



Royal
Geographical
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From pit to plantation

A self guided walk around Overseal and Moira in the National Forest



Find out how a landscape was shaped by the discovery of coal
Discover the last traces of South Derbyshire's industrial heritage
Explore one of Britain's boldest environmental projects

www.discoveringbritain.org

the stories of our landscapes
discovered through walks





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Cover image: Wadlands Wood © Barry Morson

From pit to plantation

Discover a forest in the making

Did you know that one of Europe's boldest environmental projects has transformed a maligned and scarred landscape of clay pits and coal mines into a brand new forest?

This 7 mile walk takes you through a corner of northwest Leicestershire and south Derbyshire.

Find out how a once barren wasteland was transformed by the discovery of coal. See the last remaining trace of industries including coal mining, clay extraction and lime burning.



Sunlit leaves in The National Forest
© Ben Hall / 2020Vision

Discover how today derelict buildings and pit waste have been transformed into brand new woods, lakes, walking trails and parkland.



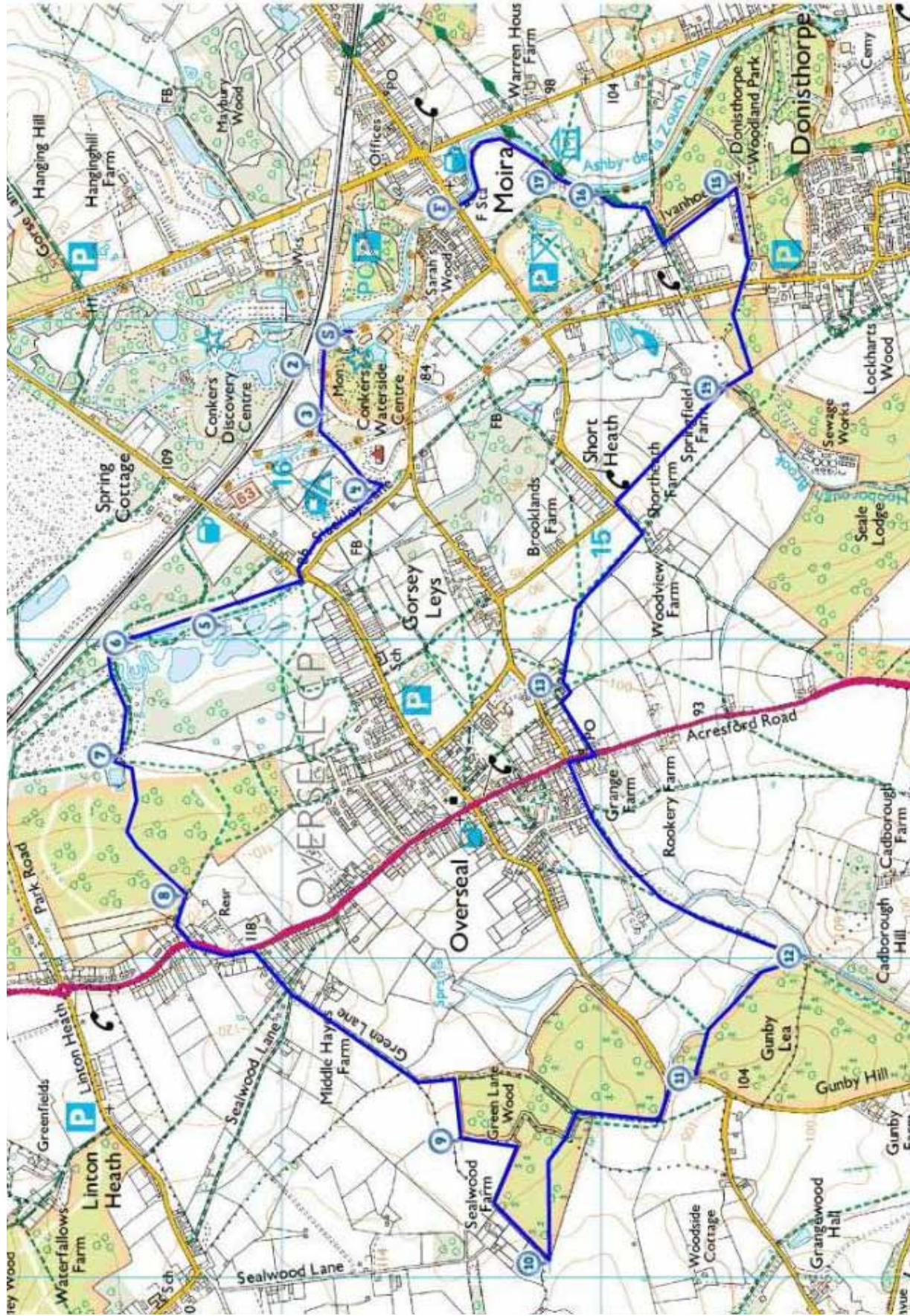
Burnet moth
© Barry Morson

This is a rare opportunity to experience the birth of brand new woodlands.

Enjoy the forest in its different stages of evolution, from young saplings to hale and hearty oak, ash, silver birch and conifers.

Find out how local farmers and landowners are converting their land to woods and wildlife ponds. Discover why rare butterflies, flowers, skylarks and even nightingales are returning to this area once more.

Route overview



Practical information

| | |
|---------------------------|---|
| Location | Northwest Leicestershire and South Derbyshire, East Midlands |
| Start & finish | Conkers Waterside, Overseal, DE12 6BA |
