

Southern Circuit

This is the first in an occasional series of long walks around the area. It is a 17 mile circuit starting and finishing at the Chequers, taking in Shingay, Abington Pigotts, Steeple Morden, & Dunton. Waymarking is poor in Cambridgeshire so you will need a map: OS Explorer 208 covers the whole route.

The route has been saved on GMAP Pedometer at address <http://www.gmap-pedometer.com/?r=6896498>.



Starting from the Chequers, walk up The Slade and along the path to Church Lane. Take the footpath diagonally across the meadow, over the footbridge and along to Grange Farm, admiring Margaret Bates's beautiful Herefords. Continue through the farmhouse garden and along the brook to New England Farm. Turn right (south) then left immediately after the barn. This is an alternative route to the standard Clopton Way which offers good views to the South East over some of the country we will cross later. Follow the path down to the Clopton way and turn left (east) towards Top Farm. On reaching the farm road you will see a paddock with a six-foot high

fence and a seven bar gate, but whatever it is for is never at home. Deer can often be seen grazing on the edge of the wood ('New Forest') below Top Farm. Turn right down the track to the Main Road.



View to South-west from path above New England Farm

Cross the road and head east for 200 yards to Downing House. Take the second footpath, which crosses the house driveway and heads out into an area of scattered shrubs and rough pasture. Follow the path along the edge of Gilrags Wood (ignore paths off on the right) until you come to a substantial bridge over the Cam (or Rhee). The footpath continues straight ahead but the owner has mown a link to a parallel path some 50 yards to the left – accept the invitation and cross to the more easterly path.

Head south and after a few yards you will see the moat enclosing the ancient Preceptory of the Knights Hospitaller. The Preceptory was founded around 1160 – a full history can be found at www.british-history.ac.uk/vch/cambs/vol2/pp266-269. There is nothing left but the moat. The enclosed area is around 5 hectares (12 acres). Walk down the west side of the moat to the stile onto the Wendy Road. Turn right and take the path on the left opposite Shingay Manor Farm across a field to the cottages of Shingay. Turn left (south), pausing to admire the garden



of the last cottage which overflows onto the footpath on its southern boundary. Do not take this path (I did – it adds a mile to the route) but continue along the road for $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, taking the next path on the right. This brings you into Abington Pigotts via a shady track alongside the moat of Manor Farm. Turn left at the Church then right at the High Street to arrive at the Pig & Abbot (good food and beer). This is around the 7 mile point, if you choose not to stop here the next pub is another $2\frac{1}{2}$ miles.

Receptory moat

Continue down the High Street and up the driveway at the end, where the road takes a sharp left turn. Continue until the hedge on the right runs out then turn left down to the remarkable gatehouse of Down Hall Farm. It was built in the late 12th or early 13th century and it is said that the cupola on top was to guide travellers across the marshes. Turn right along the track and take the path on the right hand side of the next building. After around 200 yards turn left then right after another 50. The path heads south-west across the fields. Ignore crossing paths: after $\frac{1}{2}$ mile the path joins a track: turn right. In 50 yards you have a choice: there are cattle ahead on the main route, so if you are nervous or have a dog with you take the path leading diagonally left. When you meet the Steeple Morden to Litlington road, cross over and walk west to pick up the route.



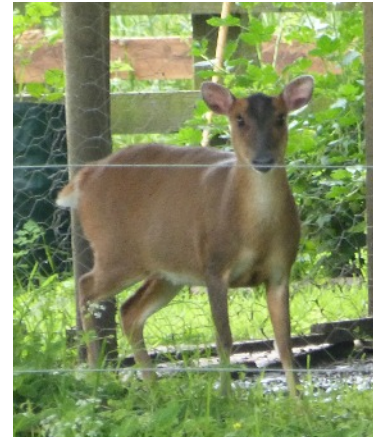
The Pig & Abbot at Abington Pigotts

Otherwise carry on to Brook End, turn right and follow the road for 60 yards round the bend, then take the path left. This field is used for raising cattle and there is a warning (sadly broken) about how to handle the young cows. Basically, they are very curious and will run up to you. So long as you keep looking at them they will back off, so keep watching all round as you walk. At the other end of the field cross Cheney Road and pick up the metalled path a few yards to the east. Follow the path through a lightly wooded area. It emerges at The Green.



Down Hall Farm Gatehouse

Walk along the road a few yards, passing the old Fox pub. Then turn right into what looks like someone's garden. Follow the fence on the right, leaving the tennis court on the left. You will emerge onto an area of rough ground: keep going straight ahead to a road (Church Farm Lane). Walk down to the end and turn right into the High Street. In 75 yards you reach the Waggon & Horses where you may wish to take refreshment. This is 9¼ miles into the walk.



Leaving the pub, turn right on Church Street and cross to pick up the path on the far side of the churchyard. The path runs alongside the school playground fence and is quite overgrown where the boundary hedge meets the fence. Push through to come out at the field, turn right and pick up the track which runs down to the bottom of the shallow valley. Take the path diagonally right across the next field, then the path which heads for the left-hand end of the row of houses which you will now see ahead. On reaching the houses, follow the path to the right which runs behind their gardens. You can cut through to the Ashwell Road earlier than shown on the GMAP, so be aware that you may need to look to the right for the next path rather than to the left. Cross the road and take the path from the apex of the bend. This path has excellent views over the whole area.

After a little less than a mile the farm track turns sharp right and the path continues diagonally left across the field towards Mobb's Hole. Turn right just before reaching Mobb's Hole and come out onto Northfield Road just south of Whitegate Bridge. Head west over the Cam for 250 yards then take the path to the left on the very fancy new concrete farm track servicing Eyeworth Lodge Farm's new poultry unit. After 600 yards the track turns right and runs straight up to Dunton. Just after the track levels out there is a track on the left giving access through the Dunton Community Garden to Church Street and the March Hare. Check opening times as it may not be open before 6pm.



Mobb's Hole Farm

From the March Hare cross the main road and head down Boot Lane. The route through the new development is signposted. On reaching the field take the path on the right which follows the hedge. Continue over the track for 100yards, then take the path on the right over a bridge. Continue down to the bottom of the valley then turn right along the bank of the brook. After 200m the path turns left through a hedge – don't miss it! The path will come out on the Sutton Road just south-east of Manor Farm Lodge. Cross the road and follow the path past the Lousy Bush nature reserve back to Wrestlingworth. Turn left on the track at Water End, then take the first Bridleway right, keeping to the right to come out in the Chequers car park.

The walk should take about 7 hours plus breaks, so allow 9 hours in total.



*Route researched by
Jim Hawkins of the
Wrestlingworth Parish Walking & Wildlife Group*

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