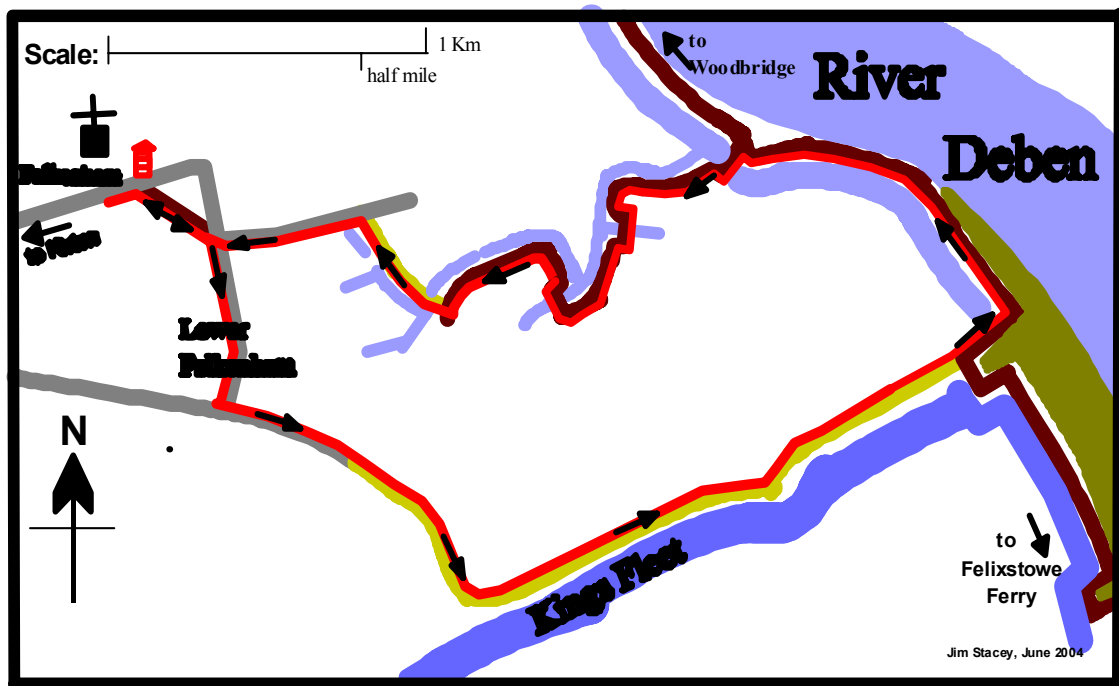


Walk 4 - Falkenham

A Walk Round Falkenham by Sue and Jim Stacey.



Start/End: On the road close to Falkenham Church.

The local bus service runs between Felixstowe and Kirton. The journey takes approximately 17 minutes. Contact Felixstowe Tourist Information Centre for times. It will then be necessary to walk down the fairly quiet road to Falkenham.

The most convenient way to get to Falkenham is by car. Falkