

The Oakley Arms Reservoir and Priory Trail, Brewwood, Staffordshire



Moderate Terrain

5 miles
Circular
2.5 hours

270616



Access Notes



1. The walk is relatively flat with just a few gentle slopes.
2. There are no stiles or kissing gates on route, just a few single bridle gates and one sleeper bridge to negotiate.
3. The paths can be muddy or waterlogged at times and they are also rutted and uneven in part so good boots are a must.
4. The route crosses several crop fields and these sections of path can be very narrow. You will cross one field which may be holding sheep so take particular care with dogs at this point.
5. There are a couple of stretches of road walking along quiet country lanes, so take care of any traffic.
6. NOTE: The footpath signposting in this area is very intermittent so we recommend using the live GPS map on the iFootpath App to help with navigation.

The Oakley Arms serves fine food, wines and local beer in the spacious dining areas or the beautiful terrace overlooking the lake.

A 5 mile circular pub walk from The Oakley Arms near Brewwood in Staffordshire. The walking route explores the local area, crossing arable fields and following quiet tracks and lanes to visit Belvide Reservoir and the former Black Ladies Priory along the way. There is plenty of wildlife to enjoy, including a wealth of wildfowl on the reservoir which is managed as a nature reserve.

Getting there

Brewwood is a small village in South Staffordshire, located about 11 miles south of Stafford and easily accessed from the A5. The Oakley Arms is located on Kiddemore Green Road, between Brewwood and the small hamlet of Kiddemore Green. The pub has its own large car park.

Nearest post code **ST19 9BQ**

Walk Sections



Start to Birks Barn



Before you set off on the walk, it is worth taking a moment to appreciate The Oakley Arms itself. The building began life in the 1860s as a family home, but by the 1940s had become the Oakley House Country Club. Run by the Gibbs family, twin sisters within the family went on to marry two members of the band Deep Purple. As a result, a whole range of famous musicians including The Beatles, ELO and Joe Brown attended parties at Oakley.

Leave the Oakley Arms car park via the vehicle exit and turn right along the road, taking care of any traffic. This quiet road leads you between a handful of properties within the small hamlet. Immediately after Rose Cottage on your right, turn right onto the tarmac access drive for Oakley Farm (signed as a public bridleway).

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After 100 metres, where the drive swings right, walk straight ahead to follow the grass track through the centre of the crop field. As you draw level with the start of a woodland copse (Drybrook Plantation) across to your right, do NOT follow the grass track which swings towards this. Instead, keep straight ahead on the narrow path through the remainder of the crop field, passing the copse across to your right. At the far end, exit the field via the metal bridge gate (which sits just to the right of the single oak tree).

Turn right and follow the small country lane, taking care of any occasional traffic. After 300 metres, turn left onto a stone access drive. The drive leads you past a property, the old Birks Barn, on your right.



1 → 2 Birks Barn to The Hawkshutts



Continue on the stone access drive and, just beyond the second property (a brick house), turn left through a bridge gate to enter a crop field. Cross this field at about 1 o'clock (there should be a narrow path but if not, you may need to push your way through the crop), passing about 20 metres to the right of the three trees in the centre of the field.

At the far side, go through the next gate and follow the obvious path through the small woodland copse. Cross the stream via the sleeper bridge and stay with the path which swings right and then left to reach a bridge gate. Pass through this and walk straight ahead on the grass track between crop fields. Keep ahead on this grass track, which leads you past a woodland copse on your right.

As you draw level with the end of the copse, stay with the grass track as it swings right, right and then left, now heading for the farm buildings visible ahead. You will come to a wide metal gate ahead. Look just to the right of this and you will see the bridge gate sitting within the conifer trees. NOTE: This next field is likely to be holding sheep so take care with dogs. Go through the gate, walk ahead (following the right-hand fence line) and leave the pasture via the gate at the far side. You will emerge onto the access lane, with the brick boundary wall of The Hawkshutts just to your left.

