



Bike for Bibles 2020

History and quirky facts along the route

The Bike for Bibles (B4B) ride this year takes us on a bit of a history tour of North Wiltshire and South Gloucestershire.

Our start location is less than a mile from the site of the old [Swindon](#) Great Western Railway works, where many great locomotives were built and maintained. The old works are now home to the Swindon Designer Outlet, which is a tourist attraction in its own right and just next door is Steam, the GWR museum.

We start by riding about 3.5 miles in a north westerly direction out of the town, on a mix of cycle paths and roads towards [Lydiard Millicent](#). The name of this village derives from the old English for 'gate by the ford' and the 12th century owner of the manor, Millicent de Clinton. After our second loop we return to HQ by this route.

We'll cycle 4 miles through [Purton](#) during both loops. As we leave we will pass over the Cheltenham and Grand Western Union Railway, eventually absorbed by the GWR. The station there closed in 1963 and until 2008 there was a public house called the Ghost Train. Sadly this spooky pub closed to make way for new housing.

The anglo-saxons founded [Cricklade](#) in the 9th century, at the point where the Roman road 'Ermin way' crossed the River Thames. You will get another opportunity to ride on this famous roman road later. Cricklade had a royal mint from 979 to 1100 and some of those Cricklade coins are on display in the town museum.

[Down Ampney](#) has several historical claims. One of the best known British composers – Ralph Vaughan Williams was born in the Vicarage in Down Ampney on 12th October 1872 to the Vicar, The Rev'd Arthur Vaughan Williams and his wife Margaret, who was a niece of Charles Darwin.

We will pass very near to site of a WW2 airfield, RAF Down Ampney, one of a cluster of local airfields including RAF Blakehill Farm, from which a huge number of Horsa gliders towed by Dakotas, took off to drop parachutists on the day before D-Day. One of the pilots who was stationed there was Flt Lt Jimmy Edwards. The Church has stained glass windows depicting an aeroplane as a tribute to the RAF and there are memorial stones near by.

[Meysey Hampton](#) was listed as Hantone in the Domesday Book of 1086. The name Meysey comes from the influence of a local family called de Meisi. As we leave Meysey Hampton we will pass back into Wiltshire on our way to [Marston Meysey](#). Should you stop to talk to the locals, be aware that they pronounce Meysey as Maisey.

[RAF Fairford](#), like Down Ampney was used in the preparations for D-Day. Now it is home to the Royal International Air Tattoo which takes place annually in July. Since the cold war it has been a Bomber base for the USAF. It boasts a runway of over 3,000m; extended to cope with heavy, long-range bombers. Due to the long runway Fairford was chosen as the landing place for Concorde 002, the first British built Concorde, after its maiden flight from Filton. Our ride will take us along 3 sides of the airfield so if you see lots of plane spotters with their huge cameras at the ready, you will know that something is taking off or landing (soon).

[Quenington](#) has a notable resident by the name of Kenton Cool. He lives up to his name, as he has climbed Everest at least 11 times. You may have seen him on TV documentaries about climbing. September is outside the normal climbing season so keep an eye out for him. He'll be the one with an ice axe in his rucksack!



[Bibury](#) hit the headlines a few years ago when a resident dared to buy a bright yellow car and park it outside his house. It was said that the vehicle ruined tourists' photographs in this picturesque Cotswold village. You probably won't see the car, but will almost certainly see lots of tourists, who flock there by the bus load. The reason for this, is that Emperor Hiohito stayed in Bibury during his European Tour. Take a look at your Passport it may well feature the weavers cottages at Arlington Row (where the infamous Yellow Car was parked). A few scenes from the film Bridget Jones' Diary were also filmed there.

Blink and you could miss your visit through [Ready Token](#) but you'll know you are there as it is on the intersection of six country roads and nine parish boundaries. It lies at the intersection of the ancient drove road called 'The Welsh Way' which was used to bring cattle from Wales to London, and the Roman "Akeman Street" along which you will ride on your way to Ampney Crucis. There are several explanations as to how the name Ready Token came about. The one we like best is that the inn that was there in 1738 would only accept cash (Ready Cash or Tokens) Chip and Pin not being available at the time!

Just as we leave [Ampney Crucis](#) before crossing the A417 we will pass by the old Grade 1 listed Norman Church of the Holy Rood (on your right). The village gets its name from the Amney Brook and the Grade 1 listed Cross in the church yard.

One mile after leaving [Driffield](#) you'll be aware of a large dual carriageway on your right. You should start to feel the roman influence again as you'll be back on Ermin Street, the road that was built to link Corinium (Cirencester) with Gloucester and Calleva (Silchester)

As we travel the narrow winding roads through [Cerney Wick](#) and on to [Ashton Keynes](#) you won't be surprised to learn we are in the Cotswold Water Park which has over 170 lakes. These were formed in the disused quarries of Jurassic limestone gravel. Underneath the quarries there is a dense layer of impervious clay which meant the rain water did not seep away and the quarries filled up.

This Bike for Bibles ride is mildly undulating with large sections of quite flat roads, unfortunately to get back to the start of the loop in Purton, we have to cycle up [Pavenhill](#). It is probably the longest hill on the route but not the steepest. When you reach Purton you can pat yourself on the back in celebration. Enjoy the ride!

