

WALK 10 LIMESTONE TRAIL (updated January 2024)

Start: The Priory on the corner of Priory Road, Wolston
Grid Ref: SP 416,758 **What3Words:** mallets.formless.broadcast
Direction: Anticlockwise
Main Walk: 8.5 miles, with 97m overall ascent
Route A: 6.5 miles, with 72m overall ascent
OS Maps: Landranger 140
 Explorer 222
Parking: Priory Road with care
 also available at St Peter's Church , Church Road, Lawford, CV23 9EG
 Grid Ref SP 453, 763: What3Words: songbook.simmer.promotion
 and at The Queens Head, Queens Road, Bretford, CV23 0JY
 Grid Ref SP 430, 772: What3Words: limiting, accusing,envoy.

Refreshments/toilets are available at:

The Rose and Crown, Main Street, Wolston, CV8 3HJ
The Half Moon, Warwick Road, Wolston, CV8 3HB
The Old Smithy, Green Lane, Church Lawford, CV23 9EF
The Bulls Head Inn, Coventry Road, Brinklow, CV23 0NE
The White Lion Inn, Broad Street, Brinklow, CV23 0LN
The Raven, Broad Street, Brinklow, CV 23 0LN
Pumpkins Deli & Café, Broad Street, Brinklow, CV23 0LS
Brinklow Fish Bar, Broad Street, Brinklow, CV23 0LN
Brinklow House Chinese Takeaway, Broad Street, Brinklow, CV23 0LN

There is a water tap at St Peter's Church, Church Lawford.

This walk remains true to the original one. Whilst it starts on Dunsmore Heath, it travels through countryside and villages, which are full of fascinating history, geology and wildlife, mainly in association with the River Avon. Be aware that the footpaths from Wolston to Church Lawford entail crossing many stiles.

Main Walk

1. Start from *The Priory* at the corner of Priory Road, Wolston. Take tarmac path via railings towards houses, passing play park to left. **Keep ahead** through housing estate to emerge at T-junction (*Arderne de Gray Road*). **Turn left** on grass verge. In 40m, **turn right** cross road (Rugby Road) into *Coalpit Lane*. **Ahead** on lane for 400m. Cross Fosse Way (**care**) into *Coalpit Lane*. **Ahead** on lane.
2. In 250m, at right-hand bend, **turn left** cross stile. **Bear right** into field. **Beware** deep ditch on left. **Ahead** cross field towards large ash tree in middle of hedge line opposite. Cross stile. **Bear slightly right** cross field towards hedge gap to left of farm/pine trees. Through gap. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right. In 50m, **turn right** through hedge gap. **Turn left** on field edge, hedge on left. **Ahead** to corner. Through gap by 2 stiles, crossing ditch.
3. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right. Cross footbridge in corner. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on right. In 120m, at stile/footbridge on right (**DO NOT CROSS**), **bear left** cross field downhill towards bottom corner by wood (Dingley Osiers). **Turn right** past hand gate, cross footbridge, pass stile. **Ahead** up field towards wall corner on left-hand side of farm buildings, passing pond on right. Pass farm (Rookery Hall) on right to tarmac lane.
4. **Turn left** on lane for 100m. At start of hedge on right (waymark post), **bear right** cross field downhill towards ash tree in hedge line. Cross stile. Down steps (**care**). Cross stile. **Ahead** on field

edge, fence/hedge on right. In corner, by field gate on right, cross 2 stiles. **Ahead** cross field down to bottom corner. Farm to left is Limestone Hall. Cross footbridge. **Ahead**, hedge on right.

5. In corner, **turn right** cross stile. **Turn left**, hedge on left. Follow hedge round to **left**, passing power pole on right. In top corner, **turn left** cross footbridge. **Turn right**, fence/hedge on right. Cross stile. **Ahead** cross massive field towards 2nd telegraph pole in from left (slightly shorter one). Through hand gate at side of large field gates (approx. 100m up from bottom corner) to lane (Coronation Road).

