

SHROPSHIRE

Outstanding Circular Walks

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walk 19

 Start

Stiperstones

 Distance

7¼ miles (11.7km)

 Height gain

930 feet (285m)

 Approximate time

4 hours

 Route terrain

Undulating walking on forestry roads, field paths and farm tracks; rough underfoot in places

 Parking

Stiperstones National Nature Reserve car park, 2 miles (3.2km) north-west of Bridges; follow brown NNR signs










 Dog friendly

A few awkward stiles; keep dogs on leads in sheep country

 OS maps



Landranger 137 (Church Stretton & Ludlow), Explorer 216 (Welshpool & Montgomery)

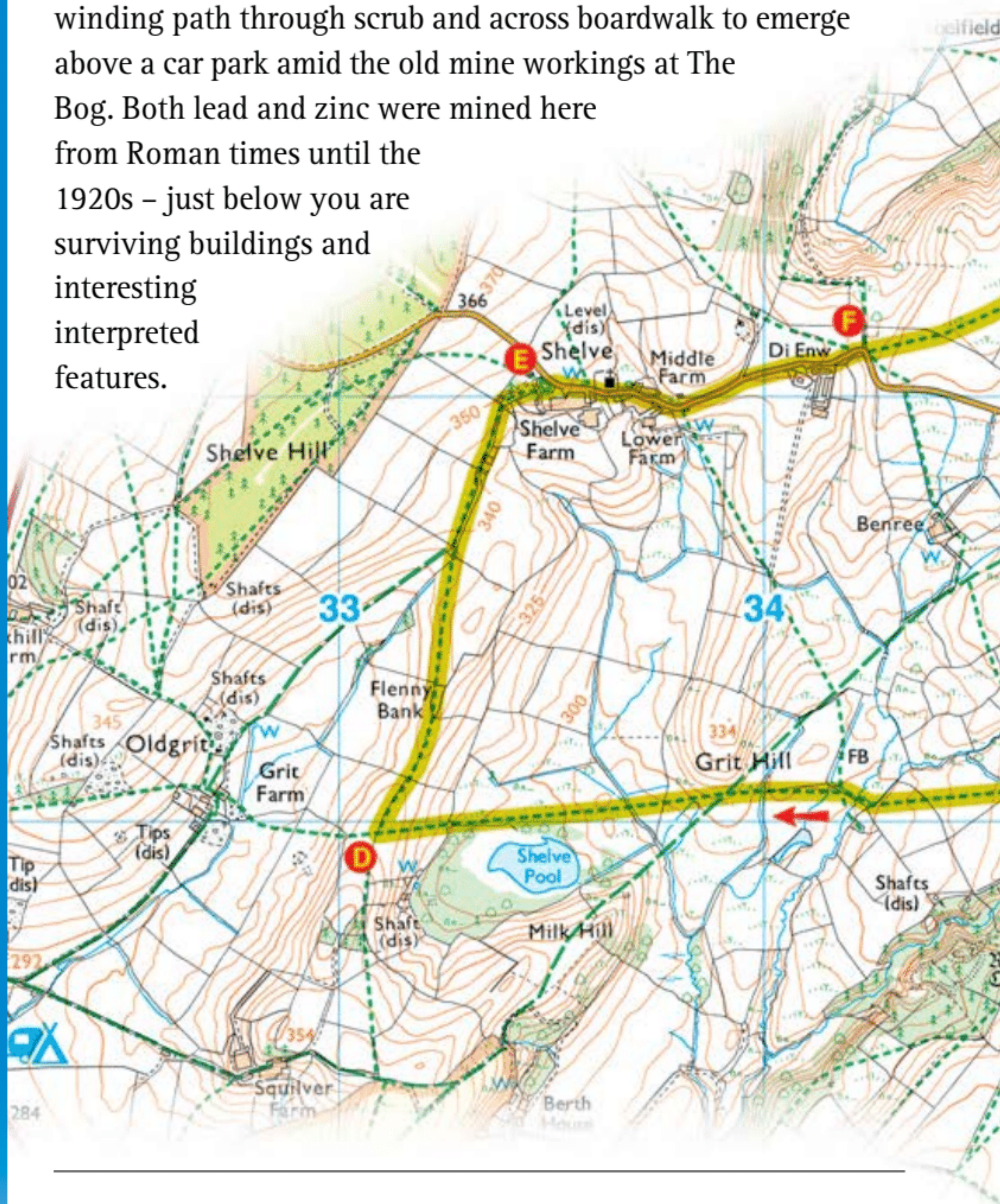
 GPS waypoints

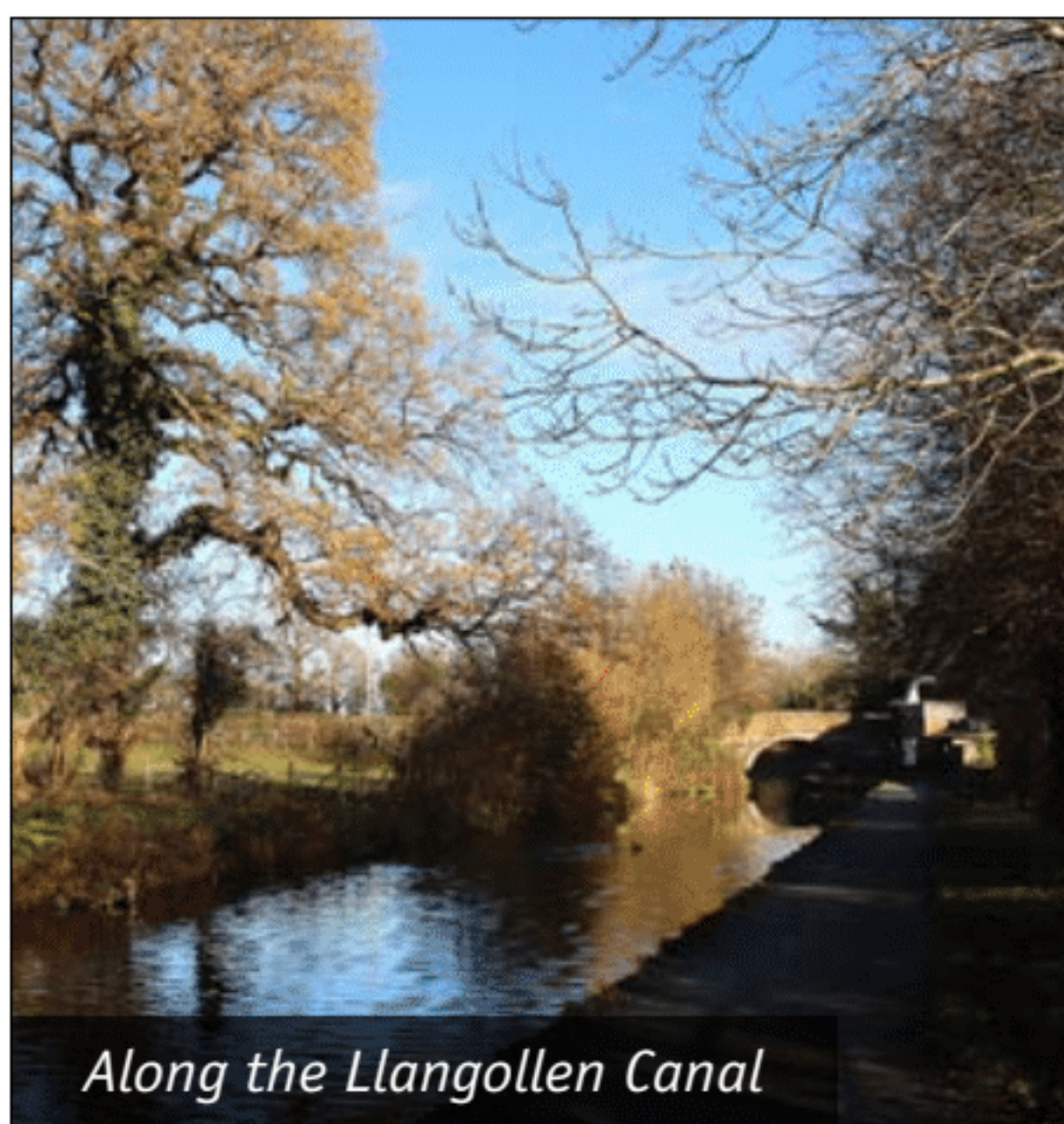
-  SO 369 977
-  SO 361 976
-  SO 356 979
-  SO 348 980
-  SO 331 980
-  SO 334 990
-  SO 342 991
-  SO 354 993
-  SO 371 995

Stiperstones

The sombre and forbidding-looking ridge of the Stiperstones, 1,758 feet (536m) at the highest point, is unlike any of the other Shropshire hills. The succession of serrated quartzite rock pinnacles that punctuate the ridge give it an appearance more reminiscent of the wilder parts of Dartmoor or the Pennines, and there is a definite feeling of remoteness and loneliness in this thinly populated area. Walking on the rocky ridge itself requires some care, but otherwise the terrain is not difficult. The route is well waymarked, there are just a few modest climbs, and the views over Shropshire and the Welsh border country are superb.

 Turn right out of the car park, walk along the lane for ½ mile (800m) to a T-junction, turn right and, at a public footpath sign about 50 yards ahead, go left through a hand-gate . Bearing right, head across the corner of a field to a hand-gate and continue across a rough and uneven gorse-strewn field, walking directly beneath overhead wires to use a kissing-gate in a bushy corner. Drop down steps and trace the winding path through scrub and across boardwalk to emerge above a car park amid the old mine workings at The Bog. Both lead and zinc were mined here from Roman times until the 1920s – just below you are surviving buildings and interesting interpreted features.





