

The Bow Brook and Salt Way Circle

A beautiful route that takes you through the heart of Worcestershire countryside in an area bursting with history. On this route you will encounter the scene of the infamous Oddingley Murders, the home of St Richard de Wyche and the local church of The Archers from BBC Radio 4.

There are two possible routes to choose between: long and short. Both routes begin at Droitwich Spa railway station, postcode WR9 8JE. Full directions are provided in the details below the route overview. This pdf is the **Full Route (32 miles)**. For the short route, return to the website and download the short route pdf.

Route Overview

<p>Full Route 32 miles <i>Suitable for experienced road cyclists.</i></p>	<p>Short Route 16 miles <i>This route is suitable for less experienced cyclists; it is shorter and avoids steep hills.</i></p>
<p>START Droitwich Spa Railway Station ↓0.1 miles</p>	<p>START Droitwich Spa Railway Station ↓0.1 miles</p>
<p>1: Droitwich St Nicholas ↓0.5 miles</p>	<p>1: Droitwich St Nicholas ↓0.5 miles</p>
<p>2: Droitwich St Andrew ↓0.5 miles</p>	<p>2: Droitwich St Andrew ↓0.5 miles</p>
<p>3: Dodderhill St Augustine ↓1.2 miles</p>	<p>3: Hadzor St Richard & St Hubert ↓5.3 miles</p>
<p>4: Hadzor St Richard & St Hubert ↓4.0 miles</p>	<p>4: Himbleton St Mary ↓1.0 mile</p>
<p>5: Hanbury St Mary ↓5.3 miles</p>	<p>5: Huddington St James ↓2.4 miles</p>
<p>6: Feckenham St John the Baptist ↓2.2 miles</p>	<p>6: Crowle St John the Baptist ↓2.6 miles</p>
<p>7: Stock & Bradley St John the Baptist ↓4.3 miles</p>	<p>7: Oddingley St James ↓2.7 miles</p>
<p>8: Himbleton St Mary Magdalene ↓1.0 mile</p>	<p>8: Droitwich St Peter ↓0.6 miles</p>
<p>9: Huddington St James ↓2.4 miles</p>	<p>9: Droitwich Sacred Heart ↓0.2 miles</p>
<p>10: Crowle St John the Baptist ↓1.5 miles</p>	<p>10: Droitwich Methodist ↓0.7 miles</p>
<p>11: Bredicot St James ↓2.6 miles</p>	<p>RETURN TO START</p>
<p>12: Tibberton St Peter-ad-Vincula ↓1.8 miles</p>	
<p>13: Oddingley St James ↓2.7 miles</p>	
<p>14: Droitwich St Peter ↓0.6 miles</p>	
<p>15: Droitwich Sacred Heart ↓0.2 miles</p>	
<p>16: Droitwich Methodist ↓0.7 miles</p>	
<p>RETURN TO START</p>	

1: St Nicholas Church, Droitwich

Getting Here: From Droitwich Spa railway station, cross the main road and the church can't be missed, straight ahead of you.

What to Expect: St Nicholas Church is, sadly, no longer used for regular services and will probably be locked when you arrive. The Church is, however, still used for meetings of local community groups and the churchyard is well kept.

History & Features: St Nicholas is a relatively 'modern' church dating from the nineteenth century, and is the newest church on the route. It replaced an earlier church of St Nicholas located further to the west.

2: St Andrew's Church, Droitwich

Getting here: From St Nicholas' Church south entrance (facing away from the main road), turn left onto St Nicholas' street between rows of terraced houses. Follow this onto a cycle path that takes you through an underpass into the centre of Droitwich, with the town library straight ahead of you. Join the main road, passing the police station on your right and the Baptist Church and Post Office on your left, continuing as far as the library, then dismount and turn left, past the old Raven Hotel, wheeling your bicycle on the pavement (this is a one-way road). As you approach the junction at the bottom of this road, St Andrew's Church is on the right.

What to Expect: There are regular services at St Andrew's and it is usually open during the day. There is currently scaffolding inside the church awaiting repairs to the ceiling, but access is not restricted by this.

History & Features: This church dates from the 13th century, though many of its features were rebuilt in the early 14th century following a fire. It is home to a chapel dedicated to St Richard de Wyche, Droitwich's patron saint and a 13th century bishop of Chichester. Richard was born near here in the village of Burford, and his shrine in Chichester was a site of pilgrimage for medieval Christians. Perhaps utter the prayer attributed to him on his deathbed during your visit:

*Thanks be to Thee, my Lord Jesus Christ
For all the benefits Thou hast given me,
For all the pains and insults Thou hast borne for me.
O most merciful Redeemer, friend and brother,
May I know Thee more clearly,
Love Thee more dearly,
Follow Thee more nearly,
Day by day.*

3: St Augustine's Church, Dodderhill

Getting here: From St Andrew's Church entrance, turn right then immediately left and right again by the carpet shop, past Waitrose car park onto the main Salt Way. You will see St Augustine's on the hill in front of you, its cross prominent on the skyline. Turn right onto the Salt Way, towards the traffic lights. Here, at the crossroads turn left, and go under the railway bridge. Take the next left up a steep hill, and you will come to a sign for St Augustine's on the left; follow the driveway left, up hill, until you reach the church. Stop there to look at the view over Droitwich!