6. **Turn left** on lane. Cross railway bridge. **Ahead** for 170m to crossroads. Cross main road (A428), **care**, into *School Street*. **Ahead** into Church Lawford village. In 100m, **bear right** into *Church Road*. [*The Old Smithy* pub to left.] **Ahead** on lane to *St Peter's Church* at end, passing impressive *Manor Farm House* on right. [Water tap at Church – through gate & on left.]

7. At small parking area, **turn left** through kissing gate. **Bear left** cross field to far left corner. Through kissing gate. **Turn right**, trees on right. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** downhill between trees. **Ahead** cross 2 fields, via kissing gate. Through kissing gate, cross footbridge over River Avon, through hand gate. **Ahead**, fence on left, crossing remains of water mill. At end of fence (waymark post), **turn left** to 2nd waymark post. **Bear right** uphill to right-hand side of horse chestnut tree & 3rd waymark post. **Ahead** over hill to 4th waymark post. **Bear left** cross dam between fish ponds. Through kissing gate to lane.

8. **Turn right** on lane, passing *Newnham Hall* on left, to lane junction. **Turn left** on *Kings Newnham Lane*, signed *Bretford*. **Ahead** towards remains of Church Tower. In 20m, see noticeboard on left by seat on barn wall. (**Route A** see below.)

9. In 10m, **turn right** through kissing gate into field. **Ahead** on track, hedge on right, passing wood on left, into next field. **Bear left** cross 2 fields downhill via hedge gap. Cross footbridge (**beware** deep ditch). Cross stile. **Bear right** cross 2 fields, via footbridge, towards field gate in corner. Cross stile to lane.

10. **Bear left** cross lane. Through hand gate in field gate. **Bear left** cross field. Through gap in tree/hedge line (waymark post). **Bear left** cross next field towards left-hand side of gap in treeline. At waymark post by large ash tree, cross footbridge. **Bear left** through bushes (waymark post). **Bear right** cross open area to another waymark post. **Turn left** through bushes. Cross footbridge. Through kissing gate. **Bear right** cross field to hedge gap/gateway on opposite side. Through gap/gateway by kissing gate. **Ahead** on field edge, hedge on **RIGHT**. Through kissing gate. **Bear right** cross field, keeping intermittent hedge on right, to corner. Through kissing gate on right of field gate. **Ahead** diagonally cross field to waymark post in opposite corner. Through kissing gate.

11. **Bear right** around road signs. Cross lane signed *Easenhall*. **Turn left** on pavement, passing chevrons, to road junction. **Turn right** on pavement (Fosse Way) & **ahead** into *Brinklow* village. Pass *West Farm* on right, then *Home Farm*, then War Memorial. **Ahead** cross *Broad Street* using island refuge (**care**) into *Coventry Road*, **joining** A Coventry Way. In 30m, at house number 5 on right, **turn left** cross road (**care**) into enclosed path (waymark post). **Ahead** between fences, then gardens on right, then field edge to corner. **Turn left** on field edge, trees on right. **Beware** hole in path in about 200m. At bottom, **turn right** through hedge gap to lane (Heath Lane).

12. **Turn left** on lane. In 10m, **turn left** onto track. **Ignore** field gates on left. **Ahead** on enclosed bridleway (Tutbury Lane) between bushes for 1km. Just over brow of hill, at bridleway junction, **bear slightly left & ahead** on main bridleway downhill for 500m. Becomes sunken lane (ancient hollow way), passing badger sett. Through bridle gate to road in *Bretford* village. [For *The Queens Head* pub, turn left.] **Ahead** cross side road (A428), **care**. **Ahead** on pavement, passing *The Olde Oaks* (*Oakdene*) on left & *Ivy Farm Cottage* (1662) on right. Cross bridge over River Avon.

