



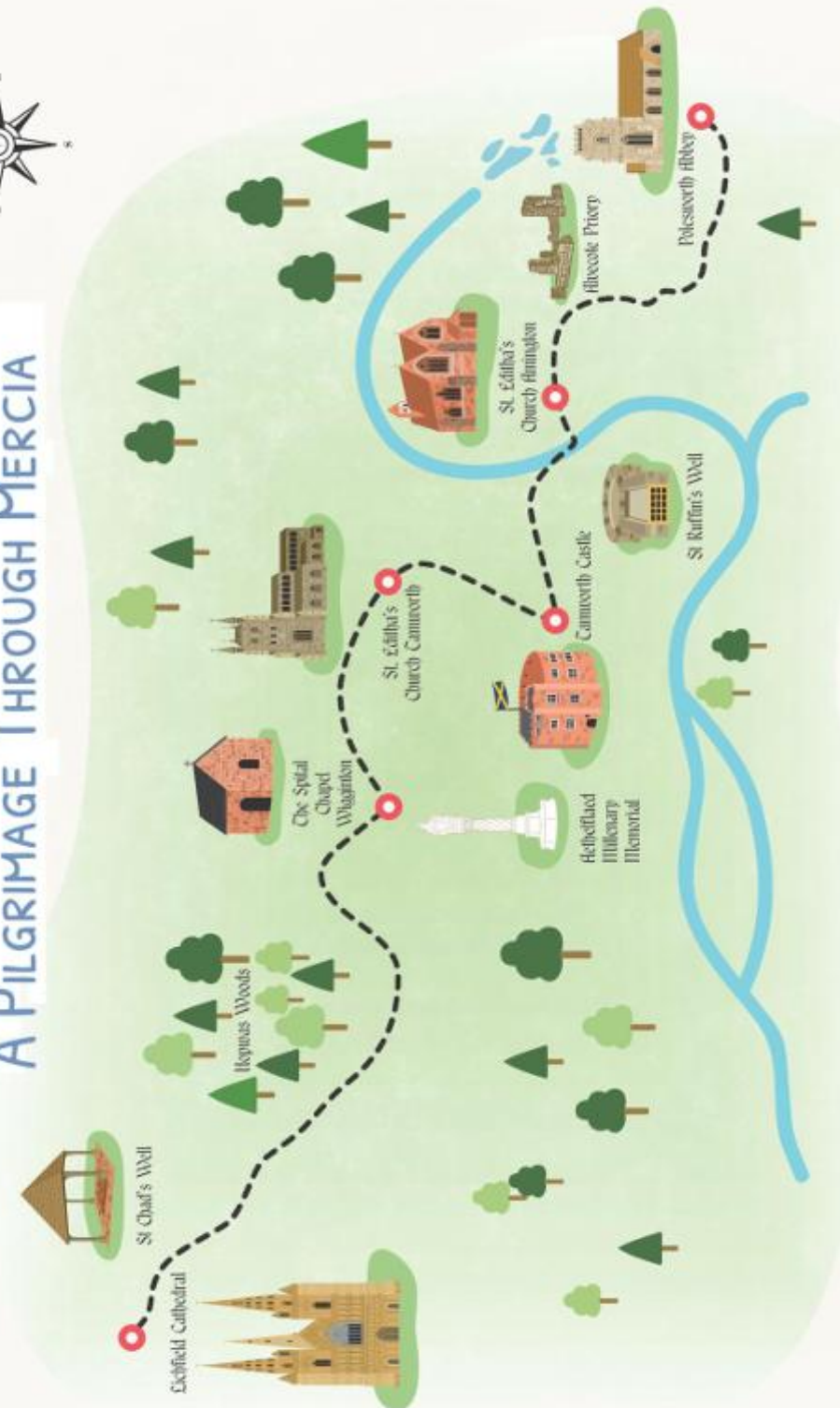
ST. EDITHA'S WAY

ALAN AND VAL'S
WALKING LOG

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ST. EDITHA'S WAY A PILGRIMAGE THROUGH MERCIA





St Editha's Way.

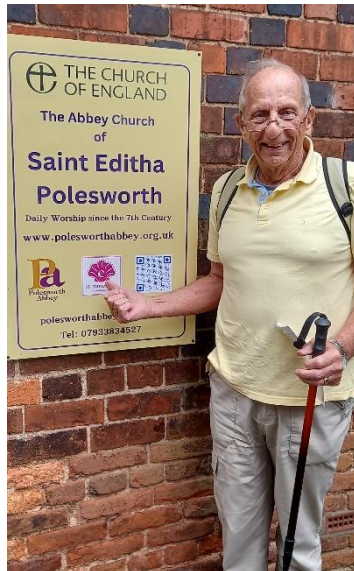
Abbey Church of St Editha, Polesworth to Lichfield Cathedral.