| Getting there | <p>Car - Overseal is on the A444, 5 miles south of Burton-upon-Trent and 3 miles north of the M42 (Junction 11). Also 5 miles west of Ashby-de-la-Zouch via the B5003.</p> <p><i>From Overseal:</i> take the B5003 and under the railway bridge take the first left. <i>From Ashby:</i> follow the B5003 through Moira towards Overseal. Turn right at the brown sign to Conkers Waterside.</p> <p>Bus - Overseal is served by hourly buses running between Burton-upon-Trent, Ashby-de-la-Zouch and Measham. The nearest stop is on Main Street. Begin the walk by walking south along the A444, cross the Moira Road and take the footpath on the left between the cottages.</p> <p>Bicycle - National Cycle Route 63 passes Overseal on the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail</p> |
| Walk distance | 7 miles |
| Level | Moderate – A generally flat route along field paths, woodland tracks and the Moira Canal path. There are four stiles to cross. |
| Conditions | The fields can be muddy after rain, so wear suitable shoes. |
| Suitable for | <p>Families – take care of children by the canal path</p> <p>Dogs – must be kept on a lead beside the canal path</p> |
| Other info | You may want to take a pair of binoculars to spot wildlife. |

Refreshments

Places on the walk route to buy food and drink include:

- Conkers Waterside café (Stop 1)
- YHA café (Stop 4)
- The Hub café near Moira Furnace (Stop 17)

There are also designated picnic areas for families between Conkers Waterside and the Youth Hostel, at Moira Limekilns and at Moira Furnace.

Toilets

Public toilets are available at the start and end of the route. Both have baby changing facilities:

- Conkers Waterside (Stop 1)
- Moira Furnace (Stop 17)

Family-friendly activities

The National Forest hosts regular family-friendly events throughout the year. To find out more see their online events calendar: www.nationalforest.org/visit

Conkers family entertainment park has indoor and outdoor venues (Discovery Park and Waterside) with children's activities, cafe, gardens, walks and more. (Tel: 01283 216633)

Moira Furnace Museum is open 1pm to 3pm from Tue to Fri and 11am to 3pm at weekends. £2 entry, £3 with guided tour. Tea shop. Boat trips available for £3.50, booking advised (Tel: 01283 224667)

