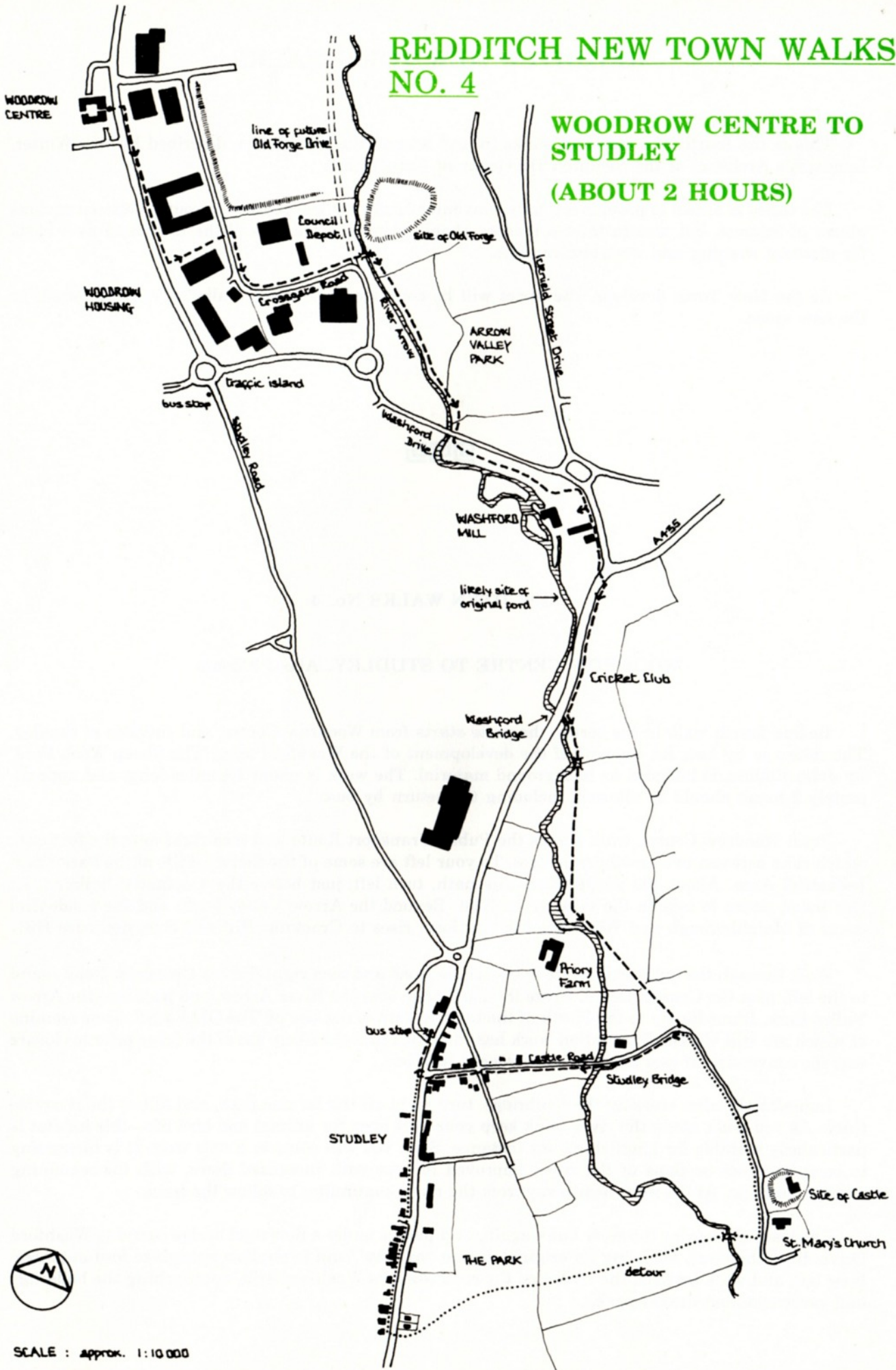


REDDITCH NEW TOWN WALKS NO. 4

WOODROW CENTRE TO STUDLEY (ABOUT 2 HOURS)



SCALE : Approx. 1:10 000

REDDITCH NEW TOWN WALKS

This is the fourth of a series of walks in and around the New Town, described by Roy Winter, Landscape Architect of the Redditch Development Corporation.

