Norfolk health, heritage and biodiversity walks

Walks in and around the Downham Market area
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This booklet was produced with support from Downham Market Group of Internal Drainage Boards
Contact with natural surroundings offers a restorative environment which enables you to relax, unwind and re-charge your batteries, helping to enhance your mood and reduce your stress levels.

Regular exercise can help to prevent major conditions, such as coronary heart disease, type II diabetes, high blood pressure, strokes, obesity, osteoporosis, osteoarthritis, bowel cancer and back pain.

Moderate physical activity such as a regular walk in natural surroundings is a simple and enjoyable way of keeping fit. To gain maximum benefit, aim to walk at a pace where your heart beats a little faster, your breathing becomes a little heavier and you feel a little warmer.

These circular walks have been carefully designed to encourage you to explore the local countryside, discover urban green spaces and to enjoy the heritage of Norfolk, both natural and man made.

Downham Market: Gateway to The Fens

Nicknamed “The Gingerbread Town” due to the distinctive carrstone used to construct many of the local buildings, Downham Market is a traditional market town situated on the western edge of Norfolk, south of Kings Lynn.

This bustling town is surrounded by a large scale open, flat and complex landscape known as The Fens which is made up of a hierarchy of rivers, drains and ditches draining the area slowly towards the Wash, England’s largest tidal estuary.

The story of The Fens

The Fens are a fascinating environment rich in both natural and man-made heritage. The landscape we see today stems back to the 17th century when, under the guidance of the 4th Earl of Bedford, Dutch engineer, Cornelius Vermuyden was commissioned among others to begin work on a drainage system for the Fens. There was much local opposition to this as the drainage system threatened the fishing and wildfowling rights of Fen Dwellers. Their fierce resistance and destruction of works earned them the name “Fen Tigers”.

Drainage schemes continued but unexpectedly, the level of the land began to fall at an alarming rate as the soil dried out. This meant that water could not drain effectively in to the rivers as they were higher than the level of the fields. Wind pumps were introduced to pump water off the land but as they relied on adequate wind and the ground continued to shrink, this was increasingly difficult. The Fens were drained effectively when steam-powered pumps were introduced in the 1820s.


Taming the flood – modern land drainage

The Fens drainage system has allowed the land to be used for farming and recreation in an environment that would otherwise be naturally flooded. Today, it requires constant effort to keep this area as usable fertile agricultural land. The area of this booklet falls within the jurisdiction of the Downham Market Group of Internal Drainage Boards (IDB). IDBs are public sector organisations responsible for land drainage and flood defence within specified areas of the county. In the fens, they manage large pumping stations and many miles of drainage dykes which carry the water to the pumps where it can be pumped up into the rivers, and ultimately flow out into the Wash. These rivers and the coastal defences are managed by the Environment Agency.
Walk information

Information about the walks includes details such as the start point, distances, path surfaces, gradients and facilities available. The following symbols will help you to decide if the walk is suitable:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Symbol</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Start point</td>
<td>The start of the walk with Ordnance Survey grid references and Postcode</td>
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<tr>
<td>Parking</td>
<td>Nearest parking; not always the same as the walk start point</td>
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<tr>
<td>Distance</td>
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<td>Details</td>
<td>Gentle gradient, 20% soft</td>
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<tr>
<td>Steps</td>
<td>Unsuitable for buggies/wheelchairs...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stile</td>
<td>Suitable for buggies/ wheelchairs...</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cattle (or other farm animals) could be grazing in some meadows</td>
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<tr>
<td>The route could contain muddy/uneven sections and stout shoes or boots are recommended</td>
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<tr>
<td>Toilets nearby</td>
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<td>Public house nearby</td>
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<td>Café nearby</td>
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If you have not exercised for a while, it is better to start with the shorter routes before moving on to the more challenging walks. The variety of walks allows you to build up your physical activity levels gently.

Getting around

Downham Market is well served by public transport, so why not leave the car behind? Several bus services stop in Downham Market making it a good way to access the Town walks. Surrounding villages are also accessible by bus.

