

A SHROPSHIRE WEEKEND : 11-14 AUGUST 2023

The centrepiece of this weekend is the **Ludlow Magnalonga**, held annually on the 2nd Sunday of August.

Organised by Ludlow Marches Food and Drink Festival, the walk is described as a **'Feast and Ramble in the Marches Countryside'**. Each year the walk takes a different route around Ludlow and during the journey we make several stops for refreshment. At each we enjoy part of a meal based on local produce of Ludlow and across the Welsh Marches. The food is washed down with local real ale, cider, a traditional local perry or cocktail. Soft drinks are also available and local bottled water, to refill along the way. Timed tickets for the event are booked in advance, and you would never believe that there are 700 or so people wandering around the Ludlow countryside.



Thanks to the organisers, food producers, route devisers, portaloos providers, entertainers, first-aiders, marshalls and rescuers and everyone who takes part in making this a fun event.



A group from South Cheshire Ramblers and friends has booked this event for several years, counted by the number of souvenir glass tankards and lanyards we've collected – I have 9 – any advance? This year I learned that of the individuals and groups attending, we are the only walking group. I had previously been asked if we could help devise a route and one year whether I would be willing to walk with Clare Balding for an episode of Radio 4 Ramblings. Sadly, I wasn't attending so SCR missed our claim to fame.

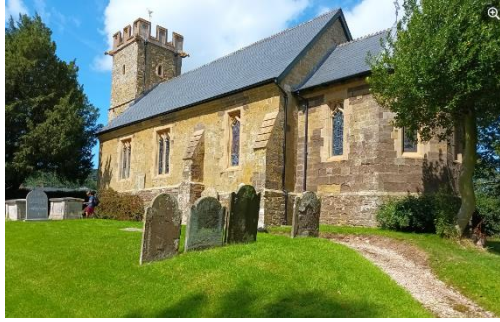
Day 1 - Friday 11 August: The Wart Hill Wander

This led walk for South Cheshire Ramblers started from Secret Hills Discovers Centre at Craven Arms, which houses the replica skeleton of the fully grown male mammoth, found less than 20 miles up the road at Condover. The exhibition explores the Shropshire Hills through time to the present day.



Our undulating, 8 mile countryside walk took us alongside woodland, riverside, through the picturesque village of Cheney Longeville and with fine views over Hopesay Common and surrounding hills.





We stopped for lunch at the Chapel by Sibdon Castle and on the return leg of our walk were astounded by the new Flow bridge over the railway line, replacing the once dangerous foot crossing.



After the walk, we made our way to the Travelodge Ludlow, our base for the next 3 nights.

Six of us enjoyed a sociable dinner at the Church Inn, Ludlow, after which we headed back to The Squirrel pub, next door to the Travelodge, for a nightcap and entertainment by an Irish folk band.

Day 2 - Saturday 12 August: National Trust, Croft Castle

Another led walk for South Cheshire Ramblers from Croft Castle, Yarpole.



We followed the route up to the Iron Age Croft Ambrey Hillfort with fine views all around. Returning through School Wood and the Conservation area, we then made our way back to the Croft Estate grounds and Castle.



We were looking forward to a usually lovely National Trust cream tea at the Café – but that is another story!!

Croft Castle and family chapel.



Dinner was at The Squirrel, where we entertained ourselves with talk of the Shrewsbury Flower Show, and the Cream Tea ! ?

Day 3 – Sunday 13 August: The Ludlow Magnalonga

We had booked a mini-bus to take us to the start of the walk – this year from the Secret Hills Discovery Centre, at Craven Arms.



It was a fine sunny day. After collecting our map, glass, lanyard, ticket/voucher, bottle of water and first snack, we set off through the Onny Meadows, following the yellow Magnalonga way-markers.

At each of the food stops, your card is marked as you collect the food and drink. It is a very friendly and happy atmosphere along the way and at each of the stops.

The menu.



There is varied entertainment at each stop; traditional and contemporary and the opportunity for a sing-a-long.





Fine view
over to
Stokesay
Castle



This year the walk was 6.5 miles and mostly on woodland trails and following public footpaths. The walk organisers bearing in mind that in 2022, there was a heatwave in August when they introduced last minute short-cuts to the planned route so that walkers could, if they wanted, avoid time in the hot sun.

At the end of the day, our mini-bus transported us back to Ludlow, where we later enjoyed another sociable dinner at The Squirrel.

Magnalonga is a leisurely walk and varies each year in distance (6-8 miles) and location, being in Shropshire there are hills to climb but nothing strenuous. Add on a bit, if we walk to the start, so could be up to a 10 mile walk.

Day 4 – Monday 14 August

Well, it turned out to be a rainy day and plans for a walk on the way home were abandoned. We had suggested, perhaps Carding Mill Valley or Acton Scott. So, some went straight home, others spent a morning *flaneuring* (*nice word, Paul*) around Ludlow enjoying breakfast, lunch or a little retail therapy and others to continue their Shropshire break with a bit of golf.

A lovely sociable weekend in great company.

Thank you to Helen and Paul for their photographic record of the Shropshire Weekend. More photos are on the SCR website.