

WALK 7 AS FAR AS THE RIVER LEAM (updated January 2025)

Start: The Old School lay-by, off the A445 opposite Pit Hill and Spring Hill junctions, postcode CV8 3BL

Grid Ref: SP 363 722 **What3Words:** flap.found.ranch

Direction: Anticlockwise

Main Walk: 8.5 miles, with 138m overall ascent

Route A: 4.0 miles with 69m ascent

OS Maps: Landranger 140/151
Explorer 221

Parking: At the start

Alternative parking and also start/finish at:

Bubbenhall: Village Hall, Lower End, CV8 3BW

Grid Ref SP 331 720. What3Words: cracks.agent.learns

Stoneleigh Village Hall, Birmingham Road, CV8 3DD

Grid Ref SP 364 727. What3Words: total.beans.bucked

St Giles' Church, Church Road, CV8 3BE (limited parking)

Grid Ref SP 360 725. What3Words: period.chins.calls

Weston-under-Wetherley: large lay-by on B4453 Rugby Road near St Michael's Church, CV33 9BY

Grid Ref SP 359 692. What3Words: succumbs.sprouting.waffle

Hunningham: The Red Lion, Main Street, CV33 9DY

Grid Ref SP 373 685. What3Words: select.conveying.lushly.

Refreshments/toilets at: The Three Horseshoes, Spring Hill, Bubbenhall;
The Malt Shovel, Lower End, Bubbenhall;
Warwickshire Lavender Farm, Watery Lane, Bubbenhall (check website);
The Red Lion, Main Street, Hunningham

Water tap at St Michael's Church, Weston-under-Wetherley.

This walk explores the ancient Warwickshire landscapes of Arden (woodland) and Feldon (fields) between the Rivers Avon and Leam. The Saxon villages are steeped in history, including sandstone Churches, Medieval Manors and even an Iron Age Hill Fort.

Main Walk

1. From north-east end of old School lay-by, cross Ryton Road (A445 - **care**) into *Spring Hill* opposite. **Ahead** down pavement, passing *The Reading Room* on right, Village Green with water 'spout' on left, and *Three Horseshoes* on right. Cross *Lower End*. See The Manor House. **Ahead** on road, wall on right, joining A Coventry Way. **Ahead** into *Church Road* to end.
2. Through gates into churchyard. **Ahead** on path, St Giles' Church on right. Through kissing gate into field. **Ahead** cross field, trees & River Avon to right. Cross stile/footbridge. **Ahead** on enclosed path. **Turn right** through kissing gate. **Ahead** down enclosed path to road.
3. **Turn left** up road. In 200m at bend (chevrons), cross *Quarryfield House* drive, then **turn right** between yellow-topped posts into enclosed path. Follow path around old quarry on left. At corner, **turn right**, garden on right. **Ahead** to cross stile. **Ahead** down field, fence on right (Warwickshire Lavender Farm). **Turn left** through kissing gate into field. **Beware** badger holes. **Turn right** down field edge for 50m. **Turn right** cross footbridge. Through kissing gate. **Turn left**, fence on right. Through kissing gate to lane (Watery Lane).

4. Cross lane. Through kissing gate opposite. **Turn right & left**, fence on left. Through 2 kissing gates, crossing track. **Bear left** cross field (ridge & furrow) on worn path to yellow-topped post. Through kissing gate. **Ahead**, hedge on right. Through kissing gate. **Turn right** through kissing gate. **Turn left** on field edge, keeping hedge on left. In corner, **turn left** cross footbridge. Through kissing gate, leaving A Coventry Way.

5. **Ahead** through 2 fields, fence/hedge on right, via kissing gate. Through kissing gate to road (A445). Cross road (**care**) into *Waverley Edge Private Drive*. **Ahead** on drive. At end, **keep ahead** into enclosed path on right of *Hamilton House*. **Ahead** on path along edge of Waverley Wood for 400m, keeping garden fences, then road, on left. Emerge onto road (Weston Lane) by waymark post. **Turn right** on road. (**Route A** see below.)

6. **Ahead** on road for 200m. At waymark post on right, **turn right** down & up steps (**care**). Through kissing gate into field. **Bear left** cross field to outward hedge corner. **Turn left & right**, hedge on left. **Turn left** through hedge gap into adjoining field. **Turn right** on field edge, hedge on right. In corner, cross footbridge. Through kissing gate.

