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Caer Caradoc Walk

Starting point and OS Grid reference	Cardington Village – On street or village hall parking (SO 506952)
Ordnance Survey map	OS Explorer 217 The Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge
Distance	6 miles
Traffic light rating	

Introduction: Caer Caradoc is a distinctive hill of volcanic rock 1500 ft (459 m) high overlooking the Shropshire town of Church Stretton. It offers panoramic views which include The Wrekin, Long Mynd and Wenlock Edge and on a clear day as far as the hills in North Wales and the Brecon Beacons.

On Caer Caradoc summit are the remains of an ancient Bronze or Iron Age hill fort and, unlike at many such sites, the remnants of the defensive ditches can easily be seen.

This Caer Caradoc walk is a circular route which starts and finishes at the pretty village of Cardington and takes in a pleasant countryside walk before the ascent and incorporates a ridge walk along Willstone Hill on the return.

To get to Cardington, turn north off the B4371 at Wall Under Heywood, about 4 miles east of Church Stretton. Please note the approach roads are very narrow with passing places. Parking in Cardington is limited. Best options are probably the large village hall car park opposite the main church entrance or the car park for the Royal Oak pub but please get permission if using the pub car park and have the courtesy to patronise the pub afterwards (I can vouch for the quality of the food and beer – as at May 2013!).

There is a small amount of road/lane walking but traffic is virtually non-existent. Overall, the walk is straightforward but the climb up Caer Caradoc itself is steep and there is a moderate climb up Willstone Hill.

Start: Finding the start is almost the hardest part of the walk! From the main entrance to the church, walk clockwise on the road, round the church grounds, until you reach the back gate. Opposite is a cul-de-sac lane with an unusual “Sat Nav Error” sign (SO 506952). On the power pole is an orange arrow sign for the Cardington Walk and these indicate your way for the first section of the walk. Proceed along this lane and at the entrance to the Old Vicarage, turn right.

As the track bends left, go straight ahead across the field and through the gate at the end, following the right hand boundary of the next field and the following field. The Cardington Walk arrows guide your path.

At the end of this second field, ignore the yellow arrow indicating a path to the right and continue in the next field following the right hand boundary.

At the top of this field, cross the stile in the top right hand corner and go left to follow the left hand boundary of this and the next field. At the road (SO 495960), cross straight over and follow the wide track, leaving the Cardington Walk arrows behind.

After going through a gate, the track becomes more grassy and curves left. There are good views along here, on the right, towards the valley and the hill "The Lawley" and of course Caer Caradoc to the left.

Stay on this track until it terminates at a gate. Ahead is a bungalow and you need to aim across the field to its left where, between it and the stone built house, you will find a stile in the hedge, leading on to another wide track (SO 487961). Turn right on this track, then left at a 'T' junction of tracks.

At the road (SO 485965), turn left, shortly passing the site of Comley Quarry. This rather unprepossessing site is owned by the Shropshire Wildlife Trust, where fossils of the first creatures with shells were found in the 1880s. Rocks here are used as a reference for rocks found all over the world.

As the road starts to descend, take the footpath off to the left indicated by a finger post. (SO 483965) It does say "Caer Caradoc 0.1 mile. 2 mins", but you will need to look at its reverse face as you approach.

Go through a gate with a small information board and ignore the path climbing to the left. Stay on the broad track until you reach a stile on the right, just before a gate (SO 479961). Take the steeply climbing path on the left to the col. Pausing for breath (you will probably need to!), cross the stile on the right (SO 481959) and take the path to the summit.

Here you can clearly see the remains of the defensive ditches and there are some rocks which provide shelter from the prevailing winds for a picnic lunch. There are good views SW over Church Stretton to the Long Mynd, NE and over The Lawley (hill) to The Wrekin and more.

Continue along the summit and as you start to descend, you will see a broad grassy path bearing off to the right, towards Church Stretton. Ignore this and keep more to the left of the ridge, where you will soon come across a clear narrow path descending to a broad track in the valley bottom, through a metal kissing gate.

At the track (SO 475948), there is the option to turn left for an easy walk back to Cardington. To continue on my route and get the advantage of more good views, turn right instead.

As it descends, look out for another track after about a quarter of a mile (SO 473944), almost doubling back on itself, heading into the trees. Follow this for a

short distance before bearing right to follow the course of the stream, along its left hand bank. The path along here is not very clear in places. Just let the stream be your guide.

The next turn is easy to miss but just short of a quarter of a mile from the broad track, the stream splits (SO 477944). Here, you should see across the stream an old, small, metal gate. It is past the point where it can be opened but you can step over the old fence next to it.

Once over the gate/fence, you are on an obviously little walked route. Best advice is to aim for a mid-point between the hills (75° magnetic if you want to check with a compass). On meeting a clear broad path, turn left.

When you meet another track at a marker post, just before a gate (SO 480945) turn right on a climbing path. At the stile at the top, turn left, once again picking up arrows for the Cardington Walk. Keep straight ahead, following the fence line on the right, ignoring the paths off to left and right.

Follow the fence along the right. When it bends right, keep straight ahead descending to a kissing gate. Turn left following the orange arrow, heading for the brow of the small kill ahead. Keep on the obvious path, arriving at North Hill Farm. Follow the concrete drive, then tarmac road, downhill. At the road junction, turn left back to Cardington.

