



an irresistible Offa

Walking with Offa is part of the Offa's Country Sustainable Tourism programme, supported by the Rural Development Plan for England and Wales 2007-2013 which is funded by DEFRA, the Welsh Government and the European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development (EAFRD).

The Offa's Country Sustainable Tourism Partnership aims to strengthen the local economy through encouraging people to explore the 'irresistible offa' of the outstanding landscapes and natural and cultural assets along and across Offa's Dyke and the Welsh-English borderlands. Partners include the Clwydian Range and Dee Valley AONB, Shropshire Hills AONB, Brecon Beacons National Park and ourselves in the Wye Valley AONB linking along the Offa's Dyke Path National Trail with the LEADER organisations in each county.

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The Ross-on-Wye Walkers are Welcome Group replaced 13 stiles on the Wye Valley Walk south of Ross with self-closing gates in 2011 with a grant from the Severn Waste Environmental Fund. The walk from Coughton to Ross is now completely stile-free. Many of the gates were manufactured and installed by EnviroAbility's Can Do Crew. EnviroAbility is a Ross based environmental charity that provides employment and opportunities for people from disadvantaged groups.



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Produced by the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) unit as part of the Walking with Offa project. We are grateful to David and Jenny Collin and Ross Walkers are Welcome for researching the walk. We would also like to thank the following for allowing images and detail from images to be reproduced here: Chepstow Museum, Monmouth Museum, Herefordshire Archive Service, Dean Heritage Museum Trust, Colin Smith Private Collection, Ruth Waycott Wyenot Tourism, George Woodward Private Collection, English Heritage.



Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB): An internationally important protected landscape, straddling the England-Wales border for 58 miles of the River Wye. The AONB Partnership works to conserve and enhance the beauty of this living, working landscape for present and future generations.

Whilst all due care was taken in the preparation of the information contained in this leaflet, the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Partnership does not accept any responsibility for any inaccuracies which might occur.

wye valley



Mills, Hills and Manors



Linear walk from Kerne Bridge to Ross-on-Wye
3-4 HOUR, 5.5 MILE WALK (with several steep climbs)

Through woodlands on tracks and pathways climbing to the ancient Chase Hill iron age hill fort with fine views to Goodrich Castle and the Wye Valley. Accessible from bus routes 24,34 and 35.

