

River Leen from Source to the Trent: Section 1 – Larch Farm/ Newstead to Papplewick Moor



Linear walk following the River Leen from near its source through Newstead Abbey Park and Papplewick to Papplewick Moor. The path is mostly away from the river; but the waters of the Leen can be explored in the lakes of Newstead Abbey. We pass Papplewick Hall and St James' Church Papplewick, then follow the remains of a former leat system through Moor Pond Woods, where waters from the Leen were used to power cotton mills.

Start	A - Larch Farm bus stop on A60 near crossroads with B6020 Alternative starting points: A2 – Thieves Wood Parking & Picnic Area in Normanshill Wood, just off B6139 (grid reference 542558) A3 – Newstead Abbey Gates – bus stop on A60 A4 – Newstead Village - train station A5 – Car Park Newstead Abbey Note: for A3/4/5 access to route only when Newstead open and access/ parking charges apply
Finish	Papplewick Moor – bus stop at Papplewick Lane End on Moor Road
Distance	c 5 miles/ 8km
Time	2-3 hours
Terrain	Footpaths and pavements; some shared pedestrian/ cycle paths
Travel Information	Pronto bus along A60; 141 bus in Papplewick & Papplewick Moor and Newstead Abbey gates; train and bus 3A to Newstead Village
Maps	OS Explorer 270 Sherwood Forest
Facilities/ Refreshments	Larch Farm; Newstead Abbey; Papplewick; Linby (off route)

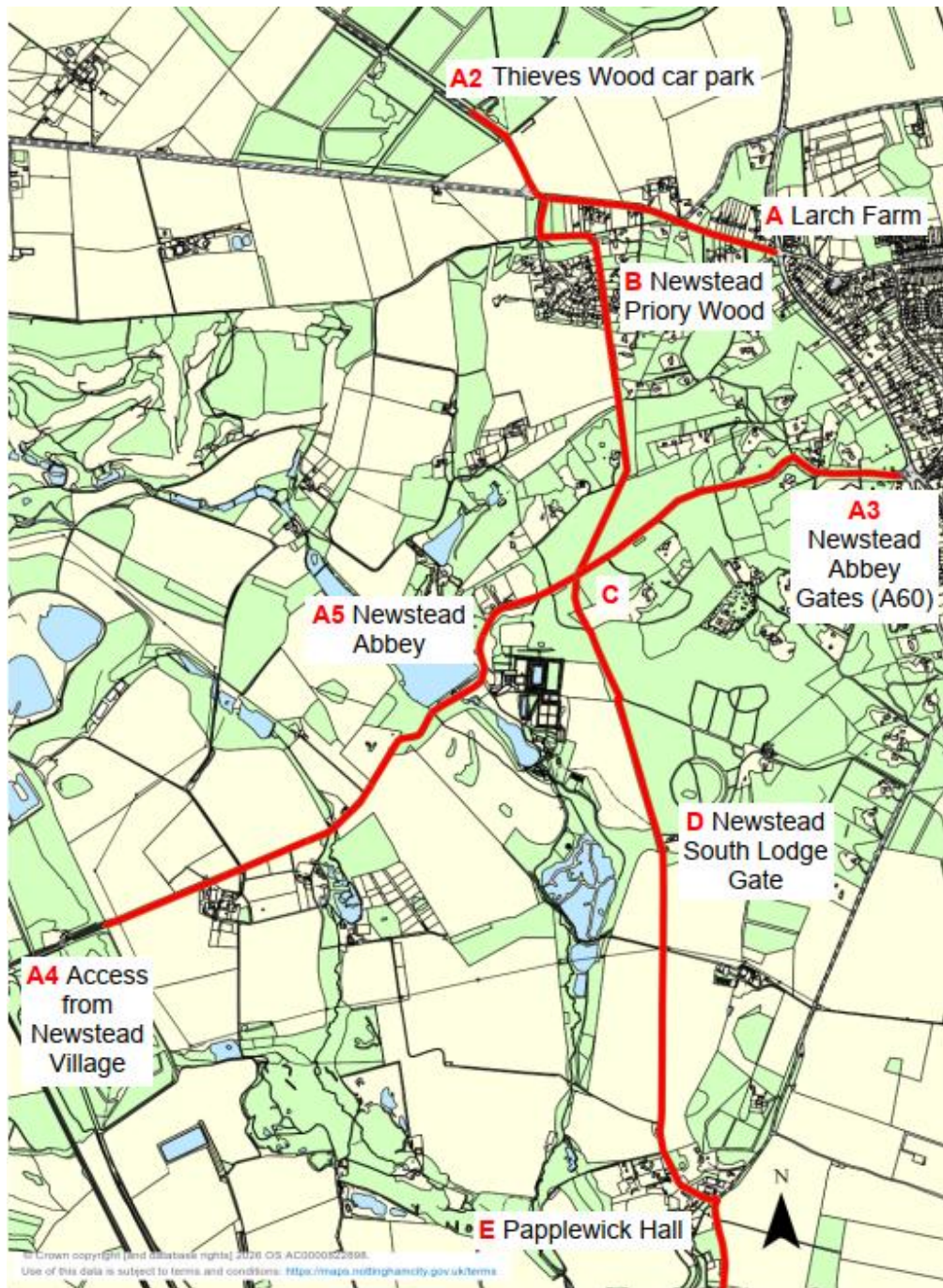
Pictures clockwise from top left: Source of Leen on Hollinwell Golf Course; lakes at Newstead Abbey; cottages in Papplewick Village; remains of leat system in Moor Pond Woods; St James Church Papplewick.

