

of the meadow, a tradition carried on until a few years ago by the current owners of the meadow, the East Midlands Gas Board.

In 1925, Leicester City Council acquired the Winstanley estate in order to construct 1,200 houses. As a consequence, a large section of the parish became part of the city of Leicester. There are however several buildings from the old village still standing, including the village shop and the National School. The thatched building, The Shakespeare, on your right, was once Ashleigh Farm House (one of the five main farms in the village) it was sympathetically converted by Everards Brewery into a public house in around 1954. Today it is an undertakers.

Some of the roads and footpaths you are following were once tracks through Leicester Forest. From medieval times, the lord of the manor and his tenants had the right to collect wood from the forest and to graze their animals there. When the forest was enclosed in 1628, they were compensated for the loss of these privileges.

The area was once a well-known location for fox hunting and Charles Loraine Smith, one time Member of Parliament, High Sheriff of Leicestershire and Lord of Enderby Hall, painted a series of parodies of the hunt, including one in 1822 entitled 'The Rendezvous of the Smoking Hunt at Braunstone', illustrating that hunting had become such a social event that the gentlemen smoked, even though this stopped the hounds from finding the fox's scent.

- Turn right down Shakespeare Drive, then follow the Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road.
- Where the main track turns right, continue onto a smaller track. The track ends at a road. Take the next right on Staplehurst Avenue which leads to another footpath. When this comes out at a road by a school, turn right onto Lubbesthorpe Road and follow this road to the end, doing a dogleg where it crosses another road.
- You could shorten the walk by turning right on Watergate Lane, which becomes Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road at this point.
- At the end of Lubbesthorpe Road, turn right, cross the service road to the traffic lights. Keep crossing roads at the designated crossings to go all the way round the central roundabout. When you reach the blue path sign, turn left to Meridian Business Park.
- Follow the road round past the Hilton Hotel sign. Turn right towards the hotel entrance (there is a Fosse Fox outside the hotel) and enter The Osiers Nature Reserve. When the path reaches a T junction, turn left.

## 5 Osiers Nature Reserve

This was once a much larger area, providing the villagers of Lubbesthorpe with willow for basket making. The common osier, a species of willow, grows particularly well in damp locations and this area is riddled with small brooks and streams that feed the River Soar.

- Cross the wooden bridge and climb the steps.

Here you have view from this "hump" over Lubbesthorpe Way the location of a Roman threshing floor and possible Roman mill excavated during the construction of Lubbesthorpe Way.

- Turn left on Watergate Lane which becomes Lubbesthorpe Bridle Road once past the M1. Ignore 'Road Closed' signs.

## Lubbesthorpe

The land either side of the road was once the village of Lubbesthorpe which had its own chapel and Manor House. By 1807, a lot of pieces of stone from the demolished Manor and Chapel were being taken away to repair the roads. There are still remains of either the Manor or the chapel in the south brick wall of the farmhouse. The name Abbey Farm is an error by the early cartographers, thinking the remains were that of an Abbey.

## New Lubbesthorpe

This is a new housing development on the southern side of Leicester Forest East. To the west of Beggars Lane are the remains of a medieval rabbit warren which is a scheduled monument. The earthwork mounds cover an area of around two acres and were used to breed and manage rabbits so that there was a constant supply of food and skins.

- Turn right on Farrar Court then left on Tay Road, then right on Girvan Drive. Follow the road to reach Ettrick Way, then turn right and cross a field to arrive on Beggars Lane. Turn right and then right onto Forest House Lane, before turning first left onto Warren Lane.

## 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](mailto: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:  
[www.visitblaby.org.uk](http://www.visitblaby.org.uk)

Follow us on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter:



