

FINCHAM CIRCULAR WALK

DISTANCE_____ approx. 4 and a half miles

TIME_____ 2 hours at a steady pace.

TERRAIN_____ mainly walking headlands and rough grazing pasture but with a section on made up road. The route has a variety of stiles and bridges some of which can be slippery when wet. Sturdy shoes or boots are recommended.

The walk is not suitable for pushchairs

WHAT YOU MAY SEE ON THE WALK

The hedgerows and fields support a range of wildlife and the scene changes from traditional grazing meadows to more open arable land. There are many points where there are good views back to the village.

En- route you may see roe deer, foxes and hares as well as a wide range of birds including tits, finches, wrens, woodpeckers, kestrels, buzzards and kites. Skylarks can be seen and heard and pheasants and partridge enjoy the environment. In winter fieldfares and redwing visit.

Along the way you can see dog-rose, hawthorn, sloe, guelder rose, spindle, hazel and blackberry. Along the verges and banks of ditches yarrow, scabious, celandine and primroses thrive.

In the section of nature reserve the path takes you through an area of woodland and grass which is allowed to grow naturally and supports a range of pollinating insects and butterflies. The seed heads of the grasses make a stunning site in late summer. Dead wood in the reserve makes an ideal place to explore mini beasts and creepy crawlies.

Not least of all, the walk is a wonderful place to enjoy the ever changing big Norfolk skies.

The walk begins in the Fincham Memorial Hall Carpark.

Turn left out of the carpark and follow the pavement until you are opposite the Swan Public House. Cross over the road and proceed down Swan Lane until you reach a metal gate. Enter the yard by a small metal gate to the left of the large gate. (1)

(A footpath goes off to the left to Boughton Road and you can see the footpath to the right which you will return on)

Proceed straight ahead for a short while and pass through a scissor stile gate to access the next field. Walk straight down this field and pass through the gate keeping the fence on your left. (This field is frequently used for grazing, so please ensure that the gate is closed.) At the bottom of this field cross the ditch using the wooden bridge. (2)

Keeping straight across the pasture look for the gap in the hedge which is where you will find the next bridge and stile. (On the left of the pasture is an ancient wood.)

Immediately after the bridge turn right to follow the zig-zag headland of the open arable field keeping the hedge to your right. From here onward you may see deer. At the final bend of the field the hedge peters out and you now have a ditch to your right. When you reach the corner of the field, cross the bridge. (A path goes along the headland to Boughton Road.) Our path turns right and follows the headland west for a short distance before turning left again keeping the ditch to your right and walking towards a clump of willow trees. Keep the willow trees to your right and note that this is the site of a small pond. This is a good spot to look and listen for skylarks. (3)

We are climbing steadily and zigzag along the headland left and then right. The ditch is still on your right. Looking left you can see the wind turbines at Swaffham and to the right across the field Raven's Farm. Cross the footbridge on the right and turn immediately left with the ditch now to your left. Climb steadily to the next footbridge and cross back to the other side turning right immediately after. Continue to the end of the field and at the corner look for the marker post which directs you to drop down right to cross the ditch via the sleepers.

Over the brow of the hill is St. Winnold's House, the site of an ancient priory.

Proceed along the headland keeping the hedge of sloe, hawthorn and dog rose on your right. Here you have a good view of St. Winnold's House. At the corner of this field turn right via planks over the ditch. (4)

You are now in the Nature Reserve. The path meanders through the wooded section and in Spring you can see primroses along the way. Later in the year various species of fungi can be found. The Reserve opens out to a grassed area with a rough mown pathway through.

Through the hedge line to the left is another arable field where hares are often to be seen.

Shortly after this point is the pond created by Parish Volunteers and left to develop naturally. Here there is a bench to rest and observe. (A footpath from here will take you to Gibbit Lane and Wereham.) With the pond on your left continue to walk through the grassed area to the end of the Reserve marked by the Reserve picture sign.

Turn right to follow the farm track uphill. (5) Views of Fincham emerge as you walk along the track. Pass around the metal barrier and then pass the cottage and farm buildings on the right. You are now walking along Black Drove. To the left you can see Stradsett Church. Off to the right and set back from the Drove is Raven's Farm.

One field after the entrance to Raven's Farm look out for the footpath sign on the left hand side of Black Drove. (6) At this point turn right to walk along the headland with the ditch on the left, turning left at the end of the field proceeding along the headland to the corner of the field where you turn right and follow the hedgerow. Off to the left you can see the buildings along the Downham Road.

After a while, by the industrial site, the path doglegs briefly right and then left again along the headland and onto the farm track (7) with the ditch and hedge to your left. One field after the hedge ends follow the track left.

This track leads to the main road where you can, if you wish, turn right and follow the footpath back to the Village Hall, but we turn right keeping the Water Treatment Plant on our left and walk along the headland until a wooden bridge is reached. (8) Here we cross the bridge and walk diagonally at

approximately 2 o'clock, across the pasture to a gap in the hedge where you cross the ditch by planks and go over the stile. Cross the next field at the same angle until you come to the stile in the corner of the field. This is marked Shrublands. Follow the path keeping the barn on the right and cross over the stile immediately after the barn onto the grass track which leads back to the little metal gate at the bottom of Swan Lane (9)

Walk back down Swan Lane and turn left back to the Village Hall.

The Parish Church of St Martin is well worth a visit if you have time.

We hope you have enjoyed the walk.

October 2018