

The Two Towns Trail

Market Harborough to Melton Mowbray, or vice versa

In memory of Elizabeth (1937 – 2024), who walked all our miles, and Dotty the rescued Jack Russell (2010 – 2023), who experienced it all in her own way.

"Am in Market Harborough. Where ought I to be?" – G. K. Chesterton: telegram to his wife.

Some final comments, before an Introduction

This is our fifth, and our last, long distance walk designed for public consumption, and it seems fitting to offer some observations about our activities since we began with *The Uppingham Round*, in 2010. Since then we have mapped and walked five routes totalling around 300 miles in length. These are *The Uppingham Round*, *The Melton Round*, *The Market Harborough Round*, *The Richard the Third Trail*, and this, *The Two Towns Trail*.

In the decades of walking in Leicestershire, Northamptonshire, Rutland, and the Soke of Peterborough (with the odd foray into south east Nottinghamshire), our love of these landscapes has deepened. None is really spectacular, though they all have long views; all are worth getting to know. The fact that our walks intersect with each other, as well as some of the long distance routes appearing on Ordnance Survey maps, such as *The Rutland Round*, *The Leicestershire Round* and the *Jurassic Way*, is not accidental. Our primary aim was to produce a kind of grid: we simply wanted to alert walkers to the beauties of the area by creating a rich network of footpaths, bridleways, green lanes, and sometimes country roads, which pass through the aforementioned regions. Aside from the Leicester section of *The Richard the Third Trail*, our walks are inevitably focused on open countryside and villages, and in the case of *The Two Towns Trail*, the towns of Market Harborough and Melton Mowbray, as origins and destinations.

As we progressed with our walks we became ever more conscious of travelling through history. Every footpath, every village, every field and every road have histories worth recording, and we are aware that our Directions could be greatly expanded in this respect. But this would produce enormously long and detailed documents, requiring extensive research, citing suitably authoritative sources. The opportunities here are virtually limitless: we've spoken with numerous individuals, historical societies, librarians and other helpful agencies, amassing an extensive file of information. What we've flagged up is largely arbitrary, in some cases via supplementary documents, intended as tasters for readers' own further researches.

On the subject of history, while mapping *The Two Towns Trail* we once again met the trackbeds of our old friend The London and North Western Railway. (In places this was a joint line with the Great Northern; we've used the acronym *LNWR* for convenience.) Some walkers may not be too interested in this aspect of their journey. But the advent and expansion of the railways had such an impact on social organisation that what's left, to include preserved lines (such as the *Great Central Railway* between Leicester and Loughborough, soon to be expanded to the outskirts of Nottingham – the GCR's former trackbed becomes part of our exit from Leicester on *The Richard the Third Trail*), forms an index of industrialisation and connectivity which cannot be ignored as part of the annals of modernity. Walking on old trackbeds (such as the Brampton Valley Way, part of our *Market Harborough Round*) exercises the imagination, and sometimes leaves considerable evidence of what was once a key part of local and national mobility. The converted station buildings at Lowesby on *The Two Towns Trail* are a very good example. Since your authors are old enough to remember

the days of steam-hauled trains, walking from Tilton on the Hill, via Lowesby, to Twyford was both nostalgic and informative – note also the viaduct of the *LNWR* at John O’Gaunt, which is clearly visible from our route between the B6047 (another of our old friends) and Twyford.

All our walks were designed and notated, step by step, as debates about how to respond to climate change, global warming and the crisis in biodiversity have intensified. Walking through the landscape puts us in touch with the good earth; walking through a field, we are in direct contact with humanity’s basic resource for survival: the very ground of being. We cannot get closer to the substrate of civilisation. Anyone who thinks that walking is just another form of exercise, or a slow and superseded form of long distance locomotion, should think again. This is not the place to discuss the contradictions involved in walking our routes when private transport is inevitably involved. (Of necessity, we used two cars for mapping point to point stages.) If the remains of the *LNWR* trackbeds are ‘anxious’ signs of industrial progress, walking has now become an index of what has been destroyed, as well as what remains for us to protect. To map the past is to map the present: there are always lessons to be learned.

Our walkers and mappers:

Elizabeth Bacon spent her working life in the NHS as an orthoptist. She was, until her final year, an active part of the *Leicestershire and Rutland Gardens Trust*.

David and Sue Wragg worked as university lecturers before retirement.

Introduction

This walk intersects with the following long distance routes:

The Leicestershire Round

The Market Harborough Round (our own)

The Uppingham Round (our own)

Total distance 31 miles.

Ordnance Survey Maps: *Landranger* 141 & 129, or relevant *Explorer* series for fine detail.

This is our fifth long distance walk, though it’s the shortest among those including ***The Uppingham Round***, ***The Melton Round***, ***The Market Harborough Round***, and ***The Richard the Third Trail***, all of which have been hosted with downloadable documentation on Leicestershire County Council’s website, and the excellent *Long Distance Walkers Association*: <https://www.ldwa.org.uk>.

The *Trail* begins and ends beside water; from the Grand Union Canal to the Rivers Wreake and Eye (and vice versa depending on where you begin), passing through what we hope walkers will find to be some delightful east Leicestershire countryside. As with our previous routes, we’ve included field by field directions, photographs, and some information about places of interest, in the present case to include the two market towns. And as with our previous routes, both experienced and less experienced walkers should be able to cover the ground easily enough, although a pair of robust walking boots is always advisable.

All paths were passable when we mapped the route in 2017; any problems, which are almost bound to crop up from time to time (blockages, broken stiles, etc.), should be addressed to **Leicestershire County Council**, using their website reporting facilities.

As with previous routes, we have avoided all roads wherever possible, though there are one or two short stretches where footpath locations make it necessary to tread the tarmac (or the verge). One or two people have asked us to indicate good pubs along the route, but we have desisted, on the grounds that pubs change hands, or even close down, and quality cannot be guaranteed. Some villages (Stonton Wyville, Rolleston, Skeffington, Lowesby) do not have public houses.

Our first section proceeds from Market Harborough to Melton Mowbray. We've then turned round to provide reverse directions for those walking the other way. We have not repeated photographs in each section, so please refer to them all as you progress from MH or MM.

Let's begin...

Union Wharf, Market Harborough to East Langton: 5 miles

The first part of the walk along the Grand Union Canal towpath and through fields to East Langton covers approximately five miles. For anyone wishing to walk a shorter distance there is parking along the road from the B6047 to Great Bowden. Leave the towpath at bridge no 10, having used the grass verge on the Great Bowden side for parking.



A view of Union Wharf, Market Harborough, December 2017.

Union Wharf lies along the main road through Market Harborough, north of the town centre towards Leicester. Pass beyond the chicane with one way traffic and continue past the police station to find the Union Wharf access road on the left hand side. The area is a mixture of publically accessible and private buildings. As you swing right around the bend take the passage on your left between the two buildings to arrive at the wharf area itself. You should now be on the left of the pool. Proceed around the marina to take the towpath of the Grand Union Canal, on the far side. Your very attractive route is now straightforward, all the way to Gallows Hill Bridge (no. 8) which takes the canal under the B6047 for the second time.



