

Dorridge & District Residents Association

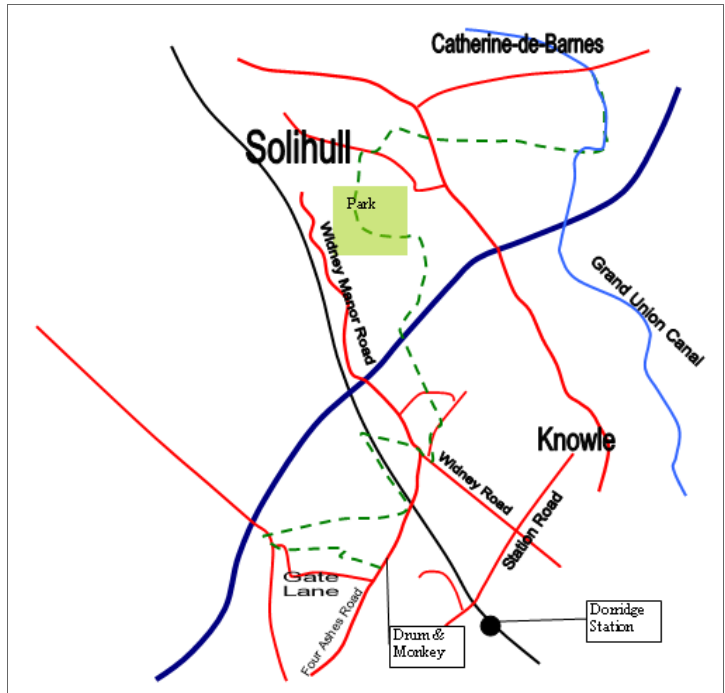
A Walk Along The Green Belt From Dorridge to Catherine-de-Barnes

The starting section of this walk through open fields would be destroyed by the building of the motorway services at junction 4, and the end section would be affected by the threatened services at Catherine-de-Barnes.

This is NOT a circular walk. It is a walk of around 6 miles through a variety of countryside and skirts Solihull town centre. There are a number of styles and it is muddy in parts when wet. It crosses main roads in a couple of places, so children would need to be carefully supervised at those points.

Starting from the outskirts of Dorridge, it zig-zags across the fields between the motorway and Dorridge, and then crosses to the River Blythe and runs along side this though to Brueton Park. From there it passes Solihull School, across the by-pass then across fields to the Grand Union Canal. Turning left takes you along to the Boat Inn for refreshments and await your return lift! This walk takes around 2½ to 3 hours. For the hardy, it is possible to do a circular walk, instead turning right at the canal to return to Knowle, cutting across through Knowle Park, Mill Lane and Conker Lane to return to the start in around 4½ hours.

There are a number of places to start from: as a landmark, start from the car park of the Drum and Monkey. If you need to park, just to the south is Althorpe Drive and the odd car can be left there. If you are intent on a circular walk and are going to use public transport to return, the station is a good starting point. Note that buses do not run from Catherine-de-Barnes on Sunday. To get to the walk starting from the station, left out of the station, descend Station Approach, left and then cross under the railway bridge. Turn right up Manor Road. Go up, passing a mini-roundabout. At the sharp left turn go ahead onto Conker Lane and then a few yards along, turn left on a path through open space. Keep on this until you eventually emerge to the side of the Drum and Monkey.



1: Go down the drive to the Four Ashes Golf Club



From the Drum and Monkey car park, go left and on the other side of the road you will see the Four Ashes Golf Club. Walk down the drive, bearing left into the car park.

2: Cross the Car Park diagonally to the far left corner.



At the far point of the car park, cross the lawned area by the hedge and walk down the side of the club buildings.

3: Continue around the edge



Follow the edge of the field, keeping to the left. Eventually you will be guided right around the bottom of the field. Go between the telegraph poles and netting.

4: Turn left over bridge.



A short way past the fencing you have to turn left over a wooden bridge. Walk straight ahead, across another bridge over a barely noticeable stream. Ahead at the field edge is a style. Cross the style and keep going ahead to the left of the hedge until you reach the

road.

5: Cross style and turn right down Gate Lane



Go out onto Gate Lane, initially keeping to the verge, but eventually you will have to walk in the road. Follow the road all the way down to the traffic lights and turn right onto the pavement towards the junction with the M42.

