

# AIRPORT TRAIL

**The Airport Trail offers the opportunity for a gentle stroll or a serious trek through beautiful woodland, grassland and wildflower meadows surrounding East Midlands Airport.**

The trail takes in the whole perimeter of the airport, providing stunning views of both airport operations and our rural setting.

The trail has reconnected footpaths, bridleways and lanes that were severed in the Second World War. This offers walkers the opportunity to take in a smaller section of the trail as there are several joining points.

Over the years, the airport has made a real commitment to developing the trail. Between 2005 and 2012 the airport worked with surrounding primary schools and community groups, planting trees and installing an art trail to add an extra dimension to the walk which currently houses five pieces of 'Art on the Trail'.

In 2025, to mark the airport's 60th anniversary, the EMA Community Fund invested a further £60,000 in upgrades to the trail wayfinding, signage and improvements to footpath surfaces.

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TRAIL QUIZ FOR KIDS



# AIRPORT TRAIL

Ten kilometres or just over six miles long, the trail takes in the whole perimeter of the airport, as well as creating a wonderful walk through woodlands, open parkland and meadows.

-  Airport Trail Information Board
-  Art on the Trail
-  Linkage Point to a wider rights of way network
-  Aviation Museum
-  Skylink Bus Stop
-  Parking

10km  
  
circular



## Airport Trail Information Board

1. Donington Rise: solicitor.spend.remaining
2. Hemington Crest: viewing.tumblers.live
3. Highfield Hedge: lamplight.afterglow.data
4. Runway 27: raking.hairspray.wizards
5. Diseworth Brow: trickles.bridge.wording
6. Swan Rivers Pond: juggles.coveted.extra
7. Ducks Nest Wood: keyboards.underline.chosen
8. Walton Hill: saved.essay.obvious
9. Runway 09: drive.highly.puffed

## what3words

### Art on the Trail

1. Dog Tooth Violet Seed: solicitor.spend.remaining
2. Valentines Tree: lamplight.afterglow.data
3. Sky Ladder: trickles.bridge.wording
4. Stepping Stones: juggles.coveted.extra
5. Trail of Life: saved.essay.obvious





# AIRPORT TRAIL DONINGTON RISE

#1

## What can I see from here?

From this point you can see long distances across the village of Castle Donington. Panoramic views of the Trent Valley can also be seen along this route. There are also great views of the airport runway and airfield.

## What grows here?

The hedgerows, farmland and oak trees around Donington Rise are great habitats for the wildlife living around this area.

## Did you know?

Where are we? Did you know that East Midlands Airport is in Leicestershire, but we have a Derby telephone dialling code and a Derbyshire postcode. We were also very briefly renamed Nottingham East Midlands Airport in 2004. This was not a universally

popular decision, and we soon returned to being called East Midlands Airport.

## Castle Donington history

Castle Donington is a medieval market town and civil parish in Leicestershire, once a centre of willow weaving, on the banks of the shifting River Trent. Dunintune or Dunitone is mentioned twice in the Domesday Book of 1086, then called Castoldonyngtoun in a Duchy of Lancaster warrant of 1484.

In 1278 King Edward I granted a charter for a weekly market and an annual Wakes Fair. Annual celebrations continue, with a May Day market, and The Fair in Borough Street for three days each October. Bondgate, Borough Street, and Clapgun Street formed the nucleus

of the village, with the castle standing at the eastern end of Borough Street. The already ruined castle was dismantled to rebuild Donington Hall, but today you can still explore the historic houses of the village centre and see the ghost of the castle through street names of Castle Hill and The Moat.



Discover beautiful buildings, local businesses and a rich history, nestled uphill, with a visit to the village.



Delve into local stories and find out more at Castle Donington Museum, scan or click on the QR code.



For more information about the history of East Midlands Airport and aviation in the East Midlands region, scan or click on the QR code.

/// solicitor.spend remainder



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# AIRPORT TRAIL HEMINGTON CREST

## #2

### What can I see from here?

You can see East Midlands Airport from Hemington Crest. Look out for aircraft taxiing to and from the runway. Further in the distance the Trent Valley views remain. Visible landmarks at this location include the Air Traffic Control Tower, the windsock, radar equipment, the wind turbines, and the eastern and central aprons.

