and then go straight to the gates onto the "Straight Mile". Continue in the same straight line on which you approached the gates, doglegging right then left to cross the "Straight Mile" safely on the pedestrian crossing (**point 2**). Soon after Gunn JCB, look left to see the classic corrugated roofline - with "northlights" - of one of the original Rotherwas Munitions Factory

buildings. Continue over a mini-roundabout and then make a short right/left dogleg onto a concrete road; where this bends 90 degrees left keep straight on through a barrier with concrete blocks. This track leads you onto surfaced Watery Lane, on which you should turn right towards a large white house; just past this turn left on a signed footpath, with a stream running on your right. Pass through a wooden gate and

then a metal gate and onwards, with the stream still on your right. Where the power lines pass overhead, turn 90 degrees left away from the stream, then dogleg right/left over a ditch and continue up to a metal gate. Through this gate, proceed to a wooden gate and turn right down a concrete farm road, to pass under the Rotherwas Link Road (**point 3**). Ascend the concrete farm road to double metal

farm gates in front of which you should turn right, through a wooden gate and then left after passing through a second wooden gate. After a short distance ignore the gap leading back to the double metal farm gates and turn right uphill and follow the edge of the orchard, with a tall hedge on your left. At the top left corner of the orchard climb up to a metal gate into the next orchard and uphill along its edge, with a hedge on your right. Climb up to the interpretation board, pausing to read it, and proceed uphill over a stile beside a metal farm gate. After a short climb go straight across a green lane and climb the rough steps opposite to ascend along the edge of a wood, with views of the Black Mountains opening up across the fields on your right. At the top of the climb go over a stile and proceed ahead to the crest of Dinedor ridge (point 4), aiming for the distant summit of May Hill, with its distinctive clump of trees, midway between the two closest power line poles.

Cross the crest and admire the views of the Woolhope Dome to the east, an area of Living Landscapes rich in wildlife and developed over millennia on varied rocks of Silurian age. Across the crest proceed towards the metal farm gate in the hedge ahead; go through this and aim half left to descend the footpath towards the distant stile in the field boundary. Once over the stile aim for the right hand one of a pair of wood-clad houses, in line with the solitary tree in the field ahead. At the bottom of the field go through a wooden gate beside a metal farm gate and right down the lane into Dinedor village. Turn right on the lane and then left through a gate onto the path to the church (point 5).

Skirt to the right of the churchyard to a metal farm gate with a waymarked gatepost and follow as directed to a metal gate and stile visible beyond the corner of the churchyard. Cross this stile and follow the waymark to the tree at the corner of the field and follow the same line from there to the next external field corner and then follow the hedge on your left. Cross a stile and footbridge and keep on this line with the hedge still on your left to reach and cross a waymarked stile, footbridge and metal gate. Keep straight on uphill with a hedge on your right, under power lines. At the next field boundary your route makes a small deviation from the footpath marked on the OS map: do not cross the stile in the field boundary but turn 90 degrees left towards the buildings of Mitchmore Farm, signed DEFRA CONSERVATION WALKS. Keep the hedge on your right until you reach a large tree before

the garden boundary and turn 90 degrees right across a field edge to meet a hedge line converging from your left. Keep the hedge on your left after you meet it; by a wooden gate, cross a drive leading to a new house and barns off to your right and keep your line through a wooden farm gate into a grass lane. Follow the grass lane to a metal kissing gate to emerge on the surfaced lane to Bogmarsh (point 6).

On reaching the surfaced lane to Bogmarsh, turn right past Ufton House and walk up past Bogmarsh Cottage on your right and look out for a metal gate and fingerpost on the bank to your left; climb the bank and take this footpath. The true line of the path is the hypotenuse of a triangle but if the field is cropped, go 90 degrees right and then 90 degrees left at the garden boundary. Descend to the valley bottom and then ascend to the external corner of Brick Kiln Wood. Again, the true line of the footpath across the field is the hypotenuse of another triangle, but you may need to follow the adjacent and opposite sides of the triangle along the edge of the Wood, up to the stile on the ridge crest (point 7).

