



The LEICESTERSHIRE ROUND



The Leicestershire Round

A walking tour of 100 miles

The Leicestershire Round and this guide would not exist without members of the Leicestershire Footpath Association who were inspired to create the walk to celebrate the Association's centenary in 1987. To those who produced the earlier guides and to current members who help maintain and promote the walk we are most grateful. With so many involved over the years there will be no individuals named.

Thanks to those outside LFA who have allowed use of their pictures in this guide, Jean Harrison, Gordon Crook and members of the Countesthorpe U3A Photographic Group.

We are in debt to Leicestershire County Council for their continued support for the Leicestershire Round on the ground and with past publications.

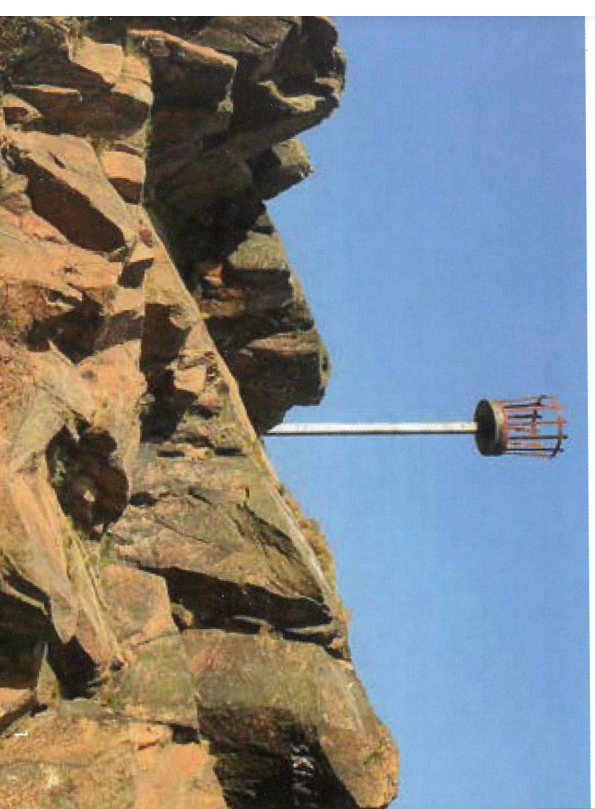
To Carol and Sue at Words and Graphics for their patience and co-operation.

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INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the third guide to The Leicestershire Round. This long distance walk encircling Leicestershire was devised by members of the Leicestershire Footpath Association (LFA) to mark the centenary of their organisation in 1987. One hundred miles mark one hundred years.

The route takes in some of the highlights of Leicestershire, Charnwood Forest, Bradgate Park, Burrough Hill Iron Age Fort, Foxton Locks, Burbage Common and Bosworth Battlefield Centre. It visits many pretty villages, varied countryside and passes through a part of the National Forest.

While you may be inspired to take on the challenge of the full distance, the walk can be broken down into attractive and interesting day walks. There is also the option to make circular walks using a part of the route.

The Round is on the doorstep of a large urban population including Leicester, Loughborough, Melton Mowbray, Market Harborough, Hinckley and Coalville. The section from Barwell to Frisby on the Wreake (40 miles) is especially easy to access by bus.

The route has always had the support of Leicestershire County Council (LCC) and is well maintained by them with the installation of gates, yellow topped posts and ditch crossings. The route is shown as a Recreational Route on Ordnance Survey (OS) maps. Distinctive waymarking is now carried out by wardens, coordinated by the LFA. All this aids navigation allowing you to enjoy the surroundings. This guide also offers information about interest along the way.

The first guide did not reach the top of Langton Caudle. That was added in the 1996 guide. This guide makes a few more changes for safety and enjoyment but, beware, the footpath network is ever changing so check for updates online.