7. **Ahead** cross field uphill towards right-hand side of larger tree on skyline. Through hedge gap. **Ahead** cross field (views of Napton & Shuckburgh Hills to left). Through young trees. **Bear left**, passing wooden post on left. Through hedge gap (waymark post on right). **Turn right** down field edge, hedge on right. Through hedge gap. **Ahead**, hedge on right. Through hedge gap. **Ahead**, hedge on right, uphill. Pass power pole on left. **Bear right**, fence on left, to **turn left** through gap on right of double field gates to road (Rugby Road, B4453).

8. **Turn left** on side road, then **ahead** on pavement into Weston-under-Wetherley. Pass St Michael's Church on left (water tap near north side of tower). At road bend (chevrons), **turn right** cross road. Through hand gate in field gate next to *The Glebe House* drive. **Ahead** on path between fences to field. **Turn left** along top of field to corner. Through kissing gate.

9. **Bear right** cross field diagonally downhill to bottom left corner. **Turn left** through kissing gate. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on left. In 150m, **turn left** through kissing gate. **Turn right** on field edge, hedge on right (beware – possible sheep electric fences). Follow field edge round **right & left** bends. Ignore wide gap on right. **Keep ahead** through gate, trees on right. In 80m, **turn right** through kissing gate. Down step (**care**). **Turn left** on field edge, hedge on left. Pass sewage works on left. **Ahead** cross field downhill towards small building. Through kissing gate to road.

10. **Turn right** on road. **Ahead** cross medieval bridge over River Leam into Hunningham. Pass *The Red Lion* on left. Pass *The Old Hall* on right & *Bridge House* on left. At end of cottages on left, **turn left** cross track. Behind number 9 *Elm Farm Cottages* letterbox, **turn left** through bridle gate. **Ahead** into field. **Bear left** on field edge, passing barn conversions on left. Through hedge gap. **Ahead** on field edge, ditch on left. At end, **bear left** through bridle gate. **Bear right** cross field. Cross footbridge over River Leam. Through bridle gate. **Ahead** up field, fence on right, through hill fort ramparts. Through bridle gate at top. Ignore kissing gate on left. **Turn right** on enclosed path into Wappenbury.

11. **Ahead** on track to St John the Baptist Church. **Turn left** on lane. **Ahead** on lane, passing *Roman Camp Farm* on left, to road junction opposite Wappenbury Hall. **Turn left** on road. In 60m, at wall corner on right, **turn right** through hand gate in field gate. **Ahead** up field, wall, then fence/trees on right. 50m from end of trees, **turn right** through kissing gate in fence. **Turn left** around gate. **Ahead**, fence on left, to field gate on left. **Bear right** across field corner. Through waymarked field gate (**care** – gate drops). **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on left, for 400m. Through kissing gate in corner. **Immediately turn left** through field gate. **Ahead**, fence/hedge on right, gradually uphill. Near top, through bridle gate next to power pole. **Ahead** on path through trees, passing barn on left. Cross concrete farm access. Through bridle gate to road (B4453).

12. Bear right cross road (*care* – blind bend) to gravel track. Through bridle gate. **Bear right** through another bridle gate. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right. Through hand gate. **Ahead**, hedge initially on right, then cross field downhill, over stony ditch bridge, to bottom corner at wood edge. Through bridle gate into Wappenbury Wood. **Ahead** on path through boggy area, ignoring side paths, then uphill. At path junction, **turn right**. Follow path uphill, fence on left.

13. At top, ahead cross *Shady Acres* drive. **Ahead** on track, round side of barrier (Nunwood Lane), field on left, then downhill. Where track bends left, **keep ahead** on surfaced path through wood. In 600m, at path junction, **turn right**. Through bridle gate. **Ahead** on path, bending **left** uphill, to join track at field gate on left. **Ahead** on track, passing large barn on right. Through gap at side of field gate to tarmac lane. *Shrubs Lodge* on right.

