



Storywalk *the* Clee Hills



in Giant's Footsteps



*the stories of Titterstone Clee with a 90 minute walk
from Mythstories museum of myth and fable*



This book contains stories of the Cleve Hills and instructions for an enjoyable 1½ hour hill walk starting and finishing at the viewpoint car park at Cleve Hill Village, South Shropshire.

Be ready for whatever Mother Nature can throw at you.

Waterproofs are a good idea, stout shoes are essential.

Wear layers of clothing so you can easily adjust to the temperature.

We recommend that you don't rely on the map in this booklet and take an Ordnance Survey Map Explorer 203 on the walk.



Remember, please respect the countryside and take your litter home.



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...stories first the walk follows...

THE STORY OF TITTERSTONE CLEE

If you go to Hereford Cathedral you can see the Mappa Mundi, one of the first maps, and if you look carefully you can find Titterstone Clee right there, a landmark all those years ago. That's not all you'll find either, there's fantastical creatures of all shapes and sizes and most importantly there are giants galore, and each needing a hill to live in.

Yes, that's right, didn't you know? All giants need a hill to live under in the cold winter and lay upon on warm summer nights. And if they haven't got a hill, well they come equipped with a giant spade so they can make their own.

In the bad old days, yes I know some people call them the good old days, but they've obviously forgotten about the giants and the trouble they caused: Well, in the bad old days there were so many giants that there was hardly room left for all us little folk. And what room they did allow us was mighty uncomfortable - a life making sure you weren't in giants' footsteps was no fun, still less was to become just another item in a giant's lunchbox.

But luckily enough giants are a quarrelsome bunch who seem to spend most of their time arguing and fighting amongst themselves. It was just that way around these parts. The giant of Titterstone Clee was a big, boastful fellow with a red hot temper and a mean, nasty streak. He'd sit in his chair, yes that is it still there to this day up on top of the hill, he'd shout and crow at the giants over on Brown Clee and Abdon Burf

“Not big enough for a hill of your own, you have to share one, what sort of giants are you, eh!”

Now sticks and stones may break your bones and names can never hurt you, but they can get you mighty mad.

And enough of the wrong sort of words can lead to slings and stones in next to no time, and that's just what they did. You don't have to be a student of history to know that one stone thrown leads to another flying back and before long you've got a full scale war.

Well, a war nowadays can be a dangerous and noisy affair, but we're only small fry, can you imagine a battle of giants?

The Clee Hills turned from the best to the worst place in all the world. Stones led to rocks and rocks to boulders; and boulders to mighty weapons.

Now, I can see that glitter in your eye, you think this story is just hokum and never happened at all, but, oh yes it did and you can prove it for yourself. Up at the top of Titterstone Clee there's that chair I told you about before and scattered around are boulders galore - the giants' missiles for all to see. And up on Abdon Burf you'll find a mighty 8-foot long slab. It's called 'the Giant's Shaft' and it's all that remains of a massive arrow shot from the Titterstone giant's bow. If you don't believe me now, you'll never believe your own eyes.

That battle went on all summer long and the sky was black above the hills. In the end the giants fought themselves to a standstill and dropped in a heap, unable to move a muscle. And that's when the good people of the Clee Hills saw their chance. They upped with their spades and picks and buried those giants right there where they lay.

The victors climbed into the Giant's Chair to celebrate their conquest. And so loud were their cheers and so noisy the din of pick hitting spade that they frightened all the giants' children away. And nevermore has a giant been seen on the Clee's to this day.

Now the Clee's were back as the best place to live the people didn't want to leave anything to chance. So every last Sunday in August, to commemorate the battles, they held a Wake on the hill. They'd sit in the Chair and intone magic words to keep the giants away.

Are we safe today, with no Titterstone Wake and those magic words lost in the past? I think not. So next time you come to Titterstone Clee, sit in the Giant's Chair and say a little prayer that we might sleep easy in our beds.

PS: Two of the giants' kids ran off and built a home near Wellington, they called it the Wrekin. But then they argued over who would have the hill and another war broke out.

