

## Walk A - Stoke Prior and Upton Warren walk (3½ miles)

**This walk starts in the industrial village of Stoke Works built by John Corbett, the Salt King. The path circles the Upton Warren Nature Reserve and Sailing Centre. It is well worth bringing binoculars. Boots are recommended except in the driest weather.**

Roadside parking available in Shaw Lane and Westonhall Road near start point. The Swan Inn will probably allow walkers to park but please check. There are two Geocaches on this walk.

**1. Stoke Works** Plaques outside Corbett Business Park give a brief history of the site. The playing field was given to the Parish Council by ICI, the last owners of the salt works. Go south past the Boat and Railway and the former village school. Note John Corbett's Raven symbol over the entrance. Until the 1970's there followed Sagebury Terrace, a row of salt-workers cottages, again provided by John Corbett. Each had a garden stretching to the railway. Keep alongside the canal to the Butcher's Arms Cottage.

**2. Former St Mary's Church Hall** Turn right by F/P sign (to St Mary de Wyche church) - another Corbett benefaction. Cross the former Midland main line, continuing straight. As you approach another railway line bear left.

**3. Great Western Branch** Cross footbridge and stile at bottom. Keep straight on for about 25 yards and then turn right across stile. Cross field diagonally aiming for the right of gate to the right of the farmhouse.

**4. Sagebury Farm** Cross stile and then go slightly left down towards the lowest point in the field, close to the lake. Cross stile and go along open track between hedge and fence around the lake.

**5. Upton Warren Nature Reserve** Go over the stile at the end of the track, keeping alongside hedge on left. This becomes the fence around the BBC's Droitwich transmitter (Radio 4 long-wave) - note the interesting 1930's buildings. During World War II coded messages, read during normal program broadcasts, were sent to the French Resistance using the transmitter. There is an exhibition about the transmitter in St Richard's House in Droitwich. Cross stiles and main A38 road, then go left towards Wychbold. After about 100 yards turn right into a lane (Just beyond are the part-timbered John Corbett Alms Houses).

**6 Wychbold** Turn right down track to Little Gains Farm. Cross River Salwarpe, go right through the pedestrian gate, keeping initially alongside river. As you reach a pair of metal gates either side of a driveway which crosses the path, cross over the driveway using the two stiles alongside the gates. Follow marked path through copse and then parallel to wire fence marking Webbs Garden Centre boundary, eventually reaching a metal gate with a gap alongside. Go up lane and turn right into Swan Lane by row of white houses. Go right into St Michael's Church and through grounds to leave by kissing gate back to Swan Lane opposite No 7. (This is not a public right of way).

**7. Swan Inn** Cross the A38 and turn right, crossing River Salwarpe, then left into the footpath running alongside the river. (There is a shop at the Shell garage). The path skirts around the Nature Reserve, following the river all the way back to Stoke Prior. You will cross a stile then a kissing gate

before entering small copse. Turn right at footbridge. (Cross footbridge for Avoncroft Museum via walk B).

**8. Shaw Lane** (F/P sign) Keep straight on down Shaw Lane back to the starting point. (For shops turn first left by telephone kiosk into Ryefields Road).

**Stoke Works** Brine has been extracted in Droitwich since Roman times. The road to Alcester is still known as the Salt Way.

During the construction of the Worcester and Birmingham Canal (1791 - 1815) the existence of salt at Stoke Works was confirmed. Two works, on either side of the canal, were opened in 1825 and 1828, which following various technical and financial problems came under John Corbett's control in 1852 and 1858. He took the gamble of lining new brine pits with cast iron pipes to prevent the inflow of fresh water. The gamble paid off and by the 1860's some claim Stoke was the largest salt works in Europe.

The railway reached Stoke from Gloucester in 1840 with the Lickey Incline to Birmingham opening later in the same year. The Works thrived with its own locomotives and canal fleet. (The latter survived until the Second World War and some of the canal loading points can be seen from the towpath).

The canal is still popular with pleasure craft forming part of a ring returning via Stratford or Stourport. There are boat-yards at Stoke Wharf and Hanbury Wharf.

#### Bus Routes

Bus No	Route	Points Served
145	Bromsgrove – Stoke Prior - Droitwich (Mon-Sat)	1, 2 and 8
145A		

The walk will take about 1¼ hours and can be combined with Walks B, D and F

If you encounter any problems please ring Worcestershire County Council-Public Rights of Way Section 01905 768289 or visit [http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20237/public\\_rights\\_of\\_way](http://www.worcestershire.gov.uk/info/20237/public_rights_of_way)

For Tourist Information ring:

Droitwich Tourist Information Centre 01905 774312

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