For bus details, contact Traveline on 0871 200 2233 or visit www.travelineeastanglia.co.uk

You can also reach Downham Market by train. The railway station is located on Railway Road just a short walk from the town centre. For National Rail enquiries, call 08457 48 49 50 or visit www.nationalrail.co.uk

Walking from schools

Several of these walk routes pass close to primary or secondary schools providing ideal opportunities for teachers, parents and children to enjoy walking after school for example. The walks could also provide the basis for outdoor educational opportunities such as local school trips and projects as well as providing an additional and enjoyable form of physical activity. Please contact the travel plan team at Norfolk County Council, 01603 638081 for more information about walking to and from school.

Tread lightly and safely

Please respect the natural surroundings as you walk; stay on the designated footpaths and take any litter home. Some of the walks take you through nature reserves, County Wildlife Sites (CWS) and other areas designated for conserving or protecting vulnerable/rare species and habitats. Please take some time to read any advice about the area in which you are walking where this is provided.

Some of these routes pass through areas grazed by horses, cattle or sheep. Please keep your dog on a lead or under tight control and take care to shut gates behind you. Please also keep dogs under tight control between 1st March and 31st July during bird nesting season.
Walk instructions

1. Start at the car park adjacent to the Town Council offices on Paradise Road. Turn right on to Paradise Road and follow for almost a third of a mile. Pass Nelson Avenue and then as you approach The Paddocks, take the next sharp left which takes you to Railway Road.

2. Turn right on to Railway Road. After approximately 400 yards, turn left on to Brickfields Lane between the houses (look out for the signpost on the left-hand-side of the lane turning).

3. Follow the track to the Willows Nature Reserve. Follow the path round to the right keeping the pond on your right and then follow it round to the left. At the end, go through the gap in the hedge and turn left on to the tarmac path. This becomes a cycle path.

4. Follow the cycle path to the end where you will exit to Hamilton Way. Walk straight on across the road into Admiralty Close and as you approach the end of the cul-de-sac, turn right on to the footway.

5. At the end, turn left on to Trafalgar Road. Walk to the end and then turn right on to Priory Road and walk to the end.

6. Turn left on to High Street. Walk past the Market Place where the clock tower is situated and continue straight on along the High Street.

7. Take the next left in to Paradise Road and then turn right in to the car park adjacent to the town council offices.
Discover The Willows Nature Reserve on this short, easy walk around the Town. The Willows is a peaceful environment, ideal for escaping the hustle and bustle of everyday life.

**The Willows Nature Reserve (County Wildlife Site)**
A small urban greenspace, the Willows Nature Reserve comprises of reedbed surrounded by continuous scrub and broadleaf woodland. There is also a pond and damp neutral grassland containing species such as yorkshire fog, red fescue and creeping buttercup.
Walk 2

Cock Drove

| Start point | Car park by the Town Council offices on Paradise Road  
Grid reference TF611033 • Postcode PE38 9HS |
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Walk instructions

1. Start at the car park adjacent to the Town Council offices on Paradise Road. Turn left out of the car park and walk to the end of the road.
2. Turn left on to High Street, pass through Cannon Square and continue straight on along Lynn Road. Walk for about 500 yards and then turn left on to Cock Drove.
3. At the crossroads, turn right on to Short Drove. Follow this road to the end where you will see a recreation ground ahead of you. Turn left on to the restricted byway.
4. Follow this path, crossing Wimbotsham Road and continue until it opens out to a field. Follow the footpath across the field.
5. Turn left on to the restricted byway at the end.
6. Follow the path for a little under half a mile until you come to Wimbotsham Road. Cross Wimbotsham Road and continue following the path. You will cross a grassy area. Keep following the path straight ahead along the edge of this grassy area.
7. When you come to the road, turn left and then take your first right to follow Cock drove back to the main road.
8. Turn right on to Lynn Road and walk for approximately 500 yards, passing through Cannon Square on to High Street and then turn right on to Paradise Road. Turn right in to the car park.
The range of soft, grassy and tree-lined paths cleverly designed into this predominantly built-up environment makes this an ideal door-step walk.

Did you know…?

● Paradise Road was named so as it is thought that the Town Gallows were sited here and that it was the closest that the poor souls who were about to suffer this fate would get to paradise before passing on.

● Cannon Square takes its name from the ancient cannon that was kept in front of Cannon House at the Northern end of the High Street. Two smaller cannons were also kept by the front door of the Castle Hotel.

