

Station Walks –
Thetford – Brandon



The Little Ouse Trail



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national express

Directions...

1

On leaving Thetford Station turn left down Station Road towards the town centre. Turn right when you meet London Road to follow the signs for Thetford Priory.

To take in the town centre including its splendid variety of shops cross London Road and down White Hart Street before returning to the Priory along Minstergate.

Take time to explore the Norman Castle Mound (shown below).

2

Following the signs and entering through the recently erected gates you find the extensive remains of one of the most important East Anglian monasteries, the Cluniac Priory of Our Lady of Thetford.

3

Leaving the Priory head west along the walkway. Where the surfaced route bears right continue following the river. Pass the bridge picking up the route signed Little Ouse Path; follow the river bank at the Canterbury Way overpass. You can cross under or over the road returning to the riverside.

4

Continue along the river and after taking the underpass of the A11 you will start to feel that you are really entering the Forest. Follow the track past the Fishing Lakes marked 'private' (this applies to fishing not walking) as you leave the town behind and from here you follow the signs for the Little Ouse Path.

5

Follow the path until you reach Abbey Heath Bridge, here you can take a detour (be careful crossing the B1107 road to the golf course) to see Thetford Warren Lodge. Otherwise stay on the north side of the river to Broadwater Common, where Thetford people once had common rights to cut hay and reeds and to dig turf for fuel.

Discover...



Thetford Images

St Mary's Priory

Founded in the early 12th century, it owed much of its prosperity to a miraculous appearance of the Virgin Mary and became a magnet for pilgrims. Two of the greatest men in early Tudor England, Thomas Howard, victor of Flodden, and Henry Fitzroy, illegitimate son of Henry VIII, were buried near her shrine.

Surviving elements include the lower walls of the church and cloister, along with the impressive shell of the priors' lodging and, reached by a pathway from the main site, an almost complete 14th-century gatehouse.

Roger Bigod had accompanied William the Conqueror throughout the Norman invasion of 1066. It was Bigod, by now an old man, who founded Thetford Priory, and who laid the foundation stone of the new church in September 1107 before he died the following week.



Brecks Partnership

Thetford Warren Lodge

One of the best of its kind, here a 'warrener' once lived in this fortified building along with his nets, traps and precious rabbit skins. The Brecks landscape owes much to the vast numbers of rabbits farmed in areas such as these once open heaths.



Thetford Images



Thetford Images

6

Follow the river with the Power Station on your right picking up the Little Ouse signs on the west of the station again to continue along the river.

This section is permissive access kindly granted by the Crown Estate.

The Power Station produces 38.5 MW of electricity from an unlikely source. It is the largest chicken litter fuelled plant in the country hidden in the forest, located at the centre of England's poultry producing region. It consumes 420,000 tonnes of litter each year producing a rich fertiliser as a by-product.



Theford Images

7

Follow the path and cross the bridge to enter a woodland plantation. Turn right at the crossroads and follow the path until you see an interpretation board on bats, here turn left through a small plantation.

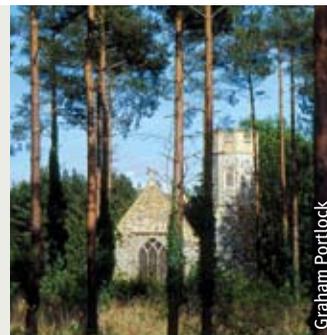


Ben Heather

A wide range of plants and wildlife can be seen along the river banks of the Little Ouse, including damselfly, dragonfly and the elusive otter.

8

Turn right towards farmland following a grass path along the field headlands, crossing a farm track before entering another woodland. The route takes you past St Helens picnic site on the opposite side of the river bridge and down to Santon Downham where facilities include a shop, toilets and regional offices of the Forestry Commission.



Graham Portlock

Santon Downham

A leafy village now but in 1668 it was an open sandy area with sparse vegetation. Mobile sand dunes that originated in Lakenheath Warren 8kms away were blown through covering hundreds of hectares of farmland and filling the Little Ouse River for nearly 5kms. From here you can follow various Forest Tracks south to High Lodge for cycle hire, restaurant and Go Ape. It's a great base from which to explore the rest of The Brecks.

Traditional grazing meadows are being created here along the valley floor using a wier system to control the water levels.

9

Head through Santon Downham, with the shop and Forestry Commission offices on your left; follow the sharp bend in the road towards the white bridge, which was featured in TV series Dad's Army. Immediately after crossing the bridge turn left along the river side path towards Brandon.