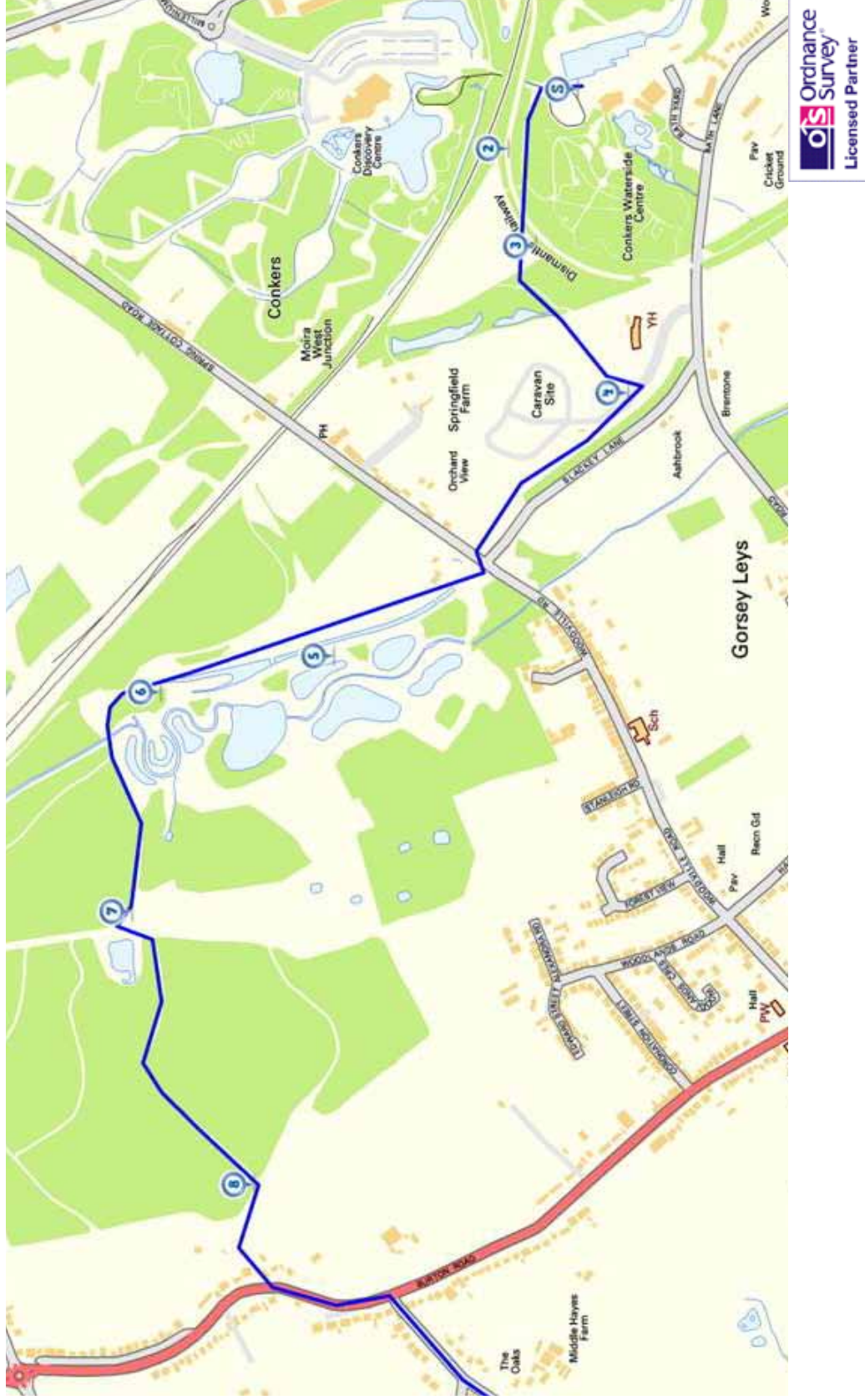
Moira Canal Festival takes place each May, usually at Moira Furnace. The weekend-long programme includes boat rides, refreshments and live music. For tickets Tel: 01530 515273

Sharpe's Pottery Museum is open from 10am to 4.30pm Mon to Sat. Free entry (donations welcome). Includes a children's play zone, shop and café (Tel: 01283 222600)

