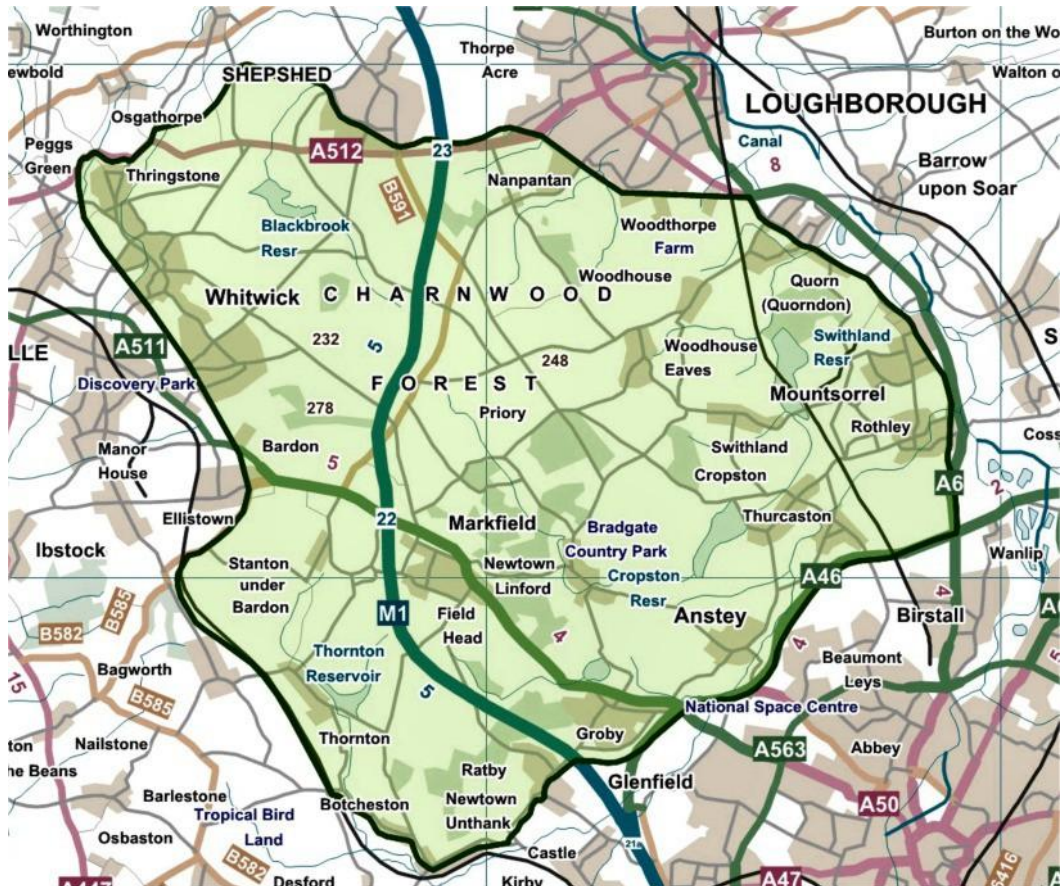


# 18 WALKS IN AND AROUND THE CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

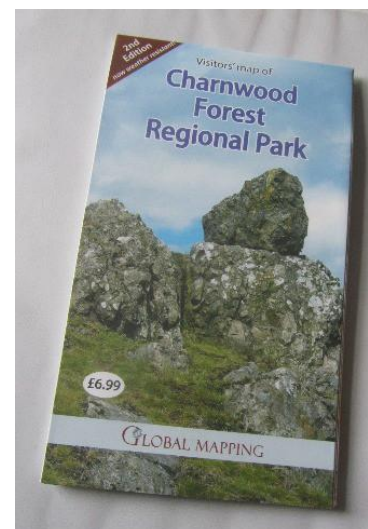


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**Produced by members of the Ramblers for the  
Charnwood Forest Regional Park.**

**The details are accurate to the best of our knowledge at the time of writing but you are advised to carry a map and are responsible for your own safety at all times.**

**We have produced simplified and award winning walkers maps of Charnwood Forest which are available from some shops and visitor centres or from Global Mapping.**



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 1 - GROBY

I frequently walk from and around Groby and thought I would share an interesting walk with you. People are looking for somewhere to take their exercise away from crowds and, given the weather, preferably avoiding muddy tracks.

This is a circular so you can pick it up where it passes nearest to your home. We have to start somewhere so I will take it from the Stamford Arms.

Head towards Ratby along Ratby Road and follow it up the hill. At the top of the hill at Oaktree Close, continue using the tree-lined path on your left, the line of the old Groby Granite Railway. Built in 1832 it was surveyed by George Stephenson and his son Robert and carried granite from the local quarries to sidings here in Glenfield. By the 1890s, Charnwood granite had become the main source of hard rock for England from the Midlands southwards. Much was sent to London and was reputedly used in the original paving stones of Trafalgar Square. A well-known colloquialism at the time captures its importance: "The streets are not paved with gold in London, they are paved with Leicestershire granite!". Wagons loaded with stone were hauled to the top of Ratby Road and released to travel to Glenfield relying on gravity under the watchful eye of a courageous brakeman. The line was closed in the mid-1960s.

Continue till you see Woodbank Road on the right and then go up that road. Where it kicks left go straight on along Laundon Road keeping left to join Forest Rise. Follow this (it becomes Forest View) and as you approach the school you will be passing above the disused quarry and skirting Quarry Park. In the right hand corner of the park there is a drive past a Scout hut which drops you down to Markfield Road where going right will take you back towards the Stamford.

En-route on your left you come to St Philip and St James Church.

Turn left into the church entrance and follow the path round the church to the graveyard for a view of the old Groby Castle motte. The church was built in 1840 by the 7th Earl of Stamford.

The castle was erected in the late 11<sup>th</sup> century and was partially destroyed a century later, most likely by followers of King Henry II so that it could not be used by rebels.

Carry on down the hill towards the Old Hall. Time Team did a 'dig' in 2010 and found evidence of a second great hall and chapel suggesting that this had been a very large and imposing building (see [wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/groby-old-hall](http://wessexarch.co.uk/our-work/groby-old-hall) for further details).

The Old Hall is a Grade II listed building and contains remnants of the earlier hall. The current brick built building you can see from the road on the left dates from the 15th century.





# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 2 - RATBY

I've spent a lot of my leisure time round Ratby and can offer suggestions to those looking to walk for exercise during these difficult times.

A very nice walk of about an hour goes up from the Bull's Head and Plough pubs, up Burroughs Road. There are kissing gates so difficult for a large pram or buggy and there is a steady uphill section. The surface is good throughout.

About half a mile up the road you will eventually come to a small car park on your right. This serves Burroughs Wood, owned by the Woodland Trust a part of the National Forest. You end up walking through two other blocks of Woodland Trustwoods.

Follow the track just before the car park heading back on yourself.



You eventually break out onto Markfield Road having walked through Peartree Wood. Cross this carefully and enter Martinshaw Woods following the main track as it swings slowly to your right. It eventually comes out at a small car park back on Markfield Road from where there is a pavement along the road.

Cross over into the parallel quieter service road till you come to a road on your right called Charnwood. Follow this round to turn right again into Wolsey Drive and then left down Stamford Street.

Part way down on your right there is a footpath through the car park of the Plough bringing you back to your starting point.

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 3 - THORNTON RESERVOIR

This is an easy flat walk on a good surface easily accessible from the village. It can be accessed from the heart of the village via a footpath near the Church but is steep and can be muddy. As a circular walk it can be joined wherever wanted and there are paths linking with it at several points but for simplicity I will describe it from the car park.

When it is safe and legal to do so people from further afield can park at the start (Reservoir Road, LE67 1AN) and the 26 bus gets you fairly close. There is a tearoom at the Nursery by the start.

The car park is at the village end of the dam and I prefer to walk over the dam and walk round anticlockwise. This way you start at the quieter stretch and see more wildlife and you tend to meet more people the further round you go if you want a sociable break. Quite a lot of people just walk one side out and back.

During the pandemic you are best walking clockwise so you will not keep passing people walking the more popular way round.



The reservoir is a giant Y-shape and going along the village side from the car park you come upon a visitor centre (rarely open) which looks like an upturned boat.

This is a walk in need of little description as you just follow the shore for about an hour to end up back where you started.

Many families walk to the end of the first side seemingly thinking they have seen it all.

Looking back down the reservoir it is easy to see why if they don't know any better.

They would though be missing out on the best part of the walk. The stretch between the two arms is where most wildlife can be spotted mainly because it is less disturbed. Many walkers don't get that far and fishermen tend to be nearer the dam and often out on boats.