@visitblaby

Let's go!  
**Blaby**  
District

7

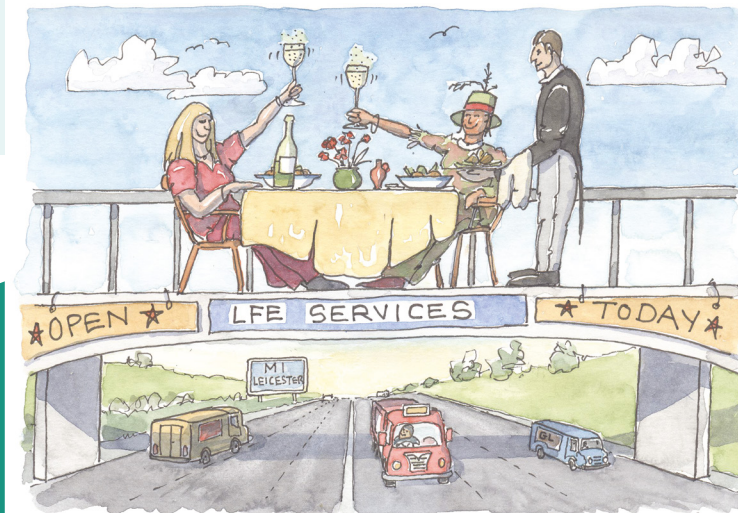
# Heritage Walks

## Route Seven

7.6 miles  
12.2 km

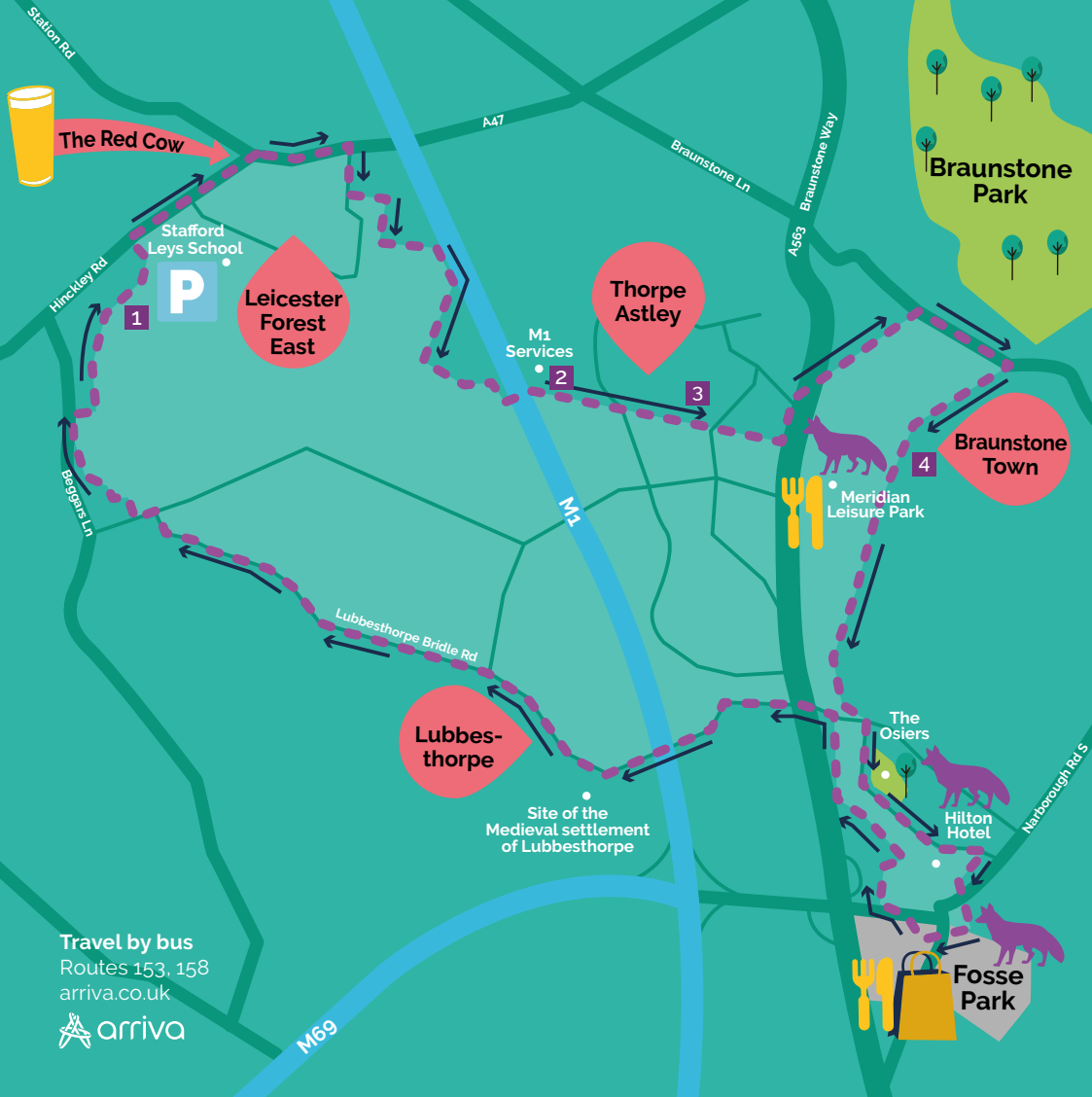
This walk is one of a series of 12 heritage trails plus a long distance perimeter route around the whole District, see the website [visitblaby.org.uk](http://visitblaby.org.uk) for more information.

