

John Corbett Return Walk (6½ miles)

Back to Stoke Heath

Designed to provide a return walk to the John Corbett Way, it is a walk in its own right. Generally it runs through more open countryside, often with the Malvern, Abberley and Clent Hills as a back-drop. Again the walk can be done in sections in conjunction with the appropriate sections of the John Corbett Way, Walk H, which gives more general information.

Parking is available at the start of the walk in public car park outside Waitrose. The Crown (point 5) will probably allow walkers to park but please check. Parking at the end of the walk in Avoncroft Arts Centre.

SECTION 1

Droitwich Heritage Centre - Wychbold (for Crown)

Moderate, several stiles, one stretch (point 3) currently obstructed by trees and scrub - might need boots after wet weather. About 3 miles

1. **Droitwich Heritage Centre** - contains the Salt Museum and the Tourist Information Centre. There are monthly Guided Town Walks featuring Norbury Theatre actors.

Cross the mini-roundabout into St Andrews Street going past the main entrance to the Raven Hotel. John Corbett's other hotel enterprise the former Worcestershire Hotel is behind you. Look inside St Andrew's Church. As a result of subsidence the 13th century tower was demolished in the early 20th century and the seven bells are now on the floor. Turn right by the Town Hall into High Street and take the first left - Saltbarrow Market or second left - Curneys Lane. Cross the Saltway by Waitrose supermarket.

2. **Vines Park** Attractive open area with several displays and relics. Further enhanced by the opening of the Droitwich Barge Canal and the Droitwich Junction Canal. Leave by the finger post, crossing the river Salwarpe towards the Gardeners Arms. Turn left into Vines Lane and immediately right up signed path across railway track. Keep left along tarmac path and right into Bays Meadow and under A38. Turn right up footpath and left to re-join road or if footpath overgrown continue along road to reach kissing gate at top of bank on left. Head down the field, slightly left towards railway, heading to a gate into second field. At an unmarked point after approximately 120 metres head diagonally right to stile at field boundary (just at the bottom of the major slope). Go up steps, keeping to left of fence and then along edge of golf course onto track. Turn left onto road for about 100 metres.

3. **Junction Ford Lane/Crutch Lane.** At the junction go over stile, heading half right to opposite corner of field and through right hand gate opening. Continue keeping to right of hedge to reach stile and foot-bridge over the Salty Brook. Head through field gate aiming for the right hand wind turbine. At the opposite field boundary do not go through the gate and over the landing strip but continue straight on along the bridleway, parallel to the runway going through two gates. Just before third gate turn right alongside farm building, keeping building on your left. Head to stile in bottom left hand corner of field.

Note: *At the time of writing the next stretch of about 250 metres of path is undefined and not waymarked. The route through the two copses is unclear and obstructed by scrub. OS Map (Explorer series) or GPS device is recommended.*

Go over stile and turn left along field boundary and through gap in hedge into small copse. At the other side of copse cross the field on a slight diagonal to the right, heading to the edge of another plantation. Make your way through or round the plantation to reach a footbridge on the opposite side over the Salwarpe. Go through two gates and between duck ponds. Avoiding the farm yard, turn left to a gate and then right to a three way footpath sign on the farm road.

4. **Walkmills Farm.** To return to Droitwich turn right along farm road to reach A38 between M5 junction and the Robin Hood. Otherwise turn left and keep on straight alongside M5, through a gate where road becomes a path. Cross ladder stile. Leave field by stile by gate and re-cross the Salwarpe, turning right into Crown Lane.

SECTION 2

Around Wychbold

Some awkward stiles. Need boots after wet weather only. About ¾ mile.

5. **Wychbold - Junction Crown Lane/Colley Pit Lane.** For the Crown and shops etc., keep on up Crown Lane for about ¼ mile, under the motorway. Otherwise turn left through a kissing gate immediately after motorway bridge following the path alongside the river.

6. **Salwarpe Bridge** Here you re-join the alternative John Corbett Way (Section 3). Turn left across stile opposite the footbridge keeping alongside fence and over a stile. Follow the treeline on your right to reach a stile where river re-joins path. Keep straight on up to another stile and then enclosed path. Turn right at broken footpath sign over stile. Left after 10 metres across stile. Go diagonally left to stile by gate on opposite corner. Continue diagonally through next field to reach a stile and track by electricity pylons.

SECTION 3

Wychbold - Stoke Heath

Reasonable stiles - one needing repairs. Boots advisable to cross arable field. About 3 miles.

7. **Wychbold (Near Alms Houses).** To reach the Alms Houses turn right through side gate on farm track to reach A38 and right for about 150 metres. Otherwise cross track and go alongside river. This is part of Parish Walk A. As you reach a pair of locked 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.

8. **Upton Warren - St Michael's Church.** A simple building with several interesting plaques. You can either continue along Walk A to Swan, Nature Reserve and to Stoke Prior or turn right through kissing gate just beyond entrance to churchyard. Two more kissing gates take you to Rectory Lane. Go past The Manor and Rectory Farmhouse where road becomes a bridle-way.

9. **Motorway Bridge.** - Immediately before bridge go right down steps across ladder stile. Keep alongside M5 to inaccessible stile by generally open gate. Turn right for about 100 metres then bear left, following tree/hedge line. At a gap in the hedge cross to the other side and continue along the hedge line with it to your left. Go through kissing gate and plank bridge at end of field. Turn left over another plank bridge into enclosed path and gate. Aim diagonally left to line of small trees with footbridge almost at end below line of poplar trees further away. Keep in same direction to stile by field gate.

10. **Grafton Manor.** The original Manor House was rebuilt in the 1560's but largely destroyed by a fire in 1710. It was a seat of Catholicism in Worcestershire. Look over the hedge and the attractive lake. The Chapel is followed by the Hotel and Restaurant. Just past the entrance turn right across ditch crossing and stile. Go half right up to gate. Cross field aiming for Bowling Green Farm. Cross track alongside fence to driveway. Continue downhill to A38 by Heathbrook House. Turn right along A38.

11. **Former Bromsgrove Guild Yard.** Turn left by footpath sign into former yard entrance (now driveway to houses). Note the reliefs set into the wall on the left. Turn right on reaching Hanbury Road and left at mini-roundabout into Ploughmans Walk. At top continue straight on and through gate into open space. Turn right on stoned path into alleyway. Cross Redditch Road by pedestrian lights and the driveway to Avoncroft Arts Centre is opposite.

Bus Routes

Bus No	Route	Points Served
145 145A	Bromsgrove – Stoke Prior - Droitwich (Mon-Sat)	1, 5, 6 & 11 Also links with Bromsgrove bus station

For times contact Traveline: 0871 200 22 33 www.traveline.info

Trains

West Midlands Railway serves Birmingham -Bromsgrove – Droitwich - Worcester – Hereford.

For train times ring 08457 484950 or visit <http://ojp.nationalrail.co.uk/service/planjourney/search>

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

For Tourist Information ring:

Droitwich Tourist Information Centre 01905 774312. They stock a good collection of books and guides.

For ideas on circular walks and more about John Corbett go to www.stoke-pc-worcs.gov.uk

Revised CDJ

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