

WALK 8 FIVE VILLAGES (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: 10.1 miles, with 111m overall ascent

Route A: 9.0 miles with 105m ascent

OS Maps: Landranger 140/151

Explorer 221/222

Parking: At the start

Alternative parking and also start/finish at:

Bubbenhall Village Hall, Lower End, CV8 3BW

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

Refreshments/toilets at: The Three Horseshoes, Southam Road, Princethorpe, CV23 9PR

The Oak and Black Dog, Brookside, Stretton-on-Dunsmore, CV23 9LY

The Blacksmiths Arms, High Street, Ryton-on-Dunsmore, CV8 3EY

The Malt Shovel, Lower End, Bubbenhall, CV8 3BW

The Three Horseshoes, Spring Hill, Bubbenhall, CV8 3BD

Route A – Ryton Pools Country Park Visitor Centre

Water tap at All Saints Church, Stretton-on-Dunsmore

This walk visits the five villages of Bubbenhall, Wappenbury, Princethorpe, Stretton-on-Dunsmore and Ryton-on-Dunsmore.

Main Walk

1. From south-west end of old School lay-by, **ahead** on pavement, A445 on right. In 60m, opposite *Pit Hill* junction, **turn left** round side of field gate, signpost *Wappenbury*. **Ahead** on track, fence on left, bushes/trees on right. **Keep ahead** on enclosed track through quarry works. At top, **bear right** cross heavy plant crossing to path between fence on left. **Ahead** to fence corner. **Turn left** into enclosed path, quarry fence on left, wood on right. Follow round to **right** to cross track (waymark post). **Ahead** on ancient pathway between low banks through Bubbenhall Wood.

2. Cross another track. **Ahead** on path to field gate. **Turn right**, fence on left. **Ahead** down steps. **Turn left**. In 20m, bend **right** into enclosed path on edge of garden field. **Ahead** to corner. **Turn left** into enclosed path, **beware** barbed wire on left. **Bear right** into field. **Turn right** on field edge, hedge on right. **Ahead** for 250m, passing 2 old ponds on left, to path junction by power pole on right. **Ahead** cross corner to bushes/trees opposite. **Turn left** around field edge, bushes/trees on right for 90m to waymark post.

3. **Turn right** through bushes. Cross footbridge. **Turn left** on field edge. **Ahead** around field, keeping trees on left & bending **right**. Cross stile. **Ahead** on field edge, trees on left. In 80m, **turn left** cross footbridge. **Ahead** up field to wood edge. **Turn right**, wood on left. Follow round to **left**, passing Wappenbury Wood access on left (noticeboard). In 30m, **bear right** downhill across field, passing bush clump on left, to road (B4453).

4. Cross road into lane opposite. **Bear right** on lane into *Wappenbury* village. Before wall on left, **turn left** through hand gate in field gate. **Ahead** up field, wall, then fence/trees on right. 50m after 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. Ignore field gate on left.

5. Keep ahead on field edge, hedge on left. At end of field, **ahead** through hand gate in field gate. **Bear slightly right** across field to trees on opposite side. **Turn left** cross stile. Cross footbridge. **Ahead** through bushes. Through hand gate into field. **Ahead** up field, passing yellow-banded power pole on right. **Ahead** along ridge towards hedge/fenceline. See tower of Princethorpe College (St Mary's Priory) over to left. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right, downhill. Through gap at side of field gate to road (B4453).

6. Cross road. **Turn right** on pavement into Princethorpe. **Ahead**, passing Priory Farmhouse & School on left, to *Oxford Road* (A423). Cross road (**care** – island refuge to left) into *Sheep Dip Lane*. **Ahead** on lane. In 75m, where lane bends right, **ahead** through kissing gate onto track (*Coffin Walk*). **Keep ahead** into enclosed path, fence on right, then fence on left. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on field edge, bushes/trees on right. Follow round to **right**, fence on right. Through kissing gate into wood. **Ahead** on path through wood, bending **right**. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on enclosed path, fence on right. **Ahead** on gravel drive, passing house (*Stretton Fields Cottage*). At end of drive, **turn left** through hand gate. **Turn right** cross tarmac drive. **Ahead** through kissing gate into field.

