

On the trail of Elgar

Take your iPod on this walk with something Elgarian on the playlist... and let your imagination run free, says David Hawkins of Leadon Vale ramblers

This walk is very undulating which provides pleasant countryside in which to walk with good views across Herefordshire and up to the Malvern Hills. There are one or two sections of lane-walking but these are usually very lightly trafficked. But this is a walk to let your imagination run free. Imagine Sir Edward Elgar walking these same paths and lanes a century ago. Bring your iPod and make sure there is plenty of Elgar on your playlist.

1 Upon leaving the lay-by proceed up the verge of the A4103 in the direction of Hereford. Opposite the Malvern turning is a marked footpath. Take this footpath, which passes between hedges, through a gate, across a field to a stile at the top of the field. Admire the fine views across to Storrige farm and church. Cross the stile, turn left and follow an uphill path through woodland until you reach a road. Turn right and walk up the road for about quarter of a mile. At the top of the hill on the right is a small track to Birchwood Lodge. Proceed down the track for a short distance and on the left you will see a small cottage. Over the door is a notice saying that Sir Edward

Elgar lived here from 1898-1901. Edward Elgar, arguably Britain's most well-known composer, was born at Lower Broadheath, north of Worcester in 1857. While living at this cottage he wrote *The Dream of Gerontius* which he, and most critics, consider to be his best composition. His oratorio setting of Cardinal Newman's poem revealed him as a composer of a strongly mystical turn of mind, and the wonderful view from this cottage will give you some sense of the inspiration he gained from the countryside.

He died in 1934 in Worcester. If you wish to know more about him, visit the excellent museum dedicated to him at his birthplace at Lower Broadheath (01905 333426).

