


Riverside Ramble

A gentle walk for all the family. Ramble along the River Onny, through water meadows and return along the quiet lane through Halford village.

 2 miles/3.5km

 1– 1½ hours

 No stiles

 A relatively short, stile-free, level walk. Pasture with cows, sheep or horses – dogs must be on leads for some sections. Muddy in places, two road crossings and two benches en route.

*The route directions were correct when printed (2017), however there may be minor changes over time.

OS Explorer Map 217

Start at the Discovery Centre

1 Start the walk by leaving the Discovery Centre towards the Onny Meadows. Go left before the Community Garden and follow the path, through a gate and into the hamlet of Newton.

Long before the railway created Craven Arms, this medieval hamlet grew up on the banks of the Onny. The variety of timber-frame and stone cottages make for a picturesque scene.

2 Follow the narrow lane to a white metal bridge across the River Onny.

The River Onny rises in the Shropshire Hills at White Grit. It flows from Craven Arms through Onibury to meet the River Teme at Bromfield and then on through Ludlow. The river's name derives from Welsh and means the river on which ash trees grow.

3 Cross the river then head left across the field to the corner of a wood. Keep the river on your left and walk to the kissing gate which leads onto the busy road. Be careful of fast moving traffic. Cross over the road on the bridge.

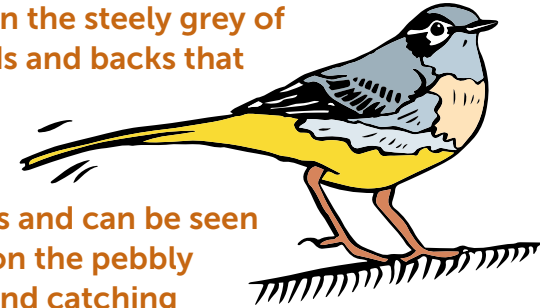
Stop on the bridge and look at the meadows. They tell the story of the changing course of the river. Meandering depressions in the field sketch out the line of the old riverbank. In years past the river has been straightened to flow faster past the old mill at Halford.

4 Beside the bridge is a small gate onto a set of steps down to a kissing gate. The next part of the walk follows a permissive path opened in co-operation with the farmer. Please keep your dog on a lead as there are often sheep, cattle or horses grazing on the riverbanks.

Follow the permissive footpath along the riverbank. **There's a solitary young black poplar tree here – quite a rare native tree species.** Further along you reach the old corn mill, now a private house. The mill was closed in 1925. Beyond is the weir, below the church on the other side of the river. **The weir has a salmon ladder on the near side to help the fish swim upstream.**

Continue on across the meadows parallel to the riverbank.