Tourist information

Swadlincote Tourist Information Centre is inside Sharpe's Pottery Museum, West Street, Swadlincote, DE11 9DG

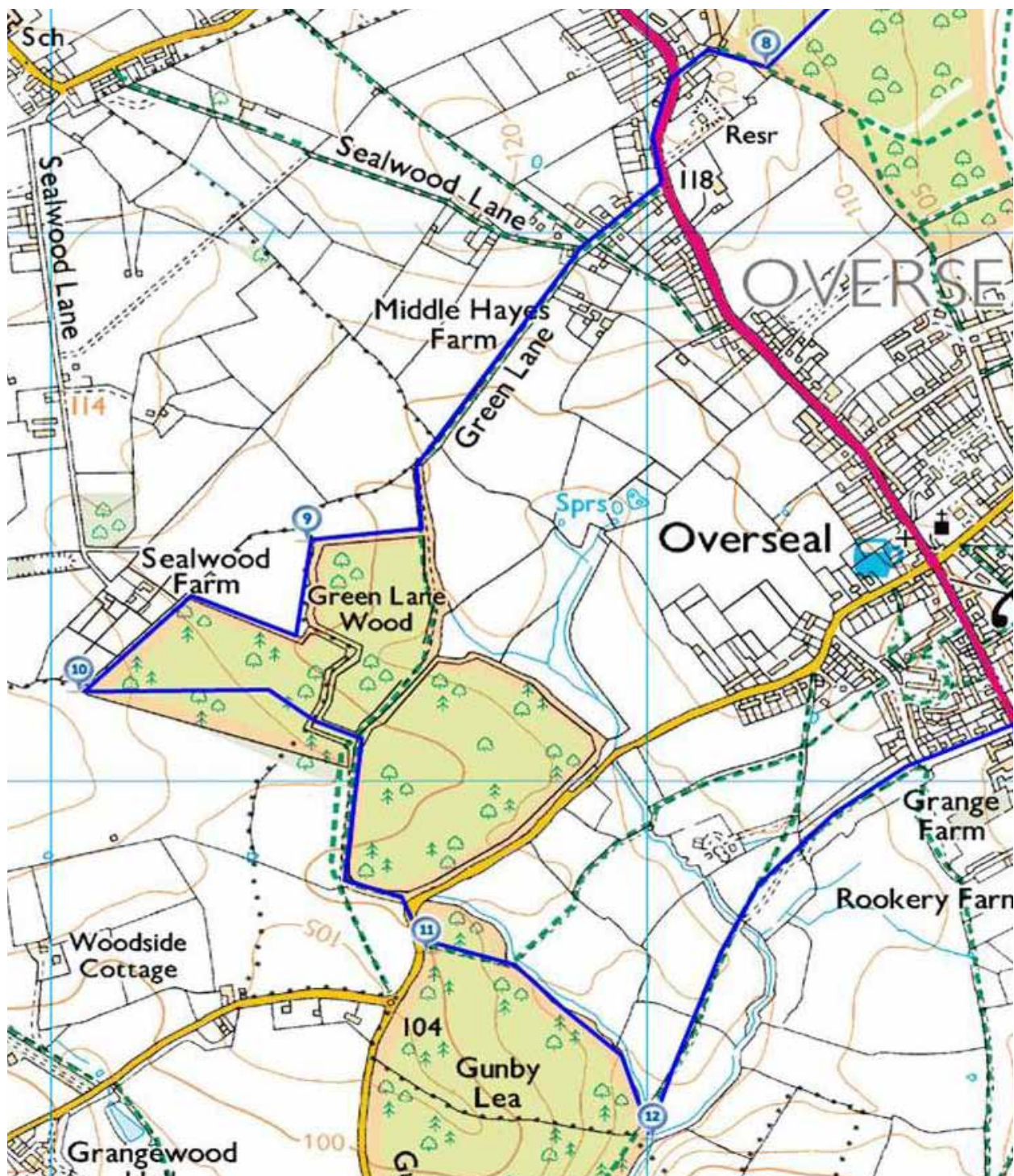
Detail of the first part of the route



Stopping points

- | | |
|---|---|
| 1. Conkers Waterside car park | 5. Coal seam post, Towpath Site |
| 2. 1st stone bench, former site of Rawdon Colliery | 6. Wadlands Wharf, Towpath Site |
| 3. 2nd stone bench, former site of Rawdon Colliery | 7. Edge of poplar plantation, Towpath Site |
| 4. YHA National Forest | 8. Stile at Wadlands Wood |