- Leicester Forest East
- Thorpe Astley
- Braunstone Town
- Lubbesthorpe



Supported by Welcome Back Funding





**P** Start your walk on Warren Lane and turn right onto the A47. Continue along the main road until Kings Drive on your right which you turn in to.

## 1 Leicester Forest East

Leicester Forest was an ancient woodland that lay to the west of the town. At the time of the Domesday Book in 1086, there was surprisingly very little woodland in Leicestershire. 'Hereswode', as it was then called, was the exception, running along the western side of Leicester and being four miles wide and fourteen miles long. As well as villagers in what is now Leicester Forest East, the people of Braunstone, Enderby and Narborough would all have had rights to the forest. In recent years, the size of the settlement has grown enormously. In 1925, it is recorded that Francis Hobill delivered milk to "all 19 houses" between Western Park and Desford Crossroads.

On Carnation Close is Boyer's Lodge, thought to be the only remaining keeper's cottage and now surrounded by housing rather than trees. In 1628, Thomas Boyar, one of the royal forest keepers, purchased land here and the house dates from this time although it has been altered greatly over time. You will see signs to Stafford Leys School whose first headteacher, Gordon Hill, was also a football league referee. He was the man in the middle at the 1975 League Cup Final between Aston Villa and Norwich City which Villa won.

- Take the first left on Kings Walk, then join a footpath on the left after walking past the park. At the substation turn left and then right onto a footpath through a gate.
- Turn left by a kissing gate and cross a bridge. Then follow the track around the edge of a field to another kissing gate. Cross another bridge and turn right running alongside Leicester Forest East M1 Services car park.



82nd Airborne  
Braunstone  
Park



Asheigh  
Farm 1920-30



Former  
Pub The  
Shakespeare



Mr and Mrs  
Lipsett Hay  
Sunday 1940s



The Osiers

## 2 Leicester Forest East Services

Service stations were a bit of an afterthought from the Department for Transport. It was only when hauliers complained that the new motorways had nowhere for them to rest and recuperate that they belatedly began searching for sites to provide basic amenities. Leicester Forest East was originally called Service Area 17 and seven companies put forward plans to develop the site with Ross, the frozen food company, being the one chosen. Their design had a covered walkway over the motorway on the north facing side whilst running alongside it was the Captain's Table, a five-star, fine dining restaurant with waitress service. It opened on 15th May 1966 and was an instant success, 'Which' magazine naming it as the only decent place to eat on the motorway. Even though the plush carpets and waitresses are no more, you can still get a bit to eat whilst looking out at the traffic thundering underneath the restaurant.

- After going under the M1, keep straight on, keeping a brook to your left. When you reach a T junction on the path, turn left then right to follow the brook on your right. Cross the road by the Thorpe Astley sign and descend a path to go through an underpass. For the Meridian Leisure Park turn right, otherwise continue on the footpath between two school sites.

## 3 Thorpe Astley & Meridian

This modern housing development is named after the Astley family (a misinterpretation of the surname Assheby part of the Zouch family) who owned Braunstone between 1334 and 1404. Gavin Close is named after an American paratrooper commander, "Jumping" General James M. Gavin, whose 82nd Airborne Division was stationed in Braunstone Park during 1944. He acquired his nickname by joining in parachute drops with his troops and became the youngest US general since the American Civil War during his time in Braunstone.

Meridian Leisure Park has a variety of restaurants, a bowling alley, 360 Play and a multiplex cinema.

- Continue straight ahead until you come to Braunstone Lane. Turn left to see the old village shop. Cross the road to see the National School and display board. Then turn right to head down Braunstone Lane.

## 4 Braunstone Town

Braunstone was once a small agricultural village lying in between the estate of Braunstone Hall, the home of the Winstanley family and Leicester Forest. The park and church now lie within the city's boundaries. In 1750, James Winstanley III dug a bore hole in the park to look for coal seams. However, the enterprise failed as intruders, thought to be from nearby mining districts, refilled his bore hole with rubble.

The church of St. Peter's, just visible from the road, dates from the 12th/13th centuries. Until recent times, it had an annual custom in which hay from the 'Clerk's Acre' meadow in Aylestone was brought along the most direct route and strewn in the church by the parish clerk or verger. The origins of the custom are lost in time but the annual ceremony was the once the excuse for a day's merrymaking. The hay was usually purchased for thirty shillings by the owner