14. Bear left on lane. In 20m, **turn left** onto gravel. Through kissing gate into Bubbenhall Meadow (noticeboard). **Bear right** to path junction. **Turn right** on path between bushes & young trees, passing seat on right. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on path across meadow. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on surfaced path uphill. Pass bird hide & noticeboard. Views across ponds & meadows to wood. At path junction, **turn right**. Through kissing gate. Cross lane. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** through Warwickshire Wildlife Trust car park, passing seat & noticeboard into Bubbenhall Wood.

15. Ahead on track through wood. At quarry fence & seat, **turn left** (Woodland Loop post). In 50m, at crosspaths junction, **turn right** on path (waymark post).

16. Ahead on enclosed path around wood edge, quarry on right. At fence corner on right, **turn right**, fence on right. **Bear right** cross quarry heavy plant crossing. **Bear left** on enclosed track. **Keep ahead** on track for 400m via gap at side of field gate to road (Leamington Road, A445). **Turn right** on pavement to return to layby.

Route A

1A. Ahead on road for 400m. At waymark post on left, **turn left** down steps. Through kissing gate into field. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on left. In corner, cross footbridge. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** for 20m. **Turn left** through kissing gate, cross footbridge, through hand gate. **Turn right** on enclosed path between hedges. Follow path around edge of landfill site for 350m. Emerge into field.

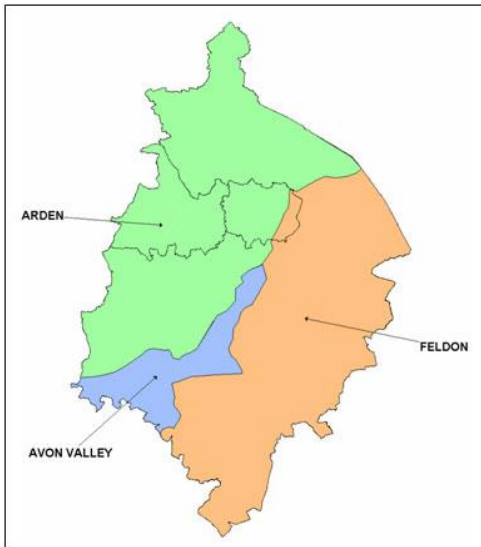
2A. Ahead to power pole on left. **Turn left** on field edge, keeping hedge on left, passing 2 old ponds on right, to field corner by power pole. **Bear left** through bushes. **Turn left** into enclosed path, barbed wire fence on right (*care*). Through gap at end. **Turn right** into another enclosed path, trees on left. Path bends **left**, ditch/garden on right. In 20m, **turn right** up steps. **Ahead**, fence on right. At fence corner/field gate, **turn left** on path into Bubbenhall Wood.

3A. In 70m, at crosstracks junction, **turn left** on track (Woodland Loop). **Ahead** on track round wood, passing seat on right, then seat on left. At crosspaths junction, **turn left** on path (waymark post). Continue with **Note 18**.

A GPX file is available for this walk – refer to ACWA website.

See next page for accompanying notes.

WALK 7 INFORMATION



This walk explores the ancient landscapes of the Forest of Arden (heavily wooded 'high' land) and Feldon (less wooded 'open' land) traditionally split by the River Avon valley.

The heavy clay soils are overlaid by sand and gravel in many areas giving rise to several quarries, yielding evidence of prehistoric hunter-gathering, as well as crop cultivation and livestock pasture from Roman times. Since then, scattered farms, nuclear settlements and open fields with woodland blocks and common land have developed. As an important Palaeolithic site, finds of stone tools, mammal bones and plant fossils have been recorded, some of which may be seen in Market Hall Museum, Warwick.

This handaxe is one of five andesite examples found at



Waverley Wood. They are some of the oldest stone tools in the country.

The andesite rock is likely to have come from the Lake District and was probably deliberately chosen and brought into this area for its colour and appearance, which is very different to the local quartzite. The handaxes were found with the fossilised remains of straight-tusked elephants, prehistoric horse and water voles. Groups of an early form of human, *Homo heidelbergensis*, were moving around the Midlands half a million years ago during an Inter-glacial period. The variety of animal remains gives us some idea about the climate of the time, which was much warmer than today.

