

Dorridge & District Residents Association

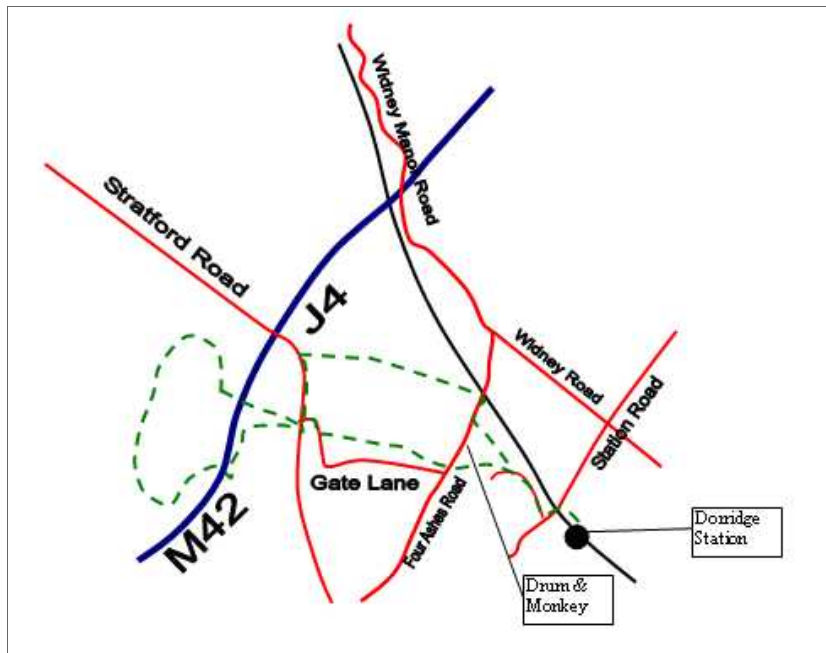
A Walk From Dorridge to Blythe Valley Nature Reserve

This is a circular walk. It is a walk of around 5 miles from the centre of Dorridge, though obviously, those nearer Four Ashes can start from there – the Drum and Monkey being as good a landmark as any. There are a few 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, including walking along Gate Lane which locals will know is less than ideal with no safe haven to walk avoiding the traffic. If the traffic concerns you, you can drive to the Blythe Valley park, but report to the gate house for parking permits and directions (see www.blythevalleypeople.com).

The start and end section of this walk through open fields would be destroyed by the building of the motorway services at junction 4.

Starting from the centre of Dorridge, it cuts through the pleasant open space retained after the Four Ashes development was built. It then dodges a few golf balls around the driving range and across to Gate Lane. It finds a hidden pedestrian bridge across to the Blythe Valley Business Park. Although the walk next to the motorway is not peaceful, the countryside and wildlife area make a satisfying contrast that compensates for the nuisance. Skirting around the outside of the business park the walk finds a substantial nature area set up jointly by the business park operators British Land and Solihull Council.

The walk then returns via the main exit bridge of the park, and across fields to Solihull Riding School, and back down Conker Lane to return to the start.



1: Starting from the station go down to the main road and turn left



Assuming you are at the station, descend the hill to the left (cycle shop is then ahead of you) and turn left, crossing at the zebra crossing under the railway bridge. Turn right at the green island into Manor Road.

2: At the end of the straight, continue on to Conker Lane.



Continue up Manor Road, first passing St. Phillips Church on your right, then carry on straight over a mini-roundabout. In a short while the road bends sharply left, you carry straight on onto the Conker Lane footpath.

3: Left into smaller footpath.



A short way along, another footpath appears on the left. This winds through open space retained as part of the Four Ashes development. Follow the footpath through this pleasant area, then on across Chadworth Avenue until the end of this green avenue.

4: Through Four Ashes Driving range.



At the end of the path you reach the main Four Ashes Road by Althorpe Drive. Cross Althorpe Drive and then cross Four Ashes Road. (My tree identification is not up to scratch, but this is the site of the four Ashes which were a famous landmark, recorded on maps a couple of hundred years ago). Walk up the roadway to the Four Ashes Driving range. Where the lane splits, go left and continue diagonally left to the far corner of the car park.