Forest Heath District Council

10

Following the path along the river edge you will see Weeting Decoy (once a wildfowl trapping area luring ducks and geese into netting cages), just visible in the reeds as a series of small ponds. The route continues along the northern bank of the Little Ouse towards Brandon. Riverside moorings give a hint to the river's past.

The river was once an important navigation link between Thetford, Kings Lynn and the Fens. Heavy cargoes of seed, coal and corn were carried along in 'lighters' or barges towed by horses along the 'haling path' or towpath. The lightermen in charge were colourful characters, dressed in fur caps and red or blue sleeved waistcoats with glass buttons. There were five artificial dams know as 'stanches' between Brandon and Thetford that controlled the water flow and depth.

11

Approaching Brandon, pass businesses based on local products with wooyards and concrete block manufacturers. Leave the river side by turning right then left onto Riverside Way, then turn right reaching the main road A1065 High Street. Follow the pavement north, the station is over the level crossing on the right.



Forest Heath District Council

Once in Brandon you may wish to explore its beautiful Country Park, situated to the south side of the town centre. Here you will find Brandon Tourist Information Centre, a tea room, shop, toilets as well as its fascinating grounds, which include a mausoleum, walled garden, walk and cycle trails and a lake.

The Brecks

One of the great natural areas of Britain

The Little Ouse runs through the heart of the Brecks, one of the most interesting and unusual great natural areas in Britain.

Spanning 370 miles² 940 kilometers² in the heart of the East of England, the Brecks has a fascinating history containing evidence of earliest human occupation.

This is a very distinctive landscape of tranquil forest, open heathland and agricultural land. It is home to many unique and distinctive birds, plants, animals and invertebrates. Here you may catch a glimpse of the rare Stone Curlew, Woodlark, Nightjar or spot roaming deer in the Forest.

This is a landscape which remains full of historical and ecological interest. Ancient heathland once covered huge areas of the Brecks. 'Brecks' were temporary fields cultivated for a few years and then allowed to revert to heath once the soil became exhausted. Sand storms were once a regular occurrence.

The Brecks was the flint capital of the UK, and is steeped in human history stretching back to the Stone Age. A Neolithic Flint mine (Grimes Graves), medieval rabbit farming and 19th century landed estates are amongst the many clues to human settlement to be found in the Brecks.



“Few of the lowland districts of England have more striking individual characteristics than the area known as Breckland.”

