

Quorn Walks – No.4

Riverside Meadows and Navigation Inn

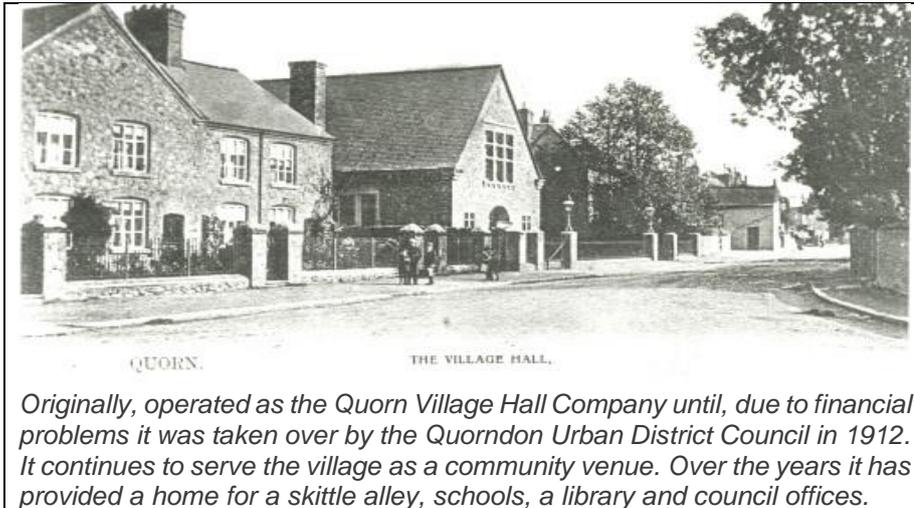
This is four of the set of six

3.5 km (2.5 mile)

Pubs at regular intervals and café at start and end.

Terrain: Flat, mixture of paved and grass. Checkpoint 1 to 3 include stiles.

Bus stops: The Cross (No. 2,127,154), Village Hall (No. 127), Unitt Road (No.127) and Barrow Bridge (No. 2).



From Quorn Cross set off eastwards along Leicester Road. For items of interest as far as School Lane, see Walk 6. Just after School Lane, we pass the Quorn Village Hall, built by granite supplied at half price by the Mountsorrel Granite Company and opened on 29th June 1889, when in celebration. 'dancing was kept up until nine in the evening'.

Just beyond the village hall we come to the Quorn Country Hotel. The oldest part, the white building with bay windows used to be Quorn House, a private residence dating from the 17th century and home to Thomas Furr the famous Quorn Huntsman between 1871 and 1899. Just past this used to stand the 700-year-old King William IV, a thatched pub popular with American paratroopers camped off Wood Lane during World War Two but was demolished in 1956. Carrying on along the road we come to the 'Brinks' where the Quorn Gas Works with its dominating gasometer stood from 1853 to 1966 supplying gas to Quorn, Mountsorrel and Barrow. Derbyshire coal was delivered by river navigation and the smell from the works was reported to have been 'abominable'.

Beyond the mini roundabout, turn left at the public right of way signpost (**Checkpoint 1 on the map**) to start a pleasant kilometre-long walk, crossing several buttercup meadows, colourful in season with three species of buttercup, the *bulbus buttercups* in drier places and the *meadow* and *creeping* butter cup on wetter ground. Many other meadow plants can be seen such as the *lady's smock* and here and there, the local *meadow saxifrage* and handsome *meadow crane's bill*. Crossing the meadows the path in places runs close to the river: in the river itself look out for distinctive species such as the *yellow water lily* and *arrowhead* and, in places in mid channel, colonies of *common club-rush*. Many colourful species grow along the riverbank: two species of *wintercress* flower in the spring and *marsh woundwort* and *purple*

loosestrife in the summer. On sunny, summer days a variety of colourful *damselflies* and *dragonflies* haunt the river and riverside. The *red-eyed damselfly* is often to be seen at rest on the *water-lily* leaves, the *banded demoiselle* with characteristic desultory flight and the males distinctive dark blotched wings. The *large brown hawk* patrols the waterway, often accelerating with impressive turns of speed. Across the river Soar lies the Barrow Gravel Pit SSSI an area of flooded gravel pits where Roman finds were made during the gravel extractions and where now old meadows, hedgerows, coppices and flooded pits constitute an important wetland site encircled by the Quorn loop of the river and the canal, and supporting a great wealth of wildlife.

