



# KINGS CAPLE

Sid Palmer of the Ramblers' Association takes a circular walk from Kings Caple along the River Wye, visiting three special churches



**Start/Parking:** Park opposite Kings Caple church next to the tump. Grid Ref; OS 559288.  
**Maps:** OS Explorer Map 189.  
**Distance:** 5 miles.  
**Grade:** Moderate  
**Stiles:** 13  
**Nearest Town:** Ross-on-Wye.  
**Refreshments:** New Harp Inn, Hoarwithy, for a drink, or meals from 12am to 2.30pm and 6pm to 10pm. Ring 01432 840900 for details.  
**Public Toilets:** None.  
**Public Transport:** Bus route 37 to Hoarwithy from Hereford and Ross-on-Wye. It is essential to check the times and days of the bus with the operator on tel: 01531 821584. If you are coming by bus, you can start the walk from Hoarwithy instead of Kings Caple.  
 Note that after prolonged or heavy rain, the river Wye regularly floods over adjoining fields. In these circumstances part of this walk becomes impassable and extremely dangerous along the banks of the river from just beyond Sheildbrook to the Hoarwithy bridge.

- 1 If travelling by car, park opposite Kings Caple church next to the tump. The 13th-century St John the Baptist Church is one of the three remaining churches in Britain which continues to distribute Pax cakes on Palm Sunday.
- 2 Walk round the right hand side of the tump, turn left along the path and climb over the stile. Cross the private drive and pause to view the panoramic scene across the river Wye to Sellack church. Climb over the stile and walk across the pasture to the field gate opposite, walk through the kissing gate and turn right onto Sellack Boat road towards the river.
- 3 After 650 metres you will pass a private house called Shieldbrook on the left. It was originally built as an inn to serve the river trade when teams of men towed the barges upstream. This continued until the building of the towpath in the early 19th century. More recently Shieldbrook was a nursery which specialised in shrubs. The owner, Mrs E. Taylor, wrote a most informative book about the area entitled Kings Caple in Archenfield.
- 4 Walk along the road to where it turns left, and at the fingerpost continue along the footpath to the footbridge over the Wye, which commands a fine view of the river and swans. After crossing the bridge, turn right underneath it and read the memorial commemorating its construction in 1895, which brought to an end to the centuries-old ferry service between Kings Caple and Sellack.
- 5 From the footbridge continue straight on south towards the church of St Tysilio at Sellack, 350 metres ahead. Cross the wooden bridge, climb over the next stile and the stile next to a field gate near to the church. Built in the 13th century, it claims to be the only English church dedicated to a Celtic saint. Guide books are available inside.
- 6 Leaving the church turn right and retrace your steps through the church gate and back towards the stile you just climbed over. Before reaching it turn left, and walk through the field gate. The footpath goes northwest towards the pond. The ground can be boggy and it may be advisable to

**Above left to right: Kings Caple Church. Toll house – Hoarwithy. The River Wye from Sellack Bridge. Hoarwithy church. Below: Sellack Church. Swan on the River Wye. Kings Caple churchyard.**



