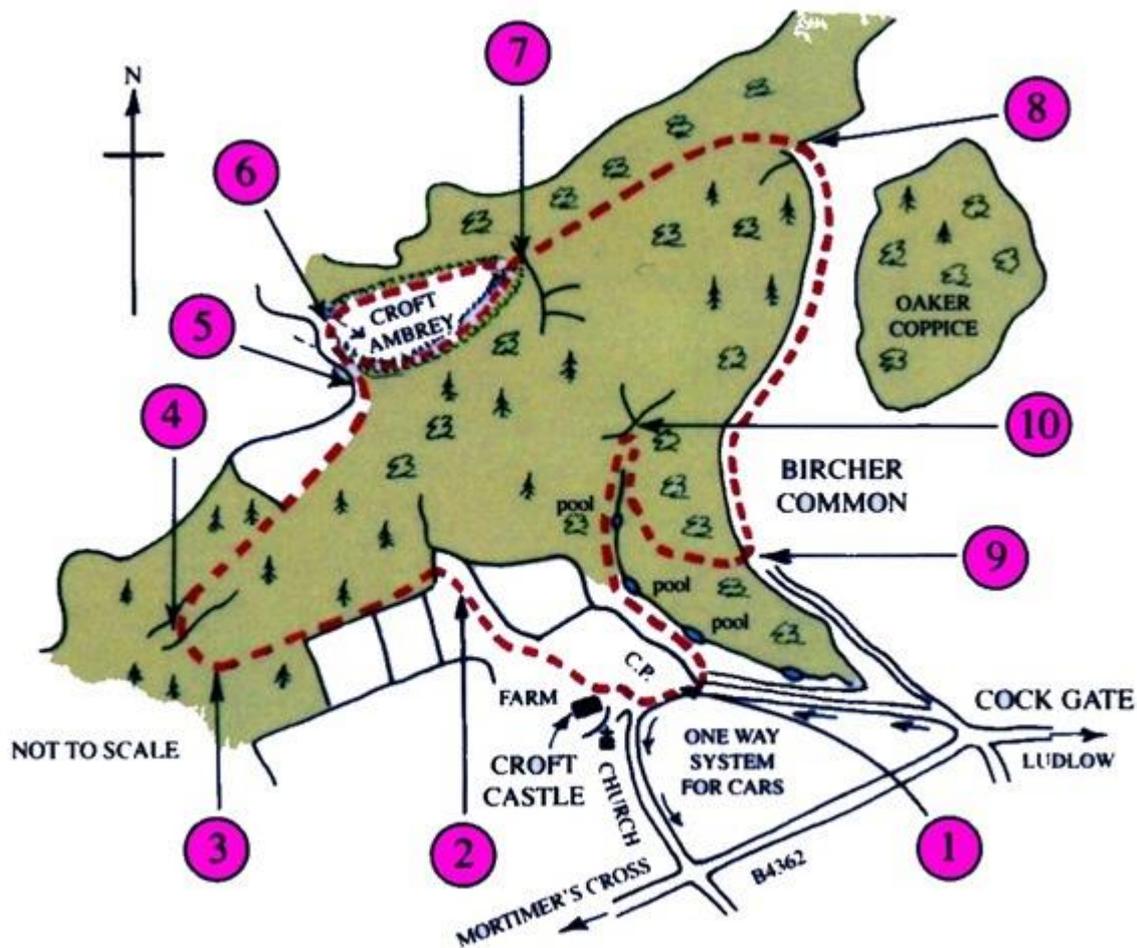


CROFT CASTLE, YATTON HILL, CROFT AMBREY, BIRCHER COMMON

5.5 miles (9 km), 250m ascent. Allow: 2.5 - 3 hrs. Easy going, some mud.

A walk on well used tracks and paths through mixed woodland and open country with good views and scope for variation.



Park in National Trust [Croft Castle](#) - Grid Ref: SO451656. Signposted from B4362 at Cock Gate. One Way System operates. Non NT members charged.

The Castle dates from the 14th century - has been the home of the Croft family since Domesday. Check site for Castle opening times and dates. Park is open from dawn to dusk throughout year.

WALK 8

(1) From the castle gateway take the tarmac road, uphill, over the cattle grid and follow it round to the (L) and at Notice board - "Footpath to Croft Ambrey", turn (R). Pass the house on (L) and on to gate and stile into field. Keeping to same line follow track - now less prominent, uphill aiming for top (RH) corner. (The Chestnut Trees are over 350 years old).

(2) Turn (L) along the top edge of field, in front of "reservoir" and go through gate ahead. Keep on this track which runs between the plantation and the fields on the (L). Where the

fields end, keep straight on through the plantation. Pass a "ride" on the (L) and where two paths join from the (L) turn (R) up the slope.

(3) Cross the forestry road and descend the small path opposite to another cross track and turn (R).

(4) The path climbs gently along the edge of Yatton Hill (In May this is a solid carpet of Bluebells and a glorious sight) After crossing the stile at the end of the Wood the view opens out over Yatton and Wigmore and the hills which separate the river Lugg from the Teme. Stay on this track where it swings to the (L) at the head of the valley, by a Forestry Commission sign.

(5) Ignore the stile near the FC sign and also ignore the next one on the (R) but where the track descends on the (L) towards the open hillside, take the smaller path on the (R), and still following the fence climb to the higher group of pine trees on the ridge. (In clear weather the view to the West makes this a good picnic site, though it can be windy by the corner).

(6) Cross the stile onto the earthwork of Croft Ambrey, a 4th century (iron age) hill fort. (Less agile walkers may prefer to keep on the main path, which runs along the North side of the Ambrey, re-joining the main route at point (7).) The steep, undulating path over the earthwork enters a flattish area, bounded on the South side by a distinct steep bank. Climb this and walk (L) along the top to where it joins a wider track to descend bearing (L) to meet the original track of point (5) at a stile.

(7) Turn (R) along this ignoring two gates and stiles on (R) and continue ahead. (In winter note the prolific mistletoe on the trees growing on the steep slope below on the (L).) At the next gate and stile, enter the close cropped pasture of Bircher Common.

(8) Walk along the (RH) edge, above a bracken, birch and gorse covered slope. After a while the Ambrey can be seen above the woods on the (R), whilst on the (L) there is a wide view over the Herefordshire countryside. Keep to the edge of the grassland and veering (L) when reaching the fence at the deciduous woodland plantation and continue down to where a track passes into the woodland on the (R) and join it.

(9) Follow this track as it soon bends (R) and descends through pleasant beechwoods into the Fishpool Valley. Pass a small disused quarry and at Forestry Commission "Croft Wood" sign, turn (L).

(10) Immediately, turn (L) again so as to walk back down the other side of the valley. After passing the first pool, fork (L) by a limekiln and proceed past a second pool and pumping house to reach another junction. Turn (R) here and shortly, (R) again to go uphill. On reaching the tarmac drive by cattle grid and gate, turn (R) to the car park and starting point.

Submitted by Neville and Mary Roberts