### What grows here?

There are a number of plants that grow at Hemington Crest, allowing a wide variety of habitats for different species. As well as scrub land, there is a flower-rich grassland and parkland oak trees.

### Did you know?

The Air Traffic Control tower at East Midlands Airport stands at 51 meters high, almost the same height as Nelson's Column in London. On a clear day you can see Nottingham Castle in the east and Derby County Pride Park Football stadium to the northwest. What a view our air traffic controllers have!

The orange windsock shows pilots which direction the wind is coming from and the approximate wind speed. The wide end of the windsock points to where the wind is coming from. Can you tell which direction the wind is coming from today? The windsock's angle relative to the pole indicates its speed. A limp windsock indicates light winds, while a fully extended windsock indicates strong winds.

We have two ground-based air traffic control radar units on the airfield at East Midlands Airport. The biggest of these has the red and white rotating scanner dish that you can see here with 'MARCONI' written on it. It goes round fifteen times per minute. It has gone round over 308 million times since it was installed.

The radar sends out a signal and if the signal meets an object, it will bounce back so that we know where all aircraft are. This radar can detect aircraft up to 74 nautical miles away. This is further than Luton if you are going south from here on the M1 motorway or just past Leeds if you are travelling north.

/// viewing.tumblers.live



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# AIRPORT TRAIL HIGHFIELD HEDGES

## #3



### What can I see from here?

Highfield Hedges offers views of SEGRO East Midlands Gateway. Also visible from this point is the eastern apron as well as views towards the village of Kegworth.

### What grows here?

Highfield Hedges showcases species-rich hedgerows which contain at least ten species of trees and shrubs. These include berry-bearing bushes like dogwood, dog rose and blackthorn, as well as standard trees like ash and oak. There are also important flowering shrubs such as hawthorn which provide pollen and nectar for insects during the summer and trees including maple, hazel and oak, all of which provide a valuable source of seeds and nuts for small mammals during the winter. This provides a perfect home and feeding ground for a great number of small mammals and birds.

### Did you know?

Did you know the land had to be cut away for the giant warehouses at SEGRO East Midlands Gateway so they could be built below ground level? This was to meet Obstacle Limitation Surface (OLS) criteria. All aerodromes have an OLS mapped around them. The airport planning team make sure the area is kept free of obstacles, including any new developments, so that the airfield can be used safely.

### Kegworth's early history

Kegworth, an historic village in North West Leicestershire, has deep roots stretching back to the Anglo-Saxon and Viking eras. Kegworth's name likely comes from the Old English word 'cæg' (key) or a Danish name 'Kaggi' meaning 'redbeard', combined with 'worth' or 'enclosure'.

When it was recorded in the Domesday Book Kegworth was a small agricultural settlement. Its fertile soil and location along the River Soar made it an important farming community throughout the medieval period. By the 18th century, Kegworth's economy expanded with the growth of the framework knitting industry, a hallmark of the East Midlands.

To find out more about the history of some of the buildings in Kegworth, why not visit the village and follow the Heritage Plaque Trail, scan or click on the QR code.



### Walks from Kegworth

There are a number of walking guides available that are designed to introduce visitors to the history and points of interest in and around Kegworth. Each route is easily accessible and even suggests local cafés or pubs to visit on the way. The walks vary in distance and terrain, catering to different preferences.



These guides are available for download in PDF format, scan or click on the QR code. They are also available from the Kegworth Library on High Street, or from Kegworth Parish Council office opposite the Market Place.

lamplight.afterglow.data



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# AIRPORT TRAIL RUNWAY 27

## #4

### What can I see from here?

Visible landmarks at this location include the Air Traffic Control tower and runway approach lighting (red and yellow structure). You can also see the Radisson Blu Hotel to the left and the SEGRO East Midlands Gateway to the right. You will also hopefully see plenty of planes as they take off and land.