THE LEICESTERSHIRE ROUND

The 100 mile route takes you in a clockwise direction around the county of Leicestershire, through a wide variety of scenery from the rugged rocky area of Charnwood, through the wide river valleys of the Wreake and the Soar up to the high and windy ridges of East Leicestershire and Rutland. We cross the land where the Iron Age people chose to build their hill fort at Burrough Hill and then descend to lower slopes where many small streams feed the rich clay arable fields. Our path goes over the low hills of the Langtons with views over the rich pastures of the wide Welland valley.

We gradually swing west to reach Foxton's famous staircase of locks before moving uphill over to wooded hills of Gumley and Saddington, crossing the south of the county to High Cross, the Roman centre of England, where Watling Street crosses the Fosse Way. From here the old Fosse Way makes for pleasant, quiet walking. Going northwards towards Bosworth Field you join the Ashby canal for a short distance and pass through the historic market town of Bosworth and the village of Shackerstone with its impressive 12th century castle mound. From there the land once more rises and you pass over former mining country, now part of the National Forest, to reach the outskirts of Charnwood passing Thornton Reservoir and thence back to Newtown Linford where the walk begins and ends.

HISTORY OF THE GUIDES

This is a totally rewritten guide and is published thirty years after the original launch. Although the walk was created to celebrate the centenary in 1987, the work was approached with such enthusiasm that the first part of the guide appeared in 1981. That guide was produced by LFA members in three small brown covered booklets starting at Burrough Hill, Foxton Locks and Market Bosworth. Each sold at just £0.75p. They were published by the Leicestershire Libraries Service, with illustrations by Jean Harrison and hand drawn maps. Some of the sketches have been reproduced in this guide.

The second guide of 1996 with a revised re-print in 2011 was produced in house by Leicestershire County Council. It covered the whole route in a single pocket sized book. It had more local interest information but still had hand drawn maps and sketches.

It has been interesting to note changes along the way. Most noticeable has been the number of church towers and spires now hidden from view by trees, no longer of use to us as navigational aids. Planting in the National Forest has made huge changes with field boundaries and open views lost, replaced by well-defined paths and wildlife. Fences to be climbed have gone, so have many stiles replaced by easy access gates. The network of paths will continue to change so please note this guide can only be correct at the time of writing.

WALKING THE LEICESTERSHIRE ROUND

The ten sections described in the guide are based on the belief that a long distance Rambler can comfortably manage on average ten miles in a day. A group of say four or five walkers could take two cars to cover each section. Some B&B and camping is mentioned in the text but a search of the web will offer the current accommodation.

The sections are then subdivided into village hops so that you could take your time to explore further. Elsewhere there are circular walks available if you need to return to your car.

The Leicestershire Round can be accessed via public transport detail of which can be found on the Leicestershire Footpath Association website at <https://leicestershirefootpaths.files.wordpress.com/2020/08/leicestershire-round-by-bus.pdf>

The maps are at a scale of 1:25,000 from Ordnance Survey data. North is always top so as you walk around the circle the direction of travel along the maps can be left to right, top to bottom, right to left or bottom to top. Follow the arrows on the red highlight.

Although we have included some village services in the guide you should check they are still open and when they are open should you plan to use them. A better bet is to take a packed lunch and in hot weather plenty of liquid.

We have received reports of hardy folk tackling the Round in a single walk/jog. So far we haven't heard that it has been achieved within 24 hours. That could be your honour.

This guide and signs on the ground should make your walk straightforward but care is needed perhaps through villages, where waymarking is absent and across large arable fields. By law a path across ploughed land should be kept clear and there has been much improvement in recent years. If you find a problem along the way please bring it to the attention of either Leicestershire County Council or LFA. Both have contact details online. (Note: A short section of the route, Launde to Belton, is now in Rutland. LCC are not responsible here so pass your concerns to LFA.)

However you choose to approach the Leicestershire Round we invite you to follow the Country Code and enjoy what the countryside of Middle England has to offer.

