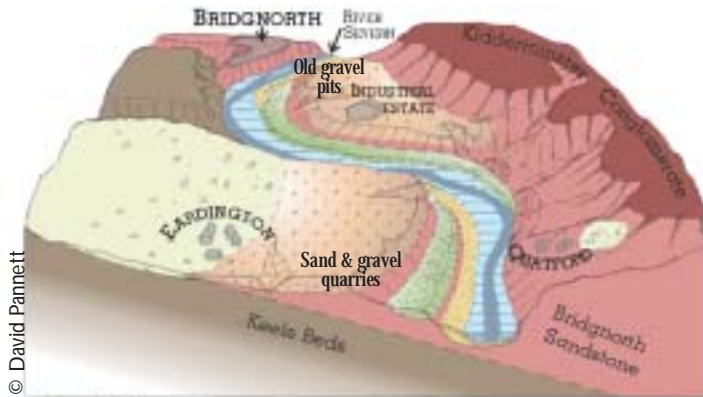


BRIDGNORTH: the rocks beneath your feet

Exercise your body and your mind on a healthy walk around Bridgnorth's High and Low Town. The walk will help towards your daily exercise routine. At the same time think about how the landscape has come to look as it does, because of the rocks on which it is built and the natural processes that have shaped the area.

The man-made landscape relies heavily on aggregates - the sand, gravel and crushed rock that goes into buildings, roads and the paths beneath your feet on this walk. In the vicinity of Bridgnorth extensive spreads of sand and gravel were deposited as the River Severn found a new course during the last Ice Age just 25000 years ago. We see aggregate extraction both as winning an essential resource and as spoiling the countryside; but we cannot have the former without the latter. This walk, in looking at the formation of the river terraces, helps to show why aggregates occur where they do, and therefore why they had to be quarried where they are found close to the town.



© David Pammett
 Glacial deposits left by melting glacier
 Main terrace of sand and gravel deposits spread by meltwater
 2nd terrace of sand & gravel after cutting of Ironbridge Gorge
 Lower terrace from infilling of deeper late glacial river channel
 Present day flood plain of fine silty sand

Keep fit along the Geopark Way

This is one of four circular Health Walks that have been devised from localities on the Geopark Way, a 110 mile long-distance footpath from Bridgnorth to Gloucester. It runs down the length of the Abberley and Malvern Hills European Geopark. www.geopark.org.uk

This "Walk for Health" has been researched and written by Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust. © 2008. For further information:- telephone 01905 855184 or see: www.earthheritagetrust.org

Rocks along the route

As you follow this walk you will find there are many features related to the rocks and landscape that you can literally "take in your stride". Letters correspond to locations on the map over-leaf.

A Immediately after passing the Library glance down Railway Street. This demonstrates clearly how the River Severn has cut deeply into the sandstone rocks, and so its tributaries have had to do the same.

B Buildings up Listley Street show interesting brickwork. The old shops and houses have coarse bricks often showing dark marks. These are a result of the bricks being fired in a kiln with tiles stacked edge-ways above them.



C The Market Hall shows contrasting blue and cream bricks, both probably from the Ironbridge area.

D Along East Castle Street look at the brickwork and in places the cobbles as you stride towards the fine sandstone facade of St Mary Magdalene's church.

E Mary Magdalene's Church was designed by Thomas Telford in 1792. The dark greenish grey sandstone blocks show the way in which layers of sandstone were originally deposited. This is probably Highley Sandstone from down the Severn, but repairs have been carried out in paler, more uniform stone, probably from Grinshill in North Shropshire.



F The leaning Castle ruins were undermined by Roundheads in the Civil War (1664). The lower part was built of local soft red sandstone: the upper part in harder white sandstone which probably came from Highley. Note also a piece of in-tact walling lying on its side!

G Take in the excellent views from Castle Walk across the deep cut tributary valley to the SVR station. Below the bypass bridge you can see the flood plain and river terraces.

H Castle Walk is walled here with mixed sandstone blocks. The reddest are softest while the white blocks are more resistant. Some of the red blocks are quite coarse grained. Views out east across the river to the Hermitage ridge on the far side (see front cover) give a good idea of the down-cutting by the river since the Ice Age. The crag of Hermitage Hill clearly shows brown, pebbly Kidderminster Conglomerate over bright red Bridgnorth Sandstone.



I St Leonard's Church was rebuilt in 1860 in local Bridgnorth Sandstone: possibly from quarries below the church to the north east. It was a poor choice as this has weathered very badly in parts. Many blocks clearly show current bedding (the criss-cross pattern of layers) as the softer beds erode. The octagonal library on the NE corner is a noticeably more orange stone.