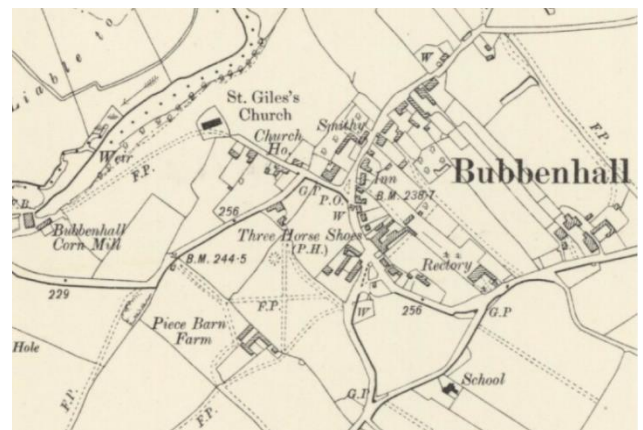


The walk starts at the old **School** layby off Ryton Road, Bubbenhall. The School was built in 1864 (date outlined in bricks!) by public subscription masterminded by the Rector. Records of the School exist from 1877 when a new Rector, Rev. Edward H. Harrison, took charge. *"The conscientious clergyman was not only responsible for much of the financial burden of supporting the school, but also spent a great deal of time in superintending the work of the school and assisting the teacher in hearing lessons."* (Tropp "The School Teachers"). Thus, like all over

the country, Village Schools and Churches became inexorably linked. In 1976, the school was educating children only up to the age of 8, and despite strenuous opposition, the School finally closed in 1999. However, it is still used for education as a Nursery (currently Kids Planet).

Bubbenhall is recorded in the 1086 Domesday Book as 'Bubenhalle' meaning Bubba's Hill. Bubba was a common personal name in Anglo-Saxon times. Also, according to stories told to schoolchildren, the name could have arisen from 'bubbling hole', due to the natural spring, which still flows today.

The old map of Bubbenhall shows the medieval pattern of a row of cottages and farmhouses, each with a croft or close, extending from the Spring to the bottom of the village. Among the early village farms were Cross House (now known as The Manor House and probably the site of a Saxon Hall), Yew Tree Farm (belonging to William Paget, hence Paget's Lane), Home Farm (previously The Moat and the site of the medieval manor), Old House Farm, and Church House Farm (probably the prebendal grange). Wood Farm and Waverley Wood Farm were built around the turn of the 18th century.



In 1086, Bubbenhall Manor was part of the Hundred of Stoneleigh, owned by Robert de Stafford. In 1420, the Lord of the Manor, John Beauchamp, was created a Baron by Richard II and in 1460, the Lord of the Manor was the Duke of Buckingham. In 1717, Bubbenhall became a joint Manor with Baginton under the Lordship of the Bromley family. The whole estate was sold in 1918, enabling villagers and tenant farmers to buy land, cottages and farmhouses.



Walking down Spring Hill, the route first passes **The Reading Room**, erected in 1876 next to the Parish Pound (for impounding stray animals – behind the fence in the photo). Originally, it was a private house, but when it became vacant in 1883, it was bought for the village with money from a bazaar, public subscription, and a cheque from the Rector, the Rev. Edward H. Harrison (again!). The two rooms on the ground floor facing the street were used as men's recreation rooms, whilst the caretaker

occupied the remainder of the house. It served the parish in many ways: as a library; a meeting place for the Women's Institute; a doctor's surgery; and a place to hold jumble sales. It was held under the control of the Charity Commissioners by a small group of trustees who administered its economic affairs. It has now reverted to a private house and community facilities are offered by the Village Hall at the bottom of Lower End.



Then the route passes the original **Village Spring or 'Spout'**. Until the 1960s, this was the main water supply for the whole village. People travelled distances to come and 'take the water', as myth, legend and folk law deemed it the "elixir of life"! Due to the nearby extraction of sand and gravel, the flow had diminished to a trickle and, by 2000, the water was undrinkable. A Restoration Project was completed in 2009. It

created a Village Pond (or pit, as it is on Pit Hill), brought back the spring water source by sinking a new 30m borehole and cleared and landscaped the whole area to restore the Village Green. The 'Spout' now fills a stone water trough and there is a new fountain on the Green. Unfortunately, the majestic oak standing over the 'Spout' in the old postcard is now so heavily pollarded that it is now a mere remnant of itself.