Also to be found along this stretch are a few extra paths which can be muddy but go into and back out of some wooded areas and if you take these paths you will come upon numerous wood carvings.

As you progress and head back towards the road there are some magnificent Scots Pines along the track.

The reservoir was created in 1854 and took 7 years to build. Now owned by Severn Trent Water, Thornton Reservoir was opened to the public in 1997. It is excellent for bird watching with good access via this circular walk.



As well as water birds, the adjacent fields and woods attract a variety of other birds and a wide range of insects.

Whether you are a bird-watcher or someone who likes watching birds, keep your eyes open and see how many species you can see. You never know it may be a first, making a round 100. I doubt it, though, as so many have been seen. 99 are recorded in the not too distant past:

|                           |                          |                      |
|---------------------------|--------------------------|----------------------|
| Barnacle Goose            | Great White Egret        | Pink-footed Goose    |
| Black necked Grebe        | Green Woodpecker         | Pochard              |
| Black Tern                | Greenfinch               | Raven                |
| Blackbird                 | Grey Heron               | Red legged partridge |
| Black-crowned Night Heron | Grey Wagtail             | Red-crested Pochard  |
| Black-headed Gull         | Greylag Goose            | Redwing              |
| Blue Tit                  | Herring Gull             | Reed Bunting         |
| Bullfinch                 | House Martin             | Robin                |
| Buzzard                   | House Sparrow            | Rook                 |
| Canada Goose              | Jackdaw                  | Sand Martin          |
| Carrion Crow              | Kestrel                  | Siskin               |
| Chaffinch                 | Kingfisher               | Skylark              |
| Chiffchaff                | Lapwing                  | Song Thrush          |
| Coal Tit                  | Lesser black backed Gull | Sparrowhawk          |
| Common Gull               | Lesser Redpoll           | Spotted Flycatcher   |
| Common Sandpiper          | Linnet                   | Starling             |
| Common Tern               | Little Egret             | Stock Dove           |
| Coot                      | Little Grebe             | Swan Goose           |
| Cormorant                 | Long tailed Duck         | Teal                 |
| Dunnock                   | Long tailed tit          | Tree Sparrow         |
| Feral Pigeon (Rock Dove)  | Long-eared Owl           | Treecreeper          |
| Fieldfare                 | Magpie                   | Tufted Duck          |
| Gadwall                   | Mallard                  | Water Rail           |
| Gannet                    | Marsh Tit                | Whooper Swan         |
| Goldcrest                 | Mistle Thrush            | Wigeon               |
| Goldeneye                 | Moorhen                  | Willow Warbler       |
| Goldfinch                 | Mute Swan                | Wood Duck            |
| Great Crested Grebe       | Nuthatch                 | Wood Pigeon          |
| Great Spotted Woodpecker  | Pheasant                 | Wren                 |
| Great Tit                 | Pied Wagtail             |                      |

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 4 WHITWICK

### **Down in the Dumps? Try a walk between three cities.**

This walk is quite urban and is mostly road walking so good in poor underfoot conditions but it passes some places of interest and affords some long views.

Start or park at the car park by the mine winding wheel in the centre of Whitwick. If you look at the street sign across the road by the wheel it says City of Dan. Facing away from the main road walk up Cademan Street with the motte and bailey on your left. As you come to a road on the right turn left up a path which takes you round the feature. This area where you are turning is known as the City of Hockley (The Hockley).

Follow this path round this feature and over Grace Dieu Brook and steeply up the hill past the church onto the main road (North Street). Turn right and follow this through the village turning right into Dumps Road. Follow this steeply down hill to the bottom where you are down in the Dumps otherwise called the City of Three Waters.

Who would not be down in the dumps after walking between three cities.

The medieval motte and bailey is Whitwick Castle surviving as an earthwork. The castle is situated on an oval natural hill with the bailey formed by the natural rise of the hill. The castle was held by the Earl of Leicester in the mid-12<sup>th</sup> century but had fallen into disrepair by 1427. The foundations and a wall on the north side were said to have been still visible in 1893.



To make your way back to your starting point keep right at the Dumps along Loughborough Road and as you approach the school turn right into the entirely appropriately named Parsonwood Hill and climb up. As you pause for breath look back at the views out over CademanWoods.

This eventually brings you out onto Cademan Street where turning right again retraces your steps to the car park.



Not a long walk but certainly a good work out!

In normal times, if in need of a break or facilities, the Hare & Hounds Country Pub and beergarden down in the Dumps is a welcome oasis.



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 5 FROM ANSTEY TO BRADGATE

### DIRECT

This circular walk takes you on one of the best approaches to Bradgate Park, the ancestral home of the 9 Days Queen, and still a wonderful deer park with much of interest for all visitors. You will experience some of the characteristic landscapes of the Charnwood Forest with granite outcrops, dry-stone walls, and acid-heath grassland. This walk has been very muddy during recent winters and wellingtons are advised at these times. There is a bus stop for the 74 service from Leicester opposite the start and finish point (Bradgate Road). The walk will take about an hour plus whatever time you wish to devote to exploring Bradgate Park.

Walk to Link Road and find the footpath between numbers 273 and 275. Once at the back of the houses the view of the Charnwood Hills begins to reveal itself. You need to head broadly towards the high point in the distance and follow the well marked path for a kilometre across 4 fields. At the double gate you'll find one of the best views of Bradgate Park in front of you, with Bradgate House in the middle distance, Old John and the memorial to the Leicestershire Regiment in the background, the grounds of Bradgate wrapping round the scene and with any luck the odd herd of deer in the foreground.

Go through the pedestrian gate in the wall and enjoy the Park and its scenery and facilities (which include cafes and toilets). When you're ready to proceed with your walk, or if you're not stopping, turn right inside the wall and walk about 100 metres to exit through another pedestrian gate. This path takes you across two meadows and then you skirt a large field on your right with Cropston Reservoir on your left.



When you reach the high point at the far corner of the field, turn right onto the bridleway and enjoy the views from this high ground as you head back towards Anstey. As you approach Anstey, the bridleway passes to the right of the Anstey Martin Academy on an enclosed route with the school fence on your left. When you reach the railings you can either go straight on to Link Rd along a path or turn right along the bridleway back to your starting point.

*Bradgate Park was bought by local industrialist Charles Bennion in 1928 and given 'to be preserved in its natural state for the quiet enjoyment of the people of Leicestershire'.*

*It has long been held that Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days Queen lived in Bradgate House. What is known is that Edward Grey's son Sir John Grey of Groby married Elizabeth Woodville, who after John's death married King Edward IV. Their son Thomas Grey, 1st Marquess of Dorset prepared for building Bradgate House in the late fifteenth century but died before he was able to begin. It was his son Thomas Grey, 2nd Marquess of Dorset who built Bradgate House, the likely completion date was believed to be 1520. However, there is now some uncertainty over this completion date, as an older house has been revealed by recent archaeological work by the University of Leicester Archaeological Services under this house and findings have suggested that Lady Jane Grey who wasn't born until 1537 may have lived in the older house (see <https://le.ac.uk/archaeology/research/people-and-places/bradgate-park-fieldschool> for reports of the excavation).*

*Bradgate Park is also internationally important for its geology and palaeontology. The Precambrian outcrops include four 'type-members' of the Charnian Supergroup, formed some 560 million years ago. Bradgate is one of the few areas of Britain where these ancient basement rocks can be seen at the surface. The oldest of the Charnian rocks within Bradgate Park are the rocks nearest the Old John and memorial summits.*

*The fossils at Bradgate and in other nearby Charnian rocks are the only known Precambrian fossils in Western Europe. Until 1957 it had been thought that complex life forms and perhaps life itself began with the Cambrian Period and that all rocks older than this developed in a world without plants or animals. The 1957 discoveries by Roger Mason, subsequently named in his honour as *Charnia masoni*, required a re-evaluation of when complex life began. The fossils had been found the year before by Tina Negus but her teachers did not take any notice of the schoolgirl.*

*It also resulted in the re-classification of other rocks in Southern Australia and Newfoundland, which have similar fossil marks. At Bradgate Park there are some 50 known examples. They mainly take the form of two-dimensional impressions of fronds and disks and have at various times been described as seaweed, jelly fish, corals or sea anemones. They are now described as belonging to the Ediacara biota, and the latest research suggests that they are animal and most similar to corals.*

*Bradgate Park is also important ecologically and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, designated as one of the finest remaining examples of ancient parkland in Leicestershire and contains some of the last remaining fragments of wet heathland in the county.*

*Fauna that can be seen, in addition to the captive herds of Red and Fallow Deer include Rabbits, Hares and Foxes. Birds include Green Woodpecker, Little Owl, Stonechat, Common Buzzard and Yellowhammer.*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 6 ANSTEY - SHEET HEDGES - GROBY POOL

This circular walk takes you to Bradgate Park via the ancient woodland of Sheet Hedges Wood - a haven for wildlife and returns via a delightful valley and the largest natural water body in Leicestershire. There is a Bus Stop for the 74 service from Leicester on the Anstey Upper Green, which is the start and finish point for this walk. This walk will take about 2 hours plus whatever time you may devote to visiting Bradgate Park, Sheet Hedges Wood or Groby Pool.

