

# 7

## FINNINGHAM WALKS: WESTHORPE LODGE & CHURCH

5.1mls/8.2km • 1hr 50 mins

Optional spur: CROMWELL'S PLANTATION

7.5mls/12.1km • 2hr 40 mins

*From the Village Green ...*

Head north on bridleway to pass the tower of St Bartholomew's and cross over *Church Lane* beside *The Old House*, once a grocery shop ❶ to reach a small bridge which spans the river, a tributary of the River Dove.

At the road, cross to take a footpath left which brings you to the B1113 Road. Take care to join *Moon Lane* opposite heading west. Keeping any dogs on leads, forge ahead on this lane to a managed wooded area on your left, you then reach a large meadow with a menagerie of farm animals, buildings and caravans. ❷ Keep to the right next to a hedgerow and watch for loose livestock, to reach a footbridge and gate to the next meadow where on the right, in a few metres, you will find the footpath goes through the hedge. (If there is a gate, make sure to close it behind you.) Turn left.

Continue west initially with the hedge on your left to pass a footpath and meadow. ❸ By following the field edge you reach a footbridge to lead you along the edge of the field and ditch to a further footbridge ❹ where you cross and turn right to head north with a tall hedge on your right. Keep to this large field edge and pass a footbridge, still keeping in this field to end up at a fourways footpath junction with a way-marker post on your right, you enter the corner of another field. Turn right between an oak tree and hedge to a grassy strip ❺ and a large gap in the hedge ahead heading north, now a wide grass headland on this field in open countryside with *Rob Hall Farm mast* ahead of you. Carry on to the corner of this field.

❻ Turn left at the large tree and then you have a hedge on your right following the field edge, and curving left and right you pass a small pond on your right and open field to come to a T. ❼ Cross a footwalk over a ditch just to the right, and continue west past a *way-marker* with a copse beside you and reach the area to your right of *Westhorpe Lodge Farm* ❽ (the owners being well renowned for their care of wildlife habitat). Keep to the footpath, passing a footbridge to reach a willow tree and roadway.

Turn left on the road to walk south, (being aware of farm vehicles), until a farm track off to your left with a *way-marker*. Follow this track east to the corner of the field ❾ and leave the track to turn right. The footpath here is on the field edge, so follow this along the hedgerow to sweep around left to meadows with just a slight view of *Westhorpe Church tower* ahead right. Follow the path to swing to the right and go through the large gap ahead with a thicket on your right to enter the rear of the churchyard which brings you to the road.

*Church History:* St Margaret's is a large church considering the size of Westhorpe village. There was a church recorded in the Domesday Book of 1086, and you can spot a small piece of Norman stone, carved with a traditional zigzag pattern, set into the jamb of the south doorway. Against the south wall is a tomb recess thought to be the last resting place of Henry de Elmham (d. 1330). The Elmham family were lords of the manor at Westhorpe and gave money to build the aisles, the clerestory windows, and the west tower. In 1419 Lady Elizabeth Elmham gave money for church bells as well as a bequest to the poor of the parish and for improvements to the main road through the village.

Enclosing the south chapel is an exceptional parclose screen, dating to the period 1350-1400. This is thought to be one of the earliest painted screens in England, and it retains its original decorative pattern in several places. The floor tiles in the chapel are also original 14th-century work. Their decoration has been largely worn away by the passage of time (and thousands of feet). Inside the Barrow Chapel is a plaque to the most famous resident of Westhorpe, Mary Tudor, sister of Henry VIII and Queen of France.

Turn left and stroll along this pretty street, passing the *Village Hall* to reach the entrance, on left, to *Westhorpe Hall* ⑩ (now a residential care home). Take this driveway past a dog bin, keeping to the left of the fork, then bear left slightly on to the grassy area and a pond in front of you; keep right of this and come to a T junction for the footpath. Go right here towards some trees ahead, and pass these with the ditch on your right to a dog-leg left and right into the next field.

Follow the field edge with a small wood on your right, to pass an opening but continuing around this large field, returning on this loop to a footbridge, ④ which you crossed earlier. Retrace your steps, with *Finningham water tower* in view now, to reach the second *way-marker/junction*. ③

Turn right to enter this meadow and keep to the left until you reach the bridge over the tributary of the River Dove. (There are often sheep in the next field, so dogs must be on leads here.) Walk up the wide grassed path to reach Westhorpe Road, [11] turn left on the pavement and pass *The Old Forge*, *Hampton House* and *Bankside* before reaching the crossroads, with the *White Horse pub* on the corner.

Carefully cross both this busy junction to the pavement opposite on *Wickham Road*, then again to the other side of the road to pass close to *The Old Post Office* with just a few more steps to be adjacent to the *Village Green* and the end of your walk.

## THE OPTIONAL EXTENDED WALK TO CROMWELL'S PLANTATION.

At ⑥, instead of turning left, carry on ahead using the farm track with a hedgerow on the right and a large arable field on the left to reach the road, where now you can see Cromwell's Plantation across the field in front of you, slightly left.

Turn right and walk on the roadside to *Rob Hall Corner* [12] (This name is said to have derived from 'Rob All' as Cromwell was accused of robbing all people!). Join the B1113 turning left, then cross the road to meet traffic. Travel for 0.3 ml passing a junction until you see the footpath on your left which heads straight to the plantation. [13]

'Cromwell's Plantation,' earlier known as 'Fapes Hill' hides within its boundary a medieval circular earthwork of the era 1066AD to 1539AD. In more recent times, around 1935, a local archaeologist Basil Brown (well renowned for the discovery of an Anglo-Saxon ship burial at Sutton Hoo) along with a Kenneth Landymore carried out small excavation work on a 'slight depression' in the centre here, to reveal a hearth with sandy pottery initially thought to be Iron Age, but later thought to be medieval/12th century. Mr Brown also recorded that the moat surrounding the earthwork was 12ft wide, the earthwork 13-15ft high. The overall diameter of the earthworks would have been in the region of 142ft to include a bank and the moat.

In the early 19th century it is recorded that there was a cottage close by, owned by 'Right Honourable John Hookman Frere', the landowner. According to parish records Benjamin Mulliner lived there and was a nurseryman. Locals then, knew the plantation as 'Ben Mullin's Plant' because he was often seen planting trees there. The Plantation is private, do not attempt to enter!

More detailed history can be found on our village website:  
[www.finningham.com](http://www.finningham.com)

Following this visit, retrace your steps back to point reference ⑥ and turn right, to continue the original walk.