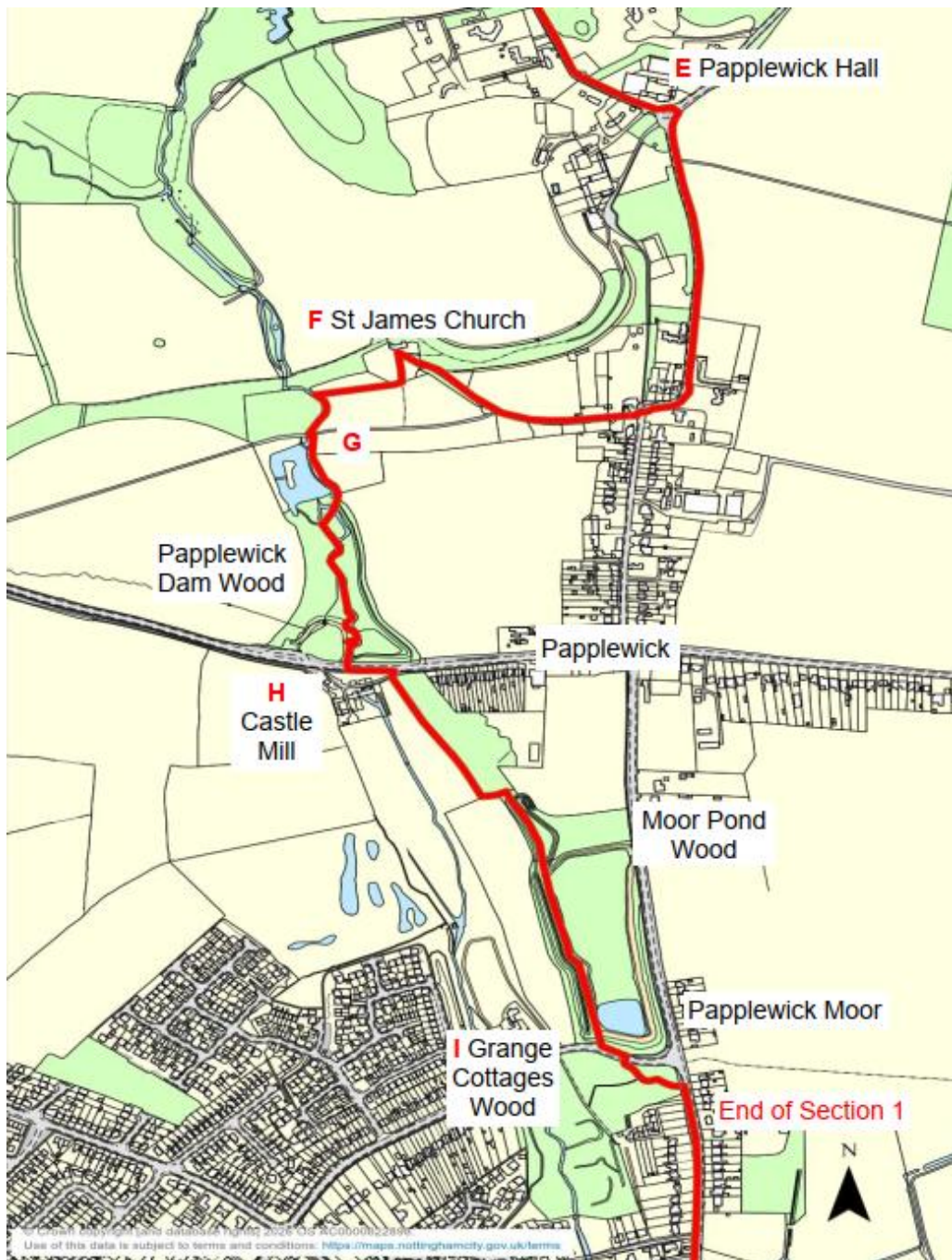
The walk is on publicly accessible paths and open spaces, most of which are rights of way; some paths are on private land where public access is by permission of the owner.

