

Wassell Wood Circular Walk

Track 1

Welcome to the Wassell Wood Circular audio trail.

This is one of a series of audio trails **delivered by Worcestershire County Council Countryside Service**. You will hear some short instructional tracks giving the directions of the walk, along with some longer tracks interpreting what you can see along the way. You can either listen while you walk or stop to listen at the start of each new track.

Whilst on the walk please be sure to close any gates you have opened behind you and keep any dogs under close control.

This 4.6 mile walk will take you from Bewdley Town, over the River Severn, rising up to the ancient hill fort site of Wassell Wood at 175 metres in height, then back down through the rolling countryside, returning to Bewdley. Depending on your speed of walking, it should take you between two and a half and three hours to complete.

Your starting point is the fine Georgian building that is the Bewdley Museum. When you are ready, use the pedestrian crossing to cross over Load Street and walk down to the river. Once you have crossed the bridge and found the large plaque on the pavement that identifies the location of the old toll house, press track 2.

Track 2

You have just crossed over the River Severn, the longest river in Britain. The source of this 220 mile river is Plimlymon in mid Wales. Meandering through 5 counties, it eventually reaches the sea at Bristol. The first bridge was constructed in 1447 and was short lived, being destroyed by the Lancastrians in the War of the Roses. The second bridge was constructed in 1483 and, as you can see from the plaque on the floor, it was a toll bridge. Interestingly, the bridge was also constructed with its own chapel. However, divine intervention was no match for the great flood of 1795, which swept it away. The third, and present, bridge was designed by the famous Scottish engineer Thomas Telford in 1798.

From here you need to take the small road known as Riverside North. After approximately 10 metres, head off on the public footpath on your right, opposite Bridge House. Follow this path up through the centre of the caravan park and out onto Northwood Lane, then press track 3.

Track 3

Turning left, you now have a short section of road walking along Northwood Lane. After 200 metres you will see a public footpath on your right. Take this path, passing under the railway line and then press track 4

Track 4

You have just passed under the line of the Severn Valley Railway. Work started on this railway in 1858 and took four years to complete. Originally the Severn Valley Railway linked Hartlebury with Shrewsbury a distance of 40 miles. Nowadays only a 16 mile stretch remains, with trains running from Kidderminster to Bridgnorth, via Bewdley, primarily for leisure and educational purposes. Run largely by volunteers, the Severn Valley Railway is a hugely popular attraction, drawing up to 250,000 visitors a year. From here you will need to head off up the valley until you get to the far corner of the field, then press track 5.

Track 5

Follow this enclosed track, cross a stile next to a field gate and continue ahead. At the top of the field, cross another stile into the next field, walking with the hedge, then fence on your right hand side. Cross a stile out of the field. Turn left and cross a cattle grid to join Crundalls Lane, then press track 6.

Track 6

Turn left follow the lane for approximately half a mile along the lane. The lane becomes a bridleway track. When you see the bridleway sign, press track 7.

Track 7

Follow the bridleway through the enclosed track and then out onto farm land. Continue until you arrive at the large metal field gate, then press track 8.

Track 8

Why not take the opportunity to have a short break while you are here and enjoy the view. From left to right you can see the Malvern Hills and the Abberley Hills. The rising ground above Bewdley obscures the view to Wales but you can see the Titterstone Clee and the Brown Clee Hills, and on a clear day as far as the Long Mynd. This is the view that the original settlers would have got from Wassell Wood Camp, which is now obscured by trees. When you are ready to continue, go through the field gate and follow the bridleway markers to another gate at Halls Farm, then press track 9.

Track 9

Go through the metal field gate, being sure to leave it as you find it, then go through the farmyard and bear to your right. Follow the blue bridleway markers along the farm track, which becomes a road through Trimpley village for about quarter of a mile. You will come to a crossroads, then press track 10.

Track 10

At the cross roads in Trimpley, take Hoarstone Lane, the road to the right and follow on down the hill towards Bewdley for approx 300 metres, taking extra care on this busy stretch of road. Go through a double gateway on your left set back from the road, into Wassell Wood, then press track 11.

