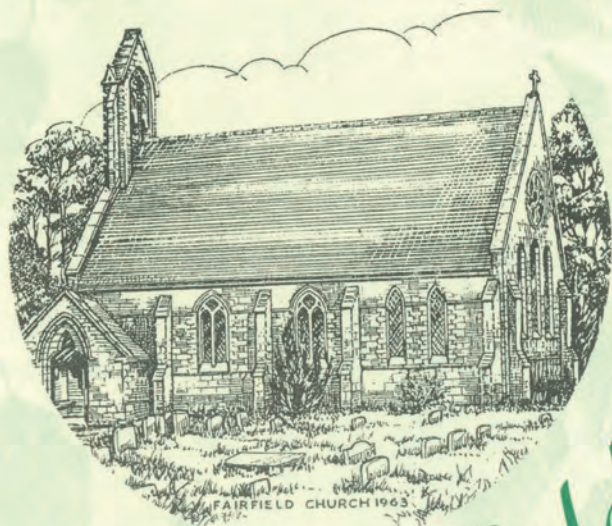


Walks Around



Belbroughton



& Fairfield

Introduction

This is one of a series of walk guides produced jointly by local Parish Councils and Worcestershire County Council. They are intended to help residents to use their local footpaths and provide visitors with a way of getting to know a part of the landscape, natural history and heritage of our County.

The guidebooks have been produced and funded as part of the PARISH PATHS SCHEME, through which the County Council and the Countryside Commission provide local councils and community groups with grants and professional advice, training and support, to keep public rights of way open and in use.

This guidebook has been carefully prepared but it carries no authority for the existence of a right of way. Legal changes to public rights of way can occur. The publishers accept no responsibility for any errors or omissions.

Acknowledgements

The walks in this book have been prepared and described by members of Belbroughton Parish Council and children of Fairfield Village School. The cover illustration is taken from a drawing by Mrs. Ivy Thomson, the nature sketches by Mrs Ruth Cherry and historical information supplied by Belbroughton History Society.

The book was produced with the assistance of Andrew Kneen, consultant-guidebook writer, and Officers of Worcestershire County Council's Public Rights of Way Unit.



Large White

Rabbit



Walks around Belbroughton

The parish of Belbroughton and Fairfield is made up of three former settlements, all of which can be traced back to Saxon times. This suggests that the character of the landscape, which these walks cross, is over a thousand years old, despite all the changes in agriculture and industry and nearness to the Birmingham conurbation. Fairfield was originally Forfeld, meaning "open country near forest land". Walks 4, 5 and 6 cross parts of Pepper, Nutnell and Chaddesley Woods, which survive from the Forest of Feckenham. Indeed the Norman Kings extended their royal hunting preserve to include all of Belbroughton and for a couple of centuries the inhabitants were subject to the harsh forest laws.

The name of Belbroughton combines the other two settlements: Beolne, the old name for the brook and surviving in Bell End etc., and Brockton, meaning a "settlement by the brook". Beolne (later Bellun) and Brocton merged in the 13th century to become Bellebrocton, then later Belbroughton. The stream determined its development, because it provided the power for a series of watermills, which were not only used to grind corn but also for working metal, the shaping, hardening and sharpening of scythe blades in particular, for which Belbroughton became famous. Swords were produced as well in the 16th Century and gun barrels bored during the Napoleonic Wars, but in the 19th Century Isaac Nash gained control of 11 mills along the stream and concentrated production of scythe blades there, until he almost had a monopoly of scythe blades in Britain and many other countries. When every blade of grass cut for hay was mown by hand this was an essential industry but the introduction of horse-drawn mowing machines and mechanisation gradually made it obsolete.

Walk 1 passes the remains of Lower Weybridge Forge. This was powered by a large pool made by damming Bradford Brook, a side-stream of the main brook, below the present sewage works. It was Isaac Nash's headquarters and there was still one man working there in 1949, using a water-driven forge to steel plate scythe blades. Walk 1 also crosses the dam of Drayton Mill. At one time it ground corn but then was used to make scythes until it closed in 1929. The water wheel was 30 feet in diameter and produced 50 horse-power.

Belbroughton Location Map



MAPS

The individual maps in this book should be sufficient for you to follow the walks described.

Ordnance Survey 1:25000 Pathfinder and the Explorer Series maps are also available from bookshops. They show all Public Rights of Way as well as field boundaries and other detail helpful to walkers. The maps which cover the area in this book are Pathfinder 953 Kidderminster and Explorer 219 Wolverhampton and Dudley.

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Walk 1. Belbroughton to Drayton.

Walk 2. Through the fields to Hurst Farm.

Walk 3. A Walk to Badger's Copse.

Walk 4. A Walk to Pepper Wood.

Walk 5. Meadows and Trees.

Walk 6. From Dordale Green through Chaddesley Wood.

Parking.

Walk 1,2. Parking is limited in Belbroughton, but there is usually space on the roads near to the Church. The Recreation Centre, signed off Hartle Lane, has a car park.

