



Following the signposts: a place-names walk into the past



This walk has been devised by John Baker and Jayne Carroll of the University of Nottingham. Neither the University and its employees nor the BBC can be held responsible for its suitability for any individual following this route.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory



Appleby is an interesting hybrid place-name, containing Old English *æppel* 'apple' and Old Norse *bý* 'farmstead, village', and is one result of the linguistic impact Viking settlement had on English place-names. **Magna** 'great' and **Parva** 'little' are distinguishing Medieval Latin additions.

1. Starting from Sir John Moore School, turn left out of the main drive and walk along Top Street and then New Road in a southwest direction. Please be aware that some of the roads around the village are busy, and it is important to be vigilant and stick to pavements wherever possible. When following smaller tracks, walkers should also take care over uneven, muddy and occasionally broken paths.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory



2. After about 500m you will arrive at the Atherstone Road (A444), and you will see the Appleby Inn opposite. Cross the road with care – this is a particularly busy and fast-moving stretch – and turn left. Go past the footpath and then turn right down Austrey Road (Westhill Farm is on the corner). There are no pavements on this road, so watch out for cars. Austrey Road winds its way uphill for about 500m.

Austrey means 'Ealdwulf's tree'. Ealdwulf is a typical Anglo-Saxon personal name. **Twycross** means 'the two crosses' or 'the double cross'. In a world with few maps, distinctive trees and standing crosses were often used as markers, and it is probably no coincidence that these crosses were located so close to a county boundary that was also, perhaps, a diocesan boundary and the boundary between Mercia and the Danelaw.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory

No Man's Heath is situated at the junction of a number of roads. Two major routes are commemorated in place-names. Salt has always been an important commercial commodity, and **Salt Street** records the existence of long-distance tracks linking the salt pans of the west midlands with other parts of the country.

3. You will pass a radio mast on the right, and immediately afterwards you will see a track, also on the right and running northwest. Follow this track, which is called Salt Street, and runs along the county boundary.

About 4km to the north, in Oakthorpe, **Saltersford Bridge** may recall another early salt-way. The neighbouring parish of **Stretton en le Feld** takes its name from a Roman road, Old English *stræt* 'street', presumably linking Watling Street to the south with Ryknild Street. It is also an interesting illustration of the mix of languages that enter into English place-names, for while Stretton is an Old English place-name, the first part, *stræt*, was a word borrowed by early English speakers from Latin (*via*) *strata*. Old English *stræt-tūn* is a common place-name compound meaning 'settlement on the Roman road'. To distinguish it from other similarly-named villages, an affix was added in the later Middle Ages. The affix contains Old French *en le* 'in the', and Middle English *feld* 'open country, plain', so this was the Stretton that is in the plain.

4. After 300m the track passes over the M42. Just to your left is Pimlico Farm.

Pimlico takes its name from Pimlico in London. It might have been so-named because of its location at the edge of the parish – it was a distant place.

