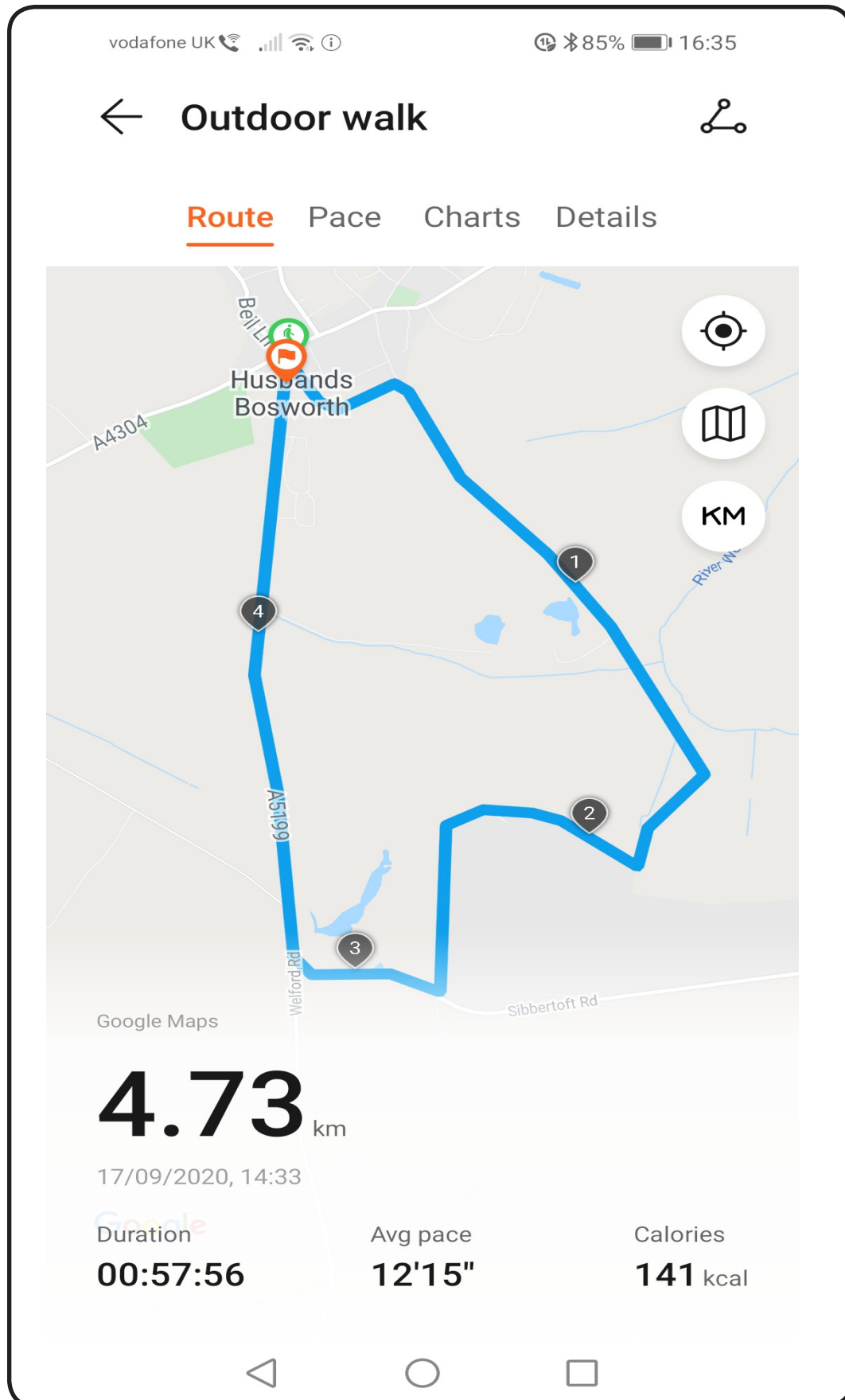


WALK ABOUT BOSWORTH

1. BOMBER COUNTY

A reasonably easy walk in open open countryside, exploring Bosworth's quarrying legacy and the ghost of wartime Bosworth...



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Easy going, though can be muddy in parts during wet times. 2.95 miles (4.73km) 1 hour

This walk starts and ends at the Turville Memorial Hall.