Note: We used the apps: 'Google Maps' and 'OS maps' to **navigate** the way along our planned route.

Day 1. Polesworth to Tamworth.

Distance: approx. 6.5 miles.

After spending some time looking round Polesworth Abbey and reading the guidebook to St Editha's Way, we were ready to begin the walk.



We followed a footpath signposted to the 'Village Centre' and crossed Bridge Street at the zebra crossing. We turned left and followed the road, crossing the River Anker, to its junction with Tamworth Road (B5000). Turning right, we walked a short way along Tamworth Road to the bridge spanning the Coventry canal.

We descended to the canal towpath, and walked along, enjoying the tranquillity of the towpath with occasional narrowboats gliding by.



On the opposite bank an old winding wheel and narrow boats moored at the old coal wharf on a bend, were reminders of the former Pooley Hall Colliery, which has now been transformed into Pooley Country Park.

The canal now passed beneath the M42 and after admiring the artwork on the bridge, depicting aspects of the mining industry, we took a path to right up the bank, which led to some gates.



We passed through the gates and kept ahead to a waymarked footpath through the reclaimed woodland known as the 'Miner's Way', which was formerly the bed of a tramway used to transport coal from the pit to the canal.

The woodland is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, with unique habitats and an abundance of wildlife. As we walked along immersed in an atmosphere so different from that of the towpath, through the trees, there were brief glimpses of the canal on our left and the spoil heap on our right.

After a while, on either side of the path there were pools, caused by mining subsidence, and the silence was occasionally broken by the sound of a train passing by on the west coast mainline to our right.

When the path converged with the canal towpath at Bridge 59, it was time to leave the canal and take a detour to the ruins of Alvecote Priory. The path turned away from the towpath and gently ascended to Robey's Lane where we turned left and crossed the bridge.



A short distance along the lane there was a gate and a path on our left, which led to the ruins of **Alvecote Priory**.

After we read the guidebook and looked round the atmospheric ruins, we retraced our footsteps to the canal towpath at bridge 59 and continued to proceed along the towpath past Alvecote Marina.



The Coventry canal was originally constructed to transport coal from the North Warwickshire collieries to other parts of the country via the canal network.

Today, traces of its industrial past are scarce, although the old narrow boats moored at a former coal wharf, still recall its industrial heritage.





Approaching Amington, the towpath was shaded by willow trees and alder,



and we passed by some houses on the opposite bank which had picturesque gardens.



At Bridge 65, we took another detour and left the canal via a narrow footpath to our right, leading up to Old Tamworth Road. We crossed the bridge and walked a short distance ahead to **St Editha's Church, Amington**, which stands on a piece of land known as 'The Green'.



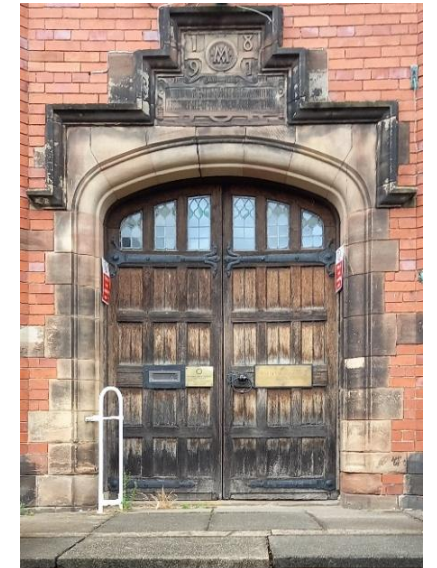
Fortunately, this delightful Victorian church was open, and we were able to look round. It had some beautiful stained-glass windows designed by Burne Jones, including one of St Editha.

Retracing our footsteps to the canal towpath at bridge 65, we continued our walk until we reached Bridge 71 and left the canal via a footpath to our right.



We kept ahead along Amington Road heading for Tamworth town centre and passed Bolehall Manor on our right.

This was once the home of Rev William MacGregor, Vicar of Tamworth (1878-87) and one of the most important collectors of Egyptology.





Soon after passing Bolehall Manor the road passed beneath a railway viaduct. We turned off just before and followed a footpath / cycleway that took us underneath.

