

PUBLISHERS NOTE

Solihull Metropolitan Borough
Council cannot accept liability for any
accident or incident which may occur
during any of the walks described in
this booklet.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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have been involved in the project; to
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WALK TIMES

It is always difficult to gauge the time that should be allowed to undertake a walk and, of course, this can be critical if public transport connections have to be made. There are so many variables eg the make-up of the group - old, young or all ages; the number in the party - the fitness and speed of the slowest member dictates the party's speed; whether or not stops are made to eat, take photographs, watch wildlife or take in the scenery; if climbing is involved (although this is not a problem in Solihull); the ability of the party - being countrywise, able to read a map and hopefully not get lost. It is therefore best to time yourself on a walk and ascertain your speed per mile or kilometre. As a general rule allow a minimum of 20 minutes per mile.

PUBLIC CONVENIENCES

The smaller villages have never had this provision and many toilet blocks have been demolished because of continuing vandalism. So apart from those that can be found in the main shopping areas and some parks, there are only: Avenue Road Car park, Dorridge; Station Road/Warwick Road, Knowle; and Main Road, Meriden opposite the Police Station.

AND FINALLY

It is said that going for a walk in the Countryside is the most popular recreational activity - I hope that this booklet will go some small way to make it enjoyable. There are 140,000 miles of public rights of way in England and Wales - so there is a lot to explore!

Note As the 1:25000 pathfinder map does not give an explanation on how to obtain grid references (GR), the full numerical reference is given in the text ie 4245 (eastings) 2791 (northings) which is more usually expressed as SP245 791.



WALK 1

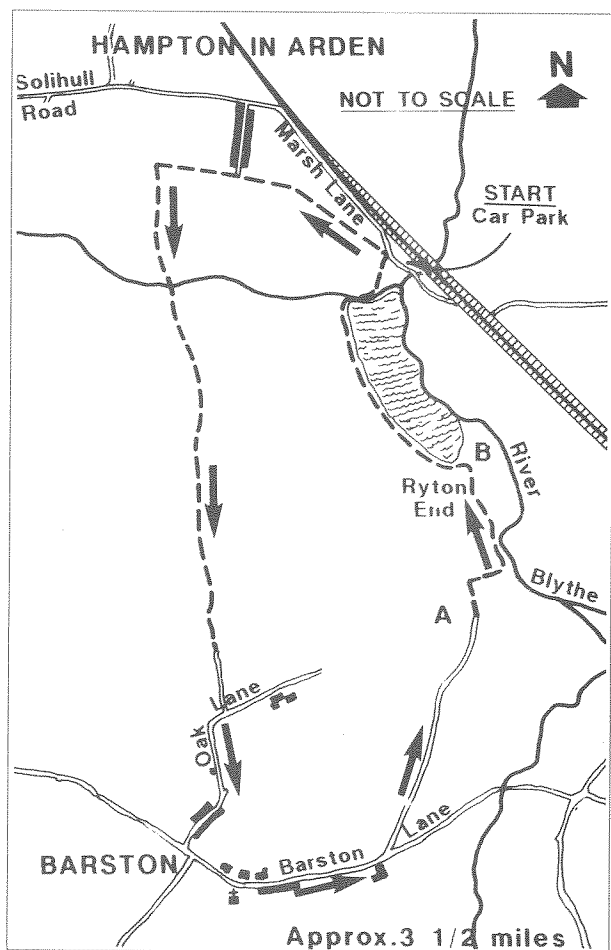
HAMPTON IN ARDEN - BARSTON 3 1/2 MILES

This walk is a circular walk between the villages of Hampton-in-Arden and Barston. Hampton-in-Arden with its well preserved 17th Century houses and red sandstone church dating from about 1130. Barston with some fine historic buildings many timber framed and the church of St Swithin which was built in 1721 on the site of a medieval church - a medieval cross still stands in the churchyard.

The walk is mostly on public footpaths over a distance of approximately 3 1/2 miles (5 1/2 km).

Being a circular route, a start can be made at a number of places, but, as parking is available at the end of Marsh Lane, Hampton-in-Arden, (GR 4212 2802), this is where we start: go through the wooden gate on the south side of Marsh Lane at the turning circle and turn almost immediately right to a stile. Follow the field path up the hill towards Hampton-in-Arden, finally reaching a cul-de-sac. Enter the field opposite by climbing over the stile. Turn left, ignoring the stile on your right and keep the wire fence and then the hedge on your right. At the end of the field turn left to a stile in the corner of the field. Follow the path to another stile and keep the hedgerows on your left. Go over another stile and cross the field to a footbridge. Go through several fields to a clump of trees on top of a hill. Continue to follow the path keeping the hedge on the right. Go over a stile and up a track between two hedges to a lane.

Turn right at the lane and continue along till you reach the main road. Turn left, which takes you to the centre of Barston. You have now completed just over half the walk and The Bull's Head public house might provide an irresistible resting place to revitalise you for the second half.



Walk through the village and take the left hand lane - signposted Ryton End. Follow the lane to the metal gate and continue on the track (A) through the field to a narrow

section with a hedge to your left and the River Blythe on your right. The ground opens out to an area of rough grassland, the track bears left, but follow the path to the right past a small lake and the remains of Ryton End Farm until you reach the large lake (B). Here there is a choice, but, the official route is to turn left, keeping the lake on your right. At the furthest end of the lake, turn left over the footbridge. With another small lake on your right, you will soon reach the starting point.

N.B. There are presently various footpath orders under consideration (resulting from a planning application for a Water Sport Centre and 18 Hole Golf Course) which, if confirmed, will make the route from the end of Ryton End (A) to the end of the walk at Marsh Lane into a Bridleway. At point (B) the footpath will remain on the west side of the lake, with a bridleway on the east side.

Before you leave for home, continue down Marsh Lane to the River Blythe to view the 15th Century five-bay packhorse bridge - one of the few left in the Midlands. It is of considerable historic interest being both an Ancient Monument and a listed structure.

April 1993

MARCH 1994: The orders listed above were confirmed on 1st March. Whilst walkers may now use the new routes, work is required to bring the bridleway up to a suitable standard for horse riders and cyclists.

† Car park is well hidden between Church Lane & Meriden Rd.
about ten metres from Church Lane, on same side. Meriden Rd
looks easier parking



Berkswell Post Office & Village Stores

WALK 2

BERKSWELL - CORNETS END 4 MILES (1 1/2 hrs)

This walk is centred on Berkswell, a small attractive village dominated by the 12th Century church of St John the Baptist. The village takes its name from the 16 feet square stone-walled well near the church which is said to have been used for baptisms by immersion.

The walk is mostly on public rights of way over a distance of approximately 4 miles (6km). In two places the route walked is different from that shown on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder maps!

†

The Parish Council car park, signposted near the green, is the starting point (GR 4245 2791). Should it be full there is ample parking space alongside nearby Meriden Road.

Leave the car park via the access road and turn right up Church Lane passed Berks Well on your left to reach the church. You are now walking part of the Heart of England Way as you walk through the churchyard and then a small wood. Follow the path through a field, a section on wooden planks with iron railings on your right and Berkswell Hall beyond. Cross the bridge over a stream and make your way to an iron gate. Immediately turn right, leaving the Heart of England Way and go through a wooden kissing gate, signposted Hampton. Follow a well defined path with an excellent view of Berkswell Hall set in grassland with the lake in the foreground. Cross the stile at the field corner and go through a small wood. Keep to the path with the hedgerow on your right. The path then follows the edge of a pine wood. After leaving the wood continue with the hedge on your left. Before reaching the farm turn right (at the signpost) and follow the hedge to a stile at the lower corner of the field.

* immediately on leaving woods

** very sparse

Follow the field path - the pine plantation on the right is called Coronation Spinney, I wonder which Coronation it commemorates? - until you reach a crossroads. * Turn right here on to what is first a public bridleway and then an adopted highway until you meet Cornets End Lane.

