U3A WTT Bradgate Park II

Route Summary

Circular Walk around Bradgate Park

Route Overview

Category: Walking  
Rating: Unrated  
Surface: Average  
Parking: Bradgate Arms if you are eating there  
Last Modified: 10th April 2016  
Difficulty: Easy  
Length: 8.270 km / 5.17 mi  
Dog Friendly: Yes  
Refreshments: Cafe at Newtown Linford entrance  
Date Published: 10th April 2016

Description

The walk starts and finishes at the Bradgate Arms, Cropston

Waypoints

1 Bradgate Arms  
(52.69294; -1.18098)
Turn left outside the pub and cross over Station Road. Proceed along towards crossroads and stop just before reaching the thatched cottage on corner by the old road on right.

Cropston is a relatively small linear settlement within the Charnwood forest, centred around the crossroads where all the historic buildings pre-dating the 20th century are found. This is also the Conservation Area. It has its origins in Saxon times and has been known variously through time as Cropstone and, occasionally, Crapstone. Although not mentioned in the Doomsday Book, it most likely existed and would have been included in the figure for the Manor of Groby. It was first mentioned by name in the Leicestershire Survey of 1130 as Cropestone.

These crossroads - Station Road, Cropston Road, Causeway Lane and Reservoir Road represent the core of the village and the historic development centered on this crossing which was close to one of the entrances to Bradgate Park. It remained relatively unchanged until latter half of nineteenth century when the reservoir, and a bit later Rothley Station, were built, when it slowly evolved down Station Road.

Before the reservoir was built in 1870 (more about this later) the main route from Anstey to the Charnwood Forest was diverted across the dam on Reservoir Road, this bit of old road being the original.

Most of the Grade II listed buildings are to be found around this centre, including on Station Road No. 2 The Thatch, Nos 6, 18-20, 3-5, 9 The Old House. On Causeway Lane, Nos 2, 8, 9 and 20 (The Gate House)

Carefully cross over into Causeway Lane, walk down and stop outside the Gate House

No. 20, the Gatehouse incorporates what was the former gatehouse at the entrance to the Park, the earliest part
Carry on down Causeway lane, through one gate and stop just before a second gate into a field on the left is reached with a lovely view across the reservoir.

**Cropston Reservoir**

Built in 1870 in response to the 1831 and 1841 cholera epidemics to serve Leicester, it entailed flooding 140 acres of farmland and the cottage occupied by Joseph Reeves, the Head Keeper of Bradgate Park at the time. 200 m north of the visitor centre is the new Warden's Lodge which was built about the same time to replace the one lost. The Company for the contract was awarded to Benton & Woodwiss of Derby. The water level was raised 2 feet in 1887 to increase capacity. Initially 200 men were employed to build the reservoir and to ensure they were all kept in order the Chief Constable of Leicester wrote a letter relating to the appointment of an additional constable for duty at Bradgate, whose wage would be 20 shillings a week plus clothing, which the Company were forced to pay. Because of rising costs and the program falling behind schedule, the entire operation was taken over by Leicester Corporation when it was recommended that another 100 men employed, plus 24 dobbin carts and 12 horses.

The area had a natural valley, which would be dammed (the present Reservoir Road) and the original road from Cropston to the Charnwood Forest was diverted along the top. The dam was constructed with a centre core of puddled clay obtained from 5 acres of land to the north side of the reservoir, which is still known today as 'puddledykes'. It would be fed by The Bradgate Brook (River Lin). The original steam powered beam engines ran until 1956 and replaced by electrically driven engines. A second, covered reservoir was added on the northern side of the park in the early 1960s.

Also covered by the water was the site of the park's old rabbit warren and at least a part of the area which was occupied by the medieval settlement of Bradgate which in 1377 had 41 taxpayers and 29 about 1400. (was this due to the plagues ??) The village was apparently removed about 1490 when the House and enlarged park were created. Its inhabitants may have been rehoused in Newton Linford.