7. Ahead cross field to end of hedge. **Bear slightly left** on field edge, hedge on left. **Keep ahead**, crossing track, into narrow enclosed path between bushes. In 150m, cross footbridge. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on path on raised bank (**care**). Through kissing gate into field. **Turn right** through hand gate into enclosed path. **Beware** horse electric fence on right. **Ahead** to gravel area. **Bear right**, *Severn Trent* works on right. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** to cross concrete bridge. **Ahead** through 2 kissing gates. **Ahead** on track, then tarmac drive between renovated houses into Stretton-on-Dunsmore. The houses were The Shoulder of Mutton Inn (look back to see 1820 inscribed in brick).

8. Ahead on road, passing *Manor Drive* on right, to village green (brook, benches & phone box). [For Brookside Stores, ahead to end of green, shop on right. A little further is The Oak & Black Dog pub. Medieval house at opposite end of green is Moor Farmhouse.]

9. Turn sharp left up *Church Hill*, passing *Village Hall* on left, then *All Saints Church* on left (water tap round back of Church). **Ahead** passing *Stretton House*, then *Manor House* on right. From top of hill, follow lane round to **left** & downhill. At bottom, **turn right** into *Fineacre Lane*. (**Route A** see below.)

10. Keep ahead on lane for 700m, ignoring gates/stile on left. **Turn right** at waymark post. Up steps into field. **Ahead** on field edge, trees/hedge on right. In corner, at waymark post, **bear right** cross footbridge. Follow path through trees. Through hand gate. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right. Through hand gate. **Ahead** on enclosed path, fence on left. Ignore stile on right. **Turn left** between allotments. **Turn right**, allotments on right. Through field gate to lane (Plott Lane).

11. Turn left cross lane. Through gap at side of field gate. **Bear right** on enclosed path, passing allotments on right. Through gap by stile to lane (Freeboard Lane). Cross lane. Through kissing gate. **Bear left** across field (Knightlow Hill) to far left corner. Through hedge gap by waymark post. **Ahead** on field edge, keeping hedge on left, downhill through 6 fields via kissing gates. Grange Farm to right at bottom. At end of 6th field, **turn left** through kissing gate. **Ahead** cross *Manor Farm Shop* drive. **Turn left** on pavement, A45 on right.

12. Ahead to roundabout. Cross A445 (*Southam*) using island refuge (**care**). **Ahead** on pavement, A45 on right (**care**). In 350m, at waymark post, **turn left & right** into housing estate. **Ahead** up Coal Yard Road. At number 22 on left, **bear slightly left** onto enclosed surfaced path, fence on left. **Turn left** between fences. **Turn right** up gravel drive to road (High Street, Ryton-on-Dunsmore).

13. Turn left on pavement. Pass *Blacksmiths Arms* on left. **Ahead** to *Co-op* on right. **Turn right** into *Warren Field*. **Ahead** to T-junction. **Turn left & ahead** into *Warren Close*. At number 24 on right, **turn right** onto path by dog poo bin. Through gap at side of kissing gate. **Ahead** on enclosed path, high fence on left. In 250m, at kissing gate on right, **turn sharp left**, joining A Coventry Way. Down surfaced path, through gate between extremely high fences. **Ahead** cross access road (Prologis Park). Follow surfaced path round **left & right** bends. Then **ahead** for 250m to road (A423).

14. Cross road (**care**) to *Millboard* entrance opposite. **Turn left** on pavement. In 50m, **turn right** cross stile. **Bear left**, then **right**, across field (car park to right). **Ahead** through gateway into enclosed path between fences. Follow path for 100m, bending **left**. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on enclosed path, bending **right**. **Beware** barbed wire on left. Down bank. Cross footbridge (**beware** low branches). **Bear left** into field. **Turn right** on field edge, keeping trees on right, & turning **right** at waymark post. **Turn right** into corner. Cross stile. **Bear right & ahead** on track, trees on right. In 150m, **turn left** on field edge, hedge on right. **Ahead** downhill into bottom corner. **Turn right & left** round large oak tree on left. Through gap onto track. **Ahead** on track between fields for 950m, passing liquid fertiliser tank on right. Through gap at side of barrier to road (Lower End). [Bubbenhall Village Hall on left.]