Walk 3, 4, 5. Car park at the Recreation Ground, Stourbridge Road, Fairfield.

Walk 6. Limited roadside parking at Dordale Green.

Refreshments.

Belbroughton. The Horseshoe, The Queens, The Talbot.

Fairfield. The Swan. Village stores and Post Office.

Walk 1

Drayton

3

Mount Farm



2

Weybridge

Sewage Works

Route 1

Route 3

Route 2

Moorfields Farm

B4188

START

1

Church

Belbroughton

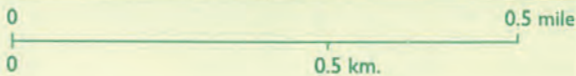
7 BRADFORD LANE

5

6

New Barn

B4188



WALK 1. Belbroughton to Drayton

This walk goes from Belbroughton village to Drayton along the Belne Brook, passing around one of the mill pools, and returns across the fields with view of open country towards the Clent Hills.

Distance: 4 km or 2¹/₂ miles, short route. 5.5 km or 3¹/₂ miles long route. **Time:** 1¹/₄ to 2 hours. **Start:** at the Church.

1. *The south side of the Church with its tower and spire date from the 14th century, while the north side was added in the 19th century Take a look at the buildings around it. Ahead are the Old School and next to it a house that was once the workhouse. On the right, on the corner of Church Road, is Waif's House which was once the orphanage, and behind, across the road, are the Old Rectory and its Tithe Barn, which is now the Church Hall.*

From the Church tower take the footpath along the left side of the burial ground and you will soon come to a broad track that goes along the ridge. Follow it with the hedge on your left in the first field and on your right in the second.

On the left you can look over the valley towards Broom Hill. On the right you can look back over the village. Looking ahead you can see the saddle-shaped Abberley Hills in the distance and the more pointed Clee Hills to their right.

At the end of the second field go over the stile and past the sewage works. When the track bends to the right at the bottom of the slope, turn left down the path that goes along the stream, keeping the wall of the ruined Weybridge Mill on your left. After about 100m cross a bridge over the stream and turn left.

2. The footpath runs along the edge of fields with the stream and woods on your left.

Look out for birds and waterfowl and other wildlife.

After the second stile you go alongside the mill pool and pass Drayton House on your right. The footpath ends on Drayton Road.

You may wish to walk down the road a little way to look at the mill, which was once used for spinning, then corn milling and later scythe finishing and now is workshops, and visit the forge, or The Robin Hood for refreshment.

3. The walk continues from where you joined the road by taking a sharp left turn along a drive that goes over the mill pool dam.

Look back to the view of Drayton House. The path then goes up the left side of a cottage garden, past the cottage on your right, opens out into

a wide path, and follows the brick drive of a house on your left. At the end turn left along the waymarked bridleway back towards Belbroughton.

There are views towards the Clent Hills along it.. Look out for signs of foxes and other wildlife. After 500m the bridleway turns right.

4. At this point there is a choice of routes.

Route 1 (Shortest) - back to the stream and along Drayton Road

Over the stile turn left and take the path along the side of the field, turning right at the corner. Towards the end of the field take the footpath to the left down towards Weybridge Works and you will join the path used on the outward journey. Cross the bridge over the stream and turn right following the path with the stream on your right. When you join the road, carry on along the pavement alongside Little Bell Hall Pool into the village and turn right opposite The Queens to return to the Church up Church Hill.

Route 2 - straight across the fields.

Over the stile cross the field to the stile in the opposite hedge. Continue in the same direction across the next field with the remains of a hedge on your right for some of the way. Cross a stile by a gate and turn diagonally left to a bridge over a stream. Turn right to the end of the field and cross another field with the hedge on your right to join Bradford Lane with a large house, The Lydiate, on your right.

5. Cross over the road and take the path across the field with Bradford House on your right. 100m further on you come to a crossing of footpaths.

6. Take the left one which leads back to the village past the Recreation Ground. At the end of the car park turn left along the footpath that takes you back to the Church.

Route 3 (longest) - bridleway towards Broom Hill.

Turn right and continue along the bridleway. This can be very muddy in wet weather. Follow the path up the hill until you come to Moorfields Farm on your left. Carry straight on here until you join Waystone Lane. Turn left and follow the lane for 100m until it joins Dordale Road.

7. Cross over the road and take the bridleway down the hill. After 200m cross another bridleway into the field ahead and continue to the gate on the opposite side. Go up a short track and you come to the remains of New Barn. Turn left to a stile near the corner of the enclosure and follow the footpath across the next field. You join up with the last stage of Route 2 here, at point 6, and follow the path to the Recreation Ground, turning left at the end of the car park along the footpath which leads back to the Church.



