

Three Woods Walk

Within 5 minutes walk from the Secret Hills Centre you will find yourself in the heart of the countryside. Explore the woods and fields and discover a Civil War battlefield, a hidden fortress, a deer park and a Roman road!

This fairly challenging walk has some steep climbing initially to *Norton Camp*. The walk then descends to follow gently undulating paths with some short climbs.



Allow 4 HOURS to complete the whole walk. Allow at least 2½ hours if you take the shorter route.



**Complete route 7 MILES
Shorter route of 4½ MILES**



Route can be muddy. Walking boots highly recommended.



Remember to take refreshments.

Welcome to the Three Woods Walk. Follow the map and the numbered points in the text to navigate your way around this rewarding walk.

Look for the special waymarkers to help you find your way (see example on map). Take time to stop and enjoy the views whilst the guide reveals the secrets of the woods and hills.

START Your experience starts at the rear of **1** the Secret Hills Centre. Follow the path into the Onny Meadows and go left and follow the path to the kissing gate at the meadow edge.

Go straight on, continuing past the black and white houses on your right, to follow the narrow lane to a white metal bridge across the river Onny. *Stop here and read on.*

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

2 Cross the river and head out across the field bearing slightly right (with the bridge at your back). *Please keep your dog on a lead in this field.* Just before the hedge turn right to cross a footbridge and climb up the hill, bearing left along a sunken lane.

Cross the stile next to the gate and follow the lane and pass Whettleton farm to reach the road. *Stop in Whettleton and read on.*

Whettleton was once a thriving village and dates back to Medieval times. It has not always been as quiet as it is today. In 1645, during the Civil War, the fields above the farm were the scene of a bloody skirmish. A Parliamentary force charged down the hill to surprise a larger Royalist force. The Roundheads won the day, killing Sir William Croft, one of the Cavaliers' commanders and taking several hundred prisoners.

3 Turn right and continue for a short distance to take the left hand turning along an old lane

that climbs up into Norton Camp Wood, just past the entrance to a large house.

The sunken nature of the track shows that it has been heavily used in the past. Two hundred years ago you would have come out at the top of the lane not into a wood but onto the edge of Whettleton Common.

4 At the edge of the wood, turn left and continue along the lane to climb eventually into the wood.

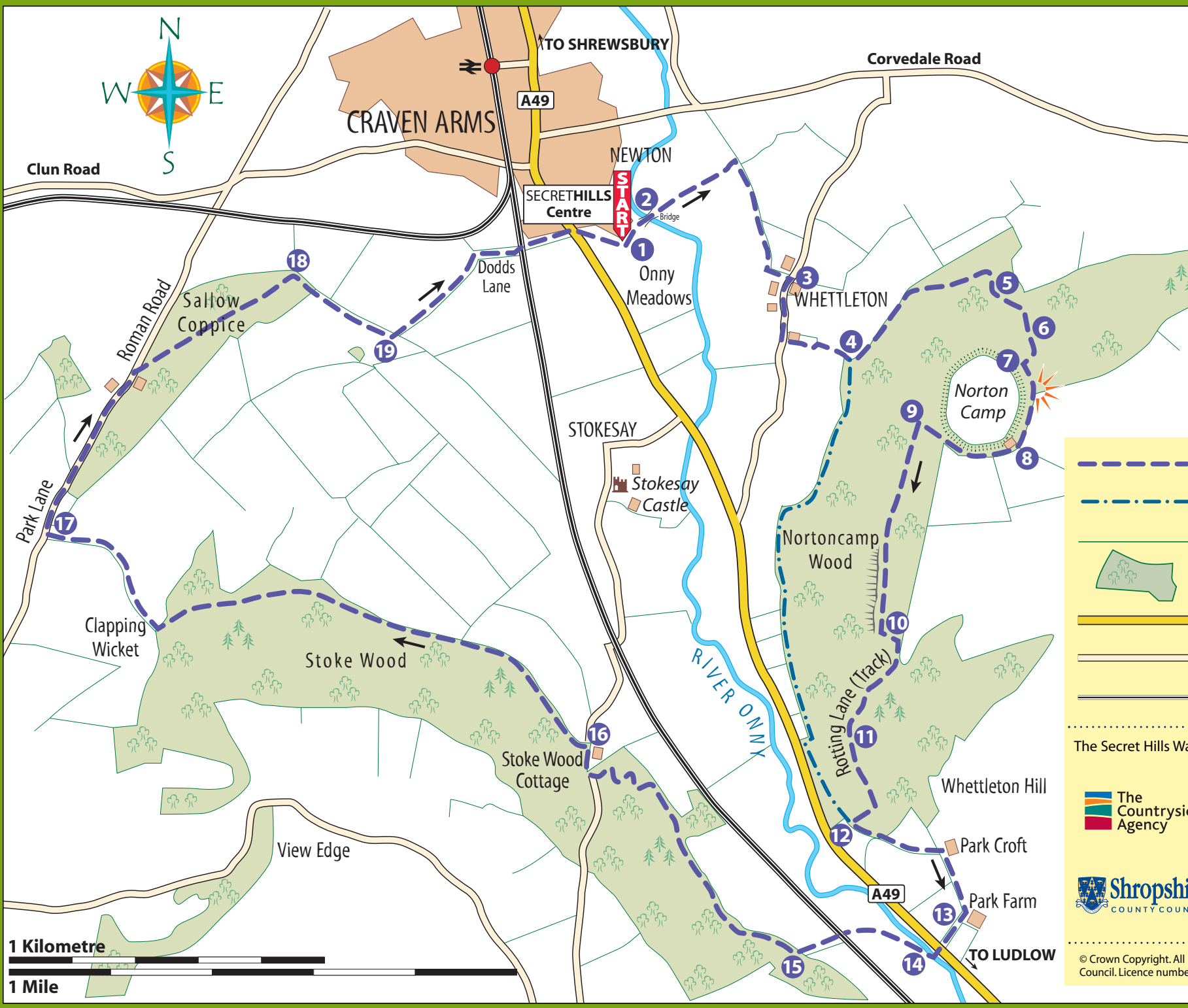
5 Keep climbing to pass a large pheasant pen on your right. *Pheasants are easily frightened so please be careful to keep your dog on a lead.*

