

Walk 6 - Ostler's Plantation & Walk 7 - Woods & Water

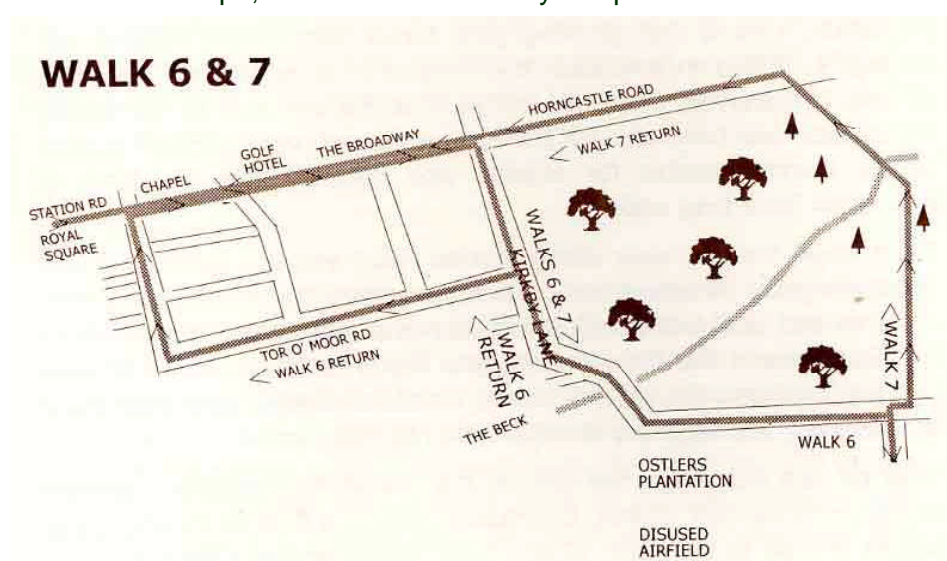
Start from Royal Square - Grid Reference: TF 193631 (or park in Ostlers Plantation - Grid Reference: TF 216629)

Walk 6 goes to, and around, the Forestry Commissions Ostler's Plantation, now a fast growing pine forest with walks marked out through it. It also encompasses the remains of Woodhall Spa's wartime airfield. If preferred, there is a car park at the entrance to the forest, which cuts over two miles off the total walk and makes instant access to the woods possible for anyone who doesn't have the time or inclination for a long walk.

Walk 7 follows 6 initially then follows a right of way that connects Horncastle road to Kirkby Lane. It crosses pine forest and deciduous woodland, and some small watercourses

From Royal Square, walk along Station Road and the Broadway. The point where the two meet was, until recent years, the site of the railway crossing and until the late 50's a station was situated in the centre of the Spa, behind the Broadway shops. This was one of two rail links serving the village, the

second was at Kirkstead Bridge, over a mile out of the Spa in the opposite direction. No rail links remain. Note the refurbished canopies above the six shops that once fronted the railway station.



Walk on past the shops, the church, the chapel, the Golf Hotel and the entrance to the golf course. Eventually, almost a mile from where you began, a road to the right, Kirkby Lane, is signposted Kirky on Bain.

You can opt for Walk 7 (Woods & Water) at this point

Walk 6 only - Turn right here. Follow this shady wood-lined road, soon leaving the residential area behind. On the left is a woodland camping site for the scouts, and on the right the cemetery. The lane winds and crosses a small stream - the Beck - before straightening and rising. to the right, behind the oak trees, the pine woods can be seen. The entrance is about a quarter of a mile further along, on the right, just after a bungalow on the left. It occurs just before the brow of the hill. A short track leads to a small car park. Notice the strip of moorland just before the car park. In August and September it is purple with flowering heather amongst a sea of fine, creamy grasses.

The Kirkby Moor Nature Reserve borders this plantation, the larger portion of it being on the Kirkby on Bain side. Ostler's Plantation is named after the agent of Mr John Parkinson, whose abortive attempts to discover coal led to the founding of the Spa. Early in the 19th century, Mr Ostler planted a fir and oak forest in the area, which he purchased from Parkinson when his employer became bankrupt. Most of that original forest was burnt or cut down. Walking in the present plantation is ideal for the wettest weather as the silver sand drains quickly. Now the trees are growing taller and being thinned out, grasses and ferns are springing up between the pine-needles.

The walks of differing lengths, are marked out here, and include parts of the old airfield. The geometric grid on which the forest is laid out, however, makes it easier to find your way along the wide rides and smaller avenues.

The airfield constructed in 1942, is one of more than 50 that were operational in the County during the last war. Some of it has been planted with conifers and lies beyond the more mature forest, about half a

mile from the car park. The taxiways, and many of the bunkers and standings are still intact, though overgrown by bracken, elderberry and bramble. It's rich with wartime memories. During 1944 and '45 the famous 617 'Dambuster' Squadron flew Lancaster bombers from here - the Petwood was their Officer's Mess. If you're lucky you may, in fact, see overhead the last remaining flying Lancaster in the UK - the aircraft's distinctive throaty roar is unmistakable; the Battle of Britain Memorial Flight is based at nearby RAF Coningsby.

At the edge of the planted airfield you can look over the fields to Tattershall Castle in one direction, Kirkstead Abbey ruin in another and across gentle undulations to the houses of Woodhall Spa in another. This is an ideal spot to view the beautiful Lincolnshire sunsets - and it must have been a welcome site to those returning from the ill-fated battles at Arnhem!



One word of warning, in the summer adders can sometimes be found basking on the airfield; so take care with children and dogs. Retrace your steps, or follow the marked routes, back to the car park at Ostler's Plantation. If walking back, return to Kirkby Lane and turn left, retracing your footsteps until you reach the 30mph limit. Follow the footpath until you reach Tor 'o' Moor Road, to the left. Turn here. This residential road is connected to the main Broadway by several avenues that branch to the right. You may take one of these, or choose to follow the road, which eventually swings sharp right to become Stanhope Avenue.

Follow this up to the T-junction with the Broadway and the shops, passing the Woodhall Spa Hotel. This hotel has recently been refurbished and was previously known as the Eagle Lodge Hotel. Prior to that it served as a County Council home for the elderly. Royal Square is only a short distance away.

Walk 7 - Woods & Water

The initial part of this walk is identical to Walk 6.

Walk past the entrance to Ostler's Plantation, and a few feet further on, to the left, you will see a drive leading to some houses. Follow this through a small patch of deciduous woodland until reaching a gate to the plantation proper, also called Ostler's Plantation. Go through this and straight ahead. The trees here are smaller than in the nearby forest in Walk 6. Follow this path until it bears to the left, then turn with it. Just before you do turn left you will see ahead, just beyond the pines, the birch and oak of the Moor Farm Nature Reserve.

The earth is still sandy here; further on it is inclined to become muddy in wet weather. Dividing the young pine, some mixed woodland and an area of very tall, mature Douglas Firs and Christmas Trees, the Beck passes under the path - this is the same stream met lower on its course on the way up Kirkby Lane.

To your right you will now be able to see through the trees the chalets of Bainland Park, to the left the tall pines tower over the path. Follow the track straight ahead, where the ground rises. You will then cross into a broad band of deciduous wood - look out for the Lillies-of-the-Valley in May.

The path turns sharp right to follow the perimeter fence of Bainland Park. If you fancy refreshments, a footpath leads into Bainland Park approximately 100 yards after the sharp right turn. Otherwise continue on, keeping the poultry farm to your right, until you reach Horncastle Road beside the farm gates. Turn left onto Horncastle Road. After about 100 yards, on the right hand side to the rear of one of the bungalows, you will be able to see the Tower on the Moor - the Woodhall Spa emblem. It is believed to date from the 15th century as a lookout tower and hunting lodge for nearby Tattershall Castle. Originally a pond, or lake was created near it. There was also a secret passage - long lost - to Tattershall Castle. Unfortunately, it is not possible to walk up to the Tower unless you are playing golf. Continue along Horncastle Road, The Broadway and Station Road, back to Royal Square.