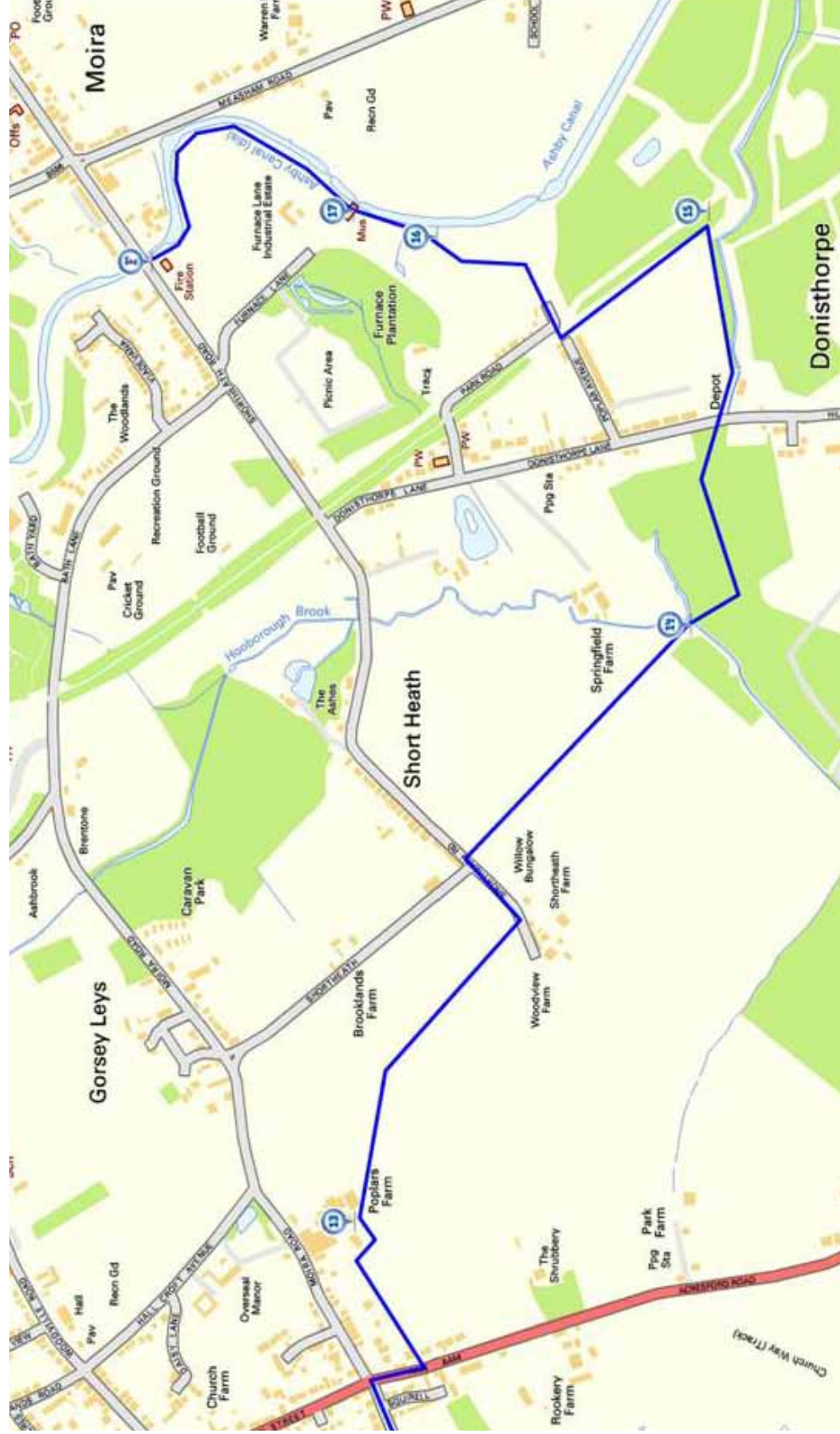
Detail of the middle part of the route



Stopping points

- 8. Stile at Wadlands Wood
- 9. View to Mease Lowlands, corner of Green Lane Wood
- 10. Stile at Gunby Lea Woodland
- 11. View of Broomfields Wood
- 12. Pond at Dead Dane's Bottom

Detail of the last part of the route



Stopping points

- 13.** Barn buildings at Poplars Farm
- 14.** Mary's Wood
- 15.** Donisthorpe Woodland Park, site of Donisthorpe Colliery **F.** Moira Lock
- 16.** Moira limekilns
- 17.** Moira Furnace

Directions

Listen to each track then read the directions in the boxes below to get to the next stop.

1. Welcome to the Heart of the National Forest Conkers Waterside

Directions 1

From Conkers Waterside car park, go between the children's play area and the canal basin. Keep the miniature railway on your left. Just before the tunnel turn left over the level crossing onto the Ennstone Trail. Stop when you reach a grassy area to the left of the path with a stone picnic table and listen to Track 2.

2. From black coal to green trees First stone bench on the Ennstone Trail

Directions 2

Walk under the railway bridge and follow the gravel track uphill. Stop at the next stone bench and listen to Track 3.

3. Merry-go-round Second stone bench on the Ennstone Trail

Directions 3

Continue up the track until you reach a footpath sign on the left. Take the route signposted towards Measham. At the next junction go through the narrow metal barrier straight ahead between the modern Youth Hostel on the left and a Camping and Caravanning site on the right. Stop on the access road to look over at the Youth Hostel building and listen to Track 4.

4. Wake up in the forest YHA National Forest

Directions 4

