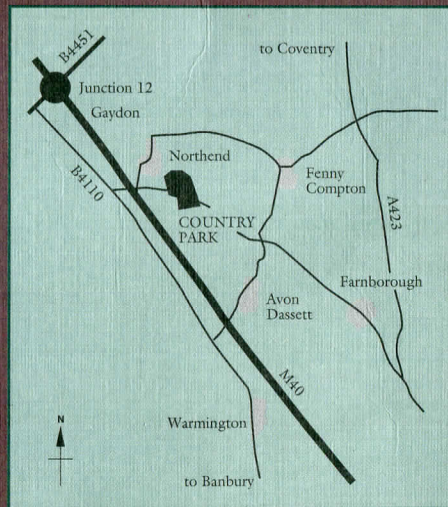




Kite flying. One of the popular pastimes on Burton Dassett Hills

How to find us:



Further information from:
Country Parks Information Service
Kingsbury Water Park,
Bodmoor Heath,
Sutton Coldfield,
West Midlands. B76 0DY
Telephone 01827 872660

Other County Council Country Parks
 and Picnic Areas in Warwickshire to
 visit are :

- Alvecote Priory Picnic Area
- Kingsbury Water Park
- Hartshill Hayes Country Park
- Draycote Water Country Park
- Ryton Pools Country Park
- The Greenway and Milcote Picnic Area
- Ufton Fields Nature Reserve

Free leaflets are available from the
 above address.

sponsored by:



Burton Dassett Hills Country Park



a visitors guide

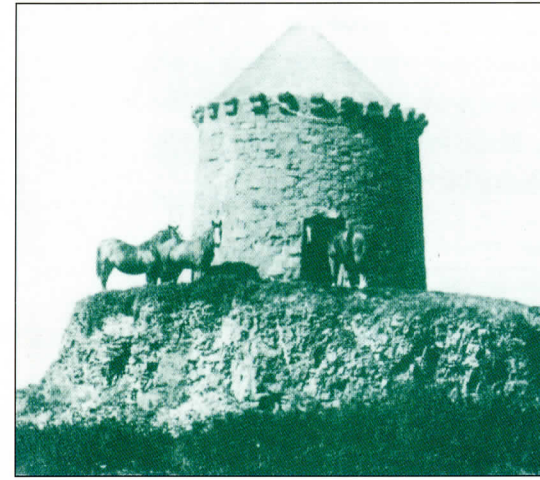
Contents

- **Burton Dassett Heritage Trail** 1
A $\frac{3}{4}$ of a mile, 40 minute clockwise walk around Burton Dassett Hills Country Park that tells you about the history and wildlife of this special place.
- **Map of Burton Dassett Hills and Trail** 6
- **Mill Lane stroll** 12
A mile long circular walk along quiet country lanes and public footpaths across the fields around the Burton Dassett Hills.
- **Young Ranger competition**
Kids – Answer the clues, find the magic word and win your Young Ranger pack.

Before you start

- Bear in mind that the Hills are high up, often windy and in places steep, so come prepared.
- Please keep dogs under close control. They can worry sheep causing serious injury and be a nuisance to other park visitors.
- Use the map in the middle pages to help you find your way around.

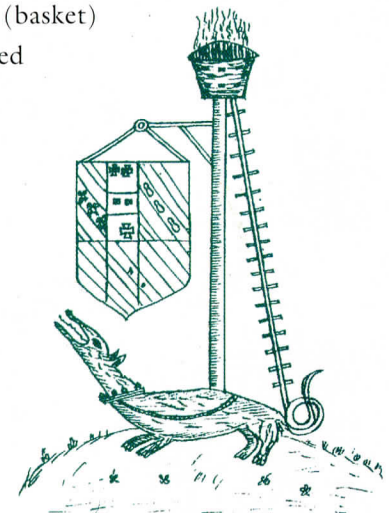
Burton Dassett Heritage Trail



The beacon about 1900. Note the quarry face nearly up to the building, since restored, and the open doorway

If you look carefully you can see that it used to have two doors and two windows. There are three theories as to its original use; nobody knows for certain so take your pick:

1. That it was a Beacon tower used as a means of passing important news across the country in the days before the telephone! An iron cressett (basket) filled with burning wood would be raised on a pole above the Beacon where it could be seen by other hill top Beacons which passed the signal on.
2. That it was a windmill of which the upper storey has since been removed.



