

Quorn Walks – No.1

Buddon Brook and Swithland Reservoir

This is one of the set of six

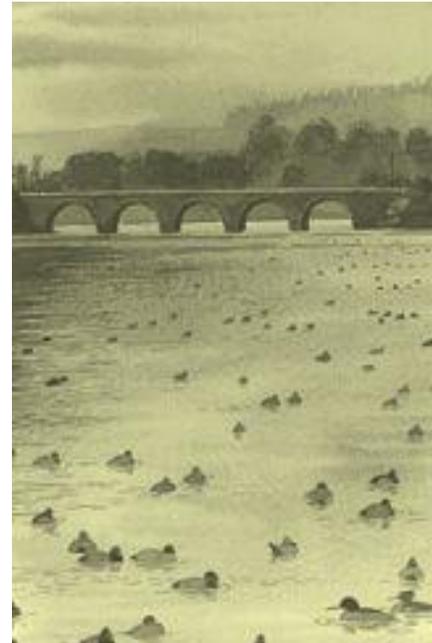
9 km (5.5 miles)

Pubs at start and end.

Cafés on route at checkpoints 3 and 4.

Terrain: Start to Checkpoint 1 - Flat paved, Checkpoint 1 to 2 – Uneven, muddy during wet weather, Checkpoint 2 to 4 - Paved hilly. Checkpoint 4 to Finish - Flat paved,
Bus stops: Regularly spaced along the route from start to Checkpoint 1 (No.154) and from Check point 4 to finish (No.127).

Starting at **Quorn Cross**, the centre and main crossroads of the village, set off along Meeting Street. Beyond the award-winning Memorial Garden and the flood barrier to the left flows Buddon Brook, whose course we will be following all the way upstream to Swithland Reservoir. The many items of interest along Meeting Street and then Chaveney Road are explained in walk 5 in this series. In this case we walk about half a mile before turning left and joining the public right of way at the footpath sign just past Elms Drive (**Checkpoint 1 on the map**)

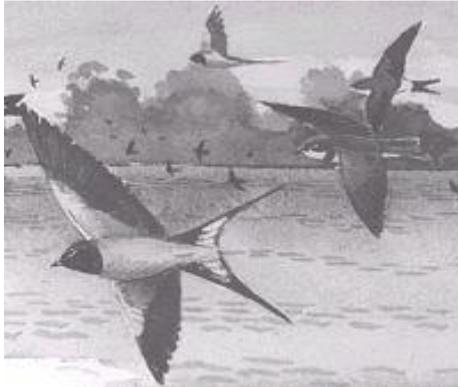


Soon after turning left, we pass the site of the former **Chaveney's Water Mill** (also called Quorn Water Mill, now Mill Farm). From the 16th to the 19th century, when Swithland Reservoir was built, a mill race from the brook was the motive power for this corn mill; the actual site of the old millwheel is not visible from the public footpath. Just after we enter the brookside path itself, you can see the remains of an ancient moated site beyond the far bank. This was probably the site of a hunting lodge for **Quorndon Park**, the former medieval deer park that existed from at least 1139 and extended over 360 acres that included Buddon Wood and the land now covered by Swithland Reservoir – under which lies the site of another lodge.

Make the most of this 600-metre section of the walk alongside the alder-fringed **Buddon Brook**, as there's plenty to see and hear, including **Caroles Copse**, all three species of *woodpecker*, the brightly coloured *kingfisher* and the handsome *grey wagtail*, which – with luck – can be seen feeding in the more open, stony sections. A large variety of small birds occur here: six species of *warblers* in summer; flocks of *siskin*, *redpoll* and *goldfinch* feeding in the alders in winter; and species of *tits* all year round. Butterflies include the *orange-tip*, *gatekeeper*, *speckled wood* and *ringlelet*; and dragonflies include *brown*, *southern* and *migrant hawkers* and the *common darter*.

After walking parallel to the Great Central Railway (see Walk 2), and turning left at Rabbit Bridge (**Checkpoint 2**), often festooned with trainspotters, we descend to **Swithland Reservoir**. This was created between 1894 and 1896 by damming Buddon Brook and forms a combined system with Cropston Reservoir further upstream. The elegant architecture and landscaping of the Victorian water treatment works to the left certainly offer a contrast with equivalent schemes today.

The reservoir itself supports a wealth of bird life. In winter, many species of *waterfowl* can be seen, and the *large gull* roost can hold up to 15,000 birds of up to eight species, some originating from distant parts of Europe or even further afield. In springtime look out for the handsome *great crested grebe* – you may even be lucky enough to see it indulging in its spectacular courtship display. If you can pick out the anchored raft, way out in the water, you should see *cormorants*, probably drying their outstretched wings. The list of bird species at the reservoir changes over the years and recent arrivals have been *peregrine falcons*, to be seen throughout the year, and common *terns*. In all, some 230 species have been recorded here.



The illustration of the reservoir shows *swallows*, a *house martin* and a *sand martin*.