What to Expect: There are two services per week, typically, at St Augustine's, but it is often locked when there is no service on. Nonetheless, the view alone is worth the cycle up.

History & Features: This church occupies an ancient site of worship, as the town of Droitwich itself dates back to Roman times. A Norman church was built on the hill in 1220, but badly damaged during the civil war, such that the present building replaced most of it in the late 1600s. If you are able to get inside, notice the unusual feature of this church in that that altar is at the West end, not the East. This alteration was made in the late twentieth century to make the altar more visible to the whole congregation.

4: St Richard & St Hubert's Church. Hadzor

Getting here: From St Augustine's Church, go back down the hill and turn right onto the main road, towards the traffic lights. Turn left at the lights, and continue along the Salt Way until you reach the M5 motorway bridge. Immediately after passing under the bridge, turn right and choose the right-hand fork, onto the lane with a sign reading 'Hadzor'. Continue along this leafy lane until you reach the church on the left.

What to Expect: This Roman Catholic church is typically only open for the Saturday evening Mass.

History & Features: Built in the 1870s for the use of the lord of Hadzor Manor, who had recently converted to Roman Catholicism, this Roman Catholic church was originally the second of two churches in Hadzor. Sadly, the older Church of England building, with its famous stained glass, was closed in the 1970s, but St Richard and St Hubert continues to serve a large congregation every week, despite its small size and simplicity. The church was built to house 100 people, but at its opening hosted a congregation of 150!

5: St Mary's Church, Hanbury

Getting here: From Hadzor church, continue along the lane, which takes you up a steep hill and down the other side (ignore the dead-end 'Green Lane' at the top of the hill). Continue through the village of Hadzor until you reach a T-junction at the top of the hill on the other side. Turn left, and continue until you reach a crossroads. Turn left, and follow the lane for a couple of miles, whereupon you reach another T-junction. Turn left, following the sign for 'Hanbury'. When you reach the main road, turn right, and turn left at the sign for Hanbury

Hall and Hanbury Church. Follow this lane past Hanbury Hall and turn left up a steep hill opposite Hanbury School. Hanbury Church is at the top of this hill!

What to Expect: The best view this side of the Malvern hills! In fact, the next highest point due east from Hanbury Church is said to be the Ural Mountains in Russia. Having viewed the beautiful Worcestershire countryside, you will usually be able to enter the Church (assuming there's not a wedding in progress) where refreshments are available. This is one of our most welcoming churches and sometimes if the church is in use refreshments are provided outside!

History & Features: The largest church in the Bowbrook Group, Hanbury commands a prime position above the surrounding countryside, and the present building dates back as far as 1210. The nave contains a large number of box pews, including the family box for the local gentry of the eighteenth and nineteenth century, the Vernon family. A side chapel provides a tranquil place to pray. The church is in high demand for weddings, and is the model for the 'St Stephen's Church' featured in the popular BBC radio programme 'The Archers' which is set in a fictional equivalent to Worcestershire.

6: St John the Baptist, Feckenham

Getting here: From Hanbury church, go back down the hill and turn left onto the lane beside the school. Follow this lane past the outskirts of Hanbury Woods until you reach a T-junction next to the Jinney Ring craft centre. Here, turn right, then immediately left onto 'Forest Lane'. Follow this long lane for about 4 miles. You will pass during this time a turning to the right and a set of crossroads. At the next set of crossroads after that (Elcocks Brook) turn right into Ham Green, and follow the lane, always keeping right, into Feckenham. When you reach the main road (Astwood Lane), turn right. The church will be on your right, in the village square.

What to expect: Feckenham is a large church and is usually open for Ride & Stride.

History and Features: The village of Feckenham was once situated at the heart of the great Feckenham Forest that stretched over most of Worcestershire. From the 1300s onwards this forest was largely cleared, but significant pockets remain. The church dates from the mid-1200s and boasts some impressive arches that were restored to what is thought to have been their original design in the early 20th century.

