

Walk 3

About 8 miles (2 on roads)

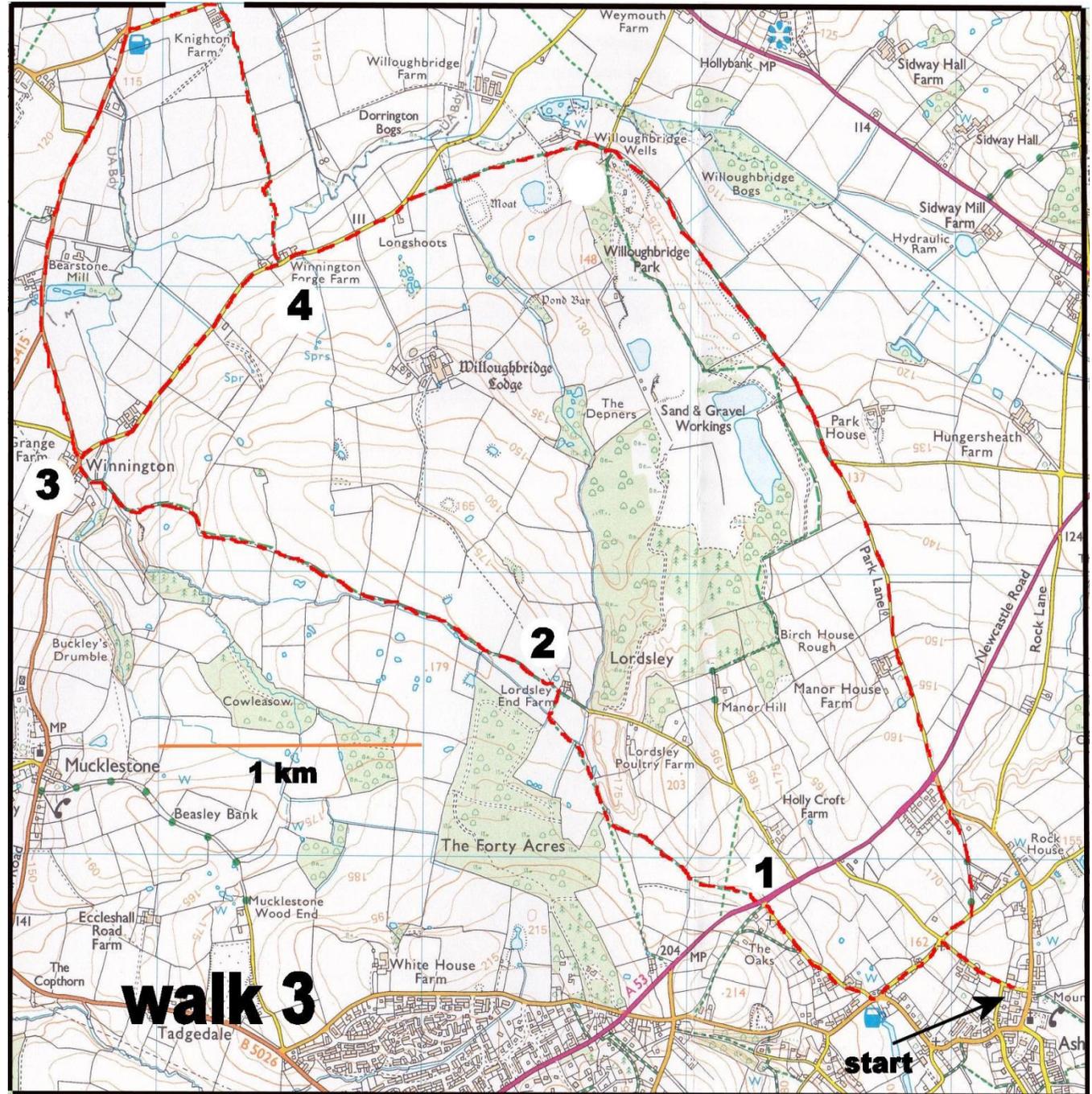
Allow 3 – 4 hours

This is the longest walk in the book and strays for a short while into Shropshire as it crosses the River Tern by the lovely Bearstone Mill. It follows an old wagon route to Winnington and on the return stretch passes through the edge of the former Willoughbridge Park. The White Lion pub, situated about halfway round, provides a welcome resting point for refreshment. The starting point is the Meynell Arms in Ashley.