Narrow boat moored just beyond Union Wharf on the Grand Union Canal, Market Harborough arm, on an early November day, 2017.

The canal loops round the 'upmarket' estate called 'The Woodlands', where the gardens of the properties reach down to the water's edge. Further along you will change sides of the canal by crossing bridge no. 18. (The numbering of these bridges is not consecutive.) Saunts Bridge is no. 11. The following photograph gives some idea of the visual delights of our route on a fine November morning after clouds and rain had cleared. The towpath was in very good condition and is used daily by walkers and cyclists.



Delightful colours approaching Saunts Bridge on the Grand Union Canal, Market Harborough arm, on the same early November day, 2017.

Bridge no. 10 marks the position of Great Bowden Hall, part of which lies beside the towpath. You may wish to climb up the bank at the next bridge for an outstanding view of north east Northamptonshire and south east Leicestershire. (It looks even better if you cross the first field.) Our route continues along the towpath. In due course we come to the factory premises on the right hand side, just before Gallows Hill Bridge (no. 8), which passes under the B6047 (see the next photograph).

Go under the bridge and turn immediately right up the bank. Cross the B6047, which is a busy main road, with due care. We will now join *The Leicestershire Round* through to Stonton Wyville. Note the signpost on the other side of the road, which directs you into the factory precincts. Enter, but after about 40 yards turn left to find the waymarker which takes you down the slope, past another waymarker. Walk diagonally across the field to locate the next waymarker in the hedge which provides this field's boundary. Our route now proceeds in pretty much a straight line to East Langton.



The Grand Union Canal, Market Harborough arm, at Gallows Bridge (no. 8) at the B6047. It was a humid day in July 2017. The pipe crossing the canal in front of the bridge belongs to the factory which is out of shot behind the hedge on the right. Our route along part of *The Leicestershire Round* passes through the factory precincts.

Carry on past the waymarker in the hedge and then straight across the field, once again through a gap in the hedge, and then proceed with the hedge on your left to the next gap, to continue across the next field. Go through the metal gate and down the bank to cross the Market Harborough bypass (the A6). This is another very busy road and care is needed. Proceed up the steps on the other side, pass through the metal gate and continue across the field to the next waymarker. Once again, go through the gap in the hedge and carry straight on towards the trees and the next waymarker, up ahead. Cross two stiles to cross the stream (a tiddly tributary of the River Welland) and pass through the trees. Cross the stile and carry straight on to the far hedge. Go through the metal gate and forge ahead to pass under the railway line. (This is the main line coming 'up' (in railway parlance) from the North, through Leicester to Market Harborough, eventually terminating at London St. Pancras.) Exit the next field in the left hand corner by crossing the bridge over another tributary of the Welland, and continue up the next field with the hedge on your right. Pass through two metal gates a few yards in from the right hand corner of this field. Cross the next field to find another two metal gates, which let you through the hedge. Carry on ahead to cross the new field, go through the metal gate, thus to cross the final field. You will emerge onto the country lane, just outside East Langton.

There are five Langtons in this part of Leicestershire: Church Langton, East Langton, Thorpe Langton, Tur Langton, and West Langton. Some information about these villages can be found here:

www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol5/pp193-213

We only pass through East Langton and Thorpe Langton. The former has an attractive cricket ground; along with that at Ashby Folville (through which our route passes) it is widely considered to be an outstanding example of its kind in Leicestershire, though with a small playing area it encourages plenty of boundaries!

Of the five villages, only Church Langton and Tur Langton have churches, the latter a Victorian building of 1866 by Joseph Goddard of Leicester. Church Langton's associations with The Rev. William Hanbury must be mentioned. Some details can be found here:

https://waymarking.com/waymarks/wm123HQ_Rev_William_Hanbury_St_Peter_Church_Langton_Leicestershire

Equally remarkable was the first performance in a parish church of Handel's Messiah on 26 September 1759. Details can be found online, for example:

<https://www.abrahamadcock.com/biography-4-church-langton/>

East Langton to Stonton Wyville, via Thorpe Langton: 3 miles

Turn right and walk along the lane, then turn left before the dead end. As this next lane swings left pass through the metal gate on the right to continue on *The Leicestershire Round*, which should be signed. Pass through the narrow field and through the next metal gate. Your route is now pretty much a straight line to Thorpe Langton, passing through a series of metal gates (mostly in pairs) which can be found simply by crossing each field. You will eventually walk through a field to the left hand corner, where there is a waymarker and another two metal gates. Pass through to turn left, thence to walk between hedges. Just before the house on your left you must turn right through another metal gate to continue towards Thorpe Langton church (otherwise the way ahead is a private road – please keep to *The Leicestershire Round*, which is signed at this point). Pass the church and then turn left into the lane which bears the name 'Near the Church'. This soon becomes 'Church Lane' – the sign is at the bottom, at the T-junction. Turn right here and then almost immediately left down the unnamed 'No Through Road', which becomes a gravel track. Continue until you reach the end, where there is a ford, usually with water flowing. Now:

Option 1 – strongly recommend for the views

This option is sometimes a bit problematic in the first field, which can be boggy in wet conditions, made worse by trampling cattle. It is also rather lumpy in places, so some care is needed to guard against turning an ankle.



**An outstanding east Leicestershire view with a louring sky.
This one was taken from the trig point above Stonton Wyville, July 2017.**

At the ford, take the option on the right of the track and pass into the field. Continue – the field is long and increasingly narrow – until you see the waymarker up the bank to your right, which will guide you through the trees. (There is actually a well-worn path lower down, used by locals, which does the same job.) Carry on through the new field until you reach the far end. Cross the stile and proceed up the slope following the hedge on your left. The view opens out and you will pass the trig point stone on your left. Just beyond, you will find a metal gate at the end of the field. Go through and simply follow the path; the view to your right is outstanding, and the hamlet of Stonton Wyville is visible. Go through the next gate and down the hill to emerge onto the farm track you left earlier (see Option 2 below). Turn right, cross the road, and walk into Stonton Wyville.

Option 2 – the wet weather route

Take left hand option onto a farm track. This leads all the way to the cross roads. (You will see the Option 1 exit to the track on your right, just before the junction). Carry on into Stonton Wyville.

Stonton Wyville to Illston on the Hill: 4 miles



On the Gartree Road beyond Stonton Wyville, July 2017.