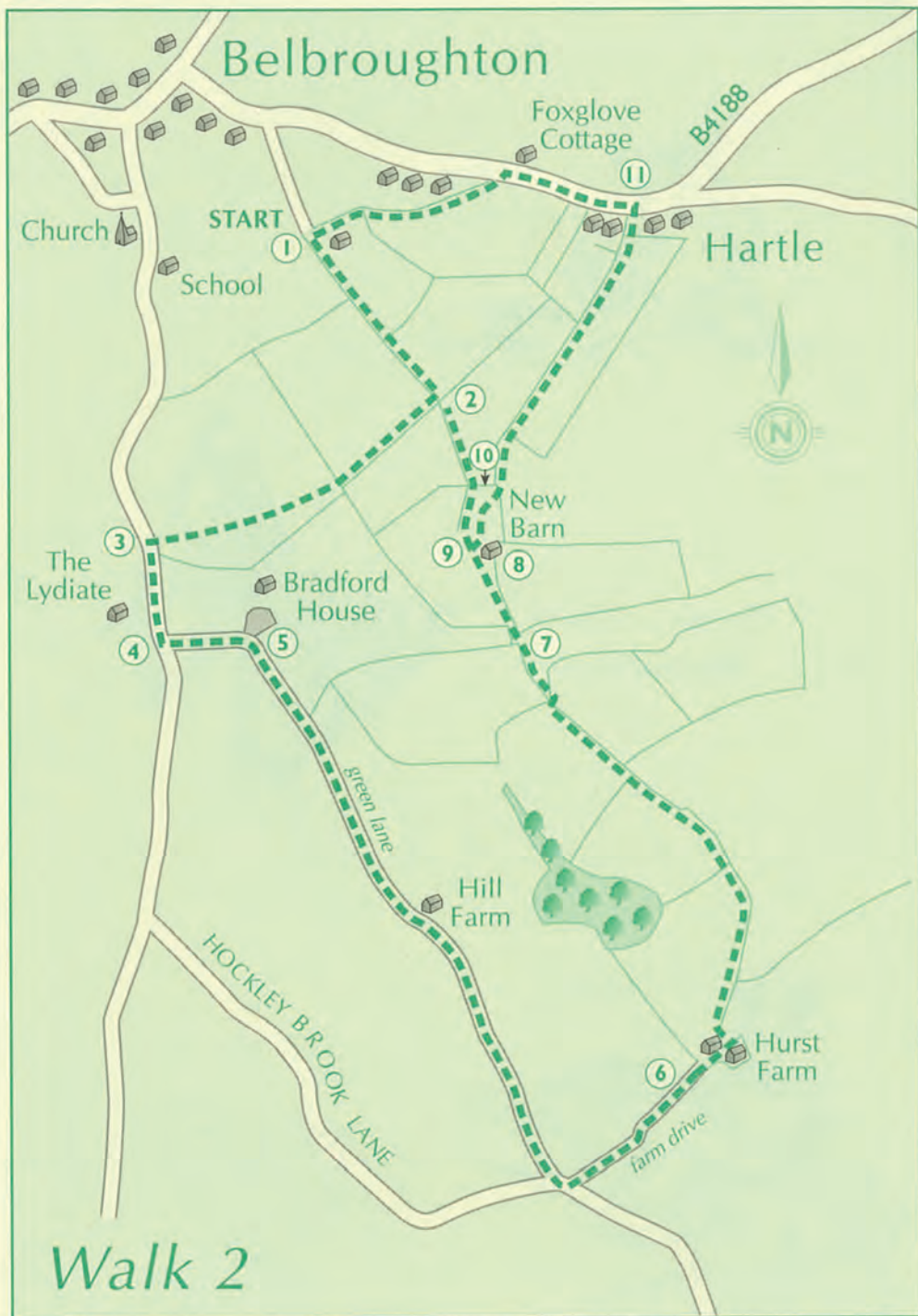
Fox

*Common Small
Tortoiseshell*



Badgers

Belbroughton



Walk 2



WALK 2. Through the Fields to Hurst Farm

This easy walk goes through the fields to the south of Belbroughton as far as Hurst Farm. **Start:** Belbroughton Recreation Ground car park. **Distance:** about 5 kilometres or 3 miles. **Time:** 1 to 1½ hours.

1. Leave the car park along the right-hand side of the Recreation Centre building, keep straight ahead through the gates and over the stile at the right-hand corner of the playing field.

2. After 100 metres, turn right at the crossing of footpaths on to the farm track towards Bradford Lane.

Note a good view of Belbroughton First School and the Church spire across to the right and Bradford House on the left. The house was lived in at one time by a Kidderminster carpet manufacturer and then a pork pie and sausage manufacturer! More recently it was acquired by the Department of Transport but is thankfully now back in private ownership.

3. At Bradford Lane, turn left and after about 150 yards, take the bridlepath on the left signed "Hockley Brook Lane ¾ mile." Notice the fine Regency-style Worcestershire brick house "The Lydiate" on the right, just before leaving the lane.

4. *The first part of the bridlepath has glimpses of the southern aspect of Bradford house with interesting outbuildings and a large duck pond, which is home for a number of species of waterfowl.*

5. Just past the duckpond, keep right on the bridlepath (which can be very muddy from this point), up the slope past Hill Farm, until it reaches Hockley Brook Lane. Turn left and almost immediately left again on to another bridlepath towards Hurst Farm.

