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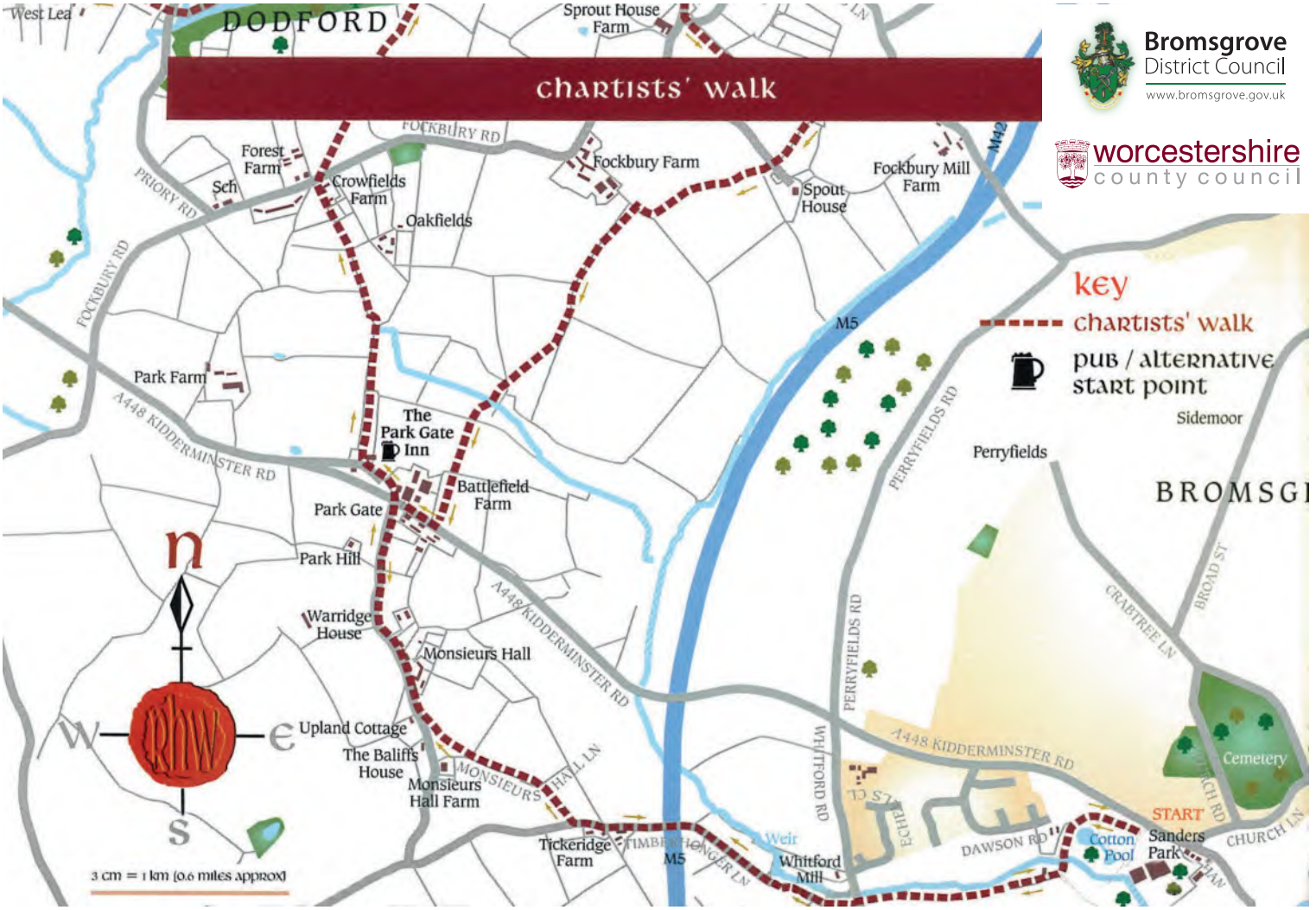