Turn right opposite the church (marked 'Unsuitable for Motors') and go through the 'S' bend in this country lane. As the lane then swings left past the barns we leave *The Leicestershire Round*, which carries on across the fields to Glooston. Carry on along the lane to pass through a five bar gate and continue up to the four way signpost you can see up ahead. Turn left here, signposted to Shangton. (The grassy and gravel track ahead through the gates – the route not to take – is part of our *Uppingham Round*, which turns towards Glooston at the signpost.) You are now on the Gartree Road. Do have a look at:

<https://www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/leics/vol5/pp1-5>

Proceed ahead for about a mile and a half until you reach the B6047. Cross with care (the speed limit is usually ignored) and continue down the lane signed 'Field Road to Carlton'. You will walk down a dip and up the other side, and here there is a signpost on the right. The footpath has been diverted through a metal gate: do not continue down the metalled road which leads to private housing. Enter the field and aim at a diagonal for the hedge beyond the hump in this field, where you will find a waymarker with another metal gate. Pass through and aim for the left hand corner of Shangton Holt wood, up ahead. When you get there, pass through a five bar gate with a waymarker and cross the field with the wood on your right. At the end of this field you will emerge onto a country lane (Kibworth Road, which can also have some fast moving traffic at this point). Cross to find the signposted entry into the field opposite, just a little way to your left along the road. Your route from here to the edge of Illston is straightforward: essentially, simply carry on through a number of fields keeping the hedges on your left, passing through gates until you arrive in a field where Illston comes into view.

(NB: That said, we were concerned to note a perverse detour through the hedge/trees, four fields in from the country lane / Kibworth Road. This overgrown area was awkward to negotiate via a stile, a right turn, a slither along and down a muddy bank, then across two plank bridges and into the next field. We say 'perverse' because the field you have just left has a metal gate in its left hand corner which admits to the next field (the one just mentioned) via a short leafy passage. Use your best judgement here: we have recommended to Leicester County Council that something is done about this part of the footpath.)

You will see two waymarkers in this final field before Illston, one in the hedge on your left (ignore), the other in the top right hand corner up ahead. When you reach this waymarker go through the gate to walk parallel to the houses of Illston's Main Street. Continue to pass through two more five bar gates and a farmyard, to arrive onto the country lane which comes down from the B6047. Turn left and locate the signpost opposite the road that leads into the village, and enter the field via the stile. We are now on course for Rolleston.

Illston on the Hill to Skeffington, via Rolleston: 3 miles

Alternatives:

Our assumption is that walkers always prefer field journeys to roads, unless the latter is the only option. At this point we suggest you read ahead in our Directions for the section of the walk between Rolleston and Skeffington. Essentially, there is one part of the field walk which involves crossing a huge field, then down a bank and through undergrowth. The field can be a slog if the ground is wet, or newly ploughed. (We have included a way to avoid this particular area – see the boxed section below. But since it involves two very short walks along land that is not recognised as footpaths, we cannot formally recommend it.)

If you would prefer to walk between Skeffington and Rolleston down a very pleasant gated road (which usually has very little, if any, traffic) proceed as follows:

When reaching the B6047 (see next paragraph) take the Rolleston Estate road as indicated. You can then walk all the way along this road – which, after the Estate, becomes a gated road – to Skeffington, arriving at a T-junction just outside the main part of the village. (Turn right here if you want to view the church.) Turn left and continue until reaching the A47, then proceed as per our Directions to Tilton on the Hill.

Carrying on from Illston then, having entered the field described above at the end of the Stonton Wyville to Illston section:

Aim at a slight right diagonal across the field to find a gap in the hedge up ahead, with a waymarker. Cross the double stile. The waymarker disc points straight ahead, but in fact your exit from the new field is about half way along the hedge over on your left. Cross the stile here and head at a right diagonal to find the waymarker in the next hedge. Go through this hedge via a double stile and wooden bridge, and carry on at a very slight left diagonal aiming for the right hand corner of the trees up ahead. When you get to the trees cross the stile in the hedge and carry on at a very slight left diagonal to pass over the new field's hump. Cross a double stile over the farm access road, then immediately go through the five bar gate to proceed looking at the houses up ahead. Aim gradually for the hedge on your left and you will find a single gate followed by a five bar gate, each with a waymarker. Pass through and carry on with the hedge on your left to pass two more waymarkers. The next waymarker is a little way in from the left hand top corner of the field.

At this point a grand view has opened up to the west and south behind you. Cross the stile, find the gate in the fence a little further along and pass into the curtilage of the house on your left. Go over another stile to emerge on to the B6047. Cross this road with care and turn right onto the grassy verge. Then enter the Rolleston Estate by turning left at the gatehouse. You can now walk the half mile into Rolleston. Take care with dogs here; livestock can usually be found next to, and on, the roadway.

Information about Rolleston's St. John the Baptist church, with photographs, together with a brief history of the Estate can be found at:

<https://www.leicestershirechurches.co.uk/rolleston-church-st-john-the-baptist/>



DAW's 'selfie', taken in front of a 'board' of mirrors in the paddock opposite the brick wall in Rolleston, mentioned in our Directions. Another set of mirrors appears at right angles out of shot on the left. The mirrors are apparently used to train horses.

Carry on past the stable conversions on your left until you see the sign 'Bridleway Goadby' on that side of the road. Take this right turn and go through the side gate (the main gates are electrically operated) to continue. Pass the church and note the fine brick wall on your right. Opposite this wall you will find a stile on the left. Go over and head diagonally right, swinging left when you get to the fence. Cross the next stile and head straight ahead to find the next stile in the hedge.

For those worried about the conditions in the next field and the often overgrown state of the vegetation immediately beyond it (see above), turn left and walk down to the gated road. Continue until you reach a footpath sign on your left which reads: 'Public Footpath to Billesdon 1¼ miles'. Turn right along the drive of *Skeffington Vale* for a very short distance to find the waymarker on your left, and pass through the five bar gate. Then continue from the asterisk in the paragraph below.

Cross and hold course towards the country house up ahead (*Skeffington Vale*).

***Skeffington Vale* (the house):** Historic England Grade II listed, List Entry Number: 1360997.

Park Cottage (almost hidden behind the trees on the south side of Skeffington Vale house): Historic England Grade II listed, List Entry Number: 1180094. Note that this is not accessible to walkers. Please keep to the footpath.

As you make your way through this huge field aim gradually left until you come to the end, where there is a waymarker. (You may have found a path cut through the crops.) Go down the little slope, through the undergrowth and across the stream via a wooden bridge and stile. Carry on through the field keeping *Skeffington Vale* over to your right. At the end of this field cross the *Vale's* private drive and then pass through a five bar gate with its waymarker. *Hold course (a path should be cut through the crops) to the next waymarker at the far end of the field. Pass through the hedge and head at a slight right diagonal (again a path should be visible) and continue over the rise. The next waymarker may be hidden in the hedge but it is easy enough to locate. Pass through the hedge to carry on at a slightly left diagonal towards Skeffington, which can be seen up ahead. At the end of the field, cross the stile and carry on with the fence on your left. Pass through a five bar gate and continue, still with the hedge on your left towards the large house. Pass through the gates at the end of the field and carry on down the track, passing said house on your right. This brings you into the village at a set of metal gates. Go through and turn left, to arrive at a junction.

Skeffington to Lowesby, via Tilton on the Hill: 4 miles



St. Thomas a Becket, Skeffington; a mostly Perpendicular church.