Walk to the Upper Green on Bradgate Rd and exit the Green into the field in the far corner. Follow the path up the hill to the left and exit the field after about 150 metres. Avoid the left turn into the recreation ground after 40 metres and then follow the path to the right at the fork after 50 metres keeping the hedge on your right side. Follow this path as it crosses over the fields for a kilometre until you reach the substantial block of Sheet Hedges Wood.

After about 20 metres take the stile into the wood and bear right at the fork after 15 metres. When the path reaches a neck of land on the edge of the wood, take the exit into an open field that leads on in the direction you have been broadly following.



The path crosses this field diagonally and is usually well marked on the ground, except when it has been ploughed, when you have to follow the waymarks. On the far side of the field the path continues along the headland and then does a chicane into the next field headland before again crossing diagonally, passing close by the telegraph pole in the field. This brings you to a confined length of path with 2 stiles and 2 gates that lead you down into Newtown Linford near the Bradgate Park Car Park exit.

*If you wish to explore Bradgate Park then walk down the exit road and into the Park. There is a range of cafes, pubs and restaurants in the village and a delightful cricket ground. There is extensive evidence of the characteristic Charnwood Building materials - granite in walls and Swithland slate on the roofs.*

To continue the circular walk find the path alongside the Post Office cafe, after 100 metres this opens out into a pleasant pasture field which gives good views into Bradgate Park if you look back. The path exits into Groby Lane which you cross bearing slightly to the right and then, passing through a kissing gate next to a field gate, you walk along a track with a hedge on your left and open views across a field to your right. Follow this path as it goes through a further kissing gate and then wanders downhill through a delightful hidden and quiet valley. Stay on the path through a further gate when the path becomes more restricted and full of Bluebells in the Spring.

Eventually, you will see Groby Pool on your right and the path exits on to Groby Lane.

Turn right along the road along a combination of road, verge and footway past Groby Pool and then continue on the footway. When the slip road on to the A50 comes into view you turn left across Groby Lane and via a stile follow the track pictured below, that goes more or less parallel to the A50, albeit at a distance



Just before you think you will have to ford a stream in front of you, the path goes left to a plank bridge over the stream and then over the field to a hedgerow. Take the path straight up the hill, bear right at the top and via 4 fields back to your starting point at the Anstey Upper Green.

*Sheet Hedges Wood is an ancient woodland which is known to have existed as far back at 1086 when it was recorded in the Domesday Book. This area is designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because of its high ecological value. It comprises a rich mix of native trees including oak, ash, wild cherry and hazel. In spring the woodland floor is carpeted in the colourful flowers of bluebell, wood anemone, yellow archangel and red campion. The name has generated many theories from a washer women hanging sheets out on hedges to dry to the hawthorns being so well flowered that they look like sheets. The reality is rather less romantic! Sheet hedges is a very old name derived from 'scite' or 'scēat' meaning dung and 'hecg' meaning enclosure, giving us some clue to how the area was being used in the Middle Ages!*

*Groby Pool is held, by some, to be the largest natural lake in the county. While there is some debate about how natural it actually is it is a SSSI and used by many wintering wildfowl. The marginal vegetation is diverse, and there is also wet woodland and meadows which have grasses such as common bent, sweet vernal grass and crested dog's-tail. Heron and Cormorant breed on the small island in the lake, Reed and Sedge Warblers breed in the fringe reed beds and Mandarin Ducks can often be seen.*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 7 - ANSTEY, WALKING THE BOUNDS

### A tour of four historic bridges over Rothley Brook

This is a circular walk from Anstey, following the Rothley Brook dipping in and out of the Regional Park; around the edges of Cropston and Thurcaston and passing through Castle Hill Country Park, harbouring much wildlife, particularly kingfishers. The source of the brook is in Bagworth and it flows through Glenfield to Anstey and onto Rothley near where it joins the River Soar; a distance of 18 miles. It forms the southern boundary of Charnwood Forest.

The walk is on solid surfaces but with some field crossing in Castle Hill Country Park and around the two distant bridges. However, if hard surfaces are required use can be made of the roads with care, in place of the footpaths although it will make the walk longer. The walk as described should take around 1½ hours.

Anstey can be reached by bus to the village centre, called The Nook, or by car, using The Nook (free) car park.

From the car park take the passageway exit on the left-hand side of the public conveniences to reach The Nook. Cross the road to the Coach and Horses publichouse and follow Leicester Road round the side of the pub.

In a short distance at Ned Ludd Close cross over Leicester Road to the first bridge, Anstey Packhorse Bridge.

*Built c. 16-17<sup>th</sup> century, it is composed on slate and granite rubble stone and red brick coping to the parapet. There are five rounded arches with side embankments. Pointed cutwaters rise to form niches in the parapet. It is a Grade II listed monument.*

*The old Anstey Enclosure map of 1762 indicates a rectangular pool in the vicinity, probably for livestock. In heavy rains, the area around the bridge becomes widely flooded.*



Follow Centenary Walk over the bridge until it rejoins Leicester Road. Cross with care and turn right with Castle Hill Country Park on your left. Follow the pavement as it bends left around the woods, into Gorse Hill, until you come to an access to the country park.

Turn in and continue straight ahead under the power lines forking left beyond them and pass through the community orchard. Follow this path, which runs parallel with the power line and with Rothley Brook on your left.

The path will end at a gate alongside the next bridge, King William's Bridge.

*Restored in 2008, King William's Bridge, a small rubble stone bridge, has two pointed cutwaters on its upstream side.*

*The bridge is medieval, originally from the early 16<sup>th</sup> century but was widened in more recent times. It is named after King William III who visited the nearby residence of Lord Gray in 1696.*



*Early maps and records refer to it as 'Damgate'. There are groundworks that indicate there was once a sheepwash alongside.*

Go through the gate and turn right, over the A46 and then left the other side. Continue on this path, bending to the right to an open space.

Here, turn left through a gate and spot the 300 year old Great Oak on your left.

Pause to read the notice board giving the history of this Early-Medieval Royal Deer Park.

Continue past the tree and follow the footpath up hill to the second bridge over the A46 (not under the A46) where there is a yellow post directing users.

Turn left over the A46 and along the footpath around the edge of the fields and riding school to the road, Anstey Lane. Cross straight over, with care, and take the bridle path ahead, down to the Brook and bridge.

*Little is known of this historic bridge which served the inhabitants of local villages and may have been installed by Leicester Abbey who owned properties in this vicinity. It is of similar construction to Sandham Bridge.*

After exploring the bridge and water edge, return up the bridleway to the hedge and take the footpath diagonally left across the field towards the church. Continue along the path up to the road. Turn left, past All Saints church and turn left along the footpath the other side. This leads to Sandham Bridge.



*All Saints Church has been much altered and extended over the centuries. Pre-1066, an Anglo-Saxon building occupied the site. There are many notable features in the current building, including one of the oldest surviving screens in England. A historical guide is available for sale in the church.*

*Sandham Packhorse Bridge is of similar construction to the bridge in Anstey with 2 rounded arches and cutwater niches on both the up and down stream sides. Located beside it is a marker stone, maybe associated with Leicester Abbey as they owned property in this area. Note the cobbled path still in existence and the splayed embankments. This bridge is believed to be a coffin bridge serving inhabitants of Cropston as they had no church of their own.*

Return back to the road, where you need to go right, back to the footpath you came on. Return along the footpath by the riding school but instead of going over the A46 bridge, turn right before it. Follow the footpath down to the end, bending right away from the main road half way down.

Take the gate on your left back into Castle Hill CP and immediately turn right into the meadows. Follow the path and Rothley Brook back to King William Bridge. This time go over the bridge and along Sheepwash Walk to Cropston Road. Turn left along the road back to The Nook.

