



THE NATIONAL
FOREST



Leicestershire
County Council

Staunton Harold



Walking through time

Routes 1, 2 & 3



Walking through time - Staunton Harold

Introduction

In NW Leicestershire lies a beautiful area of wooded hills with several outstanding historical and scenic features. Staunton Harold Estate, located in a green valley with two lakes, includes: the house, church, estate cottages and stables. The stables have been converted and are now known as the Ferrers Centre of Arts and Crafts, which comprise of craft shops, workshops, galleries and tearooms.

William the Conqueror gave the land to Henry de Ferraris, who then leased it to Harold, a Saxon from Nottinghamshire. Harold moved here and adopted the name Staunton, meaning stony settlement. In 1423 the estate was passed by marriage to the Shirley's, a distinguished Derbyshire family.

The present house is of about 1770, but includes parts of two earlier houses. The church appears to be 15th century, but was actually built in 1653 during the Commonwealth and is unique. Over the door can be read:

"In the year 1653 when all things sacred were throughout the nation either demolished or profaned, Sir Robert Shirley, Baronet founded this church; whose singular praise it is to have done the best things in the worst times and hoped them in the most calamitous. The righteous shall be had in everlasting remembrance."

Inside are the Shirley monuments, the magnificent wrought iron chancel screen and the painted ceiling.

The Shirley family parcelled up and sold the estate in 1954. The house was saved from demolition by Group Captain Lord Cheshire V.C to become one of his homes for the incurably sick, then, later become a Sue Ryder home. Now the house is the private residence of the Blunt family.



More information on the history of the estate can be found in the Staunton Harold Visitor Guide available from the Ferrers Gallery in the Ferrers Centre.

All three walks begin from the Ferrers car park and head to the front of the house and the Golden Gate. Stout shoes or boots are advised.

Key to the following Route Maps



Route



Bridleway



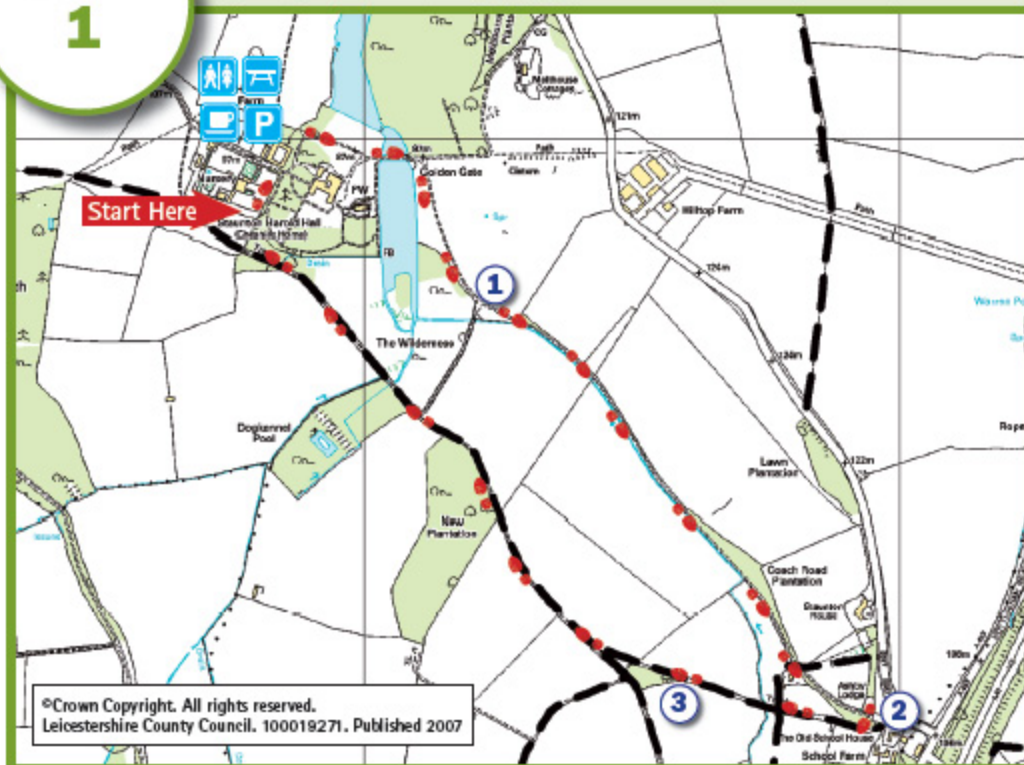
Footpath



Shortcut

Route 1

Coach Road Circular – 2 miles (3km) taking 1 hour



From the car park, cross the footbridge and follow the path lined with Yews. Bear right past a small car park and down the driveway between the two lakes. *The barley sugar piers dating back to 1681 are topped by the Ferrers supporters – the Talbot and the Stag, and originally flanked the entrance to formal gardens.*

Pass through the "Golden Gate", turn right along the tarmac "Coach Road" and take in the marvellous view of the church and house across the lake.