### Did you know?

Are the planes landing or are they taking off above you? Aeroplanes ideally need to take off and land into the wind. This slows them down on arrival. It also slows the speed of the air moving over the aeroplane's wing, giving it more lift on departure.

At East Midlands Airport our runway runs east to west. The wind in the UK typically comes from the west, we call these westerlies. This means that most of the time

we are operating on Runway 27, which means aircraft are taking off towards the west (away from you). They will also be coming from the east to land, so they'll be flying over you as they land. When the wind switches direction, aircraft will be taking off from the other end of the runway (Runway 09) and will be coming over you as they gain altitude.

The Approach Lighting system you can see looks like lots of car headlights bolted on top of yellow masts. They are only lit when it is dark, or the weather is poor. When viewed from the air the lights make an arrowhead that points to the touchdown zone on the runway. There are 120 white approach lights, as well as another 64 red ones nearer the runway. They are only used in very foggy conditions.

Can you spot the Radisson Blu Hotel, to your left? This is one of four hotels on the airport site. Did you know the Radisson Blu hotel, built in 2012, was one of the UK's greenest hotels at the time? It has a special system which collects and stores waste heat, to heat and cool the whole hotel. It also has a special drainage system, with porous paving in the car park and rainwater collection tanks, that feed into the hotel's toilets. This rainwater is also used to water the plants outside the building.

SEGRO East Midlands Gateway, to your right, is a large rail freight terminal. Did you know it can handle up to 16 trains per day. These trains can be up to 775 metres in length, and it has space to store more than 5,000 shipping containers.

/// raking.hairspray.wizards



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# AIRPORT TRAIL DISEWORTH BROW

#5



© Professor J.N. Palmer



## What can I see from here?

Diseworth Brow is situated near to the entrance to East Midlands Airport, with Diseworth to the south.

## Who lives here?

Kestrels can be found in this area. They nest in holes found in old trees and in disused crows' nests and are easy to identify with their pointed wings and long tail busy hovering over the grassland and the scrub edge, watching their prey.

There are several species of bat which can be found at Diseworth Brow. The common species are common pipistrelle, the smallest British bat feeding on midges and other insects around street lights; the brown long-eared bat, which flies around woodland edges, picking moths and other insects off leaves and the noctule, the largest of our bat species, which hunts up high. Bats can eat up to 3,000 insects in a single night!

Each of these species is able to take advantage of dwellings put up in the airport grounds

## Diseworth's early history

The history of Diseworth dates back some 2,000 years to Roman times. By Saxon times it was a thriving agricultural community with three large fields in which each household had its allocation of strips to farm. Diseworth has a brief entry in the Domesday survey of 1086 with much of its land listed under Castle Donington.

The name derives from its being the enclosure, or 'worlth', of a man named Diggolth. A Danish presence in the area is indicated by the four main streets, all 'gates' – Hall, Lady, Grimes and Clements Gate.

Diseworth's Church dates from Saxon times, and it still has the massive stone Saxon font and some early

stonework from this era. In 1225 it was gifted to the nearby Priory at Langley which commenced a major rebuild, completed by the early 1300s.

Many farmhouses and cottages in the village are over 300 years old. Timbers in The Plough Inn have been dated to c.1400 AD. The village also had a Methodist Chapel, built in 1887, and a Baptist Chapel dating from the mid-1770s. This is now the Diseworth Heritage Centre, which houses much historical material about the village and welcomes enquiries and visits.

In 1506, those village lands not owned by Langley Priory were gifted to Christ's College, Cambridge, by Lady Margaret Beaufort, mother of Henry VII, and remained in its possession until a great sale in 1920, when tenant farmers and cottagers were able to purchase their properties.

By the beginning of the 19th century the village was feeling the effects of the Industrial Revolution, with the growth of numerous cottage industries, primarily framework-knitting, a Midlands speciality, supplementing the meagre income from farming.

## Diseworth village trails

Diseworth Heritage Trust has published two Trail Leaflets – one on the Parish Church and the other featuring Historical Buildings in the village. There are also histories of The Village, The Baptist Chapel, The Parish Church, The School, and its most famous inhabitant – the infamous 17th Century astrologer, William Lilly.