Route Description

Start Point:

1. We describe the route from **Larch Farm bus stop (A)** on the A60. If coming by car you can park in **Thieves Wood (A2)** and can follow the Robin Hood Way south from the car park to reach the B6020; cross this at a pedestrian refuge and join the walk on High Leys Drive.
 2. In **Newstead Abbey Park**. Join the walk at point C where the Robin Hood Way (at footpath sign) crosses the entrance drive from the A60. The park can be accessed on foot from **Newstead Abbey Gates bus stop on the A60 (A3)**, or **Newstead Station (A4)**. Alternatively, by **parking in Newstead Abbey (A5)**, accessed from entrance gates on the A60. *NB: Options A3, A4 and A5 can only be used when Newstead is open to the public and entrance charges apply.*
- A. From **Larch Farm** bus stop, at the crossroads walk west on the B6020 Kirkby Road to reach High Leys Drive on your left, soon after passing a public footpath sign. Walk down High Leys Drive to reach brick walls marking the entrance to Priory Wood, Ravenshead (formerly Newstead TB Hospital, now residential). Just before this turn left to enter the **Woodland Trust's Newstead Priory Wood** and take the righthand path through trees to reach a wall, where the path turns right. Here you join the Robin Hood Way.
- B. Go through the gate (also with Woodland Trust sign) and continue with wall on your left and fence on your right initially with houses/ gardens on the other side and then woods/ fields. The path undulates to a bench from where you can look to your right across Knightcross Dale. Springs in this area are the nearest we get to the source of the River Leen, which also rises in **Hollinwell Golf Course**, but there is no public access. Continue ahead as the path descends, then climbs and descends again eventually reaching the entrance drive to **Newstead Abbey and Park** in Swinecotte Dale.
- C. Here (*when Newstead Abbey is open to the public*) you may wish to detour for a first view of the River Leen as it flows through the lakes of Newstead Abbey Park and exits the park via a stream which flows through the Japanese Garden. You may also wish to explore Newstead Abbey and Gardens which were the home of Lord Byron. *Note entrance charges apply if you detour from the right of way. There is no public access to the River Leen beyond the Japanese Garden so you will need to return to the Robin Hood Way to continue the walk.* To continue the main walk, cross the entrance drive to Newstead Park and continue ahead following a footpath sign on the Robin Hood Way, initially on a path meandering through trees and then turning left along a tarmac lane to reach **South Lodge**.
- D. On reaching gates by the Lodge, take the path immediately to the right of the pillar (not the gate into fields) and keep ahead with hedge on your left to exit Newstead Park at an elaborate kissing gate. Continue ahead on the hedge/tree lined track. The River Leen is over to the right in the trees beyond the field. After a little over a kilometre continue ahead on Hall Lane, passing houses and farm buildings to reach the B683, with Top Farm on your left and an entrance to **Papplewick Hall** on your right.





