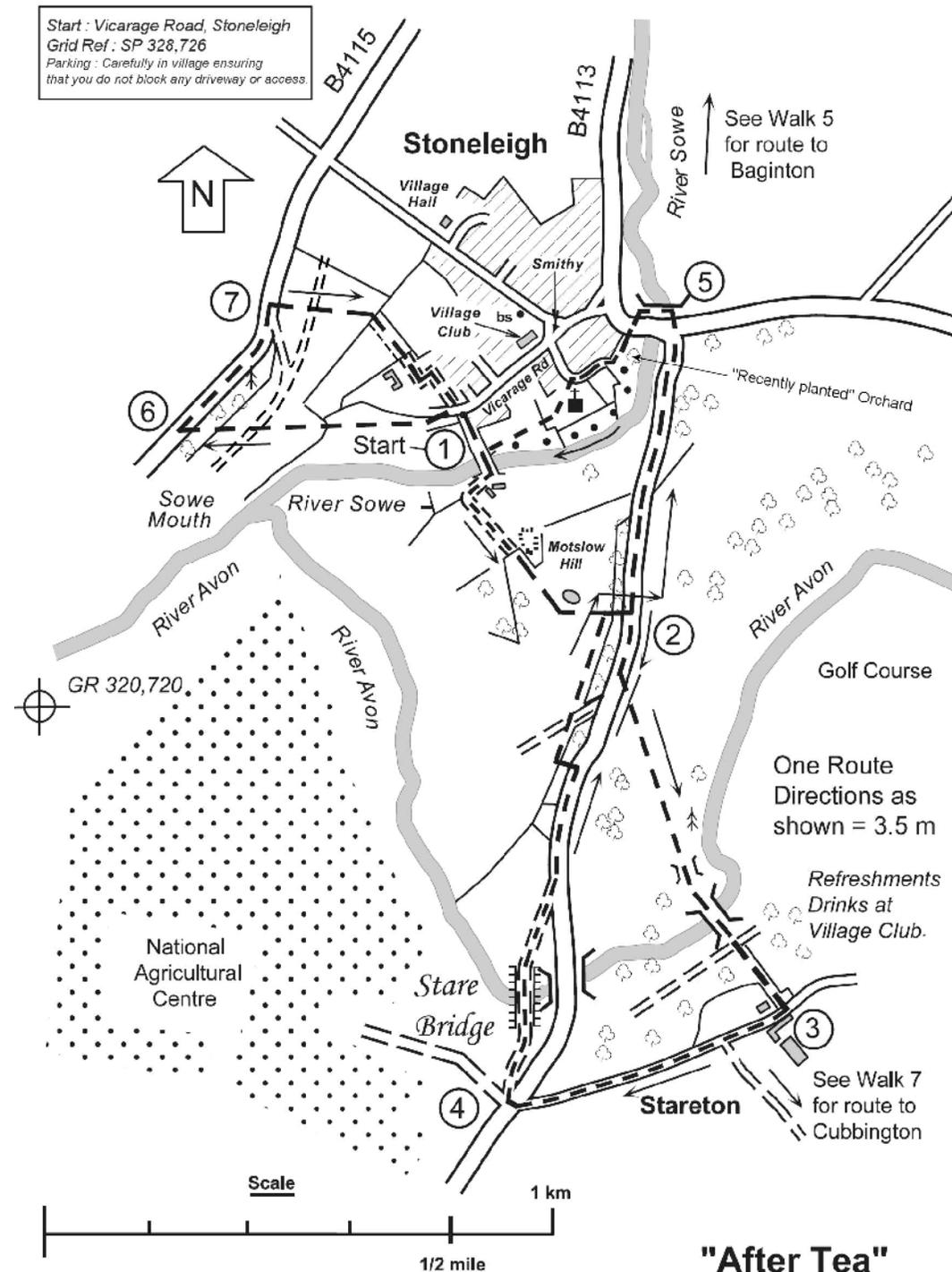


1. Go down surfaced path opposite Holly House and cross f/b over the River Sowe. Follow up through enclosed path that turns right and left to go thro' k/g. **Fwd**, fc-left and continue on same line for 90m, **V/L** at WMP to pass right hand side of fenced pool. **Fwd** thro' k/g's and small copse to road.
2. **T/R** along road for 100m to go thro' k/g on other side of road. **H/R** to shortly go thro' k/g, **H/R** on same line cross-field and go down over small stone bridge and then a f/b over the River Avon. Cross surfaced track and **fwd** up hill, hg/fc-left thro' copse to gain road thro' two gates (Stareton).
3. **T/R** along road for approx. 500m to junction.
4. At junction cross over road to Stoneleigh Park entrance. Immediately **T/R** into the old road and go thro' k/g & over Stare Bridge, thro' bridle gate & continue up to go thro' k/g to main road. **T/L** along verge for 200m and go thro' k/g on left, **fwd** thro' copse to go thro' k/g ahead. **T/R**, copse boundary on right for 350m (crossing over vehicle access), **T/R** thro' k/g's (used earlier) onto main road. **T/L** and walk along pavement & down to the bottom of the hill.
5. **T/L** over road bridge (pedestrian bridge on opposite side). Cross back over road to go thro' gate at end of bridge into an orchard. At this point you can either follow the river bank (Stoneleigh Meadow) or the Right of Way that goes thro' the church yard. For the river bank **H/L**, thro' fence gap and follow riverbank to go thro' p/g to fenced track. [For the church continue **fwd** fc-right (to pass "Wildflower Seeds bed" in summertime) then go thro' p/g to road. **Fwd** along road, go thro' churchyard to exit at k/g. Follow maintained path thro' p/g to fenced track]. **T/R** up to Vicarage Rd. and then **T/L** to go thro' k/g ahead on the left of gate to Wentworth House. Keep house boundary on your right for approx. 50m, **fwd** on same line to fence ahead to go thro' k/g. **H/R** up cross-field crossing surfaced track to go thro' p/g, **fwd** thro' a belt of trees to roadside.
6. **T/R** along verge for 250m, just past vehicle entrance, go thro' k/g on right.
7. **Fwd** cross-field and farm track to go thro' k/g, off field corner. Hg-left down enclosed footpath to go thro' k/g into enclosed footpath. Follow down to Vicarage Road.



"After Tea"

WALK 6 "AFTER TEA"

Start: Vicarage Road,
Stoneleigh
Grid Ref: SP 328,726
Direction: see map
Main Walk: 3.5 miles
OS Maps: Landranger 140
Pathfinder 955
Explorer 221

Parking: Carefully in village,
ensuring that you do not
block any driveway or
access.

The grounds of the NAC, Golf Club, Deer Park, Abbey and an Agricultural Training Centre surround the village.

These are without Rights of Way therefore footpaths directly leading to other villages are few, Baginton (Walk 5) being an exception. Walk 7 can be extended to take in this very pleasant walk.

An excellent view of the village and Coventry beyond can be seen from the top of Motslow Hill near the end of Note 1. You may be able to see the three spires on a good day.

On New Year's Day some of the villagers have a mass walk around some of this route. It is worth noting that the roads can be quite busy at NAC show times.

Stoneleigh Abbey is open to the public.

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