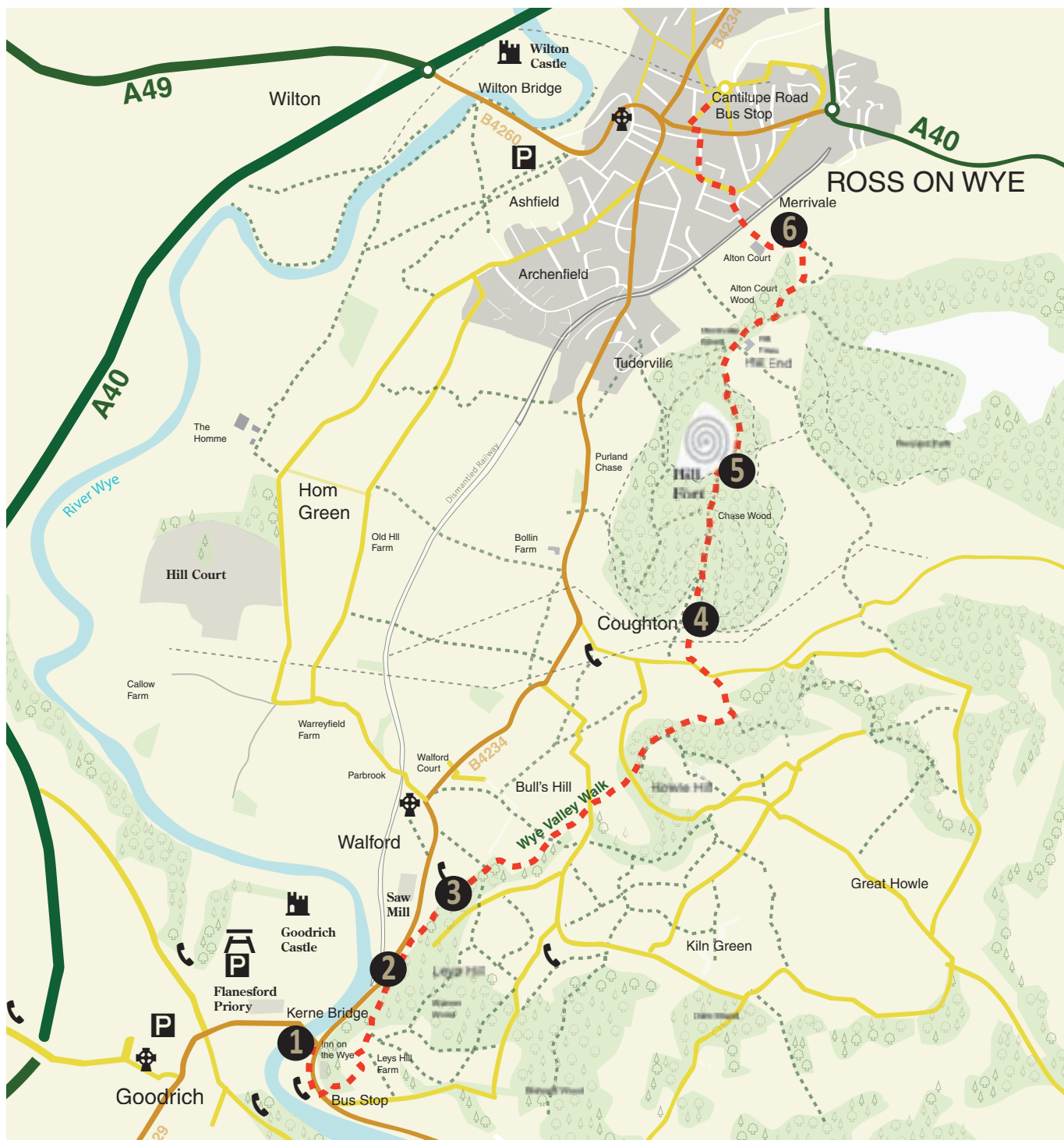


Charcoal and timber

The Wye Valley Walk between Kerne Bridge and Ross-on-Wye leads through woodland on tracks and pathways once used to access and extract timber for charcoal, the making of tools and for processing at the nearby Walford Sawmill. The historic village of Walford derives its name from Wales-ford, where the old road from Ross crossed the river into Wales, guarded by Goodrich Castle, about half a mile upstream from where Kerne Bridge is now. There are many old cottages along the route; these were both home and workplace for blacksmiths, carpenters, coppice workers and wheelwrights making good use of the natural resources of the area. When walking beneath the shade of the tall trees it is hard to believe that this tranquil place was once a hive of industry.

Take the bus for a walk

This is a linear walk, following the Wye Valley Walk. It is best to catch the bus from Ross (Cantilupe Road) out to Kerne Bridge and then walk back. The 34 bus from Ross to Monmouth turns right to cross Kerne Bridge. Ask the driver to drop you just before the bridge. The 24 and 35 buses don't cross Kerne Bridge and stop on the B4234 Lydbrook Road just past the Inn on the Wye. There are regular buses on Mondays-Saturdays and the 34 bus also runs on Sundays and Bank Holidays during the summer months. There are timetables available in Ross Library at Cantilupe Road or phone Traveline on 0871 200 22 33. Alternatively, for timetables log onto www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport/public_transport/1590.asp





▲ Timeline Historical Map 1828 - 1831



▲ Robert Pashley with prize salmon

Fishing the Wye

The River Wye is famous for its salmon fishing. A well known Kerne Bridge resident was Robert Pashley, the most famous salmon fisherman ever, who during his lifetime legitimately caught 10,237 salmon from the Wye. His best year was in 1936 when he caught 678 salmon. He fished the lower Wye mostly at Goodrich and Hill Court. Pashley was also chairman of the Wye Conservators from 1940 to 1949.

