

Main Walk

1. Opposite the Priory entrance walk thro' housing estate to reach main road (NB: while new estate is under construction, you may have to divert via Priory Road). T/L & shortly T/R up road (Coalpit Lane) fwd over main road, up minor road ahead then as it bears right WMP x-stile on left and then x-stile on right.



Nicola Bear

Wolston Priory

H/L plus cross-field, x-stile left of lone tree, cross-field, parallel to road hedge on right to reach large hedge gap. Immediately x-stile on right, T/L, fc-left. X-stile in fence ahead & fwd hg-left to field corner. Over stiles & bridge, keep hg-right to field corner over f/b, fwd hg-right, to a f/b on right, **do not go over**, H/L cross-field to right end of wood. Thro' p/g, over bridge & x-stile, cross-field up past a slurry pit on your right, aim 50m left of farm wall to gain minor road at WMP.

2. T/L down road for 120m & at WMP V/R cross-field to x-stiles & steps ahead. Hg-right for 250m to x-double stile ahead. Fwd cross-field leaving hg-left, aim for right corner, over bridge, hg-right, x-stile on right in corner. T/L, hg-left to corner, x-stiles & bridge on left, T/R, hg-right to corner. X-stile, cross-field to gap in opposite hedge, fwd cross-field to go thro' f/g onto road.

3. T/L down road, over railway bridge to road junction, cross main road into School Street. At "The Olde Smithy" T/R down church road. With back to church, thro' k/g, H/L cross-field to far left corner. Thro' k/g & shortly thro' k/g on right, fwd down enclosed path, over track, cross-field to x-stile in fence then long footbridge over River Avon. Thro' mill ruins, H/L at WMP then uphill, to WMP, then on to reach and to go between top two fish ponds. Exit onto road thro' k/g. (Route A see below).

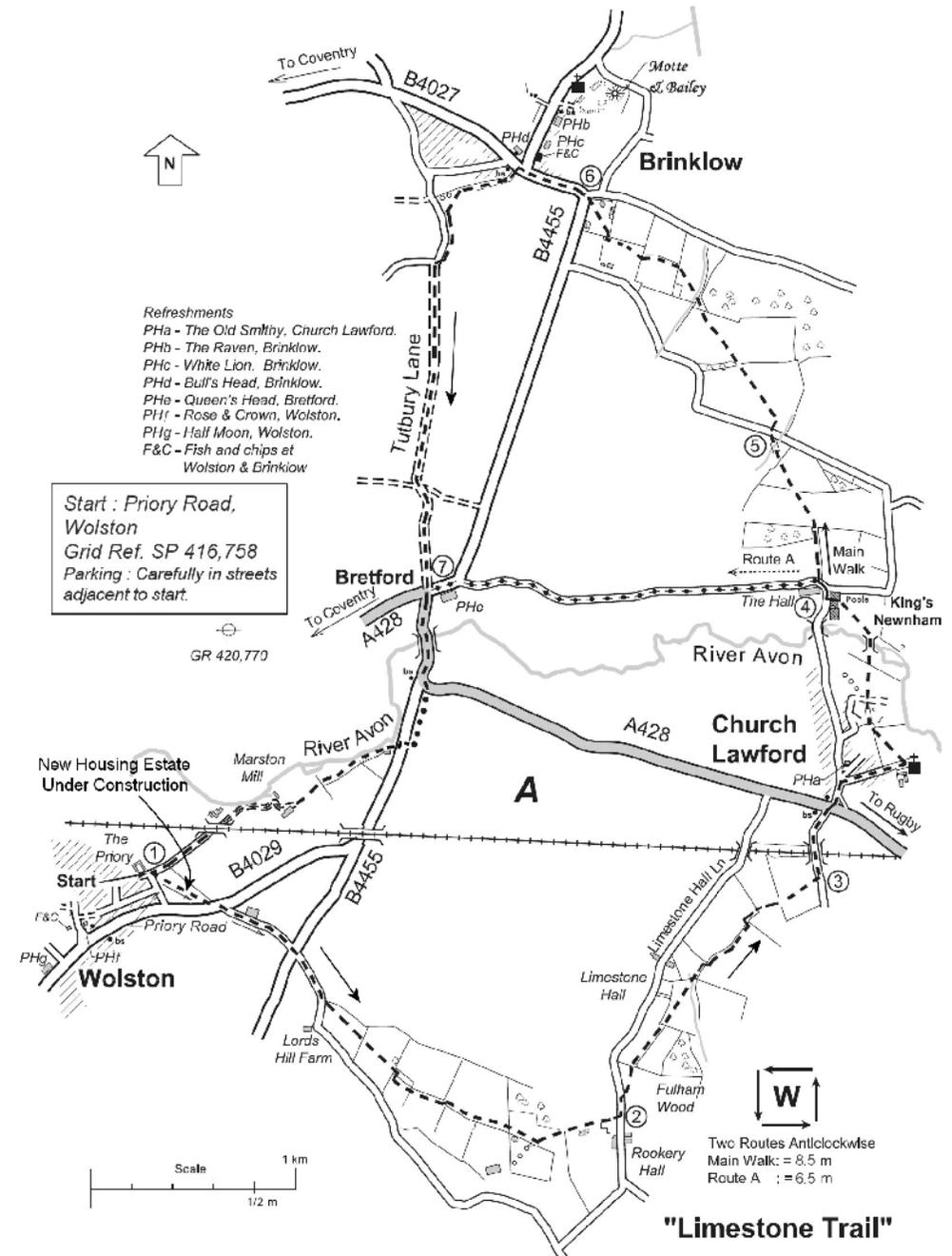
4. T/R up to junction, T/L & immediately T/R thro' k/g. Up track with hg-right fwd up to pass end of wood on left. H/L cross-field to gap in hedge. Fwd on same line cross-field to s/b & x-stile, cross-field to go over f/b ahead. H/R to x-stile onto road.