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MOUNTSORREL - COSSINGTON

(2 1/2 miles)

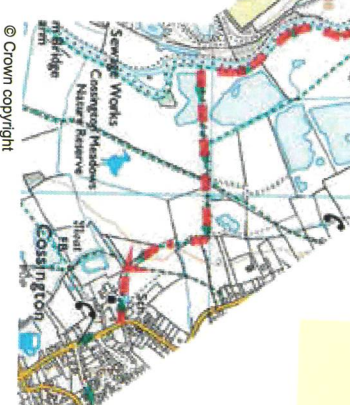
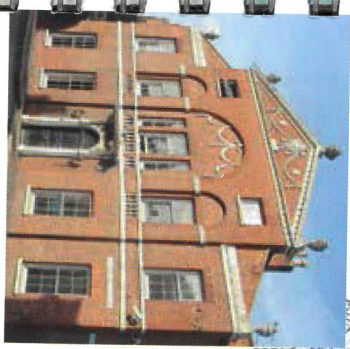
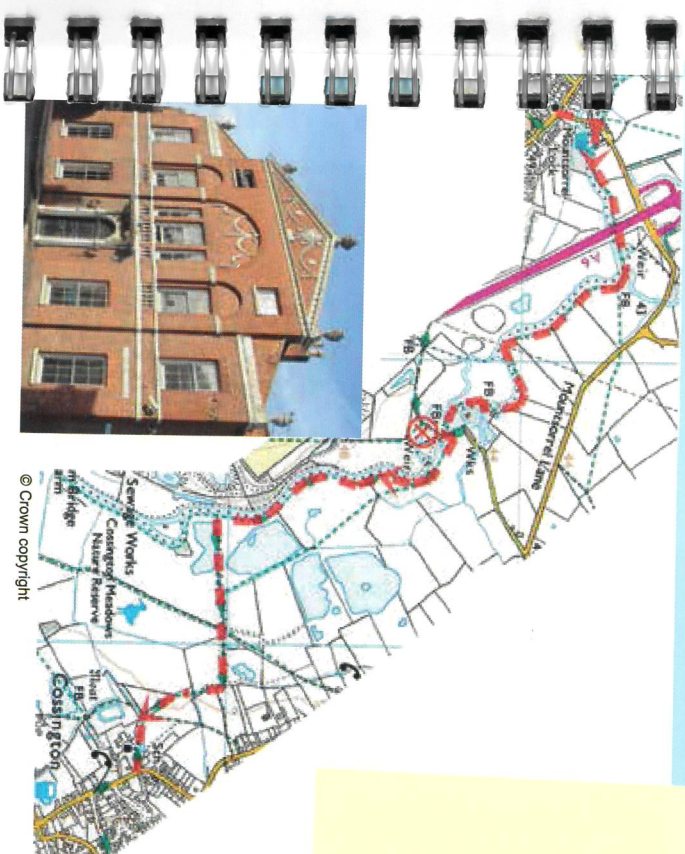
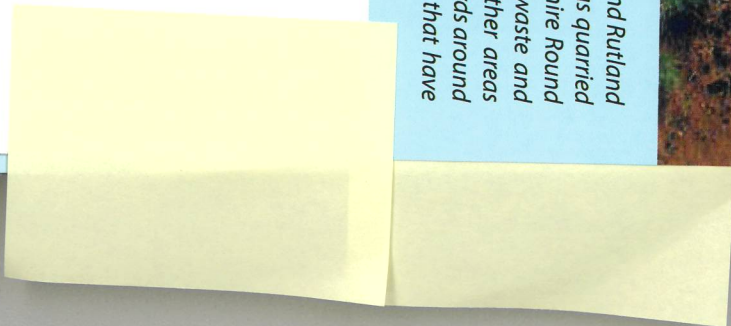
Leaving Mountsorrel the route has been amended from earlier guides. The new route is a more pleasant and easier alternative.

From the Buttercross in the centre of Mountsorrel go north along Market Place then, opposite St Peters Church, turn right onto Sibley Road. At The Waterside Inn turn right past the lock on your right and follow the navigable River Soar along the towpath. This passes under the A6 bypass and over a branch of the river on a footbridge. A further footbridge takes the path over the main river and along the other bank. The Sibley Marina and Mill building are on the opposite bank.