*The Luddites were a group of textile workers in the early 19<sup>th</sup> century who broke into factories and smashed machinery as a form of protest. They reputedly took their name from a young Anstey apprentice by the name of Ned Ludd who, in a fit of rage in 1779, wrecked two stocking frames.*

*Castle Hill Country Park covers some 250 acres of grassland, plantation and broad-leaved woodland, divided in two by the A46 Leicester Western Bypass. The northern section, bordering Anstey, comprises mainly of flat meadow land near Rothley Brook with its abundant birdlife. The park takes its name from the dramatic medieval Castle Hill earthworks which lie within the park, believed to be a Knights Hospitaller monastic grange or sheet farm.*

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 8 - MOUNTSORREL OLD & NEW

This walk takes you around Mountsorrel, an historic village situated in the Regional Park and typical of the settlements around the area. The walk of 3 miles with one stile takes under two hours and passes Mountsorrel Station; the Great Central Railway heritage line; through a working quarry and over Castle Hill to the Buttermarket in the village centre.

It starts from the Mountsorrel Heritage Centre on the site of the former Nunckley quarry which has a café and museum that gives more history of the area (*240 Swithland Road, Rothley LE7 7UE.*)

From the car park, cross the road and turn left along the footpath. Follow it along the field edge until it turns onto Wood Lane. Continue along the road (Bond Lane) with the newly reinstated Mountsorrel Station on the right.



This branch line runs for 1.2 miles to Swithland Sidings where it joins the Great Central Railway. It was restored in 2015 by local volunteers.

Keeping right on to the footpath where the road bends left. A short way along the footpath you will find an entrance to Broad Hill a site of special scientific interest under ecological restoration. Turn along this path, through the gate and follow it around to the left. At the top of the slope there are good views of Charnwood Forest and a stone carving of "Albert" the quarryman.

Continue along the path around the quarry area, following yellow marker posts. Pass through the gateway at the end and turn right along the quarry road. Continue along this road until you reach The Navins where the grassy slopes of Castle Hill appear. Note the footpath signpost and follow its pointer to the top of the hill and the rocky outcrop.

From here there is a good view looking down over Mountsorrel village and beyond the A6 bypass and River Soar. Since this new road has been in use Mountsorrel has been designated a conservation area and has ancient churches, inns, farms, workshops and houses which reflect its early industry.



Go left across to the historic war memorial monument perched on the highest point. Then you will need to retrace your steps a few yards and look for the handrail and steps on your right leading down.

Turn right to the bottom and turn right along Watling Street to the Buttermarket ahead.

*The Buttermarket was built in 1793 on the site of the former market cross although there has been a market held here since 1292.*

Continue on, passing the Buttermarket and turn left along Leicester Road.



A short way along you will see the Swan Inn a former 16th century coaching inn with many of its original features. Keep straight ahead, under the railway bridge and turn left into Bond Lane. As you walk up the lane, Stonehurst Family Farm, with its museum and café is on your right.

Continue under the double bridge and shortly you will see a footpath entrance on the right. Turn in here and follow the route through the working quarry, observing the traffic light controls and noting the viewpoints of operations. After crossing the stile, bear left and follow the footpath around the wood edge, parallel with the road.

At one point the path takes you to a group of boulders by the roadside. If you wish to lengthen your walk, cross over and bear slightly left to a footpath leading through the woods to a gate. From here there is a circular path that takes you up the hillside and gives you an impressive view of an enormous quarry and its workings. The circular path takes around 15 minutes to walk and brings you back to the road.

Cross over and resume following the path to the end where it passes under a spreading oak and the Heritage Centre is ahead of you.

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 9 - MARKFIELD TOPS

This walk takes you around the historic parts of the village. The walk is hilly and takes about 90 minutes leisurely.

It starts from The Co-op with its blue plaque showing it was previously the George Inn. This is a figure of eight walk and you can just do the first circuit. Cross over and by the bus stop take the path and walk up to the Green then go right behind the houses and follow the path swinging left round the hill and quarry, past allotments up to Hill Lane.

Here we have two choices. Taking the short option turn left down Hill Lane. There is a pavement to the end of the fenced off quarry and where it ends take the track to the left up the hill and enjoy the commanding view from the top.

Carry on down the other side following the well-marked grass track and you return to the Green.

The second option for the other loop involves turning right on Hill Lane.

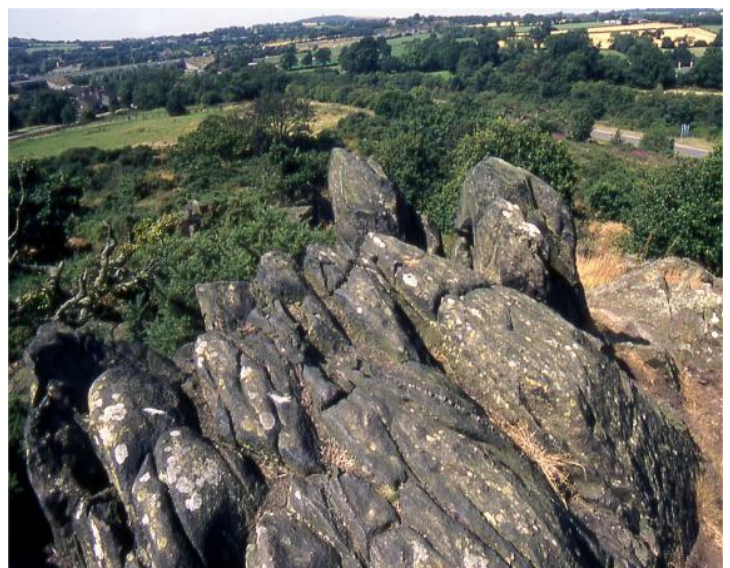
Go up the hill to the end then turn left. As you pass the last of the commercial operations look to the right for a gate and information board where you can enter a Wildlife Trust site.

There are numerous paths to explore in this area but three principal ones to choose from. Start by following the grass path up to the ridge. Here, you can bear left and after a few yards take the path down hill to the left to exit onto the road at a second point.

This is the simplest route but more interesting is to stay on the ridge and enter a rocky knoll known as the Altar Stones.

As you pass through the wall a hard left takes you to the road but better to wander round the outcrop, from where you can enjoy wonderful views. It is said that during WWII you could see the bombing of Coventry some 30 miles away from this vantage point.

**East entrance (Markfield)**





The third option is when you first reach the ridge go straight over and down the other side to swing left and take a low level route into Altar Stones with its various options.

In springtime this route is well worth taking as the bottom areas are rich in bluebells.



All three routes bring you to a second entrance/exit onto the road.

Turn left and retrace your steps back to Hill Lane and the quarry and then follow the short option back to the Green.



**West entrance**

*Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust own and manage the two adjoining and linked blocks. These are obviously quite well-used judging by the various paths. The star attractions are in Altar Stones with its frost shattered cocks-comb ridges and impressive lichens. The summit provides good views all round, with the nearby A50 only evident by the hum of traffic.*

*From time to time, to keep the undergrowth down, docile cattle are grazed in the first block known as Blacksmith's Meadow. Wire fences keep the cattle in but do not unduly spoil the open aspect of the site.*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 10 - FIELDHEAD

This walk takes about 90 minutes leisurely, is not suitable for buggies and can be muddy. It can be started from Fieldhead or Markfield.

Starting from the Fieldhead public house take the road towards Newtown Linford. Look for a footpath on your left and take it.

The path takes a hard right turn then passes through paddocks.



You eventually approach some stables where you are likely to attract the attention of barking dogs. Do not go through the gate past them. Instead turn left and left again and follow the path round the field edge.

As you follow this you come to some new woodlands on your right which can be explored but our route carries straight on passing more mature woodlands on your left.

The grass track then goes through a hedge line across the fields to enter an area of scrub and trees bearing to your left.

This stretch is a bit overgrown but passable with care. Since you left the stables, you have actually been walking along part of a 100 mile long distance footpath: the Leicestershire Round.

You follow this path as it finds its way through the trees and to the A50 trunk road where there is an underpass which brings you out onto Leicester Road in Markfield.

Turn left here and walk downhill back to Fieldhead.

If walking from Markfield we would suggest doing the walk in reverse.



**The path entrance on or off Leicester Road**

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 11- SWITHLAND

This walk takes about 70 minutes leisurely, is a little muddy at times but is basically on lanes or firm surfaced footpaths.

From the west (Woodhouse) end of the village walk out of the village towards Woodhouse Eaves and at the road junction keep left. Follow this road until just after it swings to the left and on your left take track running beside the woods toward a caravan park. Take care as these are quite busy roads.

Where this track ends and becomes a path go to your left and enter the woods.

There are a lot of small paths here but follow the stronger path keeping the hill on your right. This drops down to an even bigger track. Turn left.

Follow this path for some distance but after you skirt an open area look for a path going straight on out of the woods where the track actually swings left.