The Wye has suffered from decreasing stocks over many years but a current breeding programme by the Wye and Usk Foundation is successfully consolidating the salmon numbers.

The Leaping Salmon



This walk covers a section of the Wye Valley Walk, a 136 mile route following the River Wye from the river's mouth in Chepstow to the rugged uplands of Plynlimon in Powys. The walk takes in some of the most superb scenery from dramatic gorges to peaceful river meadows and is waymarked by the leaping salmon logo. The official route guide is published by Cicerone and can be purchased from bookshops or www.wyevalleywalk.org

For further walks on foot and by bus look out for our 'Walk this Wye' booklet which contains 12 walks linked to public transport throughout the Wye Valley Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It costs £2 plus post and package and is available from selected local shops or can be ordered online. If you want more information on walking in the Wye Valley then log onto our website www.wyevalleyaonb.org.uk

It is Resolved, &c. That this House doth agree with the Lords, That Goodrich Castle be disgarisoned; and the Works made sithence these Troubles dismantled and slighted. (House of Commons 19 July, 1647.)

Goodrich Castle

Through the beginning sections of the walk there are several fine views across the Wye Valley overlooking Goodrich castle, an 11th century Norman fortification built to defend the river crossing into Wales by the English landowner Godric who gave it his name.

Goodrich still boasts one of the most complete sets of medieval domestic buildings surviving in any English castle. During the Civil War, Goodrich was held successively by both sides, The famous 'Roaring Meg', the only surviving Civil War mortar, has returned to the castle after 350 years. Now owned by English Heritage the castle is open daily to visitors.



► Goodrich Castle



▲ Kerne Bridge from Coppett Hill

2 Wye Valley Railway

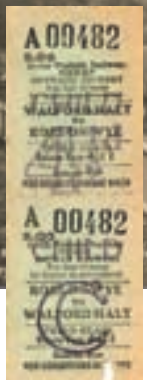
The Wye Valley Railway was surveyed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel in 1851. The Ross to Monmouth line took eight years to construct, was 13 miles long and opened in 1873. The line closed to passenger traffic in 1959 and the section from Lower Lydbrook to Ross remained open for goods transport until 1965. Kerne Bridge Station House can still be seen by Kerne Bridge.

Cross the road and walk up the lane opposite the bus shelter. Within 15 yards, go left on a track between houses. At the top of the drive, go up steps, and climb up to a track. Go right, cross another drive and then keep ahead climbing on a path between hedges. On reaching a road go left. Pass between two houses and go left at a crossroads to descend on a track beneath tall trees. Continue downhill passing Cherry Tree Cottage on right. Just before meeting the road turn right and head back uphill following a concrete drive.



▲ Kerne Bridge Railway Station

▶ Walford Halt to Ross train ticket





▲ Mrs Lane delivered coal around Howle Hill and Walford in her donkey cart similar to those used for deliveries from Walford Sawmills. Shown on a day out with Florence and Beatrice Greenway sitting in the cart.

3 Walford Sawmill

The old mill at Walford is thought to have been in existence for 260 years or more. It ground corn until the 1950s. The company moved into wood processing in the 1870s with some of the wood brought down the nearby slopes by horse or donkey and cart.

Agriculture has always played an important role in this part of the Wye Valley as the rich soils are ideal for mixed farming, including orchards. Even vineyards were grown in the area. Along the road is the Mill Race public house offering locally sourced food and beverages.

Follow drive at first then ahead into the wood, keeping ahead again at the junction of paths. Cross a drive and keep on the path which follows a line between the mixed woodland and the fields below through to Bull's Hill.

