

when contractors were preparing the ground for new housing. It is believed to be the chapel of St. James, a chapel of ease for those who found it difficult to travel to the parish church in Narborough. Huncote didn't get its own Anglican church until 1898 and even then it was never fully completed. 24 years prior to this, the Primitive Methodists built their first chapel which can be found on the left-hand side of the road before you reach the Red Lion. In 1908 they decided to move to a bigger chapel on Cheney End.

Sporting a flagpole, on your right, is the pinfold. This recently restored area was where stray animals would be kept in medieval times until they could be reclaimed by their owners. The pig on the wall statue was added to the pinfold in June 2020, to signify the pinfold's former use.

➤ Continue through the village, passing the church.

The village sign on the Village Green features a pig on a wall, watching as a band marches past. This celebrates both the village's association with pig farming and the strange story of the pig on the wall. Apparently, whenever there was a band passing through the village on feast days and the like, a pig would mount the wall to watch them go by. Whilst this is a story well known to residents, it also occurs in several other parts of the country. There used to be a local phrase given to anyone asking where you were going: "Huncote on a pig," meant mind your own business.

➤ Turn left on Denman Lane and follow this until you reach a footpath on your right between numbers 97 and 99. Turn right along the footpath. When you reach the corner of the second large field, take the footpath to your right. Keep going straight on this until you reach Narborough. Cross the road and continue on a footpath past Copt Oak Court. At the end of the footpath, continue down the hill on the pavement. At the end of Copt Oak Road turn left and follow the pavement to meet the road (this is Desford Road) which you cross and then continue heading slightly up. Where the road turns left, take the footpath ahead and then take the path to your right.

➤ Cross the Narborough bypass at the controlled crossing and continue down the path opposite. Turn left, following the one-way system to emerge in the village centre. Turn right past Narborough Hardware and DIY.

6 Narborough

At the centre of the village is the Narborough Arms, a 17th century inn and beyond it, on the Coventry Road, is Narborough Hall, a remodelled Elizabethan manor house notable for its pink granite façade, which is now an award-winning gift shop.

On 1 January 1864, the London & North Western engine No. 807 pulled in to Narborough with the first train to Leicester. Later in 1968, Narborough Station which had served the community for 104 years closed, together with Croft, Blaby, Elmesthorpe and Wigston. The "Association of Friends of Narborough Station" formed to protect the station. Led by Cllr. Dai Williams. It is said Cllr. Williams stood in front of the bulldozer about to remove the platform edge! The station successfully reopened on 5 January 1970.

The brightly coloured footbridge was built in about 1891 on recommendation by a coroner after an elderly Littlethorpe lady had been killed crossing the line. FONS – Friends of Narborough Station, set up to continue the community effort to care for the station, were

delighted to see a full refurbishment of the bridge in 2020, the same year as celebrating 50 years since reopening.

➤ Turn left at the mini roundabout. Where the road splits, after the zebra crossing, take the right fork towards the Plough Inn and follow the road through and out of the village.

7 Littlethorpe

The Plough Inn is another 17th century hostelry, one of two pubs in the village. Although the village is now strongly linked with Narborough, it used to be part of the parish of Cosby, having its own chapel, dedicated to St Mary, which disappeared in the early 19th century. Note the crenelated walls surrounding the Georgian Littlethorpe House in the square, close to the newly erected war memorial.

➤ After the very last house on the right, turn down the road to White Barn Farm and take the footpath on your left. Turn left just before the bench, and walk diagonally to your right to a gap in the hedge. Turn left at the hedge and walk with it on your right. Continue into Cosby. Turn left at the children's playground and then right towards the start.

With Thanks to...

Our thanks to Eddie Smallwood and Michael Dix for creating the walking routes and uncovering the heritage stories. And to Graham Luker for the illustrations.

This series of heritage walks have been designed to inspire walking across the District – we hope that you enjoy them. We welcome feedback and you can get in touch with us by emailing leisure@blaby.gov.uk. The walk uses footpaths, bridleways, permissive paths and some roads. Please respect the landowner's property and stay on the indicated paths. Please follow the countryside code. Take care when walking on roads and follow the Highway Code for pedestrians. You are advised to use the route in conjunction with the OS map for the area. This guide has been created with funds from the European Regional Development Fund and HM Government.