Turn right along the road and you return to the village

If you wish to avoid much of the road walking, after taking the left fork in the road you can enter the woods through the car parking area rather than the caravan site track. If doing so leave the second car park area and follow that path running parallel with the track to the hill where the first route enters the woods.

### **This rough sketch might assist.**

*Swithland Woods were bought by the Rotary Club of Leicester in 1931 and donated to the people of the county. It is now managed by Bradgate Park Trust. Further purchases have since been made.*

*The woods contain two flooded disused quarries (with an inscription on the side recording the Rotary Club's donation). Swithland slate is a traditional local roofing material.*

*Access to the quarries is prohibited.*

*Swithland Wood is one of the few woodland areas in Leicestershire of national nature importance (being on acid loamy soils) and a significantly important area of ancient woodland in the East Midlands.*

*It contains some of the best remaining examples of oak, small leaved lime and alder woodland in the county and as such is an ecologically rich habitat It also includes holly trees, some conifers,*





wildflower meadows, woodland glades, marshes and rock outcrops making it one of our more diverse landscapes. The area is poorly drained giving numerous damp parts but despite this there are really no streams in the wood. Several ditch systems run into larger ditches with some appearance of natural watercourses but these often dry up.



It has a very important, rich and varied range of flora and fauna including a diverse butterfly, moth and bird population. The area is popular in spring for its wood anemones, bluebells and other spring flowering bulbs which cover large areas of the woodland floor. Whilst not obvious it also sits on the remains of ridge and furrow, the ploughed land of our medieval ancestors.

‘Swithland’ literally means ‘land cleared by burning’. The village and its neighbouring woodland bear testimony to a period during the Middle Ages when land in this area was being cleared of trees to create space for new villages.



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 12- NEWTOWN LINFORD

This walk takes about 70 minutes taking your time to enjoy the views. It can be very muddy at times but is remarkably 'remote' and quiet. It is not suitable for push chairs and quite hilly. This is for a more determined walker.

With some reluctance I would advise it goes out to Stinking Wood and back in a circuit. I don't know where the name comes from but I don't find it's smell unpleasant!

As a circular you can do it in either direction but I prefer doing it anti-clockwise.

Walk towards Hunts Hill and Ulverscroft Lane looking to your left for a footpath sign. Take this path and as it climbs uphill it crosses another strong path and then a restored old mill on your right. The path levels off and you come to a gate and then cross a meadow to the far left hand corner where it can sometimes flood. Cross the stream cum muddy puddle.



Follow this path and it passes a large attractive but private lake just off to your left and then through trees till it breaks out into a meadow. Keep the stream on your left until you see a bridge and then go left across this.

The path then leads you uphill between old woodlands and newer plantings until you reach a small summit. This may not be very elevated but it is prominent and despite only being about 6 miles from the centre of Leicester you can see 360° with nothing manmade except the tip of a radio mast at Copt Oak.

The path swings left here sharply downhill past an old small quarry and then into another damp valley bottom. Shortly on your right the path goes off into Stinking Wood over a pleasant stream. This wet area is blessed with duckboards over the messier bits.

Follow this and it comes out onto a private drive where you go left for a short distance and then right over a stile into a pasture.

On your left there is a wooded area and you can either go straight up the hedge line to the top of the field or into the wood and go up the other side. Either way you meet a path running across the top which is part of the Leicestershire Round long distance footpath.

Take this path to the left. You follow this to your left and it crosses into pastures where horses normally graze and then round this field boundary to your right.

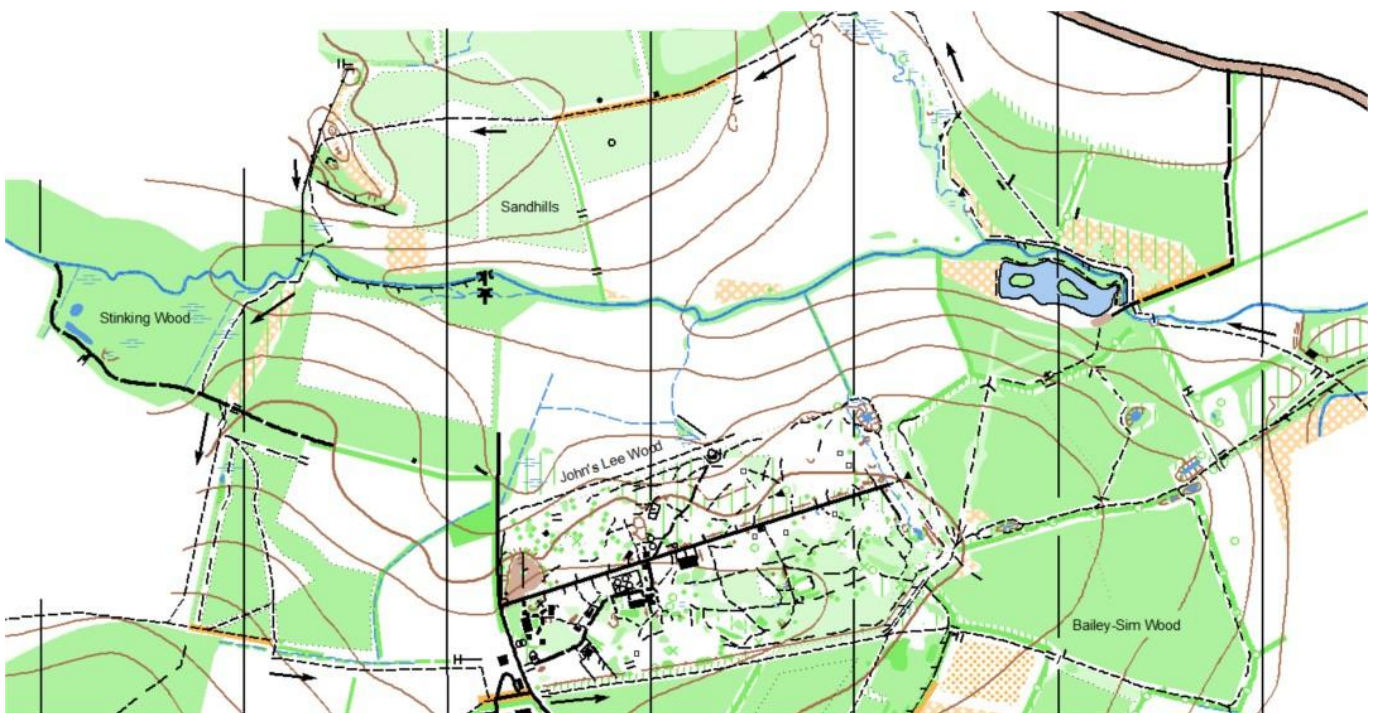
Here the peace and quiet of the countryside is about to be lost in a cacophony of barking dogs. At the top of the field you go left on a strong track and through a gate. You pass another gate on your right to stables where guard dogs run free. They cannot get at you but it can be very disconcerting

Your path crosses a surfaced track with a scout camp on your left but you carry straight on through the woodlands.

At the end off the camp site the path splits but you keep to the left fork which brings you back to the village just inside Markfield Lane

As an alternative at the last fork you can go straight on down a steep gully to the path crossroads near the old mill you met earlier and going right there takes you back to your starting point

**This drawing may assist you**





# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 13- ROTHLEY

This walk visits the Saxon village of Rothley and surrounding Rothley Park estate. It is an easy 4 mile walk in traditional English countryside and settlement. There is seasonal mud in places and some uneven footpaths and should take a comfortable 90 minutes.

It starts from the car park on Warren Way at the junction with Hallfields Lane, at SK585124, post code LE7 7TN. There is a regular bus service from Leicester or Loughborough which takes you to Cross Green and you can start the walk from there as an alternative.

From the car park turn right along Hallfields Lane and after 100 yards, left along the footpath signed for the church. As you enter the churchyard note the tall Saxon shaft and the Grade II listed parish church. Christianity has been recorded on this site since before the Norman conquest.

Follow the path around the church and exit at the lychgate along School Lane passing the former church school on the left. Turn left along Fowke Street.



On your right are some old cottages including thatched Step Cottage erected in 1727.



Fowke Street leads to Cross Green and the war memorial.

Walk across the Green, cross North Street and walk along Woodgate passing the shops.

Keep straight ahead until Woodgate merges with Wellsic Lane.





Keep right and after 100 yards there is a signed footpath on the left leading to the cricket clubhouse.

Take this path and glance over to your right where the middle age remains of the Knights Templar manor (subsequently passed on to the Knights Hospitaller), can be seen. The manor was passed to the Babbington family in 1565, some 25 years after the dissolution of the monasteries. Nowadays it is the Rothley Court Hotel but it still houses the old Knights' chapel.

