

Local Landscape/History Tour

This 16 mile route could be done by car, but to fully experience the quiet lanes, beautiful views and landscape a bicycle is highly recommended.

The first section (Lower Rowney Green and Newbourne Hill) is best done on foot and some of the hills might need some short walks too !

Lower Rowney Green and Newbourne Hill (1 mile)

From the Village Hall car park, turn left and then first right into Chapel Lane.

As the lane turns right (use the footpath straight ahead for the best views), one can see Weatheroak Hill to the north, round to Wythall, Beoley, Redditch and the Cotswold Hills to the south. Harry Harborne's well-known poultry farm was here in the 50's, famous for breeding Rhode Island Reds.

Travelling down the hill to Lower Rowney Green and up Gravel Pit Lane one passes round and through a designated LWS (Local Wildlife Site). Jasmine Cottage on the right used to be a shop selling beer and The Homestead on the left was found to have a priest's hole. Go up the hill which was once used to test drive motor cars from the Austin works.

At the top of Gravel Pit Lane, cross over Rowney Green Lane and use the footpath ahead to reach the top of Newbourne Hill (Grid ref. SP 400 7180)

Newbourne Hill is a terminal moraine formed from the rocks, clay and sand carried along with the last glacier and deposited here when the ice melted. The hill (in the centre of Alvechurch Parish) rises to 165 metres.

From the public footpath overlooking Alvechurch village, at the edge of Newbourne Wood, one can see historic marl and gravel pits and from south west to north east, Tardebigge church tower, the Lickey Hills, Hopwood and Forhill.

Return to Rowney Green Lane, turning left to return to the Village Hall.

Away from the village (15 miles)

From the Village Hall car park turn right to leave the village.

As you travel along Rowney Green Lane look out for The Calling Oak, remnants of the medieval Alvechurch deer park boundary and Peck Wood Centre (ancient woodland now with residential accommodation for youth groups),

At the cross road junction (with Bordesley Hall entrance opposite), turn left into Storage Lane.

Storage Lane is part of an old salt way used by pack-horses carrying salt from Droitwich, over Copley Hill, and continuing to the east.

As you descend, the fields on either side of the lane were part of the medieval Bordesley Park.

On the right is Lower Park Farm, where a Wellington MkIII bomber from RAF Pershore crashed in Nov 1943, tragically killing all five young crewmen.

After about 1 mile (opposite the entrance to Four Acres), is Pot End and Dagnell Brook (a popular picnic area in the 50's, and now a designated Local Wildlife Site), where a few brown trout can still be found.

Passing into the Parish of Beoley, you pass Storage House, a Grade II listed building circa 1837.

1.8 miles from the Bordesley Hall entrance, turn left (signposted as Cycle Route 55 - to Kings Norton and Birmingham).

You are now on Icknield Street (also known as Ryknild Street or Isenhylt Way in ancient times), a military Roman road running from Cirencester to Watling Street at Wall.

After passing under the M42 motorway, the lane rises steeply before dropping again. Just before the bottom, on your right, you will find cemented into the bank, a tablet of stone with the inscription: "JD 1885". This stone marks the spot where the slashed and bloodied body of PC James Davies was found on a cold February morning of that year. PC Davies remains the only Worcestershire policeman to be murdered in the course of duty.

Moses Shrimpton aged 65 ("the terror of East Worcestershire" !) was found guilty of the murder and was the last person to be hung at Worcester Gaol.

After 1.7 miles you reach the junction with the Coach and Horses pub opposite. Go straight over (still signposted cycle route 55). After a further mile and a (very) steep hill, you come to the Peacock Inn on your left and a picnic site on your right. Turn left to keep the pub on your left. Continue straight on down Lea End Lane.

At the bottom of the hill ignore the left turning and bear right following signs for Hopwood.

After 2.5 miles you cross the canal.

The canal is the Worcester and Birmingham Canal and to the right is the entrance to Wast Hills canal tunnel. Built in 1796, it is one of the longest in the country at 2.5kms long. It is wide enough to accommodate two narrow boats but there is no towpath.

Passing Hopwood Dingle (a Site of Special Scientific Interest, owned by the National Trust) you reach the A441. Turn left towards Redditch (this is a very busy road but the sidewalk is usually empty.) After 0.3 miles, cross over at the Hopwood House pub and go down Bittell Farm Road.

You will pass Upper Bittell reservoir (an SSSI) and Lower Bittell reservoir. These are feeders for the canal and are used by a sailing club and a fishery respectively. They were built to feed the Worcester and Birmingham Canal, which was finished in the 1790s, however the reservoir was not completed until 1837 – only 6 years before the Birmingham & Gloucester railway was built. The reservoirs were visited regularly by a young Bill Oddie.

After 1.25 miles, go straight on at the junction towards Barnt Green. Take the next left towards Tardebigge and left again at the crossroads taking Sandhills Green. After going under the railway bridge and over the motorway, turn right onto Cooper's Hill.

As you climb there are good views to your left of Alvechurch with Rowney Green's Newborne Hill in the distance.

After 0.5 miles turn left into Foxhill Lane.

The Malvern hills can be seen on the horizon to the right.

At the T junction turn left.

Enjoy the long fast descent down Scarfield Hill, to pass the Weighbridge pub on your right which was once the old weighbridge office for offloading coal barges to horse and cart for local deliveries.

Continue past Alvechurch Station before dropping down the hill to the centre of Alvechurch, opposite the square.

Go straight over the square and turn right onto Radford Road.

On the right you will see the old town mill where local corn was ground until the early 1940's. A little further on is the Moat House which is on the site of the Bishop of Worcester's Palace. Excellent views of what was Alvechurch Park can be seen on the right.

After 0.5 miles turn left into Old Rectory Lane.

You will pass the leats and sluices of a 19th Century mill before meeting Birmingham Road.

Turn left to return to the centre of Alvechurch and repeat the small section past the Moat House.

Continue over the A441 dual carriageway, until after two-thirds of a mile you turn right into Rowney Green Lane. One final hill later you arrive back at the Village Hall

Route and notes compiled by Michael Corfield, with invaluable assistance from Dorothy Snaddon
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