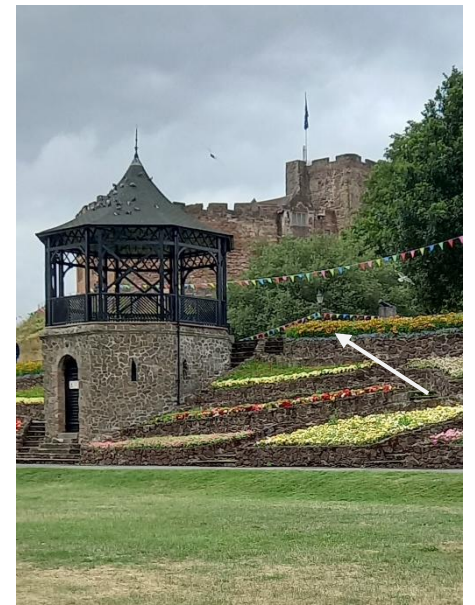


We continued ahead, beside the River Anker, to Tamworth Castle grounds and crossed the river at the first footbridge, then we turned left and followed the footpath round to the right to **St Ruffin's Well**, located in the corner of the sensory garden.

We paused for a moment to enjoy the garden then left St Ruffin's Well, crossing through the colourful flower gardens and past the bandstand, to the boundary fence round the castle motte. We followed the path round the castle motte, with the castle on our right, to the Lower Gate House and the **Millenary Statue of Aethelflaed**.



We read the guidebook, then turned about and followed the path round the castle motte, with the castle on our left, to the Upper Gate House and the entrance to **Tamworth Castle**.





We crossed the bridge to the right of the gate house into Market Street and turned left then right to view the front of **Tamworth Town Hall** and a statue of **Sir Robert Peel**, who was the MP for Tamworth from 1830 until his death in 1850. He was also Prime Minister twice and in 1834, reportedly read the 'Tamworth Manifesto' (the first political manifesto) from a town hall window. His achievements included the repeal of the Corn Laws and the introduction of the first police, known as the 'peelers' or 'bobbies'.

With the Town Hall on our right, we walked to Middle Entry, turned left and walked through to St Editha's Square and **St Editha's Church, Tamworth**.

We looked round this magnificent mediaeval church, paused at the **statue of St Editha** to say the prayer in the guidebook and before leaving took a refreshment break in the café (open from 10am – 2pm), while we read the guidebook.

We had now completed the first leg of our pilgrim journey.

The next leg of journey on to Lichfield took us through Hopwas Wood. When the Whittington ranges are firing, entry to the wood is prohibited and the gates are closed so, **before we left**, we checked that the wood was open by Googling "Hopwas Wood firing times".



Day 2. Tamworth to Lichfield.

We left St Editha's church and turned right. Passing by the War Memorial on our left, we walked diagonally across the churchyard to Church Lane and, at the end of the lane, turned left into Lower Gungate before continuing ahead to the cross-roads at the end.



We crossed twice at the controlled crossings to the Tamworth Health Centre and Upper Gungate, then walked uphill to a safety barrier by traffic lights near the top. We followed the barrier round to the left and turned right at a gap to cross into Wigginton Road.

Distance: approx. 8.5 miles.





A short distance along Wigginton Road we crossed, at a sign for **Spital Chapel**, to view the chapel and read the guidebook. Dedicated to St James, the chapel is still in use today for regular worship.

After exploring this unique reminder of mediaeval religious and charitable life, we returned to Wigginton Road, turned right, continued ahead to Kensington Drive and turned left.

Keeping ahead we passed a building, on our right, which was once part of St Editha's Hospital but is now flats. A footpath then took us through to Comberford Road, where we turned left and walked a short distance before crossing over to



Copes Drive and continuing downhill to Dryden Road.

Our route now passed through the housing estates of Leyfields and Coton Green.



Bearing slightly left at the end, we crossed into Goldsmith Place and



continued downhill, past Thomas Hardy Court on our right, to a footpath. Bearing left at the end, we crossed over into Elizabeth Drive and walked a short distance until the road bent round to the left. We then passed between the trees into Wigginton Park by a children's playground.



We passed the children's playground on our right and followed the avenue of trees on our left heading towards a thicket on the right.

Bearing right at the thicket we passed by Wigginton Lodge, a large white house, which was once the home of John Clarke, who created Wigginton Park in the 19th century, but is now home to Tamworth Rugby Club.

Bearing right again, we kept ahead to a footpath through some trees leading to Coton Green. The path emerged on Fontenaye Road with a bus stop and row of shops ahead.

We turned left and followed Fontenaye Road round to its junction with Coton Lane, turned left and, after crossing the railway (the West Coast mainline), continued ahead along Coton Lane. After passing 'Osborne', a cul-de-sac on our left, we crossed the road to the pavement on the other side and proceeded, past 'The Fox' on our left, to small roundabout at the junction with Lichfield Road (A51).



