

## NINEWELLS WOOD - SHORT CIRCULAR WALK

This is a lovely, easy, dog friendly, short circular walk through Ninewells Wood, one of the beautiful Wye Valley woodlands. The walk passes alongside a number of old stone walls and stiles and a ruined lookout tower, dating back to the land enclosures of the 17th Century. The tower is said to have been used to oversee French prisoners of war building the stone walls. Look out for the fox face carved in stone on the back of one of the stone stiles (see bottom right pic below).



## KEY FACTS

### MAP

OS: OL 14 Wye Valley & Forest of Dean

### START GRID REF

SO 514 038

### PARKING

Ninewells Wood Car Park FREE

### POSTCODE

NP25 4PW

### DISTANCE

2 1/4 Miles

### STILES

4  
(Dog Friendly)

### GATES

3

### TIME NEEDED

Approx 1 hour walking at a gentle pace. Allow extra time to explore and enjoy the woodland.

### ACCESSIBILITY

Much of this walk is on gentle terrain on woodland paths and tracks. Some parts of the route can be muddy and slippery after heavy rain. There are some narrow stone steps on one section of the walk (9-11) which may be slippery when wet. All stiles on this walk are dog friendly or have a gate alternative.

### DOGS

Dogs will enjoy this walk on mainly woodland paths where they can run free, but you will need to keep them under close control and on a lead where the route passes near properties and areas where there are animals grazing. See note above on stiles.

### REFRESHMENTS

Food and drink available at The Lion Inn at Trellech; The Fountain at Trellech Grange; The Sloop Inn Llandogo; Browns Shop Llandogo; plus a good selection of pubs, hotels, cafes and coffee shops in Tintern. Please note some pubs and cafes may operate limited opening hours in Winter.

### PICNICS

Picnic benches at Ninewells Wood Car Park.

### TOILETS

There are no public toilets on this walk.

### NEAREST TOWNS/VILLAGES

Catbrook, Trellech, Llandogo, Tintern, Monmouth, Chepstow

ROUTE MAP



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## ROUTE DESCRIPTION & POINTS OF INTEREST

From the carpark (1) follow the forestry track through the barrier into Ninewells Wood and continue on the main track, crossing a wooden stile, and a second stile further along where the path narrows and passes buildings glimpsed through the trees to your right.

Ninewells Wood contains a variety of naturally occurring broadleaf trees, including Beech and Ash, as well as some Conifers. Woodland conservation in this area now includes felling Ash trees infected with the Chalara/ Ash Dieback tree disease. Plants such as Heath Speedwell and Bilberry bushes are a reminder of the heathland habitat that existed here in the past.

In Spring and early Summer, Ninewells Wood is home to a wealth of wildflowers, which thrive in the damp conditions and dappled light. Look out for carpets of Wood Anemones, Bluebells and Ransoms (Wild Garlic) with its distinctive smell and white flowers. You may be lucky enough to spot rarer flowers such as Purple Orchids and Toothwort. Take care where you tread.

At the corner of the wood (2) where the path nears the minor road bear left to stay on the woodland path. To the right, leading onto the road is one of the 'Catbrook stone stiles' so common in this area. Look out for 'Puddingstone' boulders, a natural, cement like, stone conglomerate containing many shiny pebbles of quartz, which was often used to make millstones, due to its very hard, abrasive qualities. Puddingstone millstones are often found locally in old cider presses.

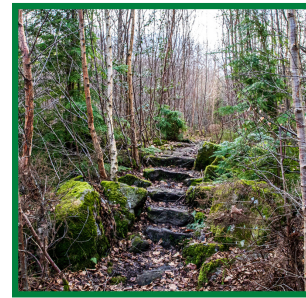
Continue on this path over two stiles until reaching the lane at High View/ The Laurels (3). Turn left along lane and immediately right through the big wooden gate, to re-join the woodland path. Continue straight on until reaching a pedestrian gate (4). Do not go through but bear left here, following the fence line on your right. Continue until reaching the gate on the right (5) which you go through and then turn immediately left to go through another stile beside a metal gate. Follow the impressive stone wall on your right until reaching a circular stone ruin on your right (6) as you reach the boundary of the wood.

This curious ruin is believed to be a Lookout Tower, with a great view of the lower Wye Valley, the Forest of Dean and the Bristol Channel beyond. It's thought it was used to keep a watchful eye on French militia captured during the Napoleonic wars (1793-1814), who may have been deployed for hard labour in the fields below. The extensive stone walls and stone stiles around Catbrook might have been constructed by these prisoners of war.

At the Look Out Tower turn left and follow the path along the edge of the wood with the stone wall on your right until you reach a stile leading into the wood (7). Cross the stile and follow the main woodland path to (8). Turn right, following the path a short distance to another junction at (9).

Turn right and make a short detour up the path to the boundary of the wood, to look at an interesting feature on a stone stile at (10). A carved face of a fox can just about be made out on the stone facing you. Local people remember some French writing underneath the fox's face, adding credence to the French prisoner of war story. More than 200,000 French prisoners of war were held between 1793 and 1814 and maybe some of these Frenchmen left their mark on the landscape of the Wye Valley here.

From the fox face stile retrace your steps back down to where the paths cross (9) and continue straight on down the path to a waymarker post (11). Turn left here to rejoin the main forest track and turn right to return to your start point (1) at Ninewells Car Park.



## ENJOY YOUR WALK

We'd love to see your photos on social media - share using #wyevalleyaonb

### PLEASE RESPECT THE COUNTRYSIDE, RESIDENTS & HOSTELRIES

Please always follow the Countryside Code. Stay on footpaths, close gates, respect wildlife and livestock, keep your dog under close control, take your litter home. Park responsibly and do not block gateways or roads. If you use a pub car park please check with the landlord and use them for a meal & drink. Keep the countryside beautiful and safe for everyone to enjoy.



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