

A Walk around Piercefield

Park in Chepstow Leisure Centre car park, just off the A466 near Chepstow Racecourse gates. Leave the car park on foot and walk back towards the main road. Turn right heading back towards the racecourse roundabout. Turn right immediately after a drive on the right called 'The Cloisters', taking a footpath through an archway in the wall. On reaching the gravel track keep straight on with a wall on your right hand side. Follow this track through the woodland (you might just catch a glimpse of Piercefield House in the distance through the trees) until reaching a gateway / kissing gate. Go through the gate into open parkland. This was part of Valentine Morris's Piercefield Park, where many eighteenth century artists painted. Gilpin painted an earlier house, this house being redesigned in the late eighteenth century by Sir John Soane. It has been in ruins since the 1920s.

The racecourse is now on your left. Follow the track and then bear right heading towards Piercefield House. Standing with your back to the ruined house the view looks out across the Severn Estuary.

Walk on directly in front of the house for about 100 yards with the fence on your left. Cross the stile and follow the footpath down to meet the Wye Valley Walk. Turn right onto the Wye Valley Walk and keep on this path, passing through a laurel tunnel. Look out for 'The Grotto' on the right, surrounded by laurel. The view is now completely obscured by laurel trees.

Continue along the path, and after a down hill section you reach a logging track. Turn right onto the track and then after about 100 yards turn left down the path and through another laurel tunnel. Keep on this main path and as the track bears right through a cutting you will see 'The Platform' on the left, a dressed stone structure with the remains of iron railings on the top and a yew tree growing out of it! Yew trees now obscure the view over the river. Keep on the main path through more woodland and after a while you will come to some railings on the left and glimpses of Chepstow Castle. A little further on you will find 'The Alcove' on the right, looking out over the river, the Castle and the new Severn Bridge.

Much of this view remains unchanged, though the noise of traffic, and the new bridges over the Wye and the Severn highlight two centuries of 'progress!'

Continue up the steps, following the path which turns off to the left through the wall, and along the fenced pathway passing the school on your right before returning to your starting point in the Leisure Centre car park.