



# Nesscliffe Circular

## Horses for courses



*By the Pine Carpark in  
Nesscliffe Country Park*

Horses have been a part of the Nesscliffe Hills for centuries. They would have clattered up to the ancient Hillfort and to Oliver's Point with its commanding view of the valley below. Wild Humphrey Kynaston, the Robin Hood of Shropshire, is reputed to have lived in the cave up 24 steps cut into the rock face on the west of the hill with his horse, Beelzebub, stabled alongside. Here, he could watch out for rich travellers on the road below. Horses would have been used to pull the huge stones along the tracks from the quarries to build many of the area's churches and buildings, including the Thomas Telford designed Montford Bridge. Horses brought Lord Bradford and his family to the Archery contest, held on the once open spaces on the top of Nesscliffe Hill. Horses also pulled the Milford Mill dray, driven by Mr. Ratcliffe, the Miller, which brought the Baschurch Sunday School outings to the 'Tea Tents' picnic area. They travelled through the Shrubbs Common, as the slope on the track from Valeswood up to the Pine Car park was too steep.

The old Startlewood Lane takes us to Ruyton-XI-Towns and on to Five Ways where it is thought that the Roman road, now a bridleway, went on to the Platt Bridge. We turn to the Cliffe Common, lowland heathland with sandy tracks, where heather and whinberries grow. The ridge and viewpoint give panoramic views of Shropshire and the Welsh Hills.

Returning to Nesscliffe Hill, we pass by Shrubbs Common, and Shruggs Coppice, and cross the gallops, used by racehorses from the trainer's stables in Great Ness.

Look out for the Californian Redwoods planted by the Bradfords which now tower over the woodland bridleways on Nesscliffe Hill, interspersed with many species including douglas fir, larch, oak, beech, and birch.

### The Cliffe

Author, Peter Davies, who lived in Little Ness, in his book '*Mares Milk and Wild Honey*' recounts tales of the Gipsies who camped at the north end of the Cliffe Common, whilst doing seasonal work on local farms. He rode his pony Topsy on the sandy Cliffe tracks.



*View from picnic table  
on The Cliffe*



*sandy bridleway on  
The Cliffe view to south  
Shropshire hills.*



*Woodland bridleway  
Nesscliffe Hill*



*Horses and donkey in the 'tea tents'  
picnic area on Nesscliffe Hill*



## Start: Pine Car park Hopton Hill

OS Landranger map 126, Explorer 240  
Grid ref: SJ 390 199

Limited parking also available at Oak car park beside lane from Nesscliffe to Hopton.

- 1 Take stoned track north-east from car park on through wood and ahead down slope to road
- 2 Turn left along road for 250m.
- 3 Go right through gate, ahead across field and through gate.
- 4 Turn right and go around field edge, through gate, ahead across field to wicket gate to hedged green lane then tarmac lane to T junction.
- 5 Turn right and immediately right again at T Junction. After 300m turn right onto stoned track to The Cliffe Common.
- 6 At junction ahead take left track uphill past houses and then keeping hedge on left go ahead down hill to junction of paths.
- 7 Turn right and follow sandy track, keeping left where wide track comes in from the right, to next track junction by notice board.
- 8 For viewpoint and picnic table turn right and go up sandy track

bearing left to brow of hill to left of Reservoir. To continue route carry on ahead and down slope to road.

- 9 Turn right on road for 100m
- 10 Turn left on stoned track

**For short route** – after cottage on right, turn right on bridleway through wood and then left on stoned track back to Pine Car park.

- 11 To continue main route follow earth track ahead down slope and past cottage on stoned track to road.
- 12 Cross road and go through gateway ahead. Take care. Look left before crossing racehorse gallops a few metres ahead. Go ahead keeping hedge to left. Where stone track bends right take bridle path straight ahead and go down hill to join stoned track by cottage. Turn left and after 50m turn right through gate into Country Park.
- 13 Follow earth track for ½ mile (800m) ahead past quarry and past path to Kynaston's Cave to where track bends left to the road and Three Pigeons Inn.
- 14 Go up shallow steps ahead on right and follow earth track bridleway ahead through trees,

keeping right at finger posted junctions, past roadside Oak Car park, and uphill round right bend up steep bank and left bend to T junction with wide track.

- 15 Turn left and follow track past the buildings on the left.
- 16 Turn right at junction after buildings and follow stoned track, keeping left past turn to Picnic Area, left at pond and left at next junction, up to cottage.
- 17 Turn right to road. At road turn left.
- 18 After 100m turn right on stoned track back to start at Pine car park.