Find this walk, all 12 heritage trails and more on the **GoJauntly app**. Simple photo guides help you navigate while nifty tips point out things of interest and places to eat.



For more information on this walk and for other walks in the series visit our website:
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Let's go!
Blaby
District



Heritage Walks

Route Nine

8.7 miles
14 km

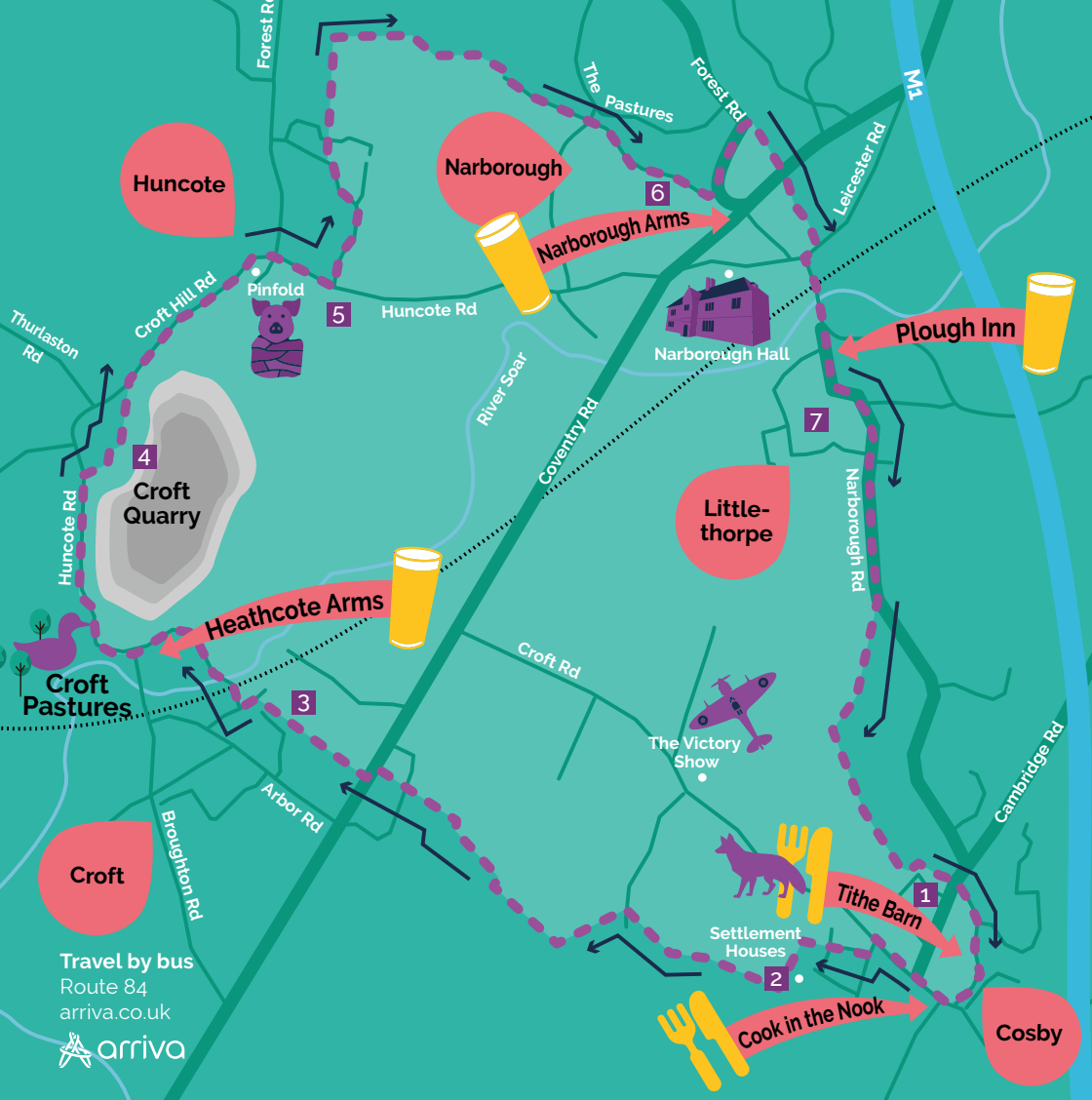
This walk is one of a series of 12 heritage trails plus a long distance perimeter route around the whole District, see the website visitblaby.org.uk for more information.