The beacon at Burton Dassett from an early drawing

3. That it was a Warreners lodge, the home of the man who looked after rabbits. In medieval times rabbits did not 'breed like rabbits' as they do today, but needed constant cossetting even to the extent of having their burrows dug for them. They were much prized both for their meat and fur and needed protection from poachers. Medieval documents show that there was a rabbit warren in the Parish somewhere.

*Burton post
windmill as it was
after renovation
in the 1930's by
order of Lord
Willoughby
DeBrooke*



To one side of the Beacon is a flat area on which stood a **wooden post windmill** until it blew down in 1946. This was not the first time such a disaster had occurred; in 1655 the previous windmill blew down in a storm, killing the Miller who had come up from Northend to turn the sails out of the wind.

Make your way along the road to the car park at Pleasant Hill (2).

Saxon Warrior



This flat area is the result of quarrying which literally took off the top of the hill. In 1908 a **saxon graveyard** from the 6th or 7th centuries was found here and some of the bodies showed signs of having died in battle. Amongst the possessions buried with them were an iron pot and a sword.

Turn back along the road, after about fifty metres bear off left down a narrow grassy track in a hollow, which takes you into one of the quarried areas by the picnic tables.

The humps and bumps that cover much of the Hills are the **remains of quarrying (3)** that has gone on since early times. The stone that caps most of the Hills is Ironstone and it is this iron that gives the lovely orange colour to the rock. Many local houses are built of stone from the Hills, whilst in the last century and again in the two world wars the quarries were worked for the iron they contain, the stone being taken away to be crushed and smelted.

*Burton Dasset
Quarrymen early in
the 1900's*



The Ironstone was taken away using an aerial ropeway that ran from the west side of Gallows Hill down to a rail head at Burton Dassett Sidings, alongside the Warwick to Banbury road.

The stone reached Gallows Hill from the various working faces by a tramway, with the wagons being pulled by ponies. You can still follow two of the main tramway routes as they cross under the road to the Beacon; one heads from the picnic area and the other past the toilet block, converging at the site of the aerial ropeway.

"Shakespeare Route."
**Stratford-upon-Avon &
 Midland Junction Railway**

On and from Dec. 1st, 1909,
BURTON DASSETT SIDING
 (Between Fenny Compton and Kineton Stations;
 On main road between Warwick and Banbury)
 WILL BE
OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
 FOR
 Grain, Timber, Bricks, Stone, Coal
 and Coke, Hay and Straw, and similar
 descriptions of Station to Station Traffic,
 in full Truck Loads.

Goods should be consigned
 via S. M. J. Railway, "Shakespeare Route."

Information respecting Rates and other arrangements
 can be obtained on application to the Station Master at
 Kineton, or to—
 Stratford-on-Avon, **RUSSELL WILLMOTT,**
 Nov., 1909. Traffic Manager.

W. Staines, Printer, Chapel Nere, Stratford-on-Avon.

*Burton Dassett
 railway sidings where
 the stone from the
 hills came via aerial
 ropeway*

Stories are told of the aerial ropeway being used, unofficially, for passenger transport between the quarries and railway siding, to avoid the walk up the Hill. On one occasion an unlucky fellow was riding up in one of these buckets when the lunch whistle sounded, the ropeway was stopped and he was left dangling 50 foot up in the air.



Salad Burnet

Sheep and flowers. Believe it or not the Country Park is a haven for wildflowers, and it is all thanks to the sheep and the farmer. The Hills have been grazed by sheep or cattle for hundreds of years in the traditional way, with little pesticide or fertilisers. This has allowed many different species of flowers to find a home here.

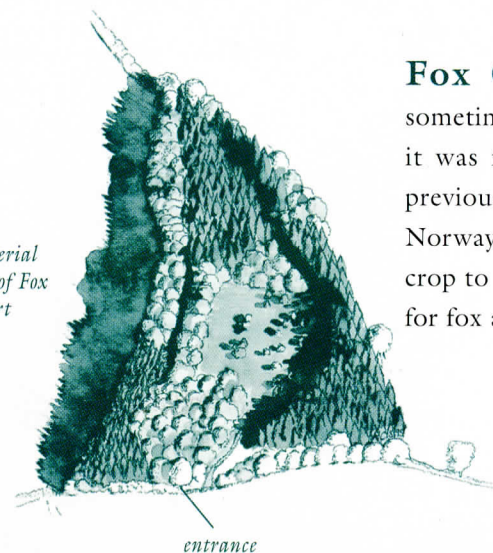
The trouble for us is that because the sheep graze them they are all so small, often with tiny blooms. Still, a careful search is well worthwhile as many are very beautiful. Explore particularly on the slopes of the quarry areas and look out for plants such as Wild Thyme, Salad Burnet and Quaking Grass.

