

THE RIVERSIDE

At Aymestrey

CROFT CASTLE CIRCULAR

500-1000 ft
MODERATE



GPX FOR APPS

We can email you the GPX file for this walk - just ask!



Map Sheet



GPX

MORE ON OUR WEBSITE

Scan or click me here.



KEY TO MAP

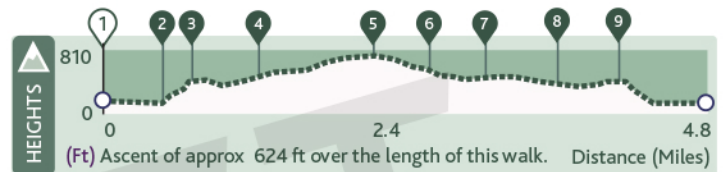
- | | | |
|-----------|------------------------|---------|
| Road | Live link | Parking |
| Bridleway | Viewpoint | Church |
| Footpath | Take care! | Ascent |
| Track | Cafe | Descent |
| Livestock | Livestock (occasional) | |

NT CROFT CASTLE

Croft Castle, a formidable presence in the Herefordshire landscape, boasts a remarkable history spanning nearly a millennium. The Croft family's lineage at this site predates the Domesday Book of 1085, establishing them as one of England's most enduring landed families. Throughout the centuries, members of the Croft family were deeply entwined with national events, witnessing and participating in conflicts from the tumultuous Wars of the Roses to the English Civil War, their allegiance shifting with the political tides.

The family's fortunes were not always stable though. A significant downturn came in 1746 when, due to financial distress exacerbated by losses from the South Sea Company bubble, Sir Archer Croft was compelled to sell the estate. It passed into the hands of the Knight family, who embarked on a substantial Rococo-Gothic remodelling of the castle in the 1760s, giving it much of its current style.

Remarkably, the Croft family managed to repurchase their historic home in 1923, reclaiming their heritage. However, the mid-20th

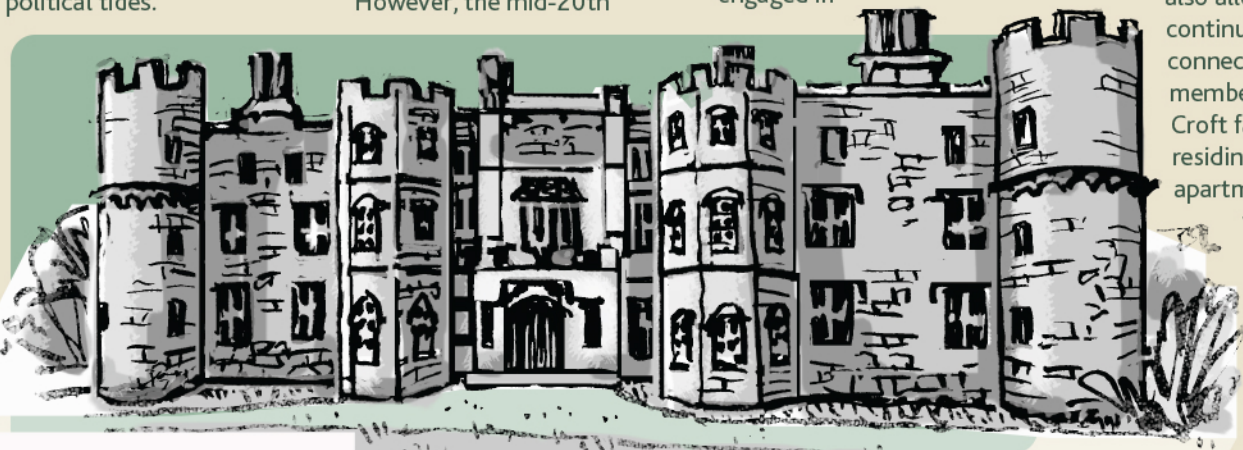


century presented a new and pressing challenge. The burden of crippling death duties, coupled with the ongoing increasing costs of maintaining such a large and ancient property, threatened the castle's future.