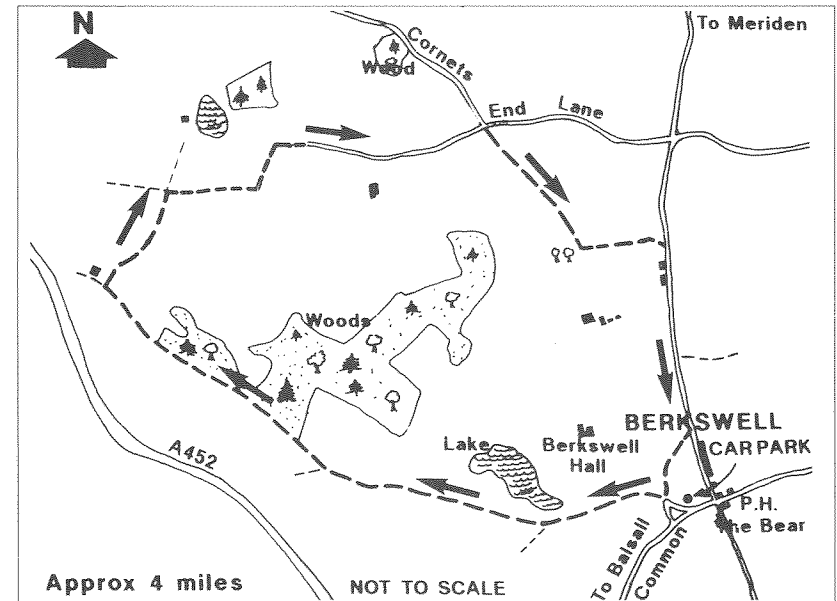
Turn right here and take the path signposted across a field to a stile. The path on the next large field becomes less distinct, but keep to the same general line over a slight rise and then head for a stile at the bottom corner. Differences will be seen here with the Pathfinder Map route and a diversion has been applied for.

Continue parallel with the hedge on your right and then make for the stile by the gate at the signpost "Tyne-Lea". Between the houses you reach the Meriden - Berkswell Road. Cross the road and turn right along the newly tarmaced footway which takes you to Berkswell. Halfway down this road at the farm track on the left the Heart of England Way is rejoined. On entering Berkswell, just before the first house, cross over the road and take the path which leads back to the churchyard and through to Church Lane.

Berkswell boasts a small museum of local interest and details about it can be seen in the Post Office window. It is open on Sundays from 2.30pm till 6pm between the beginning of May and the beginning of October.

May 1993

* tarmaced bridleway





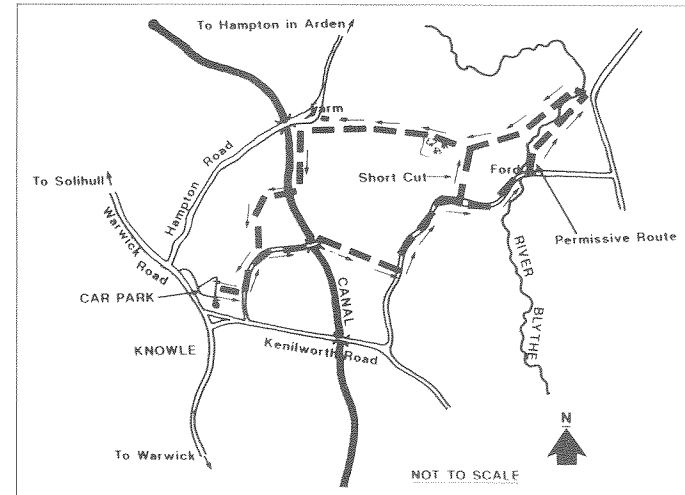
Knowle Parish Church & The Guild House

WALK 3

KNOWLE EASTWARDS 2 1/2 OR 3 MILES

This walk is a circular walk from Knowle towards Barston. The historic High Street of Knowle is a shopping centre of note, possessing well-established specialist retailers. The oldest existing building in the High Street is Chester House, a restored Elizabethan timber-framed building, now the library and with contemporary Knot Garden at the rear. Those wishing information on all the buildings should purchase a copy of the Knowle Society's booklet "A Short Guide to Central Knowle".

The walk starts from the public car park (GR 4182 2767) which is accessed from the High Street at the side of the Greswolde Arms Hotel. Head for the Knowle Junior and Infants School in the far corner and take the path through the churchyard and The Childrens' Field to Kixley Lane. Turn left here and continue down the lane passing on the left, just before the turning circle, the stile which we will cross over at the end of the walk. Cross over the Grand Union Canal which celebrates its 200th anniversary this year with the opening up of the towpath over the 140 miles between Little Venice in London and Gas Street Basin in Birmingham. Continue straight ahead over a stile, a footbridge and another stile. Then follow the hedgerow (on your right) to Elvers Green Lane.



Turn left along the Lane, after the sharp right angled bend, if you want to shorten the walk to 2 1/2 miles (4km), go through the gate on the left, skirt round the copse and turn left at the top of the hill to pass in front of the dilapidated brick barn.

To complete the full walk continue along the lane to the River Blythe crossing, where the Council a few years ago carried out improvements including limited car parking spaces. Immediately after crossing the river take the stile on the left and follow this permissive path alongside the River Blythe to the steel footbridge. Recross the river here and bear left across the field heading for the far left-hand corner. On entering the next field a well-defined path leads to the large barn on the top of the hill which is passed on your right - here the short cut route is re-joined. Pass alongside the wood on the left and continue along the track with the hedge on your right. On the skyline to the south west can be seen the tower of Knowle Parish Church - our destination. Follow the track between the outbuildings and house of Waterfield Farm on to Hampton Road. Turn left here and before the canal bridge, bear left down to the towpath and continue along with the canal on your right.

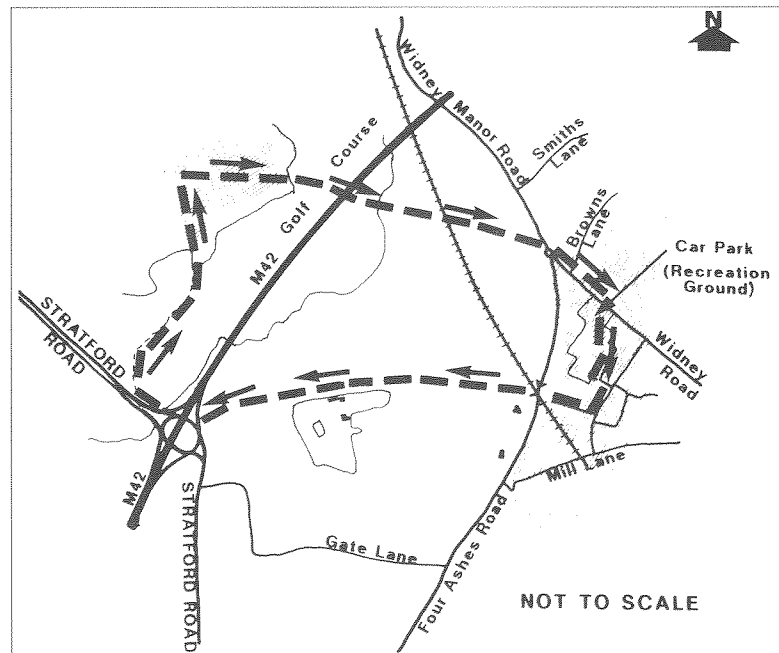
Cross over the canal by the footbridge and follow the path through the first field, taking the stile on your right in the next field which leads you to another stile which takes you back into Kixley Lane. From here either the outward route can be retraced or a diversion made through the High Street back to the Car Park.

WALK 4

BENTLEY HEATH - MONKSPATH 3 1/2 MILES

This walk is over a short circular route with a variety of differing footpaths, some very rural in type although close to built-up areas and other sections closer to housing yet thickly wooded and enclosed.

The walk starts from Bentley Heath Recreation Ground car park in Widney Road, opposite Widney Close (GR 4165 2763). It will take a minimum of 1 1/4 hours over a distance of 3 1/2 miles (5 1/2 km). Bentley Heath Recreation Ground was bought in 1932 and has an area of almost 11 acres. It comprises a play area, pitches and tennis courts.



From the car park, continue through the park following the tarmac path to Redhouse Close, turn left here and at the junction with Slater Road turn right. Turn

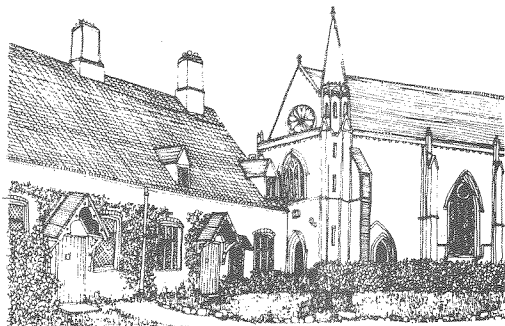
right at the next road, Packwood Close, continuing to the road end and following the footpath beyond to Four Ashes Road. Turn left here, cross the railway bridge and follow the track on the opposite side of the road. This track then meets the concrete access road to Solihull Riding Club - evidence of this major horse riding facility is seen in the fields all around. Continue up this road, turning right before the entrance to Moat Manor - Solihull's version of the Hickstead Bank is viewed on the edge of the car park. Proceed down the gap, with a hedge on your left and the indoor arena on your right, to the bottom corner of the field - near the four poplars the footbridge is located. Continue round the wood to the gap in the hedge, then cross the open field, heading for the middle of the largest gap in the trees on the skyline. Follow the line of occasional hawthorns to the stile by the Stratford Road.

