

Nic Howes' Wild Walks

“Swedgelands”: Hereford’s southwestern rural-urban fringe

This walk was devised to introduce a relatively little-visited sector of Hereford’s rural-urban fringes – incorporating some classic “edgelands” features - that lie under the shadow of a western bypass proposal and include the innovative, socially inclusive Southside Project and Hereford Community Farm. Residents and visitors to Hereford are fortunate to have access to high quality green spaces that surround the city; productive, rich in wildlife, bucolic in character and full of opportunities for learning and leisure within half an hour’s walk of High Town in the City centre.

Cross St Martin’s Street and follow the shared cycle and walk route upstream along the right bank of the River Wye (riverbanks are assigned left or right from the point of view of the direction of flow of the river). Pass under Greyfriars Bridge carrying the A49 road and continue between ASDA and the River Wye to Hunderton Bridge, completed in 1854 and no longer carrying a railway. Go through the high arch ([point 1](#)) and continue along Luard Walk, passing through anti-vehicle bollards by a children’s playground on your right. At the intersection with Wallis Avenue, the road ahead becomes Villa Street, which is later blocked to vehicles at its intersection with Vaga Street. Continue through the bollards and along Villa Street to the point where it turns 90 degrees left to avoid Newton Brook, becoming Golden Post as it does so.

Where Golden Post intersects with Hunderton Road on the left, turn right down another shared cycle and walk route to cross Newton Brook ([point 2](#)). Cross the end of Sydwall Road and continue ahead on the shared route, to the left (i.e. right bank) of a small tributary of Newton Brook that has a home-made nameplate: Maggie’s Brook. The shared route continues between rear fences of homes on the Belmont housing development, crossing Abbotsmead Road and Northolme Road before entering the large grassland public amenity area of Abbey View East.

Follow the well-made gravel path ahead to a fork, and branch right off the gravel and onto the grass thus making a short cut that re-joins the gravel path that leads to the crossing of Dorchester Way, by black and white posts ([point 3](#)). Once over the road, follow the gravel path across another grassland public amenity area: Abbey View West. This part of the Belmont housing development was built on a former landfill site and has valves installed through

which landfill gases are released (a typical edgelands feature).

Cross a metal stile to enter a grass field, with the tower of Belmont Abbey ahead. Keep the line of trees and ditch close on the right, straight on over a wooden stile, with the dark ridge of the Black Mountains appearing in the distance ahead. Carefully dogleg right/left across the surfaced Ruckhall Lane ([point 4](#)) and into a large field, crossing two more wooden stiles in the process. The proposed route of a western bypass approaches from the right; if built, the road would completely alter the atmosphere of this peaceful place, currently only 500 metres from the outer edge of the Belmont housing development.

Keep the hedge close on the left until forking right to pass under the canopy of a solitary oak tree, to the left of its trunk, to access a metal gate into the next field. Near here, the public footpath crosses the proposed line of a western bypass. Follow the compacted path across the field to a metal kissing gate into another field and the tower of Clehonger Church comes into view straight ahead; the churchyard could make a peaceful spot for a break. To continue the walk route, just before the wooden kissing gate into the lane ([point 5](#)), turn 135 degrees anticlockwise on the spot and follow the southern edge of the field just crossed, keeping the hedge and power lines close on the right, with Hereford Cathedral tower visible, left of straight ahead. Dogleg right/left through a hedge gap to reveal the buildings of Clehonger Court ahead. Bear right into the farmyard ([point 6](#)) and cross the wide concrete apron to pass black metal gates via the gap on their left or the stile on their right. Walk down the farm drive to the B4349 and carefully dogleg left/right across it and into a quiet tarmac lane past Pykeways (Tel Ex on map, [point 7](#)).