In a pivotal moment in the 1950s, Michael, 2nd Lord Croft, alongside his sister Diana Uhlman, engaged in

crucial discussions with the National Trust. Their dedication, combined with a successful fundraising effort to establish an essential endowment, culminated in the bequest of Croft Castle and its extensive 1,500-acre parkland to the National Trust in 1957. This foresight ensured the castle's preservation for public enjoyment, opening its doors in 1960. The agreement

also allowed a continuing connection, with members of the Croft family still residing in private apartments within their ancestral home.



An artist's sketch of Croft's frontage.



Point 2
RESPOUSE MAPPING SOLUTIONS

DIRECTIONS

1 TL from the Riverside's front door, cross the River Lugg and then cross the A4110 to the gate for the Mortimer Trail aside the gatehouse (please be careful here, this can be a fast road). Continue straight until you see the next gate ahead in corner of field. Go through gate and you should see path bearing slightly right ahead over fields (a further couple more stiles/gates) to the foot of the wood (horses grazed occasionally here).

2 At foot of wood go through gate then look to see path going uphill into the wood. Continue up until you cross another track. Steps continue up into the wood, continue uphill until you eventually arrive at a gate to open fields (The Moors).

3 Go across field ahead to next stile (cattle grazed occasionally in these fields). Path bears slightly left next to field corner and another couple of stiles. Go right through hedge stiles (don't go through horse field ahead/on left) and on to corner of next field past information board. Go over stile as path bears left to track. TL at track and continue uphill past Hill Farm on your L until you reach the gates for the woodland.

4 Continue up track past ruin on R and then almost immediate TR on woodland path (this can be overgrown in places in summer months). Continue until path splits, keep L and continue until x-junction of paths, TR here and follow red Croft Castle walk signs.

Continue past next path x-junction and along the lower edge of the wood with fields on your R. Path bears left slightly uphill through the wood from here to paths x-junction. Bear R through gate and along lower edge of wood (again with fields on your R) until next gate. Go through and bear slightly R around reservoir.

5 TR downhill towards the row of old

Spanish Chestnut trees. (Occasional cattle grazed here, this is a popular path though and they are used to people and dogs normally). Continue down to gate in hedge and paths junction.

6 TR here into the adventure playground and then down and L through playground to gate on to track. TR after gate on to track with green markers (ancient tree route) and follow track along, it eventually curves left through an avenue of trees and out to field edge and paths junction (Occasional cattle).

7 TR here and continue straight to bottom left corner of tree area. Look for slightly overgrown old stile ahead, cross it and TR after until you reach field edge. TL at field and follow edge until you reach field corner. At corner look out for gate here, go through and TL then through next gate into large open field (sheep grazed here commonly).

8 Bear right (ignore obvious track leading down to lower field edge and road). You should find one or more small paths across field to edge of wood and gate(s) before you enter the wood above Pierre-point House.

9 Continue on obvious track ahead through forest until you reach obvious paths junction before horse pasture on R. Continue ahead straight along lower edge of pasture to gate which takes your around pasture edge to Lucton Lane.

TR on lane then TL back on to Mortimer Trail gate into the Moors and info board.

3 Retrace your original steps across fields (beware of cattle grazing again) to Common Wood and downhill through wood. Continue along trail back to the Riverside.

2
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THE SPANISH CHESTNUTS
AT CROFT CASTLE



Croft Castle's estate is renowned for its magnificent Spanish chestnut trees. These majestic trees aren't native to Britain but were likely introduced centuries ago, possibly as early as the 15th century. The Croft family, deeply rooted in the castle's history, are thought to have planted them, perhaps to provide timber or nuts, or simply as a mark of their enduring wealth and status.

Many of these venerable trees are now ancient specimens, some believed to be over 500 years old. Their gnarled, spiralling trunks and expansive canopies create a unique, almost mystical atmosphere.

The National Trust, since taking over in 1957, actively works to protect and manage these precious trees, ensuring their survival and the preservation of the unique arboreal heritage they represent. They are a beloved highlight for visitors exploring Croft Castle's parkland.