Turn left and walk on to pass the church, then through a five bar gate ('Unsuitable for Motor Vehicles'), thus to arrive at the A47. Cross with care and carry on along the lane signed 'Glebe Farm, Gated Road'. As you progress, the spire of Tilton church will become visible in the distance. Carry on past the transmitters, and then pass the farm buildings on your left as the track swings right through a five bar gate. Proceed ahead, ignoring any possible deviations, including a left turn signed to Billesdon and Tilton, and then Manor Farm Walk ('No Thoroughfare'). When you arrive at the T-junction, turn left along Main Street into Tilton and use the pavement to pass through the churchyard up ahead. When you emerge onto the road, swing left to pass *The Rose and Crown* pub to find the B6047, which leads from the A47 to Melton Mowbray. Turn left and use the pavement until you come to the garage. Cross here and continue into Digby Close opposite, which swings right to run parallel to the B6047. Almost immediately swing left to walk into the housing estate. As the road swings right, carry straight on between the houses to arrive at the footpath sign at the edge of a field. Go through the five bar gate and straight on down the slope, which then bends left past a waymarker. Pass through the gate at the next waymarker, turn left and then go through the five bar gate to continue with the hedge on your left, walking down a gentler slope. When you arrive in the very long field swing right around the foot of the hill and carry on to the far hedge, aiming for the farmhouse you can see behind it. At the end of this field, pass through the next five bar gate with its waymarker and carry on with a fence on your left. Pass through the next gate with its waymarker to continue past the farmhouse, swinging gently right to carry on down the farm track, thus to pass another waymarker at a gate and cattle grid. As you proceed ahead look for a waymarker in the hedge over to your left and take a diagonal to reach it. Cross the stile, go down the bank and pause to have a look at Lowesby Station, now a private residence.

Lowesby Station

The *London and North Western Railway*, remnants of which walkers familiar with our other long distance routes will know about already, divided at the 'Marefield Triangle', which can be seen on old Ordnance Survey maps. Lowesby Station was the first stop along the line that ended up at Belgrave Road Station (demolished: the booking hall site is now a flyover) in Leicester. The other line continued south to Hallaton, eventually to join what is now the East Midlands main line service, a little north of Market Harborough. The line was closed in 1953, except for workmen's trains until 1957. Like many country stations, Lowesby was some distance from its village, and our walk no doubt runs along the route residents would have taken. Note too that residents of Tilton could use this station for journeys into Leicester, or stations along this part of the *LNWR*. Tilton's own station, on the southern branch of the line, lay on the other side of Halstead, two miles or so away from the village. Tilton Cutting has been of interest to geologists, and the area is now a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The cutting can be seen from the Tilton to Oakham Road (map reference SK762056); notice boards provide useful information. The site of the station itself is now given over to a private residence.

Having viewed the station buildings and site, continue across the old track bed, go up the rise, and through a five bar gate at the waymarker. Press ahead with the hedge on your right. As you cross this field look left to see the sad remains of a signal box for Lowesby Station. Head for the next waymarker, to pass through another five bar gate until you reach the next one with its stile. Having crossed, simply carry on down the long avenue of hedges, crossing a farm track via a waymarker. At the end of this avenue lies Lowesby, which is little more than a hamlet. Go through the gate and, keeping the hedge on your right, another one with a waymarker. At the end of this next field you will emerge at its right hand corner onto the road, with Lowesby church just over to your left.



The restored and rebuilt Lowesby Station, now a private residence. Photographer unknown, previously published on the now defunct website 'Steaming Around Britain's Railways'.



The derelict Lowesby Station, before restoration and rebuilding.
© Richard Green (cc-by-sa/2.0).



The derelict signal box, visible from our walk. Burned down in 2024. Photographer unknown, previously published on the now defunct website 'Steaming Around Britain's Railways'.

Lowesby to Twyford: 2 miles



**Lowesby Hall, front elevation, as seen from the grassed footpath described in our Directions.
© Stephen Richards (cc-by-sa/2.0).**

The footpath out of Lowesby is, at the time of writing, difficult to identify. It lies within the curtilage of the Lowesby Hall Estate. Please follow the next few directions carefully. Cross the road and take the lane marked 'Private', straight on. Just beyond the churchyard on your left you will see a waymarker disc pointing back across said churchyard. Carry on a few paces and you will see your route marked on the right on the other side of a fence. Cross the fence and turn left (you have no choice due to the proximity of the hedge). This takes you round the side of the Hall, via a stile, and then keeping the fence on your left. Cross another stile and continue down the slope. The way forward is not clearly marked here: you should be aiming at a slight left diagonal until you arrive at a country lane. When you reach it turn right and proceed, in due course via a gate with a cattle grid, until you reach the B6047. Cross this road and continue into the field at the footpath sign and stile, to continue with the hedge and copse on your left. Cross the next stile at the waymarker and carry on still with the hedge on your left. (John O'Gaunt viaduct is now clearly visible over to your right; this was part of the old *LNWR*, north of the Marefield triangle, where the track split for Leicester, via Lowesby, and Market Harborough – see above.) There is a waymarker in the fence on your left, with either a gap to let you through, or a stile. Carry on at a diagonal to find the next waymarker. Cross the plank bridge (be careful with your footing if there is a lot of vegetation here!) and stile. Head for the top left hand corner of the field to cross the next stile, and then carry on with the hedge on your right to pass under the power lines, with an adjacent pylon. Proceed to the bottom of this field to cross the stile, then head slightly to your right to the bottom of this field to find the next waymarker. Cross the stile and walk ahead, aiming for the fence on your right, which contains a five bar gate. Pass through and aim diagonally right over the track and down into the dip for the next waymarker. Cross the stile here and climb up to pass through the metal gate. Turn left (the recreation ground is over on your right) and then through the five bar gate, which lets you into Lowesby Lane, Twyford.

Twyford to Ashby Folville: 2 miles



**John O'Gaunt viaduct, north of the Marefield Triangle on the *LNWR* trackbed.
© Andrew Tatlow (cc-by-sa/2.0).**

Turn left at the bottom of Lowesby Lane onto Main Street, pass the church, and walk down to the B6047. Turn left and you will see the side of a brick house in front of you on the other side of the road. Cross over and walk down the track to the right of this house (the footpath sign may be hidden by foliage), swing round to pass the houses on your left and cross the stile at the five bar gate.

COUNT YOUR FIELDS from here in order to find the turn onto the *Midshires Way*, up ahead in the **eighth** field. So:

Cross FIELD 1, keeping the hedge on your right. Enter FIELD 2 via the stile.

Cross FIELD 2 and enter FIELD 3 via the next stile.

Cross FIELD 3, holding course to pass under the power lines, then cross another stile to negotiate a short scrubby area, exiting via another stile into FIELD 4.

Cross FIELD 4 by keeping the hedge on your right. Pass the next waymarker at the hedge/fence and walk across the wooden bridge into FIELD 5. Carry on to the far hedge. Cross the double stile with its waymarker to enter FIELD 6.

Cross FIELD 6 to find another double stile and enter FIELD 7. Cross this field to the next stile and little wooden bridge to enter FIELD 8. This field is crossed by the *Midshires Way* after about 100 yards, straight ahead. **TURN RIGHT** onto the *MSW* (see next photograph). Do not carry on across FIELD 8; this would take

you towards Barsby. (It would also carry you along our own *Melton Round*, whose reverse route from Twyford you have been following to this point.)