15. Ahead up road into Bubbenhall village. Pass *The Old Forge* on right & *The Malt Shovel* on left. Before T-junction, **bear left** on path into *Spring Hill*, leaving A Coventry Way. See *The Manor House* on right. **Turn left** on pavement. **Ahead** uphill. Pass *The Cottage* on left, then the *Three Horseshoes* on left. See the Village 'Spout' on right. Pass *The Reading Room* on left. 10m after 50mph signs, **bear right** cross road onto tarmac path to road (A445). Cross road (**care**). **Ahead** on tarmac path to return to lay-by.

Route A

1A. In 500m, at 2nd set of field gates, **turn left** cross stile. **Ahead** across field uphill to outward hedge corner. **Bear slightly right** on field edge, hedge on left, to enter Bull & Butcher Wood. **Ahead** on path through wood. Through gap into field. **Ahead** on field edge, trees on left, passing trig point on right. At field corner, **ahead** through bushes to road (A423).

2A. Bear right cross road (**care**) to waymark post. Cross footbridge & stile. **Ahead** on field edge, fence on left, through 2 fields via stile. At end of 2nd field, cross stile to lane (Burnthurst Lane). **Ahead** on lane for 1.2km. Where lane bends left at small parking area, **turn right** onto gravel track (Nunwood Lane). **Ahead** on track, Old Nun Wood (noticeboard) on left, to bridleway junction at *Shady Acres*.

3A. Turn right on track, round side of barrier. **Ahead** on track, field on left, then downhill. Where track bends left, **keep ahead** on surfaced path through Wappenbury 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.

4A. Bear left on lane. In 10m, **turn right** onto surfaced path. **Turn left** through kissing gate into Ryton Pools Country Park. **Ahead** on path, fence on right, to wide track junction. **Turn left & ahead** on track. At track junction (shelter on left), **ahead** on track slightly downhill. At next junction, **ahead** down bank. Then **turn left**, signpost *Bubbenhall*, between fences. **Ahead** through kissing gate exiting Park. **Ahead** on verge path, A445 on right, for 350m, crossing *Paget's Lane*, to return to lay-by.

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

See next page for accompanying notes.

WALK 8 INFORMATION

For information about Bubbenhall, Bubbenhall Wood, Wappenbury and Wappenbury Wood, please see *Walk 7 Information*.



The walk approaches **Princethorpe** with a splendid view of the iconic bell tower of **Princethorpe College**. The college incorporates the buildings of the former **St. Mary's Priory**, which was founded by French Benedictine nuns from Montargis, who sought asylum from the French Revolution in 1792. In an attempt to reduce poverty and quell discontent in France, religious communities were banned and their property seized for the good of the nation. After several moves, the nuns settled in Princethorpe in 1832. As well as affording the level of seclusion desired by the closed community, the natural springs and rich farmland allowed the Priory to be self-sufficient. Laws preventing the building of religious houses had also been recently repealed making Princethorpe Priory one of the first new Catholic buildings in England in 300 years. As well as founding the Priory, the nuns established a Girls' School. In 1966, with falling numbers of both girls and nuns, the Priory was sold to the Missionaries of the Sacred Heart, who opened Princethorpe College as a Senior Boys' Day & Boarding School. Girls were admitted to the Sixth Form in 1976 and to the whole School in 1995, then Boarding ceased in 2004. Whilst not an academic 'hot-house', Princethorpe has an excellent reputation for 'value-added' academic success and specialist provision for those children with Learning Support needs via an inclusive learning environment.