- E. Turn right to walk along the B683 on the pavement. The Hall can be glimpsed through the hedge on your right. The road bends right passing attractive cottages at the edge of **Papplewick Village** and then soon bends left. Here turn immediately right on a lane between Papplewick Lodge and Morton Farm Tea Rooms which is signed to **St James' Church**. Follow this continuing ahead through gates to reach the church yard and church. The church is not usually open, but the porch provides some shelter and seating in poor weather (and there are benches in the church yard for fine weather).
- F. With the church porch behind you walk ahead to leave the church yard through a gap in the hedge, then keep ahead to cross a field and pass through the gap in the next hedge. Turn right on the path to (at last!) reach the River Leen. You can stand on the stone bridge to look up and down stream, but do not cross. Instead turn left before the bridge on a permissive path with ponds on your right, soon reaching an Information Board for **Papplewick Trail and Moor Pond Woods** which has a useful map showing the paths we will follow, and the names of the woods we will walk through (*see also points of interest for links to additional information and audio tour*).
- G. Follow the path and soon cross a bridge. There is a small waterfall (the Top/ Upper Dam) to your right. Turn left and continue on the path through **Papplewick Dam Wood** with the stream (the Leen) on your left. Cross another bridge and here either ascend steps straight ahead or turn right on the lower path. Either path will bring you to an exit onto B6011 Linby Lane. There is also a picnic site and small parking area here.
- H. Cross the busy road here using the dropped kerb edge and turn left on the pavement to walk past a stone building which is the site of the former **Castle (cotton) Mill**, now a house, on your right. Just before you reach houses (and Papplewick sign) turn right to follow the path through **Moor Pond Woods**. The River Leen is now mostly out of sight to your right. The channel on your left is the course of the former leat system. Ignore side paths. When you reach a wooden bridge with an adjacent signpost "no 10" which references "**Hidden Valley Trail**" and "**Robinson's Industrial Heritage**" look at the stone works of the former leat system which served the cotton mills. You may wish to explore other paths but then continue ahead without crossing the bridge. At another bridge on your left take the right path to the exit on Papplewick Lane. (Alternatively detour by crossing the bridge to reach the pond, turn right, then cross back at another bridge with information boards about the "Cotton Conundrum" and descend steps to the exit).
- I. Turn left on Papplewick Lane, immediately reaching another information board and further evidence of the former leat system. Cross the busy road carefully here and continue in the same direction, then very soon turn right through a gap in the fence into **Grange Cottage Woods**. Follow the path through the wood to exit on Moor Road. The bus stop (Papplewick Lane End) marks the end of this section.

Points of Interest

Robin Hood Hills and Hollinwell

The river Leen rises in springs in the Robin Hood Hills and Kirkby Forest. One of these, Holy Well, is situated just beyond the 8th tee of Hollinwell Golf Club. The club dating from 1887 takes its name from the well (Holy Leen Well). Legend has it that Robin Hood sat on the hillside rock above the second green known as Robin Hood's Chair. See [Notts \(Holinwell\) FQ](#); www.hollinwell.co.uk; The free Hollinwell history e-book has a chapter on the Watercourse – see Hollinwellhistory.co.uk.