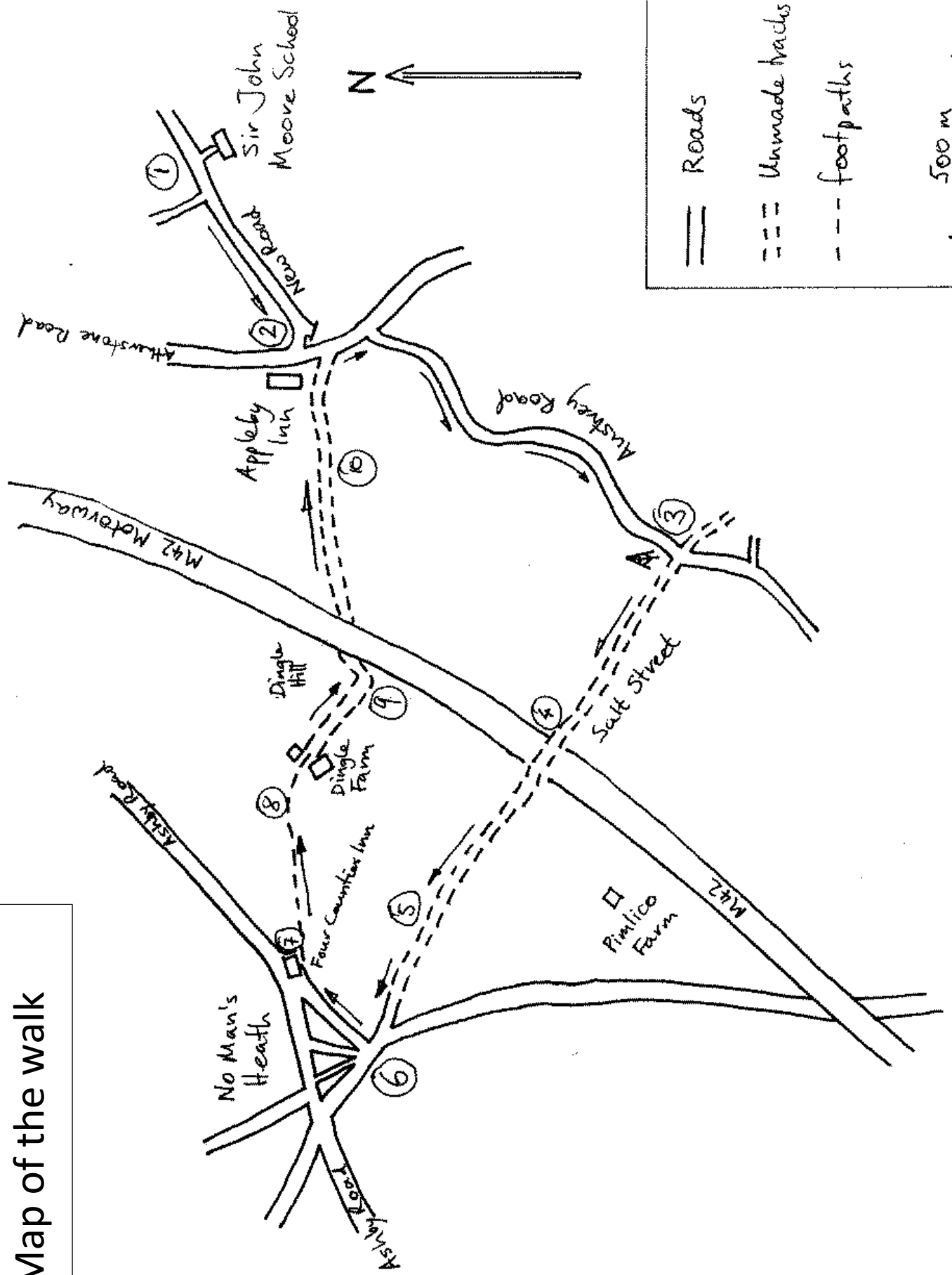
Brandon goes back to Old English *beorg-dūn*. A *beorg* was a rounded hill or mound, while a *dūn* was a flat-topped hill. Modern quarrying has changed the shape of the hill, but the place-name suggests to us how it might once have looked – was it perhaps a flat-topped hill with a mound on top? **Markfield** means 'open land of the Mercians', and may well have been a site on the edge of Mercia, or a site where Mercian governmental gatherings took place.

5. After another 200m the track reaches a summit overlooking No Man's Heath. Almost due east on the horizon is Bardon Hill and just to the right of that is Markfield.

Newton is a common place-name meaning 'new settlement or farm', and it may reflect the creation of a new settlement on the edge of the heathland on the shire boundary. The affix **Regis** is medieval bureaucratic Latin, and indicates that the village was owned by the king.

6. Follow the track down towards No Man's Heath. To the left is the parish of Newton Regis.

Map of the walk



THE GREAT BRITISH STORY

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY

7. A short distance after you join the Austrey Lane, heading into No Man's Heath, two roads branch off to the right. Take the smaller of the two tracks heading northeast, and after 100m you will arrive in the car park of Four Counties Spice.



The meeting of
four shires:

Then – Four
Counties Inn
Pubsign



Now – Four
Counties
Spice

Four Counties Spice (formerly Four Counties Inn) takes its name from its location at the point where the shires of Nottingham, Leicester, Warwick and Derby came together. Before the boundaries were formalized, they would have been separated by a wider expanse of land under shared use by the surrounding communities, and this is reflected by the survival of an area known as **No Man's Heath**. The Four Counties Inn and the hamlet of No Man's Heath would have begun as squatter settlements, and folkloric traditions have grown up around their interesting legal position between different legal districts.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



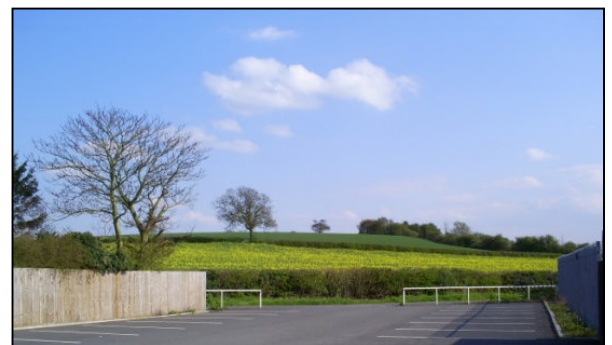
www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory

THE GREAT BRITISH STORY

A PEOPLE'S HISTORY

However, places that occupied boundary locations also provided useful neutral ground for legal assemblies involving several communities. That this was the case on No Man's Heath is indicated by a now lost place-name **Spellow**, recorded in a medieval document relating to the furlongs in Norton Field. The first element of this is an Old English word *spell* 'speech', a reference to the negotiations and pronouncements that took place at such sites. The second element is either Old English *hlāw* '(artificial) mound' or *hōh* 'hill-spur'. It is possible that an old mound has disappeared after centuries of ploughing, but the local topography is strongly in favour of *hōh*, given the shape of the ridge along which Salt Street leads down to No Man's Heath. The late Margaret Gelling, who spent many years studying place-names of this kind, defined the classic shape of a *hōh* as a gently rising ridge falling away in a slightly concave slope. From the car-park of Four Counties Spice, take a look back at the hill-spur to the south. You will see a gently rising ridge falling away in a concave slope!

Below: View of the Salt Street ridge from the carpark of Four Counties Spice. Is this the Spellow?



8. Continue along the same track towards the main road, but take the footpath on the right, heading east towards Dingle Farm.

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory



9. Follow this path past Dingle Farm in a southeast direction, taking care not to damage crops or disturb any farm animals or horses you pass on your way. The track turns east again for about 50m, before a sharp turn to the northeast to go under the motorway. Before you reach this bend, take a look over the fence on your left. This is Dingle Hill with views to the north.

Directly to the north is **Cadborough Hill**. It is just possible that it has the same meaning as the recurrent place-name Cadbury, the second element of which is OE *burh* 'stronghold'. The first part is thought either to derive from a British name, perhaps containing **catu-* 'battle', or to be the name of an otherwise unknown mythical figure, Cada.

10. Continue along the track until it comes out on the A444 next to Appleby Inn. Turn left and then cross the road and follow New Road back to Sir John Moore School.

Institute for Name-Studies, School of English, University of Nottingham,
University Park, Nottingham, NG7 2RD

Website: www.nottingham.ac.uk/ins

Key to English Place-Names: <http://kepn.nottingham.ac.uk/>

Email: name-studies@nottingham.ac.uk

Telephone: +44 (0)115 951 5919 **Fax:** +44 (0)115 846 7526

DISCOVER YOUR PLACE IN HISTORY



www.bbc.co.uk/greatbritishstory