

Circular Walk Four

Five Church Walk (including 2 ruins)



This walk of just over 4.5 miles (7.5 kms) takes in the four churches in Shotesham, two that are very much in use and 2 ruins, plus one church in Saxlingham on a spur, so this walk is not strictly circular. Included please find some links to historical information about each of the churches. Duration 2 hours plus browsing time.

Our walk starts at All Saints Church in Shotesham, Explorer UK Grid Reference TM 24682 99056, where there is some space for parking.

For a brief description of the church, see the link to an article written in 2006 by Simon Knott on the Norfolk Churches Site.¹ The church is open daily. Do have a look around as visitors are welcome.

When you are ready, descend the driveway from the church to The Street. Turn left and walk along the foot of the grassy slope in front of the church to the

west. Cross over the junction with Rogers Lane and after some twenty-five yards, look for an entrance gate on your left that is also the driveway into Brookfields. You are now entering Shotesham Common, land owned by the village. There are a number of different paths across the common, none of them the numbered official Shotesham footpaths, so you won't see any finger posts or way-marks here.

Cross the common heading west-northwest until you reach Hollow Lane. On reaching Hollow Lane, turn left and walk up the hill, passing Botolph Cottages on your right. At the top of the road, there is a junction with Hawes Green. Turn right and you will see a gate immediately on the right that is the entrance to the cleared area that contains what remains of the ruins of St Botolph Church² mostly the base of the tower. Walk over to the bench overlooking the valley beyond that gives excellent views over Shotesham.

In due course, go back out of the gate, turn left and follow Hawes Green to St Mary's and St. Martin's. En route, pass Doctor's House and Nurse's House then you will pass Oak Lodge on your left, a former mortuary and on your right, The Infirmary, now Archers House that housed mentally disturbed people. These buildings mark the site of possibly the very first Cottage Hospital in England. As the row of houses ends, you have open country on both sides with views over the west side of Shotesham to your left then on the right, St Mary's Church and on the left, St Martin's. Follow the road as it opens out into countryside with views over the west side of Shotesham to your left and the two churches ahead. First of all you will come to St Mary's on your right. The path to the church is on the corner of the road on the right or you can simply walk a little further round to main entrance. For details of the church and opening times see³. The only recent update is the arrival, after many hundreds of years, of electricity.

When you are ready, walk the few yards south farther along Hawes Green to see the ruin of St Martin's Church, the grounds which have been cleared recently by the Shotesham conservation group and the tower made safe from irreparable decay following the raising of significant funds.

For details of St Martins see the Norfolk Churches website⁴.

Now we are off to our fifth church, St Mary's in Saxlingham, a neighbouring village to the south, whose footpaths join up with those of Shotesham. From St Martin's head south-east to Rogers Lane. Cross straight over and follow the quite short Shotesham Footpath 12 across a field and then right along the field edge to its end. This path then joins Wash Lane where you turn left and follow the road as it winds down with quite steep banks past farm buildings. Just before a ford, Wash Lane turns ninety degrees to the left but continue straight on along Chequers Lane across the ford. Chequers Lane goes ninety degrees right and then immediately ahead you will see a finger post pointing directly west that is Saxlingham Footpath 3. This is the spur to Saxlingham, so the walk is not strictly circular, as we shall return to this point along the same path.

Follow a wide verdant easy walking path all the way to Saxlingham. St Mary's Church can be easily seen in the distance just off to the left and is reached by

turning left onto Saxlingham Footpath 4 before you reach the main street. Footpath 4 continues on past the church. Enter through the churchyard. Here is the link for church details⁵.

We retrace our steps back to Saxlingham Footpath 3. Go back to the junction with Wash Lane, a straight easterly route. Turn left to re-cross the ford and look for a finger post on the right side that marks Shotesham Footpath 14. This path climbs diagonally up the field going to the right until you are following the westerly side of a hedge. This meets a track going east to west that you cross heading diagonally to the right to enter the next field, which does occasionally have cattle grazing. On your right, to the east is the western edge of Great Wood. Cross this field either following the field edge or diagonally, depending on crops. Your exit and junction with Shotesham Footpath 7 is at the northeastern corner of the field. There is a bit of a jumble of concrete and iron stile with some barbed wire, so it is often easier to walk round a few paces to the right and cross through the bushes, which is what you have to do if you have a dog with you.

You have some lovely views again with St Mary's and St Martin's to the left with Hawes Green behind and you can often just see the flagpole and flag of St George on All Saints straight ahead.

Keep going straight on across 2 fields, joining Boudicca Way after the first, then down Joy's Loke with the V2 bomb crater on the left, marked by a plaque, over the stream, through the copse until you are back at All Saints and your starting point.

¹ <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/shotesham1/shotesham1.htm>

² <http://www.heritage.norfolk.gov.uk/record-details?MNF9632-Ruins-of-St-Botolph%27s-church-Shotesham&Index=8978&RecordCount=56734&SessionID=8a9a261d-20c3-4fb6-9840-33e3f61d2e9e>

³ <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/shotesham2/shotesham2.htm>

⁴ <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/shotesham3/shotesham3.htm>

⁵ <http://www.norfolkchurches.co.uk/saxlinghamnethergate/saxlinghamnethergate.htm>