

**Start/Parking:** Coddington Church. Grid Ref. SO718426 (Please leave a small donation in the honesty box inside the church).  
**Maps:** Ordnance Survey Explorer. 190 : Landranger. 149.  
**Length:** 4.5 miles.  
**Grade:** Moderate.  
**Stiles:** 16. Some difficult for dogs  
**Nearest Town:** Ledbury.  
**Refreshments:** Farmers Arms at Wellington Heath.  
**Public Toilets:** None.  
**Public Transport:** None.

Coddington, with its thirteenth-century church, is a small village nestling in typical Herefordshire countryside just outside the market town of Ledbury and to the west of The Malvern Hills in an area of outstanding natural beauty.

- From the car park entrance turn left down the lane but not before taking in the view ahead of you to the west and the Black Mountains. At the property ahead turn right on down the track, then take the stile on left into a nursery garden, then right over a double stile and through a kissing gate into Coddington vineyard.

- One of the most beautiful of English vineyards, it was planted mainly in 1985, on a south facing slope, where the vines absorb the warmth of the sunshine late into the autumn, allowing the grapes to ripen slowly – important in the production of delicate, floral, aromatic English wines. The old cider press room has been converted into a shop which is open Thursday to Sunday from 2:00 to 5:00pm.

- Follow the waymarks through the vineyard to cross a wooden footbridge – pausing here to admire the pool, beautiful gardens and the seventeenth century farmhouse – to a small gap in the hedge and onto a tarmac lane. Turn slightly right to cross a metal stile opposite. Follow the left hand hedge, cross stile on left, then follow right hand fence towards Woolfields farm (notice the name picked out in tiles on the roof).

- At the farm head diagonally left towards the pole and gate/ stile opposite, go through or over and follow right hand hedge to pass through next gate. Keep the hedge on your left for 100 yards, then head diagonally up the field, following the line of electricity poles, to a stile at the road.

- Turn right along road to T junction, then right again for 200 yards before turning left over a stile at Small Farm Stables. Go ahead, crossing two more stiles to reach a tarmac lane. Walking along the lane, go straight on at The Cottage. This lane then becomes stoned until it reaches a house where you take a path to the right and go downhill to emerge opposite the Farmers Arms in Wellington Heath.

Enjoy a drink or food in the pub, or you can stop for a picnic in the small grassed area beside the stream.

- Turn left and follow Herefordshire Trail waymarks, crossing a stream via a wooden footbridge, until you reach the edge of Frith Wood. The Trail goes right but we turn



left and follow the wood edge path. At the forest road turn left and then you will reach a tarmac road. Go left uphill, pausing at the top on the brow look down the valley to Ledbury in the distance, until you reach the drive to Hope End on the right. Cross the stile to the left of the drive and slowly climb following the distinct path.

- In front of you is the restored walled garden which was once part of Hope End House, now a 5-star bed and breakfast, hidden in the valley by trees. This was the childhood home of the poet Elizabeth Barrett Browning, between 1809 and 1832.

In *The Lost Bower*, recalling her life at Hope End, she wrote:

*Dimpled close with hill and valley  
 Dappled very close with shade  
 Summer snow of apple blossom  
 Running up from glade to glade  
 Hills draw like heaven  
 And stronger sometimes, holding out their hands.*

When Elizabeth Barrett Browning's family first came to Hope End it was a 475 acre estate consisting of several tenanted farms around a park with a modest house. The park, with wooded slopes and deer, lay in a gently winding closed valley running westwards into the hills. In Old English such a valley is called a hope – the word occurs in several Herefordshire place names. Hope End was beautiful, secluded, romantic, and perhaps a little too isolated for its own good.

Although Elizabeth's father Edward embraced the social and religious conventions, his architectural ideas were bizarre. The old house did not suit him at all. He built a fantastical domed palace in Moorish style, with iron-topped turrets running up from the ground and slender out-riding minarets. No expense was spared inside or out, and the place was six years in construction. The old house was relegated to stables and coach house and tucked away almost out of sight.

- Leaving Hope End behind, now cross a slightly awkward stile



We are delighted this month to introduce a new series of walks designed for Herefordshire Life by members of the Herefordshire Ramblers Association. Here Arthur Lee follows a gentle route from the hidden village of Coddington, near Ledbury, taking in a vineyard, panoramic views, a country pub, Hope End House and a thirteenth-century church.



and then a gate, and you will emerge on Oyster Hill, its summit indicated by the trig point and bench. Loiter a while to absorb the panoramic views: the Malvern Hills are to the east, whilst to the west across Herefordshire are the distant Black Mountains and to the north Shropshire's Cleve Hill.

- Descend diagonally to the left, through two gates and down the lane to the road. Turn right down the road till you reach Jobeys Cottage on the right, then take the footpath to the left just after this. Cross the stile and continue ahead until you start to lose height. The footpath here has recently been diverted (see note on this page) and rewards the walker with wonderful views of Coddington church and beyond.

- Go straight ahead across another stile before you reach the road at Jasmine Cottage. Turn left to follow the road back to the church gates and car park. Take time to explore the church, which is usually open to visitors, and its listed medieval preaching cross. ■



The procedure for diverting a footpath is a complex legal process. Diversions are usually instigated by the landowner or developer and include consultation with Herefordshire Council, the Ramblers Association and other interested parties. The diversion must then be advertised in the local press and a legal Order must be made before the route on the ground can finally be established.

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## The Ramblers Association

The Ramblers Association is the UK's largest walking charity. It promotes walking in the countryside, improves access to it, and protects the beauty of the countryside. In the UK the RA has over 130,000 members organised in 54 areas and 450 local groups. In the Herefordshire area we have four groups: Hereford, Ross, Mortimer and Leadon Vale. We run a combined walks programme with about four walks every week. All are very welcome on our walks.

For more information about Herefordshire Ramblers ring Tom Fisher on 01886 821544 or email [tom.fisher@virgin.net](mailto:tom.fisher@virgin.net)