

# DISCOVER SOUTHWELL TRAIL

## Local Nature Reserve

A first class route for wildlife and people



# INTRODUCTION

The Southwell Trail began life during the golden age of steam. It was once part of the Midland Railway's vision to run trains from Southwell to Mansfield. By the mid-1900s there were few trains using the line and it finally closed in 1968.

In the early 1970s Nottinghamshire County Council purchased sections of line from Southwell station through to Farnsfield station, onwards to the A614 near the White Post area, plus the spur to Bilsthorpe. Very soon afterwards it was opened to the public. In 2005-6 extensive resurfacing of the bridleway and replacement of antiquated gates and stiles made the Trail into a more accessible multi-user route.

The 7.5 mile long bridleway was declared a Local Nature Reserve (LNR) recognising its significance for nature conservation. Of particular interest are the acid grassland areas found in the sandstone cuttings near Bilsthorpe and the wide variety of wildlife that uses the Trail as a linear corridor through the agricultural landscape. Walkers, cyclists and horse riders use the trail for recreation and also as an alternative route from one village to another.

Please read on to find out more about what you can see and four "explorer" circular walks starting and finishing on the Trail. These explorer walks may not be suitable for all abilities, however, the Trail itself has good paths on even ground accessible to bridleway users.





The Friends of the Southwell Trail was formed during the declaration of the Trail as a Local Nature Reserve (LNR). We are a passionate group of people living close to the Trail who regularly lead bird and wildflower identification walks as well as surveying wildlife and talking to users of the Trail. During the winter months we enjoy getting out on the Trail to take part in conservation task days run by Nottinghamshire County Council. We meet several times a year to discuss issues, share information and plan our programme of events. We also encourage children and families to use the Trail by holding a children's wildlife drawing competition in conjunction with the local libraries.

Come and join us, we would be pleased to welcome you.

Check our Facebook and Instagram pages or get in touch by email at [friendsost9@gmail.com](mailto:friendsost9@gmail.com)



# WALK ONE - SOUTHWELL / MAYTHORNE

**ALLOW 70 MINUTES (approx 4 miles)**

Map not to scale - For further detail refer to OS Explorer Maps 270 (Sherwood Forest) and 271 (Newark-on-Trent).

**Key: (S) Start, (L) Left, (R) Right**

Start at Southwell Trail car park off Station Road, Southwell (just beyond the “Final Whistle” public house).



*Opposite the car park a blue plaque sits on one of the former level crossing gate posts, detailing the history of the railway of which the Trail forms a part. Close by is the old station house. Southwell station opened on 1st July 1847 with the final passenger service being in 1959. The “Final Whistle” is a pub with a railway theme and name dedicated to the memory of the railway days.*

Follow Southwell Trail ahead for approx 20 minutes until a minor road (Maythorne Lane) is reached.

*Immediately before the lane a bridge is crossed. The redundant lane beneath was used to prevent farm vehicles and other passers-by from crossing the tracks. Eventually a level crossing was installed as high loads could not pass under the bridge.*

Turn R (be aware of any passing traffic) walk towards Maythorne village, and into open countryside, passing a fire beacon, to the old silk mill.

*Evidence of a mill at Maythorne dates back to the 13th century, though detailed history begins in 1786 when a water driven mill was built by Tomas Caunt & Co. Silk thread production began in the 1800s and continued until the outbreak of the Second World War. The army then requisitioned the building to billet men. At that time the mill wheel and machinery were removed. Today the old mill has been developed as apartments.*

