

Oakamoor and Whiston Circular Walk

This walk around the Churnet valley begins in Oakamoor, follows Cotton Dell upstream to a nature reserve, then climbs up through woodland and over the hill tops to Whiston. From there the walk crosses the valley and passes through the National Trust's woods at Hawkmoor before returning to Oakamoor.

Distance:

Approx. 12.8km (8 miles)

Duration:

4 to 5 hours

Terrain:

Several steep, muddy sections make this walk moderately difficult

Parking:

Oakamoor picnic site car park (SK053446)

Refreshments:

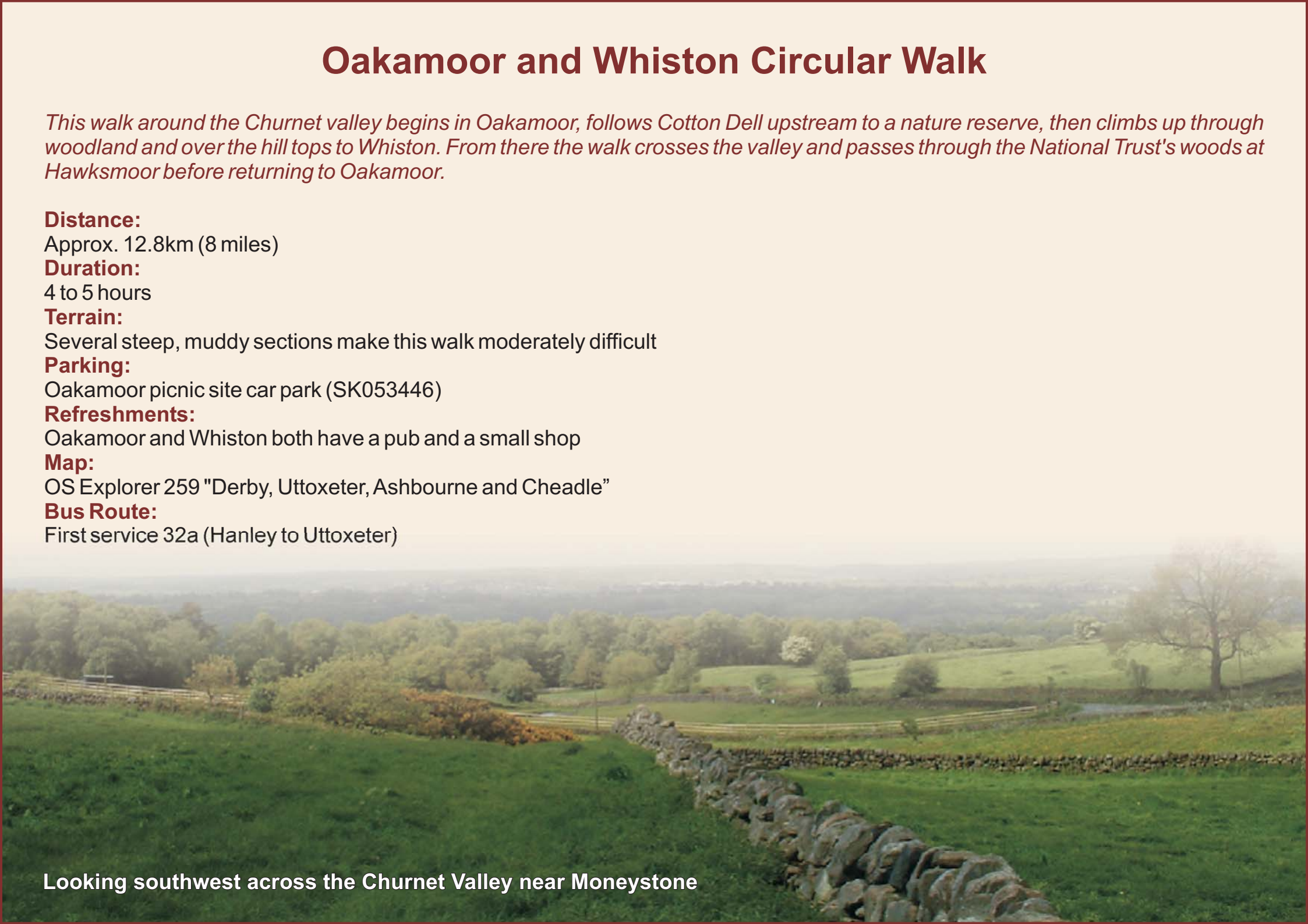
Oakamoor and Whiston both have a pub and a small shop

Map:

OS Explorer 259 "Derby, Uttoxeter, Ashbourne and Cheadle"

Bus Route:

First service 32a (Hanley to Uttoxeter)



Looking southwest across the Churnet Valley near Moneystone

1 The car park and picnic site at Oakamoor are on the site of an old copper and brass works which was demolished in 1963. Walk across the picnic site from the car park to a small bridge over the River Churnet.