William Pisford was a grocer, Mayor of Coventry in 1500, and founder of the almshouses known as Ford's Hospital, Coventry. In 1528, he purchased five cottages and land in Bubbenhall as a form of endowment for the almshouses. These were the cottages going down Spring Hill to The Cottage. They belonged to Ford's Hospital until the late 19th century. In 1823, Pisford's Charity leased 2 cottages to Thomas Walton, yeoman, who was described as a brewer at the sign of the Horseshoes. This is now the **Three Horseshoes** pub. The 1930s photo shows the post office next door.

Looking down Lower End, **The Malt Shovel** incorporates a 17th century half-timbered building (round the back) with a huge chimney at the gable end. In 1801, it was described as a 'newly-erected malthouse', suggesting that barley was being



processed here. In the 1870s the Malt Shovel was operated by Coventry Brewery. Later, it was operated by several large brewery concerns including Ansell's Brewery Ltd. This is the old pub sign. It is now a free house and even has a caravan site! The building opposite was The Forge (Smithy).



Crossing Lower End, **The Manor House** can be seen. It was stripped down to its original timber framework in the autumn of 1966 by its new owner; the previous owner - Mr. Cowley - having died in Feb 1966. The whole framework was then blown down in a severe storm. It was rebuilt in its current form.

St Giles Church is mainly 13th & 14th century, but the presence of a Norman font, which was used as an animal water trough at the mill for a time, plus the discovery of early burials during excavations, point to an established church here in the 12th century. There are 2 'green men' head corbels supporting the old baptistry arch. The Church had a new peal of six bells installed in the medieval tower for the Millennium celebrations. The churchyard is beautifully kept and the hard-working team of volunteers was delighted to win the area best-kept churchyard competition in 2007.



Poem by Dorrie Johnson – an ex-resident of Bubbenhall:

*Built beacon high,
between Arden's forests and the Felden fields
honouring faith and folklore,
holy water and green man welcoming new life.*

*Broken rows
of land-slipped stones,
some with grief-fresh flowers,
some age-old sandstone, scarred,
unsung.*

*Tithes for the glebe lands
sustaining,
renewing each century or so,
beams, or pews or altar piece.
Bells, recast, jubilant
fire the faithful.*

*Beneath the hill
the moody early reaches of the Avon
worry their way.
Swans, non-conformist, drift.*



Leaving the churchyard, the route traverses a field close to the River Avon. At the end of the field was a **corn mill**, identified on the old map above. It was present in 1629 along with a fulling mill. By 1698, there were also 2 rye mills and a wheat mill. The mill house was a half-timbered structure with extensive outbuildings, mill race, dam and sluice. These can still be seen on an aerial view of the area. The house burnt down in the winter of 1965-6, after which a Coventry builder used the site to build a new house for himself. Behind the conifer hedge, the site is now occupied by the development known as 'Riverside', comprising eleven flats.

Passing up and around **Quarryfield House** disused quarry, it is possible to see exposures of up to 4.5m of massive buff sandstone belonging to the Triassic period. It is probable that stone from this quarry was used to build the Church and other sandstone buildings in the village.

In the summer months the scent of lavender and hum of bees accompanies the walker down the fields by **Warwickshire Lavender Farm**. This enterprise started in 2016 and has grown to occupy 8 acres of lavender, mint and rosemary. There is a distillery for concentrating essential oils and a café in the 19th century barn. Open during June & July – see website for details.



The field next to Broomhill Farm shows evidence of medieval **ridge and furrow** ploughing for arable cultivation in an open-field system. It survives because it has been used for livestock pasture and never been ploughed by modern machinery. Each strip was managed by one family. The movement of soil year after year gradually built the centre of each strip up into a ridge, leaving a furrow in between. The raised ridges offered

better drainage with water draining into the furrows. In damper soil towards the base of the ridge, pulses (peas or beans) or dredge (mixture of oats and barley) were sown, whereas wheat was sown on the ridges. Traditionally, strips were one furlong (furrow-long) in length (200 metres) and up to a chain wide (20 metres). Due to erosion, the height difference in surviving ridge and furrow is much lower than it would have been in medieval times. Then it would have been up to 1.8 metres!

