

Ledbury - the rocks beneath your feet

Exercise your body and your mind on a healthy walk from the centre of Ledbury out into the surrounding countryside. The walk will help towards your daily exercise routine. At the same time think about how the landscape has come to look as it does, because of the rocks on which it is built and the natural processes that have shaped the area.

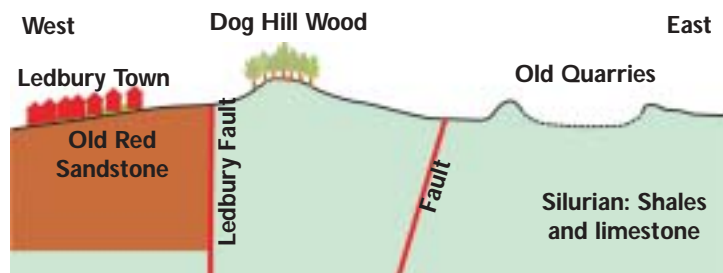
The man-made landscape relies heavily on aggregates - the sand, gravel and crushed rock that goes into building foundations, concrete and roads. Often that aggregate comes from sand and gravel deposits in river valleys. Around Ledbury there was an alternative form of aggregate made by crushing solid rock. In the past this was a by-product of limestone that was quarried for burning to make lime. As local lime production ceased, some quarries continued working purely for aggregate.

To appreciate the geological setting of Ledbury you need to imagine this piece of the Earth's crust about 425 million years ago. You would have been in a shallow, warm, tropical sea about 30 degrees south of the Equator. To the east was continent (as seen in present day rocks of Charnwood Forest in Leicestershire). To the west was a deep ocean, now represented by the fine-grained, dull grey rock of central Wales. In a broad zone just east of the Welsh Border was the continental shelf, which supported the growth of reefs not unlike the Great Barrier Reef of Australia today. The reefs and sea floor sediments became consolidated into limestone rock. Move forward 30 million years and the ocean had disappeared because the continents either side had converged and collided with each other, throwing up instead a range of high mountains through north Wales, the Lake District and Scotland. As these eroded, so huge deltas of sand and silt were spread across South Wales, Herefordshire and Shropshire to become the Old Red Sandstone.

Later still, perhaps about 300 million years ago, a further

phase of mountain building saw much faulting of the rock around Ledbury; the most obvious feature of which was the thrusting upwards of the very ancient rocks of the Malvern Hills. Fast forward to the present day and you are left with a situation where Ledbury lies across a roughly north to south geological fault with the younger Old Red Sandstone to the west and the older Wenlock Limestone to the east.

Rocks along the route



This geological setting gives a walk divided into two parts. Starting and finishing in the town centre are fairly level sections of the walk with only a gentle rise to the east. As you leave the town the route crosses the Ledbury Fault and rises steeply up wooded slopes now concealing the remains of a once-extensive quarrying industry. You will find there are many features related to the rocks and landscape that you can literally "take in your stride". Letters correspond to locations on the map over-leaf.

A From your starting point by the Market Hall look across the road to the Barrett-Browning Library building of 1896 (see front cover) which shows a distinctive mix, for architectural effect, of the two contrasting building stones of the Ledbury area: the red sandstone and the grey limestone.

B The St Katherines Alms Houses (right) look much more austere in the grey Wenlock Limestone except for the window surrounds.

C Up Church Lane look at the cobbles beneath your feet. Instead of the more usual river-worn cobbles, these are small and irregular blocks of crushed limestone. Several cobbles reveal fossils on the foot-polished surface, such as the



stems of crinoids or sea-lilies: an animal like a cross between a sea-urchin and a starfish, on a stalk!



D The amazing church of St. Michael on the site of a Saxon minster church is a veritable encyclopedia of local building stones. It is predominantly of the Old Red Sandstone (though it is not all red), probably from quarries just south of the town off the Gloucester road. There are some blocks of limestone and especially in the unusual

detached tower are areas of softer brown sandstone: Downton Castle Sandstone from the northern edge of town. Stop for a good look here when you finish the walk.



E Stone walling is a feature of the outskirts of the town. Don't dawdle too much to look, but several blocks



reveal fossil brachiopod shells (left) typical of the Wenlock Limestone!

F The footpath starts more or less on the Ledbury Fault with the softer Old Red Sandstone to the west and the steep slope of Wenlock Limestone to the east. Fallen boulders below the slope often contain fossils.

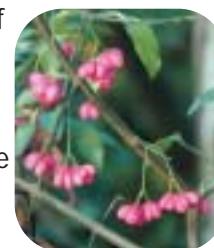
G Notice in the trackside exposures the dipping beds of Lower Ludlow Shales: the more silty and softer rocks which overlie the Wenlock Limestone.