5. Thro' p/g (in f/g) opposite, H/L cross-field. At right hand end of long copse, fwd on same line cross-field to out of sight WMP at far left corner of wood ahead. Over s/b, keep wood on right for 50m, then T/L at WMP thro' h/g, over s/b & thro' k/g. H/R to reach double f/gs in hedge ahead, thro' k/g on left of two f/gs, fwd hg-right thro' k/g in corner. H/R cross-field to meet hedge on right. Fwd hg-right thro' k/g right of gate. Fwd cross-field to far corner, thro' k/g onto main road.

6. Fwd along main road into Brinklow, pass Broad St on right, shortly & before Heath Lane T/L at WMP into enclosed path behind gardens. Just before stile T/L, hg-right, T/R thro' gateway at end of field onto road. Immediately T/L up bridle track, continue forward at junctions & go down into Bretford.

7. At road fwd, over river bridge to road junction. By bus shelter fwd across road (with care) thro' p/g opposite, T/R, hg-right to exit field thro' k/g in corner. Fwd across road (with care) into drive opposite, go thro' k/g on right at end of drive. River right, fwd over two fields to reach farm buildings. Fwd in front of barn, T/R, & shortly T/L on farm track, fwd over cattle grid then thro' p/g, under railway tunnel & then along road to return to the start.

Route A At the end of Note 3 T/R up to junction, T/L and walk along minor road to Bretford. After joining the main road at Bretford, fwd past The Queen's Head. At junction keep left to traffic lights, continue with Note 7.



WALK 10 "LIMESTONE TRAIL"

Start: Priory Road, Wolston
Grid Ref: SP 416,758
Direction: Anticlockwise
Main Walk: 8.5 miles
Route A: 5.5 miles
OS Maps: Landranger 140
Pathfinder 956
Explorer 222

Parking: Carefully in streets adjacent to start.

The ponds at King's Newnham, according to local knowledge, were drained by pulling the plug out of the lower pool to catch the fish.

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

This walk starts outside Wolston Priory, chiefly Elizabethan though it still has some stones of a priory founded in Norman times. It has a Tudor doorway with a massive old door and a cellar where a company of printers was working in Elizabethan days. Across fields east and north at the back of Limestone Hall, built of limestone locally quarried possibly in the 18th century. At one time limestone was extensively worked in the surrounding area. The workings gave rise to the discovery of the fossilised remains of many prehistoric animals.

So on to **Church Lawford** (*Lelleford* in the DB, *Chirche Lalleford* in 1235, ford of a man called Lealla). In the centre of the village at the Green is The Old Smithy public house, once known as The White Lion. Around the walls inside are many old photos of the village and sales documents of the building when it was sold by the Duke of Buccleuch's estate between the wars and many other interesting documents. In what were the stables there is now "Frankton-Bagby Micro-Brewery" brewing real ale, some of which can be bought in The Old Smithy. In Green Lane can be found the last surviving thatched cottages in the village. Opposite The Old Smithy is the Reading Room, built in 1912, it now serves as the village hall. The Rectory down the main road, formally the residence of the incumbent of St Peter's Church, is now a private house.

The walk goes down Church Road towards St Peter's Church overlooking the River Avon. It was built in 1874 around a former 14th century church, parts of which can still be seen. Adjacent to the church stands the Elizabethan manor house, possibly the oldest complete building in the village.