2 Cross over the bridge and bear to the left of two large gateposts towards the far corner of the grassed area. A short path takes you through some trees and out onto the road opposite the Cricketers Arms.

3 Turn right and walk uphill a short way to a bus shelter. Cross over the road to a small track by the side of a black and white cottage and follow it into Cotton Dell.

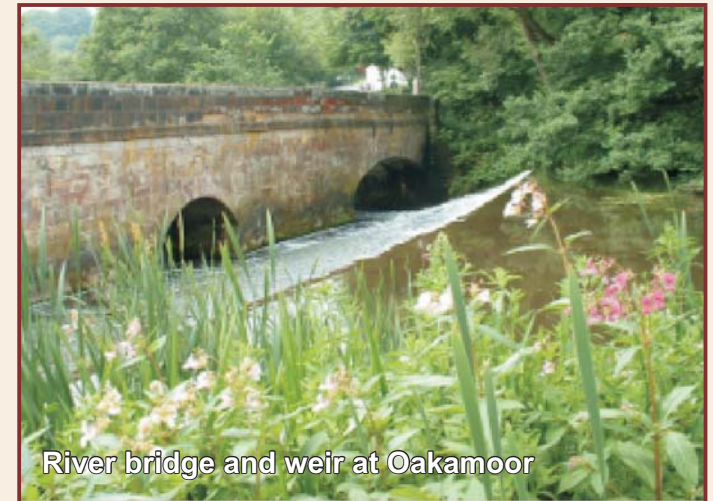
4 Ignore the footbridge on your right and the private road joining on the left, and continue alongside the stream for half a mile to reach a wooden sign marking the entrance to the Cotton Dell nature reserve, a lush valley-bottom woodland managed by Staffordshire Wildlife Trust.

5 Turn left by the entrance to the reserve and walk uphill through the trees to a small field. Cross the field, aiming for a stile in the wall to the right of the house (Oulsclough) and then continue up the hill through woodland.

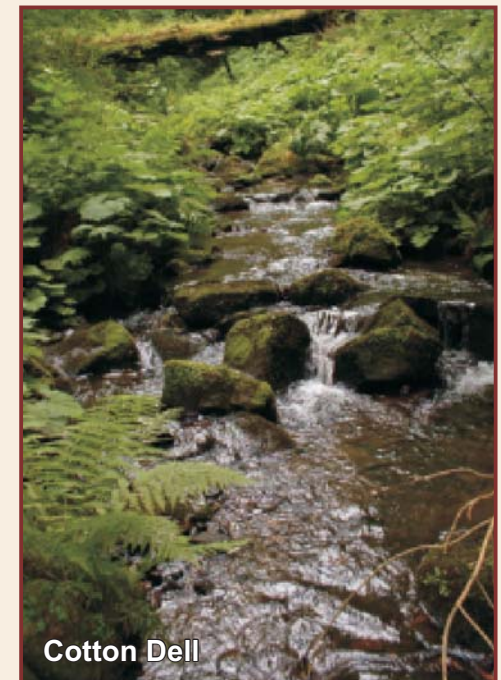
6 Where the gradient levels out, turn sharp right onto a joining path and follow it up through the wood and then down the slope on the right between mature beech trees to the edge of the wood.

7 Across the valley can be seen Cotton College, a Roman Catholic school built in the nineteenth century but now closed and abandoned. Continue past Cotton Banks Farm and follow the track along the edge of the wood for nearly a kilometre.

8 After crossing a cattle grid take the next path off to the left which follows an old grassy track up through scattered trees to a stile. Go through the stile and walk down two fields keeping the wall on your right until you emerge onto an overgrown track. Turn left along the track and follow it to the road, then turn right along the road to Rock Cottage.



River bridge and weir at Oakamoor



Cotton Dell

9 Cross the stile on the left just beyond Rock Cottage, and walk diagonally down the field to the gate and stile in the corner and then diagonally across the next field to a stile by the wood. Walk along the side of the wood then cross four fields keeping the wall on your right, to emerge at Whiston Golf Course.

10 Cross over the fairway to a stile in the opposite wall, and then continue along a gravel track passing to the left of the clubhouse to reach the road at a stile behind a clump of trees. Across the road, behind the cottages, lies the site of the long-demolished Whiston copper smelting mill. Turn left and walk downhill, noting buildings on the left made from blocks of black copper slag.

11 Just before reaching the main road turn left onto Whiston Eaves Lane. After about 50 metres turn right into Brookfield Close and take the path between the houses, around the back of a garden into a field. Follow the path across the field to a stile, and then continue along the wall to a stile and some steps down onto Ross Lane.