H The disused quarry, which once provided limestone for burning to produce lime for mortar or as a fertiliser for farm land., crushed rock for aggregate and larger stone for building is now a haven for wildlife. You can



still see remains of a disused lime kiln (right). On the west side the beds of Wenlock Limestone dip steeply.

I The path runs on top of a low cliff of Wenlock Limestone, with a profusion of lime-loving plants: spindle (right), field maple, spurge laurel and many others). Before descending the steps get a glimpse through the trees across the track (see front cover) to the extensive Upper Hall Farm Quarry.



J Take another view into the quarries of Wenlock Limestone up the old entrance track. This whole area is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) for both its botanical and geological interest.

K The high ridge between Colwall and Ledbury had to be tunnelled when the railway was built. Evidence for this are the air shafts which are just visible across the fields.

L Pause to take a look back towards the British Camp and the southern end of the Malvern Hills (right). The complex landscape pattern of ridges and intervening



valleys is caused by a combination of faults on a NE to SW trend which result in repetition of the resistant limestone rocks alternating with softer shales.

M The Aymestrey Limestone beds that underlie the ridge of Dog Hill Wood dip very steeply here, having been 'dragged' from a less steep position by the nearby fault.

LEDBURY



Walk through the past for a healthy future



See how rocks have shaped the landscape



Keep fit along the Geopark Way

This is one of four circular Health Walks that have been devised from localities on the Geopark Way, a 110 mile long-distance footpath from Bridgnorth to Gloucester. It runs down the length of the Abberley and Malvern Hills European Geopark.



This "Walk for Health" has been researched and written by Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. © 2008. For further information:- telephone 01905 855184 or see: www.earthheritagetrust.org



Supported through Defra's Aggregates Levy Sustainability Fund

A Healthy Lifestyle

Regular exercise of at least 30 minutes five times a week is recommended. This walk can be part of your routine. Before significantly increasing your physical activity level it is strongly recommended that you seek your doctor's advice.

We suggest you familiarise yourself with the route of the walk first, and take in the points of geological interest a few at a time each time you follow it. Otherwise you might find yourself stopping more than you are walking - with little benefit to your physical health!

Because parts of this walk are isolated, we advise that you not do it alone.

Walking the Way to Health is a joint initiative between Natural England and the British Heart Foundation to encourage people to take short walks in their local area as part of a healthy life style. For more information see www.whi.org.uk on the Internet



The Walk

Distance - 4.1km or 2.6 miles for the full walk. When you are feeling fitter try this more rugged route. It takes you from the town centre, past the magnificent minster church and up the hills at the back of the town, where limestone was quarried both for burning to lime and use as aggregate.

Short Cuts - To begin with you might prefer a shorter circuit, missing out the rougher paths and steeper hills. a) Keep to the pavement between 4 and 11, but take a short detour into the bottom of the quarry at 11. At 12 take the footpath alongside the lodge signed to "Green Lane" and go up the field-edge path to 19. This reduces the walk to 1.5km or just under a mile. About 20 minutes brisk walking: enough for daily exercise. b) Walking up Coddington Lane between 12 and 16 avoids the steep climb from 12 and rougher path, but watch out for traffic. You also miss out on the limestone quarries and lime-loving flowers. There is little saving of distance.

Time - don't overdo it, but as fitness builds aim for about an hour and a quarter for the full route

Surface - Walking from 1 to 4, 11 to 16 and 21 to the end is on pavements or metalled paths. Between 4 and 11, and 12 to 16 is on footpaths and tracks which may be slippery when wet and can be muddy. Walking shoes with good grip on the soles should be worn.

Gradient - Because of the natural lie of the land, this is the steepest of the four Geopark Way "Health Walks". From 4 to 7 is uphill, with a quite steep section up to 7. From 8 to 11 is steeply down a footpath through the old quarries. From 12 is a steep section up through the wood. There are less steep gradients up to the highest point at 17, then it is downhill, mostly gently, back to the start.



Public Transport

Buses - most come into Ledbury via High Street. Alight by the Market Hall for the start of the walk.

Rail - Ledbury is served by the Hereford to Malvern and Worcester line. The station is at the north end of The Homend. It is about 1km to the start of the Walk. For bus and train times phone Traveline: 0870 608 2 608