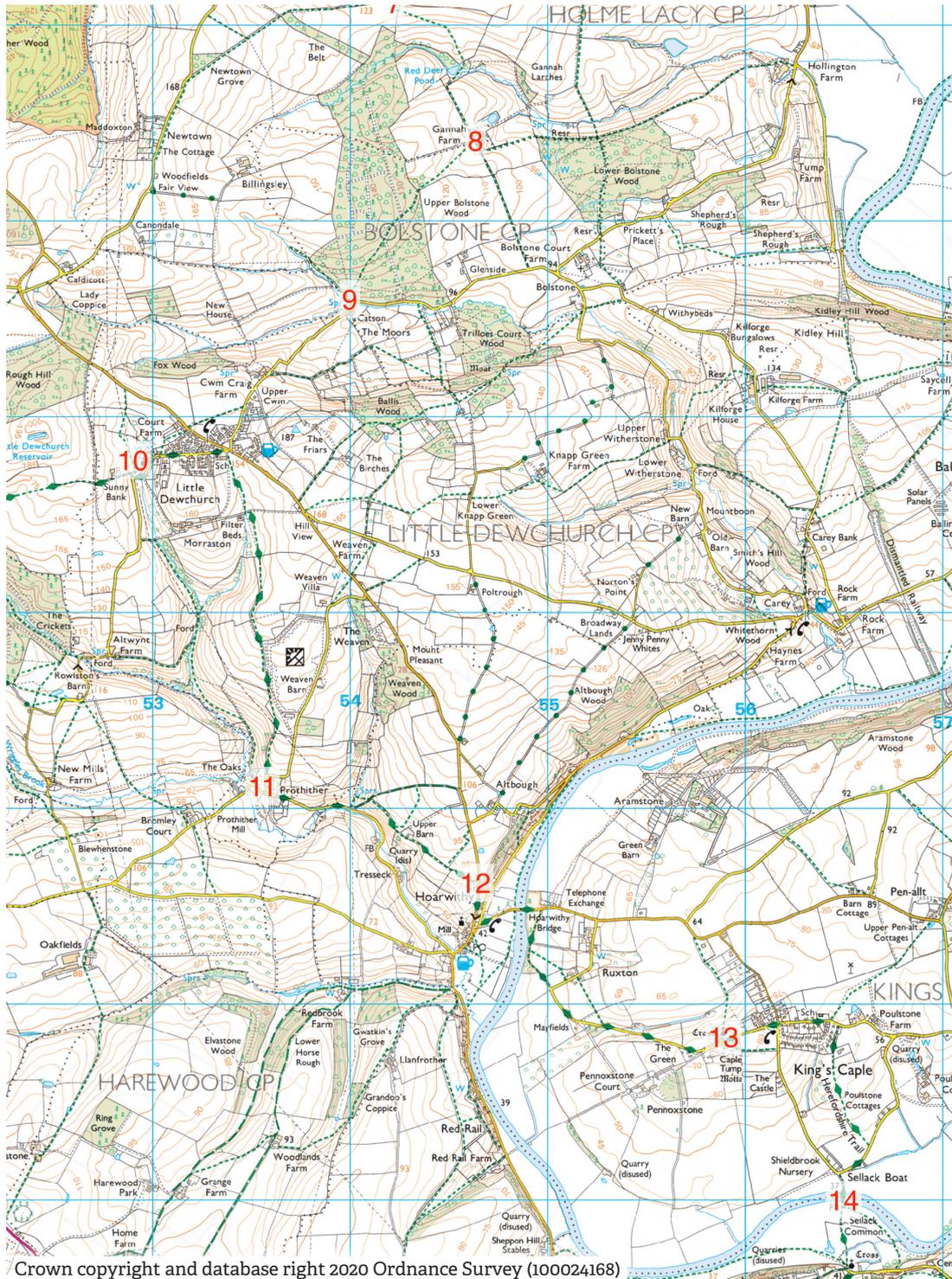
Once over the stile ignore the footpaths to left and right along the ridge and keep straight ahead, descending to the right of a hedge for a short distance to a stile and cross it to pass through the hedge on your left. Yet again the true line of the footpath is the hypotenuse of a triangle and should be clear, heading off gently down across the sloping field; May Hill with its distinctive clump of trees should be straight ahead in the distance. At the bottom of the slope bear left along the top edge of a small wood and cross a small brow. Once over the brow, look out for a bay-like shape into the woodland on your right, with a waymarked stile at its head. Cross this stile into the wood and walk along the top of the dam that holds back Red Deer Pond, which is silted up on your right. Cross a stile by a metal farm gate and then bear left round the corner to another metal farm gate to the left of a large ash tree. Once through this gate, follow the grass path to Gannah Farm (point 8) via two more metal farm gates.

