

# Between Hereford and Breinton: the City's wonderful western approaches

## Nic Howes explores this now threatened landscape

Start **(S)** at the west front of the Cathedral and head along King Street and St. Nicholas Street to meet the busy Ring Road. Do not cross this but descend to the subway alongside Greyfriars Surgery. Emerge into a car park, cross it and turn left down Greyfriars Avenue towards the Rowing Club. To the right of the Rowing Club entrance take a waymarked footpath, passing under a large ash tree **(point 1)**. Turn right when you meet the riverbank and pass the Sea Cadets' building. Although you have walked only a short distance you are already entering Hereford's western rural-urban fringe.

Continue along the Wye's left bank (your right, as you walk upstream) and pass through an arch in the disused railway embankment and immediately fork left to continue walking upstream on the river bank **(point 2)**. Broomy Hill water tower appears clearly on your right, across the playing fields. You will pass a heavily protected building on your left that sits on top of the water intake for the Broomy Hill pumping engines and associated water works; you will also notice a miniature railway laid out on your right. With no sport being played and no open day at Broomy Hill, it should be quiet already, as the trees and hedges behind you absorb the sounds of the city centre.



Pass through two waymarked gates in succession, noticing the tributary entering the Wye on the opposite bank; this is Newton Brook, which marked the edge of Hereford's built-up area on the Wye's western right bank until the development of housing at Belmont in the 1980s and 1990s. Are you beginning to feel a rural environment around you as the houses on the opposite bank disappear and woodland descends to that riverbank?

Cross a footbridge with a gate at each end and go through a waymarked gate. Pause at the Environment Agency's (EA) Belmont River Monitoring Station **(point 3)**; this monitors the level of the Wye, which can be seen live on the EA website. Ahead, the course of the Wye bends to your right and this is the point at which some people presently support a "red route" bypass crossing the river, elevated on stilts. The gorge that the Wye flows through at this point is thought to

have formed during and after the last ice advance, when the Wye was pushed south from its former course along what is now the Yazor/Widemarsh/Eign Brook valley. It's worth pausing to reflect on this special place and its future. As you continue along the riverbank you may spot terraces on the steep bank above the floodplain on your right; could these be ancient "strip lynchets"?

Cross a footbridge with a gate at each end and immediately turn right angle right through another waymarked gate, away from the riverbank **(point 4)**. At one stage, this point on the Wye featured among bypass proposals for the "green route" crossing. Cross the flat floodplain with a field boundary close on your right, go through a gate and climb the bank ahead, aiming to the right of the large red brick house and walking 100 metres beyond it, almost to the road. You will arrive at an interpretation board for Green Bank

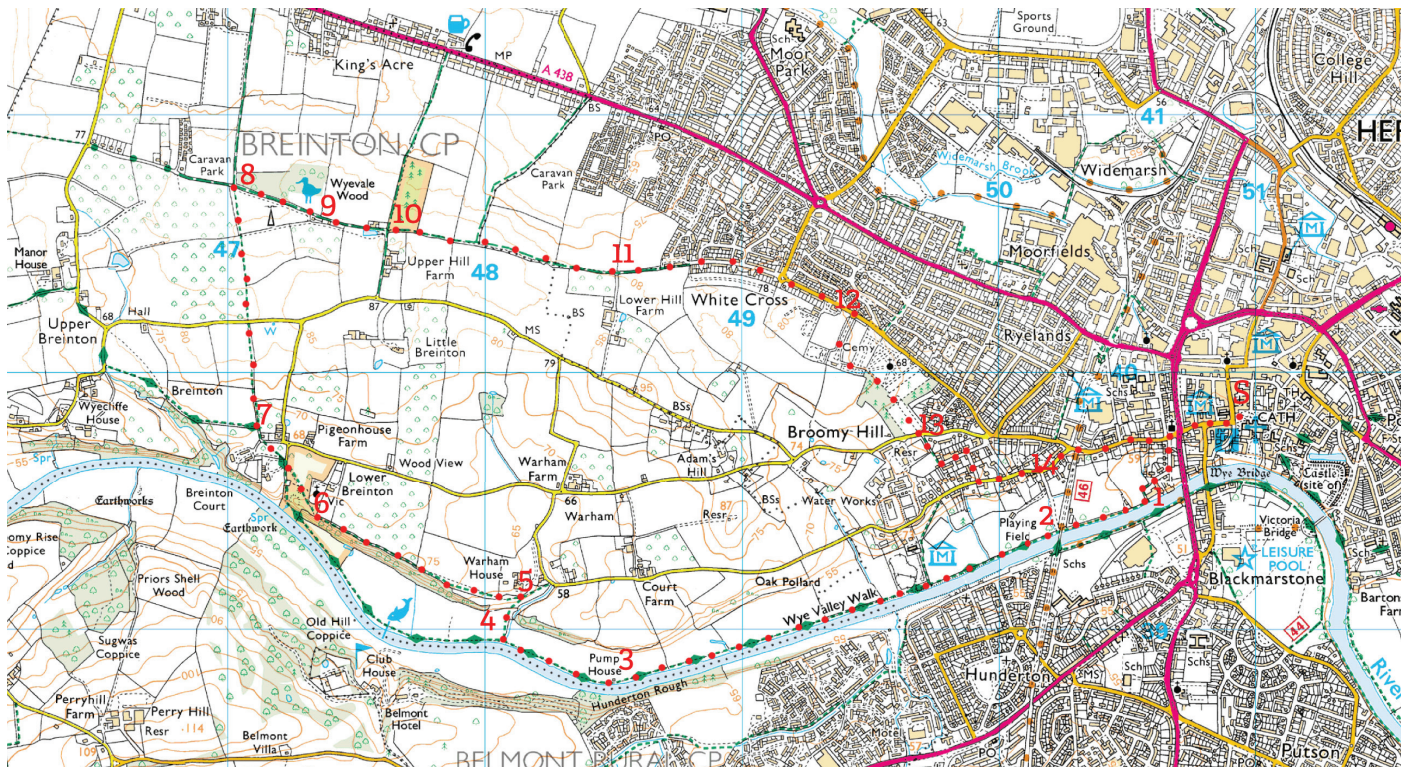
**(point 5)** that is well worth perusing because it succinctly explains the history of this landscape in words for which there is no space here. Walk back along the top of the bank you just climbed, in front of Warham House. This part of the walk overlaps The Brian Hatton Trail, devised by Robin Thorndyke at Hereford's Museum Resource and Learning Centre.