Along the Llangollen Canal

end of the field, ignore the gate on the right and carry on to come out onto a road by Chirk Bridge **H**.

Cross to the drive opposite, but abandon it almost immediately in favour of a footpath on the left, beside an old mill leat. Wind through a gate and stay with the path as it rises across a steep bank to emerge at the top onto a road. Go right to a junction and then left along Castle Road at the edge of the town.

Approaching a mini-roundabout at the end, leave left along a path **J** that drops to a canal basin at the southern portal of Chirk Tunnel. Follow the towpath away across Chirk Aqueduct. Back in England, it swings left past

A World Heritage site

Opened to traffic in 1801, Chirk Aqueduct was engineered by Thomas Telford to carry the Llangollen Canal across the Ceiriog valley. Embedded within the masonry to contain the water are cast iron troughs, something that Telford had successfully pioneered on the Shrewsbury Canal at Longdon-on-Tern only a couple of years earlier. The 234-yard (214-m) long aqueduct carries the canal across the valley on ten stone arches soaring 70 feet (21m) above the valley, and for a short time was the tallest built. Immediately to the north, the canal then delves through a tunnel 460 yards (420m) long as it makes its way to the even more impressive Pontcysyllte Aqueduct, just 3½ miles (5.6km) farther on – an extension to the walk if you have the time. The adjacent railway bridge is even higher and was opened in 1848. Despite the competition, the canal managed to survive as a working waterway until the 1930s, and avoided closure because it also served to feed water to the Shropshire Union Canal.

canal cottages and on to a bridge at the top of Chirk Bank. Keep going beside the canal for another ½ mile (800m) back to Gledrid Bridge. ●



Chirk's two massive bridges

The great divide Offa was King of Mercia at the end of the 8th century. This ambitious ruler determined to keep the troublesome Celts out of his large central-England kingdom; so had constructed a stunning boundary ditch and rampart of immense proportions and stretching (nominally, some sections are missing, others are rivers) about 160 miles (257km) from Prestatyn in North Wales to Sedbury, on the Severn Estuary near Chepstow. In places the rampart (possibly topped in places by a palisade) is 8 feet (2.5m) high and the dyke 65 feet (20m) wide. Longer than Hadrian's Wall, its purpose was to mark the boundary, and possibly also to act as a border where taxes could be collected at crossing points.

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walk 28

Start

Offa's Dyke Centre,
West Street, Knighton

Distance

9 miles (14.5km)

Height gain

1,500 feet (460m)

Approximate time

5 hours

Route terrain

Generally good paths and tracks. Several steady and one very steep climb; one steep descent

Parking

Bus Station/Market car park, Knighton (Pay & Display)






Dog friendly

Keep dogs on lead in sheep country

OS maps


Landranger 137 (Church Stretton & Ludlow), Explorer 201 (Knighton & Presteigne)

