

# The Heart of The National Forest

Starting at Conkers Discovery Centre, these walks take you through the growing Heart of The National Forest Park.

Centred on the former mining village of Moira, the Park is a showcase for The National Forest. Where once stood colliery stocking yards, there is now Conkers Discovery Centre, which provides a great day out for all of the family. Surrounding Moira, the Park encompasses 1,000 acres of new and mature wooded landscape. It is constantly growing, with new woodlands and facilities such as the YHA hostel at Moira. It is a fantastic place to start your exploration of The National Forest. So why not come and try out one of these three walks?



## How to use this leaflet

The walks in this leaflet were originally published as three separate, yet overlapping, walks. This led to a certain amount of repetition, so it was decided to combine them all in one leaflet to celebrate the Heart of the Forest. They can either be treated as three separate short walks or linked together to form longer routes.

For 3 short walks, you can use the following start points, which are marked **S** on the maps:

**Donisthorpe walk** - Conkers Discovery Centre

**Saltersford walk** - Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail car park

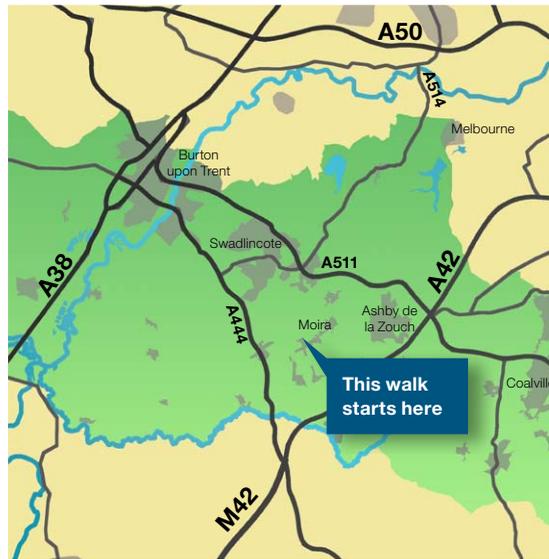
**Willesley walk** - Saltersford Valley Picnic Area car park

For the full 8½ mile walk, follow the instructions for the Donisthorpe Walk to **D4**, where you are given a choice of routes. At this point, turn to the Saltersford walk and follow the instructions from **S1**.

After walking around Saltersford Valley Picnic Area to **S5**, you again have a choice of routes. So turn to the Willesley walk and follow the instructions from **W1**. At the end of the Willesley walk, you have been returned to **S6** and can then follow rest of the Saltersford walk to rejoin the Donisthorpe Walk at **D4**.



This leaflet can be used in conjunction with OS Explorer 245 (The National Forest) and Landranger number 128 (Derby and Burton upon Trent).



### The National Forest Company

Enterprise Glade, Bath Yard, Moira,  
Swadlincote, Derbyshire DE12 6BA  
01283 551211  
enquiries@nationalforest.org  
www.nationalforest.org

*Every effort has been made to ensure the accuracy of this information at the time of printing. However, the National Forest Company cannot be held responsible for any error, omission or subsequent changes.*

*Photography: Christopher Beech and NFC*

*Maps reproduced by permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of HMSO. © Crown copyright and database right (2009). All rights reserved. Licence number 100021056.*

## Walks in the Heart of The National Forest

Three short walks



# Donisthorpe walk

This is a short walk following a 3½ mile circuit. Starting from Conkers, the route explores some of the interesting sites and places between Moira and Donisthorpe.

**D1** Start at Conkers Discovery Centre. From the entrance to the main building, turn right along the edge of the car park to take the path running through the railway tunnel to Conkers Waterside. Continue through the car park, out of the entrance gates on the right and down the road to the junction with Bath Lane.

Turn right and, just before the bridge, follow the path to the right through the woodland to join the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail.

**D2** Turn left along the Trail and follow it until you reach the entrance to Donisthorpe Woodland Park (½ mile).

**D3** Continue along the Heritage Trail. At a fork in the Trail, turn right and cross the brick bridge. Go past the first path marked on the left.