J Bridgnorth Sandstone - red, with steeply dipping beds, is exposed in the bank by the path. The field and woods to the right have been quarried and were one source of stone for the oldest parts of town: the castle, town walls etc.

K As you descend to the playing fields look upstream to High Rock in Bridgnorth Sandstone, a cliff alongside the A442, often causing problems from falls. The river runs close to the east side of a wide flood plain, as it meanders across a valley produced when its volume was hundreds of times greater as the Ice Age glaciers melted.

L Remains of The Friary show sandstone blocks often of whiter stone, possibly from upstream in the Ironbridge Gorge or downstream at Highley.

M Well bedded Bridgnorth Sandstone shows in the excavated cliff faces for older cottage platforms. The softest stone is badly affected by borings of solitary bees. The river has swung over to the west side of the valley, with the flood plain on the east rising to a terrace with Low Town buildings above flood level.



N The bridge is medieval and built of Highley sandstone. It was repaired by Telford after severe floods in 1796. The deck was widened in the 1950s.

O The Bylet (island), south of the bridge is characteristic of the Severn. Such islands were created artificially in medieval times by digging a bypass loop to allow a fish weir in the main channel and navigation on the outside. They were usually made, as here, at a point of natural shallows.



P The Cliff Railway (1898) cuts through the Bridgnorth Sandstone showing the scale of the bedding.

Q Rock Houses or cave dwellings excavated into relatively soft Bridgnorth Sandstone (see front cover) show clearly the criss-cross arrangement of beds of sand (see close-up on left) resulting from dunes being swept one over another in desert conditions about 290 million years ago.



BRIDGNORTH

Walk through the past for a healthy future



See how rocks have shaped the landscape



A Healthy Lifestyle

Regular exercise of at least 30 minutes five times a week is recommended. This walk can be part of your routine. Before significantly increasing your normal physical activity it is recommended that you seek your doctor's advice.

We suggest you familiarise yourself with the route of the walk first, and take in the points of geological interest a few at a time each time you follow it. Otherwise you might find yourself stopping more than you are walking, with little benefit to your physical health!



Severn Strollers are the official Walking for Health groups in the Bridgnorth area, organising weekly guided walks. Contact 01746 713190

The Walk

Distance - 3.7km or 2.3 miles for the full circuit.

Time - don't overdo it, but as fitness builds aim for about 50 minutes walking time.

Surface - Walking is mostly on pavements and metalled paths. Between 14 and 15 is across grass of playing fields and may be soft after rain or under water at times of flood. Normal walking footwear is adequate.

Short Cuts - If you are short of time (or energy) there are many short cuts that can be worked out from the map. Eight flights of steps connect High and Low Town.

Gradient - Bridgnorth is divided between High Town on the sandstone plateau and Low Town on the river terraces. The steep drop between the two is about 33 metres. If you don't fancy the slope then take two shorter walks. Around High Town (1 to 11) is almost level except for slight uphill gradients from 1 to 2 and from 9 to 10. In Low Town (15 to 19) it is level by the riverside except for steps at 16 and to get close to the caves at 18. There is a steep downhill slope from 12 to 13. To get back up we suggest the Library Steps at 19, all 126 of them! For a helping "leg-up" take the Cliff Railway.

Public Transport

Buses - come into and out from Bridgnorth via High Street. Alight by the Town Hall and start your walk at 9.

