

Bengate to Honing



Bengate in Summer

This walk begins at the Weavers Way car park, Bengate (just off the main A149). If you get the weather this is a lovely walk through shady woods and growing crops, taking you back to the 1920's with glimpses of the Dilham Pleasure Gardens. Look out for a cannon, an iron arch, a lock, a waterfall, a white horse and a pill-box. Transport is a constant presence. More info from sasocial@btinternet.com or other walks from www.swantonabbottsocial.com

1. Begin at the car park, Bengate, signposted off the A149- easily missed! It is best to park end on to allow more cars to park. **(A)**
2. Go under the A149 through an underpass and immediately turn left, signposted "Weaver's Way". Climb up the short bank onto the Weavers Way itself.
3. Turn left and follow the track through woods and fields. This was the route of a railway until the late 1950's. **(B)**
4. At Briggate Station, partially restored, continue on the railway and cross a B road. Ignore turns to left and right until you reach a signpost pointing to the left saying "Canal Walk" (there is an information board beside the sign).
5. Follow this path through heavy undergrowth and over fallen trees (this can be difficult and boggy walking at times) until you come to the old cut of the North Walsham and Dilham canal. **(C)**

6. The path leads you round into a more open area and network of watercourses; to the South of here was the Dilham Pleasure Gardens **(D)**
7. Rejoin the Weavers Way and go through a metal-arched bridge. **(E)**
8. Follow the path until you reach a track crossing it at a gate. You are turning right past houses, but you may like to take a slight diversion to look at Honing Lock (signposted).
9. After inspecting the lock return to the track and proceed between houses; the track turns into a metalled road.
10. This road is joined by another and then meets a more major road where you turn right.
11. Follow this road round to a "B" road, where you turn right. This is a busy road so beware of traffic.
12. After turning the corner, opposite Corner Farm, you will see a public footpath sign pointing off to the left. Follow this path beside a field.
13. Set your sights on the Church- the path continues straight although there is a slight deviation to right, then left, to cross a farm track.
14. At the road, cross over and go into the churchyard. **(F)** The exit path is at the far left-hand corner of the churchyard.
15. Take the path down from the Church to the main road and turn right (make a slight diversion to the left to see the cannon outside the Village Hall here).
16. Follow the road out of Honing, keeping to the left at a fork and then turning left up a permissive track (canal Lane). This leads you back to the Weavers Way, where you turn right to return to Briggate Station.
17. At Briggate Station you may retrace your steps to the start point at Bengate, but it is worth visiting Briggate by turning left onto the road through the village. **(G)** Note the old canal lock and the pill box as you enter the village. **(H)**
18. After the Old White Horse on your left, take the road on your right to return to the Weavers Way, and thence your starting point.

A. Milestone marking North Walsham 3 miles and Yarmouth 22 miles

A Norfolk County Council milestone recorded by the Milestone Society and positioned along the Great Yarmouth to North Walsham. This milestone is triangular in section with a sloping top. The milestone is slightly weathered, partially obscuring the inscription.

The inscription reads:

TOP: "N.C.C./MAIN/ROAD".

LHS: "TO/NORTH/WALSHA(M)/3/MILES".

RHS: "TO/YARMOUTH/22/MILES".

B. 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.

C. 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.

D. Dilham Islands pleasure garden

The Dilham Islands were created in the 1840s by Shephard Thomas Taylor, owner of Hill House in the village. 25 acres of bog were transformed into six islands surrounded by manmade waterways, accessible by a series of ornate swing bridges. The rivers were used for boating and fishing. A two-storey summer house provided a central meeting place on one of the islands. Monkey puzzle and oak trees were planted 1851, and a boating park and four boat houses were constructed at the same time. Little is known of the pleasure ground after 1907, and it fell into disrepair. It is rumoured that a Second World War bomber got rid of its bombs over summer house, and once it had lost its roof it fell apart. Poplar trees were planted in the 1960s, encouraged by the government, and were intended to be used for matchsticks and mining. Some restoration work was begun in 2009, and the gardens will occasionally be opened up to the public.

E. Honing Railway Bridge, Midland and Great Northern Line

A cast iron, steel and brick railway bridge of 1881, carrying a road over the old Midland and Great Northern local line. The line was dismantled and is now Weaver's Way footpath. The bridge's parapet has bolted on trefoils as decoration.

Grade II Listing Description:

Railway Bridge carrying road over Midland and Great North Railway local line. 1881. Steel and brick. Horizontal girders carry cross girders which support 4 brick arches. Above is plate parapet with trefoils bolted onto each section. Bridge supported on vertical lattic-girder pillars from which spring delicate steel arched braces supporting horizontal girders, in the spandrels of which are circles.

1991. Restoration: Strengthened and well restored by Norfolk County Council.

F. Saints Peter and Paul's Church, Honing

This interestingly proportioned parish church consists of a tall west tower, narrowly aisled nave, south porch and a tiny chancel. Originally built in the 15th century, it was almost entirely rebuilt in 1795, when the chancel was constructed to its current size and the nave aisles narrowed. The tower remained as it was, but its west door was partly blocked and rather clumsily converted to a window. These alterations give the interior of the church a slightly strange perspective, as the aisle arcades remain but the aisles themselves form only narrow passageways. The 13th century font survives, and there are a number of interesting floor slabs, mostly hidden under the carpet. On each side of the chancel arch is a wall tablet to members of the Cubitt family, and there is also a World War One memorial to members of this family who were lost.

G. Briggate Watermill

The burnt-out remains of an 19th century three storey brick watermill on the North Walsham and Dilham canal, probably on the site of an earlier mill. Two steam engines were later housed in a separate corrugated iron building, and the mill was eventually powered by electricity. Closed down in the late 1960s, the mill was gutted by fire in 1975 and has not been restored or redeveloped.

H. World War Two Type 24 pillbox, south of Briggate Bridge

A World War Two Type 24 pillbox survives as an extant structure 200m to the south of Briggate Bridge. It is visible on aerial photographs and is also depicted by modern Ordnance Survey mapping. It would have formed part of the line of defences established along the River Ant during World War Two. It appears to have been positioned to protect the approach to Briggate from the south, along White Horse Lane.