The walk through the edge of **Waverley Wood** is along a bank and ditch. These are part of a medieval network of earthworks associated with woodland management. Crossing the field on leaving Weston Lane posed a very different sight during the Second World War. Here was a lighting and fire-bombing civil decoy site designed to confuse the enemy into dropping their bombs in the wrong place. It was set up to simulate factory lighting as a way of protecting Armstrong Whitworth at Baginton. No trace of the site remains.



Onward across fields to **Weston-under-Wetherley**. Passing **St Michael's Church**, the red sandstone tower is particularly striking. There is evidence of a 12th century Church here, but this was rebuilt in the 13th century with the construction of the tower in the 14th century. The Church is unusual in retaining a complete 13th century aisle.

The route soon leaves the village, but, looking to the left of the path, an island of modern houses can be seen. This was the site of the

Warwickshire Reformatory School for boys built in 1856. Parliament's 'Young Offenders Act' of 1854 aimed to replace deterrence and retribution (mainly prison sentences) with reformation and restoration to a useful place in society. Lord Leigh was the scheme's main proponent, financial contributor and donated



the land on which the School was built. Boys between the ages of 8-18 were admitted and, in addition to classroom lessons, were mainly occupied with agricultural work.

In 1869, it was noted that 'Lord Leigh's interest in the school has enabled 12 of the boys to emigrate during the year'. During the evening of Sunday, 3rd September 1886, 41 inmates make

their escape committing great devastation in allotment gardens and engaging in a desperate encounter with the police in Coventry. Within 24 hours all the boys were captured and returned. The ringleaders were sentenced to jail and hard labour. Others received punishments, like whipping and solitary confinement, according to the part they had played in the outbreak and the rules of the establishment. The outcome of the investigation and punishments meant that there was never any repetition of the affair.

Indeed, the reformatory gained an excellent reputation for the admirable work it had done in the direction of reclaiming lads from the labyrinths of crime. In 1892, boys were learning trades, like tailoring or carpentry, as well as producing vegetables for sale. Some joined the military as army bandsmen after learning to play instruments in the school's brass band. In 1904, the school's capacity increased to 100 boys and, the following year, adopted the title of Weston Training School for Boys.

The photo above is dated 1920 and the School finally closed in 1928.

The buildings were taken over by Warwickshire County Council in 1929 to form the nucleus of a 'colony' – a more-or-less self-supporting community of people with mental illness or learning disability. **Weston Hospital** was a satellite of the lunatic asylum at Hatton, near Warwick. After closure in the 1990s, the buildings were retained and converted into residential properties, together with the development of a modern housing estate.



Reaching the **River Leam**, the route uses a footbridge to cross the river. Prior to the construction of the modern bridge, there was a post-medieval timber bridge here (photo). This was also the site of Weston Mill, though only brick foundations survive, together with earthwork traces of water courses. The route follows the bank of the River Leam, meaning 'elm tree river'. It rises at Hellidon Hill in Northamptonshire and flows through rural Warwickshire before draining into the River Avon between Leamington Spa and Warwick.

Approaching **Hunningham**, walkers pass through an area of medieval settlement earthworks revealing house platforms and boundary banks. Occupational debris, eg building stone, tiles, nails, pottery and oyster shells, from the 13th century have been found. There is a small rectangular earthwork surrounded by a **moat** (shown on the OS map and photo). The platform is a square with sides of about 24m long. It is thought that this may have been the location of a Dutch barn.





Further along in the same field, **St Margaret's Church** can be seen. This is a medieval Church consisting of a choir, central nave, north nave, sacristy, south portico and a wooden bell on the west tympanum. It dates back to the last part of the 13th century.

Hunningham bridge over the River Leam has medieval origins, though the present structure is mostly post-medieval (1651)



with later repairs. It has 3 arches over the river and 1 flood arch at each end. The buttresses are exceptionally large for a bridge of this type. The recesses are very handy, as the roadway is rather narrow and only 1 vehicle can pass across at a time.



Next to the bridge is **The Red Lion** with its spectacular riverside setting. The building is 16th century and patrons travel from far and wide to sample its food for the soul!

Hunningham is a medieval Manor, whose history is of great interest, because it has been documented continuously for over a thousand years, from the Domesday Book to the present day. The descent of the Manor includes the Baron Leighs of Stoneleigh



Abbey, who held the Lordship of the Manor for 300 years. In 2020, the Lordship and holder of all rights associated with the Manor was bought by Dr. Luca Lombardi of Bari, Italy.

