

THE MALVERN HILLS AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

Discovery Walk No. 2



A view of Park Farm and Colwall Church

Two Churches and a Vineyard

Points of Interest

A Colwall Church dates from around 1300 and there are windows of that date. There are later alterations as in many parish churches, especially when the parish has grown in the way Colwall has. The tower is also fourteenth century as is the preaching cross in the churchyard. However, the oldest remnant of the church may well be the Saxon lintel whose reclining moon shape is visible embedded on the south side of the west window. There are fine yew trees together with Victorian plantings of conifers. The half timbered ale house to the east was used after the services in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Instead of sober collections to maintain the church, ale would be sold and the profits would go towards the upkeep of the church. The ale house has been restored and is used for village meetings.



B Park Farm is on the site where the Bishops of Hereford had a hunting lodge in mediaeval times. The earliest part of the present building dates from the sixteenth century, but there are later additions and adaptations. The park was extensive, covering the western side of the Malvern Hills from the Wyche Cutting to Chase End Hill and then back to Colwall.

C The stream is the Cradley Brook and this flows north into the river Teme. The extended northerly flow of the brook is unusual for a British waterway. The various ice ages and their accompanying ice sheets tended to hail from the north, and in consequence forced waterways to find new channels to flow away from the ice.

D From this point it is possible to see oast houses (on your right) which were used for drying hops that were grown in large quantities in East Herefordshire. With their long vines growing up the hop poles, they mirrored the vineyards of warmer regions. With the relaxation of duty on beer, hop growing reached its zenith in the 1870s. Nowadays many hopyards have become redundant, and imported hops are used.

Also at point D are strangely shaped oak trees (see photograph). These are pollarded oaks and are typical of historic parkland. 'Pollarding' is a way of growing timber and grazing stock, especially deer, together. By cutting the tree above the animals' browsing line, new growth can escape being nibbled. This eventually grows into the many stems on a single trunk that characterise pollarded trees.



Pollarded Oaks

This section of the walk is also part of the 'Ledbury Run', an extremely tough 12km cross country race where pupils of Malvern College run from Ledbury to Malvern over two ranges of hills. It is also certainly close to, or actually on, a pilgrim route from Hereford to Holywell on the Malvern Hills and may explain why both Colwall and Coddington Churches have preaching crosses.

E The farm building ahead on your left is Moorcroft, which gave its name to the 'Moorcroft' pear, a traditional pear used to make perry or pear cider. Herefordshire and Worcestershire were famous for these trees and the symbol of the pear has been incorporated into the arms of Worcestershire. The National Collection of Perry Pear Trees can be found at the Three Counties Showground on the eastern flanks of the Malverns. The local name for these bitter perry pears is 'stranglers' because of the way the fruit grabs the tonsils on the way to the stomach. Fortunately the drink they make is kinder to the throat.

F The large building on your right is Coddington Court, built in 1780. Prosperity came to Herefordshire farming in the eighteenth century and many landowners rebuilt their houses accordingly. Coddington Court is a classic of this vein.

G Coddington Church, like Colwall Church, dates from about 1300 and it too has Early English windows. The Victorian restoration was quite extensive, but the church is still small and intimate. Outside, the preaching cross is well preserved despite damage done to it by Puritans in the seventeenth century. The Victorians added the present crucifix on top. Inside the church are to be found stained glass windows by William Morris from designs by Burne-Jones. There are some interesting buildings around the church including Church Farm and the sandstone Old School House. The walk includes both sandstone (from the valley) and limestone (from small outcrops) buildings. The view from the west of the church towards Bosbury includes rolling hills, hopyards and red sandstone soil, typical of rural Herefordshire, with the Welsh Mountains in the background.

H The vineyard produces good white wine which it is possible to purchase in the shop. The two main grapes are Bacchus and Ortega, which produce characteristic spicy wines with a pronounced bouquet. Recently the classic grape of Alsace, Pinot Gris, has been planted. These grapes are adapted to the short growing season of northern climes. The design of the lines of vines, running down a warm southern facing slope, maximises the amount of warmth and sun that the vines enjoy. In warmer and earlier times, vineyards abounded in southern England but then declined because of worsening climate and foreign imports from Europe. Even if you do not stop to buy wine, pause to admire the very beautiful garden framed by the old buildings behind. The house dates from 1700, the cruck barn from 1750 and there is a cider mill in the shop.

