

## Walk 8 (11½ miles) - Jay - Abcote - Hopton Castle

Starts flat through the water meadows of the river Clun (impassable after prolonged heavy rain), then finishes with Hopton Wood and a few short climbs

Turn L out of the Baron at Bucknell and walk along the road for ¼ mile until you reach the church. Turn L and walk down the footpath by the river Redlake until you reach the Sitwell Arms public house. Go across the road onto the dirt track opposite, and follow this through two kissing gates into the meadow beyond. Go to the far end of this field to a gate, then bear half R to the second stile and cross the railway.



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### Point A

Turn L after the stile and walk along the edge of the field by the railway. Don't go through the gap at the end of field, but turn R and pass under the power line until you reach the corner of the field by the end of the wood. Above you is a stile partly obscured by a tree.

Cross the stile and head for the far L corner of the next field, and another stile. Continue along the edge of the next field, past a brick barn, and climb the fence in the corner (by a white bridge over the river Redlake) to reach a lane.

### Point B

Turn L over the bridge and follow the lane for about ⅔ mile all the way through the hamlet of Adley Moor and onto the common the other side, where it becomes a dirt track. On the far side of the common is a house, to the R of which is a gate beneath a large oak tree. Go through this gate and cross the field to an imposing wooden footbridge, then cross the next field to a distinct clump of tall trees.

### Point C

Turn L onto a farm track and cross the bridge. This takes you through the tiny hamlet of Jay. After two gates and a very tidy garden, you come to a T-junction. Turn R here and look out for a fingerpost on your L about 60 yds further on.

### Point D

On either side are large water meadows, although the river Clun is still about ¼ mile away. Nevertheless, in very wet weather the river bursts its banks, and if you were standing by this fingerpost, water could be lapping over your boots! You'd be looking at a lake as far as the eye could see, and for the next part of your walk you would need a canoe (see photograph)!

Go through the gate and across the meadow, to where the hedgeline and treeline meet by the brook. Cross the stile and maintain your direction for ⅔ mile past a series of stiles and gates until you come to a tree-covered motte, close to the river Clun. To your left is the imposing Broadward Hall.

### Point E

Skirt the motte and cross the meadow, aiming for the stile in line with the house opposite. Turn R onto the road, cross the bridge, and then turn L. Walk along the bottom of the field by the river. Don't go up the hill, but cross two stiles to enter a private garden. This garden is testimony to what can be achieved with patience, a ride-on lawnmower and a keen gardener.

Pick your way through the bottom of the garden and pass below the house. A wooden seat invites you to "tarry a while" whilst affording a cracking view of the river and the hills beyond. In fact, take a good look at the biggest of the distant wooded hills, as this is where you'll be in about 5 miles time. Locate the stile and kissing gate at the far side of the garden. You now briefly follow the river for about 50 yards to where it meanders L, and your path continues straight ahead along the top of a field to a stile and a road.

### Point F

Turn L at the road and after a few paces keep R through two kissing gates onto a large field (may bear a crop). Bear half L and head for the gate in the distant hedgerow, aiming midway between the house on the L and the clump of trees on the R.

Turn L after this gate and then go immediately through the next. Walk down alongside the garden of the house on your L to a wooden gate at the bottom, which leads onto a driveway and down to the road. Go through the gate directly opposite, and head for the dog-friendly stile behind the shed at the bottom of the field.

If you're on track, you should now find the river Clun on your L once more, and you will be ploughing through the lush vegetation on its bank. There soon follows another stile and a natty footbridge, from where you walk parallel to the road and straight across the next field. About  $\frac{2}{3}$  the way across, look out for a small waymark post on your L (may be obscured by nettles), as this directs you to a footbridge over the river Clun.

As you leave the bridge, bear half L and walk uphill to the large clump of trees at the top. Pass through the trees and a small wood, before emerging onto the road via a kissing gate.

#### **Point G**

Turn R and walk along the road for about  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile as it drops down towards Clungunford. At the bend in the road turn L, signposted Abcott and Twitchen.

*At this point is Rocke Cottage, open 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. daily (except Mon and Tues) for traditional cream teas and light lunches (tel: 01588 660631).*

Continue up the side road for about  $\frac{1}{4}$  mile, as it curves first L and then goes gently uphill past some houses. Just before the railway bridge turn L into a farmyard.