Turn sharp left up the ramp and pass over the footbridge at the tail of the lock (K:SK59260 14740) Here you meet the original route. Cross another bridge with the weir on your right then, after a gate, turn sharp right to walk close to the canalised River Soar on your right for about half a mile. The path enters Cossington Meadows.



Cossington Meadow is managed by the Leicestershire and Rutland Wildlife Trust. The area occupied by the nature reserve was quarried for gravel during the 1980s and 90s while the Leicestershire Round was being devised. The pits were then filled with inert waste and some parts covered with deep holes to form lakes. Interpretation boards around the site offer information about the plants and animals that have colonised the reserve.

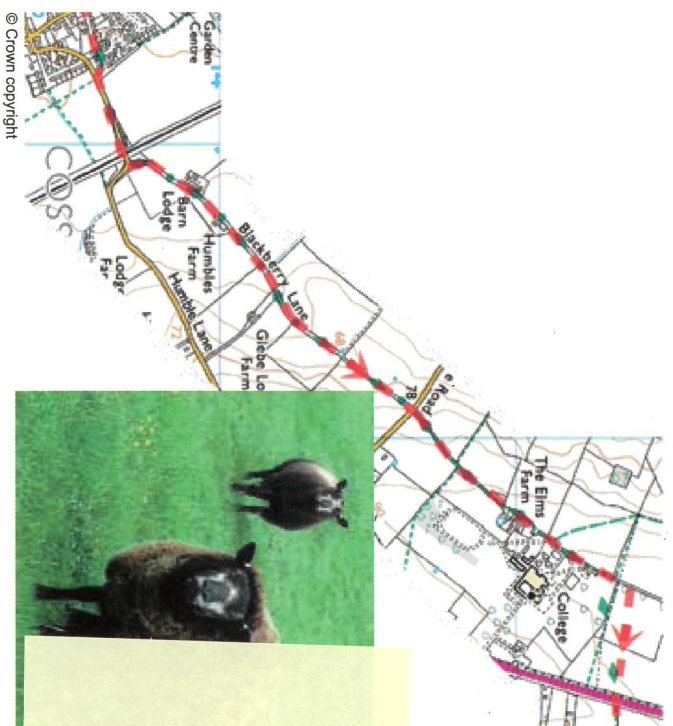


COSSINGTON - REARSBY

(4 miles)

Continue along the river bank to a field boundary hedge and yellow post; here turn left to follow the hedge on your left. Continue in this direction, crossing other waymarked paths until reaching the boundary of the reserve where you must bear right to exit the reserve. Continue close to the stream on your left and then along the enclosed track. Turn left at the gate and enter into a field with a hedge on your right to reach the memorial cross on the main street of Cossington. The church is hidden by trees on your right.

COSSINGTON almost certainly has Saxon origins, the name being derived from the Saxon Chief Coss or Cussa. Lord Kitchener's father lived at the Manor House and is buried here. Lady Isobel Barnett, an early television personality, lived in the village. Much of the village along Main Street was designated a Conservation Area in 1975 hence it has some pleasant buildings. The Royal Oak is on Main Street just beyond our turning at Bennett's Lane.



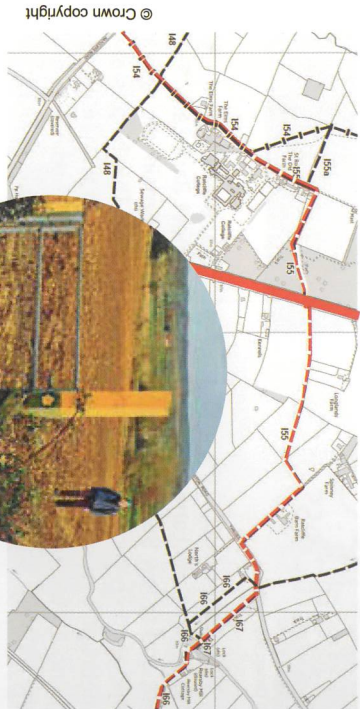
Turn right to follow the main street of Cossington, then turn left along Bennetts Lane. This swings right to meet Back Lane. Turn left and follow Back Lane uphill over the busy main line railway bridge, then turn left along Blackberry Lane. This begins as a metalled road and continues as a green lane, past farm buildings, going rather muddily uphill to meet the main road. Cross over the Ratcliffe Road to continue in the same direction along the metalled drive to Elms Farm.

