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Herefordshire Beacon and Clutters or Giants Cave

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Pay and display car park on the A449 (SO 764404)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 190 – Malvern Hills and Bredon Hill
Distance	3.5 miles
Date of Walk	4 July 2023
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Any hill with the word ‘Beacon’ attached to it generally has fine views and Herefordshire Beacon proved no exception, having a full 360° vista from its summit over the surrounding countryside. Rather disappointingly there is no cairn, trig. point or anything else to mark the summit but is obvious when you get there. From there, a long ridge leads to Hangman Hill. Whether executions actually happened there, I do not know.

Beacon Hill has a fine example of the remains of an Iron Age hill fort, one of the best ‘contour forts’ in the country, where the slope of the hill was used to best advantage. The evidence of these ancient excavations is plain to see. It has been named as the British Camp and was possibly site of a British chieftain Caratacus’ stand against the Romans. It was a popular spot with Edwardian and Victorian tourists and as a result, various paths roam the area.

Visible from the summit ridge is a reservoir which has attracted the name British Camp reservoir. This was originally built to supply water to Malvern but is no longer used. It is to be reduced in size and converted to a wetland area, landscaped with “biodiversity enhancements”. This seems a “work in [slow] progress” at the moment.

Along the route, you pass a cave. This seems to have acquired a variety of names; Giant’s Cave, Warum’s Cave and Clutter’s Cave. Like all good caves it also comes with a variety of back stories/legends:

- It was a Medieval Hermit’s Cave.
- It was constructed as a Victorian grotto (so can’t be Medieval then!).
- It is “Giants Cave” after a local legend in which the giant threw a large rock which had been the cave’s door, down the hill. This became a sacrificial stone.
- It was used as a sacrifice venue for sun worship.

Take your pick. It is shown on the 1:25000 OS map as “Clutter’s Cave” but I have no idea who Clutter was, unless he was the hermit (or the giant!).

The walk starts from a large pay and display car park on the A449 between Ledbury and Great Malvern. It is directly opposite the B4232 junction and the Malvern Hills Hotel and Restaurants. You can’t miss it.

Start: From the car park (SO 764404), take the climbing path via the five bar gate in the right hand rear corner (as viewed from the road). When the path forks just after a bench fork right, climbing the steps

.At the top of the steps, turn left along the concrete path to the summit. There is nothing on the summit to mark it, apart from a tremendous 360° view (SO 760400).

Follow the path along the summit ridge. There are several paths around but just follow the highest one. You will arrive at some stone steps. Descend these, avoiding any turns off. You will arrive at a large, round, way mark with a number of stone fingerposts embedded in the top. Turn right following the fingerpost for "Giant's Cave" and "Pink Cottage".

Within three quarters of a mile you reach a rocky outcrop on the left. Here you will find the cave at SO 762394.

Continue along the path after about a quarter of a mile, and keep a lookout on the left for stone fingerpost indicating Hangman Hill (SO 762391). Your onward route remains on the path you have been following but it is worth the brief excursion to the top of the hill for more views. There is a semi-buried boundary stone here (SO 763393).

Return to the stone fingerpost and turn left.

Pass and ignore a path on the right and continue to follow the main descending path.

Meet another broad path on the left (SO 763388). You can shorten the walk by following this path, which goes round Hangman Hill, if you wish. Otherwise continue to follow the main path.

You arrive at Swinyard pay and display car park (same price as the starting one). There is an information board here with details about the history of Castlemorton Common. Nearby Gullet Quarry is supposedly very picturesque but I must admit I did not bother to visit.

Opposite the entrance to the car park is a green padlocked barrier. Cut round the barrier and follow the track bearing right across the Common. The route is grassy but fairly obvious on the ground.

When the track divides, ignore the left hand way and keep straight ahead.

You soon join a stony track. Keep straight ahead on this (SO 767389).

Pass a sign for Dales Hall, in the direction of travel and then a house called Woodlands.

Immediately after Dales Hall, the track splits. Take the left hand track, the more grassy of the two, climbing gently (SO768390).

Follow this track, curving slowly right to follow the edge of the trees. When it splits again, ignore the left route into the trees and continue to follow the edge of them.

After a further third of a mile or so, follow the path into the trees (SO768396).

Continue to follow the obvious main track, ignoring any turns off.

You arrive at British Camp Reservoir. Follow the steep, cobbled track alongside it.

Beyond the reservoir and the reservoir house, the track becomes a metalled lane which will return you to your starting point in the car park.