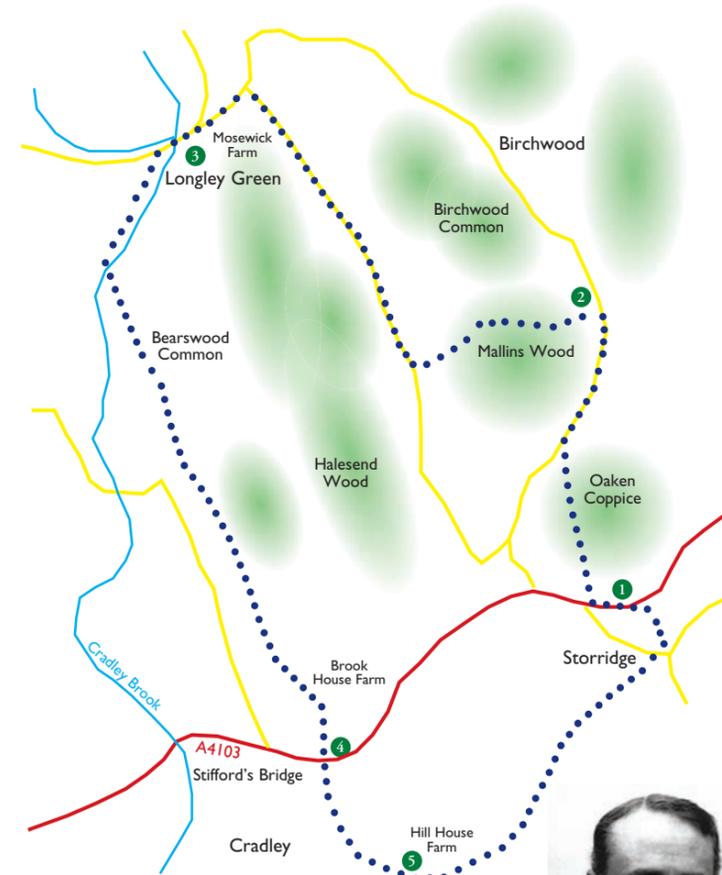


Storrige farm and church

2 Return to the road and retrace your steps some 50 yards and on your right you will see a footpath which proceeds downwards through the woods. At a path junction take the right hand fork. Proceed to the bottom of the woods. Pass through a gate into a field. Keep to the left hand boundary until you reach a narrow lane. Turn right and follow the lane to Batchcombe Fruit Farm, where you will see Kelsall's Farm Shop which sells a good selection of fruit when in season. Pass through the farm and along a good track beyond it, until you reach a lane. Turn left and after a short distance you will reach a main road at Longley Green where you turn left into the village. A short way up the road is a well-stocked village store. You have earned an ice cream by now, so have a stop and support the village shop. Further up the road is The Nelson pub which also sells food.

3 The walk now proceeds along the footpath opposite the shop. After a short incline, bear left down a path, and through a gate. The path follows the Cradley Brook, then over a stile until a bridge is reached. Cross the bridge, pass the old semi-derelict Barrow Mill on your left and the lovely half timbered

Barrow Mill



house on your right. Watch out for the crocodile! Proceed along a made up road, until it takes a sharp turning to the right. At this point take a footpath straight up a short bank. Then follow this footpath for its whole length until you arrive at a junction of paths and tracks. Note the interesting exposed rock outcrop on your left hand side. Now proceed straight ahead across a small bridge and follow the track up a short incline. At the top is a bark covered gate which you pass through. Follow the path along the right hand boundary until you reach a further gate. Pass through it and follow the path up an incline. At the top is a stile into a field and at the bottom right hand corner of the field is further stile which leads to a downward path through the trees to a track. Turn left along the track until you come to a stile on your right which gives you access to the main Hereford to Worcester road.

4 Walk for a short distance along the verge of the road towards Hereford. When you see the turning for Cradley, with very great care, cross the road and take a poorly marked footpath to the left of the Cradley turning. Climb the steps, cross the stile and climb up the field. At the top of the hill on the left hand side you will see a path, follow it

The Elgar Birthplace Museum in Lower Broadheath, Worcester, is celebrating 75 years as a public museum and is marking the occasion with a free Elgar Festival looking at the social history of the Edwardian era, on May 30 and 31. Tel: 01905 333224, www.elgarmuseum.org



for a short distance, cross a stile on your left. Walk down the small field. Cross a further two stiles until you reach a track. Cross the track to a further stile. Proceed through this small field to a stile in the left hand fence. Cross this field to a stile in the top right hand corner.

5 You are now on a crossroads. Take the lane opposite marked with a 'No through road' sign. Walk along this lane and on your left you will see a wide track marked with a footpath sign. Follow this track up the hill, through the woods with a boundary on your right. At the top of the hill at a path junction continue straight on. Pass over the crest of the hill and follow the path down to a stile. Cross the stile and continue down a steep path to the bottom of the field. Cross a stile and continue down a track to the main

The walk

Start/parking: The walk starts at Storrige. Park in lay-by on the A4103 Worcester to Hereford Road close to the turning onto the B4219 to Malvern, next to Meadowsweet Livery. GR 754487

Maps: Explorer 190 and 204

Distance: 7 miles

Grade: Moderate

Stiles: 16

Nearest town: Great Malvern

Refreshments: General store/post office and The Nelson pub at Longley Green (01886 884530)

Toilets: None

Public Transport: Service 417 runs from Ledbury to Worcester via Storrige. For more information visit www.herefordshire.gov.uk/transport/public_transport

The Ramblers

The Ramblers is Britain's biggest charity working to promote walking and to improve conditions for all walkers. The Ramblers is celebrating its 75th anniversary and has won many victories, the most recent being the new coastal access legislation. 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



road at the bottom. Opposite you will see large brick pillars with double gates. Proceed through the gates and up a driveway to Taswold Farm. Pass round the right hand side of the buildings and cross a stile. Go through two small paddocks to a further stile leading to a short flight of steps down to the main road. Cross the road with very great care to the start point of the walk at the lay-by. ■

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