The series is aimed to provide not only convenient guides to the pedestrian routes between various places of interest, but also to inform readers about interesting features of the town and as a basis for pleasant evening and week-end rambles.

As the New Town develops, the series will be continued describing walks of varying length in the new areas.



NEW TOWN WALKS No. 4

WOODROW CENTRE TO STUDLEY. About 2 hours

In this fourth walk in the series, the route starts from Woodrow Centre, and finishes at Studley. The return is by bus. An account of the development of the Washford area, 'The Sheep Wash Ford' by John Rollins, is included as background material. The walk is about 2½ miles long, and approximately 2 hours should be allowed, including the return by bus.

From Woodrow Centre, walk across the Public Transport Route and turn right onto the footpath, which runs between two hawthorn hedges. To your left are some of the factory units of the Park Farm Industrial Area. About 400 yards down this path, turn left, just before the 'Coplastix' building. At this point, pause to take in the view to the East. Beyond the Arrow Valley Park, and the residential areas of Matchborough and Winyates, the landform rises to Cracknut Hill and Summerhouse Hill.

Walk through the industrial estate to Crossgate Road and turn right. Follow Crossgate Road round to the left, past the Council Depot. Cross the footbridge over the River Arrow, and pass into the Arrow Valley Park. Immediately to the North of the tarmac path is the site of 'The Old Forge', some remains of which are still visible. Excavation work has indicated that the likely use of the forge prior to closure was the conversion of cast pig iron into wrought iron bar.

Immediately after crossing the footbridge, turn right off the tarmac path, and follow the riverside track. As you walk along the river bank keep your eyes open for animal and bird life—this habitat is particularly suitable for kingfishers, for instance. Soon you will come to a new weir. It is interesting to compare these sections of the river, improved to cope with increased flows, with the remaining original sections. At the weir, bear away from the river, continuing to follow the track.

The track soon joins the river bank again, and passes under a new road bridge carrying Washford Drive. Here the river, following its original course, 'oxbows', and is shallow enough to ford in places. Bear left, and walk between the river and the road towards Washford Mill, approaching the buildings and gardens across the car park.



THE FIRST WATER MILL—WASHFORD MILL.

Although there has been a water-powered mill at Washford since medieval times, the oldest part of the existing buildings dates from c1645. It is thought that Washford Mill was the first water mill in the region to be converted to use in the manufacture of needles, probably in c1730. The buildings are now converted into an inn, but in one of the bars a working water wheel has been retained as a feature of interest. It is possible to see other features of the mill water system from the inn gardens, and obtain refreshment as necessary.

From the car park, turn right and then follow the old road, now a footpath, up to the main road. It is thought that the Roman road, Rykniel Street, forded the River Arrow somewhere just South of the present mill, to your right. The later use of this ford as a sheep wash gave the place name of Sheep Wash Ford.

When you reach the main road, cross over and walk towards Studley. As you reach Washford Bridge, look out for a small gap in the hedge, marked by a post carrying a 'right of way' sign. Having passed through this gap, walk around the perimeter of the cricket field, across a small footbridge, and into the next field. Here it is, once again, possible to follow the river, as it meanders towards the site of the Priory. The original Priory, for Augustinian Canons, was established in 1135, on and around the site of Priory Farm. The latter embodies a few fragments, from as early as the 14th century, of the convent buildings.

At the large bend, bear away from the river and, skirting the wooded area, pass through into the next field. On the high ground to your left, the tower of the 1834 Studley 'Castle' can be seen. These buildings are now used as a management training centre. A short walk across to the 'kissing gate' brings you to Castle Road. The main route now returns to Studley. If, however, you would like a slightly longer walk, visiting the site of the original Studley Castle and the parish church, and returning via The Park, follow the dotted line on the map.

Otherwise, turn right towards Studley down Castle Road. The Arrow is re-crossed at Studley Bridge; to your right is another mill used in the manufacture of needles. When you reach the main street of Studley, cross over and turn right. A short distance down this street is the bus stop. From here X6, R11 and R12 buses will return you to the Studley Road traffic island—on average there are three buses per hour. Exact times should be checked from a 'Reddibus' timetable.

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