

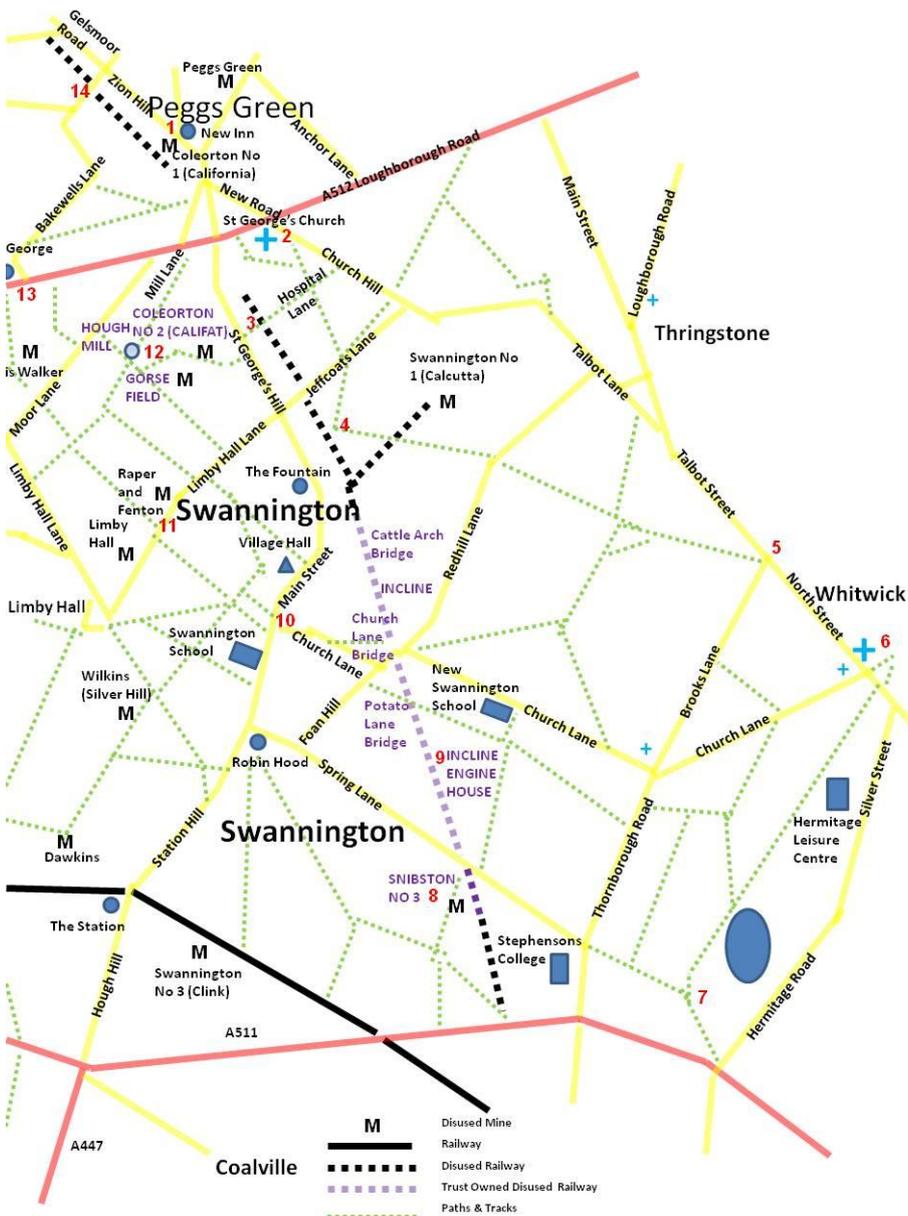


## Series – Building Up An Appetite Walk – Four Railways And A Mill

From the New Inn at Peggs Green walk to St George’s Church, the isolation hospital, Coleorton railway, Jessop’s horse drawn tramway and the Calcutta mine, all within the first mile! Onward to Whitwick with its ancient church, the Charnwood Forest railway and Hermitage recreation areas. Pass Stephenson’s College on the way to George and Robert Stephenson’s 1832 Leicester and Swannington railway, the first steam railway in the midlands. Through the Snibston No 3 mine, down the Swannington Inclined Plain, pass the Quaker smithy and walk through woodland plantations to the start of Jessop’s tramway. Explore the Gorse Field, Califat mine and Hough mill, then on to the Willis Walker mine, Billy Bakewell’s packhorses and along the Coleorton railway to the New Inn.

Walking on paths, crossing stiles. Distance = 6.3 miles / 10 kilometres, duration = 3 hours.

The sketch map below is not intended to be a substitute for an Ordnance Survey map.



1. Start at the “New Inn” in Zion Hill, opposite the former 1849 California colliery.
2. Head south east along New Road to St George’s Church, the site was chosen by Sir George Beaumont and his guest William Wordsworth.
3. Exit onto Church Hill and take the footpath on the right. Head down hill and at the junction with two houses turn right along the path. Pass the former 6 bed isolation hospital and reach the cutting of the Coleorton horse drawn railway. This took coal from the mines of Coleorton and Peggs Green through a 480 yard tunnel under the former Ashby to Loughborough turnpike to the bottom of the Incline.

