

Along the way

From Setchey Bridge (just south of Setchey village) the walk heads east, following the north bank of the River Nar through open fenland for about 4 miles before arriving at Abbey Farm.

Pentney Abbey, an Augustinian priory, was founded here around 1130 by Robert de Vaux. The priory, which went into decline in the 15th century, was eventually dissolved by King Henry VIII during the Reformation in 1537. Its abandoned and decaying buildings were later looted for building materials and used for target practice by Oliver Cromwell's troops. The ruins of the impressive flint and Barnack stone gatehouse, which dates from the 14th century, still remain next to the farm house. A wide range of interesting archaeological objects, which include swords, human remains, coins, metalwork, a harness pendant and a medieval weight, have been found on the site.

From Abbey Farm the route leads southwest away from the river towards Shouldham Warren, a fascinating environment where the Brecks and Fens merge and the landscape changes quite abruptly. Although now heavily forested with conifers, Shouldham Warren was once an area of open heath. It was a designated warren between the 17th and 19th centuries and a place where rabbits were bred, nurtured, protected and trapped for meat and fur. Skins were taken to Brandon and Thetford where they could be processed into felt for hats or exported.

The huge earthworks and ruined buildings to the east of the car park are far more recent, probably dating to World War Two, and may be the remnants of a shooting range or temporary camp.

From Shouldham Warren the route heads north and west towards the small village of Wormegay where the earthworks of a medieval motte and bailey castle are still visible. Beyond Wormegay the route continues past the site of Wormegay Priory, another 12th century Augustinian institution, before returning to the River Nar. From here you follow the river's south bank to walk a short way west to return to Setchey Bridge and the route's starting point.

Walk summary

A diverse 10.5 mile walk through the countryside of the Fens and Brecks, visiting Setchey, Pentney Abbey, Shouldham Warren and Wormegay along the way

Getting started

The route begins at Setchey Bridge at TF636134 on the River Nar. Alternative starting points are near Pentney Abbey at TF698121, and at Shouldham Warren car park at TF679105.

Getting there

Bus services Norfolk Green 37 and 39 (Setchey), Pentney Shuttlebus (Pentney). To walk from Pentney to the alternative starting point near Pentney Abbey is just under 2 miles.

Bus stops Setchey, opp Old Church layby and Pentney, adj Church Close

Traveline enquiries: 0871 200 22 33

www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk

Maps and guides

Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 235, King's Lynn, Downham Market & Swaffham, available from Ordnance Survey shop www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/oswebsite

What to expect

Mainly footpaths, with riverbank walking along the River Nar between Setchey and Pentney Abbey.

Facilities

Accommodation at Pentney Abbey, Pentney village
Car Parking (TF679105) at Shouldham Warren
Post office at Wormegay