



## Series – Developing A Thirst

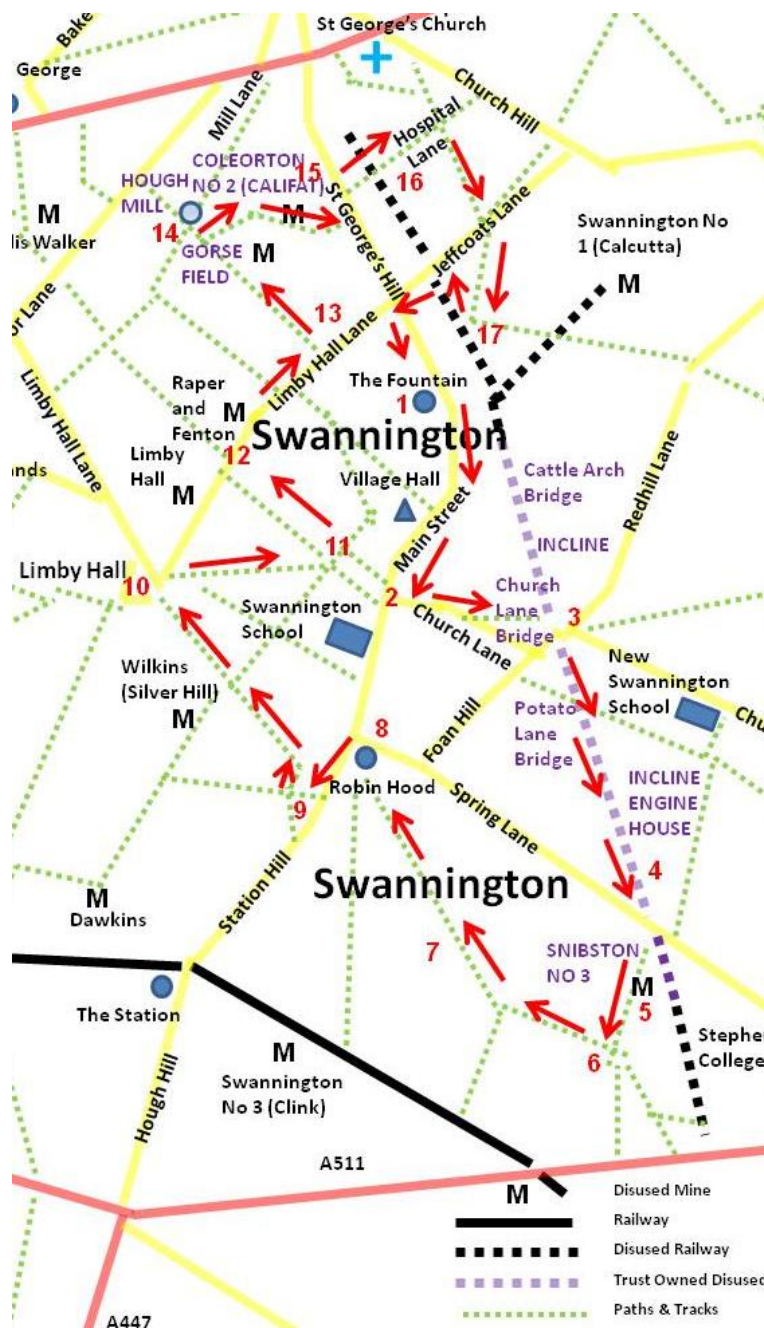
### Walk – Woodlands and Conservation

View and explore the thousands of trees planted in and around Swannington. Appreciate how former mine sites have been transformed into nature conservation areas. In autumn revel in the glorious leaf colours as the trees approach semi-maturity.

From the Fountain Inn walk to the Quaker Smithy, up the Incline, then woodlands virtually all of the way via the Robin Hood, Limby Hall, Hough Mill, the Califat, a former isolation hospital and back to the Fountain. Follow ancient green lanes, pass former mining sites and Jessop’s horse drawn tramway to the ill fated Charnwood Forest canal.