13. Ahead on raised path, fence on right. At road junction, **turn right** on *Fosse Way* signed *Wolston*, passing bus shelter. **Extreme care – no pavement**. Keep on right-hand side of road using verge where possible. In 250m, **turn right** into house drive. **Bear right** into enclosed path, drive on left. Through kissing gate. **Ahead** on path, river down to right & bank up to left. In 180m, **ahead** through hedge gap. **Ahead** on path between fields. Through field gate. **Ahead** on grass track, fence on right.

14. Through field gate. **Bear right** cross concrete yard, barns on left. **Turn right** onto gravel track to Marston Mill on right. **Turn left** on track. **Ahead**, crossing 2 cattle grids (**care**). Pass *Marston Hall* on right. **Ahead** under railway bridge. **Bear right** on track. **Ahead** on lane for 300m, passing cottages on right, to return to *The Priory*.

Route A

Keep ahead on lane for 1.8km into Bretford village. At road junction (*Fosse Way*), **ahead** on pavement, passing *The Queens Head* pub on left. **Turn left** at road corner, passing *The Olde Oaks (Oakdene)* on left, to traffic lights at bridge. **Turn right** cross road (**care**). **Turn left** cross bridge over River Avon. Continue with **Note 13**.

GPX files are available for both the Main Walk and the Short Walk – refer to ACWA website.

See next page for accompanying notes.

WALK 10 INFORMATION

For information about Wolston and Dunsmore Heath, please see *Walk 9*, and for information about the Fosse Way, please see *Walk 8*.



This walk starts at The Priory in Wolston. **Wolston Priory** was established between 1086 and 1194 on land granted by Hubert Boldran to the Benedictine Abbey of [Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives](#) in Normandy, France. It was of modest size and probably occupied the moated site just to the west (marked on OS maps). However, it was run down by 1388 and by 1394 was transferred to the Carthusians at Coventry Priory. After the [Dissolution](#) it was purchased by Roger Wigston, who was probably responsible for the renovation of the rectory building into the present Grade II listed

house. The moated site and earthwork remains are now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. The house retains its 16th century timber-framing and includes items from the original priory – a 15th century entrance arch in the porch, a stone piscina in the kitchen and a carved corbel in the adjoining pantry.

In 1589, John Penry set up an illegal press in the cellar, secretly printing some of the 'Martin Marprelate' satirical tracts, which attacked the episcopacy of the Anglican Church, primarily the censorship of all printing operations. For his acts, he was charged with high treason and hanged on the order of Queen Elizabeth I.

The house remained in the Wigston family until Roger Wigston's death in 1608, when the property was inherited by his grandson, [Sir Peter Wentworth](#). It was then sold in the 18th century by the descendants of Fisher Wentworth and later acquired by the Wilcox family of Wolston Manor until 1926. The Priory is currently owned by Secland Group offering serviced office space for businesses and the adjoining Priory Farm buildings have been converted into residential dwellings.

The footpath from Coalpit Lane goes through several fields, passing **Dingley Osiers**, up to Rookery Hall. A dingle is a small wooded valley and this one was presumably where osier willows were grown for basket-making. **Rookery Hall** is typical of the Dunsmore Heath farms being exposed on the heathland and with a distinctive roofline. Medieval ridge and furrow ploughing can be seen close to the farm.



Descending close to **Fulham Wood**, the site of a medieval chapel is suggested by documentary evidence. William, son of the chaplain of Stude, was accused of homicide at Lawford in 1232. Stude was a chapel appropriated to Coventry Priory in 1260 and there is a record of the chaplain of 'Stade' in 1271. In 1528 the name 'Stode' occurs on Dunsmore Heath. 'The Stude' shown on the first edition OS 1" map also indicates the site of a chapel.



Limestone Hall is named after the stone it is constructed from, as well as the fact that limestone was extensively quarried and worked in the area. The site of a lime kiln nearby, used for making lime during the 18th century, is marked on the OS map of 1887.