On reaching the road at Spring Herne, go left and then immediately right on a drive. Pass by Linden Lea to descend the garden, steeply in places, to steps and then cross three stiles in succession. Climb up the hillside and turn left over a stile. The path soon reaches a road.

Cross over the road and follow the track (Bridleway) uphill. Ignore the steps going downhill opposite the building on the right. Keep ahead and follow the track around to the right of Meadow House. At the junction of tracks turn left and follow the track downwards. At the next cottage leave the track through a gate into a meadow. Cross the meadow, and follow the path right into woodland. After several stiles the path will reach the road at Coughton.

4 Coughton Mill

Coughton Mill is said to have been first built in the 12th century when Richard Talbot was granted the Manor of Coughton by King Richard 1st . A mill continued here in working condition until the early 1900s, and the building still remains as part of the farm complex.

Go left on the road, and pass by Mill House on the left and the farm on the right. Cross the road at the corner. Go through a gap by a barred gate (buildings are on the right). Keep ahead through three more barred gates on a permissive path that rises away from the farm. Continue through a pasture to a fourth gate leading into Chase Wood. The path rises, steeply in places, to a junction of tracks. The final challenging climb on the walk leads through Chase Wood up to Chase Hill Iron Age hillfort. Keep ahead and you will soon see the Iron Age rampart on the left.



▲ Early Map of Chase Hill fort

5 Chase Wood Hillfort

The single rampart of Chase Wood Hill fort is said to have been fully constructed and settled continuously in the 5th and 4th centuries although there were earlier camps on the site. This Iron Age monument can clearly be seen from the path. Please note there is no public access into the fort. The fort was not merely defensive but a major settlement and probably a trading centre.

The descent from the summit follows the line of one of the many old roads from the Dean into Ross. Follow the track as it descends through woodland but, as this swings left, keep ahead by a forestry barrier. Hill Farm is to the right. Continue on a path through Merrivale Wood, with many mature sessile oak and ash trees, managed by Herefordshire Nature Trust. Keep right at the fork, go through the gate and proceed along a track with a fence to the right. Turn left before an oak tree, and then go through two gates. There's a good view of Ross to the left including the tall spire of St Mary's Church. Turn left in the field to drop down to the bottom left corner. Go through a kissing gate and follow the track around to another kissing gate. Go through this and a third gate to exit on a road at Alton Court, seen on the left.



▲ Market Hall in 18th century, Ross on Wye

6 Down to Ross

Alton Court is a fine 17th century timber-framed building which is now the headquarters of PGL Travel Ltd. Peter Gordon Lawrence started the first canoe trips down the Wye in 1957 and the firm now is one of the leaders in activity and adventure holidays.

The estate was closely associated with the medieval deer park which covered the ancient woods of Penyard, Chase and Merrivale. These were retained as hunting grounds by the Bishops of Hereford, possibly from the Bishop's Palace (where the Prospect and Royal Hotel now stand). They had hunting rights here, preying on wild boar and deer. After 1300, these woods were managed to provide timber too – for house and boat building and for fuel and fences. Wardens guarded against poachers, but in 1354 one gamekeeper turned poacher! The Bishop of Hereford's warden, Walter Moton, was tried for carrying off an outrageous 1,300 deer! He also stole hundreds of hares, rabbits, partridge and pheasant from the 'chace' at Ross and spent time in the Fleet Prison as a result.

Continue along Penyard Lane to join Alton Street. Turn left and walk ahead until you turn right into Chase Road cross Gloucester Road and then turn right into Cantilupe Road and the bus stop.

If you have time to spare in Ross on Wye there are lots of interesting buildings, cafés and independent shops to visit. Of particular note is the red sandstone Market Place, built in the 1650s and which now serves as a Visitor Information Centre and exhibition venue for Ross on Wye. Beside the Market House is the timbered house of John Kyrle, a famous benefactor of Ross. St Mary's Church and the Prospect viewpoint (laid out by John Kyrle) are also close by.