

Walking to Caer Caradoc from Church Stretton.

The Shropshire countryside to the east of Church Stretton has a collection of hills which are generally quieter than the Long Mynd to the west. These hills are made more interesting by the occasional rocky outcrops which are great to sit on or behind for a picnic. These hills provide a number of walks each containing at least one section of ascent.

You can start in Church Stretton where car parking (grid ref. SO454936) is available together with a train service. Locate Sandford Avenue which runs from the traffic lights on the A49 into the main centre. Take Essex Road, which leads north from this avenue, and continue out of the town to reach a footpath sign on your right at the northern end of a new housing development (Grid ref. SO457939).

Follow this footpath across the railway to reach the A49. Cross this busy main road and continue along the track opposite. Continue across the field ahead using the stiles to reach a lane. Turn left towards New House Farm taking the second footpath on the right. This path follows the field boundary to join a track. Go through the gale and fork left down to a footbridge (Grid ref. SO 471943). Go over the bridge and turn right for a short way before turning left up an eroded path that climbs steeply up. This path leads to a fence which is crossed by a stile with the onward path still climbing onto the ridge of Caer Caradoc.

The views have improved from here on and to the left you will see the Long Mynd whilst to the right you should be able to see the Battle Stones on Willstone Hill which will be a feature of the second part of this walk. Eventually the slope becomes less steep and the remaining walk to the summit of Caer Caradoc is a fairly easy ride. The summit is an ideal place for a break and you will notice the remains of the hill fort. You can now come back the way you came for a shorter walk or carry on...

Descend steeply north on a clear path towards the whaleback of The Lawley. Where the slope flattens turn sharp right and contour across the eastern flank of Caer Caradoc to reach a stile in a fence. Cross this stile and walk south east across the field following a feint path. This will bring you out onto a track with a finger post pointing to where you have just come from!

Go straight over the track and cross the field ahead keeping a small hill to your right. The path can be hard to locate but as you get to the bottom of the field you will see a stile in the fence. Cross this stile and go into a small wood. The path then leads across a small bridge over the stream before climbing back out of the valley to reach a further track by a small farm building. Turn left along this track for a short way and then sharp right (Grid ref. SO 485946).

This path climbs steadily to a col on the western side of Willstone Hill. Cross the stile and continue ahead along the bridleway, which is followed all the way across Hope Bowder Hill and down to the B4371. Turn right, taking care of busy traffic, into the village. After approximately 300 metres look out on the right for a footpath. It is fairly well hidden on the left hand side of a driveway but once located should be followed across fields passing the Gaer Stone on your right to reach the B4371. Turn right along the road for a short way ignoring the first bridleway on your right. Shortly after this there is a waymarked path on your right.

Take this and follow round the right hand edge of a large field to reach a stile that provides access to Helmeth Hill. Ignore the stile instead turn left and keeping the field boundary on your immediate right, continue down the field to reach a lane, which was used for the outward route. Turn left and retrace your steps back to Church Stretton where there are plenty of opportunities shopping, food and drink!

Length: approx. 9 miles / 14.6 km

Ascent: 1550 feet / 470 metres

Grade: Moderate

Start: OS grid reference SO454936. Lat 52.5371422050729 + Long -2.8059347573898

Start Postcode: SY6 6BJ (approx. location).