6: Just before the roundabout turn right onto path.



As you walk towards the M42 J4 roundabout, look to your right and you will find a style up the bank, just before you reach the roundabout itself. Cross the style.

7: Head straight across the field.



The path goes straight across the middle of the field. There is a short post in the middle of the field, and on the horizon you might just make out the shape of the Solihull Riding Club arena in the same line.

8: As you near the edge, you should see a break in the hedge.



Continuing on roughly the same line, you will see a low hedge on the left, with a break, then a higher hedge on the right. Go through the break.

9: Follow the hedge on the right



Follow the hedge on the right, which breaks away to the right.

10: Cross the style and the bridge



In the far right corner of this small field is a style and bridge. Cross the bridge and follow the obvious path and way marks towards the riding school.

11: As you reach the School join the lane.



As you pass the cottage, the fence has a gap on the right and you cross onto the track.

12: Follow the track



Follow the track out to the car park in front of the riding school and then join the lane on the right, keeping ahead in the same direction.

13: Take the rough track on the left



Just before some cottages, there is a track on the left. Follow the way marked path until just before Four Ashes Road.

14: Take the Kissing Gate to the left.



Cross through to the field and take the well-trodden footpath on the left. This goes alongside the railway for quite some distance.

15: Continue onwards



Whilst mainly walking on the field edge, you will come to a small copse. Take the path to the right of the copse, continuing along the next field, still next to the railway.

16: At the end of the field...



Eventually, the path comes to a thin hedge and you should see a tunnel to your right under the railway. Drop down through the hedge...

17: Continue onwards



Through the tunnel..

18: And up the bank.



Go up the bank and follow the well-defined and way-marked path. This eventually comes alongside a cemetery. Continue along the path out on to the road.

19: Cross the road and turn right



You've arrived at Widney Manor Road. Cross over (take care, but there is good visibility) and turn right, walking up towards the roundabout.

20: Turn left into Widney Road



At the roundabout turn left, then walk a short way down to the crossroads where you turn left into Browns Lane.

21: Carry straight on



Crossing to the footpath on the right, carry straight ahead through the no-entry signs continuing along Browns Lane.

22: As the footpath splits from the road...



Continue along the footpath until the pavement splits from the road to the right. Stay on the road, watching for cars, and take the footpath across the style on the left, just after the large tree.

23: Follow the path



The path stays to the left of the field and eventually comes out on to a lane (Smiths Lane) across another style. Turn left and shortly you will see another style on the right.

24: Cross the style on the right



Turning right off Smiths Lane across the style, walk straight ahead following the hedge on the right hand side of what looks a bit like someone's back garden.

25: Continue onwards



Continue walking straight on across a stile and eventually the motorway will reveal itself, together with a footbridge. Cross the M42 via the footbridge(!).

26: After you cross the footbridge, turn right



As you come off the footbridge, cross the stile ahead - ignore the wooden bridge ahead and turn right, though at the time of writing it is not way marked. In principle the footpath follows next to the River Blythe down to the copse, but there is a well-used path along

the middle of the field.

27: Continue onwards along the right of the copse



The path joins the corner of the copse. Carry straight on and a kissing gate will appear at the end of the field.

28: Go through into the woods



The path then goes through the woods. It continues for some distance, with the River Blythe sometimes alongside, sometimes 20 metres away, but always in sight.

29: Continue onwards



The path breaks out of the woods, but continue on in roughly the same direction.

30: and on...



31: ...eventually arriving at a footbridge.



You eventually arrive at a large footbridge with metal guard rails. Follow the path up to the bridge...

32: turning back over the bridge.



The path follows the Blythe to the right, but we will turn left back over the bridge and through the park.

33: Path comes out into open parkland.



The pathway comes out into open parkland. Strike diagonally to the far right, joining the footpath/cycle way on the other side of the field. You can see the nature centre on the far side of the park.

34: Continue onwards



The path continues on, you follow it in roughly the same direction.

35: Path splits



The main path then swings to the left, you carry straight on passing between formal gardens.

36: Out of the park



The path then leads to the main gates of the park. Exit the park and turn right along the road.