The Old Hall is a Grade II listed post-medieval Manor house. It retains 17th century timber-framing in the gables. A notable feature is the massive stone-based chimney stack with diagonally-set brick flues.

From Hunningham, the route follows the ancient trackway to **Wappenbury** (Wappa's Burgh). Crossing the footbridge over the River Leam and climbing the hill into the village is treading in the footsteps of ancient Britons as the walker passes through the eroded ramparts of an **Iron Age Hill Fort**. The village is situated almost entirely within the Fort ramparts, which are now protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument, and can be seen encircling the village on the OS map.



An Iron Age coin dating from the reign of Cunobeline was found here. Cunobeline was a Celtic King of the Britons from around AD10 to AD40, immediately before the Roman Invasion. His name means 'strong as a dog'. A Neolithic stone hammer was also found here, indicating occupation of the area from prehistoric times. Later finds include Romano-British

pottery and kilns dating from AD350, plus a spindle whorl, an oblong bone dice, a bone weaving spear, coins and a brooch; hence the site was set up as a **Roman Camp** not far from the Fosse Way.

There is also evidence of a large **medieval settlement** within the earthworks of the Fort, including house platforms and hollow ways. Finds include two medieval coins, a pin head and a possible sword or dagger chape. Medieval earthwork remains of ridge and furrow cultivation are also evident to the east of the village. In the 14th century, like villages all over the country, Wappenbury was overrun by the plague and most villagers died. As a result, the village has never regained its original size.

St John the Baptist Church stands on a slight mound in the middle of the churchyard. The chancel and nave were built in the 13th century with the tower added a century later. In the churchyard opposite the south door is the square base of a 14th century cross on three octagonal steps. Adjacent to the churchyard is St Anne's Roman Catholic Church, which was built in 1849.



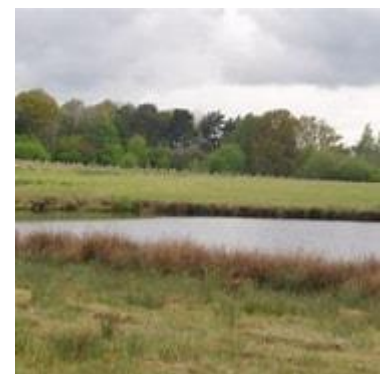
The route passes **Roman Camp Farm** situated centrally within the Fort ramparts. Built in the mid-18th century, the imposing farmhouse is Grade II listed.



Opposite the road junction is a large attractive Edwardian property. Although the building is marked as **Wappenbury Hall** on OS maps, technically it is not a Hall at all. It originated as a small farmhouse up to 1894. It was then extended and considerably altered by a gentleman, who also built the massive oak stables to house his Hackneys which he intended to breed. The stables now serve as a garage and store-rooms. Sir William Lyons of Jaguar fame retired to the Hall in 1972 and enjoyed living there until his death in 1985. He kept award-winning Suffolk sheep and Jersey cattle on the farm estate. The present owners improved the house again, adding a drawing room, the wood panelling in the hall and landscaping the garden to include a swimming pool. The property now operates as a commercial nursery.

Several fields take the walker via Hill Farm to **Wappenbury Wood**. Mentioned in the Domesday Book, records show that Richard of Wappenbury was given modest rights over the wood. By the end of the 15th century, the wood provided a source of fuel, building materials and hunting opportunities for the local community. Medieval ridge and furrow earthworks to the north of the woods, ancient bank boundaries, and the ancient trackway, Nunwood Lane, all provide evidence of the woods' antiquity. Nearly clear-felled twice in the 1940s and 1950s, the wood has been left to regenerate naturally, resulting in a large, semi-natural ancient woodland. It is now managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, who have developed a network of grassy rides and glades offering tranquil walks through a wildlife treasure trove.

The route moves seamlessly into **Bubbenhall Meadow and Wood**, also managed by Warwickshire Wildlife Trust. Enjoy the contrast of the meadow with its open grassland and pools and the ancient woodland. Once farmland, the meadow area was quarried for sand and gravel from 2001 to 2006. It has since been restored to a traditional hay meadow with grazing cattle and sheep, pools rich in waterfowl and planted with native woodland trees. It creates an essential wildlife corridor between the surrounding woods and local habitats, allowing rare species to thrive and greater ecological diversity.