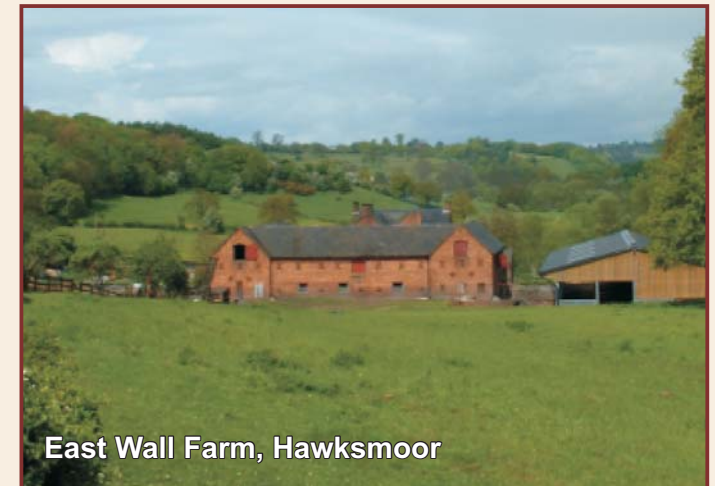
12 Turn left down the lane passing Eavesford Farm on the right to arrive at a stile and gate. Continue to follow Ross Lane, which is now little more than a track (and can get very muddy in wet weather), into a field and down the field boundary on the right to reach a railway bridge in the bottom corner. The railway is the old Leek to Uttoxeter route, and now forms part of the Churnet Valley Railway's line. Over the bridge are traces of the Uttoxeter Canal, opened in 1811 and replaced just 38 years later by the railway.

13 Walk over the railway bridge and then shortly afterwards cross over the River Churnet on a footbridge. Continue along the path to a second, smaller, footbridge, then bear left following the riverbank to join the route of the Staffordshire Way at the next stile.

14 Continue across the meadows keeping the river on your left for half a mile until you reach a large pool by East Wall Farm, where in mediaeval times there was an ironworking site. You have now entered the Hawksmoor Nature Reserve. This has been in the ownership of the National Trust since 1927 and is an area of oak and birch woodland rich in wildlife.

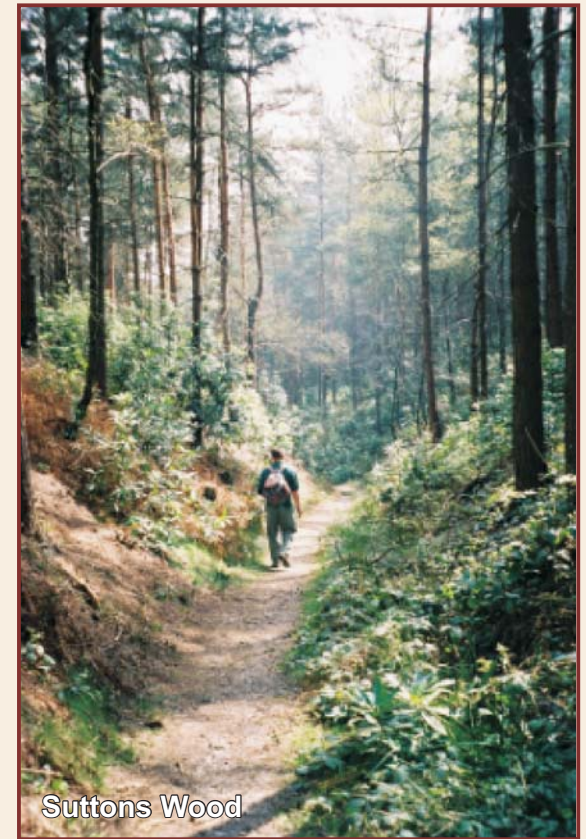


Looking west near Whiston Golf Club



East Wall Farm, Hawksmoor

- 15 Pass to the right of the farm, following the brick wall until you reach a stile and gate by a large horse chestnut tree. Through the gate, turn right up the farm track, and then fork right where the track splits, continuing up the hill for half a kilometre to emerge at the nature reserve car park.
- 16 Turn left out of the car park gateway and walk along the road for about fifty metres before crossing over to a footpath signed "Stoneydale". Follow the path through Sutton's Wood until you emerge on a minor road.
- 17 Turn right and follow the road steeply up to the top of the hill, then turn left onto a lane signposted to The Ranger youth hostel. Follow this for half a mile until you reach a footpath on the left by a cattle grid on the drive to Ranger Cottage.
- 18 At this point we leave the Staffordshire Way. Cross the cattle grid and bear left up a grassy track to a wooden gate at the edge of Moss's Banks Wood. In the wood bear half right and follow a steeply descending path (which can be slippery in wet weather) through the woodland to emerge on the Red Road the lane from Alton to Oakamoor.
- 19 Turn left along the Red Road, then right at the next junction. After a few hundred metres look out for the old railway tunnel on the left, just before you return to Oakamoor picnic site.



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