

Real Ale Ramble – River Dene Walk

This walk is based on one in the book, "Short Walks from Warwickshire Pubs", by Richard Shurey, published by Countryside Books. Excluding the detour into Walton, the length of the walk is about 2 ½ miles. All the stiles and gates are dog friendly.

Use Ordnance Survey Landranger Map 151.

Start your walk from the thatched Stag's Head pub in Ettington Road, Wellesbourne. This building has been well restored and differs little from the hostelry of a century ago, when it would appear to have been a popular meeting place for farm workers. It may well have been here that the seeds were sown for Joseph Arch to form the trades union for agricultural workers.

The Stag's Head does not have a car park, but there is plenty of road parking around Chestnut Square. The grid reference of your starting point is GR 277552. Use the OS Landranger Series map number 151.

Opposite the pub, walk along Chapel Lane to pass the Manor House, and the Old School House. After a few hundred yards, on reaching Baker's Hatch, turn right along Lowes Lane. Almost immediately, turn left down a signed footpath and through a gate, which leads in turn to a kissing gate into a pasture.

Follow the arrowed direction straight ahead into the field, keeping just to the left of an obsolete hedge, marked by bushes. Reach and cross the stile at the far end of the pasture. In the next field, walk along the left-hand border to a bridge over the River Dene. After crossing the bridge, turn left up to a stile in the corner of the field, but do not climb over. Instead, turn right along a track towards a farm, keeping the field border on your left.

Go through the gate, and continue straight ahead (with barns on your left) to another gate, and climb the stile. Here you reach a vehicle track, and the Wellesbourne Watermill complex. Cross the track, continue through a gap along an enclosed path to a gate, and pass through.

Keep straight ahead. The path now borders the river on your right. Maintain your heading, keeping the field's margin to your left, through several gates, or gaps in the fencing, to a farm vehicle track. Turn right, cross the river by the footbridge (or wade through the ford) to a lane.

Here you have two options, a detour to the village of Walton (turn left), or a direct return to Wellesbourne (turn right).

Turn left to visit Walton. Almost immediately you enter the village, an estate hamlet allied to great house of Walton Hall, which is now a hotel and country club. It is worth continuing through the village; nearly all the houses are visually interesting and full of character. At the far end of the village, there is a good view to your left of Walton Hall. If you are up to it, continue through the main gate, and follow the drive to the Hall itself. The bar and conservatory restaurant is open to the public, and a refreshing drink may be had on the lawns outside. Turning left outside the main door, cross the lawns and then a footbridge. Turn right and follow a track alongside the lake back to re-join the main drive. Retrace your steps back through the village to the ford.

Turning right from the ford, walk along the lane for about ¾ mile, passing semi-detached cottages on your left. About 150 yards beyond the cottages, take a signed path over a stile on the right, and follow the track diagonally across the field to another stile about 100 yards away. Climb it, and continue along the narrow footpath to a road. Go directly across the road and follow a walled footpath to rejoin Ettington Road. Here turn right, and the Stag's Head is about 100 yards ahead.