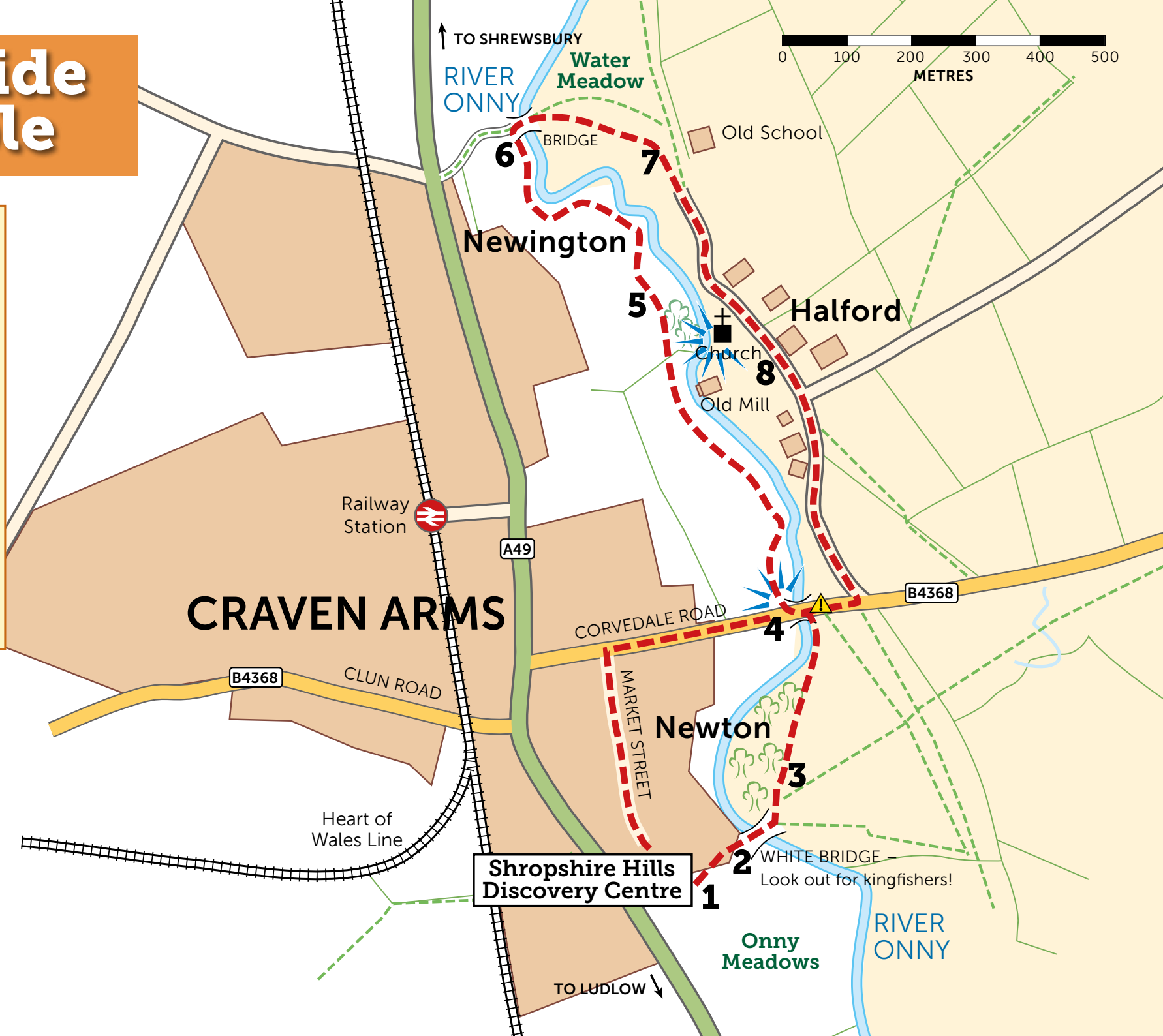
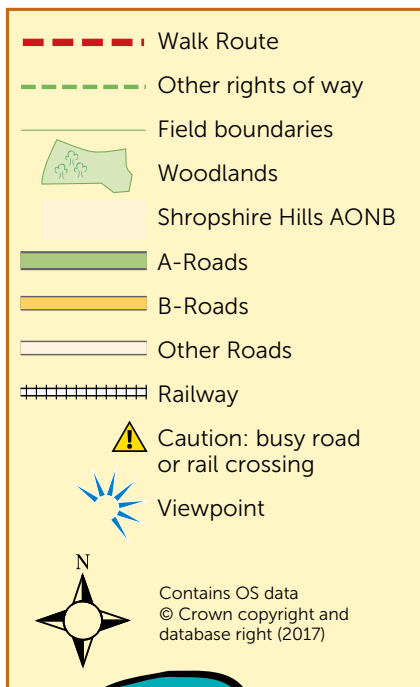
As you follow the river upstream, look out for three unmistakable birds, often seen here. You may see a dipper – small, quick dark birds with a distinctive white bib. They stand bobbing on the rocks before darting under the fast flowing water in search of insects. You can also see grey wagtails here. Despite the name, it is the yellow of their chests rather than the steely grey of their heads and backs that will catch your eye. They also eat insects and can be seen foraging on the pebbly beaches and catching bugs on the wing.



The kingfisher is the most colourful of the three birds you can see here but you'll need sharp eyes to spot one. They are shy and dart quickly, keeping low to the water. You may see a flash of brilliant blue green or spot one by its orange and white chest, fishing from a branch.

5 Follow the river as it winds through the meadow until you reach a kissing gate leading to an old lane next to a white bridge. You have now reached Newington.

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Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre, the home of Grow Cook Learn

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Grow Cook Learn is a registered charity, connecting people to the food, history and landscape of the Shropshire Hills AONB, providing opportunities to local people and visitors to learn and discover.

Visit the Centre for the Shropshire Hills exhibition and film, our cafe which serves delicious home cooked meals and for walks through 30 acres of riverside meadows.

There are regular bus and train services to Craven Arms.

The Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty is recognised as one of Britain's finest landscapes. It's one of 46 AONBs in the UK.

