

The

Woodman's Way

Wimblington • March

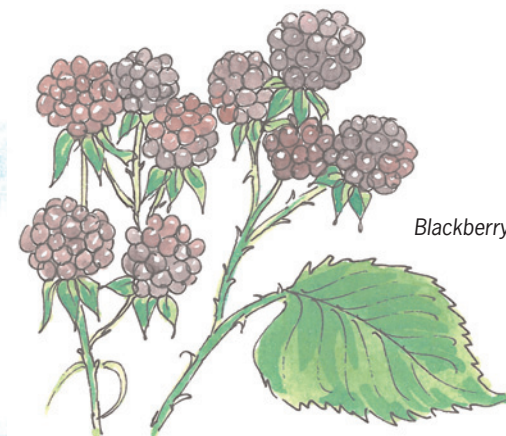
be a **Fens Adventurer!**



Woodland manors

By the 12th Century a hierarchy of farmers and land owners had become established. Cecilia de Hatchewood owned Coneywood to the southwest of March where a Hatchwood Farm still stands. The land around 'Hatchwoods' was a large common divided into strips for farming. Mature hedges now grow along the old access roads to the fields as they do down Linwood Lane, the route later taken by the Huntingdon to Kings Lynn stage coach. John Peyton owned the Manor of Eastwood where Neale-Wade College now stands and added to this Southwood, which he bought from Reading Abbey.

All that remains of the wild woods line the green lanes of Workhouse Drove and Linwood Lane, while St Wendreda's Church recalls that ancient boundary village in the marsh. Cecilia de Hatchewood and John Peyton have surrendered their woodland estates to the new housing estates of March, but the wonderful spring blossoms of hawthorn, blackberry, elderberry and dogrose. The brilliant red, orange and black berries of autumn will unlock March's woodland past as you walk the Woodman's Way.

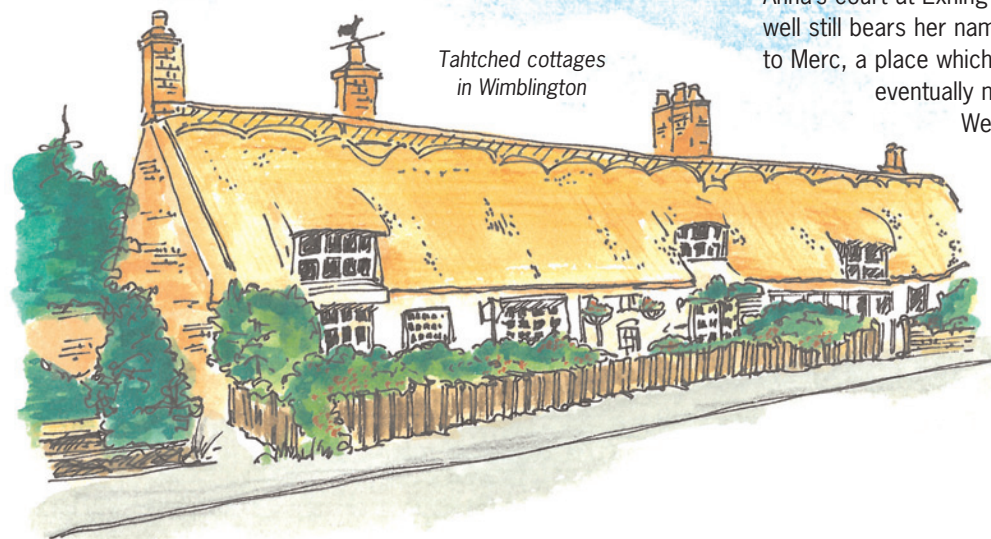


The waters rise

Although the Romans cleared much of the woodland, it was finally destroyed by the rising waters of the fens. East Anglia has suffered from changes in sea level for thousands of years, changes which are still occurring. The climate became cooler and wetter, the waters of the rivers and meres rose, and the Romans went back to the sun amidst a collapsing empire. The rising tide brought the ancient oak trees to the ground. Their roots became waterlogged, they could not get the nutrients they needed, and the wildwood finally died. Other species such as willow, black poplar and alder, better adapted to wetland conditions took over. A new wild wood grew up in the marshland that was to become a habitat we now commonly associate with the Fens.

The new wood

From the early Saxon period emerged new settlements, Merche, Mercheford and Wymelston, better known as March and Wimblington. The clay hills on which March, Wimblington and Doddington stand were again wooded islands rising out of the marshy fen. They made secure, if isolated, homes for the Saxons who used the wood for fuel and buildings as the Romans had done.



Tahtched cottages
in Wimblington



One of the first of these settlers was Wendreda, a young woman of good deeds who possessed great healing powers. She is thought to have been a member of King Anna's court at Exning near Newmarket, where a spring well still bears her name. In the 7th Century AD she came to Merc, a place which meant 'boundary'. She was eventually made a saint, the patron saint of St Wendreda's Church which was founded in 1342. The church is famous for its magnificent 18 angel figured timber roof. It is 'worth cycling forty miles in a head wind' to see, according to Sir John Betjement, former poet laureate.