Keep left of the Clubhouse and pass through two gates to the third by the side of a house and then turn left. You will reach Rothley's second green, Town Green.

Spot the surrounding cruck cottages.

At the Green turn right across the grass and right again along a no-throughroad named Town Green Street.



Pass over the Rothley Brook bridge and take the footpath on the right signed for Thurcaston. The path goes between the fences, over the clapper-like bridge and through Rothley Park with its many old and large trees. The footpath then crosses the golf course following the yellow indicators to the railway.

Under the bridge and the footpath bends left across a field to Thurcaston village, at Mill Road. Turn left along Mill Road for 100 yards and at the far side of the road bend there is a footpath sign left. It leads you up a private drive, passes the garage and on the other side of it a yellow signpost showing the route into the field. Follow the hedge along your right hand side until the path bends right between the trees and a row of back gardens.

At the end you meet a bridle track where you need to turn left and follow the track, over the Great Central Railway and straight back towards Rothley along the other side of the golf course. When the track turns to tarmac and bears round to the left you will spot two footpaths on the right. Take the far one, across the field and across a second field. It ends at a gateway on the edge of a new housing estate.

Go through the gate by the edge of the housing estate and immediately turn left along the earth bank by the dyke.

This will lead you back to the car park.

# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 14- CROPSTON FOREST

### CIRCULAR

This circular walk takes you into Bradgate Park, the home of the 9 Days Queen of England and still a wonderful deer park with much of interest to all visitors, and then into Swithland Wood, one of the finest ancient woodlands in the Forest. You will experience some of the characteristic landscapes of Charnwood Forest with granite outcrops, dry-stone walls, a Victorian water supply reservoir and ancient woodland.

There is a bus stop for the Centrebus 154 service from Leicester to Loughborough by the Bradgate Arms near the start point of the walk.

The walk will take about two hours, plus whatever time you wish to devote to exploring Bradgate Park and Swithland Wood. There is an element of on-roadwalking.

Walk to the crossroads at the western end of the village (Cropston Rd/Station Rd) and walk down Causeway Lane. Beyond the houses the lane becomes a bridleway and provides excellent views towards Bradgate Park over Cropston Reservoir. One kilometer from the start point the bridleway turns sharp left through a field gateway but you need to keep heading broadly straight on but with the field hedge now on your right. Follow this path around the edge of a 40 acre field and then across two pastures and go through the pedestrian gate into Bradgate Park. Follow the well-marked and very well maintained short-cropped grass path (the deer provide an excellent sward!) keeping an eye out for Green Woodpeckers which regularly feed on the ant hills on your left. Cross the bridge over the River Lin opposite the ruins of Bradgate House and turn right on to the tarmac road. This road passes the Park visitor centre, café and toilets. 500 metres after these you come to the Hallgates exit. Walk out of the car park and turn left along Roecliffe Rd.

After passing the Hallgates buildings, go over the stile into the pasture field and follow the well-trodden path across the field into Swithland Wood.

Turn left in the wood and after just 80 metres walk up an embankment and turn right on to the bridleway running through the wood.

After 200 metres turn right, still on a bridleway, and follow this route as it leads you out of the wood.



80 metres after leaving the wood turn right, still on a bridleway between fields and after 200 metres take the left fork onto a footpath which leads you past horse pastures and a very attractive small lake, known locally as Puddledyke, which is excellent for dragonflies in summer, to Bradgate Road.

Turn left on to the road and after 450 metres, when the road forks, take the footpath on the right (which would make the 4th leg of a crossroads) and follow this path back to Station Rd, Cropston, turning right onto it to get back to the start.

### *Background information*

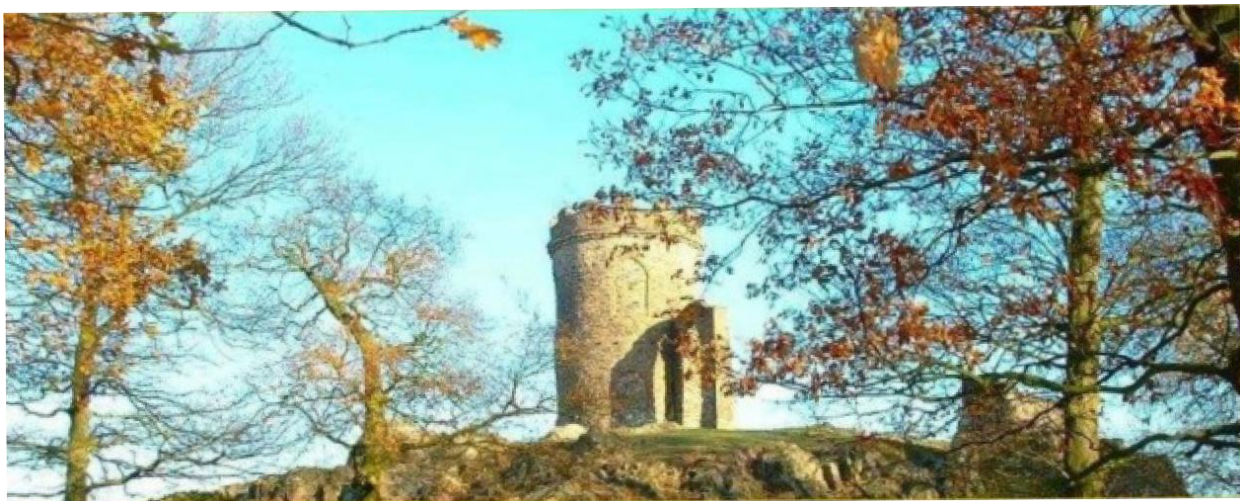
*Some of the old names are fascinating and cause you to ponder over their historic origins. Puddledyke sits in the corner of three woodland blocks. It sits where Farther Broom Close and Near Broom Close meet Big Meadow, names lost in the mists of time.*

*Bradgate Park was bought by Charles Bennion in 1928 and given 'to be preserved in its natural state for the quiet enjoyment of the people of Leicestershire.'*

*It has long been held that Lady Jane Grey, the Nine Days Queen lived in Bradgate House. What is known for certain is that Edward Grey's son married Elizabeth Woodville, who after John's death married King Edward IV. Their son, Sir John Grey of Groby, 1<sup>st</sup> Marquess of Dorset prepared for the building of Bradgate House in the late fifteenth century but died before he was able to begin. It was his son, Thomas Grey, second Marquess of Dorset, who built Bradgate House. The completion date was believed to be c.1520. However, there is now some uncertainty over the completion date. An older house under Bradgate House has been revealed by recent archaeological work by the University of Leicester Archaeological Service and findings have suggested that Lady Jane Grey who wasn't born until 1537 may have lived in the older house.*

*Bradgate Park is also internationally important for its geology and palaeontology. The Pre-Cambrian outcrops include four 'type-members' of the Charnian Supergroup formed some 560 million years ago.*

*Bradgate is one of the few places in Britain where these rocks can be seen at the surface. The oldest rocks within Bradgate Park are the rocks nearest Old John and memorial summits.*





*The fossils at Bradgate and in other nearby Charnian rocks are the only known Precambrian fossils in Western Europe. Until 1957 it had been thought that complex life forms and perhaps life itself began with the Cambrian Period and that all rocks older than this developed in a world without plants or animals. Fossil discoveries, in the 1950s, subsequently required a re-evaluation of when life began. It also resulted in the re-classification of other rocks in Southern Australia and Newfoundland, which have similar fossil marks. At Bradgate Park there are some 50 known examples. They mainly take the form of two-dimensional impressions of fronds and disks and have at various times been described as seaweed, jelly fish, corals or sea anemones. They are now described as belonging to the Ediacara biota. The latest research suggests that they are animal and most similar to corals.*

*Bradgate Park is also important ecologically and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest designated as one of the finest remaining examples of ancient parkland in Leicestershire and contains some of the last remaining fragments of wet heathland in the county. Fauna that can be seen, in addition to the captive herds of Red and Fallow Deer include Rabbits, Hares and Foxes. Birds that are specialities of the Park include Green Woodpecker, Little Owl, Stonechat, Common Buzzard and Yellowhammer.*

*One of the outstanding woodlands in the Charnwood Forest, Swithland Wood was sold in 1921 to the Leicester timber merchant William Gimson, who began to extract the timber commercially, with the aim of dividing up the land for building plots as it was gradually cleared.*

*Following public concern about the threatened loss of this ancient woodland of importance for its geological, natural history and industrial history features, in 1925 the Rotary Club of Leicester, with the cooperation of William Gimson, bought the whole site of approximately 137 acres (55 ha) for preservation and to provide access to the public for recreation "as a national heritage."*

*The Rotary Club established the Swithland Wood Trust, repaired and renewed the fencing of the area, provided car parking and restored the paths, spending around £6,000 on the original purchase, fencing and landscaping.*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 15- QUORN WOODHOUSE

### CIRCULAR, SKIRTING THE FOREST PARK

This is part paved and part paths which can be muddy in places in poor weather. The walk should take about 2 hours.