On reaching Coronation Road, the route crosses over the **Rugby to Coventry railway line**. This line opened as part of the London and Birmingham Railway in 1838, before merging with the Grand Junction Railway in 1846 to form the [London and North Western Railway](#) (LNWR). This became part of the [London, Midland and Scottish Railway](#) (LMS) in 1923, then part of [British Railways](#) during [Nationalisation](#) in 1948. As a part of the reprivatisation process, the railway infrastructure, passenger and freight services were separated into discrete organisations.

Between 1994 and 2002, the infrastructure was owned and operated by [Railtrack](#). Following a spate of accidents, mismanagement and maintenance neglect, Railtrack was reformed into Network Rail, which now owns the infrastructure, including railway tracks, signals, overhead wires, tunnels, bridges, level crossings and most stations, but not the passenger or freight rolling stock.



So, on to **Church Lawford**, mentioned in the [Domesday Book](#) of 1086 as Leileford and Chirche Lalleford in 1235. Clearly, it grew up as it was possible to ford the River Avon at this point and the village developed on higher ground. In the centre of the village is **The Old Smithy** pub, once known as The White Lion. There was a micro-brewery in the stables for a time, but this ceased trading in 2006. Whilst The Old Smithy was never a forge, there was a village forge supplying wrought iron products in the 18th and 19th centuries (marked on the 1905 OS map). The buildings are now a house and garage.

The village once had a school, but this was closed in 1996. A reading room was built in 1912, which became the village hall, but this was demolished in 2007 and replaced by a modern building. Other village facilities included a post office and general store. Here is Mrs. Rose Whiteman standing in the doorway of the house next to the Post Office in 1905. Her husband, William Whiteman, was the Proprietor. Their son, Charlie, is standing with his bicycle by the fence. The demise of villages, such as Church Lawford is nothing new – prior to the plague, there was a much larger medieval settlement in the fields north of Church Road. Earthwork evidence includes a hollow way and house platforms.



Near the end of Church Road stands **The Manor House** – a truly impressive Grade II listed 16th century building with some highly decorative details in the stucco and timber-framed walls. In 1086, Church Lawford was among the estates held by Earl Roger of Shrewsbury and administered by Rainald de Bailleul (sheriff of Shropshire). In the reign of Henry II (1154-1189), Roger Heyrun was Lord of the Manor and a benefactor of Coombe Abbey.

A descendant, also called Roger Heyrun, held a knight's fee in 1243.

A knight's fee was a unit measure of land deemed sufficient to support a knight. This would not only provide sustenance for himself, his family, and servants, but also the means to furnish himself and his retinue with horses and armour to fight for his Lord in battle. The 'fee' was the value of the land for tax assessment in the medieval feudal system. This Manor held lands of approximately 1,700 acres, comprising 154 acres of arable, 1,465 acres of pasture, and 109 acres of river and upland meadow. Roger Heyrun and his wife Agnes were buried at Coombe Abbey.

After a succession of changes in Lordship, the Manor eventually passed to the Dukes of Montagu and Buccleuch in around 1640.



St Peter's Church stands on high ground overlooking the River Avon. It is first recorded in the late 11th century, contains 14th century remains and 17th century woodwork. The Church was extensively rebuilt in 1874.

Close to the Church, there is the site of an **animal pound** used until the Enclosure Acts of the 17th and 18th centuries. It is marked on the 1886 OS map.



From the Church, the route crosses the fields (earthwork remains of the medieval village) downhill to the River Avon. After crossing the footbridge, the remains of the **water mill** can be seen, shown in this 1930s photo. A mill was recorded on this site in 1086 and was mentioned in 1291 as having been given to the monks of Pipewell Abbey, Northamptonshire. The monks also created the fish ponds, which are traversed before reaching the lane. These ponds were for the breeding and storage of fish, an important source of protein,

and are still used today by anglers.

Newnham Hall is a splendid Grade II listed 18th century farmhouse built on the site of a mansion occupied by the Earls of Chichester and demolished in 1776. The garden shows evidence of 17th century formal terraces and, together with the adjacent Church, must have been a very sumptuous and grand property. Most of the farm buildings have now been converted to residential use. However, there is a 16th century limestone dovecote (to the right of the house in the photo), which is unusually large. Dovecotes were used for the breeding and housing of doves and pigeons, again an important source of protein, particularly in winter.