We continued along Lichfield Road, crossing the River Tame before arriving at the village of Hopwas, which is recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, and has a number of listed buildings, including cottages, a school house and two historic public houses, the *Red Lion* and the *Tame Otter*.



Opposite the 'Tame Otter', we turned right into School Lane, which took us back to the Coventry canal. Bearing right at Thomas Barnes' School, we joined the towpath and walked along to the first bridge, 'Hopwas Wood Bridge'.



We crossed the bridge into the wood and turned left to follow the bridleway gently uphill, ignoring all side paths. This ancient woodland occupies some 400 acres and dates back to the 11th Century.



After passing an open gate, the ascent was steeper. We plodded our way uphill to the top of the hill, then continued ahead past a delightful beech wood on our right.



The path, after bearing left slightly, now led to a convergence of three paths. Bearing slightly right, we followed the bridleway to exit the woods, and the bridleway broadened into a wide track through open country.



Now, in complete contrast to the previous leg of the journey, instead of walking alongside the canal with reminders of the former mining industry, we had fields of ripened wheat on either side, and there were hedgerows with blackberries and verges dotted with wildflowers.

We continued along the bridleway, passing Whittington ranges on our right, until we reached Common Lane. We turned right and continued ahead before turning left into Sandy Lane opposite Whittington Primary School. We followed the bridleway, with Whittington Heath Golf course on our left, to some houses on our right, then passed through a woodland to emerge at Lichfield Road with a distant view of the three spires of Lichfield Cathedral, our final destination.



We turned left and walked a short distance before turning right into Marsh Lane, this was a single-track road, so we proceeded ahead with caution until we reached Darnford Lane, where we turned left. Again, we continued ahead with caution passing Darnford Moors Golf Club on our right and we could hear the drone of the traffic on the busy A38.

After crossing the bridge over the A38, we turned right and went through a gate into Darnford Park, which had benches and picnic tables, so it was an ideal place for a break and some refreshment. After our break, we



returned to the hedge separating the park from a housing estate and followed the path that ran alongside. There were gaps in the hedge with access to the houses and when we reached the 8th gap from the start, we turned left and went through to the housing estate.

At the end of a short road, we turned right and followed the road round to the second turning on the right, which led us to Austin Cote Lane at its junction with a roundabout.



We crossed Austin Cote Lane, beside the roundabout, turned right and followed the pavement round before bearing left into Burton Old Road East.

Burton Old Road is bisected by a railway and there is a footpath which crosses the railway into Burton Old Road West. We continued along Burton Old Road until we reached Wissage Road where we turned right.



After a short distance, we crossed Trent Valley Road at a controlled crossing, and followed Wissage Road, passing Bridge Academy on our left, to St Chad's Road with Stowe Pool ahead. We turned right and walked a short distance before crossing over to St Chad's Church.



The origins of St Chad's church date back to the 12th century, so we went inside to look round before going to **St Chad's Well**, which is to the left of the church. We read the guidebook the returned to church gate.



We crossed the road to a gap in the wall and took the path to the right leading up to the pool.



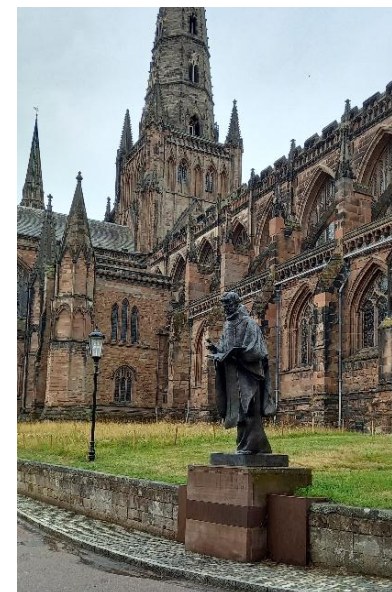
We then followed the path round the pool, enjoying a wonderful view of the cathedral, and at the end of the pool, we kept ahead to a short road that led to The Close and turned right.



We walked the short distance to the statue of St Chad before following the road round to the main entrance at the west end of the cathedral, passing the café and toilets on our left.

We looked round the inside of this magnificent mediaeval cathedral and read the guidebook.

Finally, we went to the shrine of St Chad, situated at the east end of the cathedral, to say a prayer.



Our pilgrimage journey was complete but, before we left, to prove that we had completed 'St Editha's Way', we had the 'Certificate of Completion' stamped at cathedral reception desk.

