

Cycle Queenswood

Nic Howes swaps two legs for two wheels for a tour around Dinmore Hill

From the Queenswood car park, walk your bike across the A49, one carriageway at a time, using the refuge island half way. Turn left along the southbound verge, against the traffic direction, still walking with your bike. You will very soon reach a farm gate with a gate beside it, through which you should gain the bridleway (riding permitted). The Raglan Mudstone Formation underlies the first few hundred metres of the bridleway: it has weathered to give impermeable clay that can produce pooling, slipping and sliding on this short section.

Road bike cyclists will have to ride towards Hereford on the A49, downhill as far as the sharp left turn to The Railway Inn and Bodenham. Taking this left turn will eventually bring you to **point 2** on the route description.

Start cycling along the bridleway, away from the A49; bear right where another track comes in from the left at a waymarked post. Keep straight ahead and exit the woodland through a farm gate to gain great views north on your left, with a line of oaks on your right.

Cross a cattle grid by farm buildings (**point 1**), keep along the track until the next cattle grid and then fork right off the track and follow the edge of the wood straight ahead,

Distance: 15 miles

Traffic: route follows quiet lanes with two direct crossings of the fast, busy A49.

- Most of the route is level or downhill, although one short and two long, steep climbs should not be overlooked or underestimated. Experienced riders will know in advance whether they will attempt the climbs in one big push, stop for breathers without dismounting or dismount and push. This route creates space for thought on the opportunities for - and barriers to - a Living Landscape that surrounds Queenswood and links with the Lugg Wetland Gem.
- The route description assumes the rider is on a mountain bike or hybrid; the route is also suitable for road bikes except at the start, where an alternative route for road bikes appears in italics.
- *Riders should note that Queenswood Country Park itself is a no cycling space and that this route has been devised to abide by that requirement.*
- The route might also be appropriate for some runners, because the lanes it uses are generally quiet



Wild Walks & Rides

as directed by waymarks. After the wood peels off on your right, follow the clear, banked path ahead to pass close to the right of two prominent oak trees and reach the farm gate beyond.

Go through the farm gate and follow the edge of the wood on your right, along the top edge of the field. Reach another farm gate, go through it and bear right into a rather overgrown sunken track. You will soon reach another waymarked farm gate that you should go through to enter a field that may have cows and calves in it, so you should move with due care if this is the case.

Bear to the right of a continuation of the sunken lane ahead, descending the steep slope above and beside it to reach another waymarked gate at the bottom of the field. Go through this sixth farm gate and follow the sunken lane to reach a cottage on the left, just beyond which you should turn right to meet the surfaced lane at **point 2**.

Turn left along the surfaced lane and cross the River Lugg on a bridge; you may wish to pause at this point and look out for kingfishers, dragonflies, otters and other wildlife of the Lugg Wetland Gem landscape. Take the first right turn after the bridge and proceed to a T-junction where you should turn right (**point 3**). You will soon reach the foot of "God Almighty Hill" and may later reflect on what epithets might be added to the last two climbs on your ride. Beyond the top of the bank, which clearly delineates the edge of the Lugg's floodplain, you slowly descend undulating ground, eventually

passing S&A's Brook Farm and The Volunteer pub on your left. Ignore the Withington turn on the left and soon after take the Wellington turn on the right (**point 4**).

Cross the River Lugg and maybe pause for more wildlife watching and bear in mind that this section of road may be closed in times of flood because it runs on a particularly low point of the Lugg's floodplain. Cross the railway on the level crossing and proceed with extra care on a relatively busy lane past a quarry and a small industrial estate on your left.

You soon have to cross another dual carriageway section of the A49 (**point 5**); dismounting is recommended because the traffic is moving fast but the visibility is good enough to allow you to wait patiently for a gap large enough to walk your bike across to the lane opposite, in one go.

Peace and calm is rapidly regained as you follow this quiet, level lane that later skirts the lower flanks of the hill that is largely cloaked with Wellington Wood. Turn left at the T-junction and then ignore the left turn to Wellington and Moreton and continue ahead, signposted Canon Pyon and Westhope. After a quiet mile and a half, turn right at the T-junction, signed Westhope (**point 6**).

Follow the lane as it bends to the right, ignoring the left turn at this point, and enter Lower Westhope. Continue ahead uphill, passing another left turn, bus shelter and 'phone box on your left. Pass a small church on your right

Places for refreshment on or just off the route are marked in blue on the map (essential to check opening days and times before setting out as not all establishments are open daily):

R: Railway Inn
E: England's Gate Inn
V: Volunteer
G: Garden Centre
B: Old Boot Inn

and at the next right hand bend the serious climbing begins. During the climb you may pause to look and listen for woodland wildlife, particularly birds. Ignore the next right turn to Backwoods and continue climbing steeply until you reach a fork, at which you should branch right on a surfaced lane for the last short pitch to reach the cattle grid onto Westhope Hill Common (**point 7**).

Follow the hard-packed tyre tracks ahead across the grass; these are likely to be passable on all bikes except after exceptionally prolonged rain. The tracks kink significantly to the right and the farm buildings of Broomwell soon come into view, and you should aim to cross the cattle grid beside them, onto another surfaced lane (**point 8**).

Keep straight ahead on the lane along the ridge crest, enjoying spectacular views to north, east and south; look out for buzzards and red kites and beware of pheasants breaking cover across your path!

As you negotiate the bends near the bottom of this long descent, look out for a highly unusual field boundary (for Herefordshire), made of stone slabs perched on edge (just after the High Pressure Gas Line marker on your left).

Turn right just before the road ahead passes under the bridge carrying the railway (point 9). Now you begin the long last climb to reach the summit of the Queenswood plateau. Near the top of this long climb the surfaced lane turns right – signed to Wynnes – and you should fork left (straight ahead) to finish the climb on a track that reaches a farm gate on your right labelled The Old Orchard, at which point you should turn left to reach the Queenswood car park where you started.



The first part of the route is off road, taking the bridleway through Dinmore Woods.