

## **MALVERN LINK**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This walk of 35 miles links the North Worcestershire path south of Birmingham, to the southern end of the Worcestershire Way at Great Malvern. The Malvern Link was devised to create a Worcestershire Round route. First edition, Forhill to great Malvern 1994.

This new, revised route edition of the Malvern Link is produced in response to changes in the start and finish points of the Worcestershire Way and the North Worcestershire Path. The Link now starts from the Lickey Hills Visitor Centre (car parks, shop, café, toilets and information), OS map 139, GR SO 997754, and finishes at Great Malvern OS map 150, GR SO 775460.

### **STAGE ONE – LICKEY HILLS TO TARDEBRIDGE – 5.4 MILES**

From the visitor centre, take path south past children's play area into coniferous woodland. Where the way divides, keep straight on downhill, through a dell then rising gently through more fine woodland to reach Cherry Hill Lane. Cross the lane and walk through an avenue of beech trees down to Barnt Green railway station (direct line from Birmingham, New Street). Turn right (TR) up the road, then left down Hewell Lane. At T junction (Blackwell Road), turn left (TL) for 100m then cross the road to a footpath on the left. A narrow defile leads to a long, rising pasture. Cross a footbridge over the M5 motorway. A track leads on to reach Cooper's Hill Lane. Ahead along Foxhill Lane for about 400m to a footpath on the right opposite The Barn. Follow field path crossing several stiles to reach Scarfields Hill.

TR down road, pass junction and on for 200m to a footpath on the left opposite Hob Cottage. Follow track beside hedge along the crest of a ridge and down to Cattespool Farm. Just beyond cattle grid, TR between barns and across to a gate. A fine bridleway is a grassy track to a gate, then TR and follow field edge around and down to pass a cottage to gain Agmore Lane.

TL along lane. At crossroads, ahead along Wharfe Lane to reach the Worcester and Birmingham Canal. TL over canal bridge then TR up narrow lane to bypass canal tunnel. Cross the B4096 road and take the path ahead, over field and down steps to the A448 road. Dual carriageway, cross with care, fast moving traffic! Steps, then short path down to road. TL and cross bridge. TR down ramp to gain the towpath of the Worcester and Birmingham at Tardebridge.

***Map ref, 997694.***

## **STAGE TWO – TARDEBRIDGE TO HANBURY – 5.1 MILES**

Follow the towpath down the impressive Tardebridge flight of locks passing below two bridges. Just before the next bridge spanning the canal, TL and follow a bridleway below a grass bank (the dam of Tardebridge reservoir) to enter a rising field. Climb field edge to gate and track. TR along this track to pass Patchetts Farm.

### **CHANGE TO OS MAP 150**

Continue past a farm and along a concrete drive. Beyond a house on the right, leave the track and head for a small gate in the right hand corner of the field. The bridleway ahead is sometimes a little overgrown and in wet weather, can be very muddy. Exit onto Upper Gambolds Lane. TL and almost immediately go over a stile on the left and across a field (170°) to a gap in the hedge. Then across a small stream continue on near stream to cross a footbridge. Pass to the left of a large house, along a short leafy track to reach Copyholt Lane. Cross the lane and a stile into a field.

The next mile to Lower Bentley is over fields. Walk along the hedgerow on your left and after 150m cross a gate into the adjacent field. Resume direction (roughly south) still following the hedge to a stile in the field corner. Cross two more fields. The first past a pond and trees to a stile 40m right of a gate. The second straight across to a gate. TL up the hedgerow in the next field to cross a stile under an oak. On (190°), go up the field over a narrowing crest to come alongside a tall hedge of hawthorns and oaks.

Proceed down a field with large farms on each side to a stile in the bottom right hand corner. Exit onto Lower Bentley Lane. TR along the lane. Cross Woodgate Road, through a gate and up a track onto Bentley Common. Where the track ends continue by the hedge on the left to the finger post. In the large field ahead, bear over to the hedgerow on your right past water troughs and continue beside the hedge to a gate in the far corner. Go up the field towards a pylon. Cross the stile and follow the hedge on your left down to the road. TL up the road. After about 300m, at a corner, go up a grass track between cottages and over a stile into a field. Follow along by the hedge then through a gate on your right. Resume direction skirting the large house of Pipers Hill Farm. Follow the concrete drive to exit the grounds into woodland. TR immediately onto a track. Follow the path down through the wood and cross the road (B4091) to Pipers Hill car park.

