

Circular Walk Three - Backwood Lane



This 4 mile (6.5 kms) walk takes in some road walking, but is compensated by a lovely woodland walk from Backwood Lane to Grub Street and varied scenery. Duration an hour and a half. Start from Brooke Road close to the junction with Baxters Lane Explorer UK Grid Reference TM 26305 97646

Our starting point is the junction of Baxters Lane and Brooke Road, just as the latter becomes Heath Road. This is the northwest tip of Baxters Wood. Our route takes us east northeast along Heath Road towards Brooke, tree lined on both sides at this point before it opens up a little. After about 750 yards, the road turns 90 degrees left. Look for a way-mark indicating a footpath on the left at the start of Backwood Lane. Follow this path across a field and enter a wood where our path turns immediately right. This is a quite gorgeous woodland path. Take your time to meander along this path that is actually Howe Footpath 7, but links nicely with the Shotesham footpaths to make a circular walk. Initially to our left is Privett Plantation and Pye's Covert. Then you can see the back of Hengate Farm and its chicken sheds. Our path runs parallel to Backwood Lane on the right, with Brooke Wood running along the first two thirds of its length.

Halfway along our path on the right is Scott Pasture, a farm and clump of trees. The path is quite long, around 1500 yards in total and opens up on its last section, before coming to a large, modern white house on the corner of Grub Street.

Here turn left along Grub Street with a little more road walking heading west, passing a number of houses and a farm on the right. The road bends gently to the right and there are views towards Poringland to the right. The red flashing lights on the radio masts are quite a landmark and can be seen for many miles. The fields here can be a riot of yellow in the years when rape is grown.

Look for a way-mark on the left indicating Shotesham Footpath 4. Look carefully as it is not that easy to find. The first little wood on the left with what looks like a path along the western edge is actually a decoy named Corporation Plantation and you actually want the next wood on the left enticingly called Creasey's Grove. Find the way-mark and the path along the western border of the grove. But take care, this is where it gets tricky as the signage isn't always easy to follow and the path can be sometimes a bit obscure if not walked frequently. As you walk along this western edge of Creasey's Grove, the path appears to turn 90 degrees left but the actual footpath proper goes south-southwest across two fields, sloping down to Brooke Road by the Bowling Green in Shotesham. The first time we walked this path a few years back, we spent an age looking for the gap in the hedge and ditch from the top field to the bottom field. Now we know that it is a grassy strip close to and just to the left of the telegraph pole. That should help.

This path starts quite high up so there are some good views of the village to the right and Valley Farm to the left. It can get pretty muddy in winter. The path takes us to the northeast corner of some gardens of houses along Brooke Road. Keep their boundary hedges on your right and the path curves left and then turns right for the final 25 yards alongside Shotesham Bowling Green to rejoin Brooke Road.

Turn left and continue until you reach the fork with Market Lane after 40 yards. Take the right fork onto Market Lane then immediately turn right after crossing the ford onto Shotesham Footpath 5. You are heading to Stubbs Green and this path is again very picturesque with the stream on your right and trees on both sides.

Our path looks as if it is blocked by an iron gate with the legend "Stubbs Green Cottage" but this is still the footpath and the gate has been rather broken for a good while. If it's stuck, just walk round it. Cross a small footbridge over The Beck that runs along the base of the old glacial valley and eventually drains into the River Tas further west. A newish wooden fence is on your left, the land is boggy and bushes are on your right.

You now get to the base of a lovely sloping meadow, in spring and summer, full of colour and some quite rare orchids. Shotesham Conservation Group has done a lot of work to open up and preserve the beauty of the area. Ignore Shotesham Footpath 6 that goes off to the right and walk up the slope of water meadow towards Stubbs Green Pond. In spring the area to the left on upward slope, by the 5 barred gate and beyond is also a riot of yellow, this time with buttercups.

When we arrived in the village, in 2006, the Stubbs Green Pond area was so overgrown that we couldn't find the pond at all. Now, thanks to the work of the Conservation Group, it makes a beautiful sight all year round. Sit here for a while if you wish on the little bench on the other side of the pond on the south slope. Incidentally, you have now joined Boudicca Wayⁱ that comes into Stubbs Green from the west and we are going to walk along it for a short way heading east.

So leaving Stubbs Green pond, head east past the lovely house on your left. The hedges on both sides open out into fields and there is a wide, grassy path heading southeast to follow the length of this first field towards the northernmost corner of Little Wood. At this point, if you look to your left, you will see that considerable field edge work has been done by farmers planting specific wildflowers to encourage butterflies and bees. Cross a stile to the next field. Note that nearly all the stiles are dog-friendly in that there is always a gap somewhere for a dog to get through without having to do battle with barbed wire.

Continue on Boudicca Way along the northeastern edge of Little Wood, the historic Hornbeam Woodⁱⁱ, until the gap in the hedge at the end of the field. Turn left and walk down the slope to Market Lane. Rescue horses or sheep sometimes graze in the field to your right depending on the time of year. Blackberries abound in late autumn. Cross the stile here or open the gate to go through as it is rarely locked, remembering to close it firmly.

Turn right and walk about 25 yards on Market Lane before turning left onto a well-marked footpath FP22, that heads east-northeast along the side of two fields. The first part of this wide, grassy path is quite a steep slope (by Norfolk standards) but very short. At the top, you can still see to the west the tower of St Mary's church in the far distance and the scattered farms and houses at the east end of Shotesham about you. The part of the path by the second field is still a grassy bank until about 30 yards from its end, then it becomes cross-field that can be a bit muddy. Pass out of the entrance and back onto Brooke Road and our starting point.

ⁱhttp://boudiccaaway.co.uk/bw_spaw2/uploads/images/Boudicca%20Way%20Route%20Full.jpg

ⁱⁱ http://www.english-nature.org.uk/citation/citation_photo/1004212.pdf