

# Country Walks

## Around Halesowen's Green Borderland



“In the footsteps of our ancestors”



### Circular Walk No. 7 Lutley & Hodge Hill

*A self-guided circular walk from Huntingtree Park to Hodge Hill, returning via Wassel Grove in North Worcestershire*

<http://halesowenwalks.wix.com/halesowenwalks>

#### Walk Information

<b>Start &amp; Finish:</b>	Huntingtree Park, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4HY
<b>Distance:</b>	Approximately 4 miles (6.4km)
<b>Time:</b>	Approximately 3½ hours to take in view points
<b>Terrain:</b>	Very steep up to Hodge Hill, otherwise fairly easy going, muddy in parts. Some considerable walking through urban areas.
<i>Please follow the countryside code, especially:</i>	
<b>Dogs:</b>	Please clean up after your dog and keep under close control around grazing animals
<b>Litter:</b>	Please take your litter home

This walk is part of a connecting network of seven circular walks around “Halesowen's Green Borderland”, all on the western edge of the mighty West Midlands conurbation.

You may be surprised at the varied and diverse landscape, with its outstanding views, steeped in ancient history and rich in all kinds of vegetation and wildlife. Some parts include steep slopes and steps etc. and can be muddy at times.

Appropriate sensible footwear and clothing is recommended.

#### Acknowledgements

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- Original concept of walk April 2016
- With special thanks to Malcolm Shilcock
- Authors: Roy Burgess and Mark Hemus
- Photo Credits: Frontspiece photo of Lutley 1911 - Peter Barnsley. All others - Mark Hemus.
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#### Disclaimer

- The majority of the land indicated is in private ownership and the representation on this leaflet of any road, track or path is no evidence of the existence of a right of way.
- This leaflet is only a guide and is in no way intended for use with concern to boundaries and ownerships whatsoever.
- “Walk at your own risk”. The authors and their agents will not be responsible for any claims for any damage or injury to persons or property however sustained - i.e. “Enter and walk at your own risk”

#### Sponsors

*We wish to thank the following for their support in the production of this leaflet:*

**WORCESTERSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL  
HALESOWEN NORTH & SOUTH COMMUNITY FORUM**

#### Introduction - Lutley & Hodge Hill

This is a walk through a very historical and ancient rural landscape, which is wedged between the built up areas of Lutley, Hasbury, Cradley and Wollescote. Many of the Victorian, Georgian and Medieval agricultural features remain today. The area is also very rich in flora and fauna. Very little written history has been recorded here, and with the rapid advancement of the 20th Century housing developments, many of the physical features have been lost forever.

However, clues to history of the area still lie in the remaining landscape, where thousands of flint tools and arrow heads have been discovered dating from the Middle Stone Age, some 8000 years ago.

The centre section of the walk climbs to the crest of Hodge Hill, from where the distant views over and beyond the Worcestershire Countryside are truly outstanding. Here the paths follow the footsteps of our ancestors, giving the impression that we have passed through a virtual “door of time”.

The route is basically circular, starting and ending in the residential areas of Hasbury. It can also be extended to include remnants of Cradley Deer Park to the North, and to Wychbury Hill (Walk no3) in the South West.

Some sites of interest A-M, as indicated on map overleaf



#### Huntingtree - “in Hasbury”

‘Huntingtree’ as indicated on the Ordnance Survey Map of 1884, was, no more than a small rural settlement of only two buildings. Historian's record that the name was derived from the Anglo Saxon “a tree that belongs to Hunta.” Nearby, on the same map there is shown a mysterious avenue of standing stones and an earth mound (since long gone).

This mound probably served a different purpose to the earth works that were once situated at the highest part of Hasbury Parish; near Quarry Hill, and the Holy Well of St Margarets.

These earthworks were thought to be Iron Age in origin, and gave the name to ‘Hasbury’- derived from “bury” a fort or look out station, in a hazel (“has”) wood.

In the “Halesowen Story” by Hans & Lena Schwarz, they consider that a long lost pack horse route from Halesowen via Bundle Hill passed through Huntingtree, and continued via Lutley Lane, down through the Holloway at Wollescote, to cross the River Severn, near Bewdley.

Huntingtree Park, in the residential 20th Century district of Hasbury, is located more-or-less on the original old rural Huntingtree settlement.