• Cannon Square: A reminder of the popular horse fairs once held here.
Walk 3
Howdale/ Rabbit Lane

Start point | Car park on Howdale Road, opposite the Howdale
Grid reference TF615030 • Postcode PE38 9AF

Parking | Free
Distance | 1.8 miles
Details | Minor gradients, 55% soft

Walk instructions

1. Start at the car park on Howdale Road opposite the Howdale. Cross Howdale Road and walk north across the Howdale, through the playground. Climb some steps through the hedgeline to the residential area. Walk straight on between the houses.

2. At the end of the path, turn left and then turn right on to St Edmunds Road. At the end of the road, turn left on to Bexwell Road.

3. After just over 100 yards, turn right on to Rabbit Lane. Follow Rabbit Lane for approximately a third of a mile.

4. As you approach Glebe Road, bear right, following the path to the right hand side of the road. The path continues through the housing estate. Follow this for approximately a third of a mile all the way to the end until you come out opposite a field.

5. Turn right past the reservoir and after approximately 150 yards, turn right on to a tarmac track which takes you back in to the housing estate.

6. Turn right on to Landseer Drive and shortly after the bend turn left on to Hogarth Road.

7. At the end of this road, turn left on to Hillcrest. Walk to the end of Hillcrest road and then turn right on to Bexwell Road.

8. After nearly 300 yards, turn left on to Stonecross Road. Take the first sharp right on to Rouse’s Lane. Continue along Rouse’s Lane, bearing left at the grassy island to Howdale Rise.

9. Cross the road and continue along the track back to the car park.

Did you know?

● The remains of the Town pump, once a feature of the Market Place, are situated to the Eastern end of the Howdale. Now non-functioning, the pump was once the main water supply for the people of Downham Market and was still being used in the 1930s.

● The local deep red/brown carrstone used in the present Church of St Edmund and many other buildings around the town was quarried on the Howdale.

● The Howdale (pictured below) is supposedly named after Miss Howe and Miss Dale who donated this six acres of open land to the people of Downham Market.
This is a pleasant, easy route starting from The Howdale, one of Downham Market’s popular open green spaces.

The Roman Catholic Church of St. Dominic a little further down Howdale Road at The Towers is unusual in that it was created out of a former stables and coach house. The Towers used to be the location of a great house which was once the dwelling of James Scott who donated the Town Clock to Downham Market. There was also a hospital and residential home on this site until it caught fire in 1966.
Walk 4
Bridle Lane/ Rabbit Lane

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Walk instructions

1. Start at the car park adjacent to the Town Council Offices. Turn left on to Paradise Road and then turn left on to High Street. Keep walking straight on through Cannon Square along Lynn Road for just over three quarters of a mile.

2. Turn right on to Bridle Lane just before the Garage. The bridleway becomes soft surface at the end of the lane. Follow this as it opens out into fields.

3. At the end of the track, turn right on to a hard-surface track, still following the bridleway. Just before you reach the large covered reservoir on your left, turn right on to a restricted byway through a new housing development.

4. Follow the path straight on until it exits to Glebe Road. Turn left and then take your first left on to Rabbit Lane. Follow Rabbit Lane until you reach Bexwell Road.

5. Turn right on Bexwell Road. Cross Cannon Square turning left on to High Street and then turn right on to Paradise Road. Turn right in to the car park.

St Edmund’s churchyard and cemetery ▲
(County Wildlife Site)
The site is largely neutral grassland (both mown and unmown) with some scrub area. Grassland species found here include sheep’s sorrel, creeping buttercup and common mouse-ear. Common bird’s-foot trefoil, tufted vetch and lady’s bedstraw can also be found in the unmown area of grassland.

▲ St Edmund’s Church
Seen on your left as you approach Cannon Square from Rabbit Lane, St Edmund’s church has Norman origins and is mainly 15th/16th century. The material used in the present building came from the carrstone quarry on the Howdale, whilst the corner stones and window surrounds came from Barnack, near Peterborough.
This route provides another good opportunity for a brisk leg stretch. At end of Bridle Lane, you will quickly find yourself surrounded by fields giving a wonderful sense of open space.
Denver Sluice River Great Ouse

Start point | Car Park near the sluice (Sluice Road)  
Grid reference TF588010 • Postcode PE38 0EG
Parking | Free  
Distance | 2.2 miles  
Details | Moderate gradients/ riverbanks, 100% soft

Walk instructions

1. Exit the car park through a small gate on the opposite side to the toilet block. Cross the road and walk up the bank to the Fen Rivers Way. Follow the path along the river bank.
2. After just over a mile (you will see a little way up ahead the bridge where the A1122 crosses the river) bear right off the main riverbank on to a public footpath crossing a field to a stile. Climb the stile and continue across the field.
3. Turn right following the bank of the Relief Channel (Black Bank Dyke) back towards Denver Sluice. When you come to the end, go through a gate, cross Sluice Road and go through another gate back to the car park.