Go through the gate, turning right to carry on into the Park keeping the reservoir on your right, over a style and just follow the obvious path through a kissing gate and into the park. Carry on until you see a sort of quarry on the left - Stable Pit
The Stable Pit

Site of medieval slate quarry. The rocks at lower end of park and much younger than the ones higher up which we looked at in Park I. Stable Pit represents this, a bit of a jumble. Site of earth movements and heating up rocks during earlier times.

Carry on to main path and turn left

Camp Site

It was 2001 when a few scattered flints were found by a couple walking in Little Matlock. They reported their find to a park ranger thus setting in motion a process of discovery which puts Bradgate Park among the oldest habitable places in England. It is only one of three known open-air campsites from the end of the last Ice Age. So far hundreds of flints have been found in a 5m sq. site. Its called a Creswell camp site, named after the cave-pocked crags on the Notts/Derby border. Although they did not dwell in caves here, the technology they used was of this Creswellian era when rapid climate change about 15,000 years ago led to large tracts of new grassland becoming accessibly to animals such as horses, deer, etc. and this small band of humans also entered this land of plenty and evolved into the Creswellian people. The stone tools technology found reflected the new hunting strategies required to cope with these ecological changes from a warming climate.

Walk up on to ridge follow path along, keeping fairly well left for best view down into valley. Take easiest route down and turn left towards Newtown Linford entrance. Here we can have a 10 minute loo break and/or drink at the cafe near the entrance. Then walk back along path until Wishing Stone.

River Lin

(52.68488; -1.22431)
On the Geology tour it was described as a 'Misfit river' - not formed by ice erosion, but an ancient wadi or river bed. This valley area being created about 225 million years ago when area was just north of equator in a desert zone - a triassic desert - as opposed to 600 million years ago when the upper rocks were formed in a different landscape and during a more violent time in earth's history. The missing 400 million odd years represent a time of opening and closing of ancient oceans, uplift, etc. until it joined together.

Only known as the River Lin where it passes through Newtown Linford and Bradgate Park. It is quite a small river, but nevertheless has been an important water supply for local communities for generations. Throughout its history, particularly during the middle ages, there were frequent disputes regarding rights to water supplies, especially for use for mills. Its source is within Ulverscroft Reserve, where it is called Ulverscroft Brook, which is fed from nearby springs, and it eventually ends up flowing into the River Soar at Quorn.

In this south-west corner of Bradgate Park, the Lin flows through this wooded valley with rocky outcrops known as Little Matlock. Dammed here about 1870 to create a chain of 4 settling ponds, thus enabling the build up of silt to be cleared before flowing into the reservoir. From Cropston Reservoir, it flows into and feeds Swithland Reservoir. It flows out under the name of Bybrook through Swithland parish where it changes to Buddon Brook, and onwards via Quorn into the River Soar.

When Cropston Reservoir was drained for maintenance ?30 or so years ago, an aerial view shows really clearly the course of the river flowing into and out of it.

The Wishing Stone, marks the site of a dam created about 1500 for a pond from which water was carried in the leet which runs north-west to the rear of Bradgate House to supply the daily needs of the residents and to fill the fishpond and power the water mill.

Follow the line of the leat as far as possible until you reach the entry behind the walls of the house.
Northern boundary wall of Bradgate House is where the leat runs into the enclosure to feed the fishpond and on through to power the Water Mill which was housed at the south east end of the Tilt Yard.

When the house is open to the public - Wed, Thurs, Sat & Sunday for few hours, it is possible to walk beside the leat, fishponds and see where the watermill was housed but for now we will walk down to the front of the house, turn left and follow the wall round to corner and just have a look.

Return to the path and turn left walk towards the Hallgates entrance. Turn right onto Roecliffe Road and follow the road over the reservoir dam to return to Bradgate Arms.

If you prefer go over the bridge in front of the house and retrace steps back to boundary wall (make sure you take the leftish path, through the kissing gates and back onto Causeway Lane and the Bradgate Arms.)