RATCLIFFE COLLEGE, a co-ed Catholic public school was founded in 1847. The original Victorian Gothic buildings were designed by Augustus Welby Pugin. Past pupils include American actor Patrick McGoohan who co-created and starred in 'The Prisoner'.

From this lane there are fine views back towards Mountsorrel, across the Soar Valley and over to Charnwood. Pass a grand Holme Oak (*Quercus ilex* – the evergreen oak) and the farm buildings on

your right. A gate leads back into the college grounds. Continue along the drive to the last house on the right 'Ambrose House' then turn right.

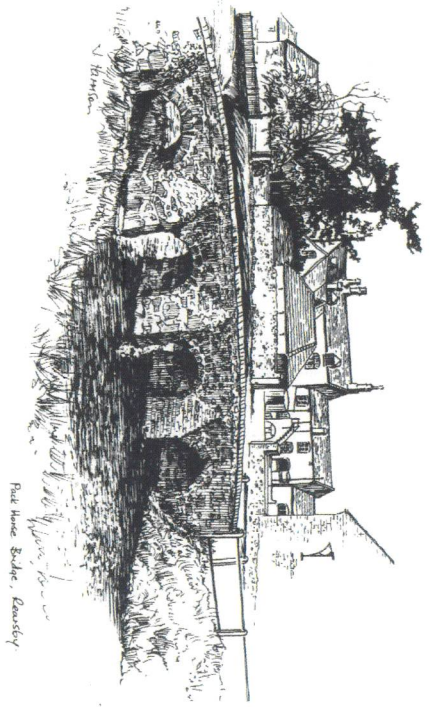
Cross the playing fields to the waymarked crossing in the hedge bearing slightly to your left. Continue diagonally over the next field now planted with young trees and keep in the same direction to reach the A46 Fosse Way. Cross very carefully going through the gap in the barrier of the central reservation to the waymark on the far side of the road slightly to your left. This involves a short walk along the verge towards oncoming traffic. Enter the field by the gate and walk downhill close to the hedge on your left. From a gate and footbridge in the corner a view of the Wreake valley is spread out in front of you. Rearsby lies ahead. Continue in the same direction across the ploughed field to the bottom left corner by a big ash tree. Turn left to reach Spinney Farm drive. Turn right to follow this tree lined tarmac farm drive. Meet the Thrussington Road and go round a sharp bend and take the second footpath on the right to cross the field to join the drive to Rearsby Mill. Pass a beautiful pond on your right and continue straight ahead, keeping the mill house on your left, then swing left following the drive. Cross the bridge and take the gate into the field on the right before reaching 'Rearsby Mill Cottage'.



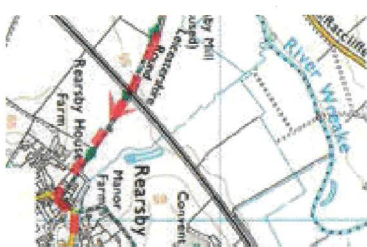
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Many of the water mills we pass on the route are built on sites of previous mills constructed before the Norman Conquest and named in the Domesday Book.



The path now moves away from the river. Another gate leads to a wide concrete bridge. Follow the green hedged lane which leads over the railway (a busy little line, which will get busier, so take care). The elegant slim



church tower of Rearsby comes into view over to the left. Pass a children's play park on your right. As the track bends left a narrow footpath provides the link to the road, or continue along the track to join Mill Road. Turn left, which leads into Brookside, Rearsby. Pass Manor Farm on your left and walk beside the stream. Pass various bridges finally arriving at a ford and the attractive granite packhorse bridge. The main part of the village lies to your right, on the main road.