6 Go straight on up the hill passing a junction on the right. Soon the track becomes a stony lane with views out to the left (looking east) of the Clee Hills. To your right is Norton Camp. *Stop here and read on.*



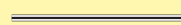
The earthworks of Norton Camp, an Iron Age hill fort of about 300 BC, crown the summit. The camp is renowned for the double rampart and ditch of its defences. Archaeological evidence from excavations suggest that hill forts like this were really hilltop towns.

Local legend says that Norton Camp and the opposite hilltop of View Edge were both inhabited by giants who took it in turns to keep an eye on a store of treasure buried at Stokesay. They used to throw the key of the treasure chest from one to the other across the valley, but one day the key fell short, into the castle moat, and nothing has been seen of the treasure since!

7 The lane follows the outer ring of Norton Camp. Follow the lane around the edge of the camp until you reach an old red brick building on the right.



Look out for these markers to show you the route

-  Main Walk Route
-  Short Cut Route
-  Hedgerows
-  Woodlands
-  Main Roads
-  Other Roads
-  Railway

The Secret Hills Walks have been funded by



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Further Information

Secret Hills, Shropshire Hills Discovery Centre,
Ludlow Road, Craven Arms SY7 9RS.

Tel: (01588) 252593.

Discover the wonders of the Shropshire Hills from the splendour of the scenery to the complexity of their history and heritage.

Travel Information

Mainline railway stations are at Shrewsbury, Church Stretton, Craven Arms and Ludlow. For bus and train information call: **0845 705 6785**

Guidelines for walkers

- Please keep your dogs under close control. We recommend they be kept on a lead on farmland.
- When walking your dog, please take care when in fields of livestock. Take extra care when crossing fields with cows and calves.
- Please leave gates as you find them.
- Always try to keep to the waymarked paths.
- Please respect the country code: protect wildlife, plants and trees. Do not drop litter, light fires or make unnecessary noise.
- Always carry refreshments and wear suitable footwear.
- Pay attention to the weather and dress accordingly.

Other Secret Hills Walks

Riverside Ramble – An easy walk for all the family

Wart Hill Wander – Discover an ancient hill fort, walk part of the Onny Trail along the route of an old railway

Hills & Dale Hike – Climb to Flounders Folly, an isolated tower and discover one of the best views in South Shropshire.

Secret Hills Cycle Rides

The best way to see the Shropshire Hills is by bike. Discover superb views, hidden valleys, ancient castles, quiet woods and sleepy villages.

Walking For Pleasure Great walks for all the family.

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The walk now follows a permissive path, agreed with the landowner; please keep to the waymarked path.

- 8 Take second right past the red brick building and follow the track around the perimeter of the Camp. Keep to the track as it enters the wood, ignoring the turning on your left to reach a stile in the fence to your left.
- 9 Cross the stile and follow the path as it winds along the top of the escarpment in the wood. Cross the next stile and continue in the same direction. *Please keep away from the edge and on the path.*

As you walk through the wood watch out for a network of animal tracks that criss-cross the path through the wood. Fallow deer live in the wood but you'll have to be very quiet to see them.