**D4** Take the next left to leave the Heritage Trail. Follow the surfaced path into the woodland park and go past the Miners Welfare car park.

Alternatively, you can extend your walk by taking the Saltersford walk on the next page (starting at **S1**).

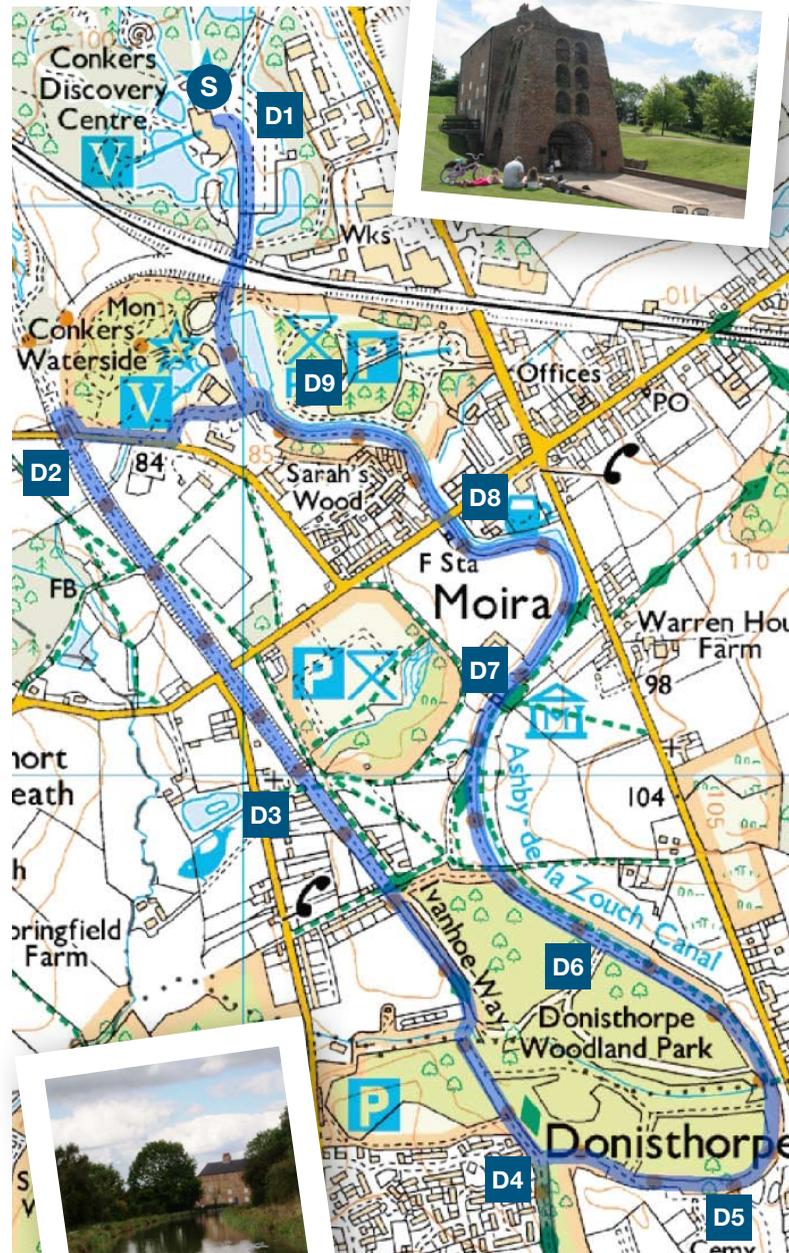
**D5** Continue along the path until you reach the Ashby Canal. Turn left and follow the canal towpath.

**D6** Follow the towpath for ½ mile past the canal footbridge and the lime kilns to Moira Furnace.

**D7** Continue alongside the canal, past the Furnace and round to the new lock at Shortheath Road.

**D8** Cross Shortheath Road and follow the canal towpath to the Bath Yard canal basin at Conkers Waterside.

**D9** Walk back through the railway tunnel to Conkers Discovery Centre or, if you have paid to enter Conkers, give your legs a rest and take the train back from Waterside!