Make your way through the quarries and down to the wood



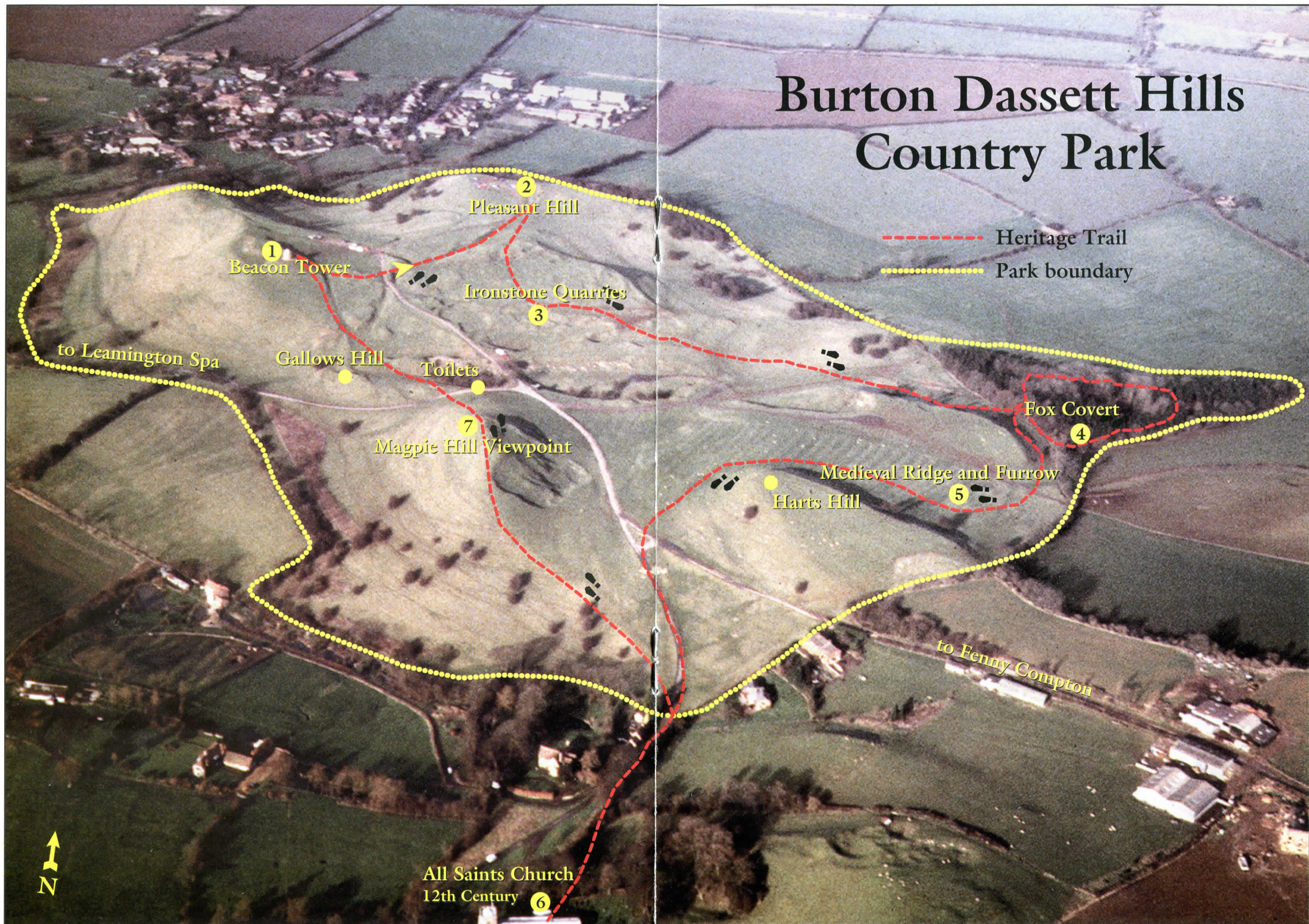
*Quaking
 Grass*

*An aerial
 view of Fox
 Covert*



Fox Covert (4) was 'new' sometime in the 19th century when it was first planted on what had previously been a field. The trees, Norway spruce, were planted as a crop to make money, and as shelter for fox and game hunting!