We are taking Quorn Cross as our starting point and we set off along Meeting Street and Chaveney Road.

This first half mile is of historic interest. Meeting Street once part of the ancient salt road that linked the Midlands with the east coast.

Two typical architectural features to look out for as you walk around the older parts of the village are walls built of granite, from the nearby quarry (Buddon Wood Quarry opened in 1821) and roofs with diminishing courses of Swithland slates (smaller slates higher up the roof).



On the left, No.12 was the old blacksmith's, one of three in the village whose customers included, of course, the Quorn Hunt and the stagecoach operators (before the railways, up to 32 scheduled stagecoaches a day passed through Quorn running day and night and the White Horse, was one of at least three coaching inns in the village and included stabling for 15 horses). This was the main route (A6) between London and Manchester.

The detached house set back a little after the Blacksmith's Arms used to be the Three Crowns inn, whose licence was transferred to a pub on Woodhouse Road in 1899 to serve the new Great Central Railway.

Just beyond Sanders Road, notice that the award winning 1990s houses (Nos 43-47) reflect the design of the old blacksmiths. At this point, the sound of running water would have been even louder in the past as Poultny Brook, which now flows under No.49, used to flow freely over the street itself to join Buddon Brook. Hidden by the tall trees of Kaye's Plantation to the left lies Quorn House, built in 1820 by the village's hereditary 'squires', the Farnhams, on the site of the family's 14<sup>th</sup> century house: and was the headquarters for the Rosemary Conley diet and fitness business until purchased in 2015 for office use by Tarmac.



We now pass two former churches on the right. No.83 is a former Primitive Methodist Church and a little past Spinney Drive, the Meeting House, a building dating from the 15th century, was where Baptist services were held from 1776 before the Baptist Chapel opposite was built and which included Thomas Cook amongst its preachers.

Until the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the last building on the way out of the village was Chaveney House (opposite Elms Drive), originally owned by the Chaveney family and dating in parts from 1415, though largely rebuilt in the 1600 and 1700s. Its proximity to the road is explained by the fact that the side we see was originally the rear of the building. No.33 Chaveney Road, further along on the right, was frequently visited by D. H. Lawrence as his girlfriend Louise Burrows lived there.

Where Chaveney Road takes a sharp right we carry straight on along Buddon Lane following the public right of way / bridleway sign. The plantation of tall trees on the left means that in spring this walk is accompanied by a chorus of bird song and offers a good chance to see woodland birds

At the end of the paved road, go forward across a field into the rather eerie cutting with tall thorn bushes, choosing the lower or upper paths depending on the conditions. After passing under the Great Central Railway bridge the path turns sharp right and offers a view across the field to Quorn & Woodhouse Station.

This was the last London-bound mainline to be constructed opening in 1889. The closure of the station in 1963 theoretically broke the original GCR contract with the local Farnham family, who granted the company permission to build on the condition that this station would stay open 'forever'! Nowadays, this forms the longest stretch of double tracked preserved mainline in the country.

Follow the path along the field hedge and at the end of the field, turn left. In the distance you can see the village of Woodhouse Eaves (at the edge of Charnwood Forest, 'eaves' meaning 'edge of'). Just before the Thatched Cottage, turn right into Woodhouse, older than Woodhouse Eaves but many of whose original houses on the main road were replaced in the mid-1800s by the carefully designed cottages of local stone and slate we see today.

Turning right at the main road pass first an old spring on the left, where the water used to emerge from the Bulls Head, and which was erected in 1859 by the Herrick family, long time owners of Beaumanor Hall. The last old house on the right is clearly older than most, evidenced by the rise in the carriageway since it was built.

The Beaumanor estate, created in the 13<sup>th</sup> century, was once Charnwood's largest manor, incorporating Beacon Hill and reputedly including Richard II amongst those who hunted in its park.

It was bought by the Herricks around 1600 but the present building dates from 1847.

During the second world war Beaumanor was used by an important signals unit that intercepted German transmissions before passing them to Bletchley Park for deciphering.

After the entrance to Beaumanor, take the public right of way path signposted to the left at the 'chevrons' and after crossing Poultney Brook into the second field, skirt round the field to your left.



In the next field, aim towards the far right-hand corner until the yellow way marker becomes visible. In the last field, the target is just to the left of the tall university tower building. The lane onto which we turn right has plenty of wildlife interest.

On the route through Woodthorpe itself look out for the old Quorndon/Woodthorpe parish boundary marker. The boundary in question is actually several hundred metres to the South.

Our path back to Quorn takes us across the fields to the right at the public right of way signpost and back over the Great Central Railway bridge. Following the path we pass 'One Ash' on our left, a small country house and grounds (built in 1894).

Where Poultney Brook joins us again, keep to the path ahead rather than the track to the left which was once part of the old Woodthorpe Road. Between the brook and the Woodhouse Road ahead, lies a small wildlife-rich meadow.

Diagonally across to the right we can follow the public right of way towards Caves Field and then left across the Tom Longs water meadow a site leased by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. A display board provides information about the wildlife that can be seen here.

Alternatively in wet weather turn left and then right at the traffic lights and follow the main road.

*Thanks are due to Quorn Parish Council for some content*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 16- QUORN FOREST CIRCULAR

This is part paved and part paths which can be muddy in places in poor weather. The walk should take about 2 hours.

We are taking Quorn Cross as our starting point and we set off along Meeting Street and Chaveney Road. This first half mile is of historic interest. Meeting Street once part of the ancient salt road that linked the Midlands with the east coast. Two typical architectural features to look out for as you walk around the older parts of the village are walls built of granite, from the nearby quarry (Buddon Wood Quarry opened in 1821) and roofs with diminishing courses of Swithland slates (smaller slates higher up the roof). This walk takes us round the quarry and could be said to go round the upside-down hill. Buddon Hill as it was is now one of the biggest holes in the ground in Europe.

Beyond the award-winning Memorial Garden and the flood barrier to the left as we start, flows Buddon Brook, whose course we will be following all the way upstream to Swithland Reservoir. Walk about half a mile and then turn left and joining the public right of way at the footpath sign just past Elms Drive.

Soon after turning left, we pass the site of the former Chaveney's Water Mill (also called Quorn Water Mill, now Mill Farm). From the 16<sup>th</sup> to the 19<sup>th</sup> century when Swithland Reservoir was built, a mill race from the brook was the motive power for this corn mill; the actual site of the old millwheel is not visible from the public footpath. Just after we enter the brookside path itself, you can see the remains of an ancient moated site beyond the far bank. This was probably the site of a hunting lodge for Quorndon Park, the former medieval deer park that existed from at least 1139 and extended over 360 acres that included Buddon Wood and the land now covered by Swithland Reservoir – under which lies the site of another lodge.

Make the most of this half-mile section of the walk alongside the alder-fringed Buddon Brook, as there's plenty of wildlife about.

After walking parallel to the Great Central Railway and turning left at Rabbit Bridge we descend to Swithland Reservoir. This was created between 1894 and 1896 by damming Buddon Brook and forms a combined system with Cropston Reservoir further upstream. The elegant architecture and landscaping of the Victorian water treatment works to the left certainly offer a contrast with equivalent schemes today. The reservoir itself supports a wealth of bird life which abounds in this area, as do wild flowers and the insects etc. which rely on them. The jewel in the crown is this reservoir, where NatureSpot ([www.naturespot.org.uk](http://www.naturespot.org.uk)) have records of 233 species. Wildfowl includes Greylag, Pink-footed and Canada Geese, Tufted and Mandarin Ducks, Goldeneye, Wigeon, Teal, Gadwall, Pochard, Shoveler, Smew, Goosander, Scaup and Pintail. Less common bird species include Garganey, Common Sandpiper, Little Ringed Plover, Dunlin, Common Scoter, Cormorants, Little and Great White Egrets, Great crested, Black-necked and Little Grebes. Peregrines can sometimes be seen in Buddon Wood.

After crossing the controlled outlet to Buddon Brook and turning onto the eastern shore of the reservoir, we begin to skirt Buddon Wood Quarry, out of sight but plunging down cliffs hundreds of feet deep beyond the remaining woods to our left. The rocks of Charnwood are among the oldest in Britain and an important source of hard rock. Systematic quarrying began here in the late 1700s. Just before Buddon Hill became a quarry, large amounts of Iron Age pottery and quern-stones were found on it, offering more evidence that this was the site of a Celtic settlement overlooking the Soar Valley. 'Querns' were hard stones used for grinding corn and Quorndon therefore means 'quern hill'.