Wildlife



The River Leam supports numerous fish, such as roach, perch and common bream. A magnificent range of dragonflies and damselflies flit along its banks, including banded demoiselle, darters, chasers, hawkers and the emperor dragonfly. Kingfishers can be spotted here and are known to breed along the river. The elusive grass snake may be seen as it swims amongst arrowhead, yellow water-lilies and flowering-rush. At the edge of the river marsh-marigold, yellow iris and purple-loosestrife flower alongside rushes, sweet-grass and common reed.

Otters are gradually re-colonising the county and have been recorded playing in the river in Leamington Spa! Kestrels and barn owls are a wondrous sight as they frequent the fields adjoining the river.

As can be seen on the OS map, the walk passes through the largest cluster of ancient native woodlands in Warwickshire, forming part of the Dunsmore Living Landscape project: *'Our vision is to create an ancient wooded landscape with coppice connected by a network of hedgerows and wild flower meadows, rich in wildlife and accessible to all.'* As well as managing the woods in association with the Warwickshire Wildlife Trust, Woodland Trust and County Council (Country Parks), the project is also proactive in creating living corridors between the woods. These enable the movement of wildlife, which reduces population isolation, which in turn prevents local species extinction and inbreeding, and maintains a healthy gene pool.



The local sand and gravel extraction operations have created opportunities to restore the landscape by developing the country parks and meadows, thus providing the all-important wildlife corridors and mosaic of habitats. Indeed, the endangered Hazel Dormouse was introduced into the local woodlands in 2017 and appears to be thriving. Dormice are naturally arboreal (tree-living) and the wood corridors provide them, not just with food and shelter, but also a safe way to travel without setting foot on the ground.

Historically, an impressive 88 species of birds have been recorded in Wappenbury Wood, with plentiful sightings of warblers, woodpeckers and tawny owl. On a sunny day, butterflies, such as white admiral, purple hairstreak and silver-washed fritillary can be seen. Ground flora include bluebell, wood anemone, wood sorrel, and wood sage, as well as broom, common gorse, honeysuckle, bramble and bracken.

Bubbenhall Wood and Meadow boast an array of 43 different birds, 19 species of butterfly and 27 different types of fungi. Between the hazel, holly, ivy and elder, flowers pop up - from bluebells to wood anemone, wood avens to honeysuckle. Old farm hedges contain hawthorn, blackthorn, occasional oak and willow, providing nesting sites for yellow wagtail and meadow pipit (seriously declining species). View the pools from the bird hide to spot wading birds, including heron, lapwing, oystercatcher, plover and snipe.



Bubbenhall Wood was traditionally managed by coppicing. This is an ancient woodland management technique that dates back to the Stone Age. It involves felling trees at their base to create a 'stool' where new shoots will grow. Most tree species can be coppiced but the best suited of our native trees are hazel, sweet chestnut, ash, lime and willow (osier beds are still marked on OS maps). Coppicing provided a regular source of firewood, charcoal, timber for building, fencing, tool handles, furniture, bean poles and basketry. Today, coppicing is primarily a way of improving the health and

biodiversity of a woodland area by opening it up to the sunlight and allowing a wider range of plants to flourish, which in turn supports a wider range of insects, birds and mammals.

Coppice woodlands are divided into sections called coupes, which are then cut 'on rotation'. The length of the rotation cycle depends on the type of tree and how long it takes to produce poles of a suitable size and length. Hazel is usually coppiced on an 8-year cycle, whereas chestnut has a cycle of 15-20 years. In the first year or two after a tree is coppiced, the young, tender shoots are vulnerable to being nibbled by deer and rabbits, so they need to be protected. Traditionally, this was done by building a 'dead hedge' around the coppice using pruning material from the coppicing. With a coppice in full rotation, there will be a range of habitats, increasing the biodiversity of the wood.

In the 18th century coppicing in Britain began a long decline, brought about by the erosion of the traditional

markets. Firewood was no longer needed for domestic or industrial uses, as coal and coke became easily obtained and transported, and wood as a construction material was gradually replaced by newer materials.