### Lutley Lane

Beyond Lutley Mill the lane is unsurfaced, and the original use by heavy horses, and carts, combined with water erosion, has over the years created in places a cutting also known as a 'Holloway'. It is thought that the route predates the Medieval Period of the 12-15th Century.



### Lutley Mill

At this point in the walk you can see the back of this impressively restored water mill, which is now a private dwelling.

The original mill was probably well established during the 12th century or maybe even earlier, as were other mills, all along the River Stour and its tributaries. In the 19th Century Gun Barrels were manufactured at Lutley Mill, to supplement corn grinding.

Two iron plaques dated 1823 were fixed to the walls to mark the boundary between Lutley in Worcestershire and Hasbury then in Shropshire. The mill became "disused" around the 1880's.



### Medieval Landscape

The "patchwork quilt" formed by the dividing 18th Century hedgerows planted to either side of Lutley Lane were stripped out in the 20th Century. Ironically this now reflects the massive open areas of the original 12th Century medieval landscape, where division was formed by strips of land (Ridge & Furrow) to be shared amongst the community.



### Lutley Village

Crop Marks in the area have revealed evidence of Bronze and Iron Age farming. Pottery has also been found dating from the Romano-British Period. The name Lutley is thought to be derived from the Anglo-Saxon "Hluda" being a personal name meaning "loud", and "leah" a cleared woodland estate. In 1086 Lutley was recorded as being held by a College of Secular Canons, of

Wolverhampton whose splendid Monastery was founded in AD996, by Wulfruna, a religious lady.

Grange Farm was probably on the site of the original "Grange" where the affairs of the Medieval Lutley Village were managed.

The darker side of the 18th & 19th Centuries were the enclosures of the open fields with hedgerows, and the ownerships transferred to larger estate owners. The workers of the land then to be turned adrift to move to the squalid housing of the Industrial towns, and to look for work in the factories and mines. A census of 1841 records the population of the village as 137, following which, like Lutley, many rural villages in England were abandoned and deserted. Today there is very little trace of the original village community, except for perhaps the clues held in the 1887 pattern of the hedgerows and orchards, clustered around the remaining Grange, Four Elms & White House Farms.



### Ancient Boundary

The stile in the thick holly hedge at this point in the walk marks part of the old parish boundaries of Lutley, Cradley, Wollescote & Hagley. This boundary originating from the Iron Age Period was defined and recorded by King Eadred of the West Saxons AD 950.

A landmark to mark the boundary as it crossed Foxcote Lane was originally known as the "Pikes", which was later replaced with a large flat "Broadstone".



### Foxcote Pond

Over the years, this once large pond has silted up, and it is now so colonized with reeds that only a small area of clear water remains. The surrounding medieval ridge & furrow fields are extremely rich and "unimproved," hosting many important wetland plants.

Thousands of flint tools and arrow heads have been found in the vicinity, dating from the Middle Stone Age, some 8000 years ago. The pond would be a prime attraction to the herds of deer that would seasonally migrate to these uplands, from the Severn Valley Region. It is likely that these were summer encampments of tribes from surrounding areas, attracted by the abundance of the deer herds.

Foxcote Pond may have been artificially created or enlarged during the Stone Age Period. A little further downstream are the remnants of three fishponds, constructed in the Medieval Period, and managed as "Fish Ponds", to supplement the diet of the villagers and the Lords of the Manor.



### Hodge Hill & The Frontier Zone

8000 years ago our ancestors would have stood on the crest of this hill and the all-round view of distant hills & ridges, on a clear day, would be much the same as it is today.

Local historians believe that this strategic summit may have been the site of a watch tower or look out point in those early periods known as the "Dark Ages." In Della Hook's 1989 study of North Worcestershire, this area, known as Wassell Grove - "has its origins in the Anglo Saxon word for "Wassell", indicating a "Look Out Point."

This would be part of a chain of look out points, along a territorial border stretching from Wychbury Iron Age fort along the Clent/Lickey Ridges towards the Iron Age Fort at Bury Mound in Wythall, via "Waseley" & "West Hills"; roughly on the modern Worcestershire County Boundary.

In the Late Iron Age, there is evidence that this boundary would also be a strategic tribal frontier zone between the Dobunni to the South and Cornovii to the North.