Walking on paths, crossing stiles. Distance = 4 miles / 6.5 kilometres, duration = 2 hours.

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



1. Start at the “Fountain Inn” in Main Street. Head south, passing the village hall, formerly the Miners’ Institute, and the former Bull’s Head public house on the right.
2. Admire the Quaker Smithy on the corner of Church Lane and 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. Turn into Church Lane and walk down hill. Just after a right hand bend, turn left through the gate and head uphill across the field.
3. Ascend the steps onto 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. Go under Church Lane and Potato Lane bridges and proceed up the Incline.
4. At the top of the Incline, explore the brick layout on the two Incline Cottages, plus the engine house. The trucks were then attached to the Leicester and Swannington Railway for shipping to Leicester.
5. Having crossed Spring Lane and entered the site of the former

Snibston No. 3 colliery (1850-1895), explore the site. The Leicester and Swannington Railway was built by George and Robert Stephenson in 1832 when the first train went from Battleflats to Leicester. The line reached Swannington in 1833 and was the first steam railway in the English Midlands.

The current track came from the former Mantle Lane goods yard in Coalville. Exit to the south via the squeeze between two concrete posts. Follow a narrow track and descend the short, steep slope.

6. At the bottom of the slope and next to the disused style turn right and follow the former green lane gradually downhill.
7. Continue along the green lane and the woodland plantations to the left.
8. At the Robin Hood, identify the former Primitive Methodist Chapel in front of the former butchers (now a joiners), abattoir and animal pound. There is a brook to the right in Deepdale, which is in a culvert as it crosses in front of the Robin Hood and Spring Lane. Admire the elaborately carved and engraved village sign before turning left along Station Hill.
9. Ignore the footpath that crosses the field next to Elm Farm. After the field turn right onto another ancient green lane that is part of the Miners' Heritage Trail. After a short distance turn right up some steps. Follow the path with woodland to the left and village views to the right.

At the end of the field turn left, follow the oak tree lined tarmac driveway. Cross the track and continue along the oak tree lined driveway. When the driveway bears left follow the grass path straight ahead.

Go through the small wooden gate and over Wilkins sough (rhymes with rough) which was deepened by John Wilkins to drain the Silver Hill mines. It was dug out by 300 men at a cost of £2,000.

10. On reaching Limby Hall Lane turn right along the road, then right through a wooden gate with a permissive path sign. Turn left through a metal gate, cross the field and the footbridge. Continue straight ahead and uphill through Walkers' Wood named after an established village family.

The woodland was planted in 2004 as a National Forest scheme. It includes clumps of hazels with their late winter / early spring catkins and wild cherries whose leaves turn red for a spectacular autumn show. Exit the woodland to the left of the houses on the ridge emerging onto a track.

11. After just a few metres the track turns to the right, instead go through the wooden gate and proceed to the information board. Admire the views over the valley and Hough Mill on the 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.
12. 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.

13. 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.

14. 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. There are a couple of picnic tables which could be used if you brought a snack.

From the mill head south, following the track as it bends around the ponds to the left. Just after the ponds are the horse gin statues showing how technology enabled coal to be mined at a greater depth. Continue east along the track to the metal gate.

15. 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, before the gate turn left along the footpath through the woods, then diagonally across a field and along a short track to emerge onto St. George's Hill.

16. Cross the road and take the footpath slightly higher up the hill. After a small field cross the cutting that is the former Coleorton railway – the horse drawn tramway that took coal trucks from the mines in Peggs Green and Coleorton to the bottom of the Incline.

Continue across the next field, noting the small brick built former isolation hospital that was used from the 1880's to 1930's for up to six patients, originally only smallpox but later other infectious diseases.

Turn right just before a couple of houses, keep the hedge on the left. Continue to Jeffcoats Lane, cross the road and follow the path which bears right as it skirts the houses.

17. On reaching the embankment go up the steps, this is another section of the horse drawn Coleorton railway. Turn right and on reaching Jeffcoats Lane turn left, then left again into Main Street, continuing south until reaching the Fountain Inn.

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).