- ① After the cattle grid continue straight along the entrance driveway. *Be aware of approaching vehicles. Keep children and dogs under close control. For most*

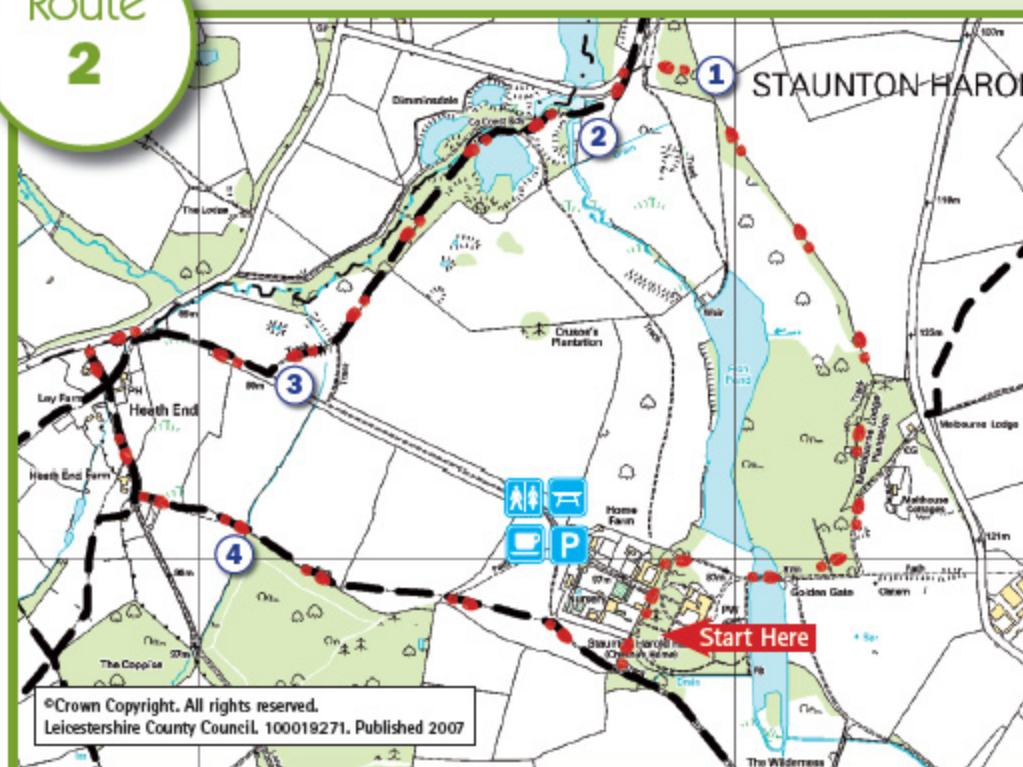
of the length of this road you can hear water in the stream beyond the hedge on the right.

- ② Once over the speed hump and past the Lodge, turn immediately right to join the "Old Coal Road" *This farm track was originally used to transport coal from the medieval coalmining village of Lount. Servants at the Hall would also use it so as to avoid using the formal carriage drive.*

- ③ Walk up the track to a rise crowned by a small spinney. Continue straight ahead with a hawthorn hedge on the right-hand-side. Go through a gate and follow the main driveway straight ahead to return to the car park.



Route 2



Start as Walk 1 to the "Golden Gate", and go straight up hill to the left, where a waymarker will guide you to the first stile into the woods inscribed "J B".

Here begins the 1¾ mile (3km) Staunton Ridgeway. Follow the yellow spots through Melbourne Lodge plantation to Stile 2 (from quiet), then alongside the deer park wall to Stile 3 (homes and). *A gap has been left to reveal a magnificent view over the lakes, reservoir and wooded hills. Also, look out for the pots built into the wall.*

① From Stile 3 head downhill to the car park, and take the path to the left, down to the road. Turn left and walk alongside the road and over the bridge with views of the reservoir. *The Leics/Derbys county*

boundary runs up the middle of the reservoir where the brook once ran.

② Enter Dimmingsdale Nature Reserve, one of the reserves of the Leicestershire and Rutland Trust for Nature Conservation. *Various quarrying works for limestone and other minerals were carried out here, from the 13th century to 1891, when the site was abandoned and left to nature. Now the area is a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) due to the underlying rocks giving rise to a mixture of acid and calcareous soil types.*

Throughout the site there are remains of lime kilns, although now overgrown. The information boards around the site provide more details of the wildlife and history.

At the board in front of the largest pool turn right and take the path West. On reaching a "squeeze" go right signed for the Ivanhoe Way. Cross the stile and keep the hedge on the left, then bear right to reach the driveway leading to the Hall.

③ Turn right down the driveway to the road, then, turn left. After 100m turn left up a private road signed "Ivanhoe Way". Just before the last house on the left, take the footpath across the field, keeping to the right hand side. In the next field keep left along the field boundary.