Around the lane at the back of the Hall stands **St Laurence's Church** tower. As a private chapel for the mansion and the Parish Church for Kings Newnham, it was built of limestone in the 12th century. However, the village lost most of its population during the Enclosure Acts and the Church ceased to be used in 1730. It became rather dilapidated and was partially demolished around 1796, leaving only the tower. The font, pillar piscina and stoop were relocated to the hall garden as ornaments.

In 1852, excavations revealed six lead-lined coffins. These were the remains of the Earl of Chichester and his family. The bodies were embalmed, some in excellent preservation, and one was of a man who had been beheaded. After examination they were reburied. In the tower, at a great depth, burnt and decomposed animal matter was found, with evidence of pagan burials.

The walk continues across the fields to Brinklow. Within these fields, the discovery of Mesolithic flint flakes and tools, Neolithic ring ditches, Bronze Age burials, Iron Age agricultural settlements, Roman coins and artefacts, medieval earthworks and other remains all indicate that this fertile area has been occupied for millennia.

Brinklow sits astride the Fosse Way, which kinks around the hill, on which the oldest part of the village sits. Brinklow's name may have come from **Old English** *Brincehlaw* meaning 'burial mound on the brink of a hill' or Brynca's Low from an **Anglo-Saxon** personal name. More likely, though, the name is a combination of the Celtic *bryn*, a hill, and the Anglo-Saxon *hlaw*, also meaning hill. This natural high point, which offers a commanding and striking view of the surrounding countryside, has been a site of significant importance throughout history. It is thought that there would have been a Bronze Age tumulus or burial mound here, though no excavations have revealed any evidence. The Normans certainly exploited the site



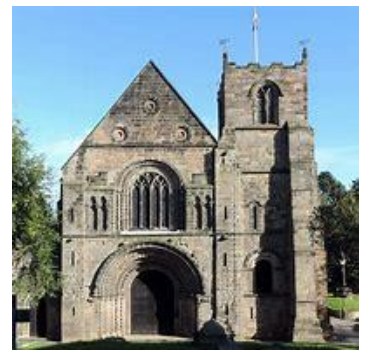
to build their well-preserved motte and bailey castle as a defensive sighting point and close to the Fosse Way. Refer to *Walk 12* for more information.

Brinklow has always been a large village supporting the 13th century St John the Baptist Church, a primary school, several shops and numerous alehouses, associated with its position on the Fosse Way, an arm of the Oxford Canal, which used to wind around the village, and the grant of a weekly market made in 1218. The market is mentioned in manorial documents up to 1832.

At the time of Domesday, Brinklow was included in the Manor of Smite. In the 12th century, Roger de Mowbray held the Manor for the Earls of Leicester and it was Nicholas de Stuteville who obtained the grant from King John for the weekly market. Following several changes of Lordship, it appears that the Manor was relinquished to Coombe Abbey. Subsequently, after dissolution, various knights from other counties held manorial rights. Interestingly, in 1626, part of the parish, including the site of the Castle, was in the hands of Arthur Gregory of Stivichall (see *Walk 5* information) and his son, John, is recorded as holding the Manor in 1654. In 1850, A. F. Gregory was Lord of the Manor and the Lordship remains with the Gregory-Hood family today.



Between Brinklow and Bretford, the route follows an ancient trackway called **Tutbury Lane**. Some sources claim that this lane originates from use by Ancient Britons before the Roman's built the Fosse Way. However, its name implies that it was actually a link between Tutbury Priory in Staffordshire and Wolston Priory in Warwickshire. Both Priors were dependencies of Saint-Pierre-sur-Dives and founded at around the same time. Monks must therefore have travelled between the two Priors – the route can be traced on a road map without diversions via Nuneaton and Burton-upon-Trent.