...But that's another story on another hill.

And here is a poem story from Titterstone Clee...

MAISIE WHO MAKETH THE MAN

In the town of Cleobury Mortimer
Lived a lady called Maisie Bloomer
Now what manner of a woman be she?
She be a witch, that is what she be.
Maisie Bloomer of Cleobury Mortimer,
Know her and that is a witch you see.

Maisie she had a tiny daughter
Little girlie, Pleasance be her name
Now what manner of a girlie be she?
She be a fairy, that's what she be.
Pleasance the daughter of Maisie Bloomer,
Know her and that's a fairy you see.

Tiny Pleasance she had a boyfriend
Litty-bitty-silly Harry Bache
Now what manner of a boy child be he?
Ordinary boy, that's what he be.
Harry Bache boysie of Pleasance Bloomer
Know him and a mere mortal you see.

Maisie Bloomer, come one Easter,
Took an egg and hexed a hen,
Gave the hen's egg to her daughter,
For to paint it for her friend.

Tiny Pleasance took that hen's egg,
Prettied it with paint and brush,
Gave the hen's egg to her boyfriend,
Said don't eat it, treat it thus...

Harry Bache you take this hen egg,
Carry it atop that hill,
Put it in the blasted ash tree,
Leave it stay three weeks until.

Harry after three weeks waiting,
Put the egg to hen to hatch,
Time gone by with hen a-roosting,
Cracked, out came cock with no match.

Out that egg a mighty cockerel,
Harry called "The Witch's Bird",
Won every cock fight around here,
Respect, prizes, the last word!

In the town of Cleobury Mortimer
Lived a lady called Maisie Bloomer
Now what manner of a woman be she?
She be a witch, that is what she be.
Maisie Bloomer of Cleobury Mortimer,
Know her and that is a witch you see.

Maisie she had a tiny daughter
Little girlie, Pleasance be her name
Now what manner of a girlie be she?
She be a fairy, that's what she be.
Pleasance the daughter of Maisie Bloomer,
Know her and that's a fairy you see.

Tiny Pleasance she had a boyfriend
Sportsman by the name of Harry Bache
Now just what manner of a man be he?
Extraordinary, that's what he be.
Harry Bache the love of Pleasance Bloomer
Know him and a special man you see.

THE BLACK DOG OF TITTERSTONE

When you're out walking on Titterstone and the light begins to fail, beware! There are things you will not wish to see. And if you've got an eye for precious jewellery make sure your appetite for ownership doesn't lead you astray.

As the stars begin to twinkle in the sky above, you may catch a glint below and hear the baying of a great black hound.

He'll come to you nearly all the way and then he'll stop fast, his eyes glowing red looking through you to somewhere or someone beyond.

Look at his neck, as his hackles start to rise, and a red and green collar encrusted in jewels surrounds it.

Try to calm him with whispered words of comfort but he'll never come to you. You'll never touch his precious choker and you won't trap him, so never try.

He's watching someone, and as his white teeth begin to gnash and his snarl rises to a steely growl, suddenly he's gone. Faded off into a night as black as his coat.

You won't be the first to see him, and surely not the last, but always on that same spot. The very place where a ghastly murder took place; and all for the theft of a necklace, a thing of such beauty; so many years ago.

***And I hope that hasn't scared you off
having an adventure on the hill...***

THE WALK

Titterstone has been an industrial site since medieval times, when coalmining began here.

Before then, people were certainly busy on the hill. Once there stood a pre-historic stone circle called The Grey Stones, alas long since destroyed, and the Hill was topped off with the largest Iron Age Hillfort in Shropshire. This was, possibly a home for up to 3,000 people before the climate worsened and made the inhabitants seek shelter elsewhere.