W.G. Clarke, 1925

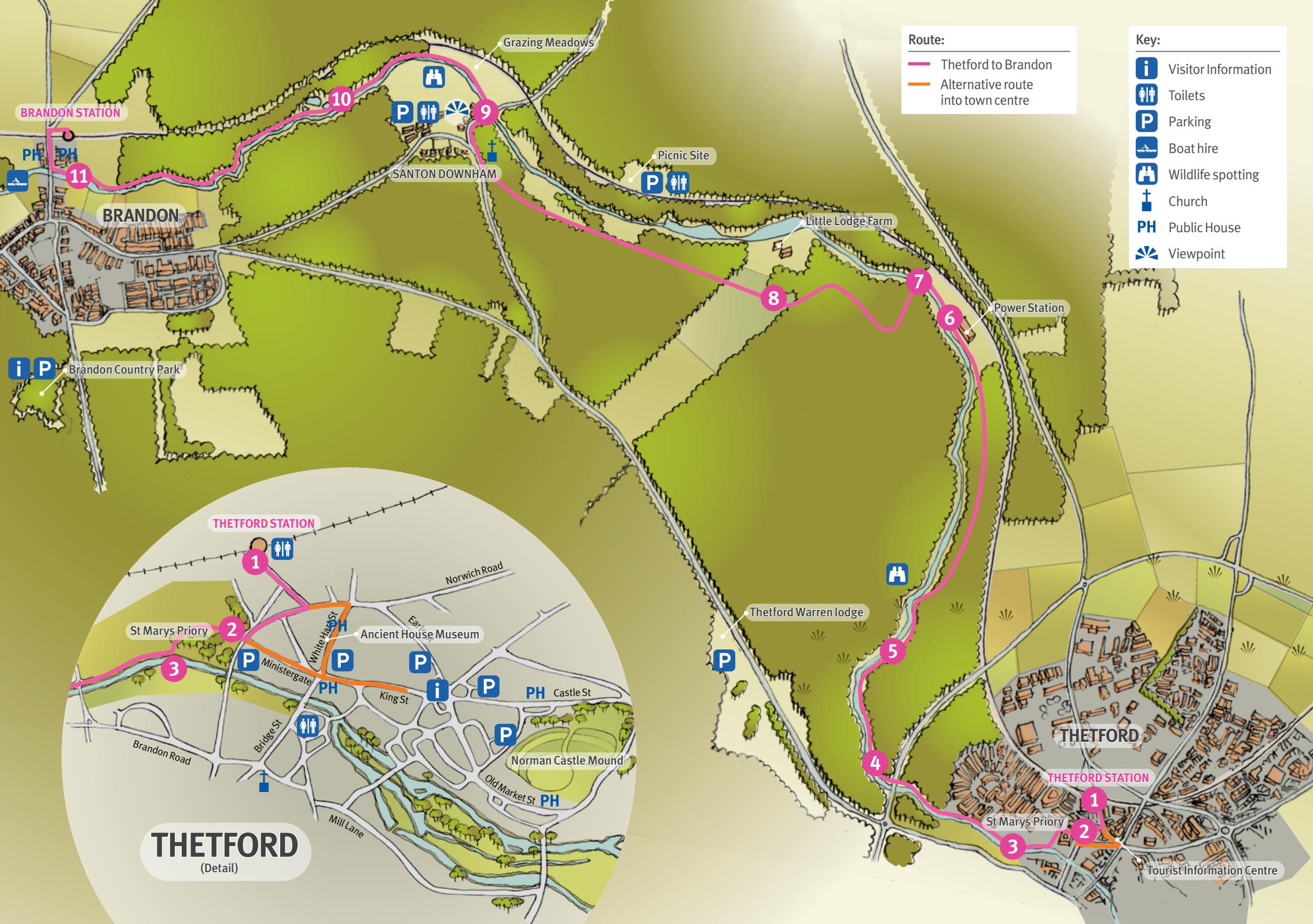


The effects of the last 'Ice Age' can be seen nowhere else in Britain and Ireland as extensively as in the Brecks. 12,000 years ago ice bubbles created Pingos and permafrost created distinctive patterns and features on the land.

In the Brecks you can enjoy walking, cycling and horse riding on the ancient trackways and peaceful forest trails. Visit one of the market towns: Brandon, Mildenhall, Swaffham, Thetford and Watton, all of which offer unique and different experiences.



Whether you live in the Brecks or are a visitor you will be spoiled for choice as there is so much to see and do in this special place.



Route:

- Thetford to Brandon
- Alternative route into town centre

- Key:**
- Visitor Information
 - Toilets
 - Parking
 - Boat hire
 - Wildlife spotting
 - Church
 - Public House
 - Viewpoint

THETFORD
(Detail)



BRANDON STATION

BRANDON

SANTON DOWNHAM

THETFORD

THETFORD STATION

Tourist Information Centre

Grazing Meadows

Picnic Site

Little Lodge Farm

Power Station

Thetford Warren lodge

Brandon Country Park

THETFORD STATION

St Marys Priory

Ancient House Museum

Norman Castle Mound

Old Market St

Brandon Road

Bridge St

Mill Lane

Norwich Road

White Hart St

Ministergate

King St

Castle St

This walk is approximately 15kms (9 miles) in length with opportunities to make detours or develop your own circular walk using rights of way and forest tracks.

The route from Thetford to Brandon train station is predominately flat following the slowly winding course of the Little Ouse River and allows you to experience the wide range of landscapes in the Brecks. Please follow the Country Code and care should always be taken whilst walking along the riverside. Refreshments are available from Santon Downham shop during opening hours, but taking your own may be advisable.

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Other routes are available. Check out www.visiteastofengland.com/walking for more routes

Exclusive offer – Ancient House, Museum of Thetford Life

Set in a beautiful Tudor house, this delightful museum tells the remarkable story of Thetford at the heart of the Brecks. Discover rich collections and meet people from Thetford's past from revolutionary writer Thomas Paine to Sikh hero Maharajah Duleep Singh. On production of a valid train ticket to/from Thetford/Brandon, the museum is offering 'Two for One' admission. For full terms and conditions, more information, opening times and admission call 01842 752599.

Further information:

Brecks Partnership
01842 760116
www.brecks.org

Thetford Tourist Information Centre
01842 751975
www.explorethetford.co.uk

Brandon Tourist Information Centre
(Brandon Country Park)
01842 814955
www.suffolk.gov.uk

National Rail Enquiries
08457 484950
www.nationalrail.co.uk

East of England Tourism
www.visiteastofengland.com

High Lodge Forest Centre/
Forestry Commission
01842 815434
www.forestry.gov.uk/highlodge