

Trip Report Mortimer Forest

Date: July 27th, 2018

Group: Steve (leader), Sarah, Mike W, Selina, Jeff, Debbie, Sue, Della, Jim

Route: ([link to Walking Britain](#))

Total Distance: 11.4 miles

Total Ascent: 2700 ft

Weather: Dry and warm

A small group assembled for this trip down the A49 to Ludlow. It was only as I started to write this report that I noticed that the group contained nobody who had been on the last walk that I led (Aran Fawddwy) - best not to read anything into that!

The start point for this walk is just in Herefordshire but the walk itself also ventures on to the Shropshire side of the border, spending a considerable time in an area of woodland called Mortimer Forest, a couple of miles to the south-west of Ludlow. From the car park on the edge of the forest we first followed the Mortimer Trail uphill through the trees skirting an area called High Vinnalls and successfully picking up another trail that led down to a road and picnic area. We had already seen a couple of roadside signs declaring "Save Mortimer Forest" which prompted some discussion of what might be threatening the future of the Forest. At this point we found the answer, thanks to a large information notice that had been put in place by a campaign group. In a nutshell, Forest Holidays, a company 15% owned by the Forestry Commission, is planning to build 68 large-scale holiday houses within the forest (details at <https://www.save-mortimer-forest.co.uk/>), in much the same way that it will be doing soon in Delamere Forest after a long legal battle.

We followed the road for half a mile or so before picking up another track through pleasant shady woodland and then crossing a few fields on paths. A quiet lane then led us down to the hamlet of Burrington. At this point we joined the Herefordshire Trail which wasn't well signed but fortunately was well described in the route details. At a bridge over a stream Spot and Ellie enjoyed some welcome refreshment! We endured a bit of foliage fighting along the next section of the path before it emerged near Elton Hall and took us into a pleasant field where the path was bounded by woods on the left and another stream on the right. A perfect place for lunch!

Not long after lunch the Herefordshire Trail took us back into the main part of Mortimer Forest but we (or more accurately the leader!) then had a bit of difficulty finding the necessary small path off the forest track - dense bracken to blame. Soon we emerged into a large open area known as Hanway Common. From this elevated spot the views were wide-ranging, with the "giant golf ball" on top of Titterstone Clee particularly prominent. Path signage was rather sparse here but using all navigational aids - thanks Jim - we made our way down to the ruins of Richards Castle. The ruins and earthworks of the castle are close to a historic church dating from the 12th century. As we paused to look at these features and check the way ahead we managed to lose Jim, but it was only a momentary scare!

The route used for return to the cars from Richards Castle didn't exactly follow the description but got us there a bit quicker for the return journey up the A49. And so ended an enjoyable day out in a new area.