- ◆ Cosby
- ◆ Croft
- ◆ Huncote
- ◆ Narborough
- ◆ Littlethorpe



Supported by Welcome Back Funding





Travel by bus
Route 84
arriva.co.uk
arriva

P Start at Cosby recreation ground, cross Park Road to head down Main Street. Keep on the road as it bends to the right.

1 Cosby

You will pass the church of St. Michael and All Angels, a 14th century medieval building, having its first recorded rector in 1220. In the churchyard you can get a good view of the Tithe Barn, now a much-enjoyed restaurant, but once the repository for tithes and rents. Independent farmers were obliged to give 10% of their produce to the church and this building, dating back to around 1450, is where they would be stored.

On the other side of the road is Brook's Edge (the three-storey white house). It was once the home of the Armston family who lived in the village for over 800 years. It is thought that the house was the location for William Fredrick Yearnes' famous painting 'And When Did You Last

See Your Father?" The painting captures the moment Parliamentary Officers question a young boy about his Royalist father during the English Civil War. One of the Armstons was a Royalist who fought at the Battle of Naseby and hid in Whetstone Gorse.

Note the unusual weathervane on the brick-built barn as Main Street turns into the Nook. Keep on the Nook and then Croft Road until you reach the level crossing. Cross the road and continue, passing the Baptist chapel and old school on your left. Turn left down Kingsfield Road and right onto a public footpath.

2 The Settlement

You may notice that the houses in this area all share a similar profile, having roofs with quite a steep pitch – although the large majority have now been rebuilt in a more modern style. They were all built by the



1776 Barn



Brook's Edge



Top of Croft Hill



Tithe Barn



Narborough Station

Land Settlement Association, a government scheme to rehouse unemployed workers from deprived areas of the country, mainly the Northeast and Wales. 48 cottages were built, each with half an acre in which to raise poultry to supplement their incomes from the industrial opportunities in the area. 300 people moved into the area, 200 of them children.

As you leave the housing, you are not far from Foxland Farm on the Croft Road. For several years, this has been the location for the Victory Show, one of the biggest World War II re-enactment festivals in the country.

Skirt the first field to the bottom left corner and follow the footpath signs, going diagonally across a field after crossing a farm drive. At the B4114 turn left and cross opposite a footpath sign. Take the footpath into Croft. On leaving the kissing gate, head across the car park and turn left onto Winston Avenue. Opposite the first road on your left, turn right along a footpath with a grey metal fence along your left-hand side. Go under the railway, over the river and turn left when you get to the road. Follow the road, Dovecote Road, past The Green and fork right towards the Heathcote Arms.

3 Croft

Turn right past the church. Take the footpath at the end. Where the path passes Netherby House, take a right fork up Croft Hill.

4 Croft Hill

From the white triangulation station at the top of the hill you can see the vast Croft Quarry with the smaller Huncote Quarry on your left. Beyond that are views of the Soar valley, lying 300 metres below, with the odd shaped buildings of Leicester University visible in the distance. The hill is an isolated landmark, created by volcanic eruptions, and as such would have been a place of significance in the past. Two particular events are recorded as happening here. The first was in 836 when Wiglaf, the King of Mercia, held a witan (an assembly of the ruling classes) on top of the hill. Along with the king and queen were the Archbishop of Canterbury, eleven bishops, three abbots and a group of men described as 'Dux'. A far grislier event occurred in 1124 when Ralph Basset, one of Henry I's justices and an ancestor of Sir Ralph Basset, 1st Baron of Sapcote, held a court on the hilltop. It would appear he'd been scouring the local area for villains because the records show that 44 thieves were hanged here whilst six others were, "despoiled of their eyes and testicles."

Walk down the other side of the hill and bear left. Cross the left-hand stile and on reaching the road, turn right on the footpath. Once by the road Huncote New Hill Nature Reserve is on your right. There is a display board bearing the name Croft Quarry Nature Reserve, and from here you can walk a circular walk around Croft Quarry on permissive paths. Follow the road into Huncote. On your left as you cross the bridge is Huncote Mill.

5 Huncote

Nothing remains of the original mill that was recorded in the Domesday book as being worth ten shillings. A trade directory from 1900 shows the mill was still grinding corn nearly 800 years later. The remains of a medieval building were discovered at Cheney End