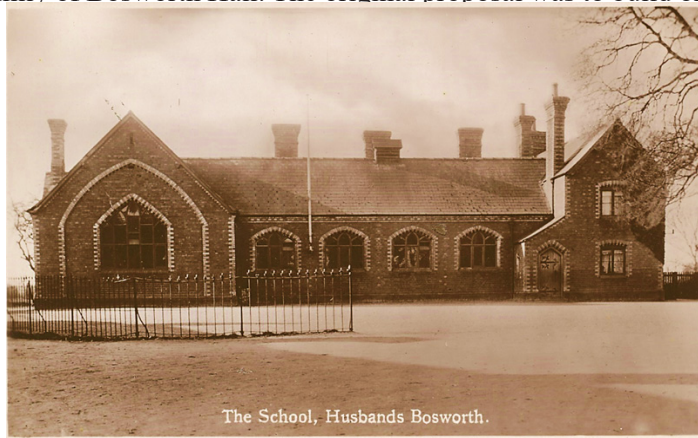
[Limited car parking here, or on The Green]

♦ *Cross the road to The Green*

Admire the old oak tree, which was planted by the school children in 1897 to commemorate the Diamond Jubilee of the accession of Queen Victoria. The Green itself is so undermined with utilities, telephone, fibre optic, electricity, water and drains that it proved difficult for the Parish Council to identify a site for the parish notice board, which explains why it stands today at a bit of a jaunty angle!

Land for the school was provided by the Fortescue-Turville family of Bosworth Hall. The original proposal was to build on the lower green, the Old Green on Mowsley Road. However, although detailed plans were drawn up it was thankfully decided that the site was too restrictive.

The school was built in 1858 under the National Schools Scheme at a cost of £852.13s.9d, with one classroom (the present main hall) and a Headmaster's house. It soon became necessary to extend the premises and an infant's classroom was built at a further cost of £374.8.4d, raised by public subscription. The first headmaster was John Houghton, who held the position until his death in 1886. He is buried in the village's Welford Road cemetery and when he was laid to rest the grief of the school was such that *'...the flowers were watered by the tears of the children.'*



The School, Husbands Bosworth.

♦ *With the school building on your right proceed down School Lane*

The houses on your left were built in the 1930s as council houses and replaced Martin's Yard, an enclave of old thatched cottages huddled around a courtyard - an early statutory clearance. Note that the houses were built in two styles, in two phases. Homes up to number 12 are inside the village Conservation Area, whereas from number 13 to the end are outside!

♦ *At the end of the lane follow the path to your left, around the Telephone Exchange*

You will note that the sign declares this as a bridle path, open to horse traffic, as opposed to a footpath, which is restricted to two-footed traffic! Half way along, a footpath meets it, emerging from between homes on Lammas Close - 50 metres of precious footpath in a parish that can only boast a meagre total of 220 metres!

♦ *Walk straight ahead until you come to Butt Lane*

Butt Lane was probably named for the archery practice butts that the village was obliged to provide in Medieval times. Every village had to *'shoot according to the Statute'* to ensure that the country was adequately armed and trained ready for a possible French invasion. In 1620 several men of Bosworth were fined one penny-three farthings each for not observing the Statute.

♦ *With Bromell Grove on your right, turn right and proceed down the lane*

Bromell Grove was named for the Bromell family who once farmed this field, and much of the land off Butt Lane belonging to Bosworth Estate. Proceed out of the built up area, down the bridle track, into the countryside. Soon you will notice the land on your left, which has been quarried for sand and gravel. Aggregate excavation has been carried on here for hundreds of years and in 1801 several bronze *'celts'* - Bronze Age knives - and spear ferrules were unearthed in Gravel-pit Spinney, by estate workers. More recently the land was quarried industrially during the 1960s, with all traffic entering and leaving the site along Butt Lane, passing over a weigh bridge sited alongside the bridle path where the track widens.

The quarry on your left was abandoned in the 1970s when the workings threatened to lower the water-table that supplied water from bore holes on Bosworth Hall land to Market Harborough. The pumping station in Waterworks Way is still in use, although the water supply to it is now reversed! Gravel extraction moved to the west, a processing plant was installed and access for the increased traffic was gained through farmland directly onto Welford Road. The closure of the bore holes allowed the quarry operators to return briefly to the land and excavate to a lower level, hauling across the bridle track. Extraction of mineral has now ceased on the whole site and the area is being returned to agriculture, water bodies and amenity land.