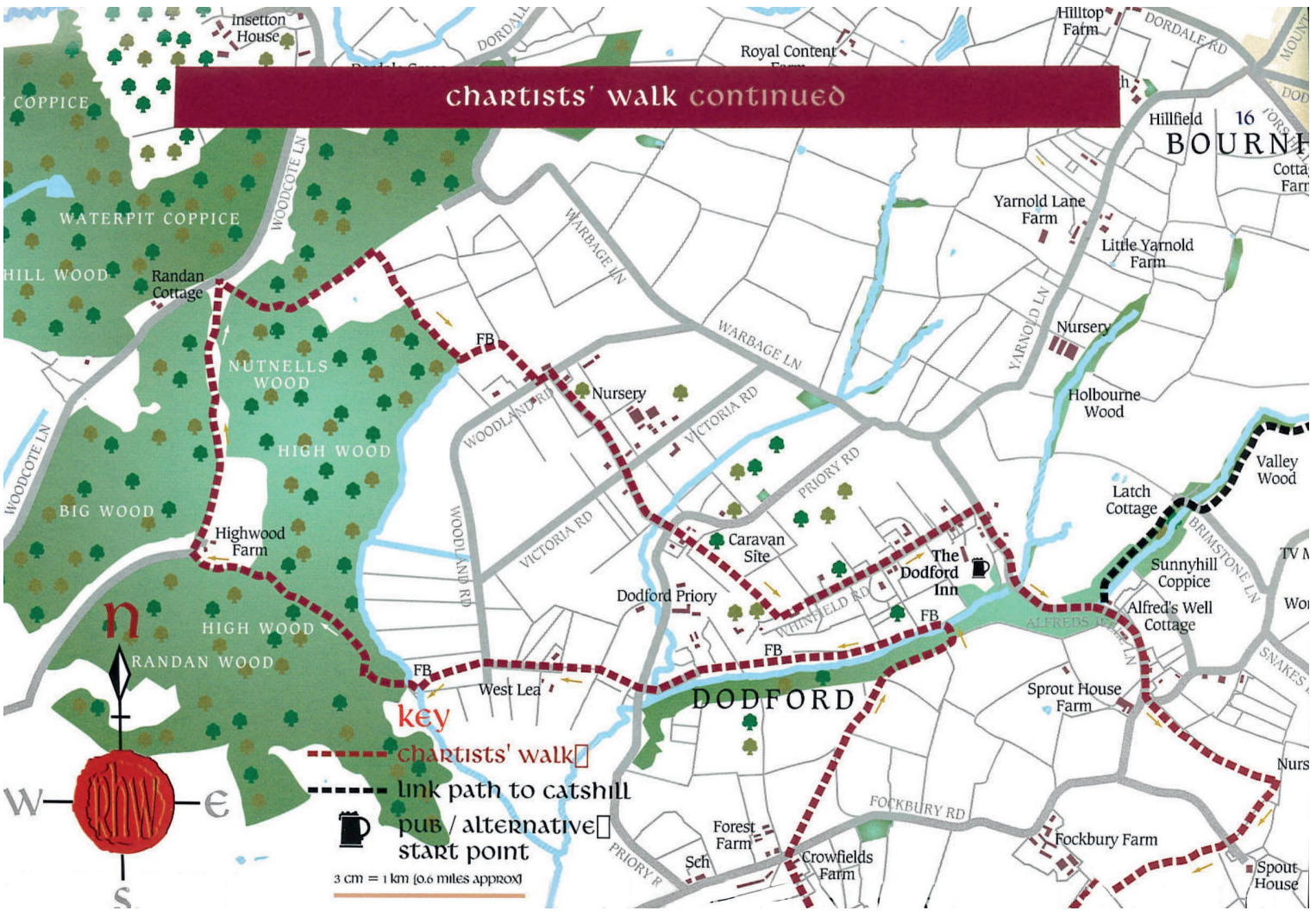
# chartists' walk