After crossing the controlled outlet to Buddon Brook and turning onto the eastern shore of the reservoir, we begin to skirt **Buddon Wood Quarry**, out of sight but plunging down cliffs hundreds of feet deep beyond the remaining woods to our left. The rocks of Charnwood are among the oldest in Britain and systematic quarrying began here in the late 1700s. The quest is for hornblende granite, a particularly hard rock, usually pinkish in colour and used in road-building and other construction. Just before

Buddon Hill became a quarry, large amounts of Iron Age pottery and quern-stones were found on it, offering more evidence that this was the site of a Celtic settlement overlooking the Soar Valley. ‘Querns’ were hard stones used for grinding corn and Quorndon therefore means ‘quern hill’. The current quarry is now the largest of its kind in Europe and can often be glimpsed in all its glory from aircraft on their descent into East Midlands Airport.

After climbing up Kinchley Lane, we turn left onto Wood Lane (**Checkpoint 3**) and then right onto the common at **Bond Lane**, Mountsorrel. (Alternatively you can take a short-cut back to Quorn by staying on Wood Lane.) Take care as either route carries traffic with limited pavements.

Turning right here at Kinchley Lane takes us on a short deviation of approximately 230 metres to the Mountsorrel and Rothley Community Heritage Centre and Granite’s Coffee Shop where refreshments are available.

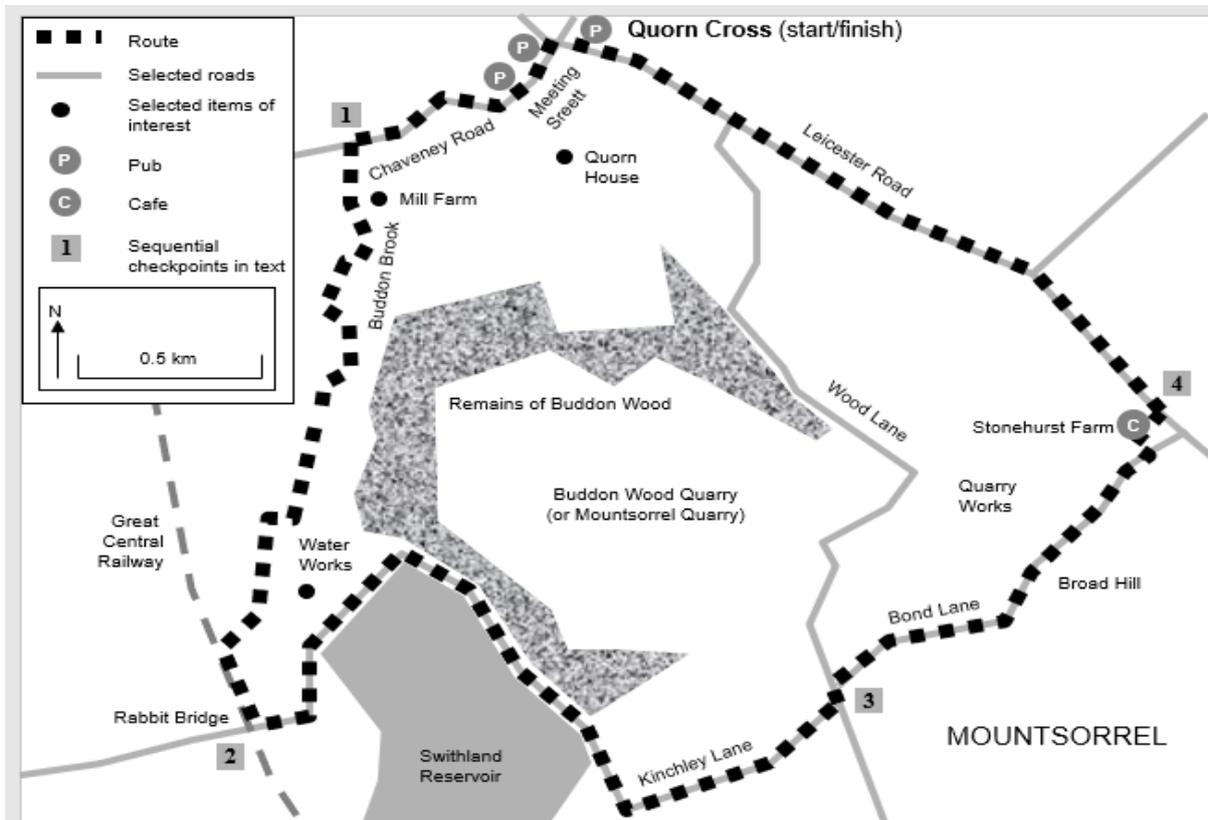
In springtime the common is alive with *golden gorse* blossom and the ground is carpeted with *wood anemones* and patches of *greater stitchwort*. Two birds worth looking out for here are the *linnet* and the *yellowhammer*.

Not far into Bond Lane the road passes over the route of the old branch line from the Great Central Railway at Swithland to the quarry. After bearing left, we see the re-created contours of the formerly quarried Broad Hill, thought to be the site of a 4th-century Roman villa. The double overbridge now carries road traffic from the quarry works, while the second, single bridge just beyond carries the mineral conveyor which moves material from the current quarry to the railhead at Barrow, along the route of the former 1860 branch line to the Midland Railway.

For refreshments, turn left before the main road into the Stonehurst Family Farm and Museum.

Emerging on the main road (**Checkpoint 4**), turn left. The items of interest along the road back into Quorn are explained in walk 4 in this series.

Quorn Walk Map 1



Paintings of Swithland Reservoir and birds by Ernest Leahy, courtesy Ian Gamble