6. After about 300 metres the path goes between the farm buildings to a metal gate. Go through the gate and after a few metres turn left over the two stiles and descend the track downhill.

With Hurst farmhouse on the left there are magnificent views of the Clent Hills to the north and, a little further on, the village of Belbroughton to the north-west.

7. *Just after crossing a stile with an iron gate there is a very pretty valley to the right with many newly planted trees and a dingle at the far end - but do not be tempted to walk along here as the land is private!*

Walk 3



8. At the bottom of the dip there is another three-bar stile and a metal one at the top of a short climb up to New Barn.

Unfortunately only the sandstone footings and some of the brickwork remains of this building, which, in spite of its name, is actually several hundred years old.

9. Walk round the outside of the barn and the footpath joins the bridleway at Primrose Hill, which is well known to local children and walkers. *From the top of the grassy bank on the left there are fine views looking westwards towards the Abberley Hills over the top of Bradford House.*

10. There is now a choice of ways back to the car park.

A. *(Short-cut)* fork left off the bridlepath down a slope and across a metal stile, straight across 2 fields to another wooden stile and the Recreation Ground is straight ahead.

B. *(Full walk)* Follow the bridlepath, which bears slightly right, and go down the slope with Primrose Hill on your right. After 150 metres go through the field gate and follow the track past converted barns on the left to Hartle Lane.

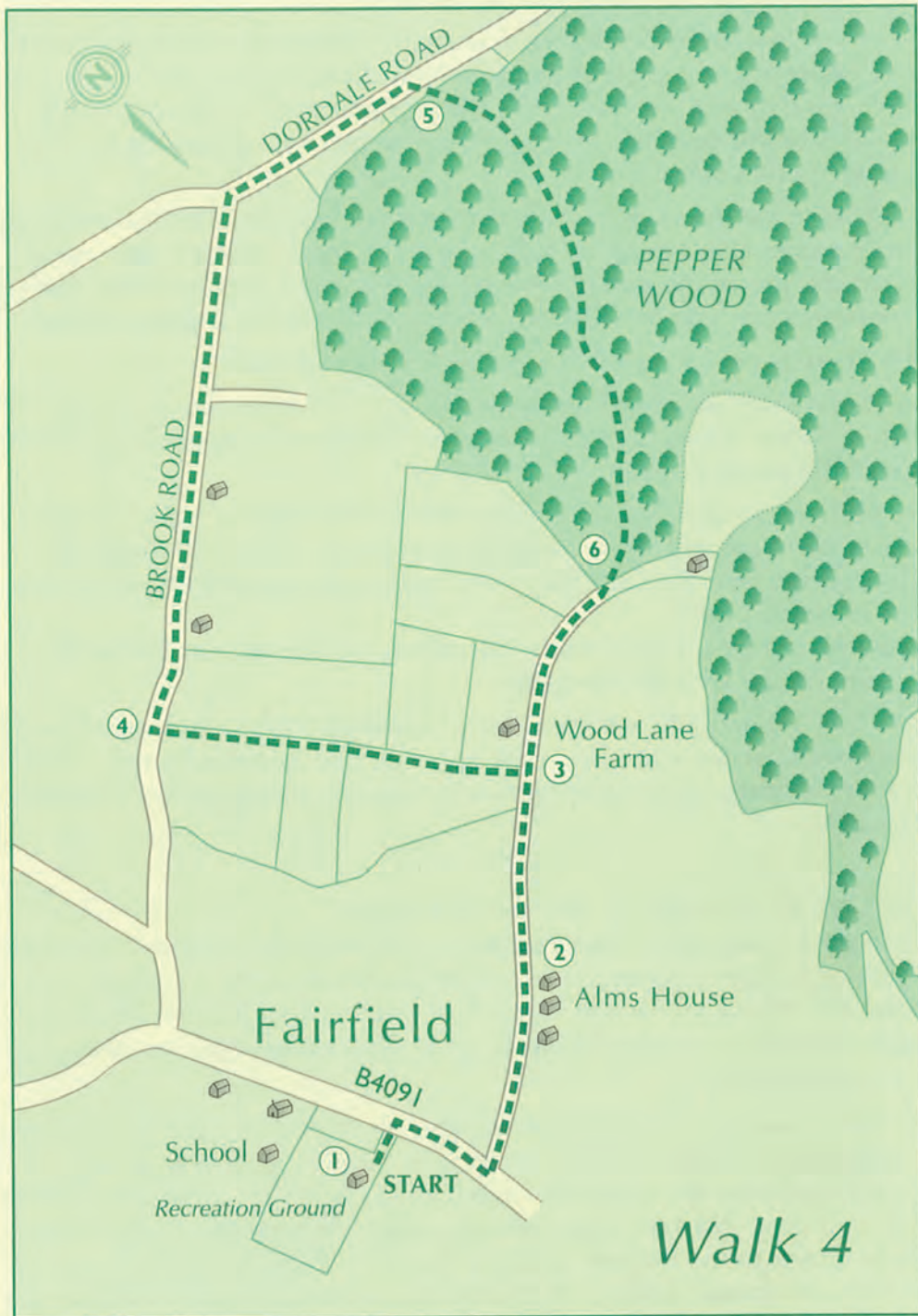
The few cottages, which are all that remains of the ancient hamlet of Hartle, can be seen on the right.