♦ *Carry on down the track and through two gateways*

Follow the raised pathway, taking care as there may be livestock in the fields. It is likely that in the past this was the main thoroughfare linking Bosworth and Welford, track raised to aid drainage in the wetter months. In the slight valley to your left runs the nascent river Welland, which rises at Sibbertoft and which here forms the county, parish, parliamentary constituency

and diocesan boundary. The land on the other side, and Highgate Lodge farm on the hill, being in Northamptonshire, Marston Trussel parish, Daventry Parliamentary Constituency and local authority district and Peterborough Deanery!

◆*Continue up the rise and you will come to a bridle-gate*

You will emerge onto pastureland scattered with odd brick walls and concrete tracks. This is the bomb store for R.A.F. Husbands Bosworth, the World War II aerodrome. The emplacements are strategically spaced so that an explosion in one unit wouldn't detonate its neighbour, causing a catastrophic chain reaction.



Built over a period of 15 months during 1942-3, at a cost of £805,000, the aerodrome was originally set out as a category 1, heavy bomber base, with concrete runways but was re-classified even before it was finished, as the nature of aerial warfare moved on. New recruits were desperately needed to replace crews lost in the massive bombing campaigns earlier in the war and R.A.F. Husbands Bosworth became a training and type conversion base, 14 Operational Training Unit. Initially under the command of nearby R.A.F. Market Harborough, but later under its own command, as 85 O.T.U., the base's main activity was training crews up from smaller single-engined aircraft onto the multi-engined Avro Wellington bombers.

◆*Follow the concrete pathway round to your right, skirting the site*

Note that the concrete, despite being laid in wartime haste, and in a necessarily temporary manner, has stood the test of time and Nature is only taking hold in a relatively few areas. Keep to the right until you come to a gateway signed 'Permissive Path', which takes you in front of the row of static caravans. As you close the gate behind you, look back to your right and you will see a straggly line of mature trees leading to farm buildings in the middle distance. This was the line of the original road to Sibbertoft, which was truncated when the aerodrome was built; the farm buildings would have been on the roadside before the war.

Continue along the line of mobile homes, until you meet the tarmac. To your left is the Gliding Centre, one of the premier gliding facilities in the UK, and home to Coventry Gliding Club since 1968. Most days you can watch gliders being winch-launched or air-towed across the greensward in front of you. The Gliding Centre café welcomes visitors and is usually open to the public during office hours and is a good coffee stop on your walk!

◆*Remember this is an active airfield, so keep to the right along the tarmac track*

On your left there are ten slabs of concrete, which are the stub-ends of one of the runways; the rest of the runway, which would have extended over the horizon, were lifted and broken up in the 1950s and it is rumoured the hard-core was used in the building of the M1 motorway. The track that you are now on was originally the perimeter track to the aerodrome, linking the runways with a series of 30 dispersal pads, where the aeroplanes were stationed awaiting orders. The pads were known as 'spectacle' dispersals as, from the air they resembled spectacles! You can see a complete one on your left, now used for glider storage, as you walk past the industrial buildings on your right. On your right, over the fence, is an extensive solar power array. This was set up in 2017 as a joint-venture project between the energy company and North Kilworth Community Interest Company, returning a share of profits to North Kilworth villagers! Originally the land in this area was set aside for the development of an industrial estate but the operators of the airfield objected to buildings being erected at the end of their active runway, so the low-profile solar panels were proposed instead and subsequently approved by planners.

◆*You will soon come to Sibbertoft Road*

Look left as you emerge onto the road and you will see the carriageway curling round towards Sibbertoft. The straight section further on around the bend was originally the aerodrome's main runway, which was requisitioned after the war to replace the original road, which we noted earlier was lost in the construction of the aerodrome. [See if you can see where you are on this USAAF aerial photo taken in February 1944 - clue: X marks the spot!]