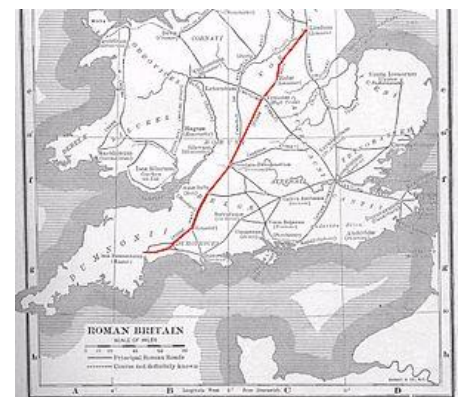
At the time of the construction of St. Mary's Priory, **Priory Farmhouse** was an inn and a toll house. It is now Grade II listed. The outbuildings became Priory Farm (OS map) and have since been converted to houses (Priory Court). Prior to crossing the main Oxford Road, the property on the left is Grade II listed **Old Manor Farmhouse** built around the turn of the 18th century. On the 1886 OS map, it is shown as Manor Farm with a Smithy attached. Today there is no longer a working farm in Princethorpe, the remaining acreage is farmed by farmers from neighbouring villages and part time smallholders. Crossing into **Sheep Dip Lane** – one can only assume that the brook alongside the lane was used for sheep dipping!

Further up the Oxford Road, at the junction with the Fosse Way, is the village pub, namely the **Three Horseshoes**, which has been in business continuously since at least 1816. The pub was originally three cottages built in the 18th century.

The route follows the '**Coffin Walk**'. This is an old corpse 'road' used in medieval times to carry the dead from Princethorpe to the parish church in Stretton-on-Dunsmore for burial. It was maintained at 1.5 metres (5 feet), ie the width of a coffin and bearers. Presumably, this separate 'road' was to enable coffins to be carried without interfering with 'traffic' on the parallel Fosse Way (B4455).

The **Fosse Way** was a Roman road built in Britain during the 1st & 2nd centuries AD, linking Exeter (*Isca Dumnoniorum*) in the southwest and Lincoln (*Lindum Colonia*) to the northeast.

The word *Fosse* is derived from the *fossa*, meaning 'ditch'. For the first few decades after the Roman invasion of Britain in 43 AD, the Fosse Way marked the western frontier of Roman rule in Iron Age Britain. It is possible that the road began as a defensive ditch that was later filled in and converted into a road, or possibly a defensive ditch ran alongside the road for at least some of its length. Many sections of the Fosse Way



form parts of modern roads and lanes, and parish, district or county boundaries, but some parts are now only accessible on foot.

A Roman rubbish pit, pottery, numerous coins and a bracelet have been found just south of Princethorpe near Stoneyford Bridge over the River Leam. There is also evidence of 4th century Roman buildings here. The settlement must have supported the original river ford crossing.

Later Anglo-Saxon pottery, brooches and tools have also been found in the area, plus a 6th century Anglo-Saxon cemetery. Indeed, the name Princethorpe is likely to be derived from an Anglo-Saxon farmer called Pren.



Princethorpe is joined with **Stretton-on-Dunsmore** in the same parish, hence the existence of the coffin walk, as the only church is in Stretton. The route enters the village through the rear of what was the Shoulder of Mutton Inn. Yet another victim of pub closures and converted into residential use. **The Oak and Black Dog** is the only remaining pub in the village out of a total of 9 inns, which provided hospitality to travellers on both the London Road (A45) and Fosse Way, as they passed over wild Dunsmore Heath. In March 1915, King George V reviewed the troops of the 29th Division

on Knightlow Hill before they went to Gallipoli. The large Portland stone obelisk on the roundabout commemorates the event.

Stretton means 'settlement on a Roman Road', ie the Fosse Way, and Dunsmore means 'hill on the moor'. With Anglo-Saxon origins, the village grew until it had its own Church and Manor House by the 15th century.

Interestingly, the first boys' reformatory was established by Warwickshire magistrates in 1818 in a rented 18th-century farm on Frankton Lane to the south-east of the village. It was run by a married couple and housed up to 20 boys (many from Birmingham). The boys (aged between 9 and 19) were given a very short prison sentence and then hired by the Master of the Asylum as farm servants for one to three years. They were taught shoemaking or tailoring and placed in employment when they left. The Asylum reformed $\frac{3}{4}$ of the boys (a few absconded and others went back to crime after leaving). The reformatory regime was far more successful than sending the boys to prison, which tended to turn them into hardened criminals. The Asylum struggled financially and finally closed in 1856. It was, however, replaced by a larger boys' reformatory in Weston-under-Wetherley (see Walk 7 Information). The buildings became **Asylum Farm** (marked on OS maps, though now renamed Hill Farm).