At the stile just after the overhead transmission lines we pass briefly into the parish of Mountsorrel before walking under the A6 and turning left over the footbridge and into the parish of Barrow-upon-Soar. The river here has not always been so tranquil as it usually appears and one night in March 1971 two weirs crossed by a two-span bridge were destroyed by a swollen river Soar draining a section of canal leaving many boats marooned. It was not until 1998 and after pressure from residents, a new single span bridge was opened crossing a single Barrow Weir. You can make a short deviation to reach the bridge over the weir by turning onto the towpath just before the bridge over the canal (**Checkpoint 2**). Also, just before the canal bridge, used to stand Barrow Mill, although demolished in 1938 the former mill owners house still stands on the left of the lane. The canal cut itself is part of the Leicester Navigation, opened in 1794 mainly for transportation of coal and became part of the Grand Union Canal in 1932.



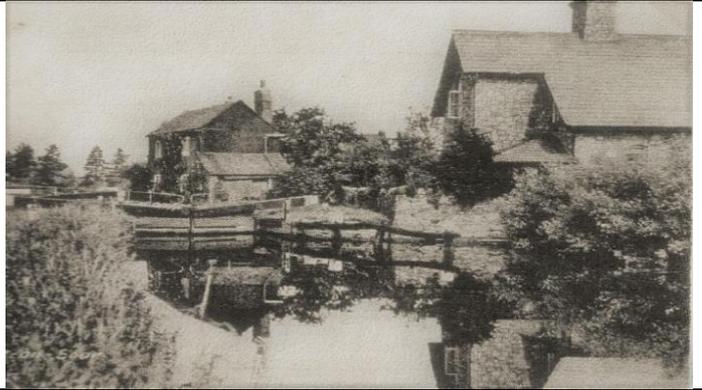
The Navigation Inn was built at the same time as the canal. When it was built it was quite remote and specifically served the canal trade with stabling for the horses. This picture was taken in the 1920's and shows members of the landlord's family outside the pub.

You may wish to take a break here and sample the inns current services.

Continuing on, we cross the bridge and drop down on the canal towpath which is followed until the Barrow Deep Lock is reached so called because at the time of construction it was the deepest lock on the entire navigation between Leicester and the Trent. Here the canal cut re-joins the River Soar, which has been on its long meander by Quorn.

The original lockhouse on the left of this picture taken about 1930 and not long before it was demolished and replaced by the current building.

The house on the right of the picture is unrelated to the canal operation.



We leave the towpath and turn right to cross the canal, looking to the left, we can see the gatehouse and entrance to Proctors Pleasure Park. At the main road turn left to cross Barrow Bridge. This is an ancient crossing point of the river Soar, the earliest recorded bridge here dates from 1724 and was replaced in 1845 by the current three arched bridge of local Mountsorrel granite. Over the years several canal boats have collided with the bridge having broken away from their moorings during floods. The site occupied since the 1980's by the Riverside Inn was a coal wharf when the canal opened and later hosted a boat hire centre and then Mr Finson's boat building workshop and café. Walk across the Barrow Bridge (**Checkpoint 3**) and follow the river turning left to take '**the Slabs**' footpath. The walking route between Barrow and Quorn used to follow the River Soar to the left and slate slabs were first laid in the late 19th century by the then Master of Foxhounds Sir Richard Sutton in order, we are told to keep his boots dry while walking between Quorn Hall and a private railway siding at Barrow. The present route of the slabs across the former 'Scotch Green Meadow' is from around 1886 and the slabs were replaced by tarmac in 2017.

The fine avenue of *horse chestnuts* under which we pass used to form the grand approach to **Quorn Hall** now beyond the A6 to the left. This home was first built about 1430 by Thomas Farnham, who had previously lived at the Over Hall (now the site of Quorn House). Quorn Hall was at times known as the 'Nether Hall' and 'Quorndon Hall'. After passing through a number of other owners, it was eventually sold in 1753 to Hugo Meynell, who was Master of the Quorn Hunt for nearly 50 years establishing the Quorn as the most famous hunt in the world. The 'Quorn Country' covered Leicestershire including Charnwood Forest and reached as far as Derbyshire and Northamptonshire. Stables and kennels were added to the hall's buildings and later a third floor to the hall itself. Many of Quorn's houses owe their origins or development to housing the hunt visitors, just as many of the villages inns and other businesses can be traced back to the requirements of the hunt. The Quorn Hunts stables and kennels eventually moved to Pawdy Lane (beyond Barrow) by 1906 and later to Melton Mowbray.

After crossing the A6 footbridge, a deviation down the first street to the left takes you past the old stable block. Cross the Meynell Road at the public right of way footpath sign for the direct route back to the village centre.

Quorn Walk Map 4