7: St John the Baptist, Stock & Bradley

Getting here: From Feckenham church, go straight on through the centre of the village, passing the pub on your left, until you reach the main T-junction opposite the shop. Turn right, past the shop, and continue up hill. When you reach a bend in the road (towards the right), there is a turning to the left signposted 'Stock and Bradley Green' (Church Lane). Follow this lane, keeping an eye out for the church on your right after a couple of miles. You will need to cycle along a gravelly driveway to reach it.

What to expect: This small church is generally open but not manned.

History & Features: This Victorian church stands on the site of a medieval 'chapel of ease' attached to Feckenham, which had to be demolished because it was in such poor repair by the nineteenth century. It is a simple, but peaceful church surrounded by pleasant views of creation. The church serves the hamlets of Stock and Bradley Green nearby, which in the Worcestershire tradition are quite scattered rather than villages with a clear centre.

8: St Mary Magdalene, Himbleton

Getting here: From Stock & Bradley Church, return to Church Lane, turning right to carry on in the same direction as you were before. This lane soon crosses a stream and reaches a T-junction. Turn right, and carry on until you reach another junction with a road going off to the right. Follow this lane, past the open fields, until you reach a sign welcoming you to Himbleton. As you reach the centre of the village you will reach another junction; turn right, following the road over the Bow brook, and turn right again before you reach the Galton Arms pub. Follow this lane to its end, veering right after the 'phone box. This will bring you to Himbleton Church.

What to expect: The church is generally open, and usually manned for Ride & Stride.

History & Features: Originally a Norman church, St Mary's retains a very medieval feel despite being added to and altered over the intervening centuries. Much of the main building dates from the 13th century, though the doorway and main font are 12th century. The transept was originally a chapel for the use of the people of Shell nearby. On the east wall above the altar are royal arms probably belonging to Elizabeth I, who is supposed to have visited Himbleton during a royal progress. The top-right corner of the east window contains a figure thought to be Mary Magdalene and may constitute the earliest glass to survive in Worcestershire.

9: St James, Huddington

Getting here: From Himbleton Church, return along the lane to the T-junction near the pub (to your right across the road). Here, turn left, and immediately turn right alongside the brook, along a small lane leading to a huddle of houses. Look out for a footpath on your left. Follow this footpath across several fields into the hamlet of Huddington; you will come out almost exactly opposite a driveway leading to a country house (Huddington Court). Go up this driveway, and through the main gates of the Court, then turn immediately left over the lawn (yes, you are allowed!) and through the gates of the churchyard.

What to expect: Huddington is located in the grounds of a private house, but is a public building and usually open but not manned.

History & Features: Huddington is a small church with many ancient features. Originally, the church was a chapel attached to St Helen's Church in Worcester and owned by the Commandery. It was restored in 1900 but retains its Norman and medieval features for the

most part. Outside is the grave of a soldier thought to have been killed in the Civil War whose body was rediscovered in the early twentieth century. Further back in history, Huddington Court was one of the buildings used by the conspirators in the Roman Catholic Throckmorton Plot against Elizabeth I.

10: St John the Baptist, Crowle

Getting here: From Huddington Church, go back down the driveway and turn left, following the lane until you reach a crossroads. Here, turn left and continue – ignoring lanes running off to the right and left – until you enter the village of Crowle. Towards the middle of the village, with the Post Office on your right, turn left up hill and pass the school on your left. Carry straight on until you reach the Church on your right. ‘Bredicot Lane’ is just past it.

What to expect: This church is usually open and sometimes manned for Ride & Stride.

History & Features: The beautiful porch alone survives of the original medieval church, the rest of the building having been entirely remade in the 1880s. However, the font is 15th century and the marble lectern is 12th century, possible from Pershore Abbey. Crowle is one of the largest church congregations in the Bowbrook Group of parishes, so called because they are all connected by the Bow brook and its tributaries.

11: St James, Bredicot

Getting here: From Crowle Church, go through the double metal gates in the churchyard onto Bredicot Lane (you can also reach this from the main road), turning right to follow this lane through rolling countryside up to the hamlet of Bredicot. Entering the hamlet, turn right onto a railway bridge then immediately left down a track leading to a house. Towards the end of this track you will see the footpath leading into the churchyard on your right.

What to expect: Bredicot church hosts only one service a month – and only in the summer months – and is generally closed to the public. However, you can access the churchyard.

History & Features: A tiny church serving a tiny hamlet, Bredicot is a ‘chapel of ease’ for Crowle and part of the same joint parish. It is known as a ‘field church’, surrounded by fields and farms rather than a large community, and dates to the 13th century. It is a simple, rectangular shape. Bredicot lies at the very centre of the county of Worcestershire.