## Points of interest along the walk:

**D1** Themed around woodland life, **Conkers Discovery Centre** is brilliant for families. There are more than 100 indoor and outdoor activities at this lively interactive discovery centre.



**D2** The **Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail** runs along the former line of the Ashby & Nuneaton Joint Railway, which transported coal from local pits to London and Oxford until 1931.

**D3** **Donisthorpe Woodland Park** was created by Leicestershire County Council on the former Donisthorpe Colliery, which closed in 1990.

**D6** The **Ashby Canal** carried coal from the pits before the railway was built. However, mining subsidence caused the canal to close in the 1940s. Due to the efforts of the Ashby Canal Trust, the canal has now been restored as far as Conkers Waterside.

**D7** **Moira Furnace** was built to process iron ore extracted from the coal deposits nearby. It closed within 5 years due to the variable quality and quantity of the iron produced. It was then used as homes for a number of mine workers who lived adjacent to the canal. The Furnace and nearby lime kilns have now been refurbished and extensive information on the history of the site is provided.

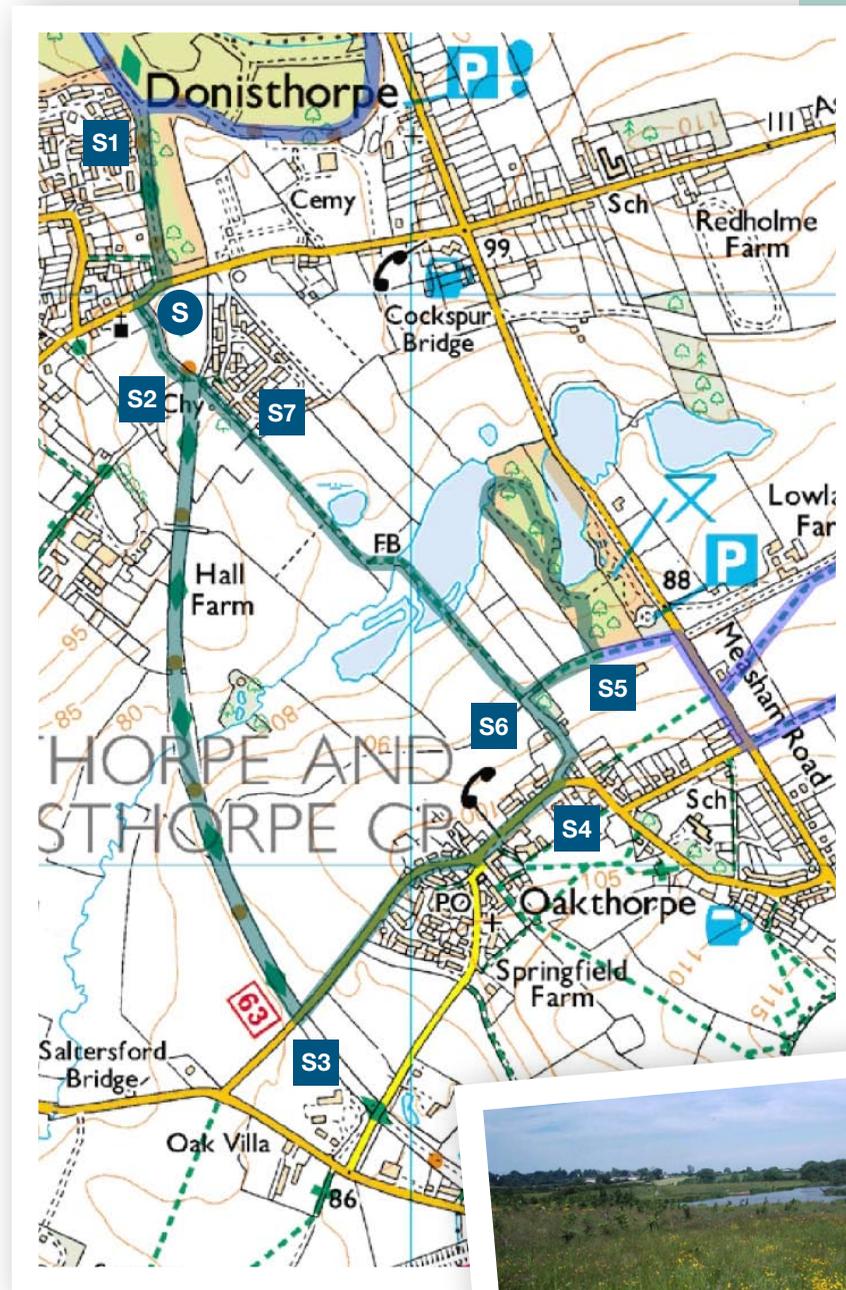
**D8** This is the first and only lock to be built on the Ashby Canal. Opened in 2001, it features two sets of top gates to save water. Short or single boats only need use the inner gates and so less water is required to fill the chamber.