Hodge Hill situated on this Frontier Zone, with its plentiful supply of deer, would provide an ideal location as a Summer camp, where tribes could meet on "neutral ground" and also hold spiritual gatherings, as well as being a trading centre. These open air ceremonies were traditionally held round a circle of sacred stones or trees. The "mound like shape" of the hill would suggest that the site may have been used for such purposes and maybe also used as a burial site. There are many "Hodge" place names worldwide, and genealogy identifies "Hodge" to mean "Spirit." Coincidentally, local residents at one time referred to the Hill as "The Spirit Field".

Disturbance of the ground by previous quarrying activities and modern farming practice has unfortunately removed much of the physical historical evidence that would have held many of the clues to the Hill's mysterious past.



### Wassell Grove Dingle

This is a small remnant of ancient woodland that once covered much of Britain. In the Spring the woods are carpeted with wonderful displays of wild flowers. The wooden footbridge across the stream was initially installed by the Halesowen Abbey Trust in 1989.

Around 1860 trial shafts were bored near the Dingle to look for Coal. Only poor quality seams were found and the venture abandoned.



### Beech Tree Colliery

The tree topped spoil mound is a remnant of one of the last Southern Black Country Coal & Fireclay Mines, finally closing in 1961.



### Cradley Deer Park (Site of)

The large agricultural field here was once part of a deer park with a manor house and first mentioned in the 1530's; but it probably existed much earlier.

This is another site in the location, where thousands of flint arrowheads and tools have been found dating back to the Stone Age. Local historians theorise that this area may have been cleared intentionally, so as to draw the migrating herds of deer out into the open.



### (Site of) Oldmall Colliery - closed c.1950s

The walk passes round the scrub covered pit mounds of this former colliery that was sunk in the 1880's. The deep, nearby, cutting is the remnant of a railway that once connected with Beech Tree Colliery, and down a steep incline to the main line railway at "The Hayes" near Lye.



### Foxcote Farms (views of)

Foxcote Farm is an early 20th Century farmhouse, now standing isolated in a 'modern' farming landscape, where the old hedgerows have been removed. Foxcote House Farm (a grade II listed building) is a model example of a Georgian farm complex, dating back to c1794.

# Country walks around Halesowen's Green Borderland

## Circular Walk No. 7: Lutley & Hodge Hill

**Start & Finish:** Huntingtree Park Activity Centre  
Huntingtree Road, Halesowen, West Midlands B63 4HY  
*Free car parking (when available)*

### Directions

#### Section 1 - Huntingtree Park to Hodge Hill

- (A)** Turn left out of the car park, head straight down Huntingtree Road for approximately 1/3 of a mile. Just past Lutley Avenue, turn left onto the surfaced bridleway, at the sign post head towards Lutley.
- (B)** Proceed along the surfaced Lutley Lane for a short distance and turn right as directed by the signpost. Cross over the stream and head towards the unsurfaced track between the hedgerows and ascend the timber steps.
- (C)** Look through the hedgerow to view Lutley Mill (on your left). Keep walking up the lane, carry on past the bends in the lane for approx 150 yards and look for a stile on your right in the hedgerow.
- (D)** Leave the Lane by turning right at this point and go past or over the stile through the gap in the hedgerow. Ascend the field path, with the hedge to your left.
- (E)** At the crest of the field, turn sharp left and head along the footpath (Ref 162) between the fence and the hedgerow. After approx 130 yards turn right and then left through a gap and continue along the field path, keeping the hedgerow to your left.
- (F)** At the end of the path turn right through the gap by the farm gate where you are now in the proximity of the original Lutley Settlement. Head straight up the field footpath (Ref 164) keeping Grange Farm and the hedgerow to your left. Keep going and descend the field path. Then go through the gap in the hedgerow, in front of you. Veer slightly right and immediately left, towards a gap in the thick holly hedge (Ancient boundary) **(F)**. Go over the stile in the hedgerow and then head straight across the field towards a marker post and electric pole.
- (G)** *Note: Foxcote Pond is viewed just to your right; in the small stream valley and now only "appears" as a marshy, reeded area.*

Head up the wide track/path between the hedgerows and at the end, cross over Foxcote Lane. **(2)** Head straight over and follow the track (Path Ref 109) uphill through the open fields, keeping the old hedge bank to your left. Go past a circular wooden marker post at the cross roads of paths and head straight on, uphill (Path Ref 106) until reaching a tall metal square post. Bear slightly right, just opposite Foxcote Farm (on your right). Head slightly left across the open field (Path Ref 104) towards a row of houses. Just past a small spinney (on your left) leave the field path and enter a gully between the fences of residential gardens. **(3)** At the end of the gully, turn left onto Wynall Lane and head towards the traffic island passing the row of shops (opposite). Cross over at the traffic island and turn right into Oakfield Road. Just past the bus shelter, turn left and head up Ashfield Crescent.