You can find this as well as other useful information on the Diseworth Village website, scan or click on the QR code.

/// trickles.bridge.wording



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# AIRPORT TRAIL SWAN RIVERS POND

#6

## What can I see from here?

From this location you can see the airport's wind turbines as well as the central balancing ponds.

## Who lives here?

Swan Rivers Ponds are home to both coot and moorhen. Coot make their nest amongst the bulrushes on the larger ponds and can be seen during the summer, aggressively defending their family from other birds. During the nesting season, moorhen are more secretive, preferring to nest deep amongst the cover of bank-side vegetation on the smaller pond.

Whilst the two species appear similar, they can be easily distinguished given a good view. The coot is the larger of the two, 'sooty' black in colour with a bright white beak. The smaller moorhen is an 'olive' grey

on the back, 'sooty' black underneath, with two large white patches under the tail and a red and yellow beak.

The ponds and surrounding scrub and marginal vegetation provide both feeding and breeding places for a variety of dragonfly and damselfly species.

These range from the tiny, electric blue common blue damselfly and azure damselfly, through the medium sized bright red common darter, the sky blue broad-bodied chaser to the larger hawk dragonflies.

During August and September, the chestnut bodied, orange winged brown hawk, the blue and green southern hawk, which flies low over water, and the smaller, darker blue migrant hawk, can be seen in large numbers hunting for insects in hedgerows and around treetops.

## What grows here?

The marginal vegetation, particularly the beds of bulrushes and bankside willows, provide important feeding and breeding sites for varying species.

These include a wide variety of invertebrates, as well as nesting birds and amphibians such as frogs and smooth newts.

## Did you know?

East Midlands Airport was the first airport in the UK to install wind turbines. The two turbines are 45m tall and were installed in 2011 as part of a project to make ground operations at the airport carbon neutral by 2012. The turbines form one part of our journey to net zero carbon operations by 2038.

/// juggles.coveted.extra



10km

circular

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AIRPORT TRAIL

# DUCKS NEST WOODS

#7

## What grows here

Around Ducks Nest Woods there are a number of plant types. These include woodland trees and shrubs, as well as mature hedgerows.

## Who lives here?

The woodland's edge at Ducks Nest makes a great habitat and breeding ground for different species of butterflies. These include the comma, brimstone and green-veined white which can be seen in vast numbers through the woodland.

There are over 2,000 species of moth found in Britain. A variety of these can be found flying around Ducks Nest Woods during the night, with fewer species being seen during the day. Unlike butterflies, moths' wings camouflage their presence from predators in the woodland.

Flowers found around the woodland edge are great habitats for bumblebees. There have been huge declines in bumblebee numbers throughout Britain in previous years, however there remain six common and widespread species, all of which can be found around the Airport Trail.

## History of the airport

The land the airport currently stands on was first used for aviation purposes by the Royal Flying Corps (RFC) in 1916 but it reverted to farmland in 1918.

RAF Castle Donington was opened as a Royal Air Force station in 1943, during the Second World War. The airfield was equipped with three concrete runways, together with two hangars, and was a satellite airfield to RAF Wymeswold, situated some nine miles (14km)

to the southeast. Initially, the airfield was used by the 28 Operational Training Unit, training RAF Bomber Command crews on the Vickers Wellington, and subsequently by the 108 Operational Training Unit, later renamed 1382 Transport Conversion Unit, training RAF Transport Command crews on the Douglas Dakota. The airfield closed and the air force station was decommissioned in 1946.

A group of local councils bought the airfield in 1963 for £37,500. It took £1,375,000 and 13 months to develop, with a 1,782m runway and parking for up to 850 cars compared to more than 10,000 now. When the airport opened for its first year of operation in 1965, there were only 115,000 passengers and just 358 tonnes of cargo.

By the end of the 1960s, both the passenger terminal and the runway had been extended to accommodate the growing operation.

A decade later, and Royal Mail were using EMA for weekday night operations and a decade after that, DHL had grown from its roots as ELAN and established its EMA base.

