

# Eight miles high

Sam Phillips of the Ross-on-Wye Group of the Ramblers leads a walk that offers all kinds of everything

This is an eight mile circular walk that starts in the village of Much Marcle about half way

between Ross-on-Wye and Ledbury. The route is flat for the first three miles and then climbs gently to the top of Marcle Ridge. The rest of the route is generally downhill. The main features of the walk are St Bartholomew's Church in Much Marcle; the wonderful half-timbered house, Hall Court and the superb views from the top of Marcle Ridge. The climb to reach the top of Marcle Ridge is longish but gentle.

1. The walk starts from the lane leading to St Bartholomew's Church. Walk away from the church and turn left when reaching the road. Go past the entrance to Hellens, one of the finest Tudor houses in the country, to the junction with the A449 Ross to Ledbury road. Go straight across and pass to the right of the Much Marcle garage. Go through a gate and

turn right. With the hedgerow on your right pass a small brown wooden hut, over a small bridge into a smaller field. After about 120 yards go over two stiles with a railway sleeper bridge between them. After about 50 yards turn sharp left over stiles and a plank bridge. Go straight ahead along the field boundary to the corner of the field. Turn right, ignoring the stile to your left, and continue with the hedge and woodland

“The panorama is truly wonderful encompassing the Malverns and the Cotswold Escarpment”

to your left. Cross two stiles, separated by a small footbridge, on your left, then turn right.

Keeping the small stream to your right cross another footbridge into the next field. Follow the hedgerow for about 200 yards and turn left over a footbridge with squeeze stiles at each end. Go diagonally across the field heading between two prominent trees towards a clump of trees. Cross another footbridge with stiles and keep straight on with the hedge on your left.

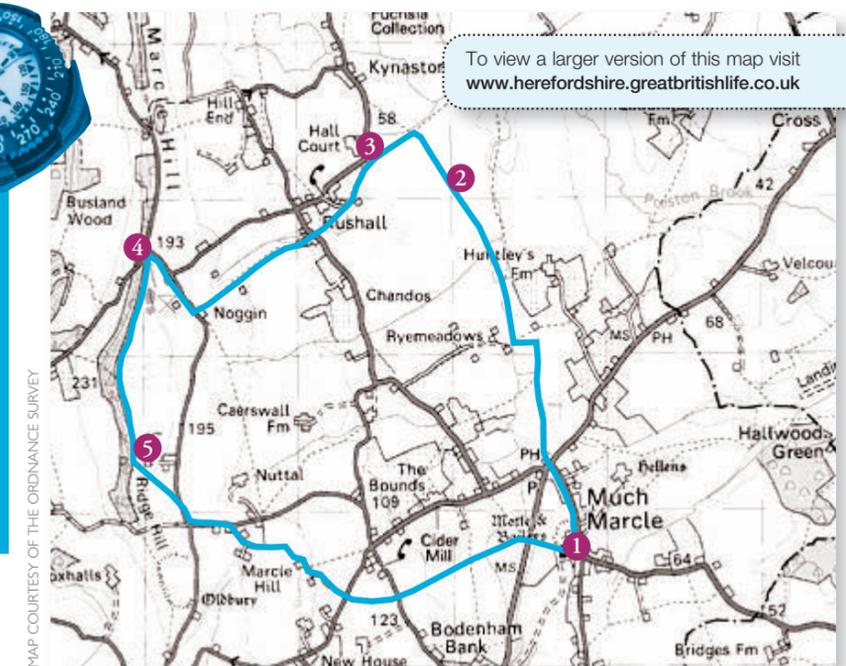
2. Cross another stile and go straight on. Just past the stile there is a sad sight, a large pile of redundant hop poles. Do not enter the field with the hop poles but continue straight on with a new hawthorn hedge on the left. Cross a stile with a horse jump alongside it into another field. Pass between a tree and the hedge then veer 45 degrees left towards a bridge with stiles half hidden in the far hedge. On reaching the bridge, turn left



Marcle church from Marcle Ridge

## MUCH MARCLE AND MARCLE RIDGE

**Start/Parking:** St Bartholomew's Church, Much Marcle  
**Grid Ref;** SO 657327. Very limited parking in the lane leading to the church. Otherwise park in road near village hall  
**Maps:** OS map; Explorer 189  
**Distance:** 8 miles  
**Grade:** Moderate  
**Stiles:** Many  
**Refreshments:** Walwyn Arms, tel: 01531 660644  
**Toilets:** None  
**Public transport:** None



To view a larger version of this map visit [www.herefordshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk](http://www.herefordshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk)

and head across the field towards a section of tarmac lane that is visible beyond the next hedgerow, and to the left of the half-timbered house that is Hall Court.

3. On reaching the lane our route goes to the left but a short detour to the right, to Hall Court is very well worth it. Hall Court was once the home of Dr John Fell, (1625-1686) Head of Christ Church College and Bishop of Oxford. He is remembered for an epigram written by Thomas Brown (1663-1704) the satirist who, as a student at Christ Church had been told off by Dr Fell, wrote:

*"I do not like thee, Dr Fell  
 The reason why I cannot tell  
 But I know and know full well  
 I do not like thee Dr Fell"*



Foxgloves on the route

Apparently, the crusty cleric was so amused he let Brown off.