Cross over at Woodfield Avenue and locate a Public Footpath sign titled "Pedmore". Proceed up the narrow gully (Path Ref 132) between the fences. At the end of the gully turn right and proceed for approx. 65 metres, to reach a fork in the footpath. Take the left hand fork (Ref 131) and ascend the very steep path through the woods. After leaving the woods, climb up onto the old hedge bank (County boundary) and turn right.

**(H)** *Note: stop for a while to take in the views from the vicinity of Hodge Hill.*

**PLEASE ENSURE YOU FOLLOW THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE!**

Key	
<b>A</b>	Points of interest
<b>I</b>	Check points
<b>P</b>	Car parking

#### Section 2 - Hodge Hill to the Lutley boundary via Wassell Grove Dingle

From Hodge Hill follow the County Boundary "bank" path downhill through the open fields in a South West direction. At the gap in the hedgerow/tree line, turn left across the field at the junction of paths. **(4)**

*Note: At this point it is possible to connect to Walk 3 at Wychbury Hill, via footpaths ref 128, 126 and 139 (see map)*

To continue Walk no. 7...

Now you are heading into Worcestershire (Hagley) across the open field (via path No. 20). Pass over the remnants of a hedge bank and head uphill to the crest of the field, keeping the line of trees on your left. Proceed downhill keeping the line of trees and hedge to your left. Follow the path to the bottom of the field, bear right and carry on until you reach a kissing gate in the hedgerow on your left (as you come to the top of the slope, you will see a gap in the hedge, look over your left shoulder for the kissing gate). Go through the gate, follow the right hand hedge until you reach another kissing gate and signpost. Pass through the gate and turn immediately right along the tarmac road.

**(5)** Proceed for a short distance and just past the "Lodge House", turn immediately left, as directed by the Public Footpath sign. Head along the farm track, keeping Clent Villa Farm to your right, until you reach a stile at the end of a short stretch of green lane.

Cross over the stile and head down the field path (Ref No.23) keeping the fence to your left. Drop down a steep bank, cross over a stile and then take the path towards a wooded valley, straight across the field (Wassell Grove Dingle).

**(I)** Look for and go over a stile and enter the wooded valley and cross the stream over a wooden footbridge. Leave the wood and head straight across the fairway of the Golf course. Look for and follow the low timber marker posts, keeping the remnants of the hedge bank on your right. Enter another wooded valley and cross the stream via the wooden footbridge. Leave the wood via a metal gate and enter an open field. Head across the field bearing slightly left. Keep the fence on your left and locate a kissing gate and marker post in the dip at the opposite line of trees.

#### Section 3 - the Lutley Boundary to the Huntingtree Park

**(6)** Go through the kissing gate and cross over a small stream via the wooden boardwalk.

*Note: You are now leaving Worcestershire (Hagley) as you cross over the boundary, denoted by the stream and are entering Dudley (Lutley)*

Ascend a bank, and follow the path through a small wooded area, to the metal gate. Pass through the gate and cross over the roadway (Lutley Lane) to locate a public footpath/track between the trees. Follow the track as indicated by the sign post for a short distance. Pass Old Bloggs Farm on your left, head straight on and locate the end of a Cul-de-sac, known as "The Haylofts". Carry on past the bungalows and turn right into Chiltern Close and then left onto Portsdown Road.

Proceed straight on down for approx. 1/3 of a mile until you reach the last junction at Rosemary Road.

**(7)** Turn right into Rosemary Road and after a very short distance, turn left into Bassnage Road. Head straight on up for about half a mile. Turn left, at the last junction and then immediately left, back into the car park of Huntingtree Park Activity Centre.

End of walk