On reaching the village green bisected by the brook, the substantial medieval timber-framed house at the opposite end is **Moor Farmhouse**. Inside was the Manor Court Room with a basement Cell.

Walking up Church Hill, the **Village Hall** is on the left. An information board tells of

Joseph Elkington (1739-1806). Generations of Joseph's family leased Manor Farm in Princethorpe, where he developed his new land-drainage system. Hitherto, open drains were used in fields, despite their interference with cultivation. However, the impervious clay layer under the soil created underground reservoirs, keeping the soil above sodden and boggy.

Elkington used a system of boreholes to drain the underground reservoirs, thus enabling wet marginal land to be productive and to feed the growing population during the Industrial Revolution. In 1795 Parliament



awarded him a gold ring and £1000 (a fortune at that time). The award was used to found the family firm of Elkingtons, the famous silversmiths.



All Saints Church has an imposing position at the top of the hill. It is the parish church of both Princethorpe and Stretton-on-Dunsmore, consecrated in 1837. The remains of a medieval church are visible as earthworks in the graveyard. The Elkington Memorial also stands near the church. Opposite the church is Grade II listed **Stretton House**, which was the old vicarage.



At the corner is the **Manor House**, built in the 16th century with alterations in the early 19th century. The original timber-framing has been covered with roughcast plaster and this old photo shows that it was covered again with climbing plants. These have now been removed and the property appears to be in excellent condition.



Exiting the village on Fineacre lane, the route crosses fields up to **Plott Lane**. These fields were known as Poor's Plot and the revenue used to support the village poor. There are still a number of allotments in cultivation here.

At the crossing of Freeboard lane, the walk is now on **Knightlow Hill** – the centre of the Knightlow Hundred, which was the largest of all the Warwickshire Hundreds. For information on Hundreds, please see *Walk 6 Information*. Suffice to say that the officials of the Hundred Court would almost certainly have met at Knightlow Cross at the summit of the hill next to the A45. The remains of the Cross and Mound are now a scheduled ancient monument.



*On Knightlow Hill dawns fitful light
Erasing slowly sombre night.
Reveals a shadowy gathering round
A hollow stone upon a mound,
'Neath which says history with a sigh
Remains of ancient chieftains lie.*

This poem refers to an ancient ceremony, which takes place every year on 11th November just before dawn at Knightlow Cross. The collection of **Wroth Silver** dates back over 800 years. Representatives of the 25



villages in the Knightlow Hundred pay their dues to the Lord of the Manor. The first written record of the collection of Wroth Silver is in 1210. Payment was originally made to the King. Lordship of the Hundred (with the right to collect taxes) now belongs to the Dukes of Buccleuch and Queensberry. The ceremony begins with a speech from the Duke's agent. Then pennies are thrown into the hollow stone. The attendees then retire to a local hostelry for a hearty breakfast,



followed by speeches and loyal toasts with hot milk and rum. True to tradition, clay pipes and tobacco are offered for smoking (but no longer indoors!).

The walk proceeds down the hill to the A45. At the bottom on the right is Grange Farm, now completely renovated with all buildings converted to residential use. After its owners died, the property was left as a time capsule of farm life in the 1950s and was auctioned in 2015 for redevelopment. The drive of Manor Farm is crossed before the ascent up the pavement towards **Ryton-on-Dunsmore**. Interestingly, the ponds on the left of the A45 were used to water steam lorries years ago. The village is split by the A45, with the northern part much less visited.



Ryton means a settlement where rye is grown. *'The soyl here is of a light sandy disposition, and beareth Rye best of any Grain'*. There was certainly a mill on the River Avon, though only the remains of the sluice gates now exist. In 1086, Ryton was in the Stoneleigh Hundred and Domesday indicates a populous and quite valuable village. There is also evidence of an extensive Medieval settlement, including pits, gullies, post holes, boundary ditches, buildings and yards, as well as surrounding ridge and furrow cultivation. **St Leonard's Church** dominates the village skyline with its 15th century tower. However, the red sandstone nave and chancel are very much older, dating from 1080 AD. St Leonard's is one of the oldest Norman churches in Warwickshire. It was built on land given to Coventry Priory in 1043 by Lord Leofric (husband of Lady Godiva).