Take the track leading off right from the car park. Follow it down past a pool full of reeds and willows. Go past Knotts Farm. Take the path through woodland for 300m to track junction. Go ahead to a gate. A clear path leads up fields to the finely sited Hanbury Church.

**Map ref 954644.**

### **STAGE 3 - HANBURY TO CROWLE – 8 MILES**

From Hanbury Church:

The entrance drive to the church is on the corner of a narrow lane. Cross the lane and go through a kissing gate into the parkland of Hanbury Hall, a National Trust property.

A clear path crosses the parkland to reach a gate onto a tree lined grass track. Follow this miniature avenue towards the hall. A little way beyond a second gate, bear left off the track to skirt a fence off triangle. Cross an access drive at the way marker, then forward, keeping left of tree shrouded pools to a kissing gate beside a wooden gate. Follow the path forward, passing in front of the main gates of Hanbury Hall and go on to cross a little stile close to the perimeter wall of the gardens. Now cross open parkland for about 700m on 220° bearing to a gate, which opens onto School Lane (at the left hand end of a barrier of woodland). TR along the lane for 600m to reach the Salt Way (B4090, Roman Road).

**Map ref 937627.**

Cross the Salt Way and go through the left hand gate/ gap. The path is alongside the hedgerow on your right, down a large field with crops. Go straight across the next field (190°) to a footbridge in a tall hedge. Also has crops. A third field is crossed on a 200° bearing to a gate. TR through the gate and follow the hedge around inner and outer corners to a footbridge in the next corner. Cross the bridge, and then proceed diagonally across an open field to a gate onto Goosehill Lane at Goosehill Green.

TL and follow the lane for about 500m to where it enters dense woodland. TR through a small gate and walk alongside the wood, up a large flat field. At the end of this field TL through a small gate, then up field to a stile in the fence line ahead. Now descend rough pasture into the shallow valley of Dean Brook, a small stream hidden in hawthorns. At this point, the Malvern Link crosses the Wychavon Way.

**Map ref 929603.**

Cross the stile on the right, then a footbridge over the brook. Go straight across a narrow strip of meadow and over a stile into a coppice. Go through the coppice (ignoring a stile on the left) and out onto a field. Ahead is a large barn and farm at Saleway. Skirt the farm to the right. Near the end of the field go through a gate on the left onto a farm drive and gain the road. TL along the road. Shortly go through a gate on the right and up the right edge of a field to a stile into the adjacent field. Resume direction, south west, alongside the hedge and exit onto Trench Lane.

TL along Trench Lane for 80m. Go through a gate on the right and walk up the right edge of the field, to a gate giving access to Trench Wood, a nature reserve. Go straight across the wood (200m) to reach a track near the far edge. TL along this track, soon passing through a gate. Continue on the track for a further 800m, through pleasant woodland to a stile on the right, into fields. TL follow the field edge down to a stile onto a track, almost at Sale Green.

**Map ref 930582.**

Cross the stile and TR to pass in front of a cottage and through a small gate back into the field (or follow the field edge to the same point). Continue along the field edge for a few metres then cross a stile on your left. In this field, bear left a little, the path heads roughly west through fields between two areas of woodland. Enjoyable walking, keeping close to Fillet Wood on your right. Near the end of the third field, bear round left up to a brick barn. Pass to the right of the barn; go through a gate and onto a track. Follow the track then a lane to reach the road at the Old Chequers Inn, Crowle.

**Map ref 921565.**

#### **STAGE 4 – CROWLE TO WORCESTER WOODS COUNTRY PARK – 3.6 MILES**

Cross the Old Chequers Inn and through the car park. A well marked path leads straight on over small pastures towards the tower of St Johns Church, Crowle. Along by a wall to a small gate in a corner, ignore the gate (narrow defile leads to the village), TR and follow the field edge to the stile. Beyond this stile continue west alongside the hedgerow on your right to the far end of the long pasture.