Turn right here and continue round the roundabout, over the M42 bridge and along the Stratford Road. Cross the River Blythe bridge and cross the stile by the blue metal gate on the right.

This takes you into a leafy ancient lane at the back of Notcutt's Nursery. Pass close to the ruined farm building to avoid a wet section and continue over the fence. A little pond is passed and then housing is followed on the right. Keeping to this path, parallel to the fence, a stile is reached which leads to a stoned road, Shelly Lane. Follow this road to Shelly Crescent. Those wishing refreshment can carry straight over to lead to Shelly Farm Public House.

The walk continues by turning right along Shelly Crescent and the tarmac path on the right just after Elmbridge Drive is taken. The tarmac section takes you between the housing and the lane continues with Solihull's recently opened 18 hole golf course on each side. After passing the 13th tee continue through the wood to the footbridge over the M42.

You are now back in Solihull Riding Club land - turn left and round the wood to the footbridge over the River Blythe and follow the hedge on your right to the railway underbridge. From there a well-defined path takes you to the stile at the corner of the new Widney Manor Cemetery. A stone path follows the cemetery fence to Widney Manor Road. Turn right here, round the roundabout and down Widney Road - back to the start. July 1993



St Mary's Church, Templars Hall

WALK 5

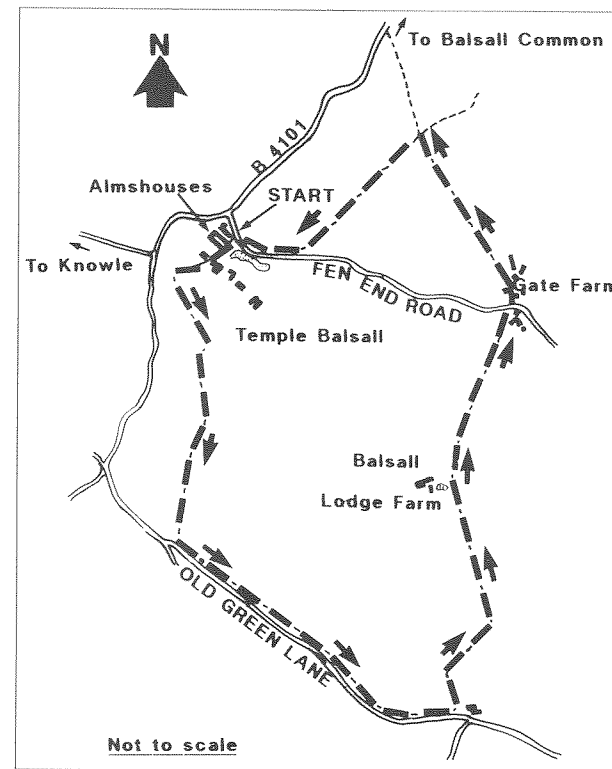
TEMPLE BALSALL - OLDWICH LANE 4 MILES

This walk starts at Temple Balsall on the B4101 road between Knowle and Balsall Common. Cars can be parked in the visitors car park of the Hospital of Lady Katherine Leveson, opposite the school, just south of the B4101 on Fen End Road, (GR 4208 2761).

The walk of some 4 miles (6 1/2 km) will take at least 80 minutes to complete.

Temple Balsall was founded by the Crusading Knights Templar in the 12th Century. These soldier monks were disbanded in the 14th Century and were succeeded by the Knights Hospitallers who were in turn disbanded by Henry VIII. The Manor was given by Queen Elizabeth to Robert Dudley, Earl of Leicester and was inherited by his grand-daughters - one of whom being Lady Katherine Leveson who founded the almshouses and school. St Mary's Church dates from the 14th Century and was restored in 1670 and again in the 1840's.

From the car park cross the road and at the signpost to St Mary's Church follow the tarmac path (the Bread Walk) past the Almshouses and Church on the right. Continue over the footbridge and at the entrance to Balsall Cemetery go through the kissing gate on the left. Follow the hedge on the left to its end by the double gate and turn right here along the track with the hedge still on the left. Cross a stile and continue along the field edge with the hedge on the left, until another stile is reached at Old Green Lane. Turn left and proceed along this country road for approximately 3/4 mile (1.4km) - it is quite narrow, so take care in case there is any traffic. Along the way Sparrow Cock Lane is passed on the right



and the road signs warn of a ford - under normal conditions the culvert copes, but, the presence of a new footbridge suggests that this is not always the case. Before Oldwych Lane is reached and just before Oldwych Gallery, turn left by the signpost which leads you past the side of the outbuildings - at this point you are at the farthest point from the start.

Past the outbuildings cross a stile and head for the corner of the field, keeping the hedge on your right. At the corner two stiles linked by a footbridge take you into the next field, turn right here and follow the field edge to the corner. At the corner the Heart of England Way is met - turn left and follow the same field edge until a small signpost directs you into a wooded area for a short distance. This deviation takes you into another field where the hedge is now on the left. At the hedge corner follow a track across two fields to the dead oak tree on the skyline.

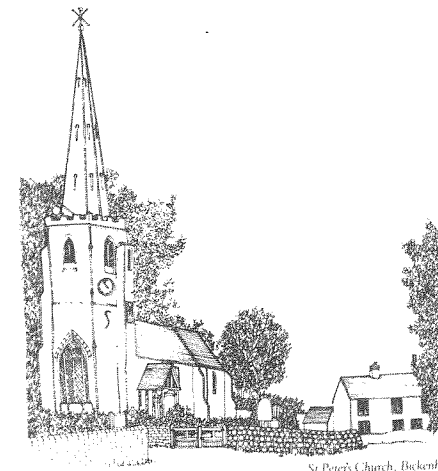
Continue along this track from Balsall Lodge Farm to Fen End Road. Turn right here and on the opposite side of the road at the signpost go down a narrow leafy path, with the boundary fence of Barracks Cottage on the left. This brings you out into a field. Follow the field edge (headland) path through this field and the next two, keeping the hedge on the right. At this third field corner there is a crossroads of footpaths - continuing straight on takes you to Balsall Street, turning right is the Heart of England Way leading to Meriden and Staffordshire, but, we turn left and continue around the same field with the hedge still on the right along part of "the Knights' Way" to Fen End Road. Turn right here and ever watchful for traffic, follow this road back to the car park.

Should you undertake this walk between Easter and the end of September on a Saturday or Sunday afternoon, you can, if you wish, partake of home made teas in the Old Schoolroom within the Court. This walk was published some years ago by Balsall Parish Council and acknowledgement is made of their historical facts which are included here.

September 1993

TAKE YOUR LITTER HOME

*Friend, when you stray, or sit and take your ease,
On moor, or fell, or under spreading trees,
Pray, leave no traces of your wayside meal,
No paper bags, no scattered orange peel,
Nor daily journal littered on the grass.
Others may view these with distaste and pass.
Let no one say, and say it to your shame,
That all was beauty here before you came.*



St Peter's Church, Bickenhill

WALK 6

BICKENHILL RECREATION GROUND
- ELMDON PARK - BICKENHILL 8 1/2 MILES

This walk is between the villages of Marston Green and Bickenhill, but could best be described as a walk around Birmingham International Airport. The walk is approx. 8 1/2 miles (14km) long and will take a minimum of 3 hours to complete.

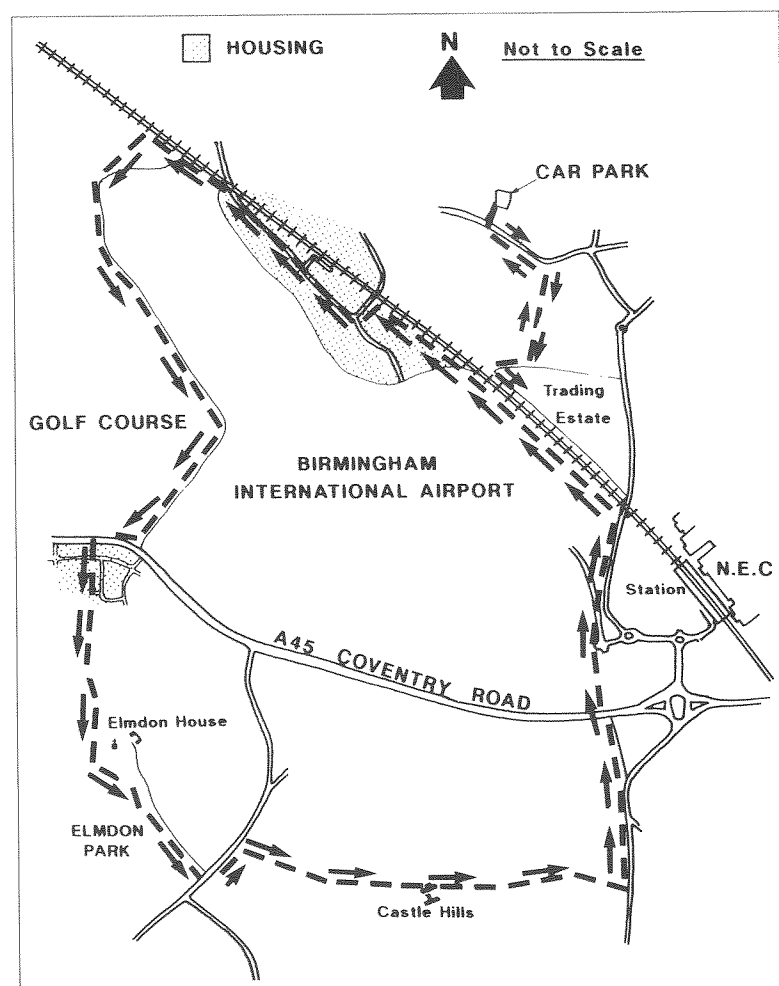
Part of this walk lies within Birmingham and can be followed on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder Sheet 934 - although the 1986 edition does not show all the paths to be walked as being Public Rights of Way.

