

# Norton Camp Climb

An energetic walk up through beautiful woods to a large iron age hill fort, descending through varied woodland and along the River Onny to finish.



5 miles/7.5km



2½-4 hours



5 stiles\*



Pasture with cows and sheep – dogs must be on leads for some sections, woodland, muddy and rough in places. A moderately steep climb up to Norton Camp, several fields with crops.

NB: This walk was originally the first half of the Three Woods Walk – you are likely to see some old waymarks etc along the route. The route directions were correct when printed (2017), however there may be minor changes over time, for example stiles are increasingly being replaced by kissing gates to make routes easier. OS Explorer Map 217.

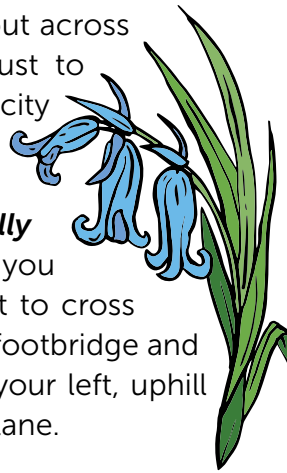
If you encounter any significant problems with the route please report them at the Discovery Centre and we will inform Shropshire Council who can liaise with the landowner.

## Start behind the Discovery Centre

**1** Walk into the Onny Meadows and take the first turn, left, past the Community Garden. Follow the path ahead through Newton, keeping right to follow the narrow lane to a white metal bridge across the River Onny.

The Onny is one of the major rivers of the Shropshire Hills. When crossing you might catch a glimpse of brown trout, a favourite food of otters. You might also be lucky and see a kingfisher.

**2** Cross the river and head out across the middle of the field, just to the right of the electricity posts ahead. **Please keep your dog on a lead in this field as there are usually livestock.** Just before you reach the hedge turn right to cross the tiny stream on a small footbridge and follow the hedge-line on your left, uphill along the line of a sunken lane.



Cross the stile next to a gate and follow the track through Whettleton Farm to reach a small gate on to the road.

Whettleton was once a thriving village. It has not always been as quiet. In 1645, during the Civil War, the fields above the farm were the scene of a bloody skirmish. Parliamentarian soldiers charged down the hill to surprise a larger Royalist force. The Roundheads won the day, killing Sir William Croft, one of the Cavalier's commanders, and taking several hundred prisoners.

**3** Turn right along the road. Take the next footpath left, just past a large house. Follow the path as it begins to climb steeply up into Norton Camp Wood.

**4** Take the left hand fork at the Y-junction, climbing along the edge of the wood to eventually head rightwards up a sunken track.

**5** Keep straight on along the narrow path then continue climbing as the path curves round to the left and then through clumps of rhododendrons and past a pheasant

enclosure on the right. You emerge onto a forest track with a view of Norton Camp's double ramparts ahead.

**6** Turn left onto the track which curves to follow the edge of the hill fort. There's a short track off to the right, one of the fort's entrances, which leads to the large pasture which makes up the interior of the fort these days (private land). Almost opposite this track is a gateway on the left from which there are wonderful views to Brown Clee (on the left) and Titterstone Clee Hill. **At 510 metres Brown Clee is the highest point in the Shropshire Hills Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.**

Norton Camp is renowned for the double rampart and ditch of its Iron Age defences which may be over 2500 years old. Evidence from excavations elsewhere suggest that hill forts like this were really hill top towns. Imagine the interior full of iron age huts, animal pens and the busyness of hundreds of people!