In 1993, National Express purchased the airport from the local councils and three years later, a new Departures Hall opened as the airport welcomed its 25 millionth passenger. In 1999 the new 51m tall Air Traffic Control tower was opened and by 2000, the runway had been extended to its current length of 2,893m. In February 2001 it was sold to its current owners Manchester Airports Group.



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# AIRPORT TRAIL WALTON HILL

#8

## What grows here?

The flower-rich grassland here makes it a great living space for herbivores and pollen-collecting bumblebees, whilst the mature hedgerow trees can house prey for predators such as the buzzard.

## Who lives here?

Buzzards are a frequent sight in this area, soaring on the thermals above the valley and across the ridge, despite having been lost from most of Britain's lowlands following persecution during the 19th century and agricultural pesticide poisoning during the 20th century. Buzzards are one of the top predators, along with peregrine, sparrowhawk and others, feeding on small mammals, increasing both their numbers and range in recent decades.

During the spring, pairs of adult buzzards set up territories centred in small woods and spinneys. They can be seen in full flight, circling high over the woods calling to each other. During the summer months, they are joined by their young and groups of five to ten can often be seen soaring together on warm days.

The common blue butterfly is one of the most characteristic to be seen in the flower-rich grassland around the Airport. Both the bright blue male and the duller brown female can be seen feeding on common knapweed and birds-foot trefoil flowers during the summer months.

The holly blue butterfly can also be seen along the hedges and around the woodland edges earlier in the year. During the spring, their caterpillars feed on holly and ivy leaves.

## Did you know?

East Midlands Airport is an important cargo airport. All sorts of things are transported on the cargo planes, from a chimpanzee to Formula 1 racing cars. DHL is the largest cargo company at East Midlands Airport, located on the Western Apron. Their huge warehouse has 4km of conveyor belts to help sort and load packages into containers before they're loaded onto the planes. Can you see a DHL plane? What do you think it's carrying?

We have many car parks at the airport, with around 13,000 parking spaces for passengers. The Short Stay car parks are nearest to the terminal and Long Stay car parks and Jet Parks are furthest away.

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# AIRPORT TRAIL RUNWAY 09

## #9

### What can I see from here?

Visible landmarks at this location include the end of Runway 09 as well as the Alpha and Bravo taxiways and the airfield lighting systems. You can also see the Air Traffic Control tower, DHL and the Rolls-Royce Hangar. On the other side of the runway, you can see the East Midlands Aeropark, which is an outdoor aviation museum.

### Did you know?

From this location you can see the Alpha and Bravo taxiways. Each taxiway is given a letter to identify it. Rather than just referring to the letter, we use the phonetic alphabet to describe the taxiway. Taxiway A is 'Alpha', Taxiway B is 'Bravo' etc. The phonetic alphabet

is used all around the airport and helps us to improve communication and reduce the risk of confusion.

The Airfield Operations team inspect the airfield every twenty minutes to address the potential risk of wildlife, especially birds, to aircraft. We want to encourage birds to move away from the airfield, so we use all sorts of methods to disperse them. These include using loud bird-scaring pistols, lasers and special audio tracks played from speakers on the vehicles... or even shooting, waving and clapping. Have you heard any of these methods being used today? We carry out checks up to eight miles from the airport, to assess the potential for migrating birds to cross the airfield.

You can enjoy watching the birds around the trail but please don't feed them.

The Instrument Landing System (ILS) has two parts, the Localiser and the Glide Path. The Localiser transmits an electronic radio beam from an aerial which is picked up by the aircraft and is shown on a display telling the pilot whether the aircraft is on the runway centreline or to the left or right of it. Aircraft use the ILS to line up with the runway from around 20 miles away.

Together the Localiser and Glide Path enable the aircraft autopilot computers to carry out bad weather approaches and even land the planes without the pilots touching the controls.

drive.highly.puffed



10km

circular

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# DOG TOOTH VIOLET SEED

#1

Art on the Trail is an initiative to showcase high quality community art sculptures for the enjoyment of local residents using the airport's perimeter trail by involving local artists and community groups.