12: St Peter-ad-Vincula, Tibberton

Getting here: From Bredicot church, go back down the track to the road but do not cross back over the railway, instead following the lane straight on parallel to the railway, then veering left. This will take you to the main road Pershore Lane. Turn right, taking care as cars travel fast along this road, and continue until you reach a roundabout. Here, turn right (the ‘third exit’) onto Plough Road. Follow this as it takes you up hill and turns to the left, and ignore the turning to Crowle on your right. Take the next left up Church Lane. Tibberton Church will be on your left.

What to expect: Tibberton Church is usually open. It hosts a good view of the countryside from outside, being perched on a hill. The church may be manned with refreshments.

History & Features: The church was built in 1868, one of the most modern in the area, albeit in a 13th-century style. The brick walls are faced with stone to make the building appear more old-fashioned. Inside, the church is of a moderate size, comfortable and quite simple.

13: St James, Oddingley

Getting here: From Tibberton Church, return to Church lane, turning either right or left (both will bring you back to Plough Road). When you reach Plough road, turn left to continue in the same direction you were heading before. Pass through the village of Tibberton, until you reach The Bridge Inn on your left. Here, the Worcester & Birmingham canal passes through the village. Do not cross the bridge over the canal, but instead turn right down a private lane and onto the canal towpath. Turn right onto the towpath, and follow it alongside the canal. As you turn a bend in the canal, you will see Oddingley Church in front and to the left, a magnificent sight in the midst of open countryside. Leave the canal at the next bridge, turning right; follow the lane over the bridge until you reach a sign pointing to Oddingley Church down a drive to your left.

What to expect: Oddingley is usually open and manned for Ride & Stride with refreshments.

History & Features: Originally a wooden church (first mentioned in 1288), Oddingley was rebuilt in stone during the fifteen century, and restored in the mid-nineteenth century, retaining its medieval features and feel. It contains the organ and Bible of Hadzor Church (closed in the 1970s). A small but welcoming church, many people have expressed that they feel a strong sense of peace in this building. Outside, it looks onto beautiful countryside. In 1806, Oddingley was the scene of the gruesome Oddingley Murders in which the local vicar was murdered by farmers reluctant to pay the tithe (a form of church tax) that was his salary, which Revd Parker had recently insisted be increased. The case caused a sensation in Georgian England but the culprits were never brought to justice.

14: St Peter, Droitwich

Getting here: Go back up the drive from Oddingley Church, and turn left at the bottom onto the lane. Follow this until you reach a T-junction, and turn right. Follow this lane towards Droitwich, ignoring the turnings to your left then to your right. Follow the road to the right when you come to a mini-roundabout surrounded by a housing estate. Continue along this road (Tagwell Road) as it veers to the left, looking out for another road called The Holloway on your right. Take this road for a few hundred yards, then turn left down St Peter's Church Lane. The church is at the bottom of the lane.

What to expect: St Peter's is usually closed and unlikely to be manned.

History & Features: The present church contains Norman features but largely dates to the 14th century, and the tower was added in 1500. There is an example of very old stained glass in the south-east window. The Church contains a memorial to one of the most famous residents of its parish, Edward Winslow (born 1595) who was one of the Pilgrim Fathers and brought the first domesticated cattle to America.

15: Sacred Heart, Droitwich

Getting here: From St Peter's Church, go back up Church Lane and turn right onto the Holloway. Turn right again onto Tagwell Lane, and follow this up to the traffic lights at the junction opposite the Esso garage. Here, turn left and continue for a few hundred yards; you will see the Sacred Heart church on your right.

What to expect: The church is usually open but not necessarily manned.

History & Features: If you've not been here before, prepare to be amazed by the elaborately decorated walls and ceiling of this Roman Catholic church. The church is brick-built, begun in 1919 when Roman Catholicism was beginning to return openly to Droitwich following the establishment of the church in Hadzor a few decades before. The architect based the design on the basilica churches of Ravenna, which also inspired the artist Gabriel Pippet who created the beautiful mosaics. Take a few moments to take it all in!

16: Methodist Centre, Droitwich

Getting here: From Sacred Heart Church, turn left back onto the main road, past the petrol garages and traffic lights, and the Methodist Church is immediately on your left.

What to expect: The church hall is usually open (on the left) and provides refreshments.

History & Features: From the elaborate colours of the nearby Roman Catholic church, we move to the prayerful simplicity of this Methodist Church Centre. The building is of brick and modern in origin, well-suited to modern forms of worship, with a large white cross on the outside. If it is open, you will find it a pleasant place to sit and pray.

Well done! That is the end of this route around 16 historic Worcestershire churches. To get back to the railway station and the start of the route, go back onto the main road, turning left and continuing left when you get to the roundabout. At the next roundabout, turn left (the 'first exit') and continue a short way to arrive at the station on your right, St Nicholas Church on your left.