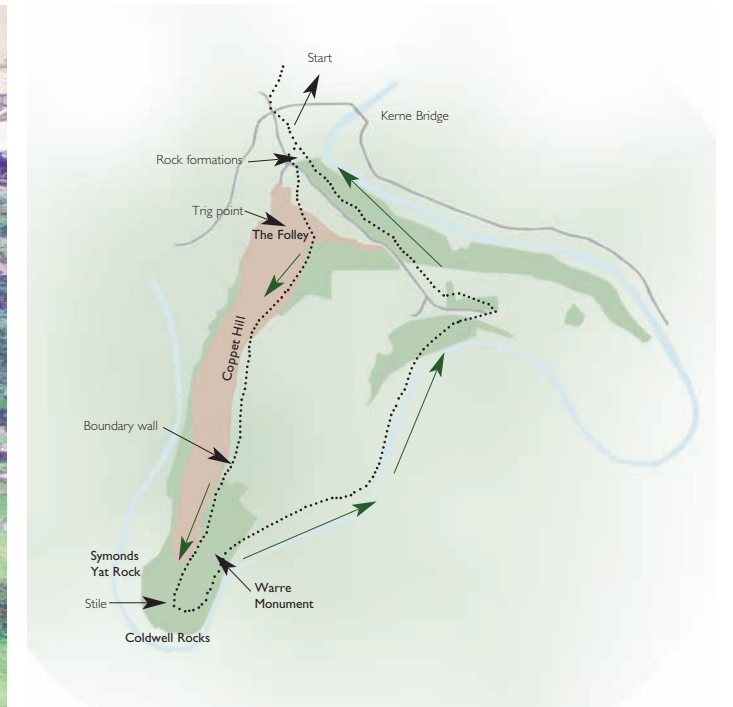
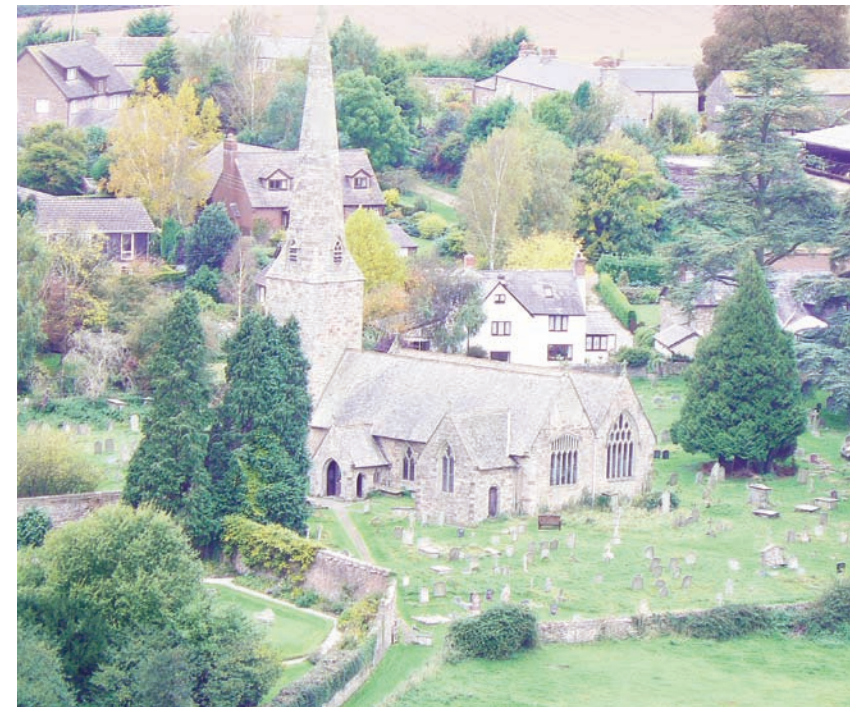




# Coppett Hill

Sam Phillips of the Ramblers' Association takes a walk through spectacular scenery above the River Wye, near Goodrich. Photographs by Sam Phillips



**Start/Parking:** Goodrich Castle car park. Grid Ref: SO576198.  
**Maps:** OS map; Outdoor Leisure 14.  
**Distance:** 7.75 miles.  
**Grade:** Moderate/energetic.  
**Stiles:** 3, plus 4 places with a stile and a gate.  
**Nearest Town:** Ross-on-Wye.  
**Refreshments:** Café/snack bar at Goodrich Castle, pub in Goodrich and at Kerne Bridge.  
**Public Toilets:** At the café/snack bar.  
**Public Transport:** No 34 bus runs between Ross-on-Wye and Monmouth.

The toll keeper's cottage at Kerne Bridge. Sam Phillip's grandparents, Sam and Hannah Woolley are standing in the doorway.