Walks produced with support from:



CRAVEN ARMS
Community Food
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Two hundred years ago Newington was a major crossing point on the Onny for the Bishop's Castle coach road or 'turnpike'. It passed through Halford to continue westwards up Long Lane. Horse-drawn coaches would have clattered down the lane and crossed the Onny at a ford before pausing at the New Inn (where Newington now stands). Here they might change their horses before pulling steeply on up Long Lane.



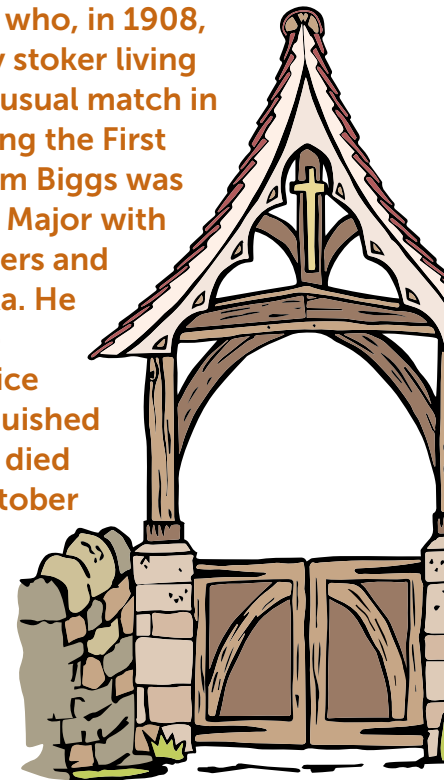
6 Cross the river on the bridge, then go through the wooden gate to your right. Follow the path across the meadow.

The field you are now crossing was once a traditional water meadow. It was deliberately flooded in the spring to encourage early growth of the grass for cattle to graze.

7 Continue along the path to go through the gate and turn right to reach the Old School House at the top of the track. Follow the lane through Halford village.

Halford Church is very old. Although most of the church has been rebuilt in the last 200 years, the southern doorway dates from Norman times.

Take time to look at the war memorial in the lych gate which is one of Shropshire's least-known war memorials. The memorial was put up by Hilda Mary Biggs, daughter of the local vicar who, in 1908, married a railway stoker living in Halford (an unusual match in those days). During the First World War William Biggs was made a Sergeant Major with the Royal Engineers and served in Salonika. He was awarded the Meritorious Service Medal for distinguished service but sadly died of malaria on October 31st 1918 a few days before the Armistice.

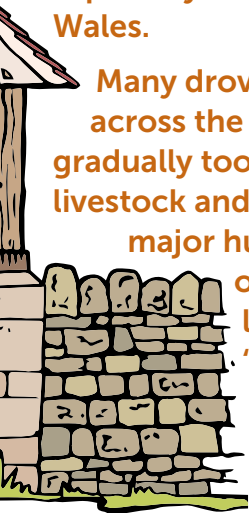


Walk out to the west end of the churchyard for an excellent view over the river and meadows. Just downstream is Halford Mill again.

8 Leave the Church, turn right and follow the lane to the main Corvedale road again. At the T junction with the main road turn right heading back into Craven Arms. Cross the road on the bridge and retrace your steps along the river to Newton. Alternatively you can continue along the road taking the second left on to Market Street. Follow Market Street back to the Discovery Centre.

Craven Arms grew up as a market town when the railways were developed during the mid to late 19th century. Before that there were just the small villages of Newton, where you started this walk, and Newington where you cross the river at the far end of the walk where the New Inn once stood. Coaches used the turnpike roads and drovers used to bring cattle and especially sheep over the hills from mid Wales.

Many drovers roads run west-east across the Shropshire Hills. Railways gradually took over the transporting of livestock and Craven Arms became a major hub for sheep being loaded onto freight trains. A popular local history book is called 'Of steam and sheep' and this also explains the modern sculpture that stands beside the A49 by Drovers' House.



The town takes its name from the Craven Arms Hotel an old coaching inn which in turn is named after the Lords Craven who owned Stokesay Castle.



Guidelines for walkers

- Wear suitable clothes and footwear for the walk, paying attention to the local weather forecast.
- Take water and refreshments with you suitable for the length of the walk.
- Most of the Discovery Walks have muddy patches for much of the year and stout shoes or walking boots are recommended.
- Please keep dogs under close control, taking particular care when crossing fields with livestock.
- Keep to the waymarked paths and leave gates as you find them.
- Take your litter home. Respect the wildlife, plants and trees and do not light fires.

SHROPSHIRE HILLS DISCOVERY WALKS

2 miles

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