Along the High Street, the route passes **The Blacksmith's Arms**. An historical pub named after one of the many village craftsmen's trades. Excavations prior to the building of the Co-op revealed a back-filled pond containing 19th/20th century iron tools from the Smithy, which existed here at that time.



Passing through the newly developed **Prologis Park**, the feeling of nostalgia for the former car-manufacturing factory is palpable. The factory was originally constructed by the Rootes Group in 1940 to build aircraft engines during World War II. After the war, it became their headquarters. However, with financial difficulties in the 1960s, the company was taken over by the American car-manufacturing giant Chrysler. With financial difficulties of its own, Chrysler sold the plant to Peugeot Citroen in 1978. Peugeot provided many employment opportunities and manufactured cars here until the end of 2006. Trenport Investments Ltd bought the site for development into industrial use. In 2012, Network Rail constructed a haulage distribution centre. Today, Prologis operates industrial properties and warehouses in prime locations throughout the West Midlands (including Ryton), based on its sizable population, central location and dense transportation network.

After crossing the Oxford Road, the path skirts around an old sand and gravel quarry, which is now home to **Millboard**. This company manufactures wood-free composite decking and cladding. Indeed, the footbridge crossed on this path was made by Millboard.

The route now follows tracks across the fields to enter **Bubbenhall** at Lower End by the Village Hall. This is a well-used multipurpose facility enjoyed by all ages and many organisations.

Route A passes through Bull and Butcher Wood before passing a **triangulation pillar (trig point)** at 107m above sea level. One normally associates trig points with the summits of hills or mountains. However, they are to be found all over the country, the highest being on Ben Nevis at 1345m above sea level and the lowest is Little Ouse in Cambridgeshire, at 0.5m below sea level.

Trig Points are the remains of a massive Ordnance Survey project to map Great Britain with absolute accuracy from 1935 onwards. The trig point was instrumental in this geodetic survey. They were workstations and reference points for the surveyor, who could attach his theodolite equipment to the fixtures and fittings within the column, including the three-pronged metal plate in the top of the trig point.



The location of each trig point was selected so that at least two others would be visible from it. Using these, the surveyor could work out the angles on the lines of sight between the three points and create a triangular mapping grid – hence, triangulation. Each trig point also contains another plate, usually low down on one side, featuring the bench mark of that particular trig point and the letters OSBM (Ordnance Survey Bench Mark). Trig point bagging has become a popular sport!



Their use has now been superseded by aerial photography and satellite mapping, and some have been removed to restore the natural state of the landscape that they stood on. Most remain, however, as an iconic part of our mapping heritage and as an incredibly useful navigational aid for walkers, not least for the simple act of confirming that you've reached a particular point, especially in the mist or dark. And with views from the hill summits, they make a peachy spot for a picnic too.

Route A continues along Burnthurst Lane before passing through **Old Nun Wood** and **Burnt Hurst Coppice**, both ancient woodlands linking Wappenbury Wood and Princethorpe Great Wood. The woods have a long history of management where oak and ash trees were felled for timber and hazel coppice was cut for fuel, hedging stakes and binders. As hazel is coppiced, new shoots grow from the cut stools to create a crop for future harvesting. Trees for timber were carefully selected and maintained for future generations. Such harvesting for woodland materials fell into decline in the early 20th century, but Warwickshire Wildlife Trust volunteers are reintroducing traditional management to maximise biodiversity and thus the wildlife value of the woods.



Finally, route A passes through the edge of **Ryton Pools Country Park** managed by Warwickshire County Council in association with Warwickshire Wildlife trust and the Woodland Trust. There are 100 acres of pools, surfaced and woodland trails, play areas, a visitor centre, toilets and parking (charges apply).

Lower Palaeolithic hand axes have been found in the sand and gravel pits close by. These indicate that early humans (*Homo heidelbergensis*) lived here about half a million years ago. At the same time the area would have been dominated by the huge Bytham River, which was, at the time, the second largest river in England. The Bytham was destroyed by advancing ice sheets around 450,000 years ago.