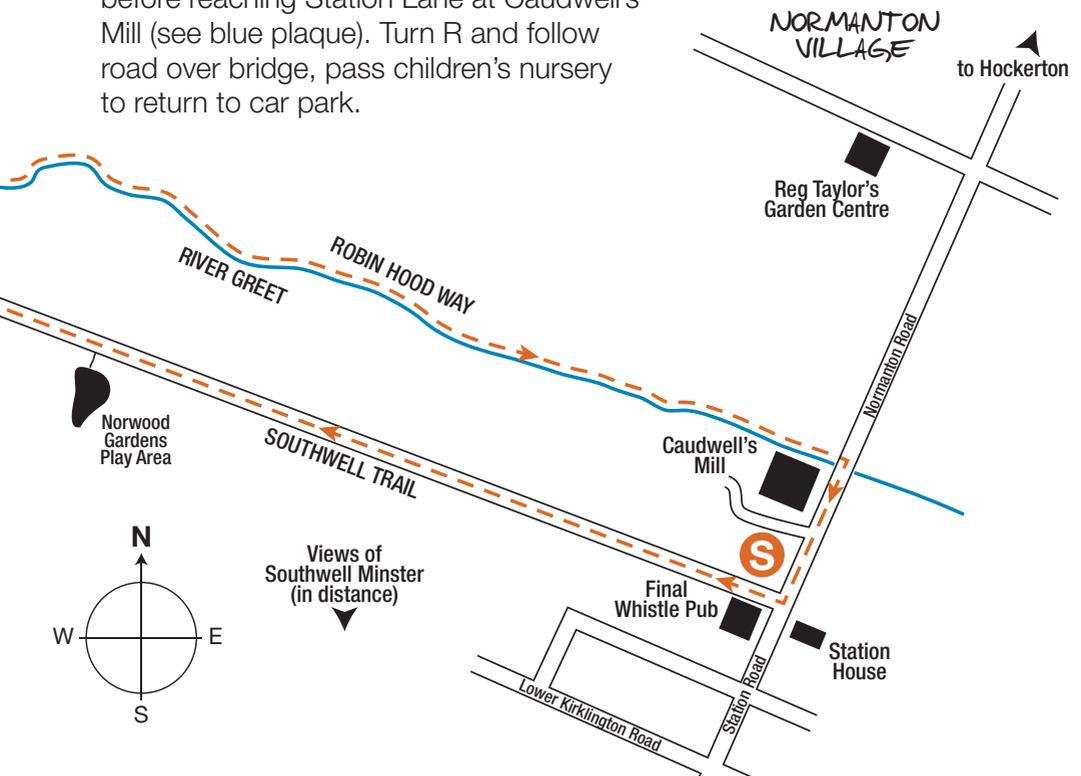




Old Station House.



Beyond “The Old Silk Mill” (see blue plaque on L) bear L and cross River Greet via metal gate/footbridge at sluice, then onto second gate/footbridge. Bear R and follow meandering river bank path (Robin Hood Way) always keeping the river on your R, ignoring faint path joining from R. Eventually the spires of Southwell Minster can be viewed on your R. Pass by industrial estate before reaching Station Lane at Caudwell’s Mill (see blue plaque). Turn R and follow road over bridge, pass children’s nursery to return to car park.



# WALK TWO - KIRKLINGTON / EDINGLEY BECK

**ALLOW 90 MINUTES (approx 6 miles)**

Map not to scale - For further detail refer to OS Explorer Map 270 (Sherwood Forest).

**Key: (S) Start, (L) Left, (R) Right**

From Southwell Trail Kirklington car park, go along the track back up to the road.

*You will pass the old Kirklington Station (private house), you can see the remains of the front edge of the blue brick platform.*



Turn L at the road. At the next T junction turn R, then cross road to follow footpath on L skirting Osmanthorpe Manor. Cross footbridge on L and follow footpath to cross second footbridge on R, by lake. Follow diagonal footpath, bearing L, at the hedgerow go L alongside field to tarmac road. Keep going straight on passing Kirklington school on R. At the T junction turn R and follow road to a small post box. Opposite on the left, after the house named “Sharnbrook/Skyfall House”, cross road and turn L onto a track.

Go over stile and follow footpath alongside field, skirting in front of copse, up the hill alongside hedgerow and down to the lake on the River Greet. Go over the bridge, turn L at farm track and then almost immediately turn R onto tarmac track to the footpath alongside ditch/hedge on L.



Follow footpath keeping hedge on R and willow plantation on L (this may have been harvested for biomass). Turn R at the end of this field and follow footpath, initially hedge on L then open fields, to join the Trail at the junction with Brickyard Lane.