The next stile shelters below an ash. Bear left and traverse the top of an open hillside to reach the edge of Thrift Wood.

Descent the bank and cross the narrow meadow to a footbridge amidst a wild hawthorn hedge that smothers a tiny brook. In the field beyond the brook, aim for a stile just left of an old

corrugated barn. For the next 150m the path tunnels through overhanging prickly hedgerow. In summer this section of path can easily become overgrown.

Exit into a large field. A short way along the field edge, cross a stile on the right into an adjacent field. TL and follow the field boundary to reach an embankment that carries a railway. Cross a stile on the left then go through an arch beneath the embankment.

The field path now heads west to gain the A5438 road. Stay close to the hedgerow on your right to a stile beneath an oak. Walk directly across the centre of the next field (sometimes crops) to a footbridge in the hedgerow. Again go straight ahead alongside the remnants of a field boundary, over a slight rise, then down to the main road.

**Map ref 897553.**

TL along the A5438. At Bredicot Lane, TR into a farm access road. After a short distance cross a stile in the hedgerow on your left. TR along the hedgerow traversing a pasture enclosed by woodland. After about 300m, there is a way marker beneath an oak. A little further on; go through a gate on your right and cross a large field towards more woodland (230° bearing, aim for a gate).

Climb over the top of a grassy knoll to locate the next gate (ignore the track, it leads to the back of Cudleigh Court Farm). Cross the track to a stile. Now bear right across a pasture dotted with oaks keeping parallel to the fence line over to your left. Gain the farm access drive at a cattle grid, then steps to the A422 road.

TR and follow the footway along the main road to cross the M5 motorway. Cross the A4440 road at a large roundabout (great care needed). Follow the drive ahead to Worcester Woods, car park.

**Map ref 878543.**

## **STAGE 6 – WORCESTER WOODS TO POWICK – 5.5 MILES**

The Worcester Woods Countryside Centre is situated on the east side of Nunnery Woods, an area of deciduous woodland on the outskirts of the City of Worcester. The centre has a cafeteria, toilets, a natural history display and a craft shop. It also provides information on local walks and events.

At the entrance to the centre there is a finger post, 'Perry Wood ¾ of a mile'. On entering the wood, follow the main way marked trail (Badger Trail) to a long narrow pool, then on lesser paths heading roughly west, to reach a walkway that runs alongside the west side of the wood.

TR along the walkway, between a sports ground with running track and a large leisure centre/school complex. At the edge of a housing estate, TR down another walkway along the top of the sports ground. After about 200m, just past a metal barrier, TL along a path bordering Nunnery Wood Primary School.

Cross the road and walk up Redfern Avenue. At the top of the hill, where the avenue swings left there is a footpath in the corner by house 34. the path forks immediately. Bear left following a tarmac path along the edge of Perry Wood then descend steps to reach Lark Hill Road. Walk down to London Road, the A44. TR and it is about 10 minutes walk down the main road to reach The Commandery near the centre of Worcester.

The Commandery, a timber framed building, was used as the Royalist Headquarters during the Battle of Worcester in 1651. It is now a Civil War Museum. Cross the main road here and TR for a short way, then TL into Kings Street. Follow the road around to the right to a tall archway, the entrance to the grounds of Worcester Cathedral. Pass through by College Green under the towering south aspect of the cathedral, and out through the Ferry Entrance, onto the riverside walk. TR alongside the River Severn to Worcester Bridge.

Cross the river. The riverside walk down the west bank is pleasant and easy along a prepared track that is also used by the Malvern Pedway. After a mile or so, the river is spanned by Diglis Weir. River traffic has to pass through a lock adjacent to the east bank. The turbulent water below the weir offers sport to salmon fishermen during the season.

Beyond the weir where the walkway turns away from the river, we continue along the riverbank through wide, flat meadows to reach the confluence with the River Teme at a concrete boundary stone and bench. Follow the Teme upstream. The river meanders between steep eroded banks; watch out for the short cut across the neck of a lengthy oxbow. A full mile from the Severn, you will reach Powick Bridge and mill.