When you reach the gap between the barn and farmhouse on your left, turn right over the stile to the right of a metal farm gate; cross the field on a diagonal, aiming to pass through the trees in the far left-hand corner. Beyond the trees, cross the waymarked stile into Upper Bolstone Wood; look and listen for deer. Follow the path straight through the wood, ignoring cross tracks as directed to reach a concrete vehicle track

along its southwestern edge and turn left on this to meet a surfaced lane (point 9).

Turn right on the surfaced lane and walk uphill to the outskirts of Little Dewchurch village; the village has a pub. Just beyond Cwm Craig Farm and the 30 mph signs look out for gate beside double metal farm gates and pass through this to a footpath. Follow the direction indicated by the fingerpost and skirt the northwest edge of the village, heading for a gate to the left of double metal farm gates. Go through the gate and carefully cross the road into the vegetation opposite, which may obscure the waymarks and short path to a stile into a garden. Cross the garden to a wooden stile; once over this descend the field, approaching the left-hand boundary and looking out for a wooden stile that you should cross and follow the path beyond, with a board fence on your right. Turn right down the surfaced lane when you meet it and arrive at the church (point 10). Little Dewchurch churchyard is a wonderful example of "God's Acre"; The Friends of St. David's care for the churchyard to keep it as a place of peace and for quiet reflection, and as a haven for wildlife where people can appreciate the beauty and diversity of nature: www.stdavidslittledewchurch.org.uk.

Continue along the surfaced lane beyond the church, round a left-hand bend and look out for a stile and fingerpost on the left as the lane begins to rise. Follow the fingerpost over the stile and down to the valley bottom with a stile to your right. Follow the attractive valley, with the stream on your left and power lines on your right. Listen for the tapping of a hydraulic ram on your left and look out for it working to pump water up from the stream, an example of a sustainable power source that utilises the flow of the stream. As the stream bends to its right, keep to its bank and pass under the power lines, cross a stile and as you approach the gap in the hedge ahead descend close to the stream and cross a muddy bridge over it. Continue along the valley bottom with the stream now on your right. Cross the bank on your left, rising gradually above the stream to meet a fence coming down from your left and pass through a wide gateway gap in this. Carry on down the valley, with the stream below on your right; arrive at a metal farm gate and go through this to walk along a path to the left of a building to merge with a surfaced lane ascending from your right (point 11). Note the new symbol on the map about 500 metres to the north of this point; this represents Witches Solar Farm, a 6 MW, 66kv solar panel array that started generating in 2013, opposite Weaven Barn.



Ignore the next turn on the left and continue ahead on the lane; you have now entered the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and joined the Herefordshire Way and will remain within the AONB – and on the Way - for the remainder of the walk. Pass the noticeboard and post box on your left and the stables on your right and descend to walk along the lane next to the brook; take the second of two close paths on the left – the bridleway that ascends a short and impressive steep section of ancient hollow way. At the top of this section look out

for the steps on the right and climb these to a stile onto a footpath that follows the rim of the valley with fine views. Ignore the steps and stile on your left and continue straight ahead over a stile to pass below Upper Barn; the tower of Italianate Hoarwithy church comes into view. Aim for the gateway to the left of the tower and when you reach it go through the kissing gate to the left of the metal farm gate and then follow the hedge on the rim of the valley to another such gate a little further on. Further on you should cross a stile to the left of a metal farm

gate and descend a short track down to meet the Hereford to Hoarwithy road again (point 12).

Turn right downhill along the road, past Hoarwithy church on the right (well worth the short detour up the steps to the colonnade); the village also has a pub. On the road beyond the church turn sharp left (signposted Kings Caple 1 mile) and then fork right to cross the River Wye via Hoarwithy Bridge with its former toll house on the right and take the signed footpath on the right, just before the Kings Caple village sign.

Follow this riverside path to meet a surfaced lane coming in from your left and continue straight ahead on this – ignoring turnings to Pennoxstone on the right – to pass between Kings Caple church and the castle tump (point 13).

