

Introduction

The Knapton Way is a circular walk of approximately 5 miles within the parish boundaries and generally follows public rights of way and minor rural roads. The directions are based on commencing the walk at the car park at the head of the Knapton Cutting in Hall Lane (1).

Other shorter circular walks can be commenced from the same point using parts of the route (see map) and the Paston Way can be used by those starting from North Walsham or from the north and east.

Certain sections are occasionally muddy and overgrown so suitable clothing and footwear is recommended. Please remember to follow the country code.

General Information (numbers below are referenced on the map overleaf)

(1) Heading south the first part of the walk follows a disused railway line. Built to service the North Norfolk coastal villages between Mundesley and Cromer the line was used for carrying agricultural produce as well as passengers. The line was closed in 1964 and the cutting is now a carefully conserved butterfly sanctuary visited by many species. Other wildlife abounds in this section of the walk so please stay on the path and keep dogs on a lead.

(2) The path leaves the railway line and follows a short section of an ancient loke. There is evidence of the adjacent trees being coppiced. The route crosses the low lying fields which were previously used as pasture, in sharp contrast to the intensively farmed fields later. The area now forms part of the Pigneys Wood nature reserve. The reserve has several sign boards that give a wealth of information on the different habitats and the wildlife.

(3) The North Walsham and Dilham Canal was constructed in 1826 following the route of the River Ant. Unfortunately the freight it was meant to have carried could still be more economically carried by land and sea and it was closed in 1886. Some work on the canal has been undertaken immediately downstream but the canal is not navigable on this section. A small water sports centre has been established to the south of the canal. The large brick building to the north is a pumping station for the abstraction of ground water.

(4 and 5) On leaving the canal and turning to the north the path rises and crosses agricultural land, mainly used for cereal crops. This represents the use of the majority of the land in the parish. The views from this section of the walk reflect not only the rural pattern of the land and the small villages with their churches; the expanding town of North Walsham can be seen to the south and to the east are the structures of the North Sea gas terminal at Bacton.

(6) Green Lane is a 'restricted byway' (previously 'bridle path') that leads to the east of the village. Typical of a country bridle path it is used by both walkers and riders. Green Lane has retained trees and bushes on both sides of the bridle path. This may be a bit restrictive to users at times but is a wonderful linear habitat for wildlife.

(7) Green Lane ends at the old Knapton railway station from where the path crosses the fields to the centre of the village of Knapton. The village has had several names with earlier records indicating that the name is derived from Knappen, a Danish name thought to mean a settlement on a hill or eminence

(8 and 9) Most of the houses in the village are along the main street running east west with a mixture of old and new. The church is well worth a visit and is famous for its double hammer beam roof. The village has no retail outlets. The return to the car park follows a minor road which forms part of the Quiet Lanes initiative. This encourages the use of the road by all (walkers, riders, etc as well as vehicles) at a reasonable speed. Be aware that not all motorists understand this concept.

Directions

1 Grid ref 30112 33071

From the car park take the steps down into discussed railway cutting and proceed along the line of the old railway for about 1100m

2 Grid ref 29326 32372

About 250m after a footbridge over an underpass turn left off the embankment and head south across the fields of the Pigneys Wood reserve to the canal (passing an old farm building on your left.)

3 Grid ref 29295 31947

Cross the bridge and walk along the bank of the canal and associated drainage ditches

4 Grid ref 29751 31399

On reaching the road turn left and then shortly left again towards Knapton.

5 Grid ref 29777 31561

200m from the road junction turn right through the field gate and proceed northwards along the path that follows the field boundaries. Some field boundaries have been removed so the path crosses a field before meeting up with the south end of Green Lane.

6 Grid ref 30381 32526

Follow Green lane for about 1500m (the route can be shortened by taking a short westward section of the Paston Way across the fields back to the car park from a point about 600m along Green Lane (grid ref 30637 33067)

7 Grid ref 31042 33850

At the north end of Green Lane take the path left over the old railway line and cross the fields to the village.

8 Grid ref 30817 34148

A short loke (lane) leads to the village street – turn left and proceed up the road.

9 Grid ref 30561 34108

At the top of the street turn left by the phone box/notice board and follow the minor road south for about 1000m back to the car park.

Knapton Way

A North Norfolk Parish Walk