- 7 keep well to the left of the trees and pond. Continue in a westerly direction for 600 metres to the river bank. Walk past the tree to your left and continue towards a large tree on the river bank. Keep to left of it, and beyond it you will see a waymarker on the river bank.
- 8 Walking along the river bank as you approach the trees on the left look up and to the left where the outline of Caradoc Court can be seen. This was built in the late 16th /early 17th centuries, and upgraded to the Jacobean style in the 19th century: a beautiful house, severely damaged by fire in 1986 but now being repaired.
- 9 Continue towards the gates and stile, climb over the stile and follow the track to the end of the wooded ridge. Just beyond the end, turn left to the gate opposite the road leading to Hentland. Climb over the stile, cross the Ross/Hoarwithy road and walk up the opposite road signposted to Kynaston and Hentland.
- 10 Continue for 800 metres until it turns sharp left. The building to the left was originally the Hentland village school. Take the track on the right signposted as a footpath, and follow it for 220 metres. Ignore the track to your left and walk straight on under the electricity wires, keeping the pylon on your left. The path bends slightly: ignore the field entrance on your right, and follow the path for 150 metres. Climb over the next stile, take the left hand path walking alongside the hedge on your left.
- 11 From here you have a marvellous view across the river Wye to Kings Caple, though in the summer it is marred by a sea of polytunnels. Walkers and others have objected to them and new planning guidelines have been introduced; they undoubtedly create a major scar on the countryside in what is supposed to be an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Continue along the hedge for 380 metres, crossing one stile, then turn left to cross two stiles on either side of a track.
- 12 Continue walking alongside the hedge for 550 metres, admiring the views across the river Wye to Capler Hill. It is difficult to believe that in this tranquil area, northwest across the fields, a substantial college existed during the late 5th and 6th centuries. Known as the Hentland College, it was established by St Dyfrig at Llanfrother in the latter quarter of the fifth century. Remains of it

- 13 have yet to be discovered.
- 14 The path and hedge curve to the left and descend, passing a number of electricity poles. Climb over the stile and follow the path which then bears left, and descending across a track and past the house called Quarry Bank on your right. Follow the curving wooded path down to the road.
- 15 Turn left and walk along the road into Hoarwithy. Take care as you walk up the hill as the road can be busy. Walk to the New Harp Inn, then continue walking to the Italianate church of St Catherine's. The church is well worth a visit but is not always open. However, there are splendid views from the terrace.
- 16 The original chapel was built in 1840 by Reverend Thomas Hutchinson, curate in charge of Hentland parish. In 1870, Prebendary William Poole, vicar of Hentland, 'beautified' the property he considered an 'ugly brick building with no pretensions to any style of architecture' in Southern Italian Romanesque and Byzantine styles.
- 17 Retrace your steps towards the New Harp. Take the first road turning on your left to Carey and Kings Caple. Ignore the next turning left to Carey and continue towards Kings Caple, past the toll house and along the road bridge across the river Wye.
- 18 After crossing the river, walk towards the Kings Caple sign. Just before you reach it turn right onto the track indicated as a footpath parallel with the river. Follow this as it widens to the size of an ancient road and gradually comes closer to the river, ignoring the stile and footpath sign on your left. After 270 metres the track turns left, away from the river. Continue for 200 metres until you reach the road.
- 19 Turn right and walk 250metres to a large house named Mayfield, then take the left fork and continue along the winding climbing road for 650metres. Follow this to the next junction. Bear left, and you are now on the Roman road which would have been a link from the river crossing at Red Rail to the northbound road going to Chester.
- 20 Ahead of you is Kings Caple church. Walk towards the



church, then either walk up the steep(ish) bank through the trees to the gate in the church wall. Stop for a minute to read the stone notice to the right of the gate, which was covered by ivy for many years. It is interesting that in the 1980s a message from 1681 inspired parishioners to plant the trees you have just walked through. Alternatively walk up to the main gate and go back to look at the stone notice, then visit this interesting church.

18 Finally you may wish to walk to the top of Caple Tump for a view of the Wye Valley to Ross-on-Wye, which is five miles away, or twelve miles by the winding river. As you view the patchwork quilt of today's fields, imagine the difference when this area was once a major producer of cider, with apple trees grown in the hedges and strips of fields. ■

**THE RAMBLERS' ASSOCIATION**

The Ramblers' Association is the UK's largest walking charity. It promotes walking in the countryside, improves access to it, and protects the beauty of the countryside. In the UK the RA has over 130,000 members organised in 54 areas and 450 local groups. In the Herefordshire area we have four groups: Hereford, Ross, Mortimer and Leaddon Vale. We run a combined walks programme with about four walks every week. All are very welcome on our walks.

**For more information about Herefordshire Ramblers ring Tom Fisher on 01886 821544 or email [tom.fisher@virgin.net](mailto:tom.fisher@virgin.net)**