

WALK 19 "ANCIENT ARDEN"

Start: Junction of Watery Lane & Green Lane, Corley Moor
Alternate start at The White Lion pub in Allesley

Grid Ref: SP 279,850

Direction: Anticlockwise

Main Walk: 8 miles

Route A: 6 miles

OS Maps: Landranger 140
Pathfinder 935
Explorer 221

Parking: Triangle opposite Bull and Butcher.
Alternatively at White Lion, Allesley.
Customers please ask permission

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

Traditionally Warwickshire has been divided into two parts; 'Feldon' and 'Arden'. The Feldon country (the field land) lies to the south of the Avon and was traditionally regarded as the more prosperous, intensively farmed region. Arden (the Woodland), in contrast, was a more hilly landscape (in part above the 500ft contour), with poorer soils and little land under the plough. (Warwickshire CC and Coventry CC have produced landscape and design guidelines to help protect, conserve and reclaim the local character of Arden.)

From Watery Lane in **Corley Moor**, walk along Green Lane left down Windmill Lane right at Birchley Hall Farm to skirt Birchley Hays Wood. Turn left and cross Pickford Brook up to Harvest Hill Lane, before turning left, Marlbrook Hall Farm can be seen with the remains of a moat.

Opposite Ivy House turn right down to Meriden Shafts, so called because of past mining in shallow pits. Turn left on Showell Lane past the old Coventry Water Works, and forward past Alspath Hall on the right, a delightful old farm house. Cross the fields to go over Pickford Brook again, past Harvest Hill Farm and Whitehouse Farm. Look for the view of Coventry spires from the southernmost kissing gate of Alton Hall Farm. Turn right onto Oak Lane to Hawkes End across the River Sherbourne.

Turn left across fields to Piker's Lane, then over fields to Wall Hill Road by the source of the River Sherbourne. Continue past wood on right to then turn left across fields to join Wall Hill Road again. Cross fields by Slashpitts Farm and back to the Mission Church (The Tin Tabernacle) and Green Lane.

Wildlife

A late summer walk on the edge of the Meriden woodland complex includes some interesting grassland features. On reaching Birchley Hays Wood you will discover a young pine plantation (approximately 30 to 40 years old) with an open canopy and a ground flora dominated by bramble. Bluebell, bracken, ferns, foxglove and wood millet also occur with some holly, rowan, birch, oak, hazel, hawthorn and dog rose around the wood's perimeter. A wide and damp woodland ride is visible from the footpath at one point and this contains a wide variety of tussocky grasses and sedges with marsh thistle, figwort, great willowherb, rush and meadow vetchling. This area of conifer plantation gives way to an interesting area of semi-natural oak woodland with ash, birch and some dense area of hazel. Bird life is particularly noted in this wood and it is perhaps worth taking a moment to see what's about. Keep an eye out for buzzards!

As you approach Meriden Shafts you will note that a large part of the woodland has recently been clear felled leaving a small area of broadleaf woodland containing abundant birch with rowan and oak and a stand of young larch plantation. During the spring the area of larch plantation through which the footpath passes contains abundant patches of bluebell but as summer progresses becomes dominated by bracken. Keep an eye open for wood millet, a tall woodland grass, which is quite common in this area.

On exiting the woodland you pass through a couple of fields to the south of Meriden Shafts. These fields are grazed by horses and used in part for horse jumping. The grassland itself is particularly rich and contains species such as devil's bit scabious, betony and meadowsweet. Fragments of semi-natural oak and birch woodland also occur at the perimeter of the grassland and include such species as holly, enchanter's nightshade, wood avens, herb robert and red campion.

On reaching Oak Lane you may wish to take a break and visit one of the smallest nature reserves managed by the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. This reserve is noted for its population of wild daffodil but also contains yarrow, ribwort plantain, black knapweed, common bird's foot trefoil, black medick, sorrel, bluebells and pignut.

Some of the woods date back to the 16th century and earlier.

On Route A, north of Elkin Wood, is the source of Bridle Brook, a tributary of Coventry's River Sherbourne.

Elkin Wood is one of Coventry's Ancient Woodland Nature Reserves (owned by The Woodland Trust).

Was the Tin Tabernacle manufactured by Boulton Paul?

As you head east off Oak Lane you will encounter areas of ridge and furrow, an ancient field pattern, suggesting that the pastures were once used for arable cultivation. The area also contains a small field used for rough grazing containing creeping cinquefoil, bird's foot trefoil and selfheal. The grassland is bordered by a dried up brook dominated by tall aquatic grasses beyond which lies a small area of semi-natural woodland of oak, alder, hazel and ash. Going north from Wall Hill Lane you will encounter an area of oak and birch woodland on a gentle west facing slope with holly, bluebell and bracken. Some hazel and rowan also occurs.

Elkin Wood Route A

Elkin Wood is a 12 acre ancient bluebell woodland that was purchased by The Woodland Trust in 1997 following a year long fund raising campaign, in partnership with Coventry City Council, Allesley Parish Council and the local community. The woodland is now under the long-term management of The Woodland Trust and is freely open to the public to enjoy.

Alternative Start from Allesley (*Alleslega* in 1176, woodland clearing of a man called Aelle).

This alternative start gives more options for public transport and joins the route at Note 6. It adds about 1.4 miles to the route. From bus terminus see map to get to Wall Hill Road.

From the White Lion walk up Wall Hill Road. Go thro' 2nd k/g left (300m), just past old city boundary post. **Fwd** cross field, keep parallel to fence posts on right, past pond on right to p/g, then k/g. **Fwd** to pylon and thro' k/g to lane. **T/L**, after 50m **T/R** onto path, fc-right thro' edge of copse to k/g. **V/R**, via stile & then k/g to cross farm track to go thro' k/g into short path leading to lane. **Fwd** down lane to T-junction, **T/R** up to farm and join walk at Note 6.

Return via same route, or alternatively take Ted Pitts & Hawkes Mill Lanes.