

Walks 3a and 3b (4¾ and 7½ miles) - Bucknell Hill with optional extension to Hopton Titterhill

Walk 3a – Hilly walk, mainly woods, out by the river Redlake with good view of Bucknell on the way back (solid line on map)

Walk 3b – As walk 3a plus a hilly 2¾ mile extension (total 7½ miles) via Hopton Titterhill. Good views of the Stretton hills at the top (dotted line on map)

Walk 3a (4¾ miles) – Bucknell Hill

Turn R out of the Baron Bucknell, go along the road, then turn R again into Bridgend Lane. Walk up this road alongside the river Redlake for about ½ mile to a gate.

Point A

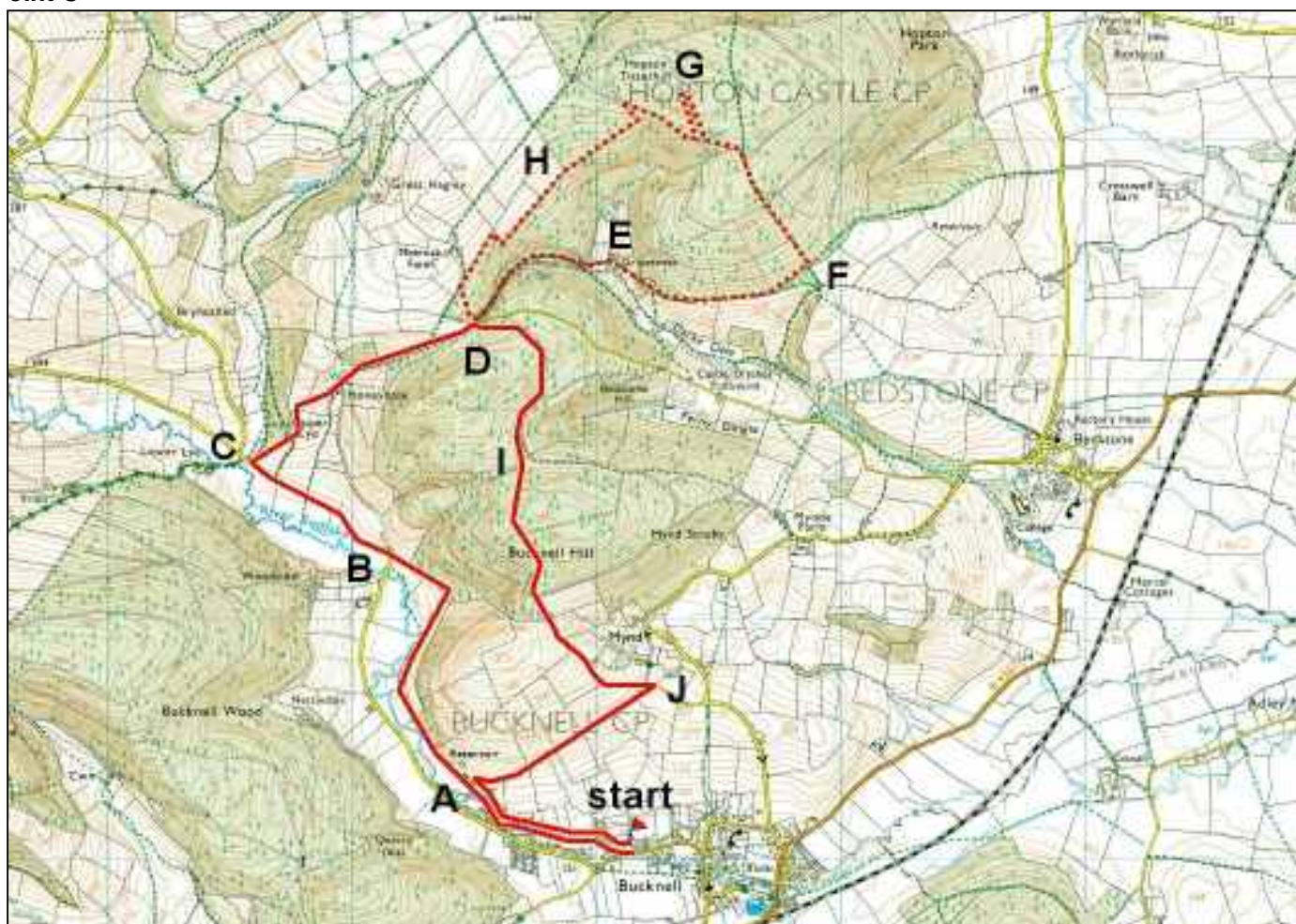
After the gate the road bends R, but you carry straight on along a grassy bridleway, bordered by gorse and a line of trees. The river Redlake meanders to your L, while to your R is Bucknell Hill.