Turn right out of the car park into SCHOOL ROAD and walk up to the cross roads, turning left by the old Congregational Church into CHAPEL LANE. In 300 m take the first turn right into WESLEYAN ROAD. At the A53 cross over, taking great care because of the traffic, and go through the second of two iron farm gates on your left just up the bank. The gatepost bears a sign 'Public footpath to Winnington'.

❶

Keeping the hedge to the right, ignore the stile on the right and pass over two stiles. Still keeping the hedge to the right, another stile is reached. Cross over this, turn right and walk to the corner of the field by the edge of the wood called 'THE FORTY ACRES'. Go through a small iron gate. Keep to the right with the hedge on your right and pass into a second field still with the hedge on your right. At the end of this field, turn right, and keeping the hedge on your left, walk to the triple footpath sign opposite LORDSLEY END FARM. Turn left through the iron gate and follow the hedge.



2

You are now on the old waggon road which went from Ashley to Winnington. Carry on, keeping the hedge to the right. (Don't cross through on to the other side at the first gap). In about 200 metres, continue through a farm gate. From here, the waggon road is more identifiable and as you proceed

between hedges, it is easy to visualise the waggon traffic passing up and down in days gone by.

Passing through an iron farm gate, and keeping the small stream to the left, the route lies through bushes to another farm gate by a stone wall. Go straight ahead across the field to a small wicket gate in the opposite hedge line. (The raised portion of the field here is probably the remains of the waggon road). Go through the gate and, keeping the hedge to the right, go on and through another gate into a large field. From this path there are magnificent views to the left over into Shropshire and, in good weather, to the Welsh mountains. Carry on, keeping the hedge to the left, eventually swinging round to the right and on to a rough stone road. Follow this road and cross the ford. Then bear right past the drives of two houses and turn right on to the road through WINNINGTON. This was once a populous hamlet with its own forge, smithy, and even a cheese factory.

3

From this point, there is a choice of routes to WINNINGTON FORGE FARM (point 4). The instructions given below involve about a mile of walking along a road which can be quite busy. Larger parties – particularly those with children – may prefer to use the minor road and rejoin the route in about half a mile. Unfortunately, this short-cut

Carry on straight ahead through the farm gate and across the field, keeping close to the hedge on the left except where a diversion is required round a pond. Soon, after passing through a pair of gates, swing round to the right of a large tree at the far side of the field and walk straight ahead over the River Tern foot bridge. The path lies ahead, slightly to the right, between two farmhouses. Cross the fence (there is a stile off the line of the path at the right hand end) carry on to the road and turn left, passing WINNINGTON FORGE FARM. This is where the short-cut from Winnington rejoins the main route.

4

Looking right up the hill, notice WILLOUGHBRIDGE LODGE on the skyline; a former hunting lodge, it once stood in a large deer park.

After passing the next house on the right after the Lodge, an iron gate and footpath sign is seen on the right. The bridle path lies straight ahead through the field to the right of two telephone poles, past a white cottage and through an iron farm gate. Carry on along this route, noting the still visible signs of the old bridle road. Cross over a farm lane, through an iron gate and go straight ahead up the track. Pass through another iron gate and turn right by an old oak tree with an enormous canker on the trunk.

5

The house to the left is WILLOUGHBRIDGE WELLS, in the gardens of which are some sulphur spring wells (on private land). Early in the 17th Century the wells were reputed to have healing properties for many aches and pains. They merited a mention by the famous Doctor Plot in his 'Natural History of Staffordshire' published at the time.

In about 50 metres notice the old lodge almost

completely hidden in the trees on the right. Keep to the right along the tarmac road passing a track on the right. Soon the road turns away to the right and leads to the quarry. Your route goes straight ahead through the trees on a bridle path. PARK HOUSE FARM is seen shortly away to the left and behind it, a magnificent view of the Maer Hills. The bridle path ends by the old park gates whose beautiful ironwork is worth a close inspection. At the tarmac road (PARK LANE) go straight ahead and in 1200 metres, the A53 Newcastle Road is reached.



The old park gates

Carefully cross the A53 into TOP ROCK ROAD. Go on ahead for 150m and fork right into ELDERTREE LANE, an unmade track. Walk to the end of this lane, turn right and in 150m, turn left into SCHOOL ROAD and return to the Meynell Arms car park.