Denver Sluice

Denver Sluice is the focal point of the flood defence system that protects the low lying Fens. The sluice was first built by Cornelius Vermuyden in the 1650s, but the present structure was built in 1834 by Sir John Rennie, before being enlarged in the 1920s. Running parallel to the River Great Ouse is the Relief Channel, the final link in the drainage system, completed in 1964. The two waterways meet at King’s Lynn, the historic port on the edge of the Wash.

The Denver Complex

The Environment Agency currently operates the Denver Complex to manage flood risk, provide a water resource for places as far away as Essex and to allow passage for river traffic. The site however also has good potential for further leisure and recreation enhancements. Working with partners, the Environment Agency would like to see the development of a hub at Denver that caters for a diverse array of activities and in turn informs and educates people about the important role that the site has whilst they get involved in activity either on or by the water.

The hub would utilise the existing public rights of way to create a number of circular walk routes of varying lengths. It would also enable people to hire a bike, a boat or even a canoe, take in a meal by the river or cruise down the river on a trip boat. All of these activities would utilise the Denver Hub as their start and finish point whilst increasing the number of visitors at neighbouring attractions such as Denver village, Downham Market or even Welney.
With stunning views across the Fens, this route follows the Fen Rivers Way along the bank of the River Great Ouse before returning to Denver Sluice along the Relief Channel. This is a great walk for spotting birds.

Fen Rivers Way
The Fen Rivers Way, a long distance path running for nearly 80kms (50 miles) between the historic settlements of Cambridge and King's Lynn, traces the course of rivers that drain slowly across the Fens into the Wash.

The walk along the river here at Denver takes in part of the Fen River’s Way. Why not try walking other sections of this long distance path and build up your fitness levels as you go?

Look out for...
• Green woodpecker • Great crested grebe • Migrating wildfowl e.g. redshank and snipe and overwintering birds e.g. brent geese, swans, widgeon, teal and pochard who are attracted to the Ouse Washes, south of Denver (a Site of Special Scientific Interest which also has other European and International protection)
Walk 6

Denver Windmill

Start point
Denver Mill, Sluice Road
Grid reference TF604012 • Postcode PE38 0EG

Parking
Free

Distance
2.2 miles

Details
Minor gradients, 60% soft (toilets available if you use the café for refreshments)

Walk instructions

1. Start at Denver Windmill. Turn left on to Sluice Road and walk for approximately 125 yards and then turn left through a gate on to a public footpath across Sluice Common.

2. After just under 150 yards, turn left on to a path. Go through a gate, walk along a section of boardwalk and follow the public footpath just under half a mile.

3. At the end of this path, turn right and then after approximately 130 yards, turn left on to Cow Lane.

4. At the end of Cow Lane, turn left on to Whin Common Road. Walk along this road until you reach the road island with the war memorial on it. Cross the road, continuing straight on along Downham Road.

5. Follow Downham Road for approximately a quarter of a mile. As you approach the end of Downham Road, it bends gently to the right. Before reaching the end of the road turn a sharp left on to Sandy Lane.

6. At the end of Sandy Lane turn right on to Sluice Road.

7. Follow Sluice Road for just over 400 yards back to Denver Windmill which will be on your left.

Denver Windmill

The windmill was built in 1835 and an additional steam-powered mill was added within the following 25 years. During the 1930s the steam engine was replaced by a Blackstone 35hp oil engine and the steam mill refitted as an animal feed mill.

The windmill stopped production after being struck by lightning in 1941. The mills’ workshops developed into a separate engineering works which carried out work ranging from church organ repairs through agricultural engineering to secret Government work during World War II.

The mill site was re-opened by the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust in 2000 with funding from a number of sources and it is now open to the public. Visit the website, www.denvermill.co.uk for further details and opening hours.