11. Turn left and follow the pavement for about 400 metres. Just beyond Foxglove Cottage, which is on the opposite side of the lane, turn left into a short footpath, which goes behind the houses, straight to the Recreation Ground.

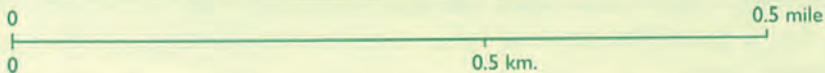
WALK 3. A walk to Badger's Copse

This gentle walk goes from Fairfield to the recently planted Community Wood at Badger's Copse. It is suitable for children from 4 years old. It was tried and tested by Classes B and C of Fairfield First School. **Distance:** 2 kilometres or 1¹/₄ miles. **Time:** about an hour. **Start:** from the Recreation Ground car park.

1. Walk down to Stourbridge Road past St Mark's Church, as far as the village hall. Turn left into the village hall car park and walk along by the church wall to a stile in the left-hand corner. Climb over. *Stop to notice the tall pine trees and the British Telecom tower, on the right.* Follow the left-hand hedge to the bottom corner of the field. *Look across the valley and find the motorway halfway up the hill. Do you know which motorway this is? Where does it go?* Climb over the stile and follow the left-hand fence to a stile by a gate. In summer you may see buttercups and hear a yellowhammer here.



Walk 4



2. Walk through the field down to the next stile by a metal gate. "New Barn Farm" on your left was built by German prisoners of war and is known locally as the "Coffee Pot". In times past most houses were known by their owner's name. Stand by the telephone pole and look south-east, towards the horizon. To the left are the Waseley Hills and to the right are the Lickey Hills. Climb over the stile into Swan Lane and turn right.

3. Turn left into Third Road. Notice the water tank opposite. The cottages along this road are all about 150 years old, and were once nailer's cottages. Walk along for 100m until you get to a sharp bend in the road.

4. Instead of following the road, take the track, which is straight ahead. You will see a gate on the right a few metres along it. Don't forget to notice the list of organisations, which have sponsored a tree in Badger's Copse. There are also some trees which were donated by people from the local area. How many trees are there? Do you recognise any names? Wildmoor Farm on the far side of Badger's Copse was once used as a school. Walk back along Third Road as far as Swan Lane and turn right up the hill.

5. Walk up the steps on the left, known as "The Devil Steps" go along by the side of the field into the Recreation Ground and back to the car park. It is said that "The Devil's Steps" may have been called "Waggoners' Way". There was a pub called "The Waggon and Horses" at the edge of the Recreation Ground.

WALK 4. A walk to Pepper Wood

This is another short walk suitable for young children. There are two stiles to cross. **Distance:** 4 kilometres or 2¹/₂ miles. **Time:** 1¹/₂ to 2 hours.

Start: from the Recreation Ground car park in Fairfield village.