**D9** **Sarah's Wood** has a play area designed for children with special needs and has a 1km tarmac footpath to improve accessibility around the site.

# Saltersford walk

The Saltersford walk route extends the walk by another 3 miles to include more of the Ashby Wolds Heritage Trail, the village of Oakthorpe and the Saltersford Valley Picnic Area.

- S1** Follow the Ashby Wold Heritage Trail out of Donisthorpe Woodland Park and across Church Street. Turn left into the Trail car park **S** beside the church of St John the Evangelist.
- S2** Where the Heritage Trail forks near a tall brick chimney, take the right fork. Pass under a bridge and walk for about ½ a mile to the next bridge. Immediately after the bridge, leave the Trail by turning left and follow the path up to the road.
- S3** Turn right to walk into Oakthorpe, continuing until you enter Main Street. Take the small lane (Canal Street) that leads off to the left.
- S4** Turn left at the T-junction and, just before you reach a gateway, you will pass a small planted woodland on your right. Turn right along a public footpath to enter a field. Walk along the edge with the hedge on your left until you come to a kissing gate into Saltersford Valley Picnic Area.
- S5** Follow the path through the trees then turn left taking the surfaced path which loops around the site giving views over the pools. Retrace your steps to leave Saltersford Picnic Area. Turn right to return to the kissing gate and then back to Canal Street.  
  
Alternatively, you can further extend your walk by taking the Willesley walk by following the instructions below (starting from **W1**).
- S6** Turn right and follow the footpath downhill, passing between two pools and then on to the houses at the edge of Donisthorpe.
- S7** Follow the footpath past the garden fences and rejoin the Ashby Wolds Heritage Trail back to Donisthorpe Woodland Park. Rejoin the Donisthorpe walk at **D4**.