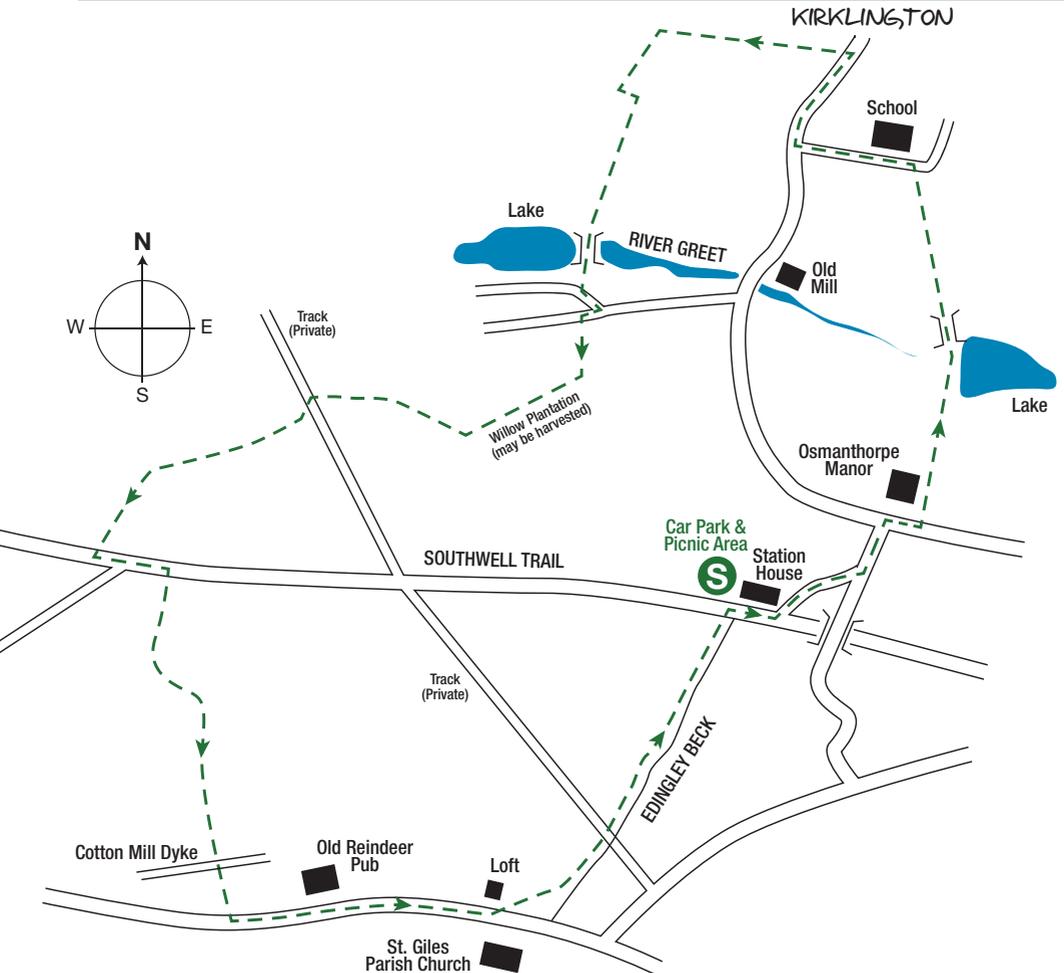
Pumping Station

Track from Brickyard Lane

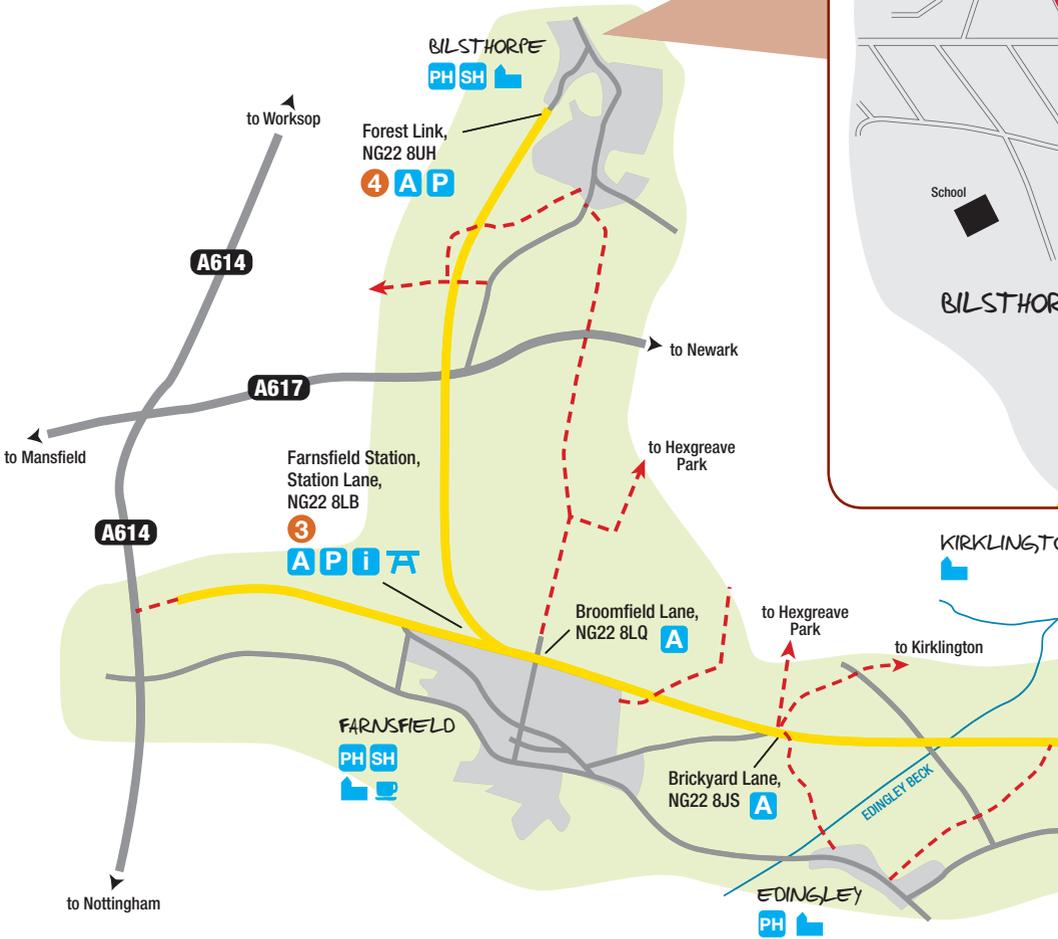
Turn L towards Southwell and after about 50m take footpath on R through fields, crossing Cotton Mill Dyke, to emerge on road in Edingley. Turn L and go past the 'Old Reindeer' pub. Opposite St Giles' Church take the footpath on the L alongside Edingley Beck. Follow this footpath through several fields back to the Trail. Turn R to return to the car park.



