



Calke Park ancient trees walk

Ticknall, Derbyshire, DE73 7LE

TRAIL
Walking

GRADE
Easy

DISTANCE
1 mile (1.5km)

TIME
40 minutes

OS MAP
**Landranger 128;
Explorer 245**

Contact

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Facilities

**National
Trust**

nationaltrust.org.uk/walks

Discover some of the oldest trees in Europe as these ancient inhabitants of Calke parkland unfold to tell their stories. On this walk, you'll learn about the trees' place within the park and the creatures that live alongside them.



Terrain

The route has stepped and stone paths, kissing gates and stiles. Enquire at the property for more accessible routes. Dogs are welcome but must be kept on leads, as livestock graze in the surrounding fields. Please place dog litter in the bins provided.

Things to see



Wood pasture

Calke has some of the oldest trees in Europe providing an island habitat for species that have survived since the last Ice Age. This rare habitat is found in ancient parkland with open structured woodland. The area around the trees is grazed and this benefits wildlife including grassland flowers and fungi. The ancient trees support a huge diversity of rare fungi, such as the oak polypore, and the 'chicken of the woods' (pictured), which only grows on deciduous trees. Look out for fungi from September onwards, when they are at their peak.

Insects and birds

Calke is Britain's 10th best site for invertebrates living on deadwood, and hosts over 350 types of beetle, including the wasp beetle, which mimics wasps to avoid being preyed upon. Plenty of woodland birds breed here at Calke and it's sometimes possible to see rarer examples such as the spotted flycatcher, which can be sighted around the park during the summer months. In the winter however, our regulars include birds such as this nuthatch.

Old Man of Calke

When Calke became a National Nature Reserve in 2006, a competition was launched to name its oldest tree. Now known as the Old Man of Calke, this ancient oak is over 1,000 years old, but still continues to grow healthily.



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Start/end

Start: Calke Abbey main overflow car park, grid ref: SK367226

End: Calke Abbey main overflow car park, grid ref: SK367226

How to get there

By bike: National Cycle Network traffic-free route, 5 miles (8km) away

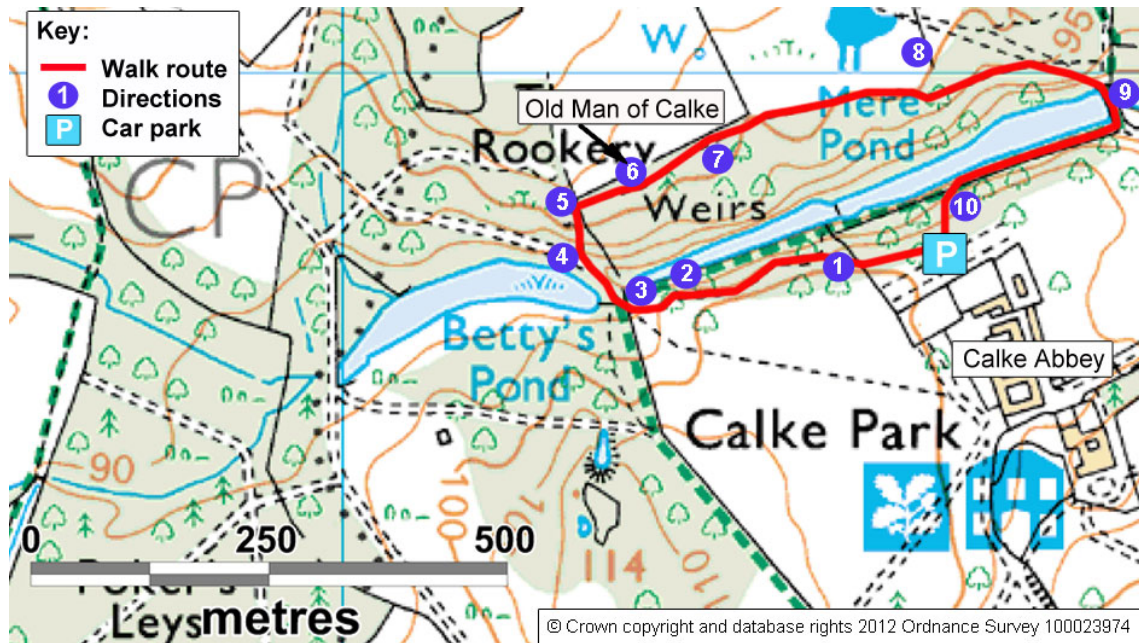
By bus: Number 69/A, Derby to Swadlincote, alight Ticknall then 1.5 mile (2.5km) walk through park to house

By train: Derby, 9.5 miles (15.2km); Burton-on-Trent, 10 miles (16km)

By car: 10 miles (16km) south of Derby on A514 at Ticknall. M42/A42 exit 13 and A50 Derby South. Brown signposts from A42

National Trust

nationaltrust.org.uk/walks



1. Begin at the far left of the main overflow car park, cross over the stile, go straight along the footpath and take the steps down to the ponds. This path is lined with horse chestnuts (*Aesculus hippocastanum*) and old hawthorn (*Crataegus monogyna*), which work in tandem to encourage a diverse range of invertebrates. The dead horse chestnut trees, commonly called conker trees, are left as standing deadwood to provide a valuable habitat for the beetles and insects. The dead trees have been topped for safety and any removed branches left on the floor as habitat piles.

2. Hawthorn flowers grow here in dense, sweet smelling clusters, encouraging invertebrates to take advantage of the early nectar feast.

3. Before passing through the stile, to the right are the remains of what was reported in the Derby Mercury to be the largest small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*) in the country, with a circumference of 72 feet (22m).

4. Carry straight on past the ponds, which are lined with common alders (*Alnus glutinosa*) - a typical waterside species.

5. Take the path to the right, which will take you up a slight incline. At the top is an old pendunculate oak (*Quercus robur*) referred to as the dragon tree. As you walk past this old dead oak tree try to imagine that the branches are shaped like a big dragon with holes acting as the eyes. Also of interest is the silver birch (*Betula pendula*) growing out from the top. Their tiny winged seeds spread in profusion and are quick to colonize any new area.

6. Follow the path as it veers off to the right and through a kissing gate. Immediately you will come across the Old Man of Calke on the left.

7. The sweet chestnuts (*Castanea saviva*) - recognisable by their latticed bark - found here, originally formed a pathway up to Lady Catherines Bower - an 18th century summerhouse, which may be seen as a raised circular foundation.

8. Continue further along this path and you will see several beech and oak trees. These are remnants of avenues planted in 1712 across the park, which were designed to align with the axis of the house.

9. At the end of this path you will reach the deer enclosure. Turn right, and on reaching the gate you will be able to see both beech and hornbeam (*Carpinus betulus*) on the other side of the fence. These species are easily confused, but the beech has the smoother bark. In autumn, both provide a magnificent yellow and red-gold glow. The name hornbeam probably comes from the structure of the wood which is very slow growing, making it dense and hard, like horn.

10. Pass through the gate and follow the path around the pond, taking the steps on the left, which will take you back into the main overflow car park.