## Points of interest along the walk:

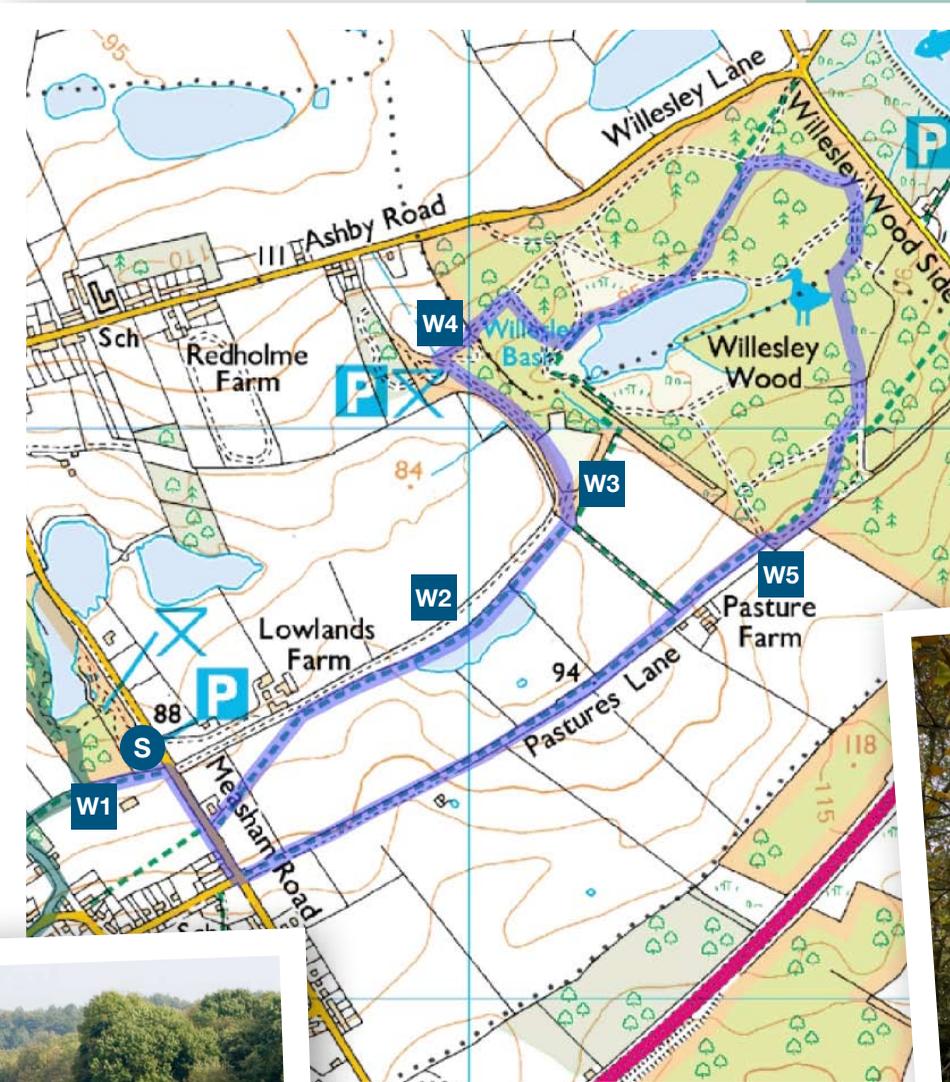
- S1** The church of **St John the Evangelist**, Donisthorpe dates back to the early 1800s and is built of grey sandstone.
- S5** **Saltersford Valley Picnic Area** covers 6ha and includes woodland, meadows, marshland and a lake that was formed by mining subsidence. Designated as a Local Nature Reserve, the site is planted with native trees and shrubs and the open grass areas are managed as traditional hay meadows.



# Willesley walk

The Willesley walk adds another 2 miles to the route, making a total length of 8½ miles. The main feature of the route is the Woodland Trust's site, Willesley Wood.

- W1** At the kissing gate, turn left and follow the path to the Measham Road. Cross the road and turn right. Just past a bungalow, take the footpath left and follow it along the edge of Lowlands Farm.
- W2** At the end of the path, cross the stile to enter the former site of Oakthorpe Colliery.
- W3** Turn left and follow the tarmac road to the car park. Turn right and enter Willesley Wood on the surfaced path.
- W4** Take the path straight ahead of you, keeping the pool to your right. Enter the mature wood and follow the surfaced path to exit at the far end. Head to the top of the site via grassy paths and turn right, leaving Willesley Wood through the gate on to a farm track.
- W5** Follow the track (Pastures Lane) and exit on to the main road by the recreation ground. Turn right and head down the road back towards Saltersford Valley to rejoin the Saltersford walk at **S5**.



## Points of interest along the walk:

- W2** The footpath past **Lowlands Farm** follows the old line of the Ashby Canal, which has since been filled in.
- W3** **Oakthorpe Colliery** closed in 1990 and the site is now managed as a nature reserve by Leicestershire County Council.
- W4** **Willesley Wood** is owned and managed by the Woodland Trust. Covering 56ha, it includes mature and newly-planted woodland together with hay meadows and lakes.

