

Caroline's Leathercoat Lane

This is a relatively short walk (around 4km) and was devised by Caroline Barrett, who was raised in Swanton Abbott and still lives in the vicinity. She remembers the school hall, encountered later, being used but does not remember the pumping station in operation. The walk itself demonstrates how lucky residents of Swanton Abbott are to live in a beautiful part of the world.

- 1.** Begin at the village sign, opposite the Jolly Farmers. From here proceed up Long Common Lane, with the pub at your back, noting the Former Chapel on your right (A).
- 2.** A little way along Long Common Lane, opposite Glebe Cottage, take a signposted footpath across two fields, heading towards a cottage in the distance. Exit the second field through a gap in the hedge opposite Lilac Tree Farm House (B).
- 3.** Turn right and follow the road for about 400m until you reach Brackenheath on your right.
- 4.** A little further on you will see a footpath sign on your right pointing through woods. Take it.
- 5.** Follow the winding path, indistinct at times; cross a brook (Westwick Beck) and continue on. The hedges give way to open fields after a few steps.
- 6.** Bear left and cross the field towards a gateway, keeping the mesh enclosure on your left.
- 7.** At the gateway you encounter Leathercoat Lane for the first time; turn sharp left and follow the track past a woodman's cottage, keeping the cottage on your left. After 200m you reach a metalled lane (School Road). Turn right and follow the road uphill.
- 8.** Keep on until you pass the old School House, built in 1866 (C), and the corrugated iron School hall, adjoining it. Soon after passing these you will find another footpath sign pointing across a field to your right. Take this path down the edge of the field, keeping the hedge on your right.
- 9.** At the end of the field, enter the woods and explore the remains of an old pumping station. Some of the old culverts, brickwork and pumping equipment still remains. Take care round here as there are various pits and deep drains, and the area is usually boggy.
- 10.** The official path proceeds from the pumping station straight on across a bridge into an open field, back to the cottage (visible from here) on Leathercoat Lane; however, this can be very wet and you might be better advised to follow the edge of the original field, turning right to re-join the Lane a little further up.
- 11.** Once Leathercoat Lane is achieved, turn left and follow the track until it meets a road. It is worth entering the fields to left and right as you go down the lane to appreciate the beautiful rural landscape around here (D).
- 12.** Leathercoat Lane comes out by a concrete hard-standing onto Westwick Lane. Turn right and follow the road back to the Jolly Farmers and the end of the walk. This lane is narrow and can be busy, so watch out for traffic.

(A) Former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel

Former Wesleyan Methodist Chapel built in 1829. This building has brick walls and a hipped pantile roof. The south end wall has a wide round arched entrance with a defaced tablet above; there are also two tiers of windows. This was converted into a motor repair shop but is now used as a house.

(B) Lilac Tree Farm House, Long Common Lane

Lilac Tree Farm House is an 18th century house of brick, with a black pantile roof. The building sits on a flint plinth, and is constructed of Flemish bond brickwork with black headers. There is an axial chimney stack and a right hand gable end chimney stack.

Lobby entrance type plan. Front of one and half storeys, five bays. 19th century square-headed casements under segmental arches. 20th century door to second bay. Moulded brick eaves cornice. Three 20th century dormers. Kneelers to gables. Platband and string course to gable.

(C) Former Elementary School

This school was erected in 1866 and closed by 1940. The school is now a private house owned by Westwick estate.

(D) Westwick Park

Leathercoat Lane lies near the Western boundary of Westwick Park, a large historic parkland, probably originally laid out in the 1760s when Westwick Obelisk was built. Waterloo Plantation, visible on your left as you proceed down the track was part of this and presumably dates from around 1815. Westwick Arch, now demolished, was once the main entrance to the park. Only the lodges remain on the main B1150



