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FINNINGHAM WALKS: A LOCAL WALK

1.8 mls/2.9km • 30 mins.

Leaving the *Green*, with the large white converted barn on your left, which was part of Green Farm and stored grain and farm machinery not so long ago, turn right on the *Wickham Road* to stand at the gateway of *White Cottage*.

① Opposite is the footpath you take, up a driveway, to join a large open arable field with an *oak tree* ahead. You pass this, to reach *Mill Lane*.

② Just opposite here in the field is where Finningham Post Mill once stood. We believe it was built in 1650–1699 and was in use up until the end of the 19th Century when it was sold by auction and demolished shortly thereafter (1887). In latter days the Mill was worked by local farmer Charles Elsey.

Turn left on what is now a bridleway to walk as far as the railway bridge (the main Norwich to London line). Do not cross, but take the narrow footpath to the right between the paddocked field and railway line. This path bends west and eventually brings you to the *B1113 road*. Turn right here to face the traffic with a short walk almost to the *water tower*.

③ Cross the road now to join a smaller road, known locally as *Ladywell Lane*, which is generally a quiet road, but do be prepared for the odd vehicle or farm traffic. Within a third of a mile you reach a road to your right with a view ahead of a footbridge over the tributary of the River Dove.

④ Turn right to walk past *Top Croft Farm*, still a working farm with large machinery and lorries to be seen. Ahead you come to *Red House*, a cottage on your right, where the road sweeps around to your left. (The small field to the right of that road did have ten ‘pre-fabs’ placed there just following the end of World War II, for families of returning servicemen. These were actually very modern for the day, with flush toilets, a modern kitchen with worktops, and electricity supplied. These remained until around 1965, when the land was reclaimed.)

Continue ahead on a byway ⑤ for a short distance, which is a grassy track heading east, until you reach and take a footpath on your left crossing a field towards some houses.

⑥ Be careful taking the steps down to the road here, as there is no pavement this side.

Cross the road to the pavement and turn right, passing *Hill House* and *The Old Forge* before coming to *Hampton House*. Formerly named ‘Yew Tree House’, it dates from the era of 1086, but in more recent years was the home of a basket-weaving business in the early 1900s. It drew its main source for weaving from the osier beds that lay behind the house in those years. Following this, and during the Second World War, it was used to accommodate Dr Barnardo’s children for a period.

Continue ahead east to reach the crossroads, *The White Horse* pub is now on your right. Carefully cross over to the pavement ahead of you on *Wickham Road*, and then after a few steps cross this road to see *The Old Post Office* on your right. ⑦

This building is believed to date back to the 17th Century. The first mention of it as a shop may be the entry in the 'White's Directory' in 1844 as a grocery and drapery store run by Edmund Rednall, and a year later it became also a post office. This concern was then taken over, following Edmund's death in 1883, by Charles G Wells who traded there for 39 years! Further proprietors were S A Munday 1922, Thomas Rowland 1929 and in 1935, Thomas Fowler and his wife Emma, who were joined a year later by their daughter Stella and husband Harold Houghton. The business thrived then with Stella and Harold taking over, with pumps installed for the sale of petrol and paraffin. The weekly shopping could easily be accommodated with a large variety of goods sold, along with frozen food, ice creams and probably a lemon sherbert! When they retired in 1978 the business was taken over by Des and Sue Whatling, but this sadly declined and we were left later with just a post office, which only survived for a short time, and then the house was sold as a private dwelling, as it is today.

Passing here you are almost back to the *Village Green*, so carefully cross back over the road to finish your walk.