

## The Worcestershire Beacon Race Walk

**This is an abridged version of walk 5, taken from the ‘Pictorial Guide to the Malvern Hills’ Book Two: Great Malvern. This walk seeks to avoid where ever possible very steep slopes and steps. However, this is a walk on the Malvern Hills and this means there is no avoiding some fairly tough sections along the walk.**

Copies of the book are available from the Tourist Information Centre, Malvern Book Co-operative, Malvern Gallery, Malvern Museum and Malvern Priory.

*Priced £8.50*

This 5 mile circular walk mostly follows the route of the Worcestershire Beacon Race and provides an interesting, if strenuous, route from Rose Bank Gardens via St Ann’s Well, past the Goldmine and up to the summit of the Worcestershire Beacon. After soaking up the incredible panorama of the Herefordshire and Worcestershire countryside the return journey circumnavigates North Hill before returning to Great Malvern. Allow a whole morning or afternoon for this scenic walk, or if enjoying refuelling stops probably 5 hours is nearer the mark.

Turn right out of the Abbey hotel passing through the Priory Gatehouse and as the Post Office is reached, take the sharp left up to the Wells Road with Belle Vue Terrace to the right. Taking care at this junction of the busy Wells Road cross-over to the entrance of Rose Bank Gardens with Malvern’s newest sculpture the eye catching ‘Buzzards’.



**Belle Vue Terrace Shops**



**Rose Bank Gardens**

Every year since 1953, on the second Saturday in October, Malvern's most popular running event, the Worcestershire Beacon Race takes place from the Rose Bank Gardens next to the Mount Pleasant Hotel (Map Reference SO 7746 4577). The race has its origins as far back as 1953 and was established in honour of Charles Blewitt, a local athlete who ran for England in the Olympics. The modern race commences at 3 pm with a field of up to 300 runners; local clubs such as the Malvern Joggers (see [www.malvernjoggers.co.uk](http://www.malvernjoggers.co.uk)) fill Rose Bank Gardens with their brightly colourful club vests and aroma of muscle pain relief potions.

After noting your departure time, walk in a southerly direction out of the gardens past banks of rhododendron and a number of Malvern's impressive gas powered street lamps. Continue through the wrought iron gate set amongst two Malvern stone pillars parallel to the Wells Road and past the 'Great Malvern' road sign. A little further on, when reaching the public bridleway sign continue straight on and onto the macadam of Foley Terrace. Keep left and continue for 300 metres to the Wyche Road. Turn right up the road and it is probably best to cross-over onto the footpath.

Continue up the Wyche Road until on the opposite side the footpath from St Ann's Well meets the road. Cross-over the road and join the gravel path which heads uphill for 400 metres and is signposted the Wyche Cutting. The climb ascends into the woods and up to Earnslaw quarry. Keeping left, the path splits, with one route heading slightly downhill to Earnslaw car park, keep to the slightly smaller, higher path in a south-westerly direction as it winds its way uphill through the woods. A stone wall comes into view on the right, and after a few metres take a final steep right turn and join the wide path at the Goldmine, Map Reference SO 7691 4416.



The Goldmine was abandoned around 1727, which was remarked on by none other than 'Treasure Island' writer Daniel Defoe. The broad path climbs steadily leading to the bright-green grassy saddle between Summer Hill and the Beacon. It can be quite windy at this point

of the walk. The main path rises up the Eastern (Great Malvern) side of the hill. After a gruelling 400 metres uphill struggle, the path levels off and the Beacon and trig point is seen to the left on the rocky summit and provides a magnificent view over stunning countryside in all directions with Herefordshire to the West and Worcestershire to the East.



#### **Worcestershire Beacon Toposcope**

The Toposcope commemorates Queen Victoria's reign and was erected in 1897, to celebrate her Diamond Jubilee. The brass plate is engraved with every point of interest visible from the Beacon. After enjoying the vista head downhill in the direction of North Hill and follow any of a number of tracks to the saddle between Sugarloaf Hill and the Beacon. On reaching the saddle there is a second Toposcope at Map Reference SO 7683 4567.

Now go left (east) along the broad path heading around Sugarloaf Hill, downhill towards West Malvern. The Dingle valley is to the left. West Malvern is now visible with the tower of St James's Church and the impressive Victorian stately home. Note the unusual looking weather vane. At the lowest point of this track, on the right hand side is the small Westminster Spout spring, Map Reference SO7647 4617.

Opposite the spring is a small bench at the edge of the meadow, providing a picturesque view of West Malvern. Continue straight on with West Malvern to the left, head up the narrow stony path, past several cottages. On the right is the second of the three unusual cast iron weather vanes to be seen in West Malvern. Go past the wooden kissing gate, footpath sign

and small plaque depicting Joyner's Meadow. Ignore the footpath to West Malvern and continue to climb the path known as the Lady Howard de Walden Drive which then levels off as North Hill is approached. To the left is the most northerly of the hills, End Hill. Our route continues to circumnavigate North Hill.

The Drive swings around the hill and meets the top of Green Valley, walk down the fairly steep path towards St Ann's Well through the thickly wooded valley until arriving at the junction of St Ann's Delight after enjoying the view over Great Malvern take the right fork down to St Ann's Well at Map Reference SO 7709 4596.



**St Ann's Well**

The well took its name from St Ann who gave patronage to wells and springs in the Middle Ages. The first official record of St Ann's Well was made by the Bishop of Westminster in 1282. The well has its outlet through a beautifully carved dolphin head into an ornate shell-shaped basin and is freely accessed to the right of the café. The plaque above the spout reads:

Drink to this crystal fountain  
And praise the loving Lord  
Who from the rocky mountain  
This living stream out-poured  
Fit emblem of the Holy Fount  
That flows from God's eternal mount.

After enjoying a refreshment break from the café, consider whether Tolkien gained inspiration from St Ann's Well nestling amongst the trees and hillside as a burrow for his Hobbits!

Now head down the single twisty track road towards Great Malvern. At the junction with St Ann's Road keep left as it starts to descend. A short distance on the right is a distinctive tall Italianate building. This was the Aldwyn Tower Hotel. More recently it has been converted into apartments. The blue plaque on the wall to the left of the entrance describes how Franklin Delano Roosevelt, a future President of the United States convalesced there aged 7 in 1889. At the next junction head in the direction gravity dictates back to the town centre.

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