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## FINNINGHAM WALKS: LOW MEADOW PLANTATION

2.4mls/3.9km • 45 mins.

Set off from the *Village Green* on a bridlepath to head north through a gate and past the church tower, dated around 1250, and its old oak door, added a century later. The line of trees directs us to the second gate, and *Church Lane*. ❶ Cross the lane slightly left. *The Old House* almost faces you, of which the nearest end with the bay window was once a grocery shop. Continue onwards between this house and a hedge to cross a narrow bridge over the stream, a tributary of the River Dove, to bear right and join *Gislingham Road*.

Turn right and walk carefully, as the road does narrow towards a bend. Pass two converted barns, and another further along but also noting a restored flint-built wall on your left at *Drivers Farm*. As you reach the bend, where you bear right, you are adjacent to *The Old Bakery* a 16th-Century building once an off licence and selling confectionery before becoming the village bakery until 1947.

❷ Just off the bend to your right, you will see a red dog bin which is beside the byway for you to continue east. This is initially a made-up driveway beside the stream, and curves to the left, passing a small pumping station to narrow slightly and pass between trees. Follow this track underneath the *railway arch* and continue with the stream on your right to reach *Eastland's Lane*. Turn right to cross the stream, and pass a plantation and footpath on your left, to reach the C569 road.

❸ Cross the road heading south on a bridlepath, through a latched gate towards the *Low Meadows*. Here, on this lovely stretch of meadows, look out for egrets, herons and a barn owl! A more upward view, and you may see buzzards high above and hear their call; and red kites have also been spotted, what a sight that must be! So enjoy your stroll through here to reach another gate at the opposite end.

❹ Dogs on leads here as it is a protected wildlife area. You may have noticed too, that there are young willow trees planted along the side of the meadows, and that theme continues through this next area. These trees are cut at quite a young age; (common uses: baskets, utility wood, crates, furniture, cricket bats, carvings, and other small speciality wood items). Tread carefully through this wild area, and in early spring, listen out for the cuckoo of course!

You soon leave this wildlife area and continue onwards with a ditch and spinney on your left and arable fields to the right. When you reach the second way-marker, ❺ turn right to head west, still on a bridleway beside a hedge and ditch on your left, taking a dog-leg at the top and then walking between two hedgerows beside *Mill Cottage* and leading up to a house called *Silver End*. Turn right here on a made-up track and cross over the *railway bridge*, passing a footpath left, to follow *Mill Lane* for 150m to a way-marker and a footpath to the right.

6 Some years ago, you would have been overshadowed here by Finningham Post Mill on your left, demolished in 1887, and of course as you can see, it occupied a suitably high position from which you can now take in the lovely view here across the valley in which our village lies, and in the distance to the north east, you may spot the wind turbines which are in operation at Eye WWII airfield.

Take the footpath down to the village, passing the *oak tree* and giving a view of St Bartholomew's Church tower. At the road, turn right and you will then have the *Village Green* on your left. Be aware of traffic as you cross the road back to the start.

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## THE CHURCH GREEN

At one time the Green was part of the Manor of Finningham and for many years an annual two-day fair took place just here in September, the last being held in 1871. Each fair was very much a time for trading with wares and livestock and also gave opportunities for local employers to offer work either within their business, or homes.

Introduced during the 18th Century, the parish held a 'Court of Pie Powder' during these fairs to dispense justice to travelling merchants, musicians and vagabonds! The term comes from *Pied Poudre*; ie 'Dusty Feet/ a Wayfarer'.

Numerous events still occur on this Green, of which some are organised by a local committee 'The Friends of Finningham'. These include a yearly fete, with several attractions, and the general public are welcomed here. Also there are visits from 'The Rural Coffee Caravan' a welcome charitable organisation which aims to bring people together from the isolation of their homes to enjoy other company along with a beverage and quite possibly, a cake!

The impressive outlook given by this part of Finningham is that of a luxuriant oasis of mature trees set in a more open countryside. Around the churchyard in the centre there are lime, acacia, birch and ash trees. Further south around Church Green there is more lime and ash together with oak, alder, beech, horse chestnut and a row of large turkey oaks. In general the trees are dominant, but not overpowering, with large areas of open space between them. The houses around the Church are thus mostly set within a backdrop of trees.