I From here, look back to the North and the lovely view of Coddington. In the spring the wood to the east is carpeted with snow drops and bluebells.

J The walled garden is part of Hope End House and predates the time when the poet, Elizabeth Barrett Browning, lived there as a youngster. Her father built a large house in Islamic style in 1815 complete with concrete minarets. There are still many fine trees that he planted which can be seen beyond the walled garden. Later, Mary Sumner, founder of the Mother's Union, also spent her childhood here and it was her father who replaced Barrett's building with one of his own. Most of the building burnt down in 1910. The remains, with their distinctive gables, can be glimpsed through the trees after the walled garden.

K Oyster Hill is an unusual name and the most likely explanation is that it is named after the Roman General Ostorius, who was active in the area. An alternative is that it is named after Easter whose name is derived from the pre-Christian Goddess of the rising sun, Oestrus, whose festival was at the vernal equinox. The trig point is not on the top for alignment reasons. There are great views in all directions and most people consider the views superior to those from the Malvern ridge.

L Note the iron railings typical of parks; parks were large areas of open ground without hedges. Parkland owners often wanted to graze stock in specific areas for short periods of time. So a portable form of fencing was required and railings served that need. Since then, many have become permanent boundaries.

M On your right is a hawthorn hedge, typical of the enclosures of the nineteenth century. The choice of hawthorn was dictated by circumstance. The enclosures have been interpreted as the legalised 'theft' of common land. The new land owners had to stake their claim quickly and effectively. With its sharp thorns and fast growth, hawthorn hedges became the 'barbed wire' for new enclosures.

N Finger posts were once common but few remain. Ahead of you is the rampart British Camp, which may have given its name to Colwall from the Latin *collis* a hill and *vallum* a rampart.

O In the first half of the twentieth century there were many orchards in Colwall and there was a canning factory in Colwall Stone.

P If you look west, the large country house on the lower slopes of Oyster Hill is Old Colwall and dates from the early eighteenth century, though the interior is much older.

Q The walk finishes with fine views of the Church and Park Farm, framed by the Hills. It is at its best in the evening sunshine.



Finger Post with British Camp in background

Essential Information

Starting Point	Colwall Church (SO739423)
Alternative Starting point	Coddington Church (SO718427); Colwall Station (SO756424)
If you arrive by train and start at the station, use the Colwall Footpaths map (available from Colwall Post Office) to get to the church (1.6 km). There are many possibilities; on the return journey leave the church-yard by the ale house and go straight across the lane onto footpath CW23; this leads to the cricket pitches; follow round Stowe Lane to join Walwyn Road which leads to Colwall Stone and the Station (2 km).	
Maps	Ordnance Survey Explorer 190; Colwall Parish Footpaths map.
Distance	5.5 miles (8.8 km)
Terrain	Easy walking with one steady climb. A short stretch can be muddy in winter.
Refreshments	None; but Colwall itself has various inns and there is also a pub at Wellington Heath (at SO712403, 700m off the route).
Car Parking	At Colwall and Coddington Churches by kind permission of the Rector.

When out walking, please follow the COUNTRYSIDE CODE.

Use alternatives to your car whenever possible.

Keep to the public rights of way and designated areas of public access when crossing farmland.

Use appropriate gates and stiles to cross field boundaries.

Close all gates that you have opened.

Avoid damaging or disturbing wildlife, including plants and trees.

Keep dogs under close control and always clean up after them.

Guard against all risk of fire.

Take your litter home and dispose of it responsibly.

Public Transport Information

To check details and timetables of bus services contact County Bus Line. Tel: 0845 7125436.

For train information telephone 0845 7484950.

This is one of a series of Discovery walks in the AONB; for further details please contact the AONB.

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