The name of **Bretford** village, first recorded around 1100, is derived from the **Old English** *bred ford*, meaning 'plank ford'. There must have been some kind of plank 'bridge' or post marking the ford across the River Avon. The original line of the **Fosse Way** forded the river to the east of the current bridge. The hollow way marking its position can still be seen. The first record of the bridge is from 1279. It was damaged during the **English Civil War**, then extensively repaired in 1653. It was largely rebuilt in the 18th century to the original medieval design of 5 arches and is now Grade II listed.

It is interesting that **The Queens Head** pub is situated by the location of the original ford. A wayside inn must have occupied the site for centuries, certainly for over 350 years. In 1848, it was called the Friendly Inn and now incorporates several small cottages. The pub has recently been completely redesigned and refurbished into an acclaimed British-Indian restaurant and take-away. The large car park and beer garden need attention though.



Bretford's hey-day was in the early Middle Ages. Documentary evidence suggests that a small Benedictine **Nunnery** was founded around 1154. The younger Geoffrey de Clinton gave land to Noemi the Nun for the establishment of a small house of nuns. The exact location is unknown, though it may have been sited at The Olde Oaks (now called Oakdene) directly on the Tutbury-Wolston route. The nunnery was short-lived

and dissolved by 1167. A **leper hospital** was founded, probably in association with the nunnery, and in 1180 was licensed to have its own chaplain. Records show that it was still in existence in 1274. There was also a **chapel** of St Edmund with a list of chaplains from 1303 to 1360.



In 1227, Bretford was so important that it gained the status of a market town by the Lord of the Manor, John de Verdon. He also set up gallows at the road junction of the Fosse Way and Rugby Road south of the bridge. These remained throughout the reign of Edward I (1272-1307). There was a windmill recorded in 1279 and again in 1360. Like most villages, following the plague in the 14th century, Bretford fell into decline and never recovered. Bretford Villa, on the corner of the Fosse Way and Brandon Lane was the

village shop in the 19th and 20th centuries.

The **Olde Oaks (Oakdene)** is a Grade II listed property with timbers dating back to 1420 and a medieval 'jetty'. There is still conjecture over whether the nunnery, leper hospital and/or chapel occupied the site. Suffice to say, the long thin garden was one of the original burgage plots laid out for the market town.



Ivy Cottage Farm is also Grade II listed and was built in the 17th century (1662). Originally, it consisted of several cottages, now amalgamated into one grand residence. During 'works' in the road in front of the house in 1989, dozens of old shoes, including a Tudor one (now in the Warwick Museum), were unearthed.

Leaving the busy Fosse Way, the route follows the bank of the River Avon to the deserted medieval settlement of **Marston**. This settlement, mentioned in the Domesday Book, surrounded the present Marston Mill Farm. Some earthwork remains are visible, but most have been obliterated by the construction of the railway in the 19th century. It is thought that Marston Mill was the 12th century mill of Coombe Abbey. In 1279, Theobald de Verdon appropriated fishing rights in the Avon between Bretford Bridge and Marston Mill. The mill race can still be seen.



Wildlife

Still within the Dunsmore Heath area, the peculiar nature of the underlying geology has added a further dimension of wildlife interest. The layers of sand and gravel, typical of Dunsmore Heath, here overlay calcareous Lias layers, which are limestone rocks from the Jurassic period. Over time, the River Avon and its myriad of tributaries have dissected the upper glacial material to reveal the older rocks. Many buildings in the area include limestone walls and have names to match.



Woodland occurs on this walk, but only as small isolated patches in the southern extent, such as Dingley Osiers, The Thicket and Fulham Wood. The latter of these is dominated by elm and suffered greatly as a result of Dutch Elm Disease. Given its name and location, the former was managed to produce osiers.

The **Common Osier** is a small willow tree that is particularly common in wet areas such as fens, ditches and riversides. It has also been widely cultivated and planted for its twigs, which are coppiced and used in basket-making. Indeed, even living willows can be woven into fences, screens and sculptures. Like other willows, male and female

flowers are found on different plants; male catkins are yellow, while female ones are green.