◆*At the road turn right*

Take care, as there is no footway and only a narrow verge for a couple of hundred yards to the junction with Welford Road. Fields on the left and right of you here were turned over to allotments during World War



RAF HUSBANDS BOSWORTH: Wellington Bombers of No.14 OTU, 5 Group, Bomber Command on February 29th 1944

II, part of Churchill's "Dig for Victory" campaign. On your right is the entrance to NBJ Joinery, which produces high-end joinery, shop and office fittings for many 'blue chip' companies, including the major banks and City institutions. The fields on both your right and left as you approach the junction were given over to allotments during the war - Digging for Victory!

♦***At the road junction with Welford road (A5199) turn right and cross onto the footway***

Take care again, as for a short way here the footway is very narrow and broken. On your left, through the trees and bushes, below the road level, you will glimpse the now redundant western quarry which is in the process of being restored to agricultural land, wildlife havens, wetland and lakes. On the eastern edge of the workings is a nationally significant archaeological site; a Neolithic Causewayed Enclosure, which is protected as a Scheduled Ancient Monument.

A service tunnel under the road here, built to accommodate cabling for the aerodrome's radar unit, which was sited on the high ground at Cote Hill Farm off Station Road, was later used by the quarry operators to take the conveyor which transferred quarried mineral to the processing plant over half a mile away.

♦***Cross over the Station Road junction and carry on along the footway along Welford Road***

Watch for traffic turning in and out of the junction. Pause a while when you are on the better footway and looking across the road you will see a redundant gateway half hidden behind the road sign. Before the aerodrome was built this was the original road to Sibbertoft that we encountered earlier, as we left the bomb-store area. Here it formed a crossroads with Station Road. During the war this was the main entrance to the aerodrome, with the guard house and NAAFI immediately on the right inside the gate. After the aerodrome was closed the guard-house and ancillary buildings became a piggery!

♦***Continue along Welford Road***

This section of road, towards the village was a turnpike, its maintenance funded by tolls charged for its use. It is likely that this road didn't exist in its present form before the turnpike, as aerial photographs show medieval ridge and furrow field markings carrying through unbroken across the line of the later roadway. Early maps show a toll-gate on the road just past the Station Road junction.

On your right, across the road, are the old quarry workings, which are presently being infilled with inert waste, eventually to be restored to agriculture. As you near the village the farm on your left, The Firs Farm was originally part of Bosworth Estate and was purchased by Leicestershire County Council in the 1920s, along with the adjacent Packs Hill and Stud Farms on Station Road, in a government-backed 'Homes for Heroes' scheme to provide livelihoods for men returning from the Great War. Faced with the post-war Depression, low land values and nobody to administer the estates or farm the land, many estates were broken up in government sponsored land purchases.

Immediately after the farm are the village allotments, which are administered by Husbands Bosworth Parish Council but are owned by Leicestershire County Council. There are 31 plots, each the statutory 22 yards by 11 yards (one chain by half a chain!). During the war there were allotments on the whole field, amounting to over 7 acres, but this was reduced in later years as demand lessened.

♦***After the allotments is the village cemetery***

The cemetery opened in 1858 and, since 1908, when the churchyard was closed, all village burials have been here. The building we see today is the central loggia of a chapel complex that consisted of two chapels, one for Conformist and one for Non-Conformist, which originally stood on the site. The chapels became dilapidated and were demolished in the 1960s, leaving only the central section. In dry weather you can still make out the footprint of the chapels in the turf. Although it looks as if there is plenty of space for future burials, the old part of the cemetery is almost full, with over 1,750 burials here, necessitating the provision of an extension which it is calculated will provide burial spaces to at least 2050 at the present rate of attrition!

The field next to the cemetery, which is presently being developed, was for many years, before the present playing field was purchased, used as the village sports field, and Knights Close was named for the numerous members of the Knight family who played here as footballers and cricketers. The



roadways in the new development are Kemp Drive in recognition of Baptist Kemp, the village veterinarian and keen supporter of the village Cricket Club who once owned the land, and Trolley Way after another family of village cricketers. Proceeding along Welford Road the houses on the left were built in the 1930s as council houses. An urban capacity study, commissioned by the government in 2004 suggested that the 18 homes should be demolished as they were land-inefficient, and replaced by over 60 modern homes. Thankfully, the scheme was quietly forgotten!

♦***Proceed up Welford Road, back to your starting point***