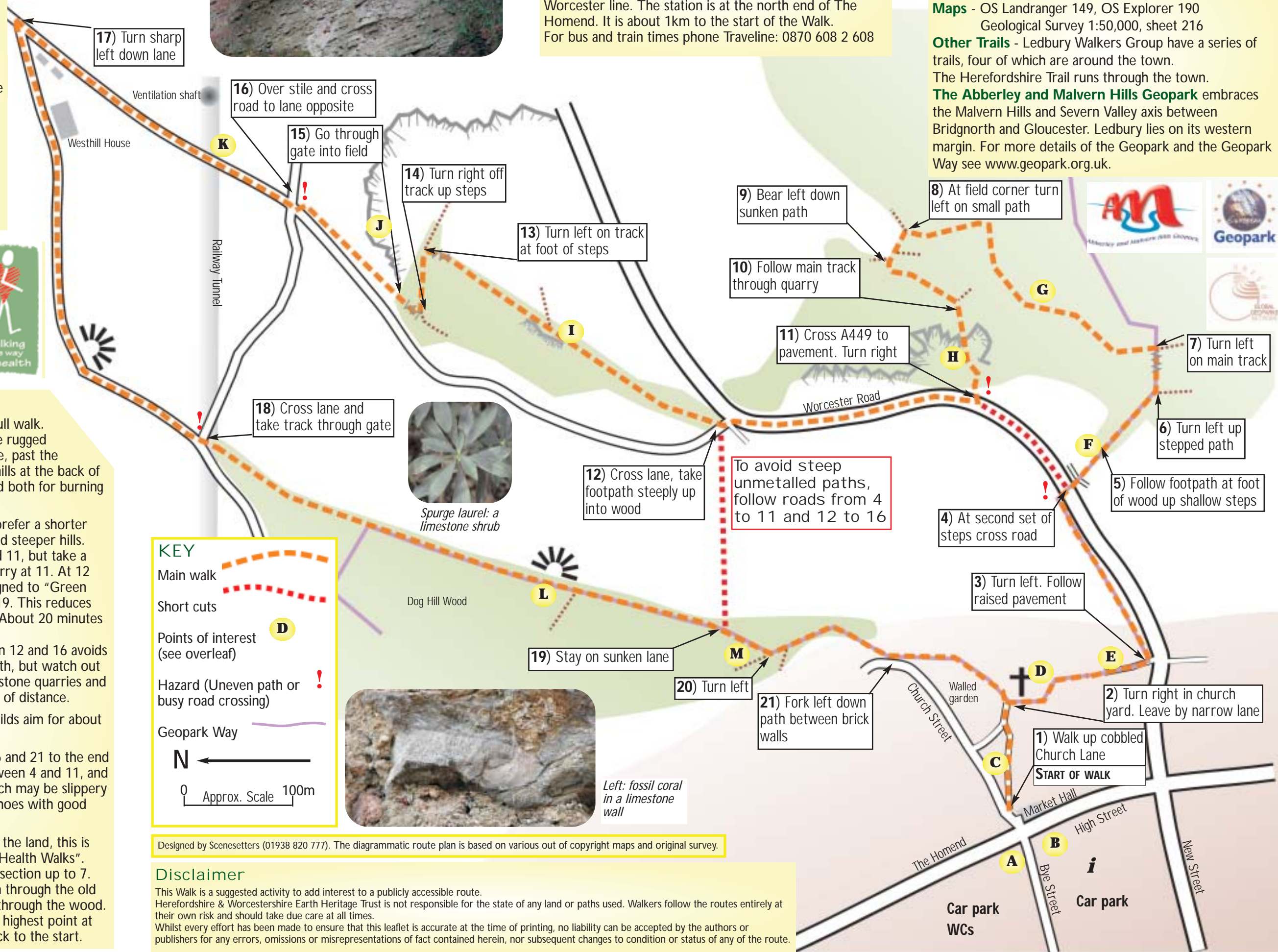
Further information

Tourist Information - from the Tourist Information Centre in the Masters House (Council Offices) behind the Alms Houses. Tel: 01531 636147

Maps - OS Landranger 149, OS Explorer 190 Geological Survey 1:50,000, sheet 216

Other Trails - Ledbury Walkers Group have a series of trails, four of which are around the town. The Herefordshire Trail runs through the town.

The Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark embraces the Malvern Hills and Severn Valley axis between Bridgnorth and Gloucester. Ledbury lies on its western margin. For more details of the Geopark and the Geopark Way see www.geopark.org.uk.



KEY

- Main walk (dashed orange line)
- Short cuts (dashed red line)
- Points of interest (see overleaf) (D)
- Hazard (Uneven path or busy road crossing) (!)
- Geopark Way (dashed purple line)

N ←

0 Approx. Scale 100m

Designed by Scenesetters (01938 820 777). The diagrammatic route plan is based on various out of copyright maps and original survey.

Disclaimer

This Walk is a suggested activity to add interest to a publicly accessible route. Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust is not responsible for the state of any land or paths used. Walkers follow the routes entirely at their own risk and should take due care at all times. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that this leaflet is accurate at the time of printing, no liability can be accepted by the authors or publishers for any errors, omissions or misrepresentations of fact contained herein, nor subsequent changes to condition or status of any of the route.