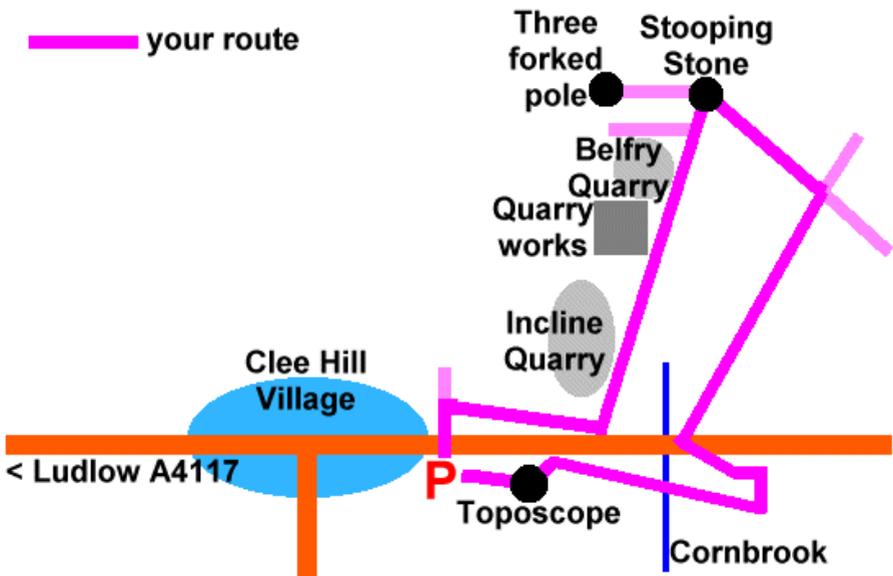
Park at the viewpoint car park in Clee Hill Village, carefully cross the main road and go up the track opposite, leading towards The Kremlin Inn, but take the first right along a track which meets a quarry road. Turn left up the road past the quarries and works, keeping them on your left.

The Kremlin Inn: At the height of the Cold War when America and Western Europe lived in fear of the mighty USSR, and 'reds under the bed' were thought to be lurking ready to spy on us, the highest pub in Shropshire had a temperamental juke-box which would suddenly break from the top ten hits to blare out Radio Moscow, hence the unusual name.

I can't speak for the quality of the Vodka, but the food and hospitality is very alluring on a day's walking.

After passing the quarries, just over a mile into the walk, the road bears right, take the track marked 'Random Farm'. Further on fork right, away from the Three-Forked Pole, up towards the Stooping Stones, you'll see the three-forked pole again off to your left.

The Stooping Stones: Women coming down from the mines, bent double with large sacks of coal on their backs, used these stones as a resting place to bear the weight of their burden so they could take a breath or two before continuing down the hill.



The Three-Forked Pole: Remember that Titterstone Wake on the last Sunday of August mentioned in the story? Well, by the middle of the nineteenth century it had grown into a right party lasting a full week. The quarrymen, miners and railworkers would really let their hair down. It would all begin at the Three-Forked Pole.

Two rows of stone blocks would be set out and the young men and their girls would process along 'tea-kettle alley', like making their way down the aisle. They would be met at the far end by the wives and older women, busily making tea with clear water from the nearby spring. Then the festivities would commence with all manner of games taking place on the hill.

The Three-Forked Pole marks three parish boundaries. It is also a very useful landmark when the mist is coming down.

At The Stooping Stones do not continue along the track, turn to your right along the slightly raised ground between the pools. Keep the Stooping Stones to your back and head slightly to the right of the spoil heap with the collapsed building on top.

As you come level with the spoil heap you will intersect a metalled track, turn right. At the junction turn right and immediately after the spoil heap on the left move off left across the scrub to the hillock. You'll see the main road before you, head towards it down the hill. There are two cottages to the right across the ravine, don't cross towards them but carry on and you will see more cottages below, meet the road to their left.

Cornbrook, a rural idyll, was once a centre for industry. Here there was a blast furnace, a mine, a glassworks and a lime-works all utilising the brook's fast-flowing waters as it drained water from the south side of the hill.

Cross the road carefully to the stream, the green path leads across the scrub to its left and goes downhill to meet a little road. Go right and follow the road across the stream. Keep to the right uphill track past one house on the left. When you come level with the second house take the green bridal path uphill to the toposcope.

At the Toposcope take in one of the most stunning views in Shropshire.

Go on to the car-park and rest those feet.