Follow the country code – why?

Because the countryside is a place to be enjoyed by all; do protect wildlife, plants and trees, don't leave rubbish behind and don't disturb others with unnecessary noise.

Because the countryside is a place of work; do keep to paths and use stiles and gates to cross boundaries; don't let your dogs disturb stock and don't interfere with crops or machines.



The Cambridgeshire countryside is there to be enjoyed by everyone. This route follows farm tracks and grassy field edge paths. The surface is uneven.

The Public Rights of Way and Access Team is endeavouring to replace stiles with gates where a barrier is necessary. More information about other Access for All walks is available on the Cambridgeshire County Council website at www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights

Come and enjoy it!



This project is supported by the Fens Adventurers Local Action Group (LAG) who deliver the Rural Development Programme England in Cambridgeshire and West Norfolk through the Leader approach. The LAG is managed by Cambridgeshire County Council & Cambridgeshire ACRE and supported by EEDA, Defra, Local Authorities and the EU's European Agricultural Fund for Rural Development: Europe Investing in Rural Areas.

Web Link: http://ec.europa.eu/agriculture/rurdev/index_en.htm



This leaflet is one of a series produced by Cambridgeshire County Council to encourage the use and enjoyment of some of the many public rights of way in Cambridgeshire. We hope you have enjoyed the walks and would appreciate any comments you may have.

Public Rights of Way and Access, Box CC1305, Environment Services, Cambridgeshire County Council, Castle Court, Castle Hill, Cambridge, CB3 0AP Tel 0345 045 5212

www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights

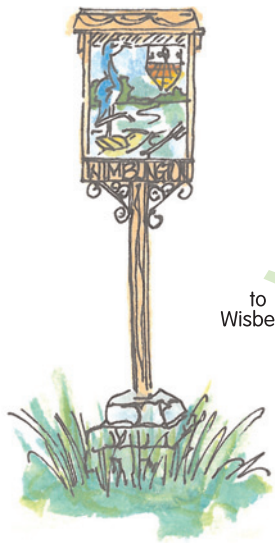
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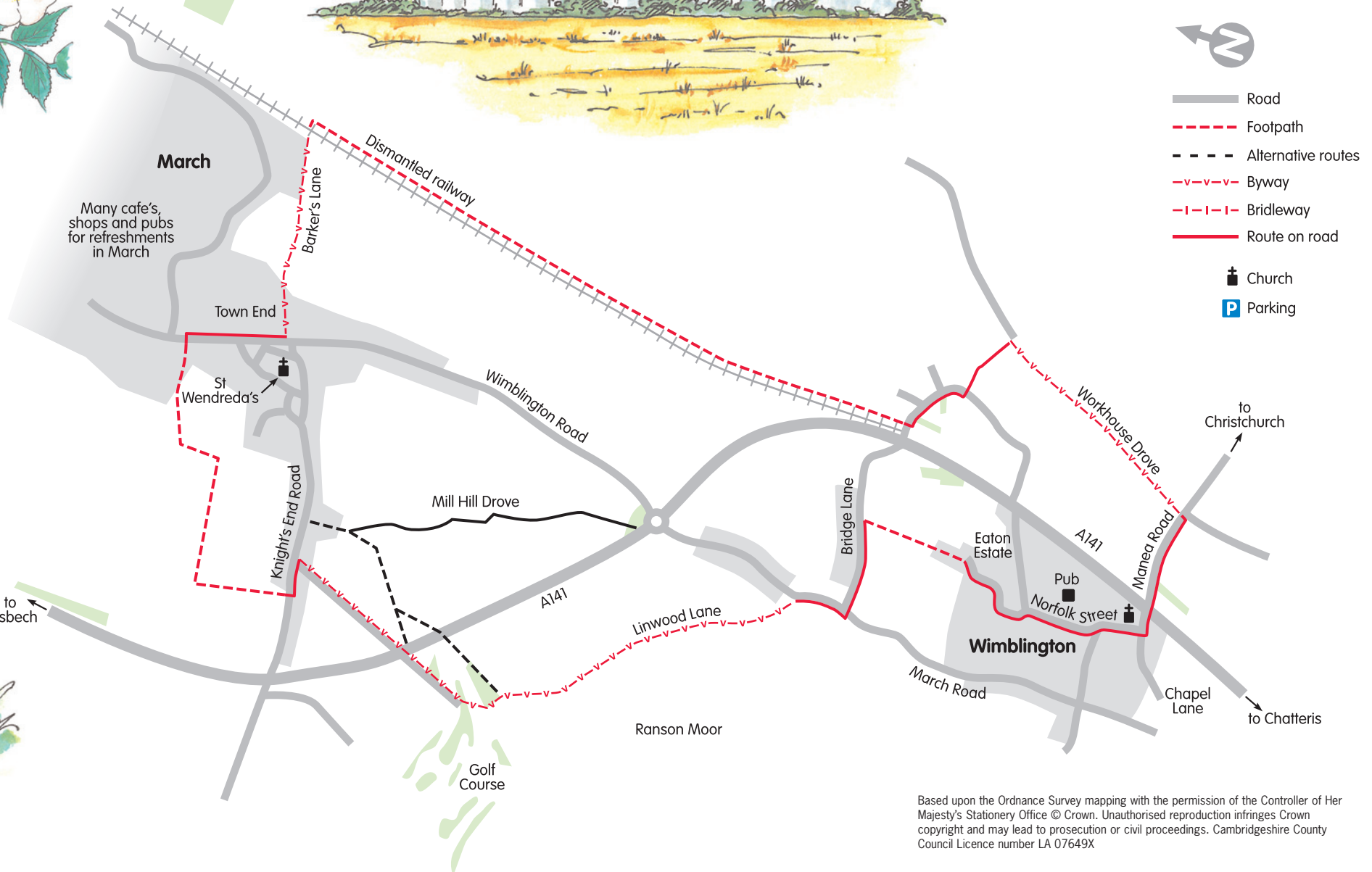
Elderberry



