



THE EYE CIRCULAR WALK – 4 miles

The walk starts in the car park of the Pennings nature reserve. The reserve is situated just off the B1117 around ½ a mile east from the centre of Eye by Abbey Bridge where there is a pointer post directing you to the reserve.

Expect some sections of the walk to be muddy after wet weather.

Use OS Explorer Map number 230 (Diss and Harleston) to enjoy this walk and the wider area.

THE WALK

Turn left out of the car park and walk the short stretch to the main road. On your left is Abbey Bridge beneath which the River Dove flows on its way to join the River Waveney on the Suffolk/Norfolk border. This section of the river is home to kingfishers, egrets and even otters.

Turn right and after a few metres, taking care, cross the Hoxne Road to reach the driveway leading to the Abbey.

Along the driveway, on your right, is the impressive Abbey. Built in 1381, it's not really an abbey but an earlier priory which was the subject of Henry 1's charter of 1119.

Several large pieces of masonry remain and at the back of the house, the walls are three feet thick! The large barn on your left, recently restored and enhanced, has been known by various names and there are many theories as to its original purpose. One name is "The Resthouse", presumably because that was where guests of the Priory stayed. Hidden by the trees on the right are the priory fishponds where the monks must have caught their Friday and fast day fish. All these features are private and special arrangements have to be made to see them.

Bear left at Abbey Farm and pass through a gate. Looking left as you cross the River Dove over Bolser Bridge, there is a very good view of the Parish Church of St Peter and St Paul.

Through the gate ahead there used to be a large stackyard. Until the days of combine harvesters, wheat and corn were stacked here until threshing tackle came along in the Autumn.

Turn right and continue until you reach another area of hard standing in front of Waterloo Plantation. Just to the north of this private area of woodland, during the war, two bombers collided whilst flying to formation, in cloud, from Eye Airfield: only three of a total crew of 20 survived.

Turn left and continue uphill along a farm track between hedgerows. Ignore any turns and paths, right or left, continuing on the track until you reach Century Road at the entrance to a housing estate.

Turn left and follow the road (ignoring Tuffs Road) then along an alleyway, with houses to your right. At the end of the alleyway cross the road, continuing down to turn right onto the footpath a few metres beyond the hedge of the last house before the bridge over the stream. The path runs along the edge of overgrown open land before snaking its way, bordering a stream on your left, to reach Lambseth Street.

As you join Lambseth Street there are almshouses a few metres down on your left. Opposite is the fire station, on the site of the old reading room, and Chandos Lodge with its crinkle crankle wall. Chandos Lodge was once the home of Sir Frederick Ashton, choreographer and founder of the Royal Ballet who lived there from 1957 until his death in 1988.

Cross the road and enter the wildlife area between the fire station and Lamsey Beck which is a small tributary of the River Dove. This area is known as the Rettery and is where flax was “retted”: the plants were soaked until they were soft enough to turn into linen.

Keep straight on and after around 130 metres bear left at the fork in the track, passing the rear of Tacon Close on the site of the old Tacon brewery which, up to its cessation of trade in the early 20th century, was served by its own siding from Eye station, the terminus of the branch line which connected to the mainline at Mellis.

The line supported a passenger service to and from Mellis until 1931 and a freight service until 1964 carrying goods inward such as coal to the gasworks and goods out such as sugar beet. During the war the station was a transshipment point for materials destined for the local airfields. On one occasion the station was machine-gunned by a German plane and station master George Chappel had to dive for safety under a wagon, escaping injury as bullets thudded into the ground.

As you continue through to the road at Magdalen Street you pass a poultry factory, previously the site of a granary complex. The red brick building on the opposite side of the road to the right is the old gasworks which closed in the mid-20th century.

Take care crossing the road and proceed down the steep slope to the Town Moors playing field and the Eye community centre. In times past this was an area of rough grazing for the use of borough freemen. On this site there used to be a huge pond which was full of frogs, toads and newts. When it was levelled, and the pond filled in, the frogs hopped up Magdalen Street!

Cross to the far side of the community centre car park, go over a wooden footbridge and turn left onto a path which skirts the woodland area, a former plantation of poplar trees originally destined for matchwood. After the great storm of 1987 the damaged trees were left as a memorial and an imaginative re-planting scheme has created a new landscape. This Town Moors project deserves a special visit.

Continue straight along the path which takes you over two footbridges and into an open field and then to a track. On the left, just before the track, there used to be an archery range, called a butt, where menfolk learned archery and practised shooting in bygone days. Turn right at the unmade road and continue uphill on Moorhall Causeway. Enter a field via a kissing gate on your left opposite the triple cart shed on your right.

Follow the hedgeline on your right for around 160 metres and cross the gated footbridge over the stream on your left. Cross the footbridge and enter the water meadows. Go straight ahead in the first field, through a wooden gate, into the second field. Continue straight on into the third field over the River Dove and veer slightly to the right heading for a kissing gate in the hedgerow.

Go through the gate and turn left; you are now on Park Lane. This originally led to Eye Deer Park and is raised above the level of the fields as they are often under water: this isolated the town and its castle on an island, hence the name “Eye”, meaning island.

Continue along Park Lane, passing the millennium line of 25 oak trees, until you reach the main road. Carefully cross the main road under the watchful eye of the carved Big Head and continue along a narrow section of the Mid-Suffolk footpath. The path opens out and then reaches Ludgate Causeway. Turn left and continue back to your starting point. As you do so, you will pass The Old Cherry Tree pub on your left. Alternatively you may wish to turn right and start the Denham Street and Back walk.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Eye is on the route of a Monday to Saturday bus service which connects Diss and Ipswich. The service is numbered 112/113/114 and you will find the timetables at: www.suffolконboard.com/buses/timetables/ or at travelineeastanglia.org.uk.

The Eye-bound service has a stop around 170 yards to the west of the short approach road to Diss railway station. The station is on the Norwich/London Liverpool Street main line which has connection points at Norwich station to the north and at stations at various points south. Diss station is around four miles from Eye.

THE MAP