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© Sarah Flander



**Sarah Flander**



**Installed 2007 at Donington Rise**



**Made from oak**

The winning design for this sculpture was created by a group of students from Diseworth Primary School during a series of workshops held with primary schools in the local area.

The sessions involved the children researching and creating large images of seeds from plants which grow in countries served by the airport.

The designs were then displayed in the airport terminal and a winner was chosen by the viewing public, which then became the carved sculpture.



[solicitor.spendremainder](https://solicitor.spendremainder.com)








# VALENTINES TREE

#2

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 **Andrew McCallum and James Swain**  
 **Installed 2010 at Highfield Hedges**  
 **Made from steel and stainless steel**

The Valentines Tree has been created by blacksmith Andrew McCallum and designer James Swain, with input from a local youth group and East Midlands Airport colleagues.

The young people from Castle Donington and Kegworth were involved in a number of workshops to generate design ideas for the creatures which are displayed on the sculpture.

 [lamplight.afterglow.data](http://lamplight.afterglow.data)





# SKY LADDER

#3

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**Daniel Jones**



**Installed 2012 at Diseworth Brow**



**Made from galvanised steel and oak**

Sky Ladder has been created by Doncaster based sculptor Daniel Jones with input from the Prince's Trust Coalville Team.

The groups attended a series of workshops where they were tasked with creating designs which form the top of the sculpture. The team also created the carvings which you can see on the oak.



trickles.bridge.wording





# STEPPING STONES

#4

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© Graeme Mitcheson

ART  
ON THE  
TRAIL



**Graeme Mitcheson**



**Originally installed 2005 at Hemington Crest  
Relocated 2025 at Swan Rivers Pond**



**Made from stone**

This is the first sculpture that was designed for the Art on the Trail project at East Midlands Airport.

The designs shown on the stepping stones were decided by students from local primary schools during a number of workshops with the artist where students created models of flight images using clay.

**The schools involved in the project were:**

- ☐ Orchard Primary School, Castle Donington
- ☐ St Edwards Primary School, Castle Donington
- ☐ Kegworth Primary School
- ☐ Diseworth Primary School



juggles.coveted.extra



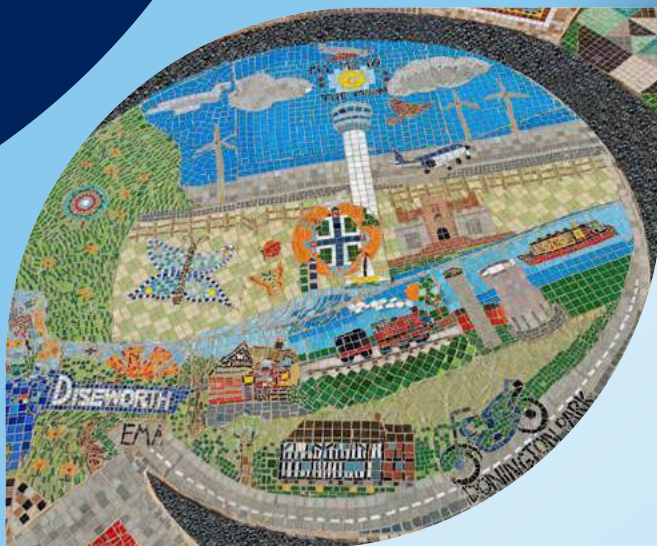


# TRAIL OF LIFE

#5

Art on the Trail is an initiative to showcase high quality community art sculptures for the enjoyment of local residents using the airport's perimeter trail by involving local artists and community groups.

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**Zahir Shaikh**



**Installed 2011 at Walton Hill**



**Made from concrete and mosaic tiles**

Trail of Life has been created by artist Zahir Shaikh with input from a number of community groups from the local area. The groups attended a series of workshops where they were tasked with creating mosaic designs, which form the top of the sculpture.

## The groups involved in the project were:

- ☐ Castle Donington Rotary Club
- ☐ Castle Donington Women's Institute
- ☐ Coleorton Women's Institute
- ☐ Diseworth Heritage Centre
- ☐ Quilt Together Shepshed
- ☐ Ruddington Wednesday Morning Club
- ☐ Swadlincote 50+ Forum.



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