Grain store



to
Wisbech

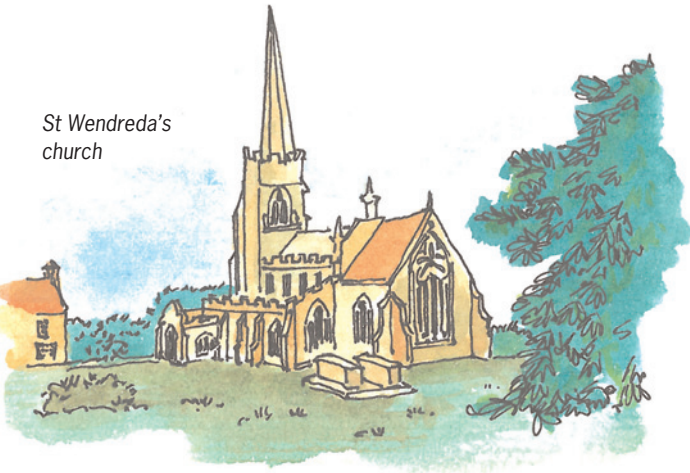


The Woodman's Way

Circular route **6.5 miles**
Allow approximately **3 hours**

All is not what it seems in the Fens, often portrayed as a land of fog, mist and marsh. Distant horizons blend into immense and changing skies which once looked down onto the wooded islands of March and Wimblington. This walk will take you through these 'woods' recognised now by local place names – Eastwood, Linwood, Hatchwood and Coneywood.

St Wendreda's church

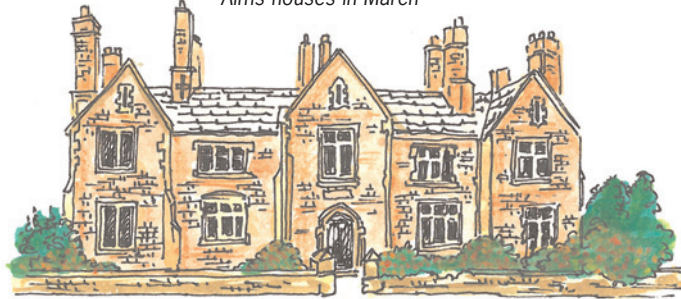


To follow the Woodman's Way you have to take an even longer journey back in time - before the railways which made March famous, before Hereward the Wake made the flooded fens his retreat from the invading Normans, and before St Wendreda came to March. Imagine a land occupied not by the ancient Britons but invaders settling down to earn a living from their newly conquered land. They cleared the ancient oak, elm, lime and ash woodlands to farm the rich soils and to build homes on stone foundations.

Starting from St Wendreda's Church March

Cross over the main road towards the school and go straight on, down Barker's Drove, signposted as a public byway. Alternatively, turn left up the main road to the Almshouses. At the Almshouses, turn left down the public footpath to Knights End.

Alms houses in March



Starting from St Peter's Church Wimblington

Carefully cross over the A141 and take the Manea Road for 500 yards where a public byway sign points off to the left down Workhouse Drove. Alternatively, follow Church Street and Norfolk Street onto the Eaton Estate. The public footpath leaves the estate from the right hand corner of the square.

How to get there

- By train** Nearest station is March
National Rail Inquiries 08457 484950
- By bus** Frequent buses to March and Wimblington
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/transport/around/buses
- By road** March and Wimblington are both accessed from the A141
- Inquiries** Cambridgeshire County Council Passenger Transport Inquiries **tel 0345 045 0675**



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Further information

Footwear: Most of the route follows grassy droves which can become very muddy in winter, particularly after heavy rain. Strong waterproof footwear is essential.

Maps: The route can be followed on Ordnance Survey 1:50000 Landranger Sheets 142 and 143 or on 1:25000 Explorer Sheet 228.

Waymarking: Green metal signs indicate the route through March and Wimblington and also where path leave the tarmaced road. Smaller metal waymark arrows indicate the route in open country.

Refreshments: Plenty of cafes, pubs and shops in March. Post office and shop in Wimblington. However, it's a good idea to take a snack with you for when you stop to rest and enjoy the countryside.

Detailed information from:
www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/environment/countrysideandrights
www.wimblingtonparishcouncil.org