Walk down the fields to cross the footbridge over the Avon into **King's Newnham**, (*Niwe* old English, the new homestead or enclosure) where there are remains of a water mill. Parts of the machinery and sluices can still be seen. A substantial part of the

structure remained until the 1950s. A fire, however began the decline. A mill mentioned in the DB was probably on the same site. Walkers are urged not to enter the site as it is private property.



Ruins of Mill at King's Newnham

Now into King's Newnham via a footpath between the topmost ponds. The ponds were created by the monks of Kenilworth to breed fish for food. They are still used by members of an angling club. King's Newnham was included in the Manor of *Leileforde* in the DB, but in the reign of Henry II it became a parish in its own right. Across the road is a fine 18th century house, King's Newnham Hall. In the grounds is a church tower, the remains of St Lawrence's Church last used in 1730. In 1852 six lead-lined coffins were found, these were the remains of Francis, Earl of Chichester and his family, plus the remains of a headless man. He is thought to have been a Royalist sympathiser who was beheaded at the same time as Charles I.

Cross the field to skirt the south of **Brinklow** and down Tutbury Lane, an ancient "holloway" which may have linked Bronze and Iron age fields and farms before the Romans built the Fosse Way to reach **Bretford** (early 11th century, probably meaning a ford provided with planks). Bretford Villa, a redbrick house, was the village shop in the early 20th century. The Queen's Head was known as the "Friendly Inn" in 1848 and now incorporates what were separate small cottages. During sewage works in 1989 dozens of old shoes (including a Tudor one, now in Warwick

Museum) were unearthed in front of Ivy Cottage Farm, occupied at the turn of the 19th century by a family of horse-breakers. But Bretford's hey-day was in the early Middle Ages. A long thin garden of the 15th century "Olde Oaks" is probably one of the original plots laid out for the Burgesses of this "town" which failed to develop. In the 12th century a small group of nuns settled here. There was also a leper hospital, its chapel continuing for another 200 years. Bretford Bridge is 18th century, replacing an earlier bridge first mentioned in 1279 and badly damaged in the Civil War. To the left of the bridge can be seen the old route of the Fosse Way as a holloway leading to a ford across the Avon. Marston Mill in the fields between Bretford and Wolston is now a farm on the site of a deserted village. The mill itself, now gone, may date from Domesday and could be the 12th century mill of Coombe Abbey, commanding the land given to Noemi the nun to support the cell at Bretford. Under the railway and back to **Wolston Priory**.

Wildlife

Still within the Dunsmore Heath area the peculiar nature of the underlying geology has added a further dimension of wildlife interest. The acidic layers of sand, gravel and clay typical of the Dunsmore Heath here overlay calcareous Lias layers, which are limestone rocks and clay from the Jurassic period. Over time the River Avon and its myriad of small streams and tributaries have dissected the upper glacial material to reveal the older rocks. Old buildings in the area often include walls of soft limestone blocks and have names with terms such as Limekiln and Limestone. Woodland occurs in the area but only as small relatively isolated patches in the southern extent of the walk such as Dingley Osier, The Thicket and Fulham Wood. The latter of these is an elm woodland, which suffered greatly as a result of Dutch Elm Disease. The others were probably part of an old basket making industry, but the area is no longer fed by the adjacent ditch, and trees such as oak are the

most common here. In the north the much larger All Oaks Wood is no longer true to its name in that the most abundant tree is ash. The ground flora reflects in places the wet conditions that prevail in the wood with species such as sweet woodruff, yellow pimpernel, ragged robin and bugle being the more interesting finds.

Grassland habitats are largely confined to the village fringes and include an area east of Church Lawford that is privately owned and managed largely for nature conservation benefit. Although species such as ox-eye daisy, pignut, germander speedwell, meadow vetchling and buttercups are encountered at Church Lawford, Bretford and Brinklow, other species more indicative of the calcareous nature of the soil can be found and this includes greater knapweed, lady's bedstraw and meadow barley.

Walkers may wish to linger a while on the River Avon crossing north of Church Lawford. Bird life in this area is rich with warblers such as whitethroat and sedge warbler, nesting mute swan, the ubiquitous heron and the possibility of kingfisher. Summer visitors may also encounter the banded demoiselle, a large and most beautiful damselfly that has a curious association with common club-rush. The common club-rush with its dark olive green stems is a characteristic species of deep, slow-flowing rivers; the banded demoiselle relies on this species alone to allow the aquatic born larvae a pathway to the sky.