Info taken from the Denver Mill website www.denvermill.co.uk

Did you know?

● Up to seven hundred windmills built out of brick or timber once dominated the Fens landscape. They were used either to drain the land or mill the corn. Many have since disappeared but some remain dotted over the landscape including Denver Mill.
A peaceful walk around the pretty village of Denver. The windmill is still operational and is a fascinating feature of this walk.

Sluice Common (County Wildlife Site)
The common is predominantly grassland with some scattered shrub and is grazed by cattle. A dyke bisects the site and is lined with species such as eared willow, creeping thistle and white bryony.

Open grassy areas attract ground feeding birds such as the green woodpecker.
**Walk Instructions**

1. Start at the Bluebell Inn on Lynn Road. From the car park, turn right on to Lynn Road. At the fork in the road, bear right on to Boughton Road and after approximately 150 yards, turn right on to Furlong Road.

2. At the end of Furlong Road, turn left on to Furlong Drove. Follow the road almost to the A134. Just before you reach the A134, turn right, climbing a stile on to a cross field path. Follow the footpath cross field and at the end, turn right on to Oxborough Road.

3. After approximately 180 yards, turn left on to Great Man’s Way and follow it to the end (about a third of a mile). Continue straight on along a public footpath that runs to the right hand side of a house.

4. Follow the footpath round to the right. The footpath becomes a bridleway. Keep bearing right along the bridleway and follow to Bridge Road. Turn right on to Bridge Road and continue, bearing left as the road becomes High Street.

5. Turn right on to Lynn Road and follow for a quarter of a mile until you arrive back at the Bluebell Inn.

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**All Saints Church ▲**
The church here was originally 15th century. The tower fell in 1578, the nave was rebuilt in the 18th century and the nave and chancel were entirely rebuilt in the 19th century.

**Old Crown House/All Saints House**
Once an Inn, this building is of early 16th century origin but has been much altered since.
A pleasant walk around the attractive village of Stoke Ferry. There is a wealth of old buildings to see en route.

The Old Chemists Shop
This building is dated 1824 and was restored by the Norfolk Historic Buildings Trust in 1987.

Look out for...
- Reed bunting
- Roe deer
- Brown hare
- Gatekeeper butterfly
- Reed warbler
  (sings a rhythmic song from within the reed bed rather than from a perch)

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Walk instructions

1. Starting from the Chequers on Church Road (facing the Green) turn right and after a short distance turn right on to Tinker’s Lane (Restricted Byway). Bear Left on to Miller’s Lane. At the sharp right-hand bend, take the public footpath straight ahead.

2. Follow the footpath for approximately 100 yards and then turn left, climbing a stile and still following the public footpath. Keep to the left edge of this field and exit to Honey Hill.

3. Turn right to follow the restricted byway. At the cross tracks, turn left along Long Church’s Lane.

4. Cross the road and continue straight on. You are now on Gullpit Drove. After a short distance you will see some buildings on your right. **There is a public footpath opposite that you can use as a shortcut.**

5. Keep following the restricted byway for a further 350 yards and then turn left on to Lake Drove at the T-junction. Follow Lake Drove for just over half a mile.

6. Before you reach the road, bear right on to the public footpath that crosses the corner of the field. At the end of the footpath, instead of crossing the footbridge to the road, bear right and continue walking for a short distance along the headland of the field following the bend in the road.

7. Turn left and exit to the road after the main apex of the bend. **The Stow Estate Trust has kindly granted permission for pedestrians to use this short section of headland path to avoid walking along the roadside at the sharp bend.**

Prison and Gallows

During the reign of Edward I, the Abbot of Ely had a prison and gallows at Wimbotsham. The site is unknown but they are locally reputed to have been near St Mary’s Church.

Coin discovery

A few years ago, a number of farthings were discovered by builders working on the porch of St Mary’s Church. The coins were thought to have been left by local men leaving to fight in World War One and were reburied where they were found.

St Mary’s Church

- St Mary’s Church is off the route but is accessible via Church Road.
- St Mary’s Church dates back to the 12th century.
- The churchyard here is a County Wildlife Site. The grass is rich in herb species such as rough chervil, bulbous buttercup and dove’s-foot cranesbill.
Stride out along quiet, tree-lined tracks from the peaceful village of Wimbotsham. A very pleasant and uplifting walk.