The *MSW* to Ashby Folville contains no more stiles. Having turned right you will soon see a higher than average waymarker coming into view. Pass this waymarker and carry straight on to another one, which admits you to a gravelled track. Turn right onto this track and simply continue to its end where it meets the country lane from Twyford, just outside Ashby Folville. Turn left into the village.



The intersection of our route with the *Midshires Way*, between Twyford and Ashby Folville, looking towards Barsby. You must turn RIGHT here onto the *MSW*. This photograph was taken on 22 July 2018, during the heatwave which began in May. A senior resident of Ashby Folville told us he'd never known harvesting to have been completed so early. On a rare overcast day, it was a barren view.



The same location as in the previous photograph, now looking towards Ashby Folville along the route when turning right onto the *Midshires Way*. (Note the angle of the rucksack compared to the previous picture.) Ashby Folville lies beyond the trees in the distance.



Approaching Ashby Folville along the *Midshires Way*, that same baked day of 22 July 2018, with the overcast sky beginning to lighten up a little.

Ashby Folville to Kirby Bellars: 4 miles

The location of the next footpath is not immediately obvious. After you've taken three bends in the road and before you get to the church, look for house no. 25 on your right. There is a signpost (probably hidden by undergrowth) which points you along a path to the left of this property, though you will actually pass through its garden until crossing over a stile and back into the countryside! From this point things are straightforward enough. Pass over the wooden bridge on your left to the next waymarker. (You will now have crossed *The Leicestershire Round* which runs at right angles to our route.) Cross the double stile at the waymarker to pass through the hedge, and head for the farm buildings up ahead – the waymarker should be visible to their right hand side. When you reach it cross the stile and swing left around the farmhouse until you emerge from its drive onto the road. Turn right and continue. The amount of traffic on this country lane varies with day and time, but there is plenty of verge available. Simply carry on up the gentle rise until you reach a crossroads. Turn left here into Pasture Lane, signposted to Gaddesby. At the end of the wood on your right you should find a signpost. (When we mapped the route it was pointing down the road, which is clearly incorrect!)

Enter the field and proceed with the hedge on your right. At the next waymarker, just beyond the hedge which marks the border of this field, take a left diagonal (or walk round the edge of the new field) towards the bottom hedge in the distance. The next waymarker is about half way along its length. Go across the plank bridge and through the metal gate and carry on with the hedge on your right. Pass through the hedge at the end of the field and hold course to repeat the exercise. There is now quite a lengthy stretch, still with the hedge on your right, during which you will pass another waymarker. When the hedge on your right ends, simply continue, now with a hedge on your left, until you reach the country lane. Turn right here to find the next waymarker over on the left hand side, which admits you back into the fields. Cross the stile here and aim diagonally towards the next waymarker at the hedge corner up ahead. Pass by and hold course for the next waymarker. Cross the stile to pass through the hedge and hold course again, aiming to pass to the right of the farm buildings. Cross the stile in the fence and carry on to the next waymarker, to the right of the farm buildings. Cross the stile and hold course to the next hedge and waymarker. Now cross a double stile and head at a slight right diagonal to the next hedge with its waymarker. Cross the stile and proceed to the next hedge with a double waymarker. (Kirby Bellars church spire is briefly visible here.) Cross the double stile, and walk across the field to pass through a gate (or over a stile next to it). Cross the private road and another stile, into a paddock. Find the stile on the far side. There are two waymarker discs here. Take the option which points diagonally right across the next field. You will emerge onto the lane just shy of the A607 (the Leicester to Melton Mowbray Road) on your left. Cross with care and walk down into Kirby Bellars village.



Kirby Bellars: the avenue in late October 2017, down to the church of St. Peter on the right at the end.



Pevsner in *The Buildings of England, Leicestershire and Rutland* describes St. Peter as a 'remarkably lavish church of ironstone', and is an interesting mixture of Decorated and Perpendicular styles.

Kirby Bellars to Melton Mowbray: 3 miles

Walk down Main Street; you are looking for a signpost on the right roughly half way along the distance between Hunter's Rise and Washdyke Lane. Pass through two metal gates, then another one, and hold course. (There are two waymarker discs: do not take the right option). Then cross the double stile over a stream and carry on beyond the dip in the field to find the next waymarker. (You can now see the railway line from Leicester, via Syston junction, to Melton Mowbray over to your left.) Cross another double stile and hold course across the new field. At the far side pass through a gap in the stone wall via a stile and continue ahead. Aim slightly to the left of the industrial buildings up ahead to find the next waymarker. Cross the stream (Copley's Brook) by a narrow plank bridge to walk next to the railway line, thus to pass the industrial buildings previously mentioned, ignoring the railway bridge on your left. A waymarker stands at the end of the industrial estate. Proceed ahead to pass another waymarker, and then continue down the slope and up the other side, passing another two waymarkers. Cross the field to the next waymarker, then take the stile and stone bridge. Carry on ahead with a hedge on your left to the next waymarker, which stands close to the A607, Leicester to Melton Mowbray road.

Now turn left along the lane. (When we mapped the route in October 2017 there was a lot of new building activity in this area, and it is possible that the footpath will at some point be diverted – keep a sharp eye out for any notices.) The route loops back on itself to pass through a gate, and then some buildings before swinging immediately right to cross the railway line via the foot gates. Now cross the bridge over the River Wreake and turn right to walk with the river on your right. After a short distance, don't miss the waymarker on your left, which offers you the option to turn right, back across the river. Take this option. You can now carry on between fences, with the river on your left. From here the walk into Melton Mowbray is very straightforward. Simply carry on along the path, keeping the River Eye (an extension of the Wreake) on your left. You will eventually swing round to the right before passing under what remains of a bridge carrying what used to be the LNWR to Melton Mowbray North station (long since demolished). You will then see Egerton Park coming into view on the other side of the river. Hold course along the grass, avoiding the road which appears over on the right. You will emerge through a gate onto the A607 at the T-junction with the B6047, marked by traffic lights. Turn left to walk into Melton Mowbray town centre.



Two views of the support for the original bridge over the River Eye of the LNWR, en route to Melton Mowbray North Station, which was demolished following total closure of the line in 1964 – the site is now a retail estate. What we see here is a footbridge grafted on to the original supports; an incongruous looking, Heath Robinson type, affair.



**The sad sight of Melton Mowbray North Station in the process of being demolished.
Photograph by John Evans.**



**An autumn view of the River Eye, taken from behind Melton Mowbray Leisure Centre,
a little way beyond our route's intersection with the A607, as it approaches the town centre.**

REVERSE Directions from Melton Mowbray to Market Harborough

Melton Mowbray to Kirby Bellars: 3 miles

If you parked your car in the Leisure Centre it's worth finding your way to the A607 through Wilton Gardens, built around the river Eye.



Crossing the river Eye in Wilton Park, Melton Mowbray, May 2018.

This year the Horse Chestnut trees, and May blossom in the hedgerows, made for an especially splendid sight in a sharp spring, after a heavy, sometimes snowbound, winter.