Burton Dassett Hills Country Park



*Bluebells
introduced
into Fox
Covert from
Waverley
Wood in
1995*



Today the Rangers are managing the wood with wildlife in mind, and so are slowly changing it into a broadleaved woodland with plantings of Native species such as Ash, Oak, Hazel, Willow and Bluebells, most recently planted in 1995. There is a quarter of a mile surfaced walk around the wood, with occasional seats and picnic tables to enable you to enjoy the peace and birdsong.

The Knightcote Spring just inside the wood is one of several that rise on the Hills. The small brick reservoir is now a haven for aquatic life such as the Freshwater Shrimp but it was originally built in 1871 by the Kimble Trust to supply water to the hamlet of Knightcote to which the water was piped. It is no longer used and so we are left with a small but steady stream flowing through the wood and a beautiful legacy for us all to enjoy.

*Knightcote
Spring,
originally built
by the Kimble
Trust to supply
water to
Knightcote*



The Kimble trust has benefitted the villages of Northend and Knightcote since 1475. As a young man John Kimble was a penniless and homeless traveller. His pleas for food and shelter were rejected at Burton Dassett but he was helped in Northend and Knightcote. He left after a few days and went on to become a wealthy farmer in Mollington.

He was long forgotten by the locals when he died, but he had not forgotten them. He left his entire estate in trust, for the benefit of the inhabitants of the two villages. His Trust still gives help to this day, including the custom of giving a loaf of bread to every household on New Years Day, and money to the children when they leave the village school.



John Kimble

Leave the wood and turn immediately left. Follow the path around the boundary of the park until you come to a farm gateway.



*Ridge &
Furrow just
outside the
park with Fox
Covert, bottom
left, and the
beacon above*

in which each 'ridge' was cultivated by a family. Most of the Hills were too steep to plough but nearly everywhere else in the parish shows evidence of ridge and furrow.

Looking up the hill you will see what looks like waves in the grass. This is **Ridge and Furrow (5)** at the foot of Harts Hill. It is the remains of ploughing in the medieval open field system

If you feel fit, continue straight on up over Harts Hill, the highest point on the park with magnificent views. The copse of beech trees was planted to celebrate the fortieth anniversary of the Queen's coronation in 1992. Go straight over the road on the other side and leave the park by the next road, to the church.

If you prefer your walks a little gentler turn right and follow the track up to the road. Turn left and follow the road to the church.

The parish church (6), known as the 'Cathedral on the Hills' because of its size, is one of the most beautiful and unspoilt

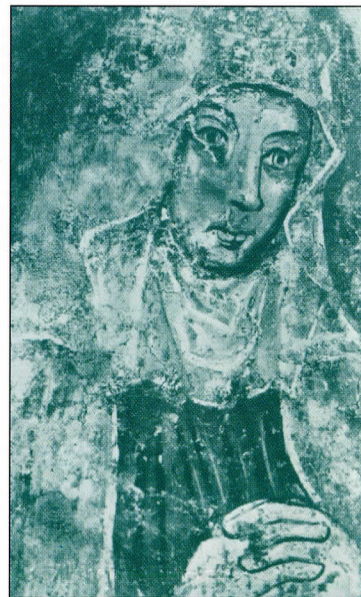


All Saints Church, centre of the parish and site of the original settlement

It is hard to imagine now that this small hamlet was the site of the original village. The name is of saxon origin; 'Burs'ton' or Burs homestead and Dasset or 'dercett', the abode of wild beasts.

The centre of population shifted down from the Hills in the 12th and 13th centuries, to the villages of Northend and Southend. The latter became a thriving place with a weekly market and three day annual fair.

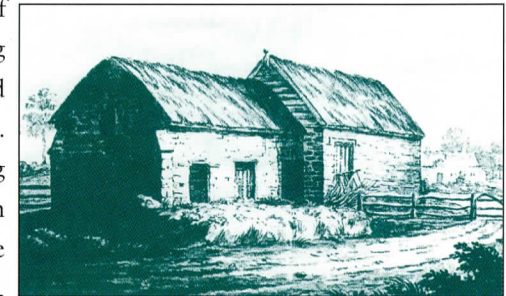
Detail from one of the medieval wall paintings



By the beginning of the 14th century the parish was so prosperous that it gave the third highest tax returns for Warwickshire, after Coventry and Warwick. It was in this prosperous period that the church reached its present size and grandeur.