5: Walk down the left side of the buildings



By the crazy golf course, walk along the edge of the grounds and past the left of the buildings. As you Pass the buildings you will see the driving range behind you to your right, but carry on down, protected by the high hedge at first, then follow the

edge of the fields around and along the bottom as the field sends you gently to the right.

6: Take path behind fence.



The path continues between the telegraph poles and the wire fencing. A short way along the path turns sharp left across a bridge. Take this turn.

7: Head straight across the field.



The path goes straight across the middle of the field over a small bridge crossing a hidden stream and on to the field edge. Safety note: very occasionally clay pigeon shooting is held in this field. The shoot should be managed to allow you

to pass without concern – it is your right of way and the set-up of the shoot should not be across the footpath, though debris indicates this is not the case.

8: Take the style



At the field edge there is a style which takes you to the left of a hedge. Follow the hedge and you will emerge onto Gate Lane.

9: Turn right and careful walk to the end of Gate Lane.



Crossing the style into Gate Lane, turn right. At first you can keep to the verge, but as you approach the corner you have to walk in the road. Take extreme care and fix a steely stare into the eyes of oncoming drivers, who are not used to seeing many

pedestrians along here, to be sure they have noticed you.

10: Cross the Stratford Road to the left to the path



At the end of Gate Lane, carefully cross to the left towards Hockley Heath. About 20 metres along the road on the far side is the signposted footpath. Either walk along and cross opposite, being wary of the very fast traffic, or cross at the pedestrian crossing at

the lights, being aware that there is only a rough verge on the far side of the Stratford Road.

11: Follow the wide grassy footpath



Follow the grassy footpath which first passes between hedges and fencing, then opens out and eventually drifts to the left, passing quite close alongside the southbound M42. Pass to the right of the mobile phone mast.

12: Follow the track to the bridge



The track arrives at a pedestrian bridge which we use to cross the M42. As you walk this area, keep your eye on the sky for birds of prey such as sparrow hawks and kestrels, and listen out for birdsong above the hum of the motorway.

13: Take the track on the left



You are now on the edge of the Business Park, though you would not know it. Turn left and follow the clear trail. Keep eyes peeled for a wide variety of birds insects and plants. The park is home to newts, snakes, birds, butterflies, otters and badgers.

14: Join the gravel trail then immediately turn left



The trail turns right and then joins a gravel track at its corner. Just as you join it, there is a rough wooden bridge to the left and a grassy trail can be seen. Turn left here to continue around the outskirts of the park.

15: Continue onwards



This mown trail firstly turns left, passing close to the motorway then drifts to the right.

16: Continue on



...passing through a couple of gates.

17: Emerge at the back entrance to the Business Park.



The path emerges at the back of the business park. We now thread our way through to Virgin Active. Firstly, cross and turn right...

18: At the roundabout, left



You then arrive at a roundabout, turn left along the footpath which then turns into a gravel track around the rear of a building, turning right.

19: Follow the footpath straight ahead



Follow this track straight on (building work for phase 2 of the Park means that the path left around the edge cannot be followed at the moment).

20: Turn left by car park



You emerge by a car park, which is at the rear of Virgin Active. Follow the path forward around the parking.

21: Turn Left and go past Virgin Active.



At a junction in the pathways, turn left. Note the large grassy picnic area on your right with fallen trees marked "insect habitat". There are bird feeding areas and a sightings book there. Carry along the pavement, past the entrance to Virgin

Active and down to the road junction.

22: Bear left to rejoin footpath.



Currently, the road to the left is a dead end, but may soon be opened out into the next field being developed. From Virgin, take this left turn, cross the road and in the corner, take the gravel path by the trees to the right.

23: Follow the path



The gravel path curves around to the right. To your left are the "Illshaw Pastures" - you can if you wish explore these as long as you watch out for nests. The River Blythe runs along the back of this area - it provides a home to skylarks and

grass snakes.