The small village of Goodrich grew up close to Goodrich Castle, a fine Marcher fortress standing on a high point overlooking an ancient ford in the river Wye. Building of the castle began in about 1101 and it was the family seat of the Earls of Shrewsbury from 1326. It passed into the hands of the Earls of Kent by the 16th century but was not lived in continuously. During the Civil War the castle walls could not be breached by the Parliamentary forces, so a special mortar was designed and made, nicknamed "Roaring Meg". It fired a 200 pound explosive shell and soon breached the south wall, hastening the surrender of the Royalist garrison. Meg still survives and can be seen in the grounds of the Churchill Gardens Museum in Hereford.

- 1 Leave the castle car park and walk to the end of the access road. Turn left and walk up the hill, passing over what the locals call the "Dry Arch". It was presumably given this name because it spans a road and there is no water beneath it.
- 2 Continue up hill to reach a road junction. Stop here and look left to admire the view of Kerne Bridge, one of loveliest of the Wye bridges. It was built in 1828 when the road that joins the current B4234 and the A40 was driven through to carry coal and iron ore from the Forest of Dean to South

Wales, thus avoiding the longer, and more expensive, trek through Ross. It was a toll bridge, and my grandparents were the last toll keepers. The toll gate was removed in the mid-1950s and the toll cottage demolished shortly afterwards. The remains of the base of the toll cottage can be seen if you look over the parapet at the Walford end of the bridge.

- 3 To the right, and on the top side of the green triangular road island, is a flight of steps. Climb these and follow the path that leads up onto Coppett Hill.
- 4 Coppett Hill is one of the largest commons in Herefordshire. The hill is owned by a charitable trust of which many of the residents, especially of the older properties, are Trustees. There are 256 commons in Herefordshire which are a wonderful resource for walkers and nature-lovers. Under the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 all commons have been designated as access land, which means that you can walk anywhere on the common, except through private gardens. Access land should be indicated by signs showing a brown walker; but Herefordshire Council has not yet erected them in our area.

5 The path passes large agglomerate boulders made up of sandstone filled with pebbles. The route is steep and soon leaves the woodland to come out onto the open spaces of Coppett Hill. Once on the open hill head for the trig point (188m) and the ruin just beyond it, known as "The Folly".

6 In 1799 Thomas Bonnor referred to "a little white building" on the highest point of the hill, which he was told had been the residence of a rabbit warriner. It is almost certain that "The Folly" is all that remains of that building. Rabbits were probably introduced to the hill by the Normans.

7 From this point the superb views into Wales begin. Looking backwards, along the line of the path you have just travelled, it is possible to see to Ross-on-Wye and beyond.

8 Continue along the ridge of the hill enjoying the views to your right. In the foreground is the parish church of St Giles, Goodrich. During the Civil War the vicar was The Reverend Thomas Swift, an ardent Royalist, and grandfather of Jonathan Swift, author of Gulliver's Travels.

9 The path drops slowly down through woodland and



eventually crosses a stile into a field alongside the river. You are now below Caldwell Rocks, famous as the nesting site of the peregrine falcon. High to your right you will see Symonds Yat Rock. The RSPB operates a peregrine falcon observation post here during the nesting season.

10 At the river bank turn left, across a rather awkward stile, and follow the river upstream passing through a field. Leave the field via a gate and proceed along a woodland track. On your left you will see a memorial recording the death of John Whitehead Warre, a 15-year-old boy who drowned near this spot on September 14 1804. The words on the monument encourage parents "to be careful how they trust the deceitful stream": a grim reminder that the tranquil river can be a place of great danger.

11 Emerge from the woodland track, using the gate or stile, into a field. Cross this and four other fields, keeping close to the river bank. Go over a stile onto a woodland path. Parts of it are very close to the river, so take care. Herefordshire Council has temporarily diverted the route, but the diversion

is easy to follow. At the waymarker arrow turn left for about 10 yards then turn right onto a well-worn path.

12 Continue alongside the river, passing under the old black railway bridge that carries the Wye Valley Walk, until you reach a clear fork in the path marked by a sturdy oak tree. Across to the left is an electricity pole with a cylindrical, grey transformer attached to it. Take the left fork, heading slightly uphill. About 25 yards before you reach the grey stone Welsh Bicknor youth hostel a path goes to the left up a set of steps. This is the path you want but it is worthwhile continuing along the front of the hostel to visit the small church, St Margaret's. It was built in 1858 on the site of a medieval church but is no longer in use.

13 Retrace your steps past the youth hostel and turn right up the steps. Follow the path (it can be muddy in places) until it opens out onto a narrow lane. Keep left here and walk along the lane eventually crossing a cattle grid. Continue along the lane, admiring the views into the Wye valley to your right, until you go downhill into Goodrich village. Then turn right up the lane back to the castle car park. ■

## 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)