#### **Point H**

Go over the stile, through a gate, and follow the hedgeline round to your R through another gate and cross over the railway line. Bear half L and head towards the L-hand end of a line of trees in the far hedgerow. Go through the gate and head towards the big hill in front of you. As you approach the lone tree more or less ahead of you, pass the end of a hedge on your R and the path bears half R. Follow the marked path across the field and over a stile.

Skirt round the field corner on your R, then follow the hedgeline to a stile, 60 yds past a large tree. Cross two stiles and walk up through a garden, past some polytunnels. Another stile takes you into the neighbouring field and up to a road.

#### **Point I**

Climb up the impressive stone steps opposite, into a sloping meadow. Take a rising traverse up the slope and head for the gap between the two woods above. Good views of the Clun valley and the surrounding hills begin to open up on your L.

Go through the gate in the field corner and turn R over the stile at the end of the wood. Head towards the hill opposite, across the sloping field. This brings you to a waymark post and a track, which you follow down to a road.

#### **Point J**

Turn R and walk  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile into the village of Hopton Castle (see footnote).

You will pass the turn-offs for Bedstone and Twitchen, as well as some lovely old timber-framed houses, before reaching a telephone box. Shortly afterwards are some white railings where the road narrows. Carry on past these and continue for about 80 yards past the houses on your L to a small gate in the hedgerow on your L, opposite the entrance to Upper House Farm.

#### **Point K**

Enter the field and aim for the L-hand of the two gates facing you. Go through this and the next field to a further gate. On your left is the ruin of Hopton Castle, from which the village derives its name (see historical footnote below). You are now faced with a stiff pull up the hill ahead, to a stile in the top L corner by the wood. The stile takes you into Hopton Wood, where you turn L onto a forest track.

#### **Point L**

The track winds its way steadily uphill through the wood for  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, with occasional fine views of the distant hills to your L. Eventually the track levels out and you come to a fork, where you bear L opposite some horrendous bike jumps and start your descent.

Stick to this track for another  $\frac{1}{3}$  mile, ignoring any mountain bike tracks. Watch out for another path joining from the L (by mountain bike sign 32). The path swings R here, and about 150 yards after this junction, turn L by mountain bike sign 36. Follow the grassy path downhill and go through the gate at the bottom.

#### **Point M**

There is no visible path for the next  $\frac{1}{2}$  mile, so great care is needed to find the correct route. Walk straight up the hill ahead and down the other side to a gate in the far L corner, just to the R of a large oak tree. Go through the gate and bear half R across the field, towards two gates. Don't go through the gates, but turn sharp R in front of them and drop down to the corner of the field.

#### **Point N**

Turn R in front of a narrow fenced-off area before the wood, and then walk downhill to the bottom corner of the field. Just before the bottom, enter the enclosure by climbing over a stile on your L, then walk up about 20 yds and cross another stile. Bear half R and drop down towards a large yew tree. Look out for a waymark post where the path splits. Turn L and follow the waymarks steeply downhill. Cross the stream in the valley below.

#### **Point O**

A short boggy stretch leads you to a gate below Pool Cottage and a track up to a road. Turn R and walk 45 yds along the road, to cross a stile in the hedgerow on your L. Go steeply uphill and cross the stile ahead of you. Walk across an undulating field, keeping close to the wire fence on your R, until you can see Mynd Farm on your L. Then bear half L across the field to a stile in the far L corner, close to the farm. Turn L onto a grassy track and follow it a short distance to a road junction, where you turn R.

#### **Point P**

Walk along this road and turn L through two gates in front of a house. Drop down the grassy slope, towards the stile by a lone tree, via a surprise kissing gate. Once over the stile proceed uphill, aiming for another stile to the L of an obvious gate (L of a pink house). A final stile takes you onto a road, and is in line with a large oak tree. Turn L at the road and walk up to the T-junction.

#### **Point Q**

Take the gate ahead of you, and walk down the field with the hedgerow close to your R. Bucknell is laid out before you in the valley below. In the bottom R-hand corner go through a gap, and pass through a wooden gate into the next field. Keeping close to the L-hand edge, walk down this field to a waymarked post. Behind the large oak tree in the corner a short muddy track drops steeply down to a gate, through which you exit onto Dog Kennel Lane.

Turn R and follow the road round to a road junction by a telephone box. Turning R again here takes you back to the pub in 350 yards.