Stay on the tarmac and go straight across at the crossroads and continue to the far eastern edge of the village, beyond the school and the entrance to Caple Avenue. Take the signed

footpath on the right, also signed Seven Acres, and then fork right to arrive at and cross a stile to the left of a metal farm gate. Follow the arrow to the right of the ash tree ahead and then keep the field boundary on your left until you reach a metal kissing gate. Strike across the field on the hypotenuse of a triangle to meet the hedge on your right and then continue down beside it before it turns away from your line to its right and you continue straight down the open field to emerge onto a surfaced lane via a metal gate,

after which you should turn right. At the 90 degrees right-hand bend, turn 90 degrees left onto the footpath across Sellack suspension bridge over the River Wye (point 14) and across the meadows via a wooden footbridge and then a stile to a stile to the left of a metal farm gate next to Sellack churchyard.

Pass between the church and the cottage and turn left on the track with the churchyard wall on your left. Soon after the wall peels left,



turn right onto a signed footpath over a stile by a metal farm gate, before a black and white cottage on the right. Ascend the field towards its far end, keeping the stream on your right. Go through a gate to the left of a wooden farm gate to enter woodland beyond the dammed pond. Take the left, uphill fork of the forestry track to emerge in a field. Cross the field to a prominent oak tree on an external boundary corner ([point 15](#)) and continue with a hedge initially on your left and then across the open field, to meet the Ross to Hoarwithy road via a wooden gate. At this point you are 200 metres up the road from the Lough Pool Inn.

Cross the road with great care and continue up steps and through a wooden gate onto the footpath across the field to the stile on the opposite side, passing just right of the power line post on the way. Follow the line of the Herefordshire Trail ahead over the stile and between houses and gardens, past an old hand pump in its enclosure and across access drives to merge with the surfaced lane from Pict's Cross to Winter's Cross. Continue straight ahead down this lane to The Grove at the bottom of the hill, with a pond on your right ([point 16](#)).

Ignore the left turn to Ross and Bridstow – and the footpath on your right – and carry on up the lane a short distance beyond the pond and junctions to take the footpath off the lane and through the hedge on your left, via a wooden gate. Follow the field boundary on your left, through a metal kissing gate and reach a

wooden gate with a steep drop into the field beyond. Descend this field to the metal gate at its foot and walk along the stream's left bank to then cross a footbridge ([point 17](#)).

Follow the Herefordshire Trail as a farm track along the right bank of the stream to a shoot's refuge container with a pond beyond it; then ascend through a gate beside a metal farm gate and then through another metal farm gate to pass the left-hand face of a large group of buildings called The Flann. At the top of the drive, follow directions through the pedestrian side gate and then turn left into the church car park, down the bank on its right into another drive and up steps on the right, through a wooden gate and into a field, which you should cross on its diagonal, passing through another gate on the way. Leave the field via a kissing gate and emerge next to the A49 in the village of Peterstow ([point 18](#)) which has a shop and a pub.

Do not cross the A49 but turn sharp left down surfaced Wellsbrook Lane and follow it down to the right bank of the Wells Brook, which you should follow past Wellsbrook Barn and the turn up to Broome Farm (where you can divert for accommodation, food and drink as advertised). Past the turn for Broome Farm, Wellsbrook Lane doglegs left then right over the Wells Brook (ignore the track ascending ahead from the right-hand bend). The next flat stretch of the Wells Brook from the dogleg to the grass triangle is an interesting landscape, in which a line of pollarded willows is a key feature.

The valley may be one of several tributaries of the Wye that carried glacial meltwater to the Wye during and after the last ice advance; the volumes of meltwater would have been larger than the present flow of the Wells Brook, so the little stream is a "misfit" for its relatively broad valley. Turn right at the grass triangle to join the Hoarwithy to Ross road and fork right at the next junction to cross the Wells Brook, pass the bus stop and take the footpath on the left, through a metal kissing gate ([point 19](#)).

Follow the footpath straight to Bristow church ahead, and on reaching the surfaced lane in front of the church ([point 20](#)) turn right up that lane to join the A49 by Bridstow school. Follow the pavement alongside the A49 down to Wilton roundabout and cross the A40 dual carriageway on the pedestrian crossing to its east. Proceed towards Ross-on-Wye across historic Wilton Bridge and descend steps on the left at its far end to access the riverside walk to the Hope and Anchor pub, beside which you should climb the steps to the top of Wye Street. Walk along narrow High Street, past the Market House (MH) at the centre of the town. If you are catching a bus back to Hereford, continue along Gloucester Road to the bus stops on Cantilupe Road.

Further reading: [The History of Rotherwas Munitions Factory, Hereford, John Edmonds, Logaston, 2004](#)