Cross the access road and follow a surfaced path to the right. The path goes downhill to reach a road at the edge of Spring Cottage. Cross the road and turn left. Pass the county boundary sign to a metal gate on the right and a footpath sign. Follow the hardcore path uphill and walk alongside a canal on the right. Pass several ponds on the left. Stop when you reach a low black post listing the names of the different coal seams and listen to Track 5.

5. Where there's muck there's brass

Coal seam post, Towpath Site

Directions 5

Continue along the towpath. Stop at the end of the short stretch of canal on the right and listen to Track 6.

6. Black gold

Wadlands Wharf, end of the canal at Towpath Site

Directions 6

Just after the end of the canal turn left. Turn left again at a fork in the path. With a pond on your left, follow a stony path uphill towards the plantation of tall straight trees. When the stony path bends up to the right, turn left through a gap in the fence. Turn right then walk uphill to the edge of woodland. Stop and look back across the site we have just walked along and listen to Track 7.

7. Wildlife returns

Poplar plantation, Ashby Woulds

Directions 7

Take the middle track through the poplar plantation, which veers left through rows of trees eventually heading for a phone mast on higher ground. Turn right at the top of the hill and then left to a gate and a stile. Stop by the stile. Look at the wood ahead and listen to Track 8.

8. Timber!

Gate and stile into Wadlands Wood

Directions 8

Cross the stile then follow the lane to a road. Turn left at the busy A444 then walk downhill. When you reach the fenced-in reservoir on your left cross over the road carefully. Turn right down Green Lane which becomes unsurfaced. At the end bear left at the metal gate into Green Lane Wood where the path splits in two. Follow the hedgerow on the right round a corner. Where the path bends to the left, walk between two posts to view the surrounding area of newly-planted trees. Stop here and listen to Track 9.