Norton Camp wood is a working woodland, its trees harvested to be replaced by saplings. Look out for warning signs that will tell you when felling is in progress.

- 10 The path winds away from the edge of the escarpment and eventually bears left then right and right again to descend to Rotting Lane. Follow the lane down the hill.
Note: Follow the blue bridleway arrows.
- 11 The southern end of the wood has been recently felled. Follow the lane as it joins the forestry track and curves off to the left and then right to come to a metal gate. Pass the gate and follow the track to the bottom of the hill, the path here forks sharply left down a narrow lane.

To head back to the Secret Hills Centre from here, refer to Norton Camp Wood short cut, later on in this guide.

- 12 At the bottom of the lane turn left along a surfaced track then right to follow the road as it climbs up the hill to reach a fork.

Go right to follow the field edge track to pass a brown stone house known as 'Park Croft'. Go through the gate and turn right to descend along the track to Park Farm.

The name 'Park Farm' dates back to the 12th Century when the area was enclosed parkland. Please take care when walking through the farmyards and please keep to the waymarked route.

- 13 Cross the farmyard passing the farmhouse on your left to follow the lane down to the main road. *Please take care when crossing the road.* Cross the road and the narrow footbridge to the left of the main bridge. Turn right off the bridge on to a track.
- 14 Go on to pass a stand of old willows then bear left across the field to the railway tunnel. Go through the tunnel taking care to leave gates as you find them. Walk up to the wood with the fence on your left bearing right to cross a stile at the edge of the wood.
- 15 Turn right and follow the permissive path along the wood edge, turning right at the T junction, to eventually climb a series of steps to reach an old lane. At the junction turn right and walk down the hill (following the red arrows) until you reach a turning on the left.

Parts of the steep wooded escarpment of Stoke Wood remain as a good example of ancient semi-natural woodland being at least 400 years old.

You may wish to lengthen your walk to include Stokesay Castle & Church (see Stokesay Castle Extension later in this guide).

- 16** Turn left following the wide, undulating path along the edge of Stoke Wood to eventually reach Clapping Wicket where the path widens in front of a solitary house. Bear right to follow the track along the field edge to eventually meet the Roman road. *Stop here and read on.*

You are now standing on Watling Street, known locally as Park Lane, now a minor road, but 2000 years ago it linked the Roman settlements of Wroxeter (Viroconium) east of Shrewsbury and Leintwardine (Branogenium) near Knighton.

- 17** Turn right to follow the road. Keep going to pass a big house on the right and reach a turning on your right into Sallow Coppice. Follow the path up into the coppice bearing left at the fork.

Sallow Coppice is an excellent example of ancient semi-natural woodland, now managed as a nature reserve. Most of the sallows (willows) from which it takes its name have long gone, as has the practice of coppicing. Instead you can see sycamore, sweet chestnut, silver birch, oak, hazel, wild cherry and lime that have regenerated naturally since it was largely felled in the last war. In spring it is a riot of flowers, with bluebells, primroses, violets and wood anemones marking the banks and woodland rides.

Continue straight on, eventually meeting another path at the northern edge of the wood.

- 18** At the junction turn right to reach a stile. Cross into the field and follow the hedge to cross a stile on your left.
- 19** Follow the right hand hedge to the top of an old lane and stile in the bank on the right. Cross over the stile and follow the lane back into Craven Arms under the railway to come out at the main road opposite the Secret Hills

Centre. Please take care crossing the road back to the Centre.

Short Cut. *Norton Camp Wood.*

- From the junction at the bottom of Rotting Lane (point 11), where the main route turns left down a narrow enclosed lane, turn right and follow the stony track.
- After 250 metres turn right in to the wood (look for the waymark as there are several false turnings here). Climb for a short distance to turn left and follow the footpath along the bottom of the wood.
- Ignore all turnings until you reach the turning at the top of an old lane (You've been here before; it's point 4 on the main directions).
- Turn left here and retrace your steps back to the Secret Hills Centre.

Stokesay Castle Extension

To walk to Stokesay Castle from here will take 10 minutes.

- From point 16 pass the turning on your left passing Stoke Wood Cottage to cross a stile on the right and follow the field edge to rejoin the lane and reach the railway crossing. *Please take extra care when crossing the railway.*
- From the crossing follow the lane to reach Stokesay Castle and Church on your right.

One of the best known medieval buildings in England, Stokesay Castle is well worth a visit and is open all year round. (Call 01588 672544 for further details).

- Return to the walk at point 16.

Thank You: The Three Woods Walk has been created in co-operation with the local farmers and landowners. SMAP would like to thank them for their help, with special thanks to Onibury Estate.



**Discover the woods & fields
from the SECRET HILLS Centre**