Our exit from Melton Mowbray lies across the bridge on the A607 Leicester Road, next to Egerton Park. Walk on the right hand side pavement until reaching a gate, just before the traffic lights. Pass through the gate and always track the river Eye on your right hand side. This progress continues for some while, passing a number of waymarkers, passing under what remains as a walkway of the old London and North Western Railway trackbed, and following the long left hand bend of the river until passing another waymarker and through two gates, still with the Eye on your right. Pass through another gate (which seems to be permanently open) then under the brick and metal bridge to pass the next waymarker. At the next waymarker go over the bridge and continue over the next one, to pass another waymarker. Then turn left and follow the track as it swings left over the old brick bridge. Carry on to cross the railway line. (When we mapped the Trail in 2017/18 the next section was disturbed by building works; we describe the path as we found it, but it may have subsequently changed. Note that you must find the underlined location below to proceed across fields towards Kirby Bellars.) Aim for the buildings up ahead and pass them on your right. Carry on through the yard towards the metal gate and use the wooden one on its left hand side. The track swings round to the right

heading towards the A607 just up ahead. Just before you reach it dive through a gap in the hedge/trees to find the next waymarker. (There is a signpost opposite the gap, but it may be obscured by vegetation.)

Waymarkers now occur with regularity and it's hard to go astray. Walk across the field at its right hand edge. Pass the next waymarker to cross the little bridge via stiles. Hold course to the next waymarker and then another one in close succession, followed by a third. The next waymarker takes you past a small industrial estate, with the railway line on your right down the embankment. You can now see Kirby Bellars church spire in the distance. (The smaller spire over to its right is that of Asfordby church). At the end of this track pass over the narrow bridge with its waymarker and take a slight right diagonal across the large field (Kirby Bellars houses are visible up ahead) until you reach a stone wall. Cross the stile with its waymarker and hold course to reach the distant waymarker in a fence. Cross the plank bridge to take a slight right diagonal through the next field. The next waymarker with double stile is not immediately visible, though the waymarker following is. Cross the double stile and head to the next waymarker in the right hand corner of the field. From here thread your short way through to the main street of Kirby Bellars. Turn left and walk up to the A607. Cross with care, and take the right turn beyond the Hall along Gaddesby Lane.



A swan on her nest in the attractive landscape a couple of fields outside Kirby Bellars, May 2018.

(In the penultimate field before threading your way through to the village, you will notice some mounds over to the left. These are likely to have been associated with a moated manor house, rather than an Augustinian Priory, established in 1539, which may or may not have been sited north of the church. For the Historic England listing see <https://historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list/list-entry/1009285> and note also www.gatehouse-gazetteer.info/English%20sites/4791.html).

Kirby Bellars to Ashby Folville: 4 miles

Almost immediately along Gaddesby Lane follow the footpath sign into the field on your right. Aim diagonally for the buildings up ahead if a path is not cut through the crops. Just before the buildings, look for a waymarker in the hedge on your left, pass through and climb over the stile. Continue through the paddock, cross the stile and the drive up to the house (now on your right) and take the double stile into the field, which may contain an inquisitive horse or two. Take a sharp right diagonal to the hedge. Cross the double stile and hold course through the next field to the hedge and waymarker up ahead. Cross the stile and continue towards the farm buildings to reach the next hedge, with its waymarker. Cross the double stile and head across the field to the five bar gate, with a stile and waymarker next to it. Cross the stile and hold course, with farm buildings/silos on your right, and then cross another stile in the fence. Proceed pretty much in the same direction to the hedge up ahead. Cross the stile here and continue at a left diagonal to the next waymarker (a house is over on your left), passing this to continue down to the road (Gaddesby Lane again). Exit the field via the stile, turn right, and walk roughly 150 yards to find the footpath sign on the other side.

Enter the field at this point and follow the farm track, keeping the hedge on your right. (From here it is attractively plain sailing until you reach the road, quite a distance away.) The hedge on your right eventually gives way to one on your left as you pass another waymarker. When you arrive at a very large field, simply follow the line of the hedge on your left to arrive at a gate and waymarker in the field's left hand corner. Pass through and aim diagonally for the wood over to your left – a path should be cut through the crops. When you reach the trees carry on to keep them on your left, to emerge at the road. Turn left and then right at the crossroads, with a sign telling you that Ashby Folville is one mile away. Walk down this road (you can see the spire of Gaddesby church over to your right), looking out for a very small farm (or at least a house with a couple of farm buildings) on your left. There is no footpath sign here, but you should go down the drive and swing around the back of the house, and then in rapid succession through a five bar gate and over a stile into another large field. Head at a slight left diagonal towards Ashby Folville. At the bottom of this field, pass through the hedge via a stile. Take a left diagonal to find the exit from this new field in the dip. Go straight ahead through the next small field, cross the little bridge and then the stile, and walk through part of a domestic garden to emerge onto the road. Ashby Folville church is now to your right. Turn left and walk out of the village.

Ashby Folville to Twyford: 2 miles

Exit the village and look immediately for a sign indicating the entrance to the *Midshires Way*, on the right hand side of the country lane (see next photograph).



Leaving Ashby Folville along the road to Twyford, at the entrance to the Midshires Way.



The *Midshires Way* sign, which is just visible in the previous photograph. The other sign points to a footpath with a plethora of stiles, which is why we've avoided it.

Carry on across the bridge to proceed along the gravelled track. Carry on for a while until you swing round to the right to find a higher than average waymarker. Pass this and leave the graveled track to enter the field. Continue to the next waymarker at a gap in the hedge up ahead. Pass this point and you have now entered the field which contains a **LEFT** turn towards Twyford. The only indicator of this turn is a waymarker in the hedge over to your left, so take care not to miss it (see next photograph).



On the Midshires Way: leaving the gravelled track for the Twyford turn, which is in the next field to the one pictured. The next waymarker comes into view as we approach the hedgeline up ahead.



The turn towards Twyford on the *Midshires Way*. We are approaching this point from the left, having passed the two waymarkers pictured or mentioned in the previous image and its caption. This picture was taken on 22 July 2018, during the heatwave which began in May. The harvest has been very early.

Your route into Twyford is now straightforward across seven further fields, containing single or double stiles and waymarkers. (The patch of scrubland underneath the power lines counts as part of one field.) You will eventually reach a stile at a five bar gate. Cross to pass the houses on your right, swing round the bend and emerge onto the B6047. Turn left, and then right into Main Street.

Twyford to Lowesby: 2 miles

Walk past the church and churchyard to find Lowesby Lane immediately on the right. Go down the lane and through the gate at the end, with the recreation ground on your left. Track the fence on your right for a short distance to find a metal gate. Pass through to cross the little wooden bridge, and then up the bank. Cross the small field/paddock by holding course, to find the waymarker with a five bar gate, thus to pass through the fence. Hold course by keeping a diagonal through the field to the next waymarker. Cross the stile and carry on through the very large and uneven field, walking parallel to the hedge over on your right at a slight left diagonal. At the top of the field, locate the half height waymarker and stile at the five bar gate. Cross to the next field and proceed at a left diagonal towards the hedge and electricity pylon. Walk next to the hedge to pass under the power line.