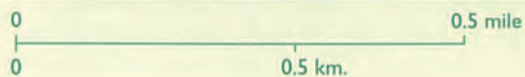
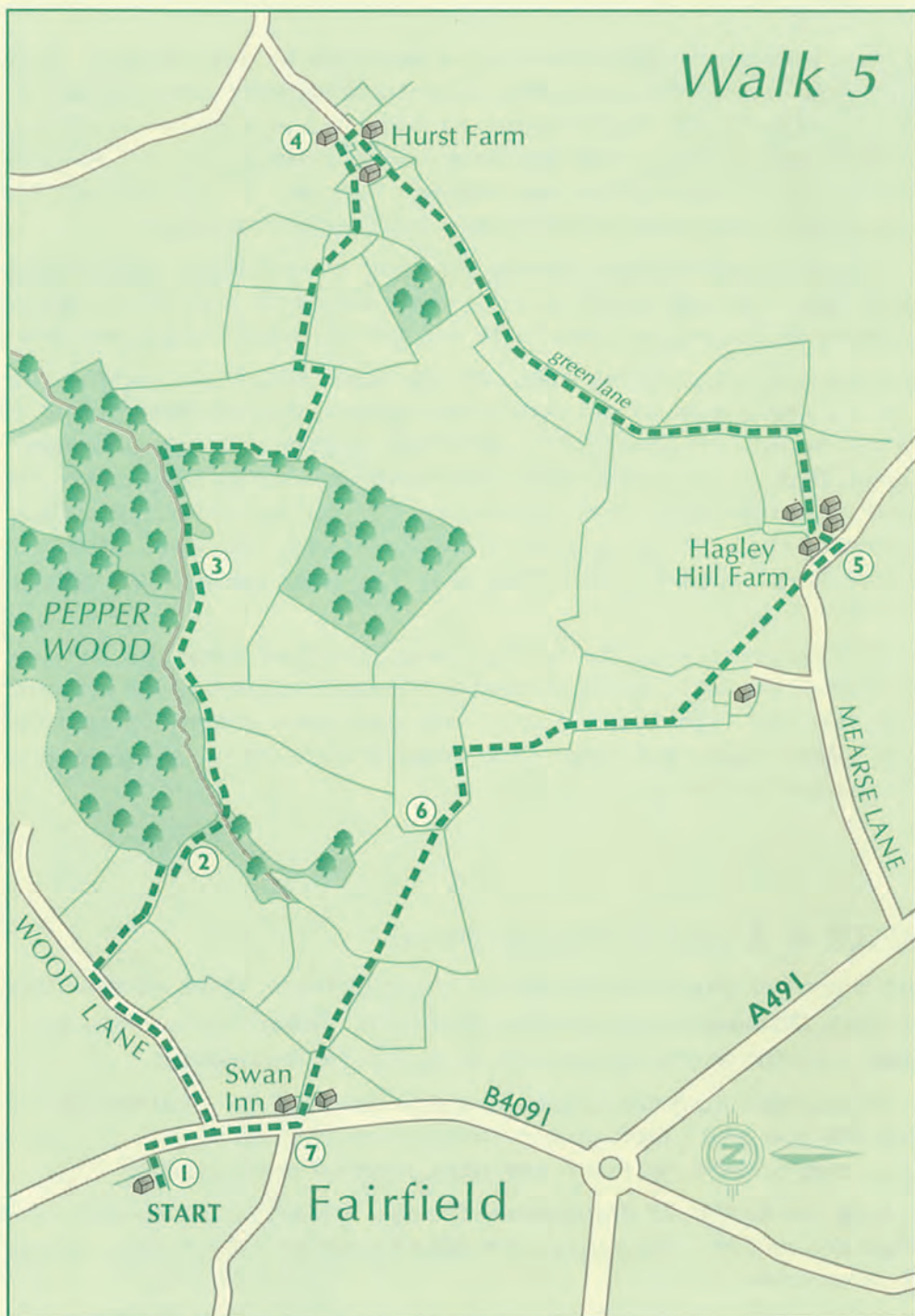
1. As you walk from the car park to the Stourbridge road find the sign that tells you which football team normally plays there.

Cross over Stourbridge Road, turn right, then left up Wood Lane.

2. Look out for the old Almshouses. The sign will tell you when they were originally built and when they were officially opened. Continue your walk up Wood Lane.

3. Take the first public footpath on the left, just before Pepper Wood Bungalow there is stile to climb over. Follow the hedge across the field until you find a break in the fence.

Walk 5



Turn and look left towards the view of Fairfield village. Find St Mark's Church and in the distance to the left the Waseley Hills. Just before you leave the field look out for a large oak tree on your right-hand side.

4. After crossing the stile turn right up Brook Road.

The people who lived in the now demolished cottages in this area were engaged in the Fairfield glassmaking industry in the nineteenth century. Some locals possess the old glassware.

Proceed until you meet the T junction with Dordale Road.

Look out again for another ancient oak tree straight in front of you. Turn right into Dordale Road. After a few hundred yards turn right again into the car park of Pepper Wood.

5. Find the sign saying 'Bridleway'. It is carved in wood. Follow the bridleway through Pepper Wood.

Look out for signs of coppicing. You may see piles of logs. When you reach the end of the bridleway look out for the Woodland Trust sign, and a sign to say how far you have walked through the woods.

6. On leaving Pepper Wood turn right into Wood Lane.

Look out for the old barn on the right-hand side.

Walk along Wood Lane to rejoin Stourbridge Road. Turn right back to the Recreation Ground car park.

