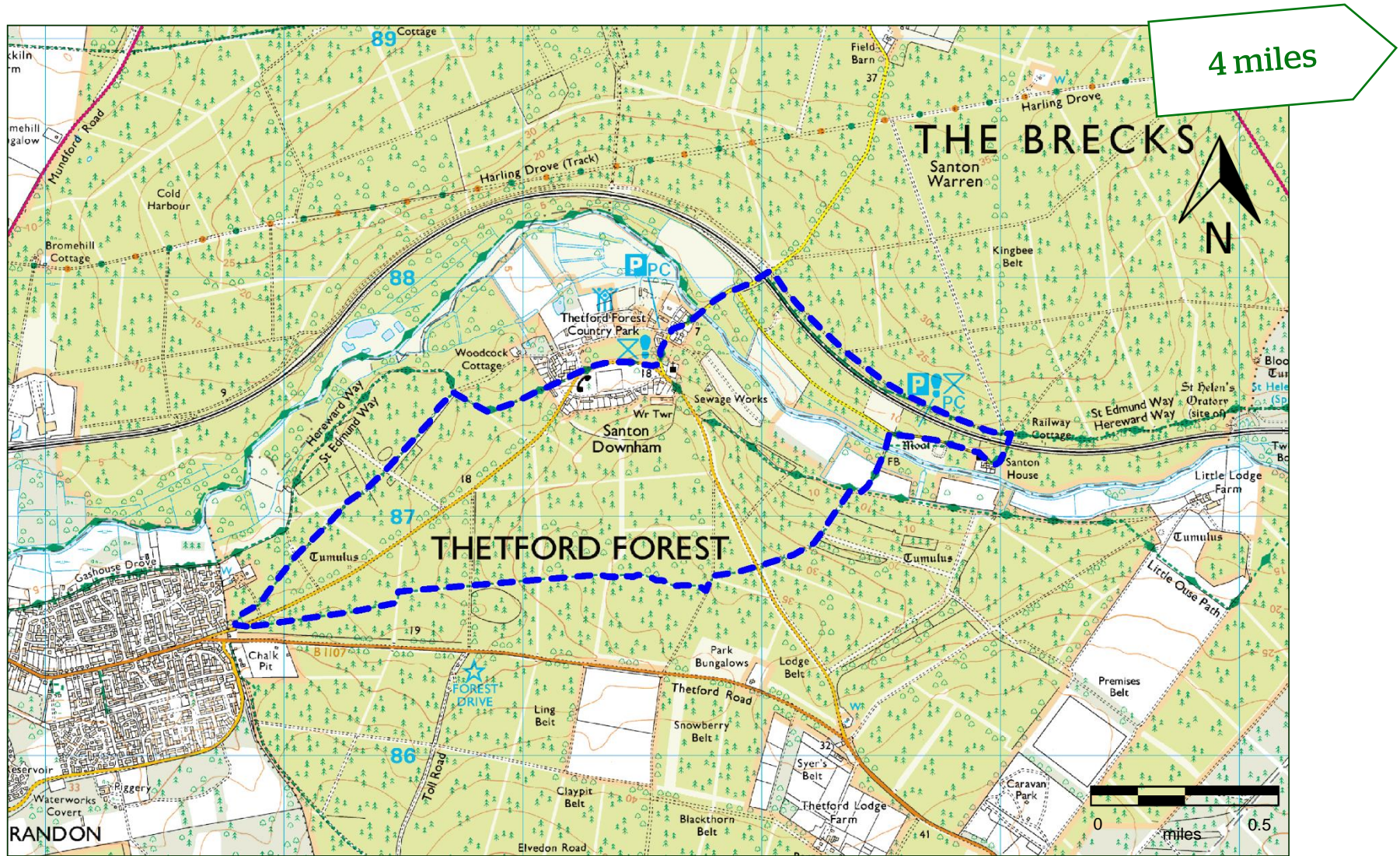


Circular Walk

The Forest Trail, Santon Downham



Along the way

Managed by the Forestry Commission, Thetford Forest largely focuses on timber production, but also provides fantastic opportunities for both recreation and conservation with the forest supporting a number of bird species as well as a growing population of deer.

The trail starts in the picturesque village of Santon Downham. Fans of Dad's Army may recognise the white lattice bridge near the start point, which featured in an episode where the platoon crossed the bridge in a vintage fire engine. At St Helen's you will pass the first of two churches on this trail - pretty All Saints, now redundant, has a distinctive octagonal bell tower and is one of the smallest churches in England.

Crossing the Little Ouse for the second time, you can either shorten your walk returning to Santon Downham or continue through the forest heading towards Brandon. Looping back towards the start of the trail you will pass the church of St Mary the Virgin in its beautiful verdant setting at the edge of the forest. A highlight of the interior is a charming stained glass window in the south wall of the chancel depicting St Francis with a variety of Breckland wildlife.

Walk summary

This trail explores Thetford Forest: the largest lowland forest in England, covering almost 19,000 hectares (47,000 acres) of woodland.

Getting started: This trail starts at the Forestry Commission Offices car park in Santon Downham (TL8160 8779), alternatively you can join the trail at St Helen's Picnic Site (TL8259 8737).

Getting there: Coach Services Nos 200 and 201 operate in the area with a stop near St Mary's Church. Free parking is available at Santon Downham and St Helen's.

Maps and guides: Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 229, Thetford Forest in The Brecks.

What to expect: Mainly forest tracks and unsurfaced footpaths with some road walking. There are Forestry Commission gates, but no stiles on this route.

Facilities: There is a shop and post office in Santon Downham. Public toilets are available all year round in Santon Downham, and Summer only at St Helen's Picnic Site.