

A Ramble Round Briggate

All aboard for a wander around Briggate and Meeting Hill! the walk begins from Honing Station Car Park, Briggate. We will head for the hills, take in a meeting, walk along a corridor of gravestones, check on our line of defences, mill about and maybe get a bit cross. But I am sure it will be enjoyable whatever the weather. Shorter than normal (honestly) it is about four miles on country lanes and footpaths, all welcome; dog-friendly.

1. Start at the Honing station car park which can be found just beyond the village of Briggate
2. Leave the car park along the railway line heading away from the gates (westwards on the Weavers Way) and follow the path onto the line. This will take you over a railway bridge that crosses the North Walsham and Dilham Canal.
3. At the first road turn right and follow it past the converted Briggate Windmill to Swan Farm.
4. At the farm turn sharp left and then continue straight on, ignoring the road to Meeting Hill on your right.
5. Where the road turns sharply left take the footpath across the field to the right, heading towards houses in the distance.
6. As you enter Meeting Hill climb down a bank into the road and turn right. Follow this down to the main road and village sign, where you turn left to go in front of the Meeting House.
7. A small diversion up the lane beyond the Meeting House takes you to a lane lined with gravestones. The scrubland behind the house here was the site of the original Methodist Chapel after which the hamlet is named.
8. Return to the main road and continue left until you shortly reach a footpath sign pointing across a field, which you take.
9. Proceed across the field in a straight line, passing a WWII gun emplacement and several pill-box defences. Head towards Ebridge Mill.
10. Eventually you will reach a road; turn right to walk in front of the Mill and admire the partially restored lock on the NW to Dilham Canal.
11. Once past the mill find a path on your right that follows a road to a Country Retreat.
12. Where this track turns sharp left you take the path straight on across the fields. Where the track turns slightly right to go uphill, be sure to explore the hedge on the left for the remains of a medieval cross!
13. At the top of the hill follow the hedgerow straight on and slightly down to join a road. This road will lead you back to the main road, and the car park.

Start at the Honing station car park which can be found just beyond the village of Briggate

Route of Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway (Great Yarmouth to Sutton Bridge)

The Midland and Great Northern Joint Railway link between Great Yarmouth and Sutton Bridge was opened in sections. The section between King's Lynn and Sutton Bridge had stations at South Lynn, Clenchwarton and Terrington and Walpole, and was opened by the Lynn & Sutton Bridge Railway in 1864. The section between King's Lynn and Great Yarmouth had twenty-two intermediate stations and opened under the Yarmouth & North Norfolk

Railway from 1877 to 1881, the Lynn & Fakenham Railway between 1879 and 1882, and by the Eastern & Midlands in 1883. The whole system was closed on 2 March 1959, although some sections survive as paths. A number of stations, signal boxes, goods sheds and concrete mileposts remain.

A railway ran through the parish, part of a line that linked Great Yarmouth to Sutton Bridge via Stalham, North Walsham, Aylsham, Melton Constable, Fakenham and King's Lynn. It opened in stages between 1865 and 1933. A railway bridge (NHER 16713) was constructed in 1881 to take the Dilham Road over the line, and a station (NHER 60561) was opened in Honing in 1882. Honing station closed in 1959 and all of the railway line it served is now closed. However some sections survive as Weaver's Way footpath and the remains of Honing Station including platforms, building foundations, and cattle pens can be viewed from the Weaver's Way footpath.

Leave the car park along the railway line heading away from the gates (westwards on the Weavers Way) and follow the path onto the line. This will take you over a railway bridge that crosses the North Walsham and Dilham Canal.

At the first road turn right and follow it past the converted Briggate Windmill to Swan Farm.

Worstead Mill, 19th century brick tower mill

This four storey brick tower mill was built around 1850 and is now converted to form part of a house. The boat-shaped cap remains, and there is a fantail cradle and brakewheel shaft, but no sails. It was last used in 1922, but was described as 'working' in 1926.

At the farm turn sharp left and then continue straight on, ignoring the road to Meeting Hill on your right.

Where the road turns sharply left take the footpath across the field to the right, heading towards houses in the distance.

As you enter Meeting Hill climb down a bank into the road and turn right. Follow this down to the main road and village sign, where you turn left to go in front of the Meeting House.

A small diversion up the lane beyond the Meeting House takes you to a lane lined with gravestones. The scrubland behind the house here was the site of the original Methodist Chapel after which the hamlet is named.

Baptist Chapel, Meeting Hill or Meeting House Hill

This Baptist Chapel is dated 1829 when it superseded the previous one (NHER 16449). It is a large square-plan red brick building with a pyramid roof in two storeys. The interior is thought to have a raked gallery on three sides on iron pillars and some box pews.

Dated 1829. Large, red brick, square with pyramid roof. Two storeys, three bays to east with central round-headed doorway and black window over. Sash windows each side. Side walls of two bays with windows. Penthouse at rear.

This chapel superceded the old one to north.

