

## 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 **Short Route (16 miles)**. For the full route, return to the website and download the full route pdf.

### Route Overview

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

## Short Route

### **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 13<sup>th</sup> century, though many of its features were rebuilt in the early 14<sup>th</sup> century following a fire. It is home to a chapel dedicated to St Richard de Wyche, Droitwich's patron saint and a 13<sup>th</sup> 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 Richard & St Hubert's Church, Hadzor**

**Getting here:** From St Andrew's Church, turn right then right again and join the main road, turning right towards the traffic lights. Go straight over 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!

### **4: St Mary Magdalene, Himbleton**

**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 right, following the sign for 'Himbleton'. Follow this lane, through the woods and past the open fields, until you reach a junction with a sign pointing you to Himbleton on the left. As you reach the centre of the village you will reach another junction; turn left, and 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 13<sup>th</sup> century, though the doorway and main font are 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **5: 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.

### **6: 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 15<sup>th</sup> century and the marble lectern is 12<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **7: St James, Oddingley**

**Getting here:** From Crowle Church, return to the main road and turn left, retracing your route as far as the Post Office opposite you. Here, turn left and then right, up 'Netherwood Lane'. Follow this lane, down a very steep hill with beautiful views to the left, cross the railway and the canal and continue until you reach a sign pointing to Oddingley Church down a drive on the left. Go down this drive and the church will be ahead of you.

**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.

### **8: 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 14<sup>th</sup> 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.

### **9: 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!

### **10: 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 10 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.