Track 11

Why not take this opportunity to look at the Wassell Wood interpretation board which has been provided by the Woodland Trust who own the site. From here, follow the left hand path up the slope until you come to the entrance to the Wassell Wood camp earthwork where there is another interpretation board. Use the stile or field gate to enter the earth works and when you arrive, press track 12.

Track 12

Wassell Wood camp is situated at a strategic point on a small spur with extensive views of the surrounding area. The enclosure consists of a central, flat area. This was made by levelling the top of the hill. There is a surrounding ditch on all sides. Slight surface irregularities within the enclosure represent the remains of where buildings and other structures would once have stood.

The origin of the site is somewhat conjectural. The current accepted interpretation of the site is that it was a Medieval moated settlement. However, its isolated nature does count against it being Medieval. Moated Medieval manors were high status sites and normally associated with villages or churches. The form and location of Wassell Wood Camp is more consistent with a late prehistoric, iron age or Romano British settlement, making it much older than previously thought. The Grow with Wyre aerial surveys have revealed other similar sites to Wassell Wood Camp, most of them located on promontories of high ground overlooking the river Severn.

It is possible that in the late prehistoric and Romano British period the landscape to the north of Bewdley was far less wooded than it is today. This would have afforded great views out across the river valley to those occupying these sites. Aerial surveys have also revealed tantalising evidence of human activity beyond the camp itself. For example, the ground south of the camp was at sometime enclosed and possibly used for settlement or farming. The terrace earthwork boundaries are visible on the upper slopes of the promontory. Surveys have also recorded the remains of ancient track ways and charcoal burning hearths.

Wassell Wood Camp has a documented history relating to the English Civil War, when after skirmishing at Trimley in November 1645, Sir Thomas Aston's Royalist force set up camp in Wassell Wood. Attacked by the Parliamentarians under captain Stone, Aston made a stout resistance, but his force was defeated and he was taken prisoner. The site was designated as a Scheduled Ancient Monument in 1976 to reflect its archaeological importance.

On the north west bank a few metres ahead of the entrance to the Camp, you will see a very old yew tree, which may pre date the Christian use of the site; yew trees having ancient associations with Paganism. Looking through the trees, you can appreciate what an excellent view point this was looking out towards Kinver Edge. Using beacons, this site may have been part of an early warning system. When you are ready to move on, press track 13.

Track 13

Leave the Camp earth works by the same way you came and this time head off on the lower path through the wood, heading downhill for about quarter of a mile until you reach another gate and interpretation board, then press track 14.

Track 14

Leave the wood and head down Hoarestone Lane, again taking care on this busy stretch of road. After 100m on your right hand side you will see a public footpath sign, then press track 15.

Track 15

Cross the stile next to the large field gate and walk with the hedge on your left hand side until you come to another stile. Go over it and turn almost immediately right over another stile. You are now beginning the descent towards the town and again there are outstanding views of Bewdley and the Wyre Forest beyond, now press track 16.

Track 16

From here you need to head left across the field, cutting off the bottom corner of the field to reach another stile, then press track 17.

Track 17

You can see a small bungalow slightly to your right across the field. Head for the right hand side of this and cross over 2 stiles to reach the tarmac lane in front of the bungalow, then press track 18.

Track 18

It is now all road walking back to the start of the walk, so continue down the small lane for approximately quarter of a mile until you reach Crundells Lane again. You will pass through a point where the lane is cut through the red sandstone and you can see some interesting examples of how trees and their roots manage to cling onto these thin soils over the sandstone bedrock. Turn left and then right into Grey Green Lane, then press track 19.

Track 19

Take care on this narrow lane and continue all the way down until you reach the main Kidderminster to Bewdley road. Turn right and follow the pavement back into Bewdley, passing under the Severn Valley Railway and over the River. When you return to the Museum you have finished the walk. Why not take the opportunity to find out more about Bewdley and the Wyre Forest by visiting Bewdley Museum, even if it is only to reward yourself with a nice cup of tea or coffee and a slice of cake at the museum's excellent café.

We hope you have enjoyed the Wassell Wood Circular. For more information on downloadable audio trails please visit www.worcestershire.gov.uk/countryside

This audio trail was voiced by Rebecca Blockley, recorded by and special thanks to Adam Mindykowski of the Historic Environment and archaeology service of Worcestershire County Council for providing the historical material.