Look out for...
- Lapwing
- Oystercatcher
- Barn owl
- Kestrel

Oystercatcher Photograph by Jill Pakenham
Walk instructions

1. Start by the information board at the car parking area at Shouldham Warren. Take the first well defined track to your left and follow round in an anti-clockwise direction, keeping to the right at any forks in the path.

2. Turn left at the cross-paths marked by a red post and continue following the red trail. This track takes you down to Black Drain.

3. Turn right to walk along the bank of the drain still following the red route. **Note you won’t see any red posts for a little while until you come to your next right turn** (see next instruction).

4. Follow the path for almost three quarters of a mile, ignoring any right turns until you come to a right turn that is marked by two red posts. Turn right here and follow the wide sandy track up hill.

5. Turn left on to another track and after a little over 250 yards, turn right at the T junction and follow this track straight on back to the car park.

Archaeology

The huge earthworks and ruined buildings at Shouldham Warren probably date to World War Two, and may be the remnants of a shooting range or temporary camp (they are situated east of the car parking area).

Rabbit Warrens

Warrens were designated areas where rabbits were bred, nurtured, protected and trapped for meat and their highly-prized fur, often on a commercial scale, from the 14th to the 19th century. Skins were taken to factories in Brandon and Thetford where the fur was treated and processed into felt for the hat trade or for export. Warrens could cover large areas, defined by perimeter banks and protected by warren lodges. Shouldham Warren was in existence by 1616. Between 1847 and 1890 there was extensive tree planting on the former warren. Today, rabbits play a vital role in conservation; their nibbling and burrowing activity creates the short sward and disturbed soil that makes the Brecks such a very special place for biodiversity.
Shouldham Warren is a fascinating environment where the Brecks merges with the Fens. Beyond the tall pine forest lies the open expanse of the Fens and the valley of the River Nar demonstrating the abrupt change from one natural area to another.

Breck meets Fens
Shouldham Warren is a patchwork of pines and heathland providing a tranquil refuge for a rich variety of plant and animal species. The undulating site slopes down to Black Drain north of the forest which acts as the transition point for the Breckland/Fenland environments. As you take in the views across the Nar Valley you will see how the typical dry, sandy, heathland landscape of the Brecks becomes the flat, open, peaty landscape of the Fens.
Walk 10

Outwell/Upwell

Start point
Church Terrace
Grid reference TF512036 • Postcode PE14 8RQ

Parking
Alongside river on Lowside – free

Distance
3.4 miles

Details
Flat, 60% soft

Walk instructions

1. Start in Outwell near St Clement’s Church at the bridge at the junctions of Church Terrace, The Tramway and Lowside. Cross the bridge and cross the road, turning right to walk along the pavement.

2. After approximately 140 yards, turn left on to Robb’s Chase (this is signposted and although it says “Private” on the sign, it is a public footpath so you are entitled to walk along it).

3. Follow the path for approximately a third of a mile and then bear right on to a track (byway open to all traffic). This is still Robb’s Chase. The track becomes a lane (Back Lane).

4. At the end of the lane, turn left and then take the first right on to Green Drove.

5. Follow Green Drove (which becomes Cotton’s Drove) for approximately half a mile. At the end of the track, turn left.

6. Follow this track, keeping left until you reach the tarmac road. Turn right on to the road and walk for a little over 350 yards. Turn left on to a grassy footpath by a sluice. The path takes you alongside an orchard.

7. At the end of this path, turn left on to Town Street. Follow Town Street, which becomes Rectory Road, for approximately one mile and then cross the road, turning right over the bridge back to your start point by Church Terrace.

Orchards
There was a phenomenal expansion of orchards in the fens from the mid nineteenth century often on County Council smallholdings. These orchards were an important part of the Norfolk economy and mainly produced cooking apples and plums either for local jam making or export to the north of England.

Orchards are an important habitat and there is a Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan devoted to them. In recent decades, there has been a significant decline in orchards leading to loss of habitat as well as the disappearance of many traditional varieties of apples, pears and other fruits.

The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway
The Wisbech and Upwell Tramway was a small railway built in the 19th century to carry agricultural produce in the Wisbech area of East Anglia. The Tramway closed on 23 May 1966.