2 → 3 The Hawkshutts to Black Ladies Priory

Turn right along the stone access lane and this will lead you over the bridge at the western edge of Belvide Reservoir. It is worth pausing here to enjoy the views and the wildlife.

Built in 1833 to supply what is now the Shropshire Union Canal, Belvide Reservoir has been a nature reserve since 1977. The nature reserve is managed by West Midlands Bird Club with no public access. Covering 74 hectares, the reservoir is home to a good range of breeding birds in summer, flocks of waterfowl and gulls in the winter and also attracts many migrants, in particular wading birds that are attracted when water levels are low and there is an exposed shoreline. Look out for great-crested grebes, wigeons, oystercatchers and shelducks as well as smaller birds within the surrounding hedgerows. Ospreys are often seen overhead in spring, heading north having overwintered in North Africa.

Continue on the access lane passing a private bird hide on your right, and, just before you reach the first house on the right, turn left through the bridge gate to reach the corner of a crop field. Walk diagonally across this field (the lane you just walked along should be across to your left and you should be veering steadily away from this). Pass through the gap in the hedge to enter the second field. Turn right and immediately left to follow the right-hand edge of this second field (with a hedge running on your right).

Stay with this hedge line ahead and then swinging steadily right. Where the hedge turns harder right, pick up the footpath ahead across the remainder of this second crop field. Pass just to the right of a single oak tree and waymarked fencepost which sits at the end of a line of hedgerow. Continue in the same direction across the centre of this third crop field. You may be able to see a church spire on the horizon at about 1 o'clock.

At the far side, a bridge gate leads you into the fourth crop field. Turn left and then right, following the left-hand edge of this fourth field. Continue on this path for some distance, along the left-hand edge of the fourth and then fifth field. At the far side, a gap in the hedge (alongside a wooden pylon) leads you to a crossroads with a stone vehicle track. Turn left along this track, leading you through beautiful old red brick buildings, the site of Black Ladies Priory. NOTE: The buildings are now private residences so please respect the privacy of the residents as you walk through the site.

3 → 4 Black Ladies Priory to Hungary Hill Farm



Black Ladies Priory, a house of Benedictine nuns, was founded in the mid-1100s. The name was given to distinguish this priory from a neighbouring Augustine convent, which was known as White Ladies Priory, each name denoting the colour of the nuns' habits. The priory was dissolved in 1538 and a large Tudor-style house was built on the site by the Giffard family of nearby Chillington Hall.

Pass the pond on the right and follow the access drive as it swings right, passing the main house and an orchard on your right and another pond across to the left. At the end of the drive you will reach a crossroads with Kiddemore Green Road. Cross over with care to go straight ahead onto the small country lane, taking

care of any traffic. At the end of this lane you will reach a T-junction. Turn left and then follow the main lane as it swings right, passing Rose Cottage on your left.

Follow the lane between hedgerows for about 0.3 miles and then turn left onto the access track for Hungary Hill Farm. The track is part of the Monarch's Way long distance path, that is said to approximate the escape route taken by King Charles II in 1651 after being defeated at the Battle of Worcester. Follow the track ahead, leading you past the buildings of Hungary Hill Farm on your left.

4 → 5 Hungary Hill Farm to End



Continue ahead on the main track, passing the three-storey farmhouse on your left (and ignoring the footpath signed off to the right). Further along you will come to a fork in the track. Take the left-hand branch to reach another fork a few metres later. Keep right this time, passing the house called The Whitemoor across to your left, and then emerging to the edge of a large crop field.

Turn left, following the line of a hedge on your left. When this hedge turns left, simply keep ahead on the grass track through the centre of the field. At the far side, go ahead through the hedge gap and then follow main grass track which turns right and then left, crossing a small stream.

Walk ahead along the left-hand edge of the next field. At the top, stay with the track which leads you ahead through a small woodland copse and on through a tunnel of trees. At the end you will emerge out to a junction with Kiddemore Green Road. Turn right along the road, taking care of any traffic, and you will come to The Oakley Arms on your left for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