After climbing up Kinchley Lane, we turn left onto Wood Lane and then right onto the common at Bond Lane, Mountsorrel. (Alternatively you can take a short-cut back to Quorn by staying on Wood Lane.) Take care as either route carries traffic with limited pavements.

Turning right here at Kinchley Lane takes us on a short deviation of approximately 230 metres to the Mountsorrel and Rothley Community Heritage Centre and Granite's Coffee Shop where refreshments are available.



In springtime the common is alive with golden gorse blossom and the ground is carpeted with wood anemones.

Not far into Bond Lane the road passes over the route of the old branch line from the Great Central Railway at Swithland to the quarry. After bearing left, we see the re-created contours of the formerly quarried Broad Hill, thought to be the site of a 4th-century Roman villa.

The double over-bridge now carries road traffic from the quarry works, while the second, single bridge just beyond carries the mineral conveyor which moves material from the current quarry to the railhead at Barrow, along the route of the former 1860 branch line to the Midland Railway.

For refreshments, turn left before the main road into the Stonehurst Family Farm and fascinating largely motors Museum.

Follow the main road back to your start.



*Thanks are due to Quorn Parish Council for some content*



# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 17 - NANPANTAN

This is a challenging walk and requires some preparation. You need to be fit, have some walking experience in hilly and rocky terrains, have the correct shoes and get your timing right. In return you will be rewarded with the most spectacular view of the Forest. The route passes through a boggy area that is wet most of the year and in winter requires waterproof boots. It also uses a permissive path that is closed at dusk. The 3 ½ miles will take approximately 2 hours and takes you through the Outwoods to Buck Hill, thought by many to be one of the finest walks in Charnwood Forest Regional Park.

Start from Nanpantan Sports Ground car park on Watermead Lane, off Nanpantan Road in Loughborough at SK517175, post code LE11 3TN. From the car park entrance climb the earth bank and take the farm track left alongside the next three fields. At the private/footpath sign turn right and follow the hedge line up to The Outwoods on the skyline.

*The Outwoods are ancient woodlands that have been recorded for over 500 years. It has rare rock formations and is a Site of Special Scientific Interest.*

Pass through the gate on the edge of the woods and keep right on the main path for a few yards until there is a right turn onto a minor footpath, by the notice board. This footpath takes you through a newer plantation, Jubilee Woods, but you will come back to The Outwoods later on the walk.

Parts of the path cross a boggy area with splendid sharp green mosses and lichen. Where the path reaches a T junction; just before a field, turn left and continue to the opening to the road at a double gateway. Cross Woodhouse Lane with care and take the permissive path offset to your right.

The path skirts woodland, beside a dry stone wall which is a typical feature of the Charnwood Forest. At the gate, go left across the field towards the high mound ahead that is Buck Hill. Go through the gate into the woodland area and find your way up over the rocks to the top.

Stay and catch your breath after the steep climb and take in the wonderful views around the Forest. Summer and Winter the views are good although very different. Continue over the hill and descending the other side and at the bottom of the slope you go over another stone wall and the footpath divides. Take the route left that leads you back to Woodhouse Lane.

Turn right there and make use of the wide grass verge to continue along the roadside for 200yds until you reach The Outwoods car park.



Cross the road into the car park where you will find a new visitor centre (due to open late 2021) and toilets. Cross the car park to the wooden fence surrounding a conservation area and go round to the right keeping the fence on your left) and going downhill to meet another path. Continue to follow the fence around to the left until you reach an open area. Here the path bends right around the open area and the charcoal kiln. Go past and turn right. The path runs along a stream bank. Continue along this route until you get back to the gate at the entrance you arrived at earlier on the walk.

On the way are seats where you can pause to see the extensive view over Loughborough and the Soar Valley, with the wolds of East Leicestershire behind. There are also impressive rocky outcrops soaring above the route.

Through the gate and back down the fields to the farm track. Left along the track a short way to a footpath signpost to the right.

At this junction there is a gateway entrance into the Sports Ground and a shortcut back to the car park.





# CHARNWOOD FOREST REGIONAL PARK

## WALK 18 - MARKFIELD -

### CHITTERMAN HILLS

This is a challenging walk and you need to be fit, and have some walking and map reading experience. It is hilly and while it includes a lot of country lanes there are some navigational challenges. You must have the correct shoes but in return you will be rewarded with the most spectacular buildings in the Forest

It can be done in two hours but it is better to make at least a half day of it and stop to enjoy the delights along the route.

Starting from Markfield and Leicester Road, take the path to the right as you go downhill which passes under the A50. Keep left and go up the hill to reach Lea Lane. Turn right here and on your left you will see the entrance to Stoneywell, a National Trust Property (see note 1).

Along your route is one of the cluster of houses built by the same arts and crafts devotee Ernest Gimson.



Keep past the property and follow Lea Lane round to the left till it meets Ulverscroft Lane where you go left.

This in turn meets Priory Lane where you will eventually go to the left.

Straight in front of you though, a track carries on and reaches the historic Ulverscroft Priory, private but visible from the track (see note 2)

Retrace your steps to the Priory Lane and go right following it across Lea Lane and downhill.

Eventually you will see a drive into Ulverscroft Wood and Manor.

The Manor is an educational and activity facility owned and managed by the Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation (<https://shuttlewood-clarke.org/>). During opening hours, the woods are open for all unless there is a private party on site. There is a network of waymarked paths and information boards so it is worth a quick wander before proceeding long Priory Lane.

After a few yards, you will then see a surfaced track going off uphill to your right. Go up this steep hill (there is a bench half way up!) and you reach Ulverscroft Grange (see note 3) with a tearoom affording one of the best views in the area. It also has a remarkable model train layout though this is only open occasionally.

When you have recharged your batteries, carry on through the grounds to come out on Whitwick Road which you follow back to Markfield (turn left).



**Care is needed on this busy road as there is no pavement.**

*Note 1 – Stoneywell Cottage (National Trust)*

*This property is not actually visible from the road but is one of a cluster of properties designed by Ernest Gimson. The family were very prominent in the Leicester Secular Society. It was following one of their meetings, at which William Morris had spoken, that 19-year old Ernest met and greatly impressed Morris. It was Morris that steered Gimson to his subsequent career.*

*Ernest decided to move to London to continue his architectural training, whilst his brother, Sydney, followed their father into the family business. However, he returned regularly to Leicester, even after his move to the Cotswolds in 1893.*

*It was there, at Sapperton, that he collaborated a great deal with the Bransley brothers, who, like him, designed and made some of the furniture at Stoneywell Cottage.*

*As well as producing furniture, he continued his architectural work, including, of course, designing Stoneywell for his brother in 1898.*

*Stoneywell is currently closed to visitors because of the pandemic. In normal times, you must pre-book. There is a tearoom and shop on site. Parking is only available to pre-booked visitors to the house and is located on Whitcroft's Lane.*

*Note 2 – Ulverscroft Priory (private)*

*The Priory was founded as an Augustinian Priory in 1174, a successor to an earlier hermitage. The 13<sup>th</sup> and 14<sup>th</sup> century buildings are built from local stone. Ruins of the priory church and tower remain. The prior's lodging and refectory are incorporated into the farmhouse constructed on site. The priory's door was reused at Thornton Church. The site was purchased in 1927 by Sir William Lindsay Everard, preserving the decaying ruins from total destruction.*





*Note 3 – Ulverscroft Manor and Ulverscroft Grange (Shuttlewood Clarke Foundation)*

*The amazing model railway was the brain child of the founder of Shuttlewood Clarke, the late David Clarke. Clarke was a successful racing driver gracing Silverstone, Goodwood, Le Mans and the Monte Carlo Rally.*

*Construction of the railway was started in 1977, having been initially situated in a factory drawing office in Mountsorrel. It was designed from the outset to be a technical exercise in the operation of points and signals based upon the Great Western Railway of the 1930's. Both colour light and semaphore signals are represented as realistically as possible, including signals and points operated by mechanical interlocked levers and track circuiting in a near prototypical manner. It first operated successfully from about 1983.*

*The layout, built to a scale of 4mm to 1ft, has been radio controlled from the outset with radio gear fitted along with batteries in the rolling stock behind each locomotive. This, in itself, is quite a unique feature especially for the time of its inception.*

***In normal times, it is well worth timing and pre-booking a visit to this layout or Stoneywell Cottage to be part of this walk around the historic properties.***