Newstead Abbey

Newstead Abbey was an Augustinian Priory founded by Henry II in the 12th century. Following the Dissolution of the Monasteries it was granted to Sir John Byron of Colwick and converted into a country house. The 6th Baron Byron was the famous poet of the Romantic Movement, George Gordon Byron (1788-1824). Newstead was purchased by Thomas Wildman in 1818, and then by William Frederick Webb, the African explorer, in 1861. David Livingstone was a visitor. Newstead was sold by William's grandson to a local philanthropist who presented it to the Nottingham Corporation in 1931. It is now owned by Nottingham City Council. Visitor interests include the ruins of the Medieval Priory; the lakes and fish pond; the gardens (and Japanese Gardens) landscaped by the 4th Baron Byron (William) in the early 18th century; the monument to George Byron's beloved dog Boatswain; and the remains of Byron's Oak. Story has it that the Eagle Lectern, now in Southwell Minster, was found in the lake at Newstead. It was sold by the 5th Lord Byron to Richard Kaye, a clergyman, who gave it to Southwell. [Home - Newstead Abbey](#). For walks in Newstead Abbey see [newstead-woodland-walks.pdf](#).

Papplewick Hall

Papplewick was part of lands controlled by Newstead Priory until 1539 when they were surrendered to Henry VIII's agent Sir John Byron in 1539; and then purchased by him in 1540. Papplewick remained in possession of the Byron family until the early years of the 18th Century when it was sold to Sir Theodore Colladon and his wife. Their daughter Ann inherited the property and married Charles Montagu MP beginning more than two centuries association with the Montagu name, although not always through a direct line of succession. Papplewick Hall was built for Frederick, Ann and Charles' younger son, between 1781-1786. Frederick was an influential character in Nottinghamshire and beyond (including the establishment of the General Hospital and the creation of a volunteer army to fight an anticipated French invasion). After running up huge debts James Fountayne Montagu sold the estate to Alderman Albert Ball in 1919. Subsequently the Estate was divided up, with sales to Hucknall Torkard Industrial Provident Society and Sir Charles Seely and piece-meal sales of smaller properties. The house and grounds of Papplewick Hall and now privately owned. See [Papplewick Hall and the Montagu estate | Papplewick Parish Council | Papplewick Parish Council](#)

St James' Church Papplewick

The church is thought to be 12th century and was part of an endowment made by Henry II to Newstead Priory: "The town of Papplewick with the church of the same name and the Mill". Legend has it that Alan A'Dale one of Robin Hood's men, was married here. The tower is 14th century, and the nave and chancel were rebuilt by Frederick Montagu in 1795 (after he rebuilt Papplewick Hall). In 1855 the parish was united with Linby (name meaning "by the Leen") becoming "the Parish of St Michael, Linby cum St James, Papplewick". Features include an East Window by Francis Eginton (a copy of Reynold's window in New College, Oxford); tomb slabs some dating from the 13th century; the Foresters' slab marked with a bow and arrow, horn and baldric; a Norman tub font; a belfry with 5 bells, one with the trademark of Henry Oldfield the celebrated Nottingham bell-founder dated 1620; and carved figures above the door in the porch, one may be late Saxon / early Norman and may represent St James. The churchyard has early 17th century tombstones and a yew tree about 350 years old. Information from [St James' church | Papplewick Parish Council | Papplewick Parish Council](#)

Moor Pond Woods

This site on the Papplewick Trail comprises **Papplewick Dam Woods**, a wet woodland dominated by willow and alder), **Moor Pond Wood** a deciduous woodland and **Grange Cottages Wood**, a recently planted wildflower meadow and mature woodland. In the 18th century Scottish born George Robinson leased land here from Frederick Montagu of Papplewick Hall and developed a network of constructed waterways known as leats (diverting waters from the River Leen) to power cotton mills. Remains of the leat works can still be seen. Castle Mill on Linby Lane was one of these mills and is now a private home. The 5th (William) Lord Byron demanded royalty payments from the Robinsons for using the waters of the River Leen and started damming up the lower lake at Newstead to force payment. The dispute was settled in court in favour of the Robinsons in a judgement which forms case law today: "a man might draw of his lakes or dams but has no right to divert or stop up an ancient stream". Because of the uncertainty in water supply resulting from the Byrons' threat, the Robinsons looked for alternative sources of power and were the first to use a rotative steam engine to power a cotton mill anywhere in the world (in Lower Mill near Bestwood Mill Lakes). We end this section at the bus stop in Papplewick Moor. Friends of Moor Pond Woods has more information and an audio tour [Home - Moor Pond Wood - Moor Pond Wood](#)