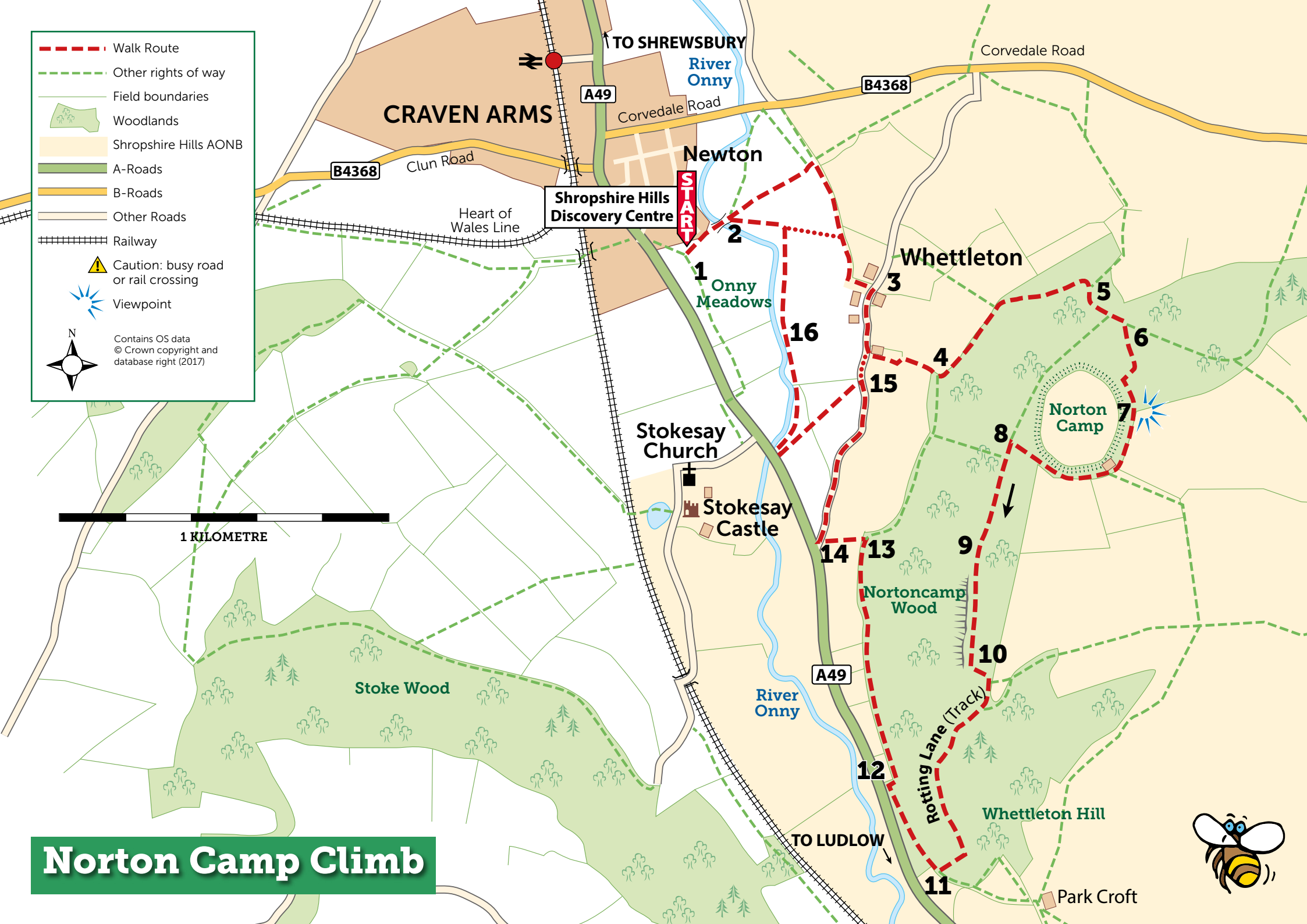
- Walk Route
- Other rights of way
- Field boundaries
- Woodlands
- Shropshire Hills AONB
- A-Roads
- B-Roads
- Other Roads
- Railway
- Caution: busy road or rail crossing
- Viewpoint

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1 KILOMETRE

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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.

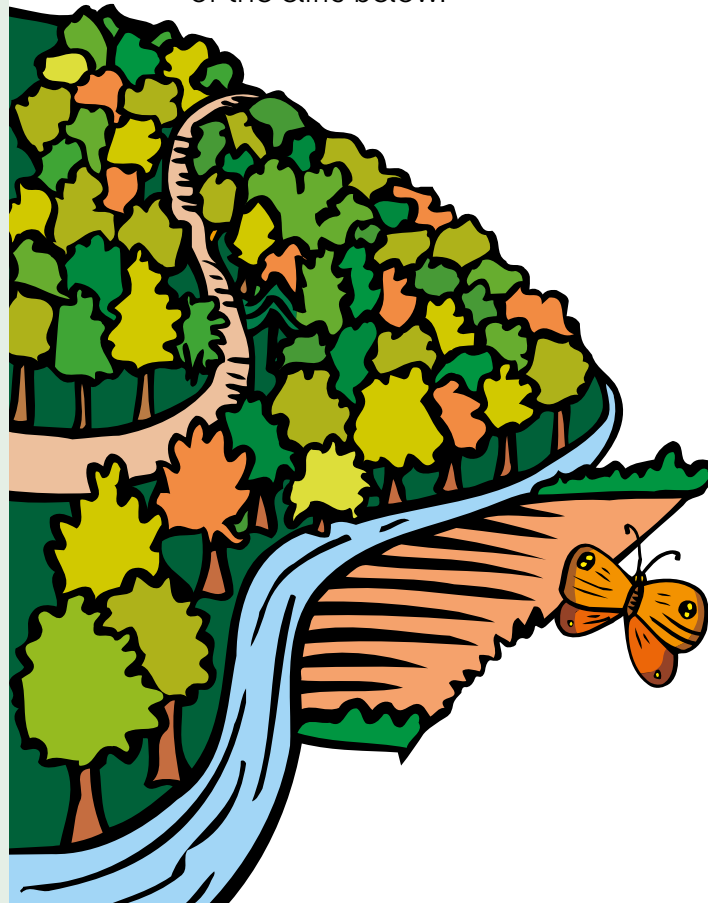
Walks produced with support from:



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**7** Continue along the track, following the outer edge of the camp until you reach an old house. There is another entrance to the fort here. Go on between the house and an old red brick building along a permissive path that keeps following the curves of the ramparts. Keep going on ahead back into the wood until you reach a junction and a stile over on the left hand side.

**8** Cross the stile and follow the narrow path as it winds along the top of the escarpment in the wood. **There are glimpses of views across to the rest of the Shropshire Hills through trees on the right.** Keep following the narrow path, staying away from the edge of the cliffs below.



**To your right the sheer limestone cliff resembles the Wenlock Edge that runs in an unbroken line from Craven Arms to Much Wenlock. The rock has been quarried in many places. Limestone was often 'burned' in lime kilns to make slake lime for 'sweetening' fields and lime wash mortar.**

**9** The path winds away from the edge eventually bearing left then turning right to descend more steeply to 'Rotting Lane'. Keep right and ahead down the track which is now a bridleway.

**10** Rotting Lane joins a forestry track that, still descending, heads left then curves right to reach a metal gate. Pass the gate and follow the track to the bottom of the hill.

**11** At this point you turn right, away from Park Croft, to begin the return route back, northwards, to the Discovery Centre along the forest track.

**12** After 250 metres, and, before a house on the right, zig-zag up to the right onto a track on a higher level. Turn left along this track and follow it left in the same direction around the bottom of the wood for some distance. There are views to Stokesay Castle through the trees after a while.

**13** When you reach a corner with a stile, gate and fence on the left climb the stile to take the footpath down into a field below. Follow the footpath along the hedge-line down to the road below.

**14** Turn right along the quiet road back, northwards towards Whettleton again.



→ Keep your eyes peeled for red kites. They are now seen regularly over Craven Arms. It was in 2006 when a pair of red kites first bred successfully in Shropshire as they recolonised from the once tiny remaining population in Wales.



You can either return using the route you started on taking the small gate on the left at Whettleton Farm OR to take in a lovely stretch of the River Onny follow points 15 and 16.

**15** At a gateway on the left before the farm look for the stile on the right hand side of the gate. The footpath cuts diagonally across the field to a stile in the fence roughly in line with Stokesay Castle on the horizon. Cross the stile into the riverside pasture. Skirt left, round to the riverside footpath. Head right, along the riverside, upstream.

**16** Follow the river, then the path climbs up and then through a couple of kissing gates. Keep left and drop down a bank to a small footbridge. Cross the field to the white metal bridge where you started the walk. Retrace your steps back through Newton to the Centre. Don't forget to drop in for a cup of tea or bottle of beer to celebrate your walk.

**Norton Camp is one of the larger hillforts in Shropshire – it encloses 17 acres. It has just one ditch along the NW side where the hillside falls away steeply below and there**

are two massive banks and ditches around most of the rest of the fort. To the south west there are two more outer banks which may have been built as additional lines of defence. It is difficult to interpret this enclosure as anything other than defensive – although it may have been as much a symbolic show of power by the local tribe as an actual one.

According to legend, a giant lived on Norton Camp and another (his brother in some versions) lived across the valley on View (or Weo) Edge – the ridge that overlooks the valley from the west. They kept their treasure at Stokesay Castle, but upon losing the key to the castle, they both died of grief.

### 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

5 miles

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