The walk starts at Bickenhill Parish Council's Recreation Ground off Bickenhill Road in Marston Green. Cars can be parked here (GR 4179 2853).

From the Car Park return to Bickenhill Road and turn left. At the bend take the track signposted to Marston Green Cemetery. Follow this track, turning right when Elmdon Trading Estate is reached. The track leads to a field where the footpath continues with the Trading Estate fence on the left. Cross the stile at Unit 14 and at the railway turn left, continue between the fences and cross over the railway bridge. Turn right and follow a well worn track between the Airport and Housing on the left and the railway on the right.

N.B. Outline planning permission has been granted for an Industrial and Commercial Park on the section between Marston Green Cemetery and the Railway - a footpath diversion will be required when building work commences.

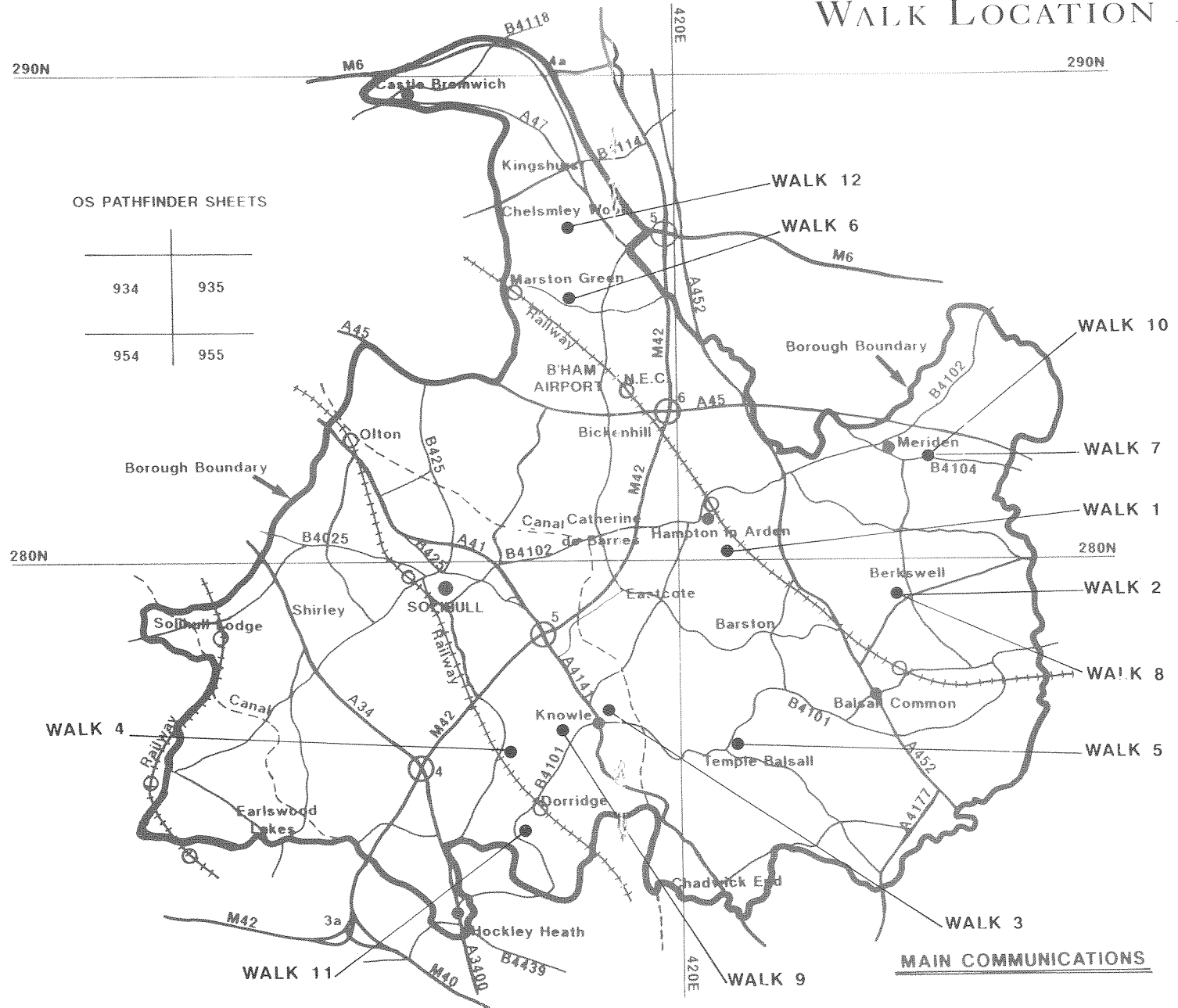
Climb the steps to Elmdon Road and turn left. At the next road junction turn right along Elmdon Lane. Near the end of this road on the left is a car park - cross over the trip rail fence just to the right of the entrance. Another well used path is reached which takes us past Marston Green Station, through a gate and down to a bridge over Hatchford Brook. At the bridge bear left and head for the fence corner. In the distance beyond the airport is the slender spire of St Peter's Church, Bickenhill - we will eventually pass quite close to it, but, it now looks a long way off! - 2 1/2 miles (4km) as the crow flies.



The Airport perimeter fence is followed for its entire length, only deviating near its end to the kissing gate between the cottages (Tiger's Island Cottages) to the A45. The latter part of this section follows Hatchford Brook Golf Course. At the Birmingham - Coventry Road turn right, cross over the dual carriageway just before the Sheldon sign and take the path up towards the houses. Turn right at this road and then left between Nos. 2533 and 2527. Follow this path over Rangoon and Victor Roads into open land, past a heritage walk information post erected by the friends of Elmdon, until a track is reached. Turn right here and where it bends, go straight ahead on the road which leads into Elmdon Park. This park with an area of 127 acres is one of the largest parks in the Borough. It was bought in 1946 and comprises a play area, tennis courts and lake within areas of grassland and woodland. Keep the car park and Elmdon Church on the left and pass the Beacon which was lit at midnight on 31 December 1992 by the then Mayor, Councillor Brian Chapple to celebrate the formation of the Single European Market. Keep to the top of the hill, past an old gnarled sweet chesnut tree and then follow the wooded strip on the left until the Land Rover fence is reached. Turn left at the fence and at the road turn right past the Golf Range on the left and continue along until Damson Parkway is reached. Cross over the dual carriageway, turn left and look out for the stile in the hedge.

Cross over this stile where we start on a section of more rural footpaths. Follow this path between the hedge and fence until another stile takes us into the open fields. Follow the hedge on the right to a footbridge. A track with the hedge now on the left leads up to Castle Hills Farm. Keep the farm to the right and at the bend in the track go through the gateway (waymarker on post). A second gate beside white fence rails is the start of a grass track which leads to another gate at the foot of the hill. A bridge is crossed and the path bears left to another gate and stile. From here head for the hedge corner and follow the hedge on the right to the stile which leads to Catherine de Barnes Lane. Turn left along the verge and then take the tarmac path which takes us into Clock Lane. At the end of this road is 'The Clock Inn' and the A45. Turn left and at the Post Office cross over the dual carriageway via the path between the central crash barrier to the Bus Stop. Follow the tarmac path to 'Old Bickenhill Lane'. After rounding the gate carry straight on until Airport Way is reached. (The recently erected sculpture of herons in flight on the roundabout to the right is quite impressive). Turn left at this dual carriageway, crossing over just before the barriers to follow the tarmac path with the fence on the left. This path goes under the elevated track of the MAGLEV, where, using frictionless magnetic suspension, cars link Birmingham International Railway Station with the Airport. Just before the railway bridge at the signpost, turn left, where a well-worn path between the Airport and the railway takes us back to the railway bridge where we retrace our outward steps past the cemetery to the car park.