WALK 5. Meadows and Trees

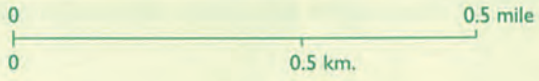
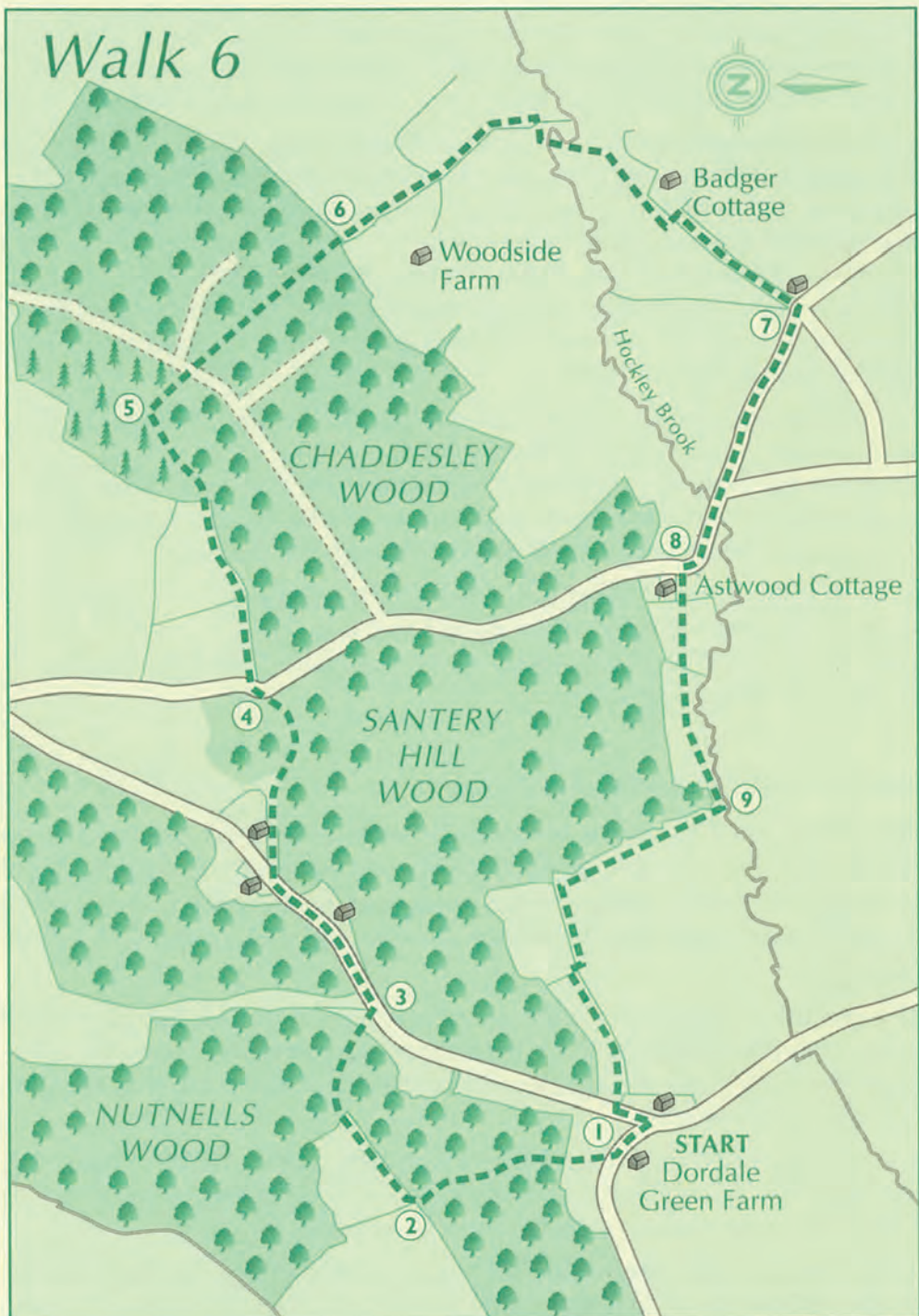
This walk goes through the fields to the west of Fairfield, skirting Pepper Wood, and offering wide views over the surrounding countryside. It can be muddy in winter. **Distance:** 7.2 kilometres or 4½ miles. **Time:** about 2 hours. **Start:** from the Recreation Ground car park in Fairfield Village Centre.

1. From the entrance turn right along the road then first left into Wood Lane. Take the first footpath on right, opposite the farm. Follow the right-hand hedge to a stile near the corner of the wood. Go down the next field to a stile at the corner.

2. Enter the wood and cross a footbridge into a field. Turn left along the line of brook. A tongue of woodland extends into the third field. Make for a stile and gate into the wood at the inner corner.

3. Do not cross the stream but bear right to a steep hollow. Cross a footbridge, follow the field edge inside the wood for a short distance, then carry on to another bridge into a field. Turn right to follow the path round

Walk 6



the field to the top corner. Turn left for 50 metres to a gap on the right into the next field. Follow the right-hand hedge past a pond and in 20 metres go over a stile into an old orchard. Cross it to the next stile and make for a farmhouse downhill on right. Pass some farm buildings on your right and go over a metal stile beside a Dutch barn on to a farm road.

4. Turn sharp right and go through the yard to a gate at the far side. Carry on straight along a paddock and two long fields, ignoring paths to the left, for $\frac{3}{4}$ km, then along a stony track, which turns right at the approach to Hagley Hill Farm. The path passes between a house on the left and a building on the right, then turns left through an opening into a farmyard. Make for the left corner and out on to the road.

5. Turn right along Mearse Lane and go through the first gate, at a bend in the road. Cross an arable field uphill, making for pylon on the skyline beyond the stile. Go diagonally right to the far right corner of the next field. Continue left across the next field to a stile in the top left corner. Follow the left-hand hedge with oaks to the end of the field.