Much of the fighting at the Battle of Worcester took place around Powick and in the meadows bordering the Teme. Old Powick Bridge, a key objective during the battle, is a little way beyond the bridge currently used to carry the A449 road across the Teme. TL over the old bridge to reach a busy roundabout at a junction with the new western bypass around Worcester. Cross

with great care! Continue along the main road towards Malvern, to a path on the left not far beyond the Vernon Arms. Cross a field corner to a footbridge in the hedgerow. Climb the path through the trees and TR into the churchyard of Powick Church.

**Map ref 834515.**

## **STAGE 7 – POWICK TO MADRESFIELD – 4.5 MILES**

From Powick Church:

Pass along the right hand side of the churchyard and out through a kissing gate. Cross a narrow strip of field then along the track ahead, down the left side of an orchard for about 700m, to a metal gate into a field.

Bear left down this field (80°) to a stile in the far corner. Cross into a field with a pylon nearby, then TR along the hedgerow to cross a footbridge after 100m. The path is mostly defined between hedges for 350m to a finger post at a junction of paths. TR up a grassy track towards a white cottage. Just before reaching the cottage, step right, into the adjacent field and resume direction along the hedgerow to a stile ahead (ornamental hedge). Cross this stile, then a stile on the left into a field. Walk up the field along the hedge on your left, caravan site on the right. Cross the following field on a 220°. Past a magnificent oak to a gate onto the B442 road.

Cross the road and follow a narrow path just left of the entrance to Stanbrook Abbey. Emerge at a road junction. Left leads to the village green and Bluebell Inn at Pole Elm. We TR up a 'No through road' alongside the boundary wall of the abbey grounds. At the top of the lane go up a shady path overhung by trees. Exit onto a broad track and follow this track for 80m, then cross a stile on the left into a field. The path is alongside the hedge on your right to a stile in the corner. Go south down the next field to a metal gate (ignoring stiles to the left). On through a second gate then across an unsurfaced road to a stile. Up the left edge of a rising field and over a stile into Old Hills Country Park. Bear right of the house, then head west up grass slopes to a trig point at 62m. a fine view point across the Malvern Hills.

**Map ref 827487.**

From the trig point go down a path, cut through grass (right hand path at fork) west, to a small gate in a hedge of trees. In the field beyond, after a few metres, cross two stiles on the left. Go straight across a wide field on a 210° bearing to a stile into woodland. A faint path through ferns and brambles crosses the wood to reach a way marked stile on the far edge after 250m. Cross the stile then TR through a gate. TL immediately and follow the trees on the left for 200m to

reach a gate on a track and a bridge over a small stream. Go through the gate and TR (260°). The path runs through a series of long fields. Stay close to the mixed woodland on your right. At the end of the last field is a barrier of trees. Ignore a stile in the right hand corner by a gate. Go left for 40m to a gate onto a tarmac drive. Go forward along this estate drive passing beneath bridges, to reach the road at Madresfield after 500m.

**Map ref 804476**

## **STAGE 8 – MADRESFIELD TO GREAT MALVERN – 2.5 MILES**

On reaching the road that runs through the village of Madresfield, (Map ref 804476), TL for 50m, then take footpath on the right at a cottage. Cross field to stile. Cross a track and through a kissing gate. Cross field centre to a footbridge in the far, bottom corner. Cross the next field to a stile just left of a house and exit onto Rectory Lane.

TR along lane to a T junction. TL along North End Lane (after about 200m, parallel grass footpath on right behind hedge) to a junction with Mayfield Road. Continue towards Malvern on North End Lane, now the B4208 to a crossroads. Cross at traffic lights and ahead up Hayslan Road. At a corner, straight ahead along a track. Take a footpath across a field and along a narrow defile. Pass under a railway bridge then TL immediately on footpath. Take central path over rise to gate. Up to road at South Worcestershire College.

Cross road and climb the steeply rising Como Road to the top crossing Victoria Road on route. TL above Malvern Library and onto a crossroads. TR up Church Road to the Tourist Information Centre and Belle View Terrace. Nearby is the Unicorn Inn and St Ann's Road that leads to footpaths up onto the ridge of the Malvern Hills and Worcestershire Beacon; at 425m, the highest point in Worcestershire.

**D A IRONS**

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