4. Continue along the path and emerge onto St George's Hill, head left down the hill and turn left into Jeffcoats Lane. Opposite houses with railway names, turn right and follow the former Coleorton railway. When reaching a wooden fence / stile, turn left down the embankment.
5. Take the path to the right, aiming just to the right of the headstocks of the former Calcutta colliery. Continue virtually straight across the fields to Whitwick.
6. Turn right and follow North Street, turn left after the Church. After the church turn left onto a path, then right to the railway line and former Whitwick Station. The Charnwood Forest railway was constructed in 1881-3 and ran from Coalville through Shepshed to Loughborough. Passenger services ceased in 1931 and freight in 1963.
7. Head south west along the former railway line, passing the Hermitage Leisure Centre, recreation ground and lake to the left.
8. After the lake, turn right and follow the track to Thornborough Road, on reaching the road turn left. Skirt past Stephenson's College and KFC bearing right along the A512 and turn right along the path leading through a scrubby area of trees. On reaching a disused wooden stile turn right up a short steep slope, continue through the trees then between two concrete posts. Explore the site of the former Snibston No 3 colliery 1850-1895 and the 1832 Leicester and Swannington railway, the first steam railway in the English Midlands, it reached Swannington in 1833. The current track came from the former Mantle Lane goods yard in Coalville.
9. Cross Spring Lane and follow the track to the top of the Swannington Inclined Plane. Horse drawn trams took coal trucks to the bottom of the Incline. The winding engine then hauled the trucks up the 1:17 slope. At the top of the Incline, explore the brick layout on the two Incline Cottages, plus the engine house.
10. Proceed down the Incline under Potato Lane and Church Lane bridges, after the latter turn left across the field to Church Lane which should be followed to Main Street. Admire the Quaker Smithy on the corner of Church Lane and Main Street, also the Old Tap House just up the road. The trough under the former tap was used until mains water came to the village in 1938.
11. Cross the road and follow the path to the right of the former Wesleyan Chapel. At the top of the ridge, turns right through the wooden gate and proceed to the information board. Admire the views over the valley and Hough Mill on the far ridge as well as reading about the opencast coal mining in 1944, Gunpowder Field and Beauty Field. Walk down the permissive path through the fields and over the brook to Limby Hall Lane. The small established woodland on the other side of the road is the site of the Raper and Fenton eighteenth century mine. Turn right.  
Immediately after the woodland, the grass verge gets wider. The verge used to be William Jessop's 1790's horse drawn tramway which took the coal along Limby Hall and Jeffcoats Lanes, then across country to the terminus with the former Charnwood Forest Canal near the George and Dragon pub in Thringstone.
12. Continue along the road and go through the second wooden gate on the left, head uphill through the young woodland plantation to the top of the field. At the top of the field pass through two gates into the Gorse Field where there is documentary evidence of coal mining since 1205. The terrain shows ample signs of mining including 170 former bell pits. Take the right fork to the Horse Gin statue showing how technology enabled coal to be mined at a greater depth. Continue east along the track to the metal gate.  
Immediately after the gate, turn left into the Califat Spinney (former Coleorton No 2 mine, the Califat, 1855-1873) and walk clockwise around the periphery, exploring at your leisure. The engine house

excavation near the centre of the site will be restored during 2012 with a brick layer to outline the building layout. The excavation nearest the Gorse Field is still ongoing.

The Califat Spinney used to comprise silver birches planted in 1911, these have gradually been removed as the trees had become dangerous. The spinney has been replanted in three tranches and is steadily maturing. The trees provide a good display of autumn colours in October. Return to the gate between the Califat and the Gorse Field, Then on to the mill.

Hough Mill (Hough rhymes with rough) is approximately 200 years old and has been extensively restored by the Heritage Trust. It is open 2-5pm Sundays, April to September or by arrangement.

13. From the mill take the south west track then turn right and cross the field to Moor Lane continuing onward to the site of the Willis Walker 18<sup>th</sup> century mine. Cross the A512 to Bakewell's Lane.
14. Follow Bakewell's Lane, at the top of the hill Billy Bakewell used to operate a pack horse business. Turn right at the junction with Stoney Lane, then after a short distance turn right onto the former Coleorton Railway which runs parallel to Zion Hill. Continue to the recreation ground and the New Inn car park.

Swannington Heritage Trust maintains:-

- Snibston No. 3 colliery 1850-95, adjacent the 1832 Leicester to Swannington Railway;
- Swannington Inclined Plane with a 1:17 slope connecting horse tramways to the railway
- Califat Spinney nature reserve, a mine 1855-1873
- Gorse Field, a fragile heath grassland; adit and bell pit mining from 1204.
- Hough Mill, built shortly after the land purchased in 1804.



Details of more walks, guided walks and mill visits are on [www.swannington-heritage.co.uk](http://www.swannington-heritage.co.uk). Any constructive comment on the walks would be welcomed, email [walks@swannington-heritage.co.uk](mailto:walks@swannington-heritage.co.uk).