WALK LOCATION MAP





Mount House Farm, Meriden Hill

WALK 7

MERIDEN HILL - FLINT'S GREEN 2 3/4 OR 4 1/2 MILES

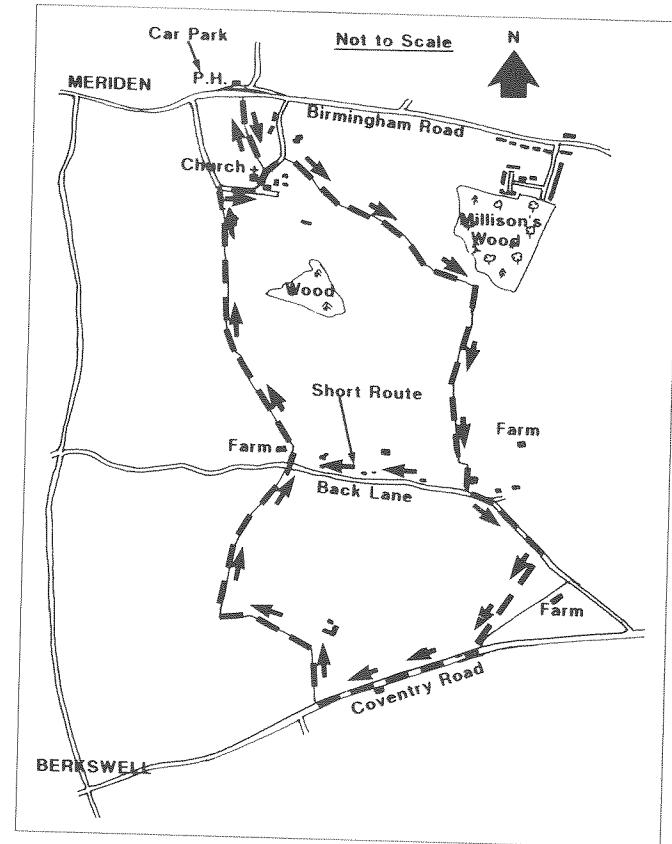
This walk is centred on Meriden, the traditional centre of England, and offers a choice of two walks. One of 2 3/4 miles (4 1/2km) or one of 4 1/2 miles (7 1/2km).

The walk starts at "The Queens Head", which is situated on the Old Road at the foot of Meriden Hill on the eastern edge of the village. Those with cars have been given permission to use the Public House car park (GR 4252 2821).

The walks are mostly on public footpaths, but there are two diversions from the legally defined routes as shown on the Ordnance Survey Pathfinder maps. The legally defined routes can be walked, but are less convenient than those detailed in the text. Negotiations are being made with the landowners to resolve the problems.

Opposite the Queens Head climb up the steps to the main road and directly across go through the iron-railed kissing gate. A short leafy section leads to another kissing gate which gives access to a field. Keep the hedge on the left and after two more kissing gates gain access into the churchyard. The construction of this last kissing gate with its curved wooden rails is worthy of note. Continue through the churchyard to Church Lane. The Heart of England Way, which we have been following turns right here - we will use its route later, on our return. We turn left and make our first deviation from the legal route.

Proceed along the road and after the gateway to Fentham, turn right down a short track to the field gate. Climb the stile and diagonally cross the field to the far right corner. Cross the stile by the right hand gate and follow the track with the hedge on the left. After passing a large water trough, gain access into a large field at the second gate on the left. Turn right and Millison's Wood is on the left and a stile is seen in the hedge beyond - aim for this stile. When the Wood gets close, turn right, head for the solitary oak and continue along the wood edge. Cross the fence in the corner and follow the path into the next field. From here we make our second diversion by continuing a short distance round the wood where we turn left up the track which leads to Back Lane.

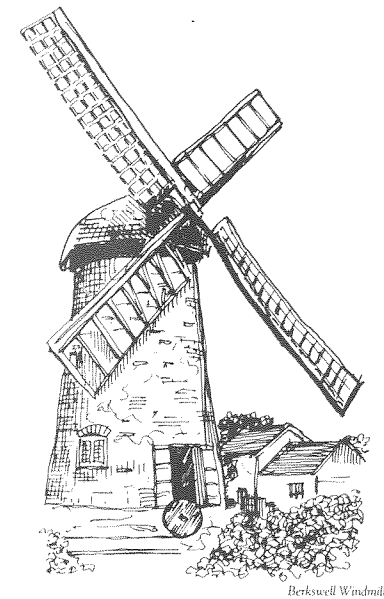


FOR THOSE ON THE SHORTER WALK, turn right here and follow the road for 1/2 mile (750m) to the signpost on the right to The Byre, where the longer route is re-joined. THOSE ON THE LONGER WALK, turn left at the road, continue along past Larges Farm and gain access into the field opposite the entrance to Oak Farm. Head for the section of fencing in the far left hand corner of this field. Take care crossing over this fence - the farmer has a stile kit to erect here. Continuing on much the same line, cross the next field to the gate in the left hand corner. A second gate takes us into Broad Lane where we turn right. Continue along this road for 1/2 mile (750m) and at Hill Cottage take the track on the right leading to Hill House Farm. Where the track bends to the right, continue straight on and at the gate turn left. Keep the hedge, and the first of many ponds, on our left and cross over the iron railings in the corner. Follow the hedge/fence in the next field to the gate where we rejoin the Heart of England Way and then diagonally cross the same field to the oak trees which surround a pond and which hide the stile in the corner. Follow the hedge on the left, then a track through a gateway where the hedge is then on the right - to a galvanised gate at Back Lane.

Here the shorter route is re-joined as we cross over the road, up the track signposted The Byre to a stile which takes us into a well maintained grass field. Follow the fence on the right, with views of the Centre of Birmingham in the distance, to another stile. Bear left down to the gate and follow the hedge on the right, crossing three more stiles before Church Lane is reached.

From here there is an option of continuing down Church Lane or turning right and picking up the outward route through the Church yard - both routes lead back to our starting point.

November 1993



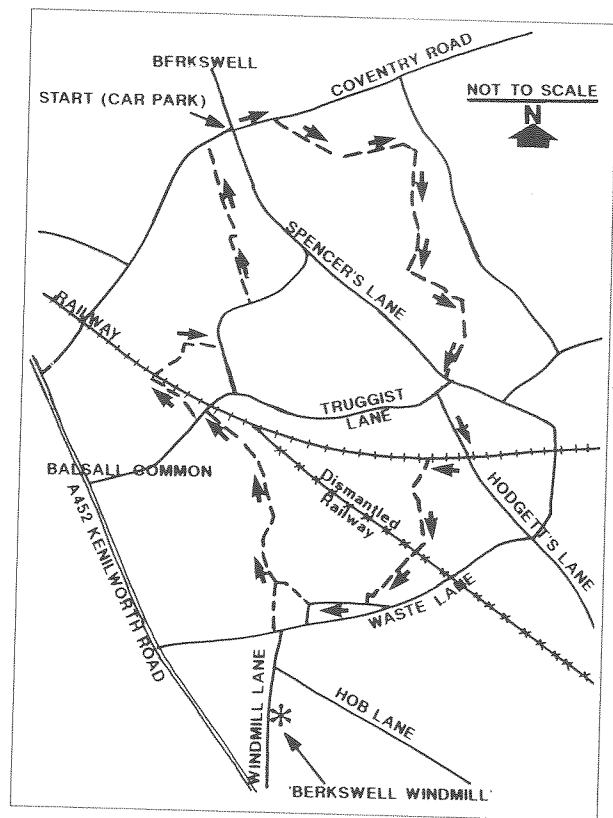
WALK 8

BERKSWELL - BALSALL COMMON 5 MILES

This circular walk is from Berkswell southwards towards Berkswell Windmill and Balsall Common. It shows us a variety of land usage from arable to dairy farming and with some fields used as grazing for horses and sheep. The walk is approximately 5 miles (8km) long and will take a minimum of 2 hours to complete - this does not include the spur to Berkswell Windmill, should you wish to see this late 18th/early 19th Century listed building.

From Berkswell Parish Council Car Park (GR 4245 2791) in the centre of the village, turn left to the crossroads at The Bear and continue up Coventry Road. After Pound Close and at the speed limit road sign, turn right between two fences to a stile. Diagonally cross this field between the two clumps of trees and over the rise the next stile can be seen in the distance. Cross the track and the stile opposite, from where, bearing slightly left, we see the next stile in the hedge. From here we cross the field - aiming for the right hand white house - this leads to a stile at the end of a tarmac drive - we don't cross this stile, but, continue around the field keeping the hedge on our left.

