

Description of Walking Route

The walk begins at the Car Park at the entrance to Needle Mill Lane. Passing through the gate at the top of the car Park, you will enter an enclosed area with a large pine tree at the centre.

This is the site of St Stephens Gatehouse Chapel which was sited just outside the monastery. Some of the gravestones and the outline of the chapel can be seen. It was pulled down in 1805 and rebuilt at the present site of St Stephens Church where a new dynamic industrial town, Redditch, was developing.

Spend some time exploring the site and then leave by the gate and walk up the slope following the hedge. The peak of the hill, which is not very high, gives extensive views of the Arrow valley and on a clear day the Arrow Valley Lake can be seen. Descend from here towards the Monastery Ruins.

The Abbey at Bordesley was founded in 1138 by Cistercian monks and became a major landowner in the area.

It was demolished in 1538 on the orders of Thomas Cromwell, the Vicar General to Henry VIII as part of the King's acquisition of ecclesiastical property during the reformation. The site has been extensively excavated and some of this has been left visible for visitors (with additional information at the Visitor Centre).

Leaving the Abbey Ruins, turn right and right again at the perimeter fence and you will then arrive at the beginning of the fishponds built by the monks to ensure a supply of fresh fish. Follow the fish ponds until you reach the gravel path and turn left and right at the river.

Cross the small bridge and follow the path along the River Arrow. The monks diverted the river, to drain the land, and dug this straight channel about a third of a mile long to achieve this. Cross over the bridge and follow the path and you will arrive at Beoley Floodgates (the five tunnels). These were designed to divert water to the Beoley Paper Mill.

Continue to follow the gravel path and you will arrive at the Paper Mill ponds. Beoley Paper Mill and Papermill Farm have been converted into private dwellings. There are two pools which originally fed the mill and the first record of paper making here was in about 1650.

Continue along the path passing under the road bridge and bearing right at the fork to cross the river over a small bridge.

Arriving at Dolphin Road, turn immediately, cross the road (bus route) and continue through the opening in the hedgerow re-entering the meadows. Continue along the track and bear left following the grass track. The field has many mounds which are the buried remains of Bordesley Abbey Forge and Mill, which is the earliest water powered metal working complex yet discovered in Britain.

Cross to the woodland and enter the gateway. Follow the path through the wood and exit through the gateway on the edge of the precinct. Turn left and continue along the path crossing the bridge on the left to Forge Mill.

Forge Mill is the National Needle Museum and explains the history of needle making in Redditch, which was the world's manufacturing centre for this essential product.

Within the complex is the Bordesley Abbey Visitor Centre which has a selection of finds from the excavations, historic documents and displays on the monks life at Bordesley, entry to the Needle Museum and a seasonal cafe.

Return to the car park along Needle Mill Lane.

HistoryWalks

around Redditch

Arrow Valley Park
North

This is a walk includes the Bordesley Abbey ruins and Forge Mill Needle Museum.

Distance: approx 2 miles (3 km)

Terrain: Fields. Grassy and gravel paths. Some gentle slopes.

Car Park off Needle Mill Lane

The Arrow Valley Park North is largely the 99-acre precinct of the Bordesley Abbey Cistercian monastery. Within the area are the excavated ruins of the monastery church, the site of St Stephens gatehouse chapel and the Bordesley Abbey visitor centre within the Forge Mill Needle Museum complex.

The Forge Mill Needle Museum is a listed building which houses original water powered machinery, models and recreated scenes to provide a vivid illustration of how needles were once made, and how Redditch came to dominate the world needle trade. Along the river there are many examples of this industrial history.



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