# chartists' walk continued



**Chartists' Walk starting point: Sanders Park car park on the A448 Kidderminster Road. 8 miles (4-5 hrs)**

The walk begins at the information board at the far end of the car park at Sanders Park, along Kidderminster Road in Bromsgrove. From the car park with the bandstand in front of you, turn right and follow the wide tarmac path to the play area. Tum right after the play area and loosely follow the stream, leaving the tarmac path to meet the road. (In the absence of roadside verges, take care against approaching traffic along this lane, which leads forward to pass beneath the M5 motorway).

Beyond the motorway continue until just past Tickeridge Farm where you leave the lane through a kissing gate on the right. Head up the ensuing field to a hedge comer, and through a field gate, keep forward along a rutted track through another field gate into the next field.

A kissing gate in the hedge gives onto a narrow lane. Turn right, and continue to the A448 at Park Gate. Bear left, crossing the road when it is safe to do so. Bear left following a tarmac path which leads past the front of **The Park Gate Inn** public house. Tum right crossing the car park to a gate. Beyond this walk up the right-hand field edge.

Maintain the same direction across fields and paddocks, to a road (Fockbury Road). Cross the stile opposite, and in the ensuing field, head for a field gate in the far corner. Beyond go through an area of rough and overgrown ground, and turn left into a lightly wooded area cloaking a steep embankment, with the path following its top edge as far as a flight of steps.

Turn down the steps, taking care crossing protruding tree roots, to a footbridge giving into rough grazing. Immediately after the footbridge **(Hedgelayers' Walk leaves Chartists' Walk here),** turn left along the bottom of sloping pastures, roughly keeping a parallel course with a sluggish stream on the left.

The on-going route is clear through a succession of fields and gates leading eventually to a concrete driveway (Rose Lane) near Priory Cottage. Turn left and walk down the driveway to meet a road. At the road, the walk continues forward, but a brief diversion to Dodford church is worthwhile.

*The church of the Holy Trinity and St Mary dates from the time of Edward VII, and is generally regarded as the best church of its date in Britain. It contains what is generally regarded as the finest collection of the work of the Bromsgrove Guild, an Arts and Crafts Movement at the beginning of the twentieth century.*

*Among its features are beautiful examples of woodcarving, plasterwork, metalwork and a little stained glass culminating in the rose window at the end of the transept.*

*At the entrance to the Dodford church there are a number of saddle stones. Out of context here, and these days often found as driveway ornaments, saddle stones were used to support a granary or a platform on which corn would be stacked, and were intended as a deterrent to rats and mice.*

*As well as its religious connections, Dodford, like neighbouring Bournheath, was part of greater Bromsgrove's nail-making industry. But Dodford had another claim to fame, being the location of a Chartist settlement, part of a radical democratic movement for the extension of political power to the working classes. The movement flourished in the mid-I800s and derived its name from the People's Charter, a six-point programme comprising male Suffrage, equal electoral districts, a secret ballot, an annual Parliament, and abolition of the property qualifications for, and payment of, members of Parliament. Chartism was an expression if working class frustration.*

At the end of Rose Lane, cross to a gate opposite giving onto an enclosed path. Continue ahead, through a gate and go straight ahead, between substantial hedgerows. This leads up to a surfaced lane.

Keep forward along the lane, and when it bends right, leave through a gate. In the ensuing field go forward to intercept a grassy path descending gently towards a footbridge.

Over the bridge, keep right to a gate a short distance away. The gate gives into the edge of High Wood. Keep forward into the woodland on a clear path as far as a waymark post. Here, turn right.

A clear path leads through the woodland, to its far side, and then bears left along its boundary, finally meeting a pronounced track. Turn right and cross a short stretch of rough ground to emerge on a rough lane near a redbrick cottage.

Keep right and walk past the cottage to the middle one of three gates giving onto an enclosed bridleway along a woodland edge. At the far end of the enclosed path, the walk goes into woodland once more, and along a stone track to a lane. **(Foresters' Walk leaves Chartists' Walk here)** Turn right as soon as the road is reached, and, immediately, right again, through a kissing gate and cross to a gate a short distance further on, to enter Nutnells Wood. A clear path twists through the wood-land to a gate in a field corner. Through the gate, keep forward along the left-hand field edge to a distant field boundary.

Turn right following a hedgerow, then through a field gate, swapping to the other side of the hedge, through a further gate, climbing gently past a field pond.