Today Hall Court is the home of William and Frances May and of The Amazing Cider Company. The cider is produced entirely from local apples and, in common with good Herefordshire ciders is "cider as it should be". The Amazing Cider Company's products have won awards at The Big Apple Cider Trials in 2010 and at the International Competition at the Hereford Museum, also in 2010. Well worth a try.

Retrace your steps to where you emerged onto the lane and almost immediately leave the lane, to the left over a stile into a field. Once in the field the Ridge Hill TV mast is clearly visible ahead. Go straight ahead for about 100 yards then veer right towards a cream coloured house. Just to the left of the house cross a stile onto a track (this is a private drive but the right of way crosses it). Turn left and very shortly right to cross another stile. Go straight ahead to cross a stile in a post and wire fence. Then turn about 45 degrees to the right and go up the field towards a group of buildings. Cross a stile onto a lane, cross the lane and follow a track to the right of a corrugated iron shed or garage. Just after the track swings left, go up a set of steps on the right and into a field. Go

## The Ramblers

The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and improve conditions for all walkers. In Herefordshire there are four groups: Hereford, Mortimer, Ross-on-Wye and Leadon Vale.

**For more information contact Tom Fisher, tel: 01886 821544 or email: [tomfisher@virgin.net](mailto:tomfisher@virgin.net)**



straight up the edge of the field and at the twin posts of the power lines, turn right and over a stile into a field, then turn left. Proceed along the top of a lovely green steep-sided valley. This is the beginning of the climb to the top of Marcle Ridge. Follow the edge of the valley until you reach a modern barn and a tarmac lane. Turn right along the lane and go for about 500 yards to a road junction with a finger post and a set of steps to the left. There is a small car park and display board showing local walks but the picnic table has been removed.

4. Climb the steps and pause to look back. The views across towards Ledbury and the Malverns are magnificent. At this point you join a part of the ▶

## WALK

**Right** Thirteenth century St Bartholomew's

**Below** Ancient Yew in Marcle churchyard



Herefordshire Trail, a 154-mile long distance walk, entirely within the county. It was devised and implemented by the Hereford Group of the Ramblers and is very popular with visitors.

The Ridge Hill TV mast is now clearly visible ahead as is, in the distance, May Hill, a much-loved landmark. Cross two fields, enjoying the views as you go and enter a third field. Just before the end of the third field you reach the highest point on the walk, 211 metres above sea level. Much Marcle is at 61 metres, so you have climbed 150 metres or 487 feet. The panorama is truly wonderful encompassing the Malverns and the Cotswold Escarpment. Pass through a gap into a fourth field and after about 50 yards go through a gap in the hedge to the right and turn left on to a clearly defined footpath. As you pass through the gap there is an equally stunning view across the beautiful rolling Herefordshire countryside to the Sugar Loaf, the Black Mountains and Hay Bluff.

5. Continue along the footpath until one of the massive concrete anchors for the TV mast guy ropes can be seen on the other side of the hedge. Go through a gap in the hedge and turn right. Gaze in awe at this 400-foot high engineering marvel and think that without it, it would be difficult to watch the football or your favourite soap. Continue gently downhill

until you cross a stile onto a track. There is a lovely view straight ahead. Turn left along the track, for about 300 yards, to reach a crossroads. Go straight on down the lane until you reach an ornamental lamppost outside Little Nuttall. Turn right here and go along the track. At the entrance to Little Puckmore take the path to the left and cross a stile into a field. Keeping the hedgerow to your left follow the field boundary around two sides of the field. On completing two sides of the field turn left in the corner cross another stile and go straight ahead with the hedge to your right. Once again there are lovely views.

After about 100 yards turn right over a stile onto a track. Go downhill along the track. Much Marcle church is now clearly visible down the hill on your left. Follow the track downhill and, ignoring a waymarker post pointing to the left, continue until the track meets a lane. Go straight across and into a field. Go approximately 45 degrees to the left to cross a field that goes down slightly then climbs gently. The path then descends gently to a stile. Cross the stile into a lane. Cross the lane and go to the right of a pair of large galvanised gates. Proceed downhill with the hedgerow on your right. Much Marcle church is now clearly visible straight ahead. Go straight ahead across the next field to cross a footbridge

into another field. Cross the field, over a plank bridge and through a gap in the hedge onto verge of the A449 road. Beware; this is a very busy road with high-speed traffic on this section.

Go straight across with great care. After crossing the road, go through a kissing gate and cross a field towards the church. Climb a final stile and go into the churchyard of the 13th century Church of St Bartholomew. The church houses one of only two wooden figures in Herefordshire, that of Walter de Helyon as well as the graves of the ancestors of John Kyrle, the "Man of Ross". In the churchyard an ancient yew tree can be found. It is estimated to be at least 1,500 years old and in its hollow trunk seats have been placed.

**You have now completed the walk that includes easy flat walking, a little gentle climbing, superb views, a little historical whimsy and a good example of agricultural diversification with a superb end product, a wonderful piece of modern communications technology, a famous tree and a magnificent old church. Not bad in a mere eight miles. ■**

