

Joyce's Walk

Sam Phillips, chairman of Ross Ramblers and Ross Walkers are Welcome, reproduces the route named in honour of one of the group's best-loved members

JOYCE Salmon was an extraordinary lady who, sadly, died last October. She was a mine of information with a wide range of interests ranging from local history to horticulture. She was also a keen walker and enthusiastic member of the Ross Group of the Ramblers. She had an encyclopaedic knowledge of local matters and she always had a snippet of information or a story to tell wherever she walked.

Joyce also led walks for the group and one in particular was always referred to as Joyce's Walk. The fact that Ross Ramblers has walked it fairly regularly on a Tuesday was instrumental in getting three gates installed on a section of the walk above Hope Mansell.

Joyce's Walk is a four-mile circular walk starting at the hamlet of Bailey Lane End, on the B road between Ross-on-Wye and Drybrook, in the Forest of Dean. It passes through woods and fields to Hope Mansell. After going through the village the walk follows a hilly route to the lane near Horn Hill Farm then skirts Harechurch Wood before returning to the start. It is a lovely walk with great views and interesting features.

1 Climb over the stile, or cross over the forestry barrier and walk straight on, into the wood, for about 50 yards. At this point five tracks meet, including the one you are on. Take the second track on the left. It is the only one that goes downhill. Follow the track downhill through the conifer woodland. It can be a bit muddy in places. At the foot of the slope the track bears right and runs parallel to a small brook (Bailey Brook) on your left. There are glimpses of meadows through the trees on the left. After passing what looks like a holiday cottage, called Oak Tree, the woodland changes to broad ▶



Above Ever-flowing spring and icy grass (7)



The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and improve conditions for all walkers. In Herefordshire there are four groups: Hereford, Mortimer, Ross-on-Wye and Leadon Vale.

For more information contact Tom Fisher, tel: 01886 821544 or email: tom.fisher@virgin.net



Above Disused railway bridge (8) **Inset** Byway sign at point 7, outside Cuckoo Point

leaf trees, mainly beech. Woodpeckers can be heard along this stretch of the walk. After about 300 yards you come to a T-junction. Take a left turn, downhill past Lily Cottage (a white cottage on the right). Head, downhill, towards Bailey Brook Cottage and pass to the right of it. Continue to descend the path to a stile and a small bridge over the stream.

2 After crossing the bridge go straight ahead, with the stream to your right, for about 50 yards and cross another small stream by an earth bridge. You are now at the foot of a short, but steep, hill with a fence and stile on the skyline. Climb the short hill to the stile and cross it.

3 Once over the stile look to the right for a lovely view towards Weston-under-Penyard and beyond. There is a very clear path across the field, going straight ahead. Follow the path to another stile in the hedge. Cross the stile and descend the steps onto a lane. You have now reached the village of Hope Mansell and are standing outside the Old School House and the small

village hall, both on the left. Continue down the lane to a junction with a tarmaced lane. Immediately opposite is a prominent display cabinet containing information about the walks in and around Hope Mansell.

Turn left and walk up the lane for about 150 yards to St Michael's Church.

4 St Michael's is a very attractive stone church, probably built in the 12th or 13th century. According to the information in the church, existing Registers of Births, Marriages and Deaths date from 1556 and it is interesting to note that English replaced Latin from about 1590. Other fascinating facts reveal that the font is about 700 years old and, "the sturdy rafters have survived six centuries".

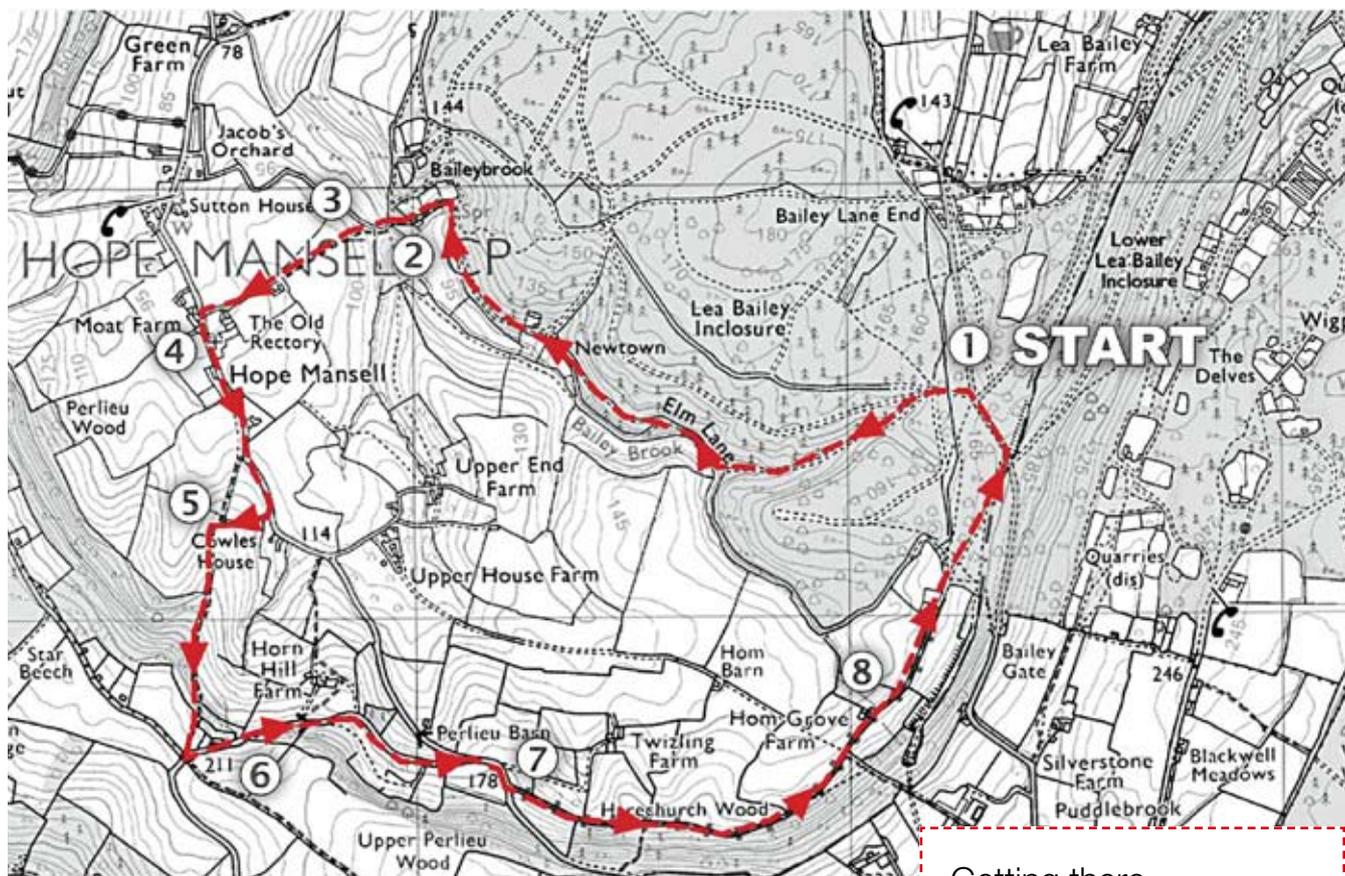
After leaving the church, turn left and continue up the lane for about 400 yards to where a finger post points to the right up a short lane where two five-bar metal gates can be seen. Go up the lane and go through the gate to the right. Please remember to close the gate and replace the loop of chain over the gatepost.

