

The Peterchurch trail

Ted Hurrant of the Hereford Group of the Ramblers makes a fascinating companion on a walk in the Golden Valley

Peterchurch nestles in the Golden Valley, which get its name from a misinterpretation involving the Welsh word *dwr* meaning water and the French *d'or* – of gold. Rowland Vaughan, in the 16th century, had numerous irrigation channels dug out along the valley floor so that large areas could be irrigated and made more productive and prosperous. Peterchurch is a great centre for walks in the Golden Valley and the foothills of the Black Mountains so this moderate walk merely samples the possibilities on offer. It is named after St Peter and various unlikely legends try to link the saint with this corner of Herefordshire.

1 It is worth having a look in the church before starting your walk. There are two notable points of interest, the first, above the south door is a plaster-cast of a fish with a gold chain around its neck which supposedly lived in St Peter's well. Legend has it that St Peter consecrated the well and put in an immortal trout. The second interesting item is the altar which consists of a piece of stone from Arthur's Stone at Dorstone and which is believed to have been used as an altar for some 5000 years. Walk down the lane to the

Boughton Arms on the B4348 road; proceed across the road taking the lane and footpath opposite. Follow the lane past Bazley Farm till meeting a stoned track, turn right. This then leads to a pretty sunken lane and on to St Peter's Well Cottage on your left. The wall plaque again shows the golden fish, as seen at the church.

2 Turn right and immediately go through the gate on the right. Follow the left hand hedge to arrive at St Peter's Well. It is an evocative sight, despite the presence of ugly fencing and a building. Stone steps descend into the mossy, ferny well which has provided Peterchurch with its water supply for centuries, if not millennia. The well was renovated in 2005 and it was then that the previously hidden steps were unearthed and the carved well head, which had been moved, was returned to its original position so that the spring water once again gushes from its mouth. Follow the hedge downhill to emerge over a stile turning right onto a stone track and then the road. Turn right at the road till reaching Wellbrook Manor on the right. At this point turn left onto a footpath, crossing the field diagonally right to a marker post then turn left up

a sunken lane and at the top turn left over a stile. Keeping the fence on the left pass through a gate and after another 150 metres turn diagonally right to find a stile in top corner of field. Cross and keeping hedge on right, proceed through gate on this line until fence turns to the right. At this point carry ahead in the same direction passing a marker post, to cross an ancient slab stile (it is good that these items of heritage are kept in use today) and wooden stile in opposite hedge.

3 This is a crossroad of footpaths. Following in the same direction, keep the hedge to the left and go through some woodland to emerge into an enclosed track with two gates which have to be passed through. Continue with the hedge on the left, through another gate and follow the field edge to the right to cross a stile on the left, turn left and then turn right onto a stone track, ignoring the first right with the cattle grid. Keep following the stone track until it takes a turn right and then go straight on the brideway along the edge of the wood. With the wood on the right, ignore any accesses into the wood until reaching a stile on the right.



An ancient slab stile on the route

Walk information

Start/parking: Countryside picnic area near Peterchurch Church. Grid Ref. SO344385

Maps: Ordnance Survey Explorer. OL13: Landranger. 161

Distance: 7 miles

Grade: Moderate

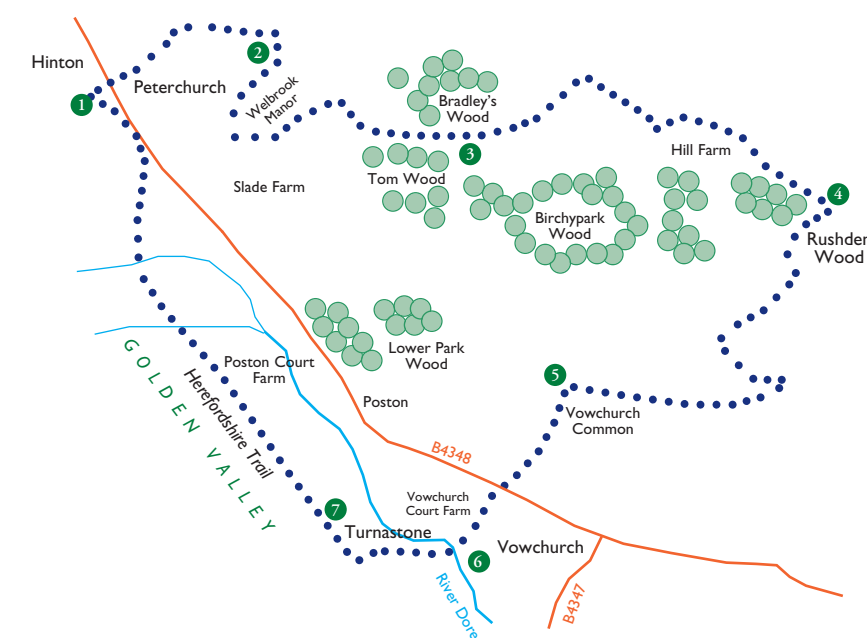
Stiles: Numerous

Nearest Town: Hereford or Hay-on-Wye

Refreshments: Pubs and shops in Peterchurch

Public Toilets: None

Public Transport: Buses from Hereford and Hay-on-Wye/Brecon. Service No 39 and 39A Hereford-Brecon. Details can be found at www.herefordbus.info or by telephone during office hours on 01432 260211.

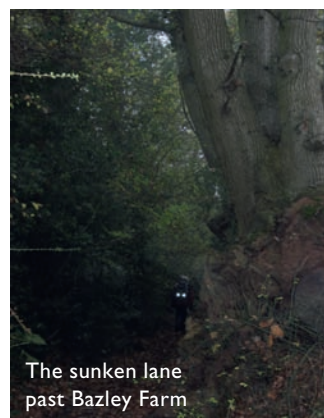


4 Turn right over the stile into the wood and descend, ignoring all side paths to reach and cross stile at bottom of wood. Descend further slightly left to cross a footbridge at the bottom. A short sharp climb between the large trees will bring a stile into view just over the brow of the hill. Cross the stile and follow the bank on the right to another stile into the wood. Follow this well-defined path through the wood and into a meadow where a stile to the left of the

house will be seen, cross and turn left onto a tarmac road. After a short distance on this road some buildings appear on the right and a stile on the left which is crossed (take care on this steep and possible slippery stile) and turn immediately right keeping the hedge on the left, descending until a

stile on the right. Cross and turn right, then left on a way-marked path. Follow this well used path across Vowchurch common to reach some tarmac and then to a road.

5 Turn left to descend to the B4348 road. Take care crossing this road to ▶



The sunken lane past Bazley Farm



Wellbrook Manor