There is a good view here of the John O’Gaunt viaduct, set in an impressive landscape over on your left.

Your exit from this field lies in the 'V' up ahead. Here you will find another stile. Cross and hold course to the next waymarker. Cross the stile and the little wooden bridge (watch your footing if there is overgrown vegetation!) and carry on ahead towards the left hand corner of the field. At the next waymarker pass through the fence (or take the stile if there is one) and turn right to track the hedge on your right. Exit this field in its top right hand corner and continue, still with the hedge on your right. You will reach the B6047 at another stile. Cross the road with care (there is a blind rise to your left) to walk down the country lane opposite, signed 'Hungarton 2¾' miles.

Carry on past the cattle grid after the bend; the parkland of Lowesby Hall is now on your left. (On a fine day, aspects of Charnwood Forest can be seen way over to your right horizon. The houses of Lowesby village can be seen on your left.) Walk as far as the footpath sign in the fence on your right, and turn left to cross the parkland. The route is not obvious: carry on until Lowesby Hall comes into view and you will see its immediate curtilage marked by a fence which becomes a brick wall a little further on. You should cut the corner of this boundary arrangement: there is a waymarker to help with the direction. Cross the double stile in the 'crook' of the fenced area, to find yourself next to the access drive of the hall, which is indicated as private property. Keeping the fence on your right, walk to the corner of the field to cross the stile. There is a short and narrow path bordered by vegetation which lets you out onto the permissible part of the drive. Turn left away from the Hall and walk past the church and churchyard on your right to emerge onto a lane. The few houses of Lowesby village are along this lane to your left, but to continue our route you must cross and enter the field at the signpost.

Lowesby to Skeffington, via Tilton on the Hill: 4 miles

Keep the hedge on your left up the slope to pass through the gate with its waymarker. Carry on along the long avenue between hedges, crossing a farm track with a waymarker until the route bends to the right. At this point take the stile in front of you and proceed ahead to the next waymarker and five bar gate, then repeat. In the next field look to your right to see the remains of Lowesby Station signal box. Still keeping the hedge on your left, exit this field at the five bar gate with its waymarker and go down the short slope to cross the trackbed of the *London and North Western Railway*. The restored and rebuilt Lowesby Station can be viewed on your left (see information box and photographs p15-16). Walk up the bank on the other side of the flat area and cross the stile into the field. Proceed at a right diagonal to find the farm track which passes through a five bar gate with waymarker and cattle grid. Now simply continue to keep the farmhouse on your right, passing through gates with waymarkers until you arrive into a huge long field with steeply rising ground to your left. You must swing round the hill towards the end of this field to carry on with the hedge on your right until you reach a five bar gate. Pass through and then take the small gate on your right, heading left through the trees until you swing right to walk up the slope to emerge through another gate into a housing estate on the boundary of Tilton. Carry straight on and at the T-junction turn right along Digby Close which then turns left to reach to A6047, opposite a garage. Cross the road and turn left until you reach a right turn away from the main road, signposted to Halstead and Loddington. Take this option to pass the village hall on your right. Swing right into Main Street (do not carry on straight ahead along Oakham Road) to pass the church on your left (or walk through the churchyard). Carry on to take the right turn signposted to Billesdon and Houghton as the Halstead road bends away to the left. Your route now swings left, and as it then swings right carry straight on along the lane with a sign 'Gated Road to Skeffington'. This lane swings left past a large house, and then right – you must ignore the farm track on this last bend. From here your route is straightforward: simply carry on, ignoring all footpath signs on left or right, until you reach the A47, en route swinging left through a gate to pass Glebe Farm, and then swinging right to pass the transmitters.

When you reach the A47, cross with care and carry on through the gate.

Skeffington to Illston on the Hill, via Rolleston: 3 miles

Alternatives:

Our assumption is that walkers always prefer field journeys to roads, unless the latter is the only option. At this point we suggest you read ahead in our Directions for the section of the walk between Skeffington and Rolleston. Essentially, there is one part of the field walk which involves a path through undergrowth, a climb up a bank, and the crossing of a huge field, which can be a slog if the ground is wet, or newly ploughed. (We have included a way to avoid this particular area, but since it involves a very short walk down a part of a private drive which is crossed by our legitimate route, we cannot formally recommend it.)

If you would prefer to walk between Skeffington and Rolleston down a very pleasant gated road (which usually has very little, if any, traffic) proceed as follows:

Before reaching the church, take the right turn signposted to Rolleston and simply continue to the Rolleston Estate. Carry on through the Estate all the way to the B6047, and then proceed according to our Directions, across the fields to Illston on the Hill.

Otherwise:

Walk past Skeffington church and continue. At the junction in the centre of the village take the right turn past the 'No Through Road' sign and walk to the end of this road where there is a fork for driveways to separate private houses. Find the metal gate on your right (the footpath sign may well be obscured by vegetation) and pass through to swing left, walking by the side of the large house, to find another gate. Enter the field and proceed with the hedge on your right. Pass through a gate with its waymarker and continue with the fence on your right. The next waymarker has a stile in the fence in front of you. Enter the field and cross directly to find the next waymarker in the hedge on the far side. Pass through the hedge and then BEAR RIGHT to keep the hedge in front of you on your left – take care here; it seems as if the path might carry straight on with said hedge on your right. Cross the new field at a slight right diagonal to find the little wooden bridge in the hedge up ahead, where the waymarker may be buried by vegetation. Pass through the hedge and continue across the field to the next waymarker and hedge. The buildings of *Skeffington Vale* (a large Victorian house) are now visible up ahead to your next waymarker's left hand side. At the waymarker, pass through a five bar gate and PAUSE FOR A MOMENT to read the next section of our Directions, marked between asterisks, before reading the following boxed section.

Reading ahead for a moment you will see that we have a section of undergrowth and a huge field to negotiate. Both can be problematic in inclement weather or after the field has been ploughed – in the latter case it can be a rough slog to reach the far side. We cannot recommend the alternative we are about to explain because it involves a very short section which belongs to *Skeffington Vale* house, and is not strictly part of designated footpaths. Should it ever become formally accessible one could simply turn right along the drive (which leads up to *Skeffington Vale* on your left) after passing through the five bar gate mentioned in our Directions. This leads to a gated road between Skeffington and Rolleston, opposite the sign 'Public Footpath to Billesdon 1¼ miles'. Were you to take this route, you would turn left to continue to Rolleston, passing straight through the Estate, eventually to reach the B6047.



**Skeffington Vale, Leicestershire, *Wheat ready for harvesting*. A typical view in this area.
© Kate Jewell (cc-by-sa/2.0)**

***Skeffington Vale* (the house): Historic England Grade II listed, List Entry Number: 1360997.**

Park Cottage (almost hidden behind the trees on the south side of Skeffington Vale house): Historic England Grade II listed, List Entry Number: 1180094. Note that this is not accessible to walkers. Please keep to the footpath.