Starting at Vicarage Road, **Stoneleigh** (*Staniei* in DB, a stony woodland clearing) on the River Sowe (*Sowa* in the DB pre English river name). It has a Norman Church and a well-known Smithy on the village green with a distinctive horseshoe built into its brick structure. The village had a pub in the 19th century but it was closed by Lord Leigh after his daughter had been whistled at by "lads who had cycled out from Coventry!" There is now a club, the old village gaol, where you can buy refreshments. Opposite are the alms-houses built by Lady Leigh in the 17th century.

Cross the Sowe by a footbridge passing the restored cottages up to Motslow Hill named from *moot* or meeting place. Its quarry provided stone for the church and alms houses. There is a good viewing point, on private land that overlooks the village and Coventry beyond on the top of Motslow Hill. Cross Leamington Road and the parkland with its old oak trees, down over a packhorse bridge and then a footbridge over the River Avon (from a Celtic word meaning river).

Then uphill to the hamlet of **Stareton**. Thomas Sotherne of *Starton*, left in his will of 1625 twenty shillings yearly to the poor of *Starton* and to the repair of *Starton* footbridge leading to the church at *Stoneley*. Turn right to Stoneleigh Abbey estate founded in the 12th century, now the NAC (National Agricultural Centre), north to cross the Avon again using the 14th century Stare Bridge.



Stare Bridge

Down the steep hill to the junction left over the 19th century bridge and through the Norman St. Mary-the-Virgin's churchyard. Across the field then up the track to Vicarage Lane. Pass Wentworth House, once Stoneleigh Vicarage, cross the fields slightly uphill where views of Sowe Mouth (confluence of Rivers Sowe and Avon) can be seen. North along the road and back down across fields to join an enclosed path back to the village.

Wildlife

With a name like Stoneleigh you would perhaps be expecting some association with rock and this seems to be the case as almost everywhere you look there are small quarries. Most of these are now water filled and it's often difficult to separate the farm ponds from the quarries. The area also contains a network of watercourses and includes the confluence between the River Sowe and the River Avon. These rivers would also have offered up considerable opportunities for quarrying.

Water quality in the River Sowe is much improved with improvements to the Finham Sewage Works to the north. When crossing rivers you may be fortunate enough to hear the characteristic peep and the small flash of blue, which indicates that you've just seen a kingfisher (or indeed a kingfisher has just seen you!).

Narrow bands of oak woodland are complemented by much larger woodland blocks on level ground. Invariably these areas of predominantly oak woodland include a range of tree species not native to the area such as sycamore, horse chestnut, pine, beech and grey poplar. Elm, holly and willow are also well represented in the area and the woods often contain a wide variety of woodland herbs such as enchanter's nightshade, herb robert, woody nightshade and red campion.

Although all pasture, the grassland tends to be agriculturally improved with only small areas of grassland that might support an array of wild species. Some areas where tree felling appears to have taken place are generally quite rich and contain wetland species such as meadowsweet rushes and tall grasses.