At the hedge corner we go across the field to the hedge corner to the left of and in front of the pylon. We follow this hedge (on our right) to cross over the stile in the corner and then follow the hedge, now on our left, to the next corner by the pond. Cross the stile and turn left following the hedge on the left to another stile. Still following this hedge/fence and negotiating a wet section as best we can, another stile is seen in the hedge in front. We don't cross this stile, but, turn right following the hedge over a bridge and then a stile - from here we bear right to a concrete bridge and gain access onto Spencer Lane to the right of the houses.



At the lane turn left, then right along Truggist Lane and then left up Hodgetts Lane. After crossing the railway bridge take the track on the right parallel with the railway cutting. Immediately after Beechwood Farm Cottage cross the stile on the left, diagonally cross the

field to a stile and then another stile between two white gates. We then follow the hedge on the right to the dismantled railway. Cross over the old railway and then follow the hedge on the right until before the buildings, a section between fences takes us to a track which goes between the buildings to Waste Lane. Turn right and where the road bends we turn right after Foxfield (A - see the end of the text for the route from here to Berkswell Windmill) down the track which leads to the open fields where we turn left to follow the hedge to a stile which we cross and turn right (B). We pass through two fields with the hedge on the right and then diagonally cross the next narrow field to a stile at the hedge corner. We then pass through two more fields with the hedge on the right - at the far corner of this second field we cross the stile, turn left and follow the hedge on the left towards Berkswell Station.

Turn left at the main road and then right up the track after the Railway Inn. Just before the brick gate pillar, turn right through the hedge and then diagonally up the field to the right of the green shed. Following the railway we turn right over the bridge, then head for the gateway and then slightly left across to a footbridge. Follow the stream (on the right) to Baulk Lane. Turn left along the lane and then left up the track to Ram Hall. Opposite the 16th Century Hall cross the stile by the signpost to avoid a muddy section where cows congregate - beyond the end of the farm buildings cross the stile by the gate and follow the field hedge on the right - to near the far corner of the second field where we turn right over the stile and follow the hedge, now on the left, back to Berkswell.

From (A), if we want to visit Berkswell Windmill, we continue along "old" Waste Lane to the main road where we turn right and then first left up Windmill Lane - the windmill is 450 metres up this road on the left. The windmill is situated close to the road, but is only open to the Public on Sundays and Bank Holidays from Easter to the end of September between 1430 and 1700 hours. To rejoin the route we can either retrace our steps or at the main road turn left and immediately after the bus shelter on the opposite side, go alongside the hedge and round the side of No. 105 to rejoin the route at the stile on the right (B) - some 270 metres north from the house.

It may seem an anomaly that Berkswell Windmill and Berkswell Station are so named when they are much nearer to the larger Balsall Common, than the village of Berkswell - but as both lie in the Parish of Berkswell, this is obviously where they get their name.

December 1993



High Street, Knowle

WALK 9

KNOWLE - GRAND UNION CANAL 4 1/4 OR 6 1/2 MILES

This circular walk starts from the car park at Jobs Close Park, Longdon Road, Knowle (GR 4177 2768). Jobs Close Park was purchased by the Council in 1946 and comprises of some 20 acres. Toilet facilities are available near Lodge Road adjacent to the tennis courts and children's play area - should they be closed, toilets are also available at the junction of Warwick Road and Station Road.

A choice of two walks are offered, the shorter is approximately 4 1/4 miles (7km) long, the longer is approximately 6 1/2 miles (10 1/2km), both over Public Rights of Way and the Grand Union Canal towpath (a permissive route, apart from the section between the footbridge and Hampton Road which is a Public Right of way).

From the car park bear right across the park following the line of trees alongside Purnell's Brook, the medieval boundary brook separating the Manors of Longdon and Knowle, to the tarmac footpath in the corner. Going through the hedge leads to a smaller area of public open space flanked by housing on each side. Within this area, surrounded by a post and wire fence, is the Knowle Nature Reserve.

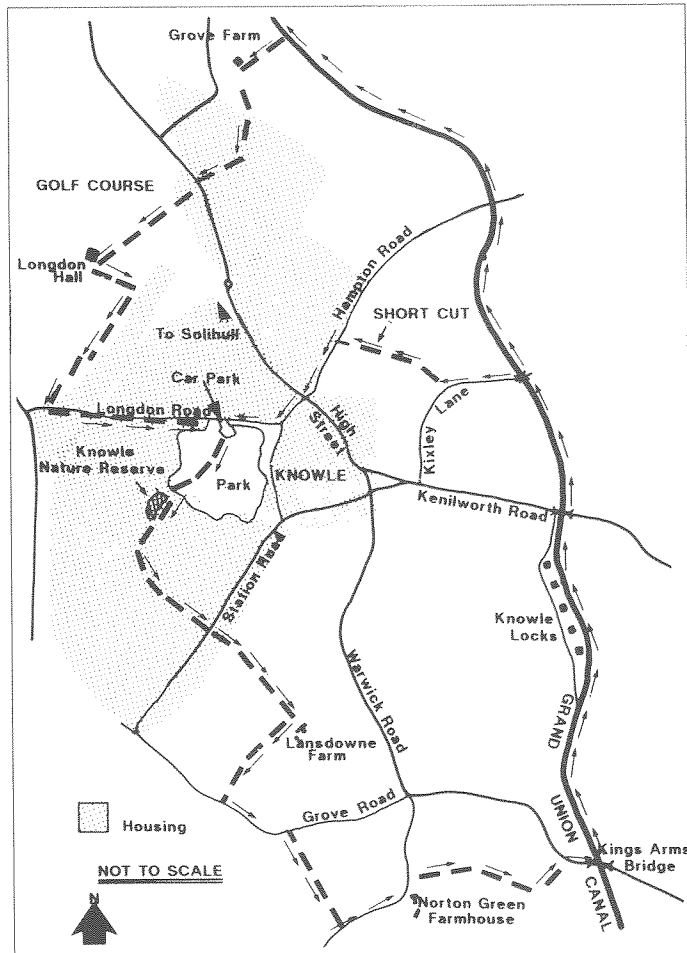
When the former Burton's Dairy Farm was released for housing in 1971, The Knowle Society negotiated with the Developer to save this rare site. It is now pre-

served as a small nature reserve managed by The Knowle Society. Due to its fragile nature please view this tiny fragment of Knowle's rural past from the outside - from either of the paths which surround it. The Reserve comprises two bog meadows separated by an Alder Copse and the rich variety of plant life indicate an area of Ancient Woodland - the medieval Forest of Arden. Those wishing further information should get a copy of the Society's leaflet or attend their Annual Open Day.

After passing the Reserve, follow Hillmorton Road to the junction with Purnells Way. Turn left here and at the next junction with Station Road turn right. Almost opposite, go along the bridleway at the sign "Greswolde House". At the entrance to Lansdowne Farm, turn right and follow this hedge. Look out for the stile at the end of the close board fence in the field at the back of the former Hospital buildings. Go up between the fences to Grove Road and turn left. (NB. A slight diversion is under consideration to divert the footpath to the edge of the two "hospital" fields - because of a building development proposal). Follow this road until on the farthest hedge line of No. 76 - go up the side of the front garden and next to the garage, follow a path which goes between the back gardens to the fields beyond. Follow the hedge on the left and at the next field cross over to the stile which can be seen to the left of the Oak trees.

At Norton Green Lane turn left past the picturesque 16th century "Norton Green Farmhouse" and then right along the track after the end bungalow. Picking our way through accumulated building materials and rubbish, (often complained about over the years!) we cross the stile and follow the hedge on the left to a dilapidated gate at a pond. We then follow the hedge which is now on the right, to a stile where we cross over towards the house. Waymarkers lead us around the house to the access drive and on to Warwick Road. Turn right and after crossing the "Kings Arms Bridge", bear right down to the towpath. At the towpath turn right northwards alongside the Grand Union Canal on British Waterways long distance towpath walk opened in 1993 to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Acts of Parliament passed to build the canal. Just beyond Knowle Locks, at the boat yard, a sign gives the limits of this walk - 124 miles back to London (Little Venice) and a mere 13 miles to Birmingham (Gas Street Basin).

After the boat yard we continue under Kenilworth Road and FOR THE SHORTER WALK, bear off the towpath to cross over the next bridge at Kixley Wharf. Follow this road to a stile on the right by the signpost just after the turning circle. From here aim for the footbridge and follow this well used path to Hampton Road. The two stiles either side of the footbridge have recently been altered by the Council to give older walkers easier access (a need perceived by The Knowle Society). Turn left at Hampton Road and at the end of Knowle High Street, cross over to Lodge Road and then right down Longdon Road and back to the car park.