Continue on this bridleway through two gates, ignoring a track going uphill to your R and a stile below you to your L. After passing through the second gate the path bends L around an imposing line of redwoods and descends via a gate to a road, where you go through another gate and turn R.

Point B

You are in the Redlake valley heading towards the village of Chapel Lawn. Walk up this road for about ½ mile until you reach an access road to a house on your R (fingerpost the other side and partly obscured by hedge).

Point C



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(Note: There are ongoing issues here about the Rights of Way. The route described follows the Right of Way and **not** the landowners suggested alternative. If you experience any problems or intimidation please report these to the Rights Of Way Enforcement Officer at Shropshire Council, tel. 0345 678 9000).

Don't go up the access road (wrongly marked on OS map) but go through the adjacent field to the R of the road. Exit through the gate at the top, keep R of the house and go up a grassy bank to a kissing gate. If you look back here you will see that the valley is dominated by Caer Caradoc, a bare hill that was once an iron age hill fort (for a historical note see Walk 7).

Continue uphill, crossing a stile and passing a house on your R (Honeyhole). Two more stiles lead to an open pasture, where a further slope takes you to a kissing gate and a major junction. A sign announces that you are now entering Hopton Wood. Once through the kissing gate you can either turn L and add a 2¾ mile loop around Hopton Titterhill, making the walk 7½ miles, or else turn R and limit the walk to 4¾ miles.

Point D

To return to Bucknell, turn R and head for the black-yellow road barrier directly in front of you and slightly uphill. Follow the forest road as it swings first L and then R, before dropping down to another major junction.

Point I

Take the path in front of you, next to mountain bike sign 48, and follow it uphill.

A short climb takes you to a high point, but the only views you get are glimpses of the Chapel Lawn valley through gaps in the fir trees on your R.

After cresting the hill, the path drops down through beeches and conifers, until eventually you pass a track joining from the L and you see signs of civilisation once more. At the Bucknell Hill sign carry straight on past the house called Vermont. On a clear day you now begin to get a wonderful panoramic view, with the radar dome of Titterstone Clee Hill clearly visible on the skyline to your L.

As you descend further the village of Bucknell is laid out before you in the valley below. Beyond the village is Coxall Knoll, a wood-covered hill that hides another iron age hill fort. Keep walking downhill until you meet a track on the L and an old horse box in the field nearby. Go past these and take the next turn R, just past a fingerpost. This is a permissive path that traverses the hill above Bucknell.

Point J

The grassy banks to the L of this path are covered with primroses in spring, while those to the R are home to numerous rabbits. Curlews can often be heard in the fields beyond. The path drops gradually, passing through a series of five gates, and becomes a metalled road at Hillside Cottage. Shortly afterwards the road bends sharp L and another gate is reached. You are now back on Bridgend Lane (**Point A**) which takes you back into the village by the pub.

Walk 3b (7½ miles) – Hopton Titterhill

From **Point D** turn L out of the kissing gate and then bear R along a stony forest track, past a black-yellow road barrier. You stay on this track for about 1 mile. It descends gently at first, skirting the end of a valley, with a house called Gripesnest below you on your R.

Point E

Once past Gripesnest the road begins to climb again, with the valley to your R. Always stick to the main path and take no notice of mountain bike routes going off L.

The woods clear briefly on your R, giving way to a grassy meadow, but then reappear again at a L-hand bend in the road. Shortly after you will meet a cross track, marked by a waymark post on your R. Turn L here, ignore the bike track half L and instead follow the grassy path steeply uphill.

Point F

Ignore any mountain bike tracks going off L and R and keep going uphill. A stony forest track eventually joins from the R. A little further uphill you come to a wide open area. Bear L and keep to the main track. Tree felling has opened up the views on your L and you begin to appreciate the height you have made (if you're legs aren't telling you this already!). Follow this track for 170 yds until you meet a pool on your R that marks a spring (directly opposite a post with a red arrow). Turn R here and follow the path to the summit of Hopton Titterhill.

As you emerge from the trees the top is just above you and to the R. The top affords some fine views of the south Shropshire hills. As well as being the start of various downhill routes for mountain bikes, the hill is also renowned for its summer whinberries.

Point G

After soaking up the views and sampling the wild fruits, retrace your steps to the spring below and turn R to regain the forest track. Follow this track for 440 yds, going past a post with a red arrow pointing half L, until you reach a further post with a red arrow pointing straight ahead. Turn back sharply L and proceed down a grassy path. Follow this path, round a R-hand bend, and continue until the wood on your R comes to an end.

Point H

Carry straight on with an enclosed fir plantation now on your R. Seeds from these fir trees are harvested periodically and sent to tree nurseries in south east England. Keep to the obvious path where it zig-zags R and L through the trees, until you emerge onto the road by the complex junction you were at earlier.

You are now back at **Point D**. Your route home is through the black-yellow road barrier ahead of you (see Walk 3a above).