April 1987. Listed, Grade II Listing Description:

Church. Dated 1829. Brick, hipped roof of black glazed pantiles. Square ground-plan with 2 storey extension to rear. Facade of 3 bays, 2 storeys. Central doorway with double reveal, semi-circular gauged brick arch. Double doors of 3 raised and fielded panels; semi-circular fanlight over, with radial glazing bars. Sash windows with glazing bars. Interior. Raked gallery with some box-pews on 3 sides supported on iron pillars. Wine-glass pulpit with niche behind. To each side of pulpit a large arched opening, blocked when school-room added.

Press cutting in file.

Baptist Chapel built in 1829; this building has brick walls and pantiled hipped with roof wide broad eaves. The interior of the building has galleries around three sides that have plain panelled front which are supported by iron columns. There is a contemporary pulpit, opposite the entrance, which is set very high and is supported by a single bracket.

Weaver's Cottage, Meeting House Hill

This house is began life as a 17th century single storey cottage. It had an upper floor added around 1800 to form a twine manufactory.

Site of Baptist chapel, Meeting House Hill

This is the site of the original chapel that gave the hamlet its name. It was founded in 1717 and was superceded in 1829 by the present chapel to the south (NHER 17018). The site is currently overgrown, but a row of gravestones remains along the boundary to the south.

Return to the main road and continue left until you shortly reach a footpath sign pointing across a field, which you take.

Proceed across the field in a straight line, passing a WWII gun emplacement and several pill-box defences. Head towards Ebridge Mill.

World War Two pillbox and gun emplacement south of Happisburgh Road

A rectangular World War Two pillbox and heavy machine gun emplacement survives as an extant structure to the south of Happisburgh Road. It is one of several defensive structures identified in the area; another World War Two pillbox, NHER 16789, lies approximately 335m to the northeast, while nearby there are also two further pillboxes dating to World War One. All of these structures are visible on aerial photographs taken from 1946 onwards. They would have protected the river crossing at Ebridge Mill to the east, and formed part of the line of defences established along the River Ant during both World Wars.

Eventually you will reach a road; turn right to walk in front of the Mill and admire the partially restored lock on the NW to Dilham Canal.

North Walsham and Dilham Canal

This important artificial waterway linked North Walsham to the River Ant at Dilham. The idea to build it seems to have originated as a means of avoiding the fairly high cost of transporting goods on the newly opened toll road between North Walsham and Norwich. It was also seen as an opportunity to improve turnover at a number of mills along the River Ant. Although the idea to build a canal was decided on, mainly by local landowners, in 1811, and an Act of Parliament authorizing its construction was passed in 1812, the canal was only completed in mid-1826 at a cost of £32,000. Once completed, the system allowed goods to travel from Antingham, via the River Bure, to Great Yarmouth (and of course back). The canal was ten miles long, dug by hand by a labour force of about a hundred men, and lined with clay. A special cut ('Tyler's Cut') was made in Dilham to access a brickworks there (NHER 15890).

However, the canal itself was narrow, only able to take boats up to twelve tons, and it soon became clear that the volume of trade was too small to be profitable. Even if the volume had been higher, the water supply (from the upper reaches of the River Ant) would not have been sufficient to replace the water let through the locks. Also the advent of the railway and improved roads meant that, in a short period of time, cheaper and more efficient transport systems were available.

After various changes in ownership, the canal fell into disuse in the 1920s. Of the five mills along its course, Antingham (NHER 15854), Bacton Wood (NHER 11572), Ebridge (NHER 11730) Briggate (NHER 8206) and Dilham (NHER 15892) only Ebridge continued to trade (by road, not using the canal) and now even this has pretty much closed down.

Ebridge Water Mill

There has probably been a water mill here since the time of the Domesday Book of 1086, and there was certainly one here in the 16th century. The present main building is a three storey five bay affair with a central corrugated stackhoist. To the east of this is a single storey granary and the canal lock. To the west is a modern loading bay. Across the road to the north is a picturesque mill pond, now sadly rather overgrown. The mill finally closed down in 1998 and currently stands empty. Plans for its future development are pending, but at the moment the only commercial activity on site is an animal feed business run from a separate ancillary building to the west.

Once past the mill find a path on your right that follows a road to a Country Retreat.

Where this track turns sharp left you take the path straight on across the fields. Where the track turns slightly right to go uphill, be sure to explore the hedge on the left for the remains of a medieval cross!

Medieval stone cross fragment

A moss-covered fragment of a 15th century stone cross. It is rectangular in section, with ridges on its faces and corners. Cross (marked on Ordnance Survey map). shows this at crossroads

Fragment about 1m high, slightly tapering, fluted; ridges in centre of each face as well as at the corners. Obviously a section of a larger cross. Set in east side of hedge (footpath now follows this side though officially it runs through field on west). Covered in moss.

At the top of the hill follow the hedgerow straight on and slightly down to join a road. This road will lead you back to the main road, and the car park.