FOR THE LONGER WALK: continue along the towpath under the bridge at Kixley Wharf, under the footbridge, under Hampton Road and bear right up to the track at the next bridge (No. 75 - number on far side). ^{W) 2011 4th Hampton D (CREW CONCRETE)} Turn left and continue to Grove Farm. Pass close to the side of the left hand building to the kissing gate. Continue down the drive and at the signpost on the left, cross the stile. Follow the path to the track, turn right and continue to the road (Queen Eleanor's Drive). Pick up the path again at the side of No. 26 and after passing Keepers Cottage turn right down the tarmac drive to Warwick Road. Cross the road and proceed down the drive between the pillars of No.1266. Watch out for flying golf balls where the drive crosses Copt Heath Golf Course. Beyond Longdon Hall, turn left at the signpost and follow the fence round the edge of the golf course to Longdon Road. Turn left down this road and back to the car park.

January 1994

HIKERS HEAVEN

*Mount a crooked little stile and climb a craggy hill,
Gaze down upon the world below, so far away - so still,
The far-off hills of misty blue majestically stand,
Through time immemorial they remain, stern guardians of the land.
Through summer's gold and winter's chill this place in beauty stays,
To welcome all who wander through its green and pleasant ways.
The folk who've never climbed a hill nor heard the curlew's cry,
Will never know the beauty that they their hearts deny.*

Georgina Hall



St Lorraine's Church & Church Farm, Meriden Hill

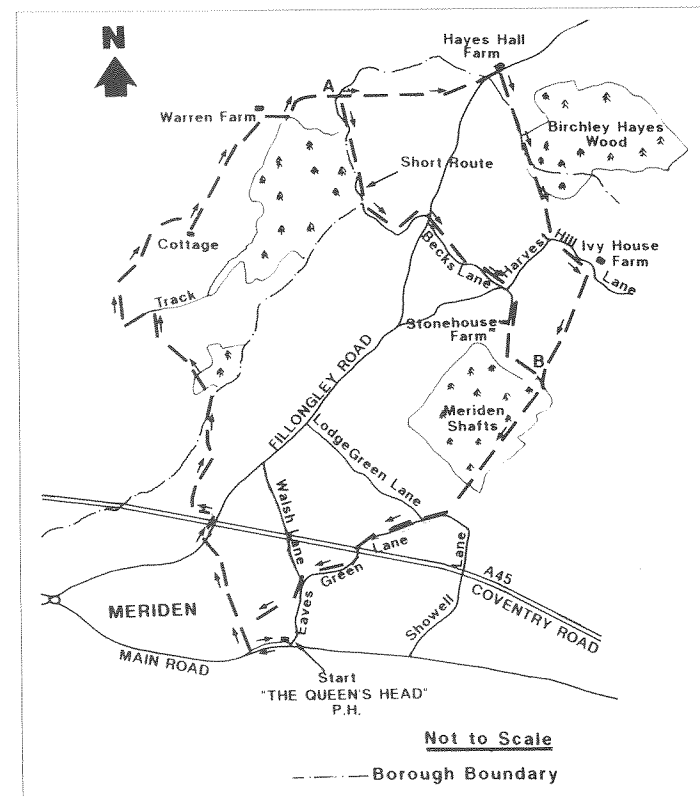
WALK 10

MERIDEN HILL - KINWALSEY 6 OR 6 1/2 MILES

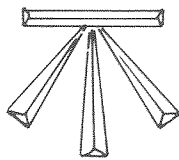
This walk starts from the eastern edge of the village of Meriden and proceeds northwards over Public Rights of Way to the Borough boundary and beyond into Warwickshire. A minimum of 2 1/2 hours should be allowed to complete the walk of approx. 6 1/2 miles (10km). The distance can be reduced by 1/2 mile by walking along narrow country lanes rather than using the public foot paths. Public toilets are available at Main Road, Meriden opposite the Police Station. The starting point is "The Queens Head" situated on the Old Road at the foot of Meriden Hill. Those with cars have been given permission to use the Public House Car Park (GR 4252 2821).

From the car park turn right along Old Road. Before No. 185 (Fenwick) turn right into the field - head for the scaffolding stile and follow a well defined path around the field edges to Fillongley Road. Turn right at the road and after crossing the A45 turn left along the top of the A45 cutting to a stile. Bear left to the fence by the Oak tree, then cross the field aiming for the wood on the skyline - as you get closer a gap in the hedge reveals a stile - cross over it and follow the hedge, on the left, to the field corner where another stile leads us into Warwickshire where we cross a narrow field and go into the wood. After passing through the wood, we follow a hedge on the right to a stile which takes us into a large open field. Down

in the bottom left corner, there appears to be two white notices, and to the right of them, is a marker post on the wood corner - we cross the field aiming for this post. As we get nearer to the post we see that what appeared to be notices are in fact Beehives! At the post turn right and follow the wood round to a track. Turn left and look out for a stile on the right. This stile takes us through a short wooded section which leads to a field - we go down the side of this field for a short distance and then cross over the stile on the right. We follow the hedge in this narrow field to a stile in the corner and then follow the hedge beyond until a marker post directs us through the hedge to a track - turn right up to the cottage. At the cottage boundary we turn left heading for a waymarker on a telegraph pole which leads us to a stile in the hedge beyond. From here we cross a large field following the line of telegraph poles to a lane where we turn right.



We pass Warren Farm House with its imposing gateway and after the wood we notice a well at the side of the lane. Cut into the stonework of the well is an Ordnance Survey Benchmark. The now mostly redundant triangulation pillar is well known and gives an exact co-ordinated position. The more common, but less visible benchmark is also used by Land Surveyors - the centre of the bar above the arrow gives the height above mean sea level. The height of this benchmark is 139.14 metres. When we reach the road junction (A - see the end of the text for the shorter route from here), almost opposite, but slightly left a foot-bridge leads to a stile and back into Solihull. From the stile we go straight up the field to the top right corner. We follow the hedge beyond, turning left through the gate just before the copse encircling the pond - here we join the Heart of England Way. Continuing along the hedge, go over the stile in the gap in the hedge just before the Ash tree - this takes us past a farmhouse and outbuildings to a gateway at Fillongley Road. Turn left and then go through the gate opposite Hayes Hall Farm - turn right and follow the track round the field edge to Birchley Hayes Wood. Continue around the edge of the wood, until at the marker post we turn right over to a stile and bridge. Crossing the next field takes us to Harvest Hill Lane where we turn left. After Ivy House Farm we turn right past the ruin and follow the hedge towards the larch trees of Meriden Shafts. Crossing the stile (B) we turn left along the Bridleway for a short distance where a stile on the right takes us into the wood. After coming out of the wood a well waymarked path takes us through a Riding School and on to Showell Lane. Turn right and at the next junction go down Eaves Green Lane, which takes us under the A45 and past Walsh Lane on the right. Opposite Village Farm go through the gate (where we leave the Heart of England Way which continues down the road) and follow the hedge which takes us back to the first field we crossed - with the scaffolding stile.



For the shorter route from the road junction (A) turn right along Kinwalsey Lane to Fillongley Road. Turn right and then first left down Becks Lane, past Shaft Lane on the right and Harvest Hill Lane on the left, to pick up the bridleway beyond Stonehouse Farm. We rejoin the slightly longer route at the stile on the left (B).

February 1994

WALK 11

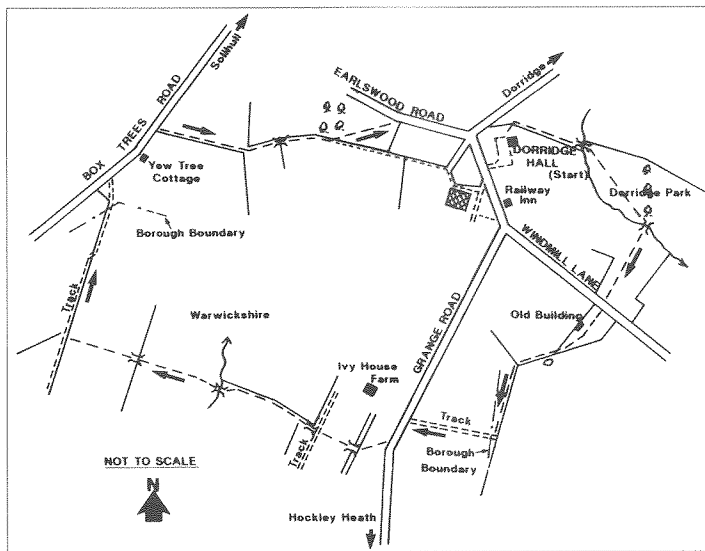
DORRIDGE - HOCKLEY HEATH 2 3/4 MILES

This walk is a short circular walk of approximately 2 3/4 miles (4 1/2 km) starting from Dorridge Village Hall car park (GR 4164 2744) off Grange Road on the southern outskirts of Dorridge. It will take a minimum of 1 hour to complete. Part of the route is in Warwickshire, but nevertheless most of the land walked in that County is owned by Solihull Council.