*Carry on over the drive of *Skeffington Vale* and hold course across the field. Cross a gravel track to a cottage, mostly hidden in the trees to your left, and carry on straight ahead to an area with trees. Cross the stile and the footbridge and pass through the undergrowth, then up the bank with its waymarker at the entrance to the next field. This is a huge space with no obvious route if there is no path cut through the crops. (The field needs a waymarker at the top of the rise.) Hold course and at the crest of the rise the next waymarker should be visible in the distant trees/hedgeline.* When you reach it, cross the stile. There is a fence up ahead. The stile and marker post (not a familiar painted waymarker) are situated at the angle of the fence as it turns through 90 degrees. Cross the stile into the paddock to keep the fence on your left, but head at a diagonal to find the stile and footpath sign which lets you out onto the Rolleston Estate road. Turn right and walk up this road to pass through the electronic gates at the T-junction. Turn left and carry on past what used to be estate cottages on your right, eventually to reach the B6047.

Turn right and walk along the verge for a few yards until you stand opposite the large stone and brick house. Cross the road with care and enter the drive of this house via the gate or stile. (A shorter than usual waymarker may be hidden by undergrowth.) Find the gate (usually left open) in the fence on your left and pass through to continue your direction. Cross the stile with its waymarker and walk round the edge of the field, passing the waymarker over to your right in the hedge. There is now an excellent view on your left, stretching all the way into Northamptonshire. (We will meet this view again as we walk from Illston to the Gartree Road, en route to Stonton Wyville.) At the bottom of the field pass through the five bar gate with its waymarker and then a single gate, similarly attired. Head up the short rise to exit the paddock at another five bar gate and waymarker, thus to cross a farm track (which leads up to the buildings on your right), via a pair of stiles.

NB: The two stiles may cross unmarked (and not very visible) electrified fences; if you have a dog, take care!

Carry on at a slight left diagonal to find a double stile and a little wooden bridge on the far side of the field. Cross and walk at another slightly left diagonal towards the field corner. Pass over the stile with its waymarker next to the gate, and head at a right diagonal to locate the next stile with its waymarker roughly half way along the hedgeline. Cross to take a left diagonal, exiting the field just outside Illston village.

Illston on the Hill to Stonton Wyville: 4 miles

NB: There is some rough ground in several fields until you reach the Gartree Road – be careful not to turn ankles!

Cross the road but do not take the street into the village immediately opposite. Instead, turn left and then right to enter the farmyard. Then proceed straight ahead through four five bar gates, arriving at a large field. Do not carry straight on, but cross this field at a diagonal towards the waymarker in the hedge. Carry on with the hedge on your right to the bottom of the field. Go through the five bar gate with its waymarker and continue at a slight left diagonal towards the waymarker in the hedge up ahead.

(The arrangement here remains unsatisfactory when it would be easier to walk into the next field by exiting the current field in its right hand corner. We recommend this impromptu route if you have trouble with the undergrowth, especially if the ground is wet.)

At the waymarker enter the hedgeline over the little bridge. Scale the little bank (which can be very slippery when wet) and turn right along the line of the fence to find the stile on your left. Enter the field by this means and track the hedge on your right. Pass through the five bar gate with its waymarker in the right hand corner. Go through the next five bar gate and continue to another one; pass through and carry on to the road, which is not busy but can have fast moving traffic. Cross over with a dogleg to enter your next field, via another five bar gate. (The waymarker here is a disc, which may be virtually invisible.)

There is a grand view of East Leicestershire, stretching into Northamptonshire, before you as you proceed.

Keep the trees on your left to find the next waymarker and gate in the field's left hand corner. Pass through and now aim diagonally right for the buildings which can be seen ahead. Steer a bit to the left of a direct line towards them to find a single gate in the hedge. Enter the field and aim for its right hand top corner where you will exit at the end of the farm drive, onto the Gartree Road. Turn left to walk towards Stonton Wyville. Continue until you reach the B6047. Cross over and simply continue until, passing over the stream and in due course through a gate, you reach the four way sign pointing straight ahead to Glooston. Turn right here down the track, which becomes a narrow lane as you pass through a five bar gate. Swing right as the road passes the barns (the *Leicestershire Round* runs off to Glooston on your left) and follow this road round into Stonton Wyville, reaching the T-junction in front of the church. Turn left and proceed to the crossroads and continue across.

Stonton Wyville to East Langton, via Thorpe Langton: 3 miles

Option 1 – recommended for the views

NB: The final field before reaching the track into Thorpe Langton at the ford is lumpy in places due to cattle movement, and the very final areas can be a bit boggy in wet weather.

Having crossed the road, take the gate on your left and walk up hill, pass through another gate and continue with the hedge mainly on your right (there are outstanding views to the left) until you reach another gate. Pass through and turn left, still with the hedge on your right, to pass the trig point stone. Continue down the slope to the end of the field. Cross the stile and hold course for the trees up ahead. Pass through towards the left field boundary (there is a slightly more direct path used by locals straight ahead) to arrive in a long field, which becomes increasingly wide as you proceed ahead. At the end of this field you will find a farm track which leads into Thorpe Langton. Carry on to the T-junction and turn right.

Option 2 – the very wet weather route

Having crossed the road at the Stonton Wyville crossroads simply carry on along the farm track. This leads in time to the ford below Thorpe Langton. Go up the back (mind the tree roots!) and continue along the same track which swings right to arrive in Thorpe Langton. At the T-junction turn right.

East Langton to Union Wharf, Market Harborough: 5 miles

Turn left into 'Church Lane', which becomes 'Near the Church'. Turn right to pass the church (you are now on *The Leicestershire Round*) and then left through a metal gate to walk between hedges before turning right through two metal gates. Hold course through metal gates until you reach East Langton. Turn left to the bottom of the lane. Enter the first field at the signpost. Head straight across this field, through a metal gate and then through two metal gates to let you through the next hedge. Carry on across the next field, go through two more metal gates, and carry on to the bottom left hand corner of the new field. Cross the bridge over a tributary of the River Welland and head across the field to pass under that main railway line which comes down from the North, through Market Harborough, and on to London St. Pancras. Cross the field, to pass through another metal gate, then carry on to find the next stile up ahead. Pass through the trees with their waymarker and continue, to pass through a gap in the hedge up ahead. Again, simply carry on to reach the busy A6 Market Harborough bypass. Cross with care using the metal gates and steps on each side, and continue with the hedge on your right to pass through more gaps in the hedges at the end of two fields. You will eventually reach a waymarker and a stile. Cross the stile and aim diagonally right to the left hand corner of this field. You should find two waymarkers which point you up the slope and into the factory premises, with a small car park on your right. Turn right to exit the factory drive which emerges onto the B6047, a busy road which leads into Market Harborough from the A6 bypass roundabout. Cross the road with care and head down the bank to reach the Market Harborough arm of the Grand Union Canal. (Ignore the waymarker which points into a field.) Turn left along the towpath, pass under the bridge (Gallows Hill Bridge (no. 8) on this section of the canal from Foxton) and now simply continue all the way into Market Harborough, where our walk ends at Union Wharf.

You have now completed ***The Two Towns Trail***.



Market Square, 1890s, looking north



The same area in 2017 from a lower vantage point. This area has recently been the site of a regular and more recent type of farmers' market.