

Stay to the left initially until you cross a small stream and then follow the path swinging slightly right around patches of gorse and wet areas before descending gently to a kissing gate. Through this, head slightly right on the level towards a large beech tree in the corner of the field where a bridle gate leads onto the road.

5 Go through another bridle gate opposite, and follow the right edge of the large field downhill.

Short cut – half way down the big field, follow the footpath sign left and across three more fields to the road a short way from the Knapp. Take care of traffic on the steep road up to the village.

The field narrows into a funnel before leading through a gate and a short, narrow section (*if very muddy here, a short alternative loop is shown on the map*). A farm track leads down to Wilderley Hall Farm, the remains of a medieval hamlet.

The well preserved Wilderley motte and double bailey lies in the woodland and field to the left, extending towards the house.

6 Turn left onto the road at Wilderley Hall, and at the dip after 400m take a right along a hedged Byway leading down to a footbridge and ford. Continue up the charming wooded dingle and the worn 'hollow way' with exposed bedrock, and on into Church Pulverbatch, also known as 'Churton'.

The green space where the track meets the road used to be the village pool. The church of St Edith sits prominently in a circular graveyard, suggesting it may lie on the site of a much earlier hillfort. The present church was rebuilt in 1853, but the west tower dates to 1773.

7 Turn left along the road and then left again along the main road through Castle Pulverbatch to the White Horse Inn and back up to the Knapp car park.

The house marked 'Woodcock' on the right used to be a pub, named after its owner. Opposite the White Horse is The Gate House, built as a toll house in the 18th Century when the turnpike road to Bishop's Castle was built. The White Horse is one of the only surviving medieval buildings in the village, a 14th or 15th century cruck-framed former farmhouse, extensively remodelled in the early 17th century. A number of other historic houses lie up the lane to the Knapp.

Below the Knapp is another area of common land, the Wokkon, extending 400m along the steep south-facing bank. The name 'Wokkon' may be derived from 'wuk' meaning oak. It is reached by a path descending diagonally from the east side of the Knapp and then passing across the grass behind Brook Cottages. A pretty wooded stream runs along the bottom of the bank with bluebells in season, and near the end a rougher path with steps leads up through bracken and scrub and loops back along the top.



Further Information

The White Horse at Castle Pulverbatch has good beer and food, as well as accommodation.

www.thewhitehorseinnpulverbatch.co.uk

01743 718247.

The nearest shop is at Longden, which specialises in local foods www.shropshiresown.co.uk.

Parking: Car park at the Knapp, Castle Pulverbatch. Limited parking at Cothercott barytes mill (3 on map)

Public transport: The 546 Shrewsbury – Pulverbatch bus stops at the White Horse. The **Shropshire Hills Shuttle** bus service also stops here.

The Friends of Castle Pulverbatch is a small group of volunteers who look after the Knapp and the Wokkon, with support from the Parish Council and Historic England. The Stiperstones & Corndon Hill Country Landscape Partnership Scheme provided additional support from 2013 to 2017. For enquiries please contact focp@yahoo.com.

Medieval mottes, barytes mining and ancient lanes

A circular walk in the scenic and historic hills of Pulverbatch, Cothercott and Wilderley

9km or 5 miles, taking 2-2½ hours, with a short cut option. Moderate terrain including several muddy tracks and some stiles.



Pulverbatch and its castle

Start from the Knapp car park, Castle Pulverbach Grid Ref: SO 423 023

The Knapp is a 12th century motte and bailey, with fine views from its strategic position. Only earthworks remain, but there was once a tower on the motte, and domestic buildings in the inner and outer baileys. The Castle fell out of use during the 13th century, but there was a weekly market here at one time, and fairs were still held within living memory.

Start by turning left out of the car park uphill on the lane through a 'tunnel' of hedges. **This is Puntley or Pultheley Lane, the old medieval road from Shrewsbury to Bishop's Castle.**

1 After about 500m turn left through a field gate waymarked 'public footpath'. The gravel track leads down over cattle grids.

The footpath here joins the old 'outrack' which was the ancient route for taking sheep up onto the open hills for summer grazing. Tenants of the Manor of Pulverbach ('Polrebec' in the Domesday Book) had common grazing rights on the Long Mynd.

Huglith Hill from Cothercott



By the house, pass through a gate on the track and then another field gate. Continue across two stiles, then stay just right of the small stream until the path fords this to a wicket gate into a field.

2 Follow the lower edge of this field, turning uphill at the end to reach a metal kissing gate on the right leading into a rougher patch. Stay left up here till you reach a waymarked level grassy track, and turn right along this. The track rises gradually through trees, past the ruins of Cothercott Hill Farm, out into the grassy field above and then to the road. **This is the trackbed of the old railway connecting the Cothercott mine with the trans-shipment point near Outrack Cottage.**

Alternative – from the start stay on Puntley Lane, and then follow the road left for half a mile to point 3.

In the conifer trees of Riddles Wood just beyond Huglith Hill are the old workings of the significant Huglith barytes mine, where 300,000 tons of ore was extracted in the first half of the 20th century. (There is no access to this site from the lane).

3 Go left along the road for about 100m to the junction and straight over here. (If you would rather have the pub in the middle of your walk, you could start and finish here).

This is the former mill site for the Cothercott barytes mine on the far side of the hill. Here the ore was hand-picked and washed, and ground using six pairs of burr stones to produce barytes (barium sulphate) – a dense white filler used in paint, paper, lino and pottery.

The concrete bases of the mill buildings can be seen, along with a number of grinding stones, some now re-sited with information.

Go through the kissing gate at the right-hand end of the parking area, follow the permissive path uphill and bear left behind a small, round knoll. There are great views to the west from here, with the Stiperstones prominent and Paulith Bank ahead. A grassy track continues north for about 200m to a gate. Beyond this, continue across Cothercott Hill, rising slightly, then gradually head right. By the remains of a small reservoir (**linked to the not very successful Wilderley copper mine**), head further right up the shallow gully lying before another rounded rise. The path continues to contour around the hill to the right following the old horse-drawn tramway from the barytes mine, with views east to the Wrekin. It then follows a fence on the left before dropping steeply down.

On the hillside across the valley you can see the remains of adits and heaps of the Cothercott mine, which was active from 1910 to 1928 and produced a total of 23,000 tons of very pure barytes. In the early 1980s, the site was investigated for possible reworking. Apart from small quantities in medical use for x-rays, the main use now for barytes is for high density muds used in oil-drilling.

4 At the bottom of the dip cross a stile and step across the small stream and up some boggy ground to meet the track heading up and left. Follow this as it runs closer to a fence on an old stone bank on the left, to reach the high point of the walk. Here at the edge of the Shropshire Hills the views are extensive across the lowland plains to the north.

Follow the path (waymarked Shropshire Way) down to the left (north-east) and through a gate into a large field. **The wet areas here provide habitat for birds such as snipe, and plants such as rushes and lousewort.**

Mill stones at Cothercott