The pond alongside the walk is probably just simply afield pond, but in an earlier field surrounded by trees, is another pond, probably a marl pit. The word marl means chalky clay as dug up and applied to acid topsoils, though the term marling means the use of any subsoil, different from the topsoil, as a fertiliser, a practice that may date from Roman times. Marl pits are typically found in the middle of fields, one per fields, to maximise accessibility and minimise the cost of cartage.

At the top of the field a gate gives onto a path along a woodland boundary, itself grassy and flanked by light undergrowth. Gradually, the path descends and curves left at the bottom of the field and leads to a foot-bridge. The walk continues up steps on the other side of a shallow stream. At the top of the steps, go forward along a woodland boundary to meet a road. Turn left and 20 yards later, turn right into Church Road.

*Church Road affords a fine view to the right po the Malvern Hills and ahead Bredon Hill on the northern edge of the Cotswolds. Nearer, the tower of St John the Baptist Church in Bromsgrove, 2 1/2 miles away, stands clear above the intervening countryside. Fruit growing was once an important part of the rural economy in and around Bromsgrove, and along Church Road examples survive of traditional orchards.*

Continue to a crossroads. Keep forward here and continue to a road junction opposite Dodford Village Hall. Go forward alongside the village hall onto an enclosed path parallel with a wooded streambed. The path gives into an open pasture. Keep forward up the right-hand edge, the path climbing to a gate in the top field corner, giving onto a narrow lane (Whinfield Road), also the location of traditional orchards. Turn left passing Ambrosia Cottage.

Go past the **The Dodford Inn** to a road junction at Warbage Lane. Turn right and, taking care against approaching traffic, walk down Warbage Lane to the foot of Nibletts Hill. **(Hedgelayers' Walk joins here)** Keep forward along the road (to return to Catshill turn left at the signpost next to Alfred's Well House), **(Foresters' Walk joins here)** passing Alfred's Well House and then climbing gently to a road junction.

Alfred's Well is a small spring site used as a water supply until as recently as 1946. The site has been known as Alfred's Well for more than a century, but its name is a corruption of Offa's Well, a reference to the Mercian king Offa (d. 796), who ruled this part of Britain. Legend claims that the king drank from the well: if this is true, then the well has produced clear water for almost 1,200 years.

Turn left at Top of' the Hill (signposted to Bournheath), and after 20 yards, turn right onto a sandy track along a field edge. Follow the sandy track, which switches through a hedgerow, continuing, right, along a field edge. At the bottom of the field, through a gate, turn immediately right and cross the corner of a field to a kissing gate.

Beyond the kissing gate, continue forward parallel with a fence on the right, to reach a kissing gate in a field corner giving onto a rough track. Cross the track and go through the gate opposite to gain the edge of an arable field. Walk left along the field boundary until the hedgerow abruptly changes direction.

Here, head straight across the field aiming for a gate about 100 yards left of distant metal barns. Go through a gate and turn right and walk towards the barns, to a waymark post. This indicates the direction of the route, left, aiming for three distant trees, across the next field, eventually reaching a waymark post at a gap at the hedge corner.

Go through the gap into the ensuing field, and forward along the left-hand field boundary. Continue to the end of a hedgerow on the left, and from it go forward towards farm buildings in the distance, to locate a kissing gate in the hedgerow on the far side of the field. Through the kissing gate, cross a ditch crossing and keep left crossing fields to rejoin the A444 at Park Gate.

Turn right, past Battlefield Farm, and to return to Sanders Park, cross the A444 with care **(to return to start points other than Sanders Park do not cross the road but follow the tarmac path past the front of The Park Gate Inn)** to take the first turning on the left (Monsieurs Hall Lane), here joining the outward route.

Continue past Monsieurs Hall, and go down the lane until, opposite Upland Cottage, the walk returns through a kissing gate, right along a track and through a gate into the next field. Now simply continue co retrace the outward route to Sanders Park.

**To find out more info about the Royal Hunters' Walks, please visit www.bromsgrove.gov.uk**