More recently the park was a set of fields until 1965, when the land was purchased and used as a landfill site for nearby towns. Waste was dumped here for 27 years until 1992, when the country park started to be developed, including the flooding of the pits. Over 2,500 trees and shrubs were planted. In the late 1990s, the landfill site finally closed and new pools were created.

Amethane-powered electricity generator is situated in the park. It uses the methane resulting from the decomposition of organic rubbish dumped in the landfill site. In one year it provides the National Grid with enough electricity to run the equivalent of around 2,000 houses.

Wildlife

This walk encircles the largest area of semi-natural ancient woodland in the county, including Ryton Wood, Wappenbury Wood, Bubbenhall Wood and Princethorpe Great Wood. All the woods are predominantly oak, but species such as birch, holly and small leaved lime occur frequently. The area is part of the Dunsmore Living Landscape project described in *Walk 7 information*.

Six species of deer live wild in Great Britain: Scottish red deer, roe deer, fallow deer, sika deer, Reeves's muntjac, and Chinese water deer. Of these, Scottish red and roe deer are native and have lived in the isles throughout the Holocene (current geological epoch following the last Ice Age, which ended around 12,000 years ago). Fallow deer have been reintroduced twice, first by the Romans, then by the Normans. The other three species are from Asia and have escaped or been released.



Muntjac deer are common sight in Warwickshire woods and field margins. They were introduced from China to Woburn Park in Bedfordshire at the start of the 20th century and rapidly spread into the surrounding countryside. As notorious browsers, they can clear a woodland understory by eating the shoots from shrubs, as well as herbs and brambles. This has been linked to declines in species such as nightingales.

Male muntjacs have short, unbranched antlers that slope backwards, and a pair of long canine teeth. They breed all year-round, but females usually only have one fawn at a time. Muntjac deer are also known as 'barking deer' because of their dog-like calls. They are about the same size as a medium dog with a gingery-brown coat and pale underside, and darker stripes on its face.

Although native to Asia and introduced by the Romans and Normans, **fallow deer** have been here so long that they are considered naturalised. They escaped from deer parks and were intentionally released into hunting forests. Fallow deer prefer deciduous or mixed woodland with large clearings, typically living in small herds. They eat grasses and herbs, and will browse young, broadleaved trees. They can be seen in our Warwickshire woodland glades.

Fallow deer are elegant, medium-sized deer, with a typically spotted coat. Males have broad, palmate antlers. During the autumnal breeding season, known as the 'rut', males make a loud belly belch to proclaim their territory and fight over females. This display may involve groaning and stylised walking, but often results in dangerous, physical contact as they lock antlers. The resulting fawns are born the following summer.



As our most common native deer, **roe deer** are widely spread across woodland, farmland, grassland and heathland habitats. They eat buds and leaves from trees and shrubs, as well as ferns, grasses and heathers. They are often seen in the fields surrounding Warwickshire woodlands, especially at dawn and dusk.

Roe deer tend to be solitary in summer, but form small, loose groups in winter. They are slender, medium-sized deer with a brown coat, turning reddish in the summer and darker grey in the winter. They have a distinctive pale patch around the rump and no tail.

The males (bucks) have relatively short antlers, typically with three points. They begin to grow their antlers in November, shedding the velvet from them in the spring. By summer, they are ready for the rutting season. After mating, they shed their antlers in October and begin to grow a new set. The females (does) give birth to spotted fawns in late spring.

The remaining 3 species of deer are not seen in the wild in Warwickshire. **Red deer**, our other native species, are farmed/hunted for their meat, antlers and hides, mainly on Scottish estates, but also in deer parks. **Sika deer** are native to the Far East, primarily Japan and China. They were introduced as ornamental animals in parks, but escaped. There are several distinct feral populations, including one in the New Forest. Sika deer are regarded as the most damaging of the non-native species in terms of their effects on the environment and economy. **Chinese water deer** were introduced to Britain in the 1870s from Korea and China. They were kept at London Zoo, Woburn Park and Whipsnade Zoo. Escapees still live around Woburn, but are spreading into East Anglia.