24: Stay with the path to the left



The path passes some large ponds on your right - these are not natural, but are part of the site drainage system. Swans, coots and other birds live here. There is a recently installed hide to observe the birds.

25: Continue onwards



Ignore paths that turn right; we carry straight on. The path runs alongside a stream for a while (which is not the Blythe which is a little further across to your left). The path changes to a wooden slatted walkway for a while, and goes

through a wooded area.

26: Continue to the road



The path emerges from the woodland through a gate, the path bears slightly left, out to another gate and on to the road entrance to the business park.

27: Turn right



At the road, turn right. (To your left is the A34 and "Big Tesco's"). If you ever are brave enough to cycle to Tesco's, this is the recommended cycle path which avoids doing battle with J4 (you will lose!).

28: Before the roundabout, cross the road.



The footpath/cycleway crosses the road at a clearly marked crossing, and we follow it but take care as traffic does enter the business park at speed.

29: Turn left at the roundabout, over the bridge



The footpath arrives at the roundabout, we turn left and then cross over to the right hand side of the road to take the footpath over the bridge, vaguely reminiscent of Newcastle or Sunderland, depending on your

allegiances.

30: At the traffic lights, cross the A34



Staying on the right, we arrive at the busy A34. The traffic lights have a pedestrian crossing facility on the right which we will use. Once across the road, turn left towards the motorway and Gate Lane.

31: Cross Gate Lane



Continue towards the motorway island. Cross Gate Lane (take care, you cannot see traffic lights to judge traffic movements). Continue until you are almost at the motorway roundabout, keep looking up at the

hedge on the right and a style can be seen up the bank. Turn right and cross this style.

32: Strike out across the field.



The path goes straight across the middle of the field. At roughly the crest of the field, a wobbly pole can just be made out, which marks the way. Otherwise, aim for a gap in the sparse hedge pointed to by the dotting of trees and shrubs to your left.

33: Aim to the right of the large tree.



Passing through the sparse hedge, ahead in the same line is a hedge with a large tree to its right, with a gap. You should see the feint mark of the footpath leading towards it.

34: Pass to the right of the tree.



The path now follows the hedge around to the far right corner of this small field: the hedge bends right, hiding the corner at first.

35: Cross the bridge in the corner.



In the right hand corner of the field, a small footbridge is found. Cross this and follow the path.

36 Bear left through the kissing gate.



The path briefly turns left to a kissing gate, and then resumes its course towards the Solihull Riding School.

37: Follow the waymarked trail



The path now takes the right hand edge of a somewhat untidy field filled with riding school odds and ends.

38: Take to the lane



As this field opens out, a cottage can be seen on the right, and just beyond it, by the tree is a gap for walkers which gives the path access to the track.

39: The track emerges at a car park



The track joins the main riding school car park. Turn right and then left to join the concrete road, continuing on in a similar direction as before.

40: Before any houses, bear left.



Half way along, the way breaks away from the road to the left, down a narrow track. By the way, Solihull Riding Club have a special arrangement where they allow dog owners to join the club and have a roam over a significant area of its grounds. We, however, must stick to

the rights of way.

41: The track emerges on Four Ashes Road and turn right.



The path passes the back of some houses, and the track fills out as it nears the road, and becomes the access road for a handful of houses. On the left a footpath can be seen which goes to the Bentley Heath cemetery, but we carry on to the

road and turn right.

42: Turn Left



Carefully crossing the road, turn left through a pedestrian access into a cul-de-sac, which is Buckminster Drive. On your right, notice the large pond, again part of the open spaces retained as part of the development of the Four Ashes area.

43: Follow the Drive to Mill Lane



Walk through the Drive until you emerge at its entrance onto Mill Lane. Cross over and turn right.

44: Return to Conker Lane



Shortly along Mill Lane, Conker Lane appears on your left. You can now follow the length of Conker Lane back to Manor Road. In turn, follow Manor Road down to its end. Turn left under the railway bridge and you are returned to the centre of Dorridge, with the station up the

hill to your right.

If you notice any problems or have any suggestions for improvements to this walk, please let us know at info@dorridge.org.uk – in fact we'd enjoy any feedback on these walks.