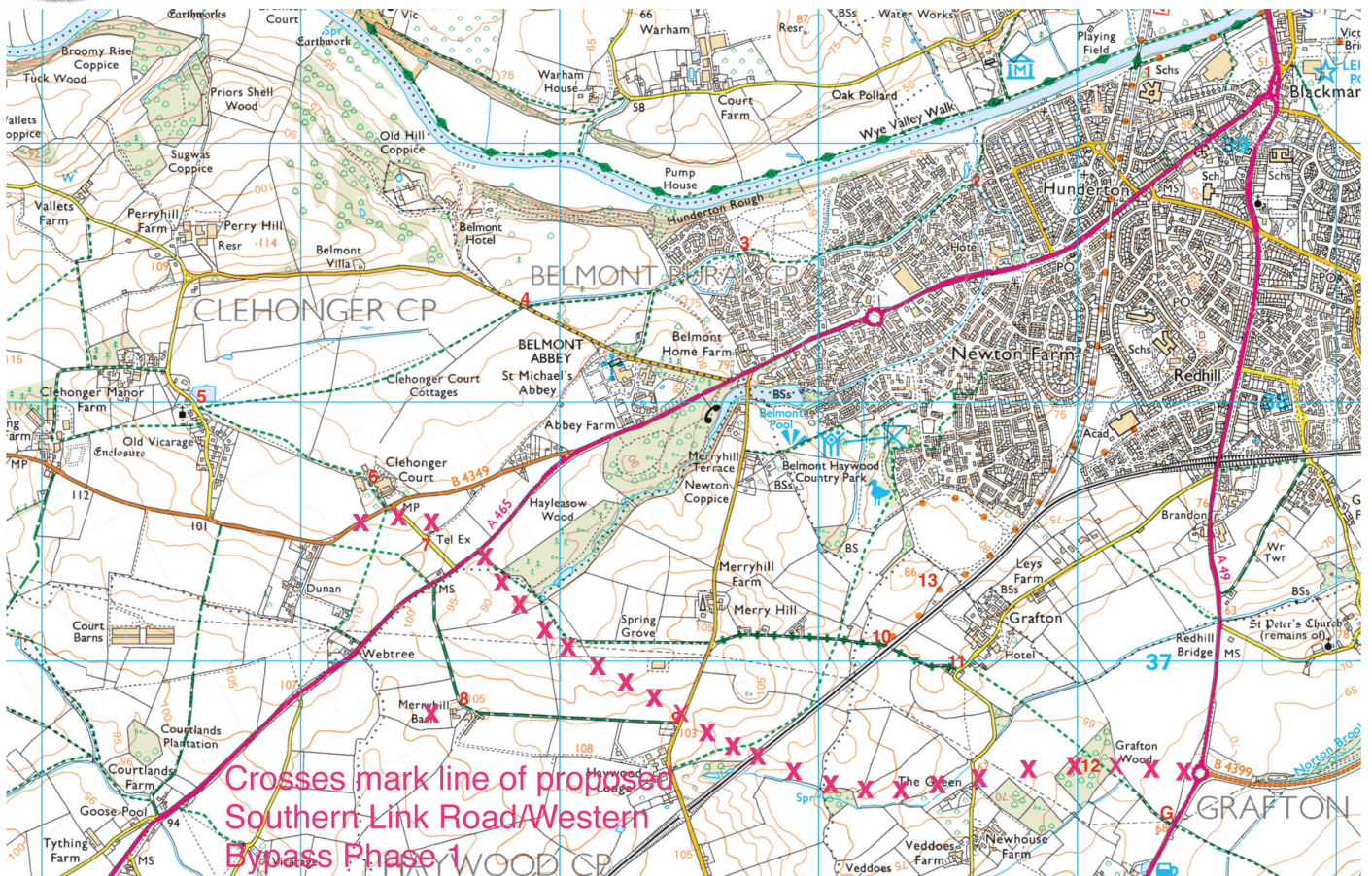
Start (S): Wye Street car park:
What 3 Words ///thick.salads.hiking

Length: 7.5 miles, 3.5 hours (without Grafton Wood spur, which would add 1.5 miles and 45 minutes.)

On meeting the busy, fast A465, turn right along the grass verge before crossing carefully to enter the tree-lined bridleyway opposite, via a wooden gate. The proposed route of a western bypass suggests that this area would be the site of a major intersection between the A465, the Western Bypass (approaching from the north) and the Southern Link Road (approaching from the southeast). The bridleyway runs parallel to the drive to Merryhill Barn, along the crest of a ridge that could be a terminal moraine left by the Wye Glacier. After joining a well-surfaced drive at Merryhill Barn ([point 8](#)), the bridleyway affords good views on the left across Hereford, Woolhope Dome and Malvern Hills and on the right to the line of Orcop, Saddlebow and Garway Hills.

There are glamping facilities along this peaceful scenic ridge, including a shepherd’s hut; the line of the proposed Southern Link Road (intended to link the A49 at Grafton with the Western Bypass) lies on the left flank of the ridge, between the latter and Hereford. The bridleyway descends along the drive to an intersection with a tarmac lane ([point 9](#)), with Dinedor Hill in the view straight ahead. Turn left along the tarmac lane and walk for about 250 metres, looking left to see the distinctive outline of Hay Bluff in the far distance. Turn right into a byway with no access for cars or motorbikes and descend gently to meet the far western end of Great Western Way ([point 10](#)), where the byway passes under the railway line from Hereford to Abergavenny.

[Point 10](#) is a decision point: either return to the start by turning left and following Great Western Way back to Hunderton Bridge ([point 1](#)) or add a spur walk to Grafton Wood – well worth it for those with the energy and inclination because – with other nearby pockets of woodland - it is a delightful relic of ancient Haywood



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Forest and lies directly on the route of the proposed Southern Link Road. Grafton Wood still has impressive banks and ditches around it, that support its great age. Another way to visit Grafton Wood is to park just off the A49 at point G on another occasion and follow the public footpath from there to the northwest, across quiet fields.

For the spur walk to Grafton Wood, pass under the railway and follow the byway on to meet a surfaced lane at Grafton (point 11). Turn left along the surfaced lane and (almost immediately) right off it onto a public footpath that crosses two arable fields linked by a footbridge before entering Grafton Wood (point 12) via a stile. Grafton Wood is worth exploring at the end of the spur before retracing steps back to point 11. The proposed route of the Southern

Link Road cuts east-west through Grafton Wood. If the two arable fields are found to be impassable due to dense crops with no cleared path, it may be possible to work around their edges.

The return to the start along Great Western Way soon passes the growing area (point 13) of the forward-looking, inspirational Southside Project that is a great contribution to Hereford's edgelands; please be sure to check out their website: growinglocal.org.uk/the-southside-project.

To the right of the shared cycle/walk route passing point 13, the fields beyond the railway line are part of another exciting, inclusive project in Hereford's edgelands – the new site for Hereford Community Farm: www.herefordcommunityfarm.co.uk. The Farm's new site at Ashley Farm

is accessible via a short walk left along Grafton Lane from point 11.

Further reading:

- *Edgelands*, Michael Symmons-Roberts and Paul Farley, 2012
- Putting *Haywood Hereford ancient woodland* into a search engine should provide some leads to articles dating back to 2016, while updates on the Southern Link Road may be accessed by searching *Hereford Southern Link Road*.