*Look out to see the high steel structure of a loading gauge, which has been used as the Friends of Southwell Trail logo. There is a picnic area here.*



# THE SOUTHWELL TRAIL

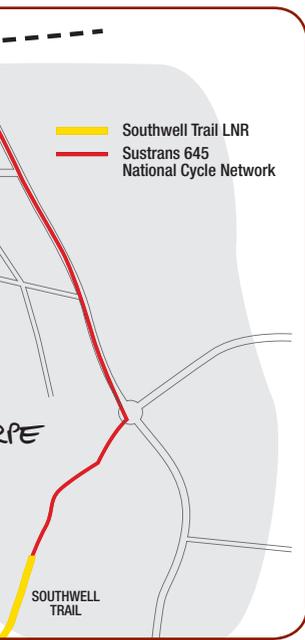


- Southwell Trail LNR
- - - Southwell Heritage Trail
- · - · Public Footpath

- A** Trail Access
- P** Car Park
- i** Information Board
- T** Toilets
- PH** Public House
- SH** Shops
- TA** Picnic Area
- 🏠** Church
- ☕** Tearoom

- 1** Start Walk 1
- 2** Start Walk 2
- 3** Start Walk 3
- 4** Start Walk 4

In addition to the rights of way shown on the map, all of the Southwell Trail is a public bridleway.



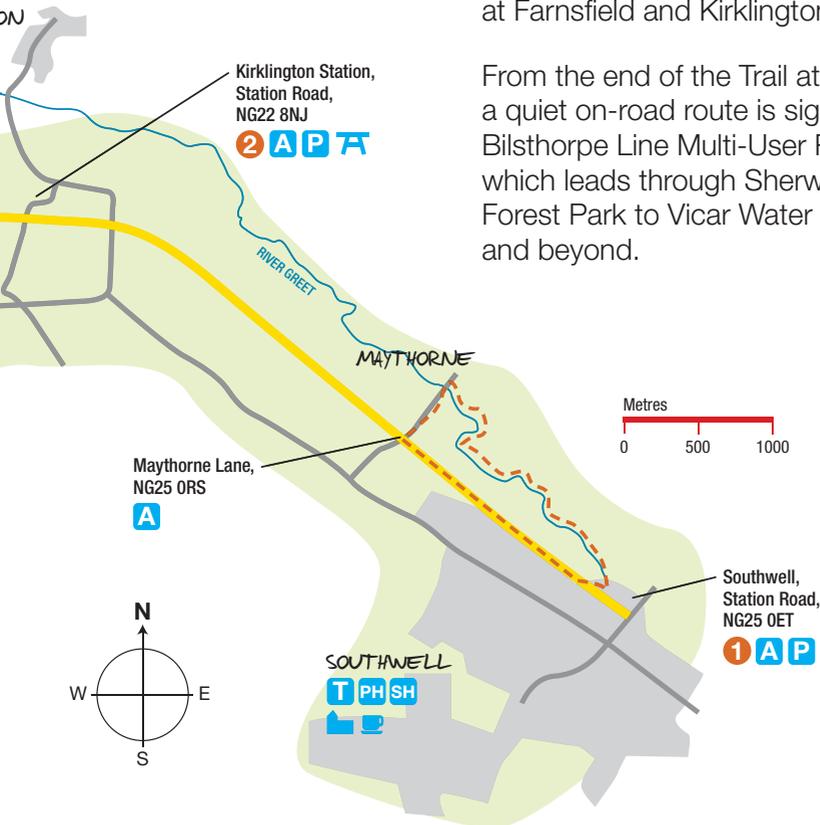
The Trail can be accessed in a number of places, particularly around the main settlements of Southwell, Edingley, Farnsfield and Bilsthorpe.

Car parks can be found at:

- Station Road, Southwell, NG25 0ET.
- Kirklington Station, Station Road, NG22 8NJ.
- Farnsfield Station, Station Lane, NG22 8LB.
- Forest Link, Bilsthorpe, NG22 8UH.

Postcodes given are the nearest to each car park. Picnic facilities can also be found at Farnsfield and Kirklington Stations.

From the end of the Trail at Bilsthorpe a quiet on-road route is signed to the Bilsthorpe Line Multi-User Route (MUR), which leads through Sherwood Pines Forest Park to Vicar Water Country Park and beyond.



# WHAT TO SEE - SIGHTS & SOUNDS OF THE TRAIL

## Southwell

The first part of the Trail travels through suburban Southwell with houses and industrial units on either side. After a short distance open countryside appears to the north while the town extends to the south. This section of the Trail is home to a wide variety of garden birds, including blue tits and chaffinches which can readily be seen and heard!



Red Admiral

## Maythorne

At Maythorne the Trail acts as a wildlife corridor through agricultural land. The semi-natural habitat of scrub woodland with occasional grass glades provides a home to many species that find open arable fields inhospitable. Butterflies including Speckled Wood, Comma and Red Admiral are a common sight during the summer months. You might be lucky to see a Sparrow Hawk hunting along the woodland edge of the Trail and Buzzards which are an increasingly common sight in the skies above.

A short distance from Maythorne you will cross the Halam Beck. The Beck is a tributary of the River Greet, which rises near Kirklington before flowing through Southwell to its confluence with the River Trent at Fiskerton.

## Kirklington

The species rich meadows at Kirklington are typical of the underlying Mercia Mudstone. See if you can spot colourful Bluebells, Cowslips and Pink Campion.

From here the Trail again crosses open countryside giving expansive views to the rising ground on either side. The woodland on the northern horizon includes Dukes Wood, where oil was discovered in 1939 with the oil field producing 6.5 million barrels of oil before being abandoned in 1966. Look south to see a long ridge of Mercia Mudstone, known as the Oxtan Ramper.



Blue Tit

## Farnsfield/Bilsthorpe

Some 100 metres east of Farnsfield Station the main Trail turns north heading for Bilsthorpe. Almost immediately it is clear that the nature of the landscape has changed with Sherwood Sandstone now being the underlying rock. The sandstone supplies poor, acidic soil, which supports open grassland and scrub. These habitats dominate the cuttings on the way to Bilsthorpe with Broom and Gorse seen in abundance.

## The Southwell Trail Rail History

The first section of the Southwell railway opened in July 1847. It was 2.5 miles long branching off the Nottingham- Lincoln line at Rolleston Junction (Southwell Junction). In 1853 due to running costs horses replaced the steam train and one carriage ran per week. During 1860 Midland Rail (MR) re-introduced the steam train, complete with a new station at Rolleston Junction.

MR proposed to develop the line from Southwell to Mansfield. Stations were built at Kirklington and Farnsfield. The timber Southwell station was taken down and moved to Beeston and a new stone station was constructed. The Mansfield section opened 3rd April 1871. This new line was not only for passengers but also carried agricultural goods for surrounding farms. One train service dedicated to collecting milk churns became known as the Milk Train.

1899 was the line's busiest year with 29,542 passengers. By 1920s there were 2 to 3 trains per day from Southwell to Mansfield taking 40 mins. Twenty trains ran each day from Southwell to Rolleston.

Coal mines opened up at Blidworth and Bilsthorpe in the 1920s. This coal was carried on the line and as the coal traffic increased the line became twin track.

Passenger take up declined, forcing the closure of a passenger service on 12th August 1929. In 1930 the Farnsfield/Ollerton branch opened (The Mid- Notts Joint Railway) to serve the collieries and Eakring oil wells. No stations were provided on this branch line.



The service from Southwell to Rolleston remained with 17 departures daily. A single carriage pulled by the much loved Paddy locomotive 58065 being a 0-4-4T built pre 1923 by Johnson. On 10th January 1955 the Southwell engine shed closed so Paddy was taken from service. Steam engines were then provided from Newark until 1959.

After the cessation of passenger services, when intermediate stations from Southwell to Mansfield were closed, the line was used for freight services until 1964. From 1965 to 1968 sections of the line were progressively closed.

By 1968 stations and buildings were removed or sold and the line taken over by the National Coal Board.

# WALK THREE - FARNSFIELD / HEXGREAVE ESTATE

**ALLOW 80 MINUTES (approx 5 miles)**

Map not to scale - For further detail refer to OS Explorer Map 270 (Sherwood Forest).

**Key: (S) Start, (E) East, (L) Left, (R) Right, (LH) Left Hand**

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From Southwell Trail Farnsfield car park, head E.

*Farnsfield Station was built in 1871 and it was closed in 1929. The building next to the car park, now named "The Old Goods Yard" (private house) was the old engine shed. To the right of this, a spur of the Trail passes the Station House on the left and the old platform on the right, now covered with heavy vegetation.*



Cross over Broomfield Lane, continue on Trail past pumping station (on R) to the junction with the Brickyard Lane track, emerging from R.

*The brick built pumping station was opened on 5th August 1898. It was originally steam driven to supply water to Newark. It is still in use today having been operated by electricity since 1973.*

At the bench turn L crossing field straight towards a single central tree (if field cropped, follow LH field edge) reaching a tarmac track outside Lower Hexgreave Farm. Go left along road to the T junction. On the corner go through gap in hedge opposite (stile). Cross a field, through a spinney and cross another field (with stiles) and enter the deer park through boundary kissing gate. Follow fence line and exit deer park via second

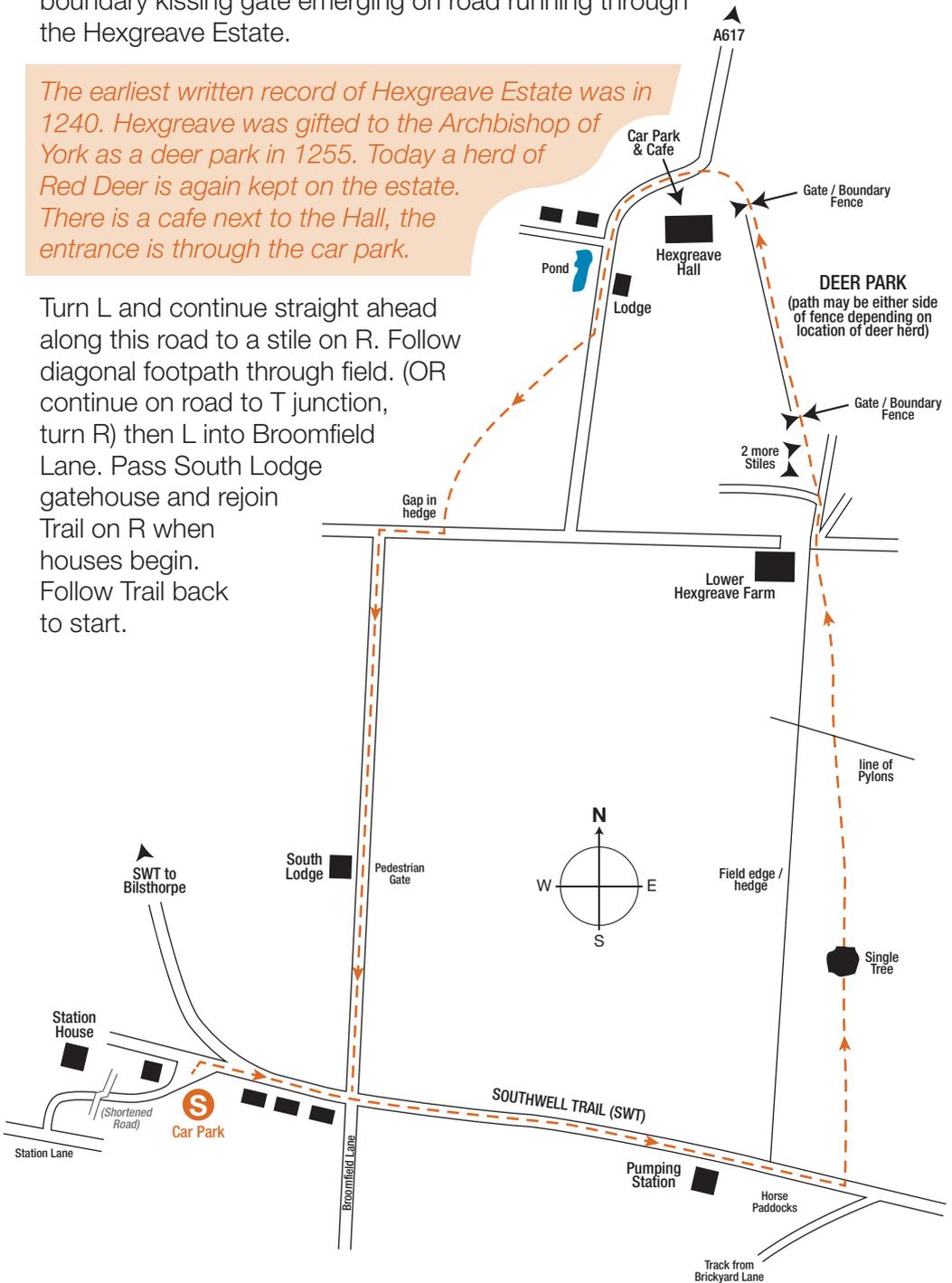


**Hexgreave Hall**

boundary kissing gate emerging on road running through the Hexgreave Estate.

*The earliest written record of Hexgreave Estate was in 1240. Hexgreave was gifted to the Archbishop of York as a deer park in 1255. Today a herd of Red Deer is again kept on the estate. There is a cafe next to the Hall, the entrance is through the car park.*

Turn L and continue straight ahead along this road to a stile on R. Follow diagonal footpath through field. (OR continue on road to T junction, turn R) then L into Broomfield Lane. Pass South Lodge gatehouse and rejoin Trail on R when houses begin. Follow Trail back to start.



# WALK FOUR - BILSTHORPE / FARNSFIELD

**ALLOW 2 HOURS (approx 7 miles)**

Map not to scale - For further detail refer to OS Explorer Map 270 (Sherwood Forest).

**Key: (S) Start, (L) Left, (R) Right, (LH) Left Hand**

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From Southwell Trail, Bilsthorpe car park, off Forest Link, head South along the Trail towards Farnsfield.

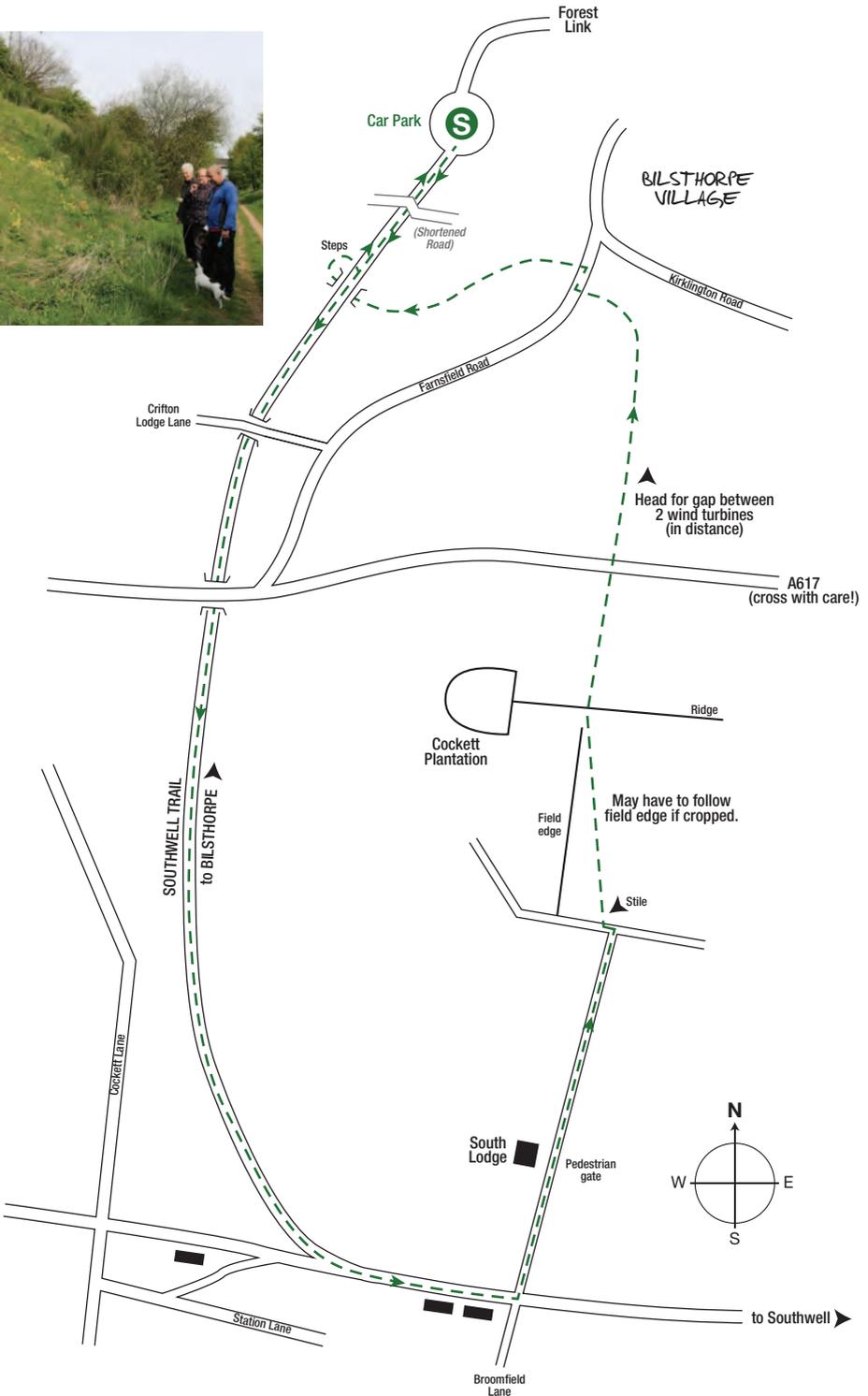
*This section of the Trail was a railway serving the Bilsthorpe Colliery and Brickworks. The Trail is wide here near the car park as this was the location of the sidings. The railway served Bilsthorpe Colliery until the line was closed. The colliery opened in 1925 to the east of Kirklington Road beyond the existing Trail and closed in 1997.*

When you come to a fork, turn L. The Trail curves round to the left to meet the Trail from Farnsfield car park towards Southwell, follow this footpath to go L along the Trail and head E to Broomfield Lane.



Turn L along Broomfield Lane, pass South Lodge gatehouse to T junction. Continue straight on over stile onto footpath across field (may have to follow left hand field edge if cropped). Follow alongside hedge in next field and ascend to ridge. Continue downhill to reach and cross A617 (cross with care!), then continue uphill (heading

for gap between furthest 2 LH wind turbine towers) to reach the tall hedgerow with row of red roof/brick bungalows at top of field/hill. Turn L at the corner of this tall hedgerow and follow this hedge/field edge to road. At the road turn R towards Bilsthorpe. Just before the junction with Kirklington Road take footpath on L through fields, with hedge on L then across field, to reach the Trail (via under bridge and go up steps on R). Turn L on Trail to return to Bilsthorpe car park.



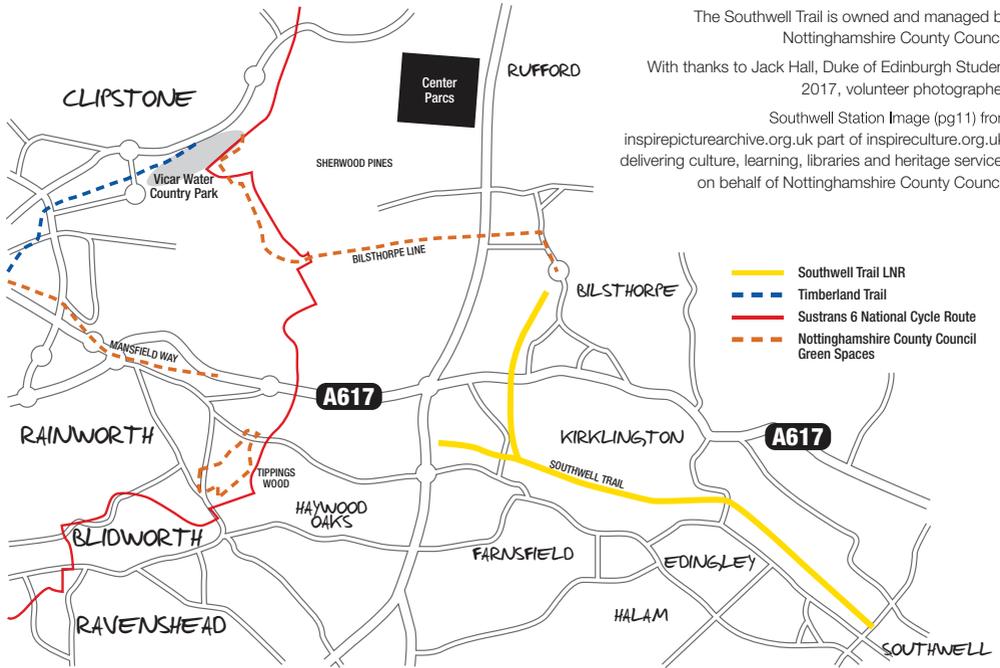
# Where to find THE SOUTHWELL TRAIL

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