The trail may be downloaded at: <https://brianhatton.herefordshire.gov.uk/events/the-hatton-trail-leaflet/>. This engaging and well-illustrated trail makes clear the value placed on this landscape by Hereford's most celebrated artist.

In 2011/2012 this area was surveyed as part of the Herefordshire Parklands Project and a Survey Report is available. At the same time, local historian David Whitehead researched a fascinating and informative landscape evaluation for Warham, going back centuries.

After passing the south front of Warham House you pass beneath the canopies of two magnificent trees – a **London plane** and a **turkey oak**; Belmont Hotel and clubhouse are off to your left on the opposite bank. Keep ahead along a narrowing strip of grassland to reach a kissing gate through to a field; proceed with the wooded field boundary close on





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your left. Go straight through a gate, pausing to look back at Broomy Hill water tower, and proceed with an orchard on your right.

Immediately after passing Breinton churchyard on your right (**point 6**), fork right to pass in front of the lychgate, ignoring the car park straight ahead. The grassy path bends to the left after the lychgate and you will soon reach a waymarked gate on your right that you should pass through, into an orchard. Emerge from the orchard into a lane and cross it to an old metal gate opposite, into another orchard; look out for an "Indian Bean Tree" and a Tulip Tree on your right as you pass. Emerge through a gate into another lane and follow the fingerpost directly opposite, up a short gravel drive.

Pass through a gate and turn right as directed by the crooked waymark; keep the field boundary close on your right (**point 7**). Pass through a gate beside wide farm gates and continue ahead, climbing the flank of Breinton Ridge with a field boundary close on your right. Reach a gate and cautiously go through it to cross a surfaced lane. Follow the footpath opposite, through a gate as directed by a fingerpost; there is a large orchard over the field boundary on your left. Follow the waymark through the next gate towards the southwest corner of the Trust's Wyevale Wood reserve; at this corner the overlap with the Brian Hatton Trail ceases. Pass through another gate and follow the drive straight ahead, ignoring the bridleway to left and right. A short way down the drive turn right through a gate beside a farm gate that gives public access on foot to Wyevale Wood (**point 8**). Take the middle of three paths; in the late summer of 2018 a volunteer work party caught sight of a purple hairstreak butterfly near this point. Meet a path coming in from your right and continue ahead to enter and cross a glade on a path that curves to the right.

Emerge through a gate beside a farm gate and turn left along the dirt track from this southeast corner of Wyevale Wood (**point 9**). Continue along the path on the crest of Breinton Ridge. Pass a pond on your right and then fork left

through a gate beside a farm gate, by a willow tree. There is an opportunity here for a detour to explore Drovers Wood, owned by the Woodland Trust (**point 10**). Continue straight along the ridge crest and at the far end of Drovers Wood grand views open up ahead and to your left, including the distant Malvern Hills. Kings Acre Road to your left and some of Hereford's industrial buildings in the distance ahead make you aware that you are very much in the city's rural-urban fringe, but they are background features. If a bypass were ever built on the "red route", it would cross immediately in front of you at this point. Pass through a gate and continue ahead, ignoring a bridleway off to your left after 100 metres. The Woolhope hills are straight ahead. Reach the open end of a holloway (**point 11**) and go into it if it's not choked with vegetation growth, ignoring the parallel field path to the left. Note Dinedor Hill in the distance behind the Broomy Hill water tower.

Emerge at the bottom of a cul-de-sac that is in fact one end of Westfaling Street and continue along it, ignoring turnings to your left. At the roundabout proceed straight over and then later turn right off Westfaling Street into the Cemetery (**point 12**) and proceed towards the Crematorium. Turn left at the sign to the Chapel Florist and Tea Rooms, passing the Millennium Garden on your right. Negotiate a right/left dogleg in the path, pass to the right of a turning circle and follow the path ahead down to a castellated wall.

Pass through a gate in the wall and cross the road ahead with care to enter a footpath with a "no cycling" sign (**point 13**). Pass a children's playground on your right and exit left into Tower Road, a quiet residential street; after walking along this for a short distance, turn right into Prince Edward Road and then left at the T junction (Broomy Hill). After passing Barton Lodge on your left, turn right down a dirt track by number 21, signposted to Rugby Club Wyeseid (**point 14**). At the bottom of this track you are back on the riverbank by the railway arch (**point 2**) and should turn left to retrace your steps to the start.