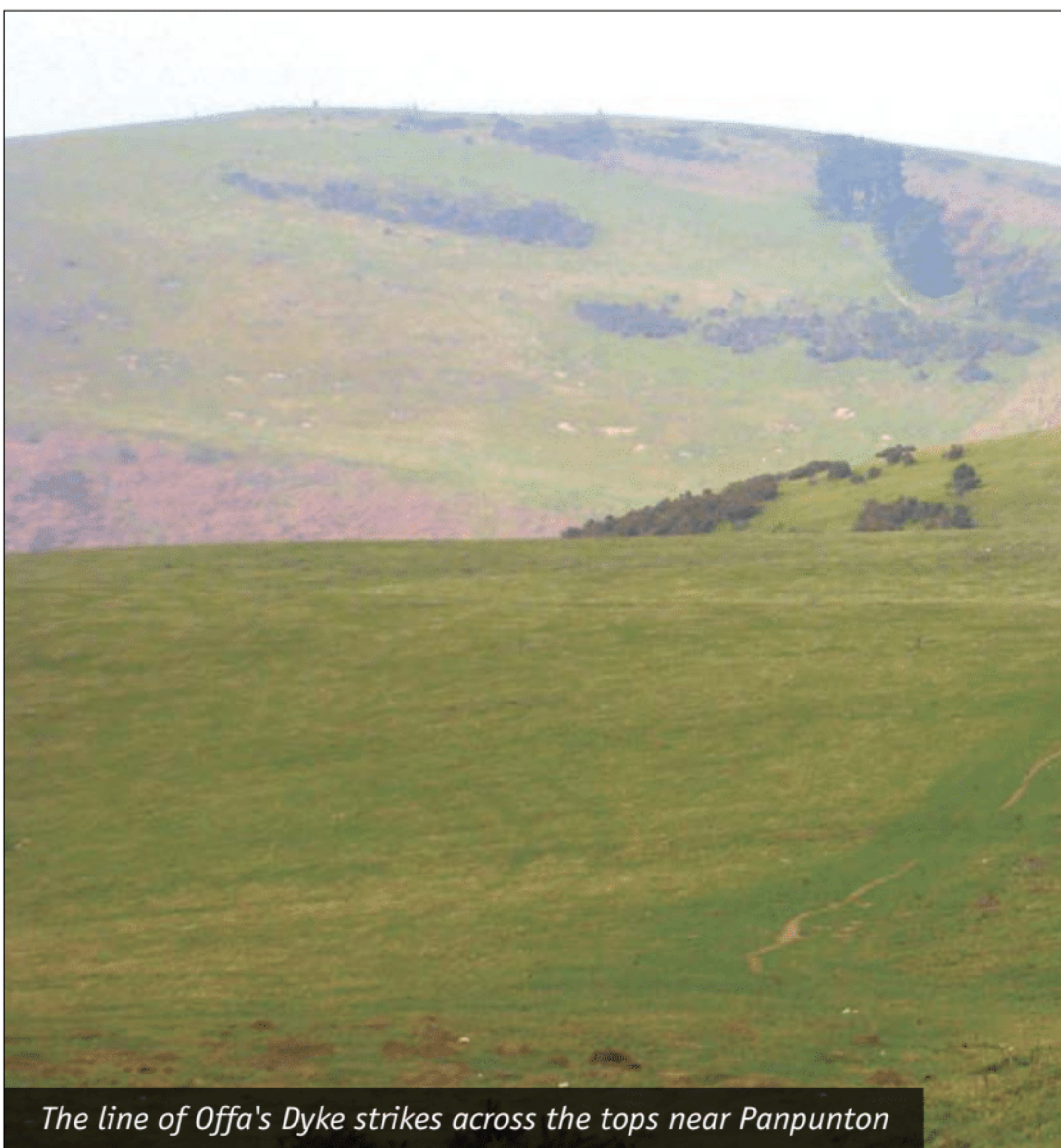
GPS waypoints

-  SO 284 724
-  SO 252 752
-  SO 254 761
-  SO 260 774
-  SO 284 734

Knighton, Teme Valley and Offa's Dyke

A deceptively easy stroll along Teme Valley lanes precedes a steady climb into the contorted landscapes of the England–Wales borders, where the route joins the stirring barrier of Offa's Dyke for a superb high-level walk along this remarkable Dark Ages construction, with inspiring views to match. Keep your eyes peeled for the majestic red kite, which survived in these secluded valleys and hills in the 1970s whilst disappearing everywhere else in Britain.

 Find the Offa's Dyke Centre, which is well signed along West Street from the town-centre clock tower. The waymarked Offa's Dyke Path (ODP) drops behind the Visitor Centre and then down steps from a corner to gain a riverside path; turn upstream alongside the River Teme, keeping eyes peeled for



The line of Offa's Dyke strikes across the tops near Panpunton



The Ercall Unconformity



Offa's Dyke

During the latter half of the 8th century, Mercia became the dominant kingdom of England, its influence extending from the Humber all the way to the south coast, excepting only Cornwall. It is traditionally held that, during this period Offa consolidated the border with the Welsh kingdoms of Powis and Gwent, although recent archaeology has suggested parts of the dyke were actually begun soon after the Romans left Britain. Whatever other purposes the earthwork may have served, it was certainly defensive against the Welsh, in that the ditch lay below the western flank. Offa's Dyke also took full advantage of the landscape, as well-exemplified here, where it commands the high ground above the Welsh Morda valley.

rising to join a higher trail. The way eventually falls to a junction, where felling, for the time being, has opened a view across the valley to Wales **F**.

Following acorn signs, turn right through the dyke and then left, soon walking beside a fence and on beyond

its end. Ignore a path then signed off right and carry on along a line of twisted oak to leave the wood through a gate at the far end. Bear right and reverse your outward steps back to the car park.

Oswestry Racecourse

'Mad' Jack Mytton, commemorated in Shropshire's 100-mile (160-km) Mytton Way, was a wealthy, if eccentric, 19th-century country squire whose main passions in life were gambling, horses and an extravagant, daredevil lifestyle. He was a frequent visitor to the hilltop racetrack here, which became established during the 17th century with impromptu gatherings of the local sporting gentry. By Mytton's day, it had become a popular event with three meetings a year, a grandstand was built and the turf re-laid by French prisoners of war. But popularity contributed to its downfall, attracting villains and unruly behaviour, while the expanding railways brought opportunity to travel to courses elsewhere. The last meeting was held in 1848.



Beside Offa's Dyke

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