Continue up the steep-sided lane and take time to look at the fascinating rock

formations with trees growing from and between them. Emerge from the sunken lane into a field, with good views over Hope Mansell to your right.

5 Follow the hedge on your left as it curves left up the field. Head towards a prominent five-bar gate with a new pedestrian gate alongside it. Go through the pedestrian gate (check that it had closed behind you, sometimes it doesn't) and continue up the field close to the fence with woodland on your right.

Keep close to the woodland and pass under low hanging tree branches and alongside more interesting rock formations, many of which are covered in bright green moss. Towards the top of the slope, turn right through another new gate. Continue straight ahead across a small field and pass through another new self-closing gate into a field. Continue on, slightly to the right to a stile that leads onto a lane at a Tee junction. There is a cottage called High Stones on the junction. Turn left down the lane, past the cottage. The lane goes down quite steeply. Walk for about 200 yards down the hill until you reach a



Getting there

Start/parking At Bailey Lane End, at the Forestry lay-by on B road between Ryeford (on the A40 Ross/Gloucester road) and Drybrook. Opposite the junction with the road to Lea.

Grid Ref SO 643195.

Parking is limited and muddy in places. Do not obstruct access to the woodland.

Maps Outdoor Leisure 14.

Length 4 miles.

Grade Moderate.

Stiles 4.

Public transport Bus route 33 between Gloucester and Ross-on-Wye. Contact Traveline on 0871 2002233.

Refreshments Wonky Donkey pub at Bailey Lane End (01989 750954).

Toilets No public toilets.

bench seat (donated by M F Freeman) on the left.

6 From this seat you can see virtually the whole of the route so far. The view is wonderful and, as you sit in almost total silence, you can almost hear Elgar's Enigma Variations playing gently in the background. This is, truly, rural England at its best. Continue downhill and along the lane for about 700 yards, past the entrance to Horn Hill Farm and the junction with the lane to Hope Mansell. Just after the road junction the lane goes slightly uphill. At the second noticeable drive entrance, on the left (the house is called Cuckoo Pitch) turn left onto a byway. The byway sign is tight against the fence on the left and easy to miss but the entrance to the byway is very obvious.

7 Walk along the byway with fields and nice views on the left and more, pleasant, woodland (Harechurch Wood) to the right. As you emerge from the woodland you arrive onto an open lane at Hom Grove Farm. On the right, a wonderful spring gushes from the hedge.

8 On the day I took the photographs for the walk there had been an overnight frost and the grass was covered in ice. Walk on along the track and, just before reaching the road, pause to admire one of the bridges over one of the many disused railway lines in the Forest of Dean. Where the track meets the road, turn left and walk, with care as the traffic travels very quickly, back to the start.

This is a short walk and is often part of the Ross Ramblers evening walks programme. Joyce Salmon was the leader the first time the group did the walk. The members enjoyed it so much that it has become known as Joyce's Walk and is a fitting tribute to a remarkable lady who walked to the top of Bredon Hill less than a month before she died.

The Ross Walkers are Welcome Group promotes Ross as a destination for walkers. Ross was accredited as the first Walkers are Welcome town in Herefordshire in July 2009 and for the past two years has organised a two-day walking Festival in October. This year the Festival has been expanded and will run from Friday, September 31 to Sunday,

October 2. The Ross Walkers are Welcome Group originated within the Ross Group of the Ramblers and is fully supported by the Ramblers. For more details go to www.ross-on-wyewalkersarewelcome.co.uk ■