Dorridge was principally a product of the railway age. Following the completion of the station in 1878, expansion rapidly took place. It now has a small, modern shopping precinct.

From the car park head towards Dorridge on the tarmac footpath and after going through the hedge line we enter Dorridge Park. Dorridge Park comprises of 51 acres of woodland and grassland. Turn right after the hedge and having crossed the bridge, leave the path and bear right past the climbing frame and slide. Where the row of mature oak trees in the middle of the park meets the stream on the right there is a footbridge. Cross over the stream (some of the water might feed the Grand Union Canal at Heronfield) and proceed up the middle of the field to the stile at Windmill Road. Cross over the stile opposite where a well-worn path takes us to another stile where the field comes to a point. Follow the hedge on the left and at the next stile, turn left and continue with the hedge on the left till we meet a track. Turn right here, up the track to Grange Road.

Turn left and cross over the stile some 75 yards along the road on the opposite side. This takes us into Ivy House Farm, owned by the Council. Planning permission to create a 27 Hole public golf course has been granted, but the detailed plans have yet to be approved. These plans show that the course has been designed around the public footpaths which will remain in their present position. Bear left from the roadside stile to another stile and bridge and then follow a well-worn path across the next field to a small footbridge by the track. Follow the hedge on the right, when we reach the brow of the hill we can see our route in the next field, but first we must go down the hill to the end of the hedge to another footbridge.



The path continues across the field to another footbridge at the next hedgeline and then over to the next hedge where we meet a track. Turn right and follow this track to Box Trees Road. N.B. the map correctly shows the footpath as being on the inside of this hedge, but, the track affords better walking conditions. At the road, turn right past Yew Tree Cottage and at the signpost cross into the field. This path, with the hedge on the right, takes us to a gap in the hedge which we go through and then we follow the hedge now on the left. At the corner of this field we find a footbridge hidden in the undergrowth. We continue with the hedge on the left and we cross over the stile* when it becomes a fence. We then diagonally cross this small field to the corner at Earlswood Road. Turn right here and at the junction, the village hall is on the opposite side of the road.

*On that idyllic summer's day, some may rather wish to proceed along the fence (on a recently diverted footpath) to view some cricket. Overlooking the ground is Woolman's Nursery renowned for their chrysanthemums. From the ground return to the car park either by following the footpath round the nursery to Grange Road and past (or through) the Railway Inn or go down the access road to the ground.

March 1994

WALK 12

CHELMSLEY WOOD - COLESHILL 6 OR 6 3/4 MILES

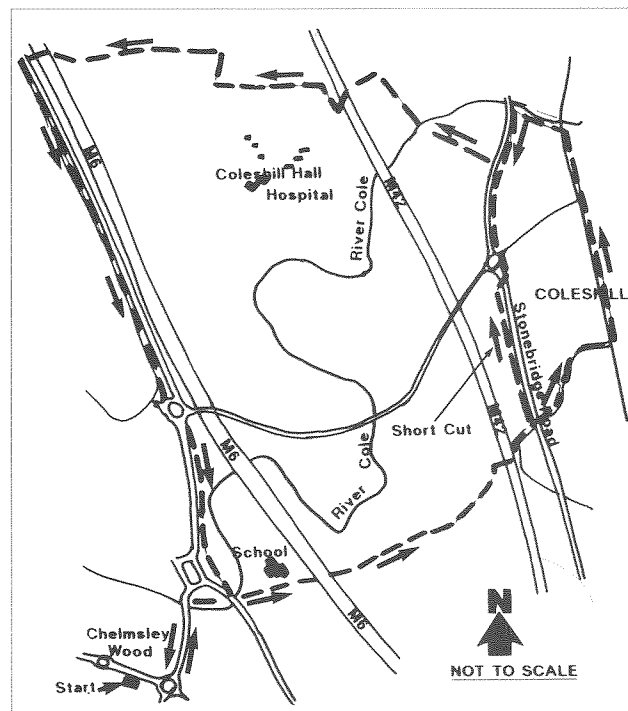
This walk is a circular walk centred on Chelmsley Wood and lying mostly outside the Borough over public footpaths in North Warwickshire Borough Council's area to Coleshill. Within Solihull the walk is through three of the Council's public open space areas. Although wellington boots are not usually recommended for walking - they are likely to be essential for some sections of this walk. To give extra balance on the muddy sections, a stick is also recommended and a pair of secateurs might also be useful.

The walk is approximately 6 3/4 miles (11km) long. It starts from Chelmsley Wood Shopping Centre a complex of over 70 shops including a Food Giant Superstore, Woolworths, Boots and Fosters and a large free car park (GR 4178 2871). From the car park cross over and turn right up Chelmsley Road, passing the remains of "Chelmsley Wood", to a roundabout and then turn left down Moorend Avenue. On your left you will see the Place Garden with its central Ceolmund sculpture. Ceolmund was a saxon farmer who gave his name to Chelmsley. The sculpture is a natural 200 year old wych-elm bole, 3 feet in diameter, which formerly grew in Chelmsley Wood. Proceed down Moorend Avenue to the River Cole bridge, the first meeting with this river on this walk, cross over the road and immediately turn right into Cole Bank Park. Follow the river to Bacon's End Bridge passing underneath the dual carriageway, turn left up to that road, then left and left again to follow the tarmac path past the newly refurbished play area on your left. This path runs into Partridge Close and at the bend with this road and Ryeclose Croft go straight ahead on the tarmac path to the subway under the M6.

The transformation is immediate as another world of fields opens up - a haven amidst a landscape of pylons, cooling towers, high rise flats, motorways and the lofty steeple of the Church of St Peter and St Paul at Coleshill, our destination. Follow this hedge lined track which becomes a narrow path and then a track again.

Eventually the traffic noise recedes and the sound of birds is more dominant. Turn right over the M42 bridge and then turn left up the track to Stonebridge Road.

For those not wishing to visit Coleshill, turn left here and follow the well-defined path between the poplar trees, which hide Coleshill from the west, to the roundabout. Cross over at the roundabout and proceed along the tarmac path on the other side of the dual carriageway. At the reduce speed signs cross over to the kissing gate on the other side via the paved path between the staggered gap in the central crash barrier to rejoin the route. This will reduce the distance by 3/4 mile (1km).



The rest of us will carefully cross over Stonebridge Road (dual carriageway) and continue up Green Lane, taking the tarmac path to the right of the pillar box at Castle Drive and then turning right at the path junction to rejoin Green Lane. At

the road junction turn left up the High Street, past the shops, the aforementioned church and down the hill to the River Cole. Enter the park, keep the river on your right, go under the conduit and turn left following it up to a play area and then onto High Brink Road. Turn right here and where this road bends, turn right again through the gap in the hedge onto Stonebridge Road - opposite is the kissing gate where the short cut route is rejoined.

A well-defined path takes us over two stiles to a footbridge over the River Cole where the next stile can be seen in the distant hedgeline, but, a small footbridge has to be crossed to get to it. At this stile, ignore the waymarker and turn left up the track, over the M42 bridge and turn immediately right down a tarmac track passing a row of derelict houses on your left with the former Coleshill Hall Hospital beyond.

Follow this new track and turn left at the bend up the old track (severed by the M42). This track gets quite wet and muddy in places and here the wellingtons and stick become most useful. Where the track opens out into a grassed area turn right and follow a narrower path. Where the path bends to the left, this leads to a very wet section - to avoid it, continue straight on into the field, turn left and follow the hedge. The field narrows and comes to a hedge - 15 yards before the second last oak tree before this hedge, turn left through the hedge to rejoin the correct path. Turn right and follow the path until it opens out with the footbridge embankment ahead. Turn right on the tarmac path under the footbridge, over the M6 and under the Collector Road to Auckland Drive. Turn left and follow the grassed area between the Collector Road and Auckland Drive (The Ridge Open Space) to the roundabout at Bacon's End Green.

Proceed round the roundabout to a pedestrian creep which leads you into Cole Bank Park which lies between the dual carriageway and the M6. You will not fail to notice the large E11R cipher cut into the bank to commemorate the silver jubilee of the Queen's Coronation in 1978. Continue through this park with the River Cole on your left and note the work done on Project Kingfisher which has created new habitats to enhance the valley both for wildlife and the enjoyment of the public. Follow the river to Bacon's End Bridge and retrace the route back to Moorend Avenue, but, this time cross into the grassland on the west side of this road (Meriden Park) heading for the newly built play area. Follow the paths in the park past the tennis courts, bowling green and lake back to Chelmsley Wood Town Centre.