During the Second World War, domestic basket-making was banned, so willow-makers turned their hands to creating hampers for ammunition and food that were parachuted from aeroplanes to the troops below.

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 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. Although species such as ox-eye daisy, pignut, germander speedwell, meadow vetchling and buttercups are encountered near the villages, other species more indicative of the calcareous nature of the soil can be found, including greater knapweed, lady's bedstraw and meadow barley.



At the River Avon crossing north of Church Lawford, look out for 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 beautiful damselfly that has a curious association with common club-rush. This rush has dark olive-green stems and is a characteristic species of deep, slow-flowing rivers. The banded demoiselle relies on this species alone to allow the aquatic nymphs a pathway to the sky.



The males are metallic blue, with a distinctive dark band across their wings, and the females are a shiny green. They lay their eggs by injecting them into plant stems under the surface of the water. The eggs take about two weeks to hatch and the nymphs take 2 years to develop, overwintering in the mud at the bottom of the river or pond.

Tutbury Lane is the location of a large badger sett. The **badger** is one of the UK's most recognised and popular mammals, bringing pleasure to thousands of people and is a living symbol of the British countryside. Its name originates from the facial stripes worn like a badge. The less common name 'brock' stems from Celtic 'brocc' meaning grey.



Badgers are members of the mustelid family (which includes pine martens, otters, polecats, ferrets and the wolverine). They are short, stout, powerful animals that live in underground setts, which can extend up to 50m² with multiple entrances and be more than 100 years old! A social group living together in the same sett is known as a clan. Females (sows) have one litter of 2 or 3 cubs per year. Cubs are born in breeding chambers lined with bedding material, such as straw, hay or fern. They are born in February and emerge above ground at around 12 weeks. Male badgers are called boars.



Badgers have several scent glands, producing a variety of odours used for communication like warning signals and mating status. Their sense of smell is particularly well-developed as they are nocturnal and have small eyes with relatively poor vision.

As opportunistic omnivores, badgers have a varied diet, including earthworms (forming the bulk of their food), insects, larvae, the eggs and chicks of ground-nesting birds, small mammals, amphibians and reptiles, as well as roots and

fruit. They deposit their faeces in shallow dug pits or latrines, typically on the boundaries of their territories, warning badgers from other clans to keep away.

Interestingly, the Dachshund (German for 'badger-hound') was bred for the purpose of badger hunting. Badger-baiting was a popular blood sport, thankfully banned in the Cruelty to Animals Act of 1835. The Protection of Badgers Act of 1992 made it an offence to kill, injure, or take a badger or interfere with a sett. Although successive governments have approved limited culling programmes, allegedly to control the spread of bovine TB, these have proved ineffective and a vaccination programme has been suggested. Any cull brings about protests with emotional, economical and scientific reasons being cited, particularly as the badger is an iconic species of the British countryside.



Badgers have also been trapped commercially for their pelts, which have been used for centuries to make shaving brushes, a purpose for which their hair is particularly suited owing to its high water retention. Paintbrushes and clothing trim are further uses. Controversially, China continues to provide badger hair from commercial badger farms. Although rarely eaten today, badger meat has been consumed throughout Europe and North America. In Britain, badgers were eaten during World War II and the 1950s, when livestock meat was rationed.

On a more cheery note, fictional badgers have appeared in many publications and animated films, notably Kenneth Grahame's *The Wind in the Willows* (1908), Beatrix Potter's *The Tale of Mr Tod* (1912 – Tommy Brock), Mary Tourtel's *Rupert Bear* (1920), Roald Dahl's *Fantastic Mr Fox* (1970), Richard Adams' *Watership Down* (1972) and Disney's *Robin Hood* (1973 – depicts Friar Tuck as a badger). The badger is the emblem of Hufflepuff House at the Hogwarts School in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter* books (1997-2007) and the official mascot of Brock University in St Catharines, Ontario, Canada; the University of Sussex; and St Aidan's College at the University of Durham.