Thomas the Tank Engine
The Tramway was the inspiration for “Toby the Tram Engine” and later “Mavis” the Drewry Shunter in W. Awdry’s “Thomas the Tank Engine”. Awdry lived near the tramway and incorporated both the J70 tram engine and diesel-operated Drewry Shunter into his stories much loved by children all over Britain.

The Big Screen
The Wisbech and Upwell rolling stock was also depicted in the film “The Titfield Thunderbolt”, a 1953 British comedy about a group of villagers trying to prevent British Railways from closing the fictional Titfield branch line.
Discover the history of the Wisbech and Upwell Tramway which provided the inspiration for much-loved engine characters in the classic children's stories of Thomas the Tank Engine.

Outwell and Upwell
The villages of Outwell and Upwell run together along the line of the A1101 but retain separate parishes.

- Church of St Clement’s, Outwell
  The Church of St Clement’s dates back to the 13th century. The 13th century tower and nave west wall remain today. The body of the church dates back to the 14th century although it underwent some remodelling in the 15th, 16th and 19th centuries. The exquisite hammerbeam chapel roof is one of the best in Norfolk with the roofs of both the aisles and nave being original.

- Church of St Peter’s, Upwell
  The tower of St Peter’s Church is 13th century, the nave early 14th century and was altered when the chancel was built mid 15th century. The church was subject to Victorian restorations throughout the 19th century. There are nearly 60 important memorials in the churchyard dating from the late 17th century to the early 19th century.
Walk instructions

1. Walk to the very end of East End and continue straight on along the bridleway (Thistle Hill Road).

2. After approximately ¾ of a mile you reach a dog-leg in the track. After the dog-leg, continue following the bridleway round to the right. This is Pepper Lane.

3. After a little over 600 yards, turn right on to Sandy Lane. At the sharp right-hand bend, continue straight on along the public footpath straight ahead passing The Lodge. Follow the path all the way around the edge of the field and exit to Woodhall Road.

4. Turn left onto Woodhall Road. Woodhall Road becomes Church Road. At the War Memorial, turn right on to the High Street. Follow the High Street for a little over 250 yards before turning right into East End.

Hilgay Fen: County Wildlife Site
This is an extensive, generally well-grazed area of open fen lying along the south bank of the River Wissey. The site is divided in to compartments by a network of drainage ditches and is considerably wetter at the western end.

The open fen areas at the western end are also more species-rich and support a diverse range of vegetation including: carnation sedge; marsh marigold; lesser spearwort and southern marsh orchid. Also look out for birds such as the tree sparrow and grey partridge.

Hilgay Heronry: Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)
Hilgay Heronry is a small copse on the edge of the fens which supports a nationally important breeding colony of grey herons. There is an average of about 40 occupied nests each year in the mature trees of European larch and ash. The nearby fenland with its extensive system of drainage dykes provides ideal feeding conditions for the birds. Look out for grey herons as you walk.

Water Vole
Water voles are semi-aquatic animals that live in ditches, dykes, slow moving streams and rivers, lakes, and marshes. Water voles are vulnerable in an environment shared with species such as American mink as they are optimum sized prey. The water vole population has severely declined in recent years and the Norfolk Biodiversity Action Plan includes a specific plan aimed at conserving them.
This quiet, peaceful and relaxing environment rich in wildlife makes this an ideal calming walk. Look out for grey herons particularly during spring and summer.

River Wissey
Hilgay is situated on the banks of the River Wissey which was once a busy route way for barges carrying goods from Stoke Ferry to the port of King’s Lynn.

Manorial Earthworks
To your left as you leave East End and start along the bridleway, there is a complex group of earthworks the other side of the hedgerow. This consists of a moated enclosure with three ditched enclosures to the east. These eastern enclosures have internal features suggesting the presence of fishponds and a building. The site is thought to be a manorial complex, possibly of the Abbey of Ramsey. There is a possible later enclosure to the south of this site.

Listen out for...
- Corn bunting with a song like a bunch of keys being jangled. They often sing from overhead wires
- Sedge warbler which sings its noisy rambling warble from the reeds at the edge of dykes

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Walk instructions

1. From the Old White Bell car park, turn right on to Upgate Street and continue on to Lynn Road. After approximately 100 yards, turn right on to Feltwell Road.

2. Turn left on to Campsey Road. Walk to the end of Campsey Road (just over half a mile) and continue straight on along the track past Campsey Farm.