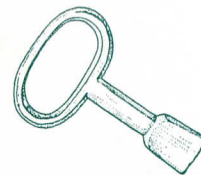
The 14th century was to be the peak of the prosperity of the parish. Like many villages Southend was decimated by the black death of 1348-9, slowly declined and finally extinguished in 1497 when the landlord, Sir Edward Belknap threw out the last twelve households and enclosed the land for sheep grazing.

The main street of Southend ran along the line of the road over the motorway. Only one building survives, the barn on the corner of the North End road,

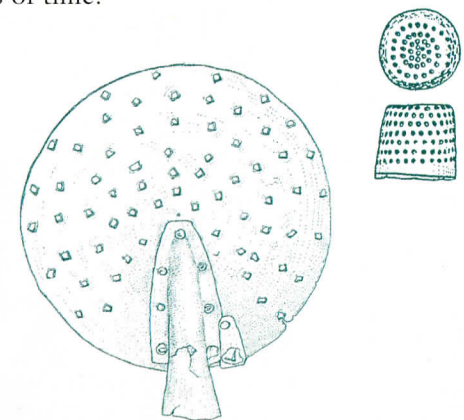


St. James Hovel the only remaining building of the deserted medieval village of Southend

which was originally the chapel dedicated to St. James. However recent excavation has revealed the size of the town running along both sides of the road and many finds have been made. As you leave the park try to imagine driving down the main street of the third largest township of Warwickshire, like so many others almost lost in the mists of time.



Key, thimble and milk-skimmer. Three of the many artifacts from the archaeological excavation of Southend.



Leave the church and walk back into the park. Walk on to Magpie Hill, the hill in front of you on the left hand side of the road.

The viewpoint (7) shows all that can be seen from the Hills. On a clear day you can see the Malverns 40 miles away, and the Clec Hills in Shropshire.



The Battle of Edge Hill

Looking west you can see Edge Hill. The plain below is the site of the battle of Edge Hill, the first battle of the Civil War in October 1642. There are reputed to be bullet holes from this battle above the chancel arch in the church.

Mill Lane Stroll

From the Beacon follow the sign at the edge of the car park down a grassy 'Holloway' and follow this down the slope to a farm gate.

The tree on your left as you go through the gate is a Field Maple, related to those from North America used for making maple syrup, and our only native maple. It's a beautiful tree especially in the autumn when its leaves turn gold and red, making a wonderful display.

Go through the gate and follow the track down to the road.



Field maple leaf and seed

This track is the ancient Mill Lane, along which carts loaded with corn were drawn up to the windmill that stood beside the Beacon..... just like the painting on the front of this booklet!

At the road turn right. You are now walking on Malt House Lane which becomes Top Street through the village of Northend. Follow this road past the post box on your left and phone box on the right, around a sharp left bend and then turn up a track opposite 'The White House' and next to 'Pype Hayes' about a hundred metres before you reach the end of the village.

Follow this track to its end and go through the gate and diagonally left up the field to the second gate in the hedgerow opposite. Bear left through this gate following the line of the fence on your left, across the ridge and furrow until you reach the kissing gate in the hedge on the far side.

Ridge and furrow is the remains of the medieval system of cultivation in strips using a plough that only turned the soil one way... into the middle of the strip; when the land was turned over to grazing the field was 'frozen' as we see it today.

Medieval farmers measured length in Perches which is equivalent to five and a half yards. Try pacing out the distance between these ridges to see if it is really medieval?

Go through the kissing gate and turn right along the track up the field; follow this to the next gate which takes you back into the country park.

To finish your walk follow the track up to the road and turn right to the Beacon. If you have any energy left take a detour to your left for a 1/4 mile walk around the Fox Court woodland trail to experience a different side to Burton Dassett.

Acknowledgements :

'A Warwickshire Beacon' by Frederick Whitehead courtesy of Leamington Art Gallery
Written by **Bob Thurston**, Countryside Ranger
Designed by **Steven Lippert**, County Graphics
Drawing by **Anne Smith**
Printed by **Reynolds**