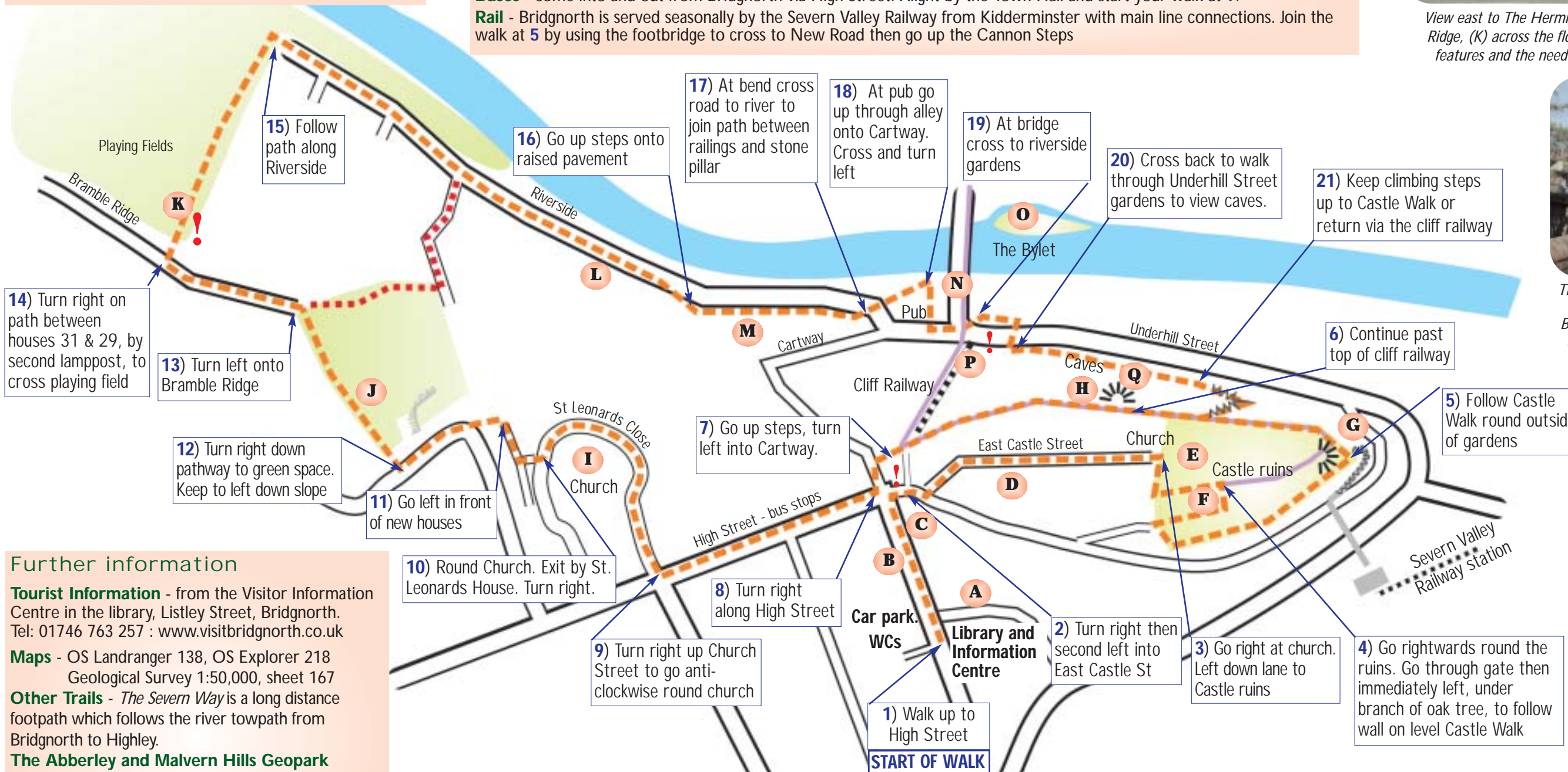
Rail - Bridgnorth is served seasonally by the Severn Valley Railway from Kidderminster with main line connections. Join the walk at 5 by using the footbridge to cross to New Road then go up the Cannon Steps



View east to The Hermitage from the lower terrace at Bramble Ridge, (K) across the flood plain. This shows several landscape features and the need for an alternative wet weather route!



The riverside gardens are a good place from which to contemplate the importance of Bridgnorth as a crossing place and once an important port, before you tackle the final climb



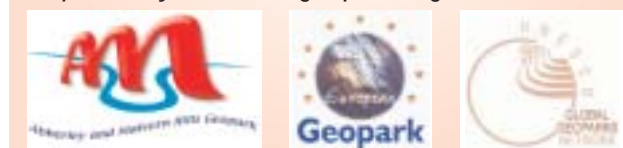
Further information

Tourist Information - from the Visitor Information Centre in the library, Listley Street, Bridgnorth. Tel: 01746 763 257 : www.visitbridgnorth.co.uk

Maps - OS Landranger 138, OS Explorer 218 Geological Survey 1:50,000, sheet 167

Other Trails - The Severn Way is a long distance footpath which follows the river towpath from Bridgnorth to Highley.

The Abberley and Malvern Hills Geopark embraces the Severn Valley in Shropshire as far north as Bridgnorth. For details of the Geopark and the Geopark Way see www.geopark.org.uk.



Walking the Way to Health is a joint initiative between Natural England and the British Heart Foundation to encourage people to take short walks in their local area as part of a healthy life style. For more information see www.whi.org.uk on the Internet



Designed by Scenesetters (01938 820 777) The diagrammatic route plan is based on various out-of-copyright maps and original survey.

Disclaimer

This Walk is a suggested activity to add interest to a publicly accessible route. Herefordshire & Worcestershire Earth Heritage Trust is not responsible for the state of any land or paths used. Walkers follow the routes entirely at their own risk and should take due care at all times. Whilst every effort has been made to ensure that this leaflet is accurate at the time of printing, no liability can be accepted by the authors or publishers for any errors, omissions or misrepresentations of fact contained herein, nor subsequent changes to condition or status of any of the route.