3. After crossing Ten Foot Drain at the end of the track, turn right. Follow the bridleway for nearly half a mile and then take the public footpath on your right (Black Bank Drove).

4. At the end, turn right on to Ringmore Road. After approximately 170 yards, turn left on to a public footpath. At the end of the footpath, turn right on to Feltwell Road.

5. After almost 200 yards, turn left on to another public footpath through a set of staggered railings between some gardens.

6. The footpath exits to Churchgate Street. Follow Churchgate Street past the remains of St Mary’s Church. At the end of Churchgate Street, turn left on to Common Lane. This becomes a track.

7. Follow the track for almost 500 yards and then turn right on to a grassy bridlepath.

8. At the end of this path, turn right and follow the path (Mill Drove) past the sewage works, bear left and head towards the A10. Turn right on to the pavement.

9. Bear right off the A10 following the pavement back towards the village. Follow the road (Westgate Street) round to the right. At the crossroads, turn left on to Upgate Street and after approximately 160 yards, turn right in to the Old White Bell car park.

*Barn Owls*

The steep side of a fenland drainage ditch from the ground level to the water is known as the ‘batter’. These strips of grass are mown regularly, and as they are often several metres wide and extend for many kilometres together they represent a significant area of grassland. Barn owls are often seen hunting over these areas as they support the small mammals they depend on for their food.
With great views across a classic fenland landscape, this walk offers a fantastic sense of space.

▼ Church of St Mary

During the medieval period the community was centred on the old church of St Mary which now stands in ruins having fallen out of use by the mid 19th century. It was replaced in 1858 by the new St Mary’s Church which stands south-west of the ruins. The new church features furnishings from the old church along with the base of the medieval village cross in its churchyard.
Walks locations

Are you interested in walking with a group?
The West Norfolk Walking for Health Scheme delivers a series of led walks in the Downham Market area.
Contact the Coordinator on 01553 778673 or email activity.coordinator@ageconcernwnd.org.uk for more information and to obtain a programme.

Useful contacts

Active Norfolk
www.active.norfolk.org

Borough Council of King’s Lynn and West Norfolk
www.west-norfolk.gov.uk

The Brecks
www.brecks.org

Permissive walks and rides
http://countrywalks.defra.gov.uk

Denver Mill
www.denvermill.co.uk

Downham Market and District Heritage Centre/Society
www.downhamheritage.org.uk

Downham Market Group of Internal Drainage Boards
www.downhammarketidbs.org.uk

Downham Market Town Council
www.downhammarkettowncouncil.org.uk

Environment Agency
www.environment-agency.gov.uk

Forestry Commission
www.forestry.gov.uk

National trail/long distance paths
www.nationaltrail.co.uk

Natural England
www.naturalengland.org.uk

NHS Norfolk
www.norfolk-pct.nhs.uk

Norfolk Biodiversity Partnership
www.norfolk biodiversity.org

Norfolk Churches Trust
www.norfolkchurches.co.uk

Norfolk Countryside Access
www.countrysideaccess.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk County Council
www.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Heritage Explorer
www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk

Norfolk Online
www.norfolk.gov.uk

Open Access
www.openaccess.gov.uk

Visit the Fens
http://www.visitthefens.co.uk/

Walking the way to health
www.whi.org.uk

Public transport
Traveline 0871 200 2233
www.travelineeastanglia.co.uk

National Rail 08457 48 49 50
www.nationalrail.co.uk

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Further information

The Downham Market Tourist Information Office is located at The Priory Centre, Priory Rd, Downham Market, Norfolk, PE38 9JS. Pop in to pick up local area information or call 01366 383287.

Contact

If you have any comments regarding these walks, whether good or not so good – tell us what you think!

Write to: Norfolk County Council, County Hall, Martineau Lane, Norwich, Norfolk NR1 2SG
Email: environment@norfolk.gov.uk
Phone: 01603 222769

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Going for a walk in natural surroundings is one of the easiest and most enjoyable ways to maintain good health, to relax, unwind and re-charge your batteries. This book has 12 walks of varying lengths, ideal to fit in with daily life. The locations have been chosen to help you enjoy and appreciate our Norfolk heritage, both natural and man-made, linking history to nature and health. Enjoy the walks!