

Picture perfect



Is it a village or a small town? During the medieval period, Pembridge certainly was a town, with more than 2000 inhabitants. That number is now considerably smaller, although the large number of timber framed houses dating back to the 15th century still remaining, makes it one of the most photogenic villages in Herefordshire.

The village is mentioned in the Domesday Book, but it existed well before that time.

THE WALK

On leaving the car park, behind the Kings House (1) turn right towards the centre of the village. At the junction with Bridge Street, you can see the Duppa's Almshouses (1661) opposite. Cross to the Red Lion and round up to the Market Hall, (2) which dates from the 13th century. Pembridge was granted a royal charter in 1239 which allowed it to hold a market and two hiring fairs for agricultural workers: the Cowslip Fair n

Greta Pennington of Mortimer Group Ramblers guides a walk around photogenic Pembridge

May and the Woodcock Fair in November. The New Inn (2) dates from the early 17th century.

From the Market Place, go up the steps on the left into the churchyard. Facing you is the Bell Tower, (3) one of seven in the county. This impressive timber framed structure dates from the early 13th century. The parish church of St Mary is mainly 14th century. After leaving the Bell Tower go round the church to the south side where there are clear signs of the moat that once surrounded Pembridge Castle, which stood on the mound. Go through the metal kissing gate on the left and walk by the fence to the stile at the bottom of the field. Walk straight ahead to the clump of trees and the small metal pylon on the right and cross the stile into the orchard. Walk up by the hedge and at the top turn

right to follow along by the hedge out to the stile leading to the minor road.

Turn right down the road for about ten yards to the stile on the left by the tree. Walk along by the hedge and at the end, having crossed one stile, immediately cross back by the stile on the right and go down the field alongside the hedge to the next stile and continue down the next two fields to the lane at the bottom. Turn right into the lane. Keeping the tin barn on your right, follow this track until it eventually comes out on to the main road through the village. Turn right and walk back to view yet more of the great variety of old buildings in Pembridge.



THE WALK

Start/Parking: Village car park behind Kings House, OS ref 392582

Maps: OS Explorer 201

Distance: 5 miles

Grade: Moderate/
Easy field tracks and lanes

Stiles: 19

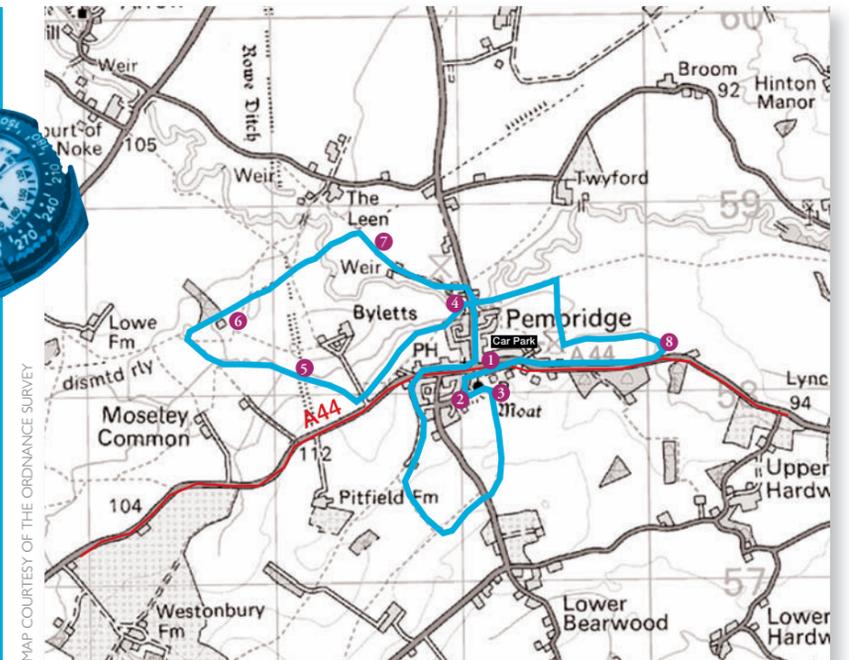
Public transport: Buses from Leominster and Kington.
Tel: 0871 2002233

Nearest town: Leominster

Refreshments:

New Inn (01544 388427),
Red Lion (01544 388007),
Kings House (01544 388029),
Sally's Pantry tearoom (01544 232727)

Toilets: Car park



At the junction with Bridge Street, turn left to go down to the River Arrow.

Just before the bridge, (4) go over the stile on the left and wind your way up the path that runs along the backs of the gardens. You can also see the River Arrow and its tributary, Curl Brook.

After the final stile go up the grass bank into the large field and straight ahead towards the tree at the end. As you approach, continue along the hedge on the left and after crossing the stile climb the brick steps to the kissing gate. Slant down, over the field, just to the left of the large tree, to the metal kissing gate half way along the fence. Go right up the lane, crossing the Curl Brook and bearing to the left at the fork, to the metal field gate. Cross the top of the field to the gap in the hedge (5).

To each side you can see a raised embankment that is now well wooded. This is the Rowe Ditch, an artificial earthwork that runs north/south across the Arrow valley. Rowe is an Old English name meaning rough. It appears to date from the seventh century and was probably built by the Saxons.

Carry on across the top of the next field to the footbridge and across the next field between the two trees to the field gate opposite. Go out on to the old railway bed (6). This was the Leominster

to Kington line. Go through the field gate immediately opposite and slant across the field, right, between the two wooden electricity poles. This land belongs to The Leen, an organic farm. Head to the left of the copse of coniferous trees, to the stile, by the gate. Turn right on to the track and here on the right you see another part of the Rowe Ditch. Follow the track with the River Arrow close on the left. Over the bridge pass the small touring caravan site and the lake on the right. Before going through the metal farm gate on the right, continue up the track for about 20 yards. On the left there is an old metal water wheel and the leat that carried the water to run it.

Return to the metal gate and walk on to the next field gate, with The Leen on the left, (7) and cross the field keeping the hedge on the left. Cross the stile, walk over the railway bed and cross the next stile and go alongside the hedge to the stile in the corner. Cross this and the wooden foot bridge and walk alongside the fence to the back of the barns ahead belonging to the mill to the right. Having passed the barns come out on to the grass and left to the track that you now follow out to the road and the bridge over the river (4). Opposite is the village green conservation project.

The Ramblers

The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and improve conditions for all walkers. In Herefordshire there are four groups: Hereford, Mortimer, Ross-on-Wye and Leadon Vale.

For more information contact Tom Fisher, tel: 01886 821544 or email: tomfisher@virgin.net



Cross the bridge, and go down left to the track beside the river. Go through the kissing gate and before going through the next kissing gate on the right, walk around the banks of the river. There are deeply incised meanders, trees, and bird life. Return to the second gate, go up the grass bank to the hedge, turn left to follow this round to the plank bridge, cross the grass to the stile and gate and go out right to the road and the village. On the right are the Trafford Almshouses (8). Continue on to the car park. ■

For more walks visit

herefordshire.greatbritishlife.co.uk