37: Go to traffic lights



Continue along the road, crossing the lights diagonally, first across Park Avenue and then across Warwick Road.

38: Continue up Hampton Lane



Walk up Hampton Lane, pausing briefly to ponder why the bridge club on the right needs such a large building and car park, passing two cul-de-sacs on the right.

39: Take the cut through



As the pavement narrows, there is a cut through on the right, take this to Oakley Wood Drive.

40: Straight on at the end of the road



At the end of the road, a gated footpath can be seen – carry straight on across along it.

41: Continue along Avenbury Drive



The path continues alongside Avenbury Drive. At the end of the separated path, cross the road to the next gate and go to the main Solihull By-Pass.

42: Cross the By-Pass with care, then straight along the fields.



Though traffic is busy and fast moving, there is good visibility at the crossing point, so patience will get you across the road safely. Just to the right of the obvious footpath marker there is a gate to the fields.

43: Cross several fields



The path continues through several fields, staying always to the hedge on the left, passing various redundant styles on the way where hedges have been removed.

44: At the end of the field...



In the last field you will see a wood at the end. The path continues on the left of the field until the gate after the large tree in the hedge on the left. At the gate, strike across the field to the far right corner.

45: Cross the style



Cross the style onto the obvious path through the woods. At the time of writing the path was partially obstructed by a fallen tree – scramble around this as best you can.

46: Emerge at the farm.



The path leaves the wood. Bear to the right and a series of styles takes you past the farm buildings, keeping the farm on the left. The vocal dog can be ignored, the bark is bad, but I remain un-bitten so I cannot prove the proverb.

47: Pass the farm



Continue past the farm.

48: Passing through the rickety gate, continue on.



The next style can be seen, just ahead and to the right, into the field.

49: Cross the next field



The path crosses the next field, take the style just to the right, and then go straight across the field, keeping parallel to the fence on the left.

50: Leave the field



Leaving the field, cross a quiet lane, and continue on in the same direction, keeping to the hedge on the left.

51: Continue onwards



The footpath crosses several fields, again staying to the left hand hedge, aside from where the path passes obviously through the middle of the fields.

52: Pass by the metal fencing.



The fields end and the path comes alongside a large metal fence. Continue along the fence until the path swings left.

53: Take track to road



The path joins the unmade track which emerges out onto the lane.

54: Turn right over bridge



Go right over the bridge and immediately after the bridge, on the right, is the access to the tow path. Go to the towpath and turn right again.

55: Go under the bridge



Assuming you are completing the walk, go under the bridge.

56: Walk along the towpath.



The tow path winds its way until it eventually comes to a wide landing area. After this, take the path that splits off right from the tow path up a gentle slope to the bridge.

57: Cross the road



Cross the road with extreme care – there is very poor visibility and this is something of a commuter rat run so traffic often passes at speed. Cross the bridge to your left via the footbridge.

58: The Boat Inn.

On the other side of the road, you will find the Boat Inn, a large pub with food and a beer garden. Take the time to rest your legs whilst awaiting your rescuers. There is also a local store with drinks and sandwiches if you prefer.

Alternatively, you can get the 192/194 bus back to Solihull (hourly service, not Sundays) and then the 40 bus or the train back to Dorridge alighting at the train station or Four Ashes Road (at the roundabout passed in step 20, then walk along Four Ashes road back to the Drum & Monkey).

Alternative Return 1.

At step 55, you can turn left along the Grand Union Canal and head south to Knowle. This is a very pleasant canal-side walk, passing Copt Heath Wharf. You can cut across through Knowle



at several points, depending on where you are returning to. To get to the centre, take the footbridge which is after the motorway bridge and around 3 more canal bridges. Following the footpath along the right of the fields, this emerges onto Kixley

Lane and you can then get to Knowle centre going right.

Alternative Return 2.

Another alternative route is again to return along the Grand Union Canal and head south to Knowle. Leave at the concrete bridge after the motorway underpass, where you can take a



footpath up on the far side of the bridge and cross to the farm buildings. This path leads through a cul-de-sac and then across Warwick Road through Copt Heath Golf Club. This brings you out at the top of Longdon Road, near Tilehouse Green Lane.

Turn right there, then left to take you to Browns Lane where you can find your way back to Four Ashes, or turn left to go back towards Dorridge.