

Ratby Parish Walks

Ratby is located just within the boundary of the National Forest, north west of Leicester. The village is easily accessible by road, from the south via the M1 junction 21a or via Groby to the north.

Parking: is available at the library on Main Street

Walk 1:

5 kms (3 miles), allow 1.5 hours, relatively flat surfaces

The walk begins at the Ratby Memorial. Turn right along Burroughs Road. On your right you will see "The Plough Inn".

Originally a farm, an inventory in the County Records for 1695, shows that ale was already being brewed here.

Continue to the top of the first slope then leave the road left and follow the enclosed path to a field.

A. Turn diagonally right across two fields. The path then turns left to a narrow footbridge leading onto the farm track.

If you have time to linger, you might spot watercress in the brook. In the spring there are lilac-pink flowers of Lady's Smock. Across to the left on the field slope you can see the ridge and furrows of the ancient strip field system.

Turn right and follow the track until it dips to the right. At this point carry straight ahead and climb the bank to a bridlegate.

B. Go through the gate and continue with the hedge on your right.

In the field across to the right is the ancient Bury Camp. This is an Iron Age Fort with a single entrance, which dates from around 100 BC. Evidence from the site indicates continuity of settlement here from as early as 10,000 years ago, the early postglacial era, through to the Bronze, Roman and Saxon periods. (There is no public access to the site).

Head to the woodland. The first bit of the wood has examples of old coppice, probably dating from the 18th century. Then you emerge into a newly planted woodland.

Continue with the ditch on your right and through a gate to reach a bridleway junction.

Turn right over the bridge and the path skirts the edge of Ratby Burroughs.

The path continues along the top of the bank until you reach a farm track that borders the woodland.

This bank and the adjacent ditch are remnants of a medieval deer enclosure.

To the left you can see the farm buildings of Old Hays Farm. The present farmhouse dates from 1773, but the moat and original farmstead dates from the late 13th Century and are a Class 1 Scheduled Monument, with the earliest reference being 1280.

Tradition has it that the Turkey Oak in the farmyard was brought over from the Mediterranean at the time of the Crusades.

C. At the junction with the farm track turn right and follow the track with the Burroughs Wood on your right.

D. Cross a ford via a wooden bridge and uphill again towards the village. You will arrive back in the village centre along the Burroughs Road, passing The Plough Inn once more.

Walk 2:

7.5kms (4.5 miles), allow 2.5 hours, gently undulating through open countryside, woodland and quiet country lanes.

This walk follows the same route as Walk 1 until the junction with the farm track at Old Hays - Point C

Instead of turning right here, continue straight on along the edge of the wood. At the second gate turn left and follow the footpath with the hedge on your right.

1. After 200m take a path to the right, over a stile and across three fields towards Bondman Hays Farm.

50m after joining the track take the stile to the left and head diagonally left to the wood. At the field edge turn right and walk with the wood on your left. The path now descends the hill and crosses Slate Brook.

Ahead is the woodland at Whittington Rough. The farmland here was one of the first areas of the ancient woodland to be cleared, probably in the 11th century, a time of great expansion in the rural economy. Here too was the village of Whittington, which fell into ruin following the Black Death.

2. With the pond on your right walk to the field corner, then turn right towards the stables. Continue with the hedge on your left, then just past the stable block go over the bridge to the track, and left, past the nursery. As the track turns to the left, take the path straight on, with the hedge and stream to the left.

3. Turn right over the stile at the woodland corner, keeping the wood to your right for approx. 100 metres. Then turn diagonally left across the field to a stile in Markfield Road.

4. Do not cross the road, but turn right. Taking extreme care on this short stretch of road. After 200 metres turn right into Cow Lane.

5. Take the track to the left of the first house. At the end of the straight section of track, don't follow it around to the right, but turn left onto the footpath, keeping the hedge on your left. At the stile the path turns to the left and then immediately right between bushes and trees. A footbridge crosses a ditch to lead into a newly planted woodland. Follow the widely cut ride, with the ditch on your right.

In spring Lady's Smock grows in the ditch, and in the summer Yellow Trefoil and creamy flowers of Meadowsweet.

6. Once at the track, follow this straight ahead for 50m and where it heads left continue straight on to meet Burroughs Road. Turn left, back towards the village, then left at Main Street to return to the library and car park.

Useful Information:

Buses: Service 27 Mon - Sat, Service 218 Sun/Bank Hols, 254, and 109.
Please confirm with Traveline (0870 608 2 608) before you travel

Refreshments: shops and public houses
in Ratby.

Other walks in the area: Groby Parish Walks, Coal Tips to Country Parks (available from the National Forest)

It is advisable to wear suitable footwear when walking.

Stout shoes or walking boots are recommended.

Some stretches of the route follow minor country roads. Beware of traffic approaching from both directions. If possible stay on the verge, if not walk in single file on the right hand side of the road.

Enjoy the walks, whilst observing the Countryside Code.

Walking - Be fit and well

The benefits of walking regularly include; reduced risk of heart disease, stroke, bowel cancer, breast cancer, osteoporosis and obesity. In addition, many people feel better in themselves. Regular exercise is thought to help ease stress, anxiety and mild depression.