④ Once through the gate at the field corner follow the path up hill, with the hedge on your right. Maintain the same direction through the fields all the way back to the car park.



Route 3

Staunton Harold Ridgeway and Breedon on the Hill – 6½ miles (10½km), taking about 4 hours (the shortcut makes the walk 3¾ miles (6km))



Start as Walk 2 to Stile 3, then stay up on the ridge and walk right along the valley crest to Stile 4 (*first beginnings*), then uphill along the hedge to Stile 5 (*out to the*). Take care crossing the road to Stile 6 (*undiscovered ends*) into Spring Wood. *The Bluebells are glorious in Spring, and in late summer a low dense mat of blackberries.*

- ① Bear half right to a vehicular track, then on reaching a fence line turn right, guided by the waymarker to Stile 7 (*there's nothing*). Continue through the wood, over Stile 8 (*worth the wear*) to Stile 9 (*of winning*) and across a small field to Stile 10 (*but laughter*). Take care crossing the road and go down to Stile 11 (*and the love*).



- ② Keep along the right-hand hedge downhill, bear right at the bottom, through a hand gate, across a brook and up steps to Stile 12 (*of friends*). Turn left along the brook which forms the County Boundary, and round the field corner to Stile 13 (1994), which ends the Ridgeway. Take the stile to the right and walk right along the hedge, then turn half left to the waymarker post and stile on the crest, then across to a stile onto Burney Lane where you turn left.
- ③ When the lane bends right there is an option for a shortcut. [Shortcut: continue along the lane, then rejoin the main route where the footpath crosses the lane – follow the path right into the field].

For the longer route leave the lane at the bend and continue straight ahead, past the radio mast, onto a grassy brideway track. Follow the blue waymarker arrows for nearly a mile. *There are good views of Melbourne to the left and Cloud Wood and Charnwood to the right, with Breedon Church prominent ahead. This ancient track marking the County Boundary was once followed by the pale of Melbourne Park – a fence on a bank dug from a ditch. Traces of which are still visible.* During its course, the track becomes enclosed, crosses the short grass at the edge of the golf course and through a gap in the hedge.

- ④ Eventually, at the main tarmac lane turn right. *You will see the farm buildings up on the left.* Then, at the power lines turn right onto a footpath through the golf course. Head uphill following the yellow-topped waymarker posts alongside the fairway to the line of trees and onto a surfaced path which will lead to Squirrel Lane. Cross and follow the path opposite, which veers up a very steep, stony climb to the tarmac road. Turn left up to the summit of Breedon Hill (400ft). *The eastern side is a dramatically quarried cliff face, and there are tremendous views all round stretching to the Derbyshire hills, Charnwood, and the hills of Nottinghamshire.*

The church is justly famous for its collection of Anglo Saxon carvings, taken from the monastery founded here in AD676.

The church surviving today is just a part of the twelfth century Augustinian priory.

- ⑤ Keep ahead, through the gap in the wall next to the gate, past the beacon, and down the steep gravelled path to Melbourne Lane. Keep on this lane to the village green and its unusual War Memorial, resembling a lock-up.

Refreshments: the village has a Pub, Butchers Shop, and the Priory Nursery and tearooms.

Just past the garden nursery on the Ashby Road, find the footbridge and take the path around the two sides of a putting green, to the first stile on your left. Head half right uphill, across two fields, forming golf fairways, towards the highest point of the horizon to reach the lane.

The short cut rejoins at this point.

- ⑥ Cross over onto the footpath opposite and walk diagonally through the field to a waymarker in the hedge, then diagonally right to the top right hand corner of the next field. Ignoring the path going off right to the farm, continue straight on alongside the hedgeless ditch. Ignore the paths going off right and left and keep heading straight with the hedge on your right.
- ⑦ Where the hedge bends right, aim left of an isolated oak, then for a gap in the trees on the horizon, marked by a distinctive fir tree. Emerging at the road opposite Melbourne Lodge take the driveway back to Staunton Harold. *Take care crossing the road.*





Staunton Harold Ridgeway was opened on 28th September 1994 as a permissive path linking with the public footpath to Melbourne. There are 13 stiles along the route that have been specially designed, bearing incised lettering. Stiles 1 and 13 bear a monogram "J B" and the date 1994. Following the route from South to North stiles 2-12 have parts of a quotation from Hilaire Belloc, then North to South an exhortation by John Blunt, the originator.

South to North

*From quiet homes and first beginnings
Out to the undiscovered ends
There's nothing worth the wear of winning
But laughter and the love of friends
Hilaire Belloc*

North to South

*Our paired legs stand
to let your paired legs pass.
Give us your hand.
We'll lead you where
the grass is greener yet.
John Blunt 1994*



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Produced with assistance from John Blunt of the Staunton Harold Estate, and the National Forest Company.