6. Cross the middle of the next field towards a gate and stile in the opposite hedge, where a hedge joins it. Walk down the next field with this hedge on your left to a stile. Here "The Swan" is just visible on the right. Make for stile near the left corner of the car park.

7. Turn right down the road to your starting point.

WALK 6.

From Dordale Green through Chaddesley Woods.

This walk goes through Nutnells and Chaddesley Woods and along the course of Hockley Brook. This is a particularly lovely walk in the Spring when the ancient woodlands are full of bluebells.

Distance: about 5 kilometres or 3 miles of easy walking. **Time:** about 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ -2 hours. **Start:** at Dordale Green, at the junction of the roads from Belbroughton, Dodford and Woodcote Green.

1. Park in Woodcote Lane close to the junction with Dordale Road. Walk back along the road and turn right along Dordale Road. About 100m from the junction, opposite Dordale Green Farm, take the waymarked stile on the right and cross the field to a stile slightly to your left into Nutnell Wood. Cross the wood in the same direction. (The path twists and turns a little through very attractive woodland).

2. At the far side turn right into the next field and take the waymarked path to the right along the edge of the wood. At the next stile the path enters woodland again and swings right. Follow it until Woodcote Lane is reached again across a small field.

3. Turn left along the road for some 300m and then fork right along a tarmac drive. Go to the right of the garage at the end to enter Chaddesley Woods (marked by a large notice). Follow the edge of the wood to another road.

4. Cross the road to the gate opposite. Continue along the edge of the wood, with fine open views on the left. At the corner of the field the path re-enters the woodland by a waymarked gate. Continue in the same direction by taking the path to the left, to a junction of paths.

5. Take the waymarked right-hand path, which shortly crosses a lane and continues in a straight line until, in about half a kilometre, open fields are reached.

6. Follow the right-hand hedge down two fields. At the bottom of the field on the right hand side is a gate, go through the gate and cross the brook by the bridge on the left. Go straight ahead up the rise and, as soon as you see the house ahead, make for the right-hand corner of its wooden boundary fence. Continue parallel to the drive on the left for a short distance to the stone gate post. Cross into the drive and walk down it to the road.

7. Turn right down the hill. The road crosses the brook and bends right.

8. Take the signposted path before the house on the left through three paddocks following the course of the brook. Where the path drops suddenly in trees cross the brook by the bridge. Follow the stream for a short distance and at the path junction do not cross to the second bridge, but follow the path to the right.

9. Turn right up the bank to the corner of a replanted orchard and walk up it past a pond with the wood on your right. Cross the bridge over the ditch and turn left and follow the path with the ditch on your left. Cross the stile at the end of the ditch and follow the left-hand hedge back to Woodcote Lane.

Public Rights of Way

There are three sorts of public rights of way. Footpaths are only for walkers. Bridleways can be used by walkers, horse-riders and cyclists. Byways are open to all traffic. Signposts show where public rights of way leave the road. Footpaths are indicated by the symbol of a walker; bridleways by a horserider. Some paths are also marked with coloured arrows showing the direction of the path. Yellow arrows are used for footpaths, blue for bridleways and red for byways.

Always keep to the line of the path. It should not be interrupted by obstructions or crops (except grass.) If a path crosses a field, the surface should be restored after ploughing and the line of the path kept clear of crops. Paths along field edges should not be ploughed.

Worcestershire County Council is the authority responsible for ensuring that the County's 3,000 miles of public rights of way are maintained and unobstructed. If you would like further information or to report any problems, please contact:

Public Rights of Way, Worcestershire County Council, Countryside Service, Woodside Offices, Perry Wood Walk, Worcester. WR5 1ES. Tel. 01905 768214.

Parish Paths Wardens

Many Parish Councils have nominated a local volunteer, known as the **Parish Paths Wardens** or **P.P.W.**, to assist the County Council with the task of looking after public rights of way.

These officers provide a valuable service by carrying out regular checks on their local paths and discussing any problems or obstructions with landowners when necessary. Many of them also undertake practical tasks such as signposting and waymarking, repairs to stiles and clearance of undergrowth, working with local volunteer groups or private contractors.

If you would like to know more or to help look after local paths, please contact the County Council's Public Rights of Way Unit, which will put you in touch with the local P.P.W.

When out walking, please remember the COUNTRY CODE.

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work

Take care to respect landowner's privacy. Try to support local businesses and services.

Keep your dogs under close control.

Dogs should keep to the line of the path with you. Dogs can alarm and distress farm animals and wildlife, especially if they have young with them.

Protect wildlife, plants and trees.

Many wildflowers are protected by law and it is a criminal offence to pick them.

Keep to public paths across farmland.

Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls.

Fasten all gates, (which you have opened.)

Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone.

Take your litter home.

Guard against the risk of fire.

Help to keep all water clean.

Make no unnecessary noise.

Take special care on country roads.

Drive slowly and do not park on road verges and in field entrances and passing places.

Even better! Leave the car at home. Why not use the bus to get to the start of your walk? Information on buses through Belbroughton can be obtained from **0870 608 2608**.



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