

Take a walk in Redditch

WITH the cold winter days upon us, it is almost too easy to stay inside and watch the old goggle box. But *Redditch Matters* is encouraging people to wrap up warm and go out to see what this borough has to offer this season.

And to help inspire us to get out in the winter air, Arrow Valley Countryside Centre has a number of walks designed to help people learn more about the area.

The Woodland Trail

Start: Arrow Valley Countryside Centre

Length: 2 1/2 miles, two hours

Terrain: Flat tarmac surfaces, grass fields, some woodland paths and one flight of steps. The walk can be muddy so get your wellies on.

Follow the green coloured arrows.

- 1** The lake is man-made, covers some 30 acres and is home to lots of wildlife. Arrow Valley Lake is an excellent place to see many species of wildfowl. It is particularly good during the winter months, when birds flock to the sheltered shores.
- 2** When strolling around the lake, look out for some of the wildfowl such as the ginger plumes and slender beak of the Great Crested Grebe. Also look out for the elegant Mute Swans, Mallards, Tufted Ducks and handsome Pochard.
- 3** This area known as the arboretum was used as a tree nursery to provide trees for the whole of Redditch! It is not a real arboretum, but it does have a number of interesting trees. The woodland floor is home to plants like the Common Bugle.
- 4** Look out for some veteran and mature Oak trees including a Turkey Oak with its distinct pointy leaves. These trees are some of the oldest in the park and some are well over 300 years old. These trees were mere seedlings at the time of the Great Fire of London.

- 5** Look at the fine views over southern Redditch. The fields straight ahead and slightly right are three meadows, hosting many plants and grasses such as Ragged Robin. They are important scrub areas attracting summer migrants such as Willow Warbler, Lesser Whitethroat and Blackcap.

- 6** The hedge on the left of the tarmac path is part of an ancient hedgerow. It includes many species including Dogwood, Crab Apple, Hazel, Field Maple, Holly, Oak, Ash, Blackthorn and Hawthorn.



- 7** Why not take a detour over the River Arrow bridge to have a look at Ipsley Pool? In the summer look out for brightly coloured dragonflies such as the 'chaser' as they hover over the water.
- 8** The Bluebell Wood contains a mixture of trees and shrubs in what is only one of two truly natural woodlands in Arrow Valley Country Park. Natural woodlands can be recognised by the presence of bluebells in the spring, a common plant in Britain but rare elsewhere.

Follow the arrows back to the centre.



Bussing it to Arrow Valley Country Park

ARROW Valley Country Park visitors will soon be leaving their cars at home and bussing their way to the countryside.

Redditch Borough Council has been given the go-ahead to install a new bus stop in Battens Drive and a footpath from the road to the Countryside Centre.

Once the stop is up, visitors will be able to use the existing Hardings number 60 and the new First 52 services to get to the park.