9. From farms to forests

View of the Mease Lowlands, corner of Green Lane Wood

Directions 9

Go through the gap and head for the information board in the middle of the new plantation. Bear left to another gap in the hedgerow with a wooden plank bridge. Pass through and keep the hedge on your right with paddocks beyond to where the woodland finishes. Stop by the stile. Look across the fields to a mature wood on the horizon and listen to Track 10.

10. Ancient and modern

Stile at Gunby Lea Woodland

Directions 10

Cross the stile into Gunby Lea Woodland. Take the middle path to reach the power cables and turn right to cross another stile. Keep the hedge on your left. At the junction of paths turn right. Continue on the path ahead with a fence on your left and a row of trees on the right. When you reach the road, cross over with care and turn right. Go uphill until you reach a metal gate and gap on the left into Broomfields Wood. Stop here and listen to Track 11.

11. A forest in the making

Broomfields Wood

Directions 11

Take the path on the left and walk downhill keeping the hedgerow on your left. Ignore the first plank bridge off on your left. When you reach the second plank bridge, walk up to a gap in the hedge just to your right where you should have a view of a large pond 50 metres ahead. Stop here and listen to Track 12.

12. Wildlife motorways

Pond at Dead Dane's Bottom

Directions 12

Return to the second plank bridge. Cross over it and bear left uphill. Follow a clear path straight ahead through fields towards the house with solar panels on the roof. Emerge onto a residential road and continue ahead to reach the A444. Turn right onto the main road (Acresford Road, Overseal). Cross the road and find the footpath bearing left just past the white cottages. Walk along the rough track and go through the gate with a red brick bungalow on your left. Then turn right through the farm buildings. Turn left and stop facing an open barn. Listen to Track 13.

13. Forests for the future

Barn at Poplars Farm

Directions 13

Bear right by a line of fence posts to cut diagonally across the field. Go through a gap in the hedge and turn right. Keeping the hedge on your right walk towards the brick cottage with two chimneys. Go through a gap to the left of the cottage then turn left to the bottom of the lane. Then turn right to follow a permissive path signposted Mary's Wood. Stop just before the concrete bridge at the bottom of the hill and listen to Track 14.

14. A lasting legacy

Mary's Wood

Directions 14

After crossing the brook continue ahead, veering left through the woodlands. Cross two wooden bridges and go up the steps to a road. Cross over and enter Donisthorpe Woodland Park at the gap between two thick wooden posts. Bear left at the brick bridge. Stop at the bench at the junction of the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail and listen to Track 15.

15. From pit to park

Donisthorpe Woodland Park, site of Donisthorpe Colliery

Directions 15

Follow the Ashby Woulds Heritage Trail signposted towards Moira. Go through the gate and turn right onto Ivanhoe Way. At junction of paths continue on the stony track straight ahead along a woodland tunnel. Turn left and go downhill alongside a wooden fence. Stop with a view of the stone archways and listen to Track 16.

16. Sweetening the land

Moira limekilns

Directions 16

Walk back up the hill to rejoin the path at the top. On your way up, look over to the right to see the large round holes (now covered over) through which the coal and limestone was dropped straight into the kilns. Turn left when you reach the towpath. Stop by the large red brick building next to the canal and listen to Track 17.

17. Blast from the past

Moira Furnace, Ashby Canal

Directions 17

Continue along the canal towpath until you reach the Moira Lock. Listen to Track 18.

18. A forest state of mind

Moira Lock, Ashby Canal

Directions 18

Continue along the canal towpath until you reach Conkers Waterside where you started. We hope you have enjoyed the walk!

Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Dot Morson** for creating and narrating the walk and providing photographs
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Britain's landscapes are wonderful.

There is a tremendous variety within our shores – whether in the countryside, in towns and cities or at the seaside. And every landscape has a story to tell about our past and present.

Discovering Britain is an exciting series of geographically-themed walks that aim to bring these stories alive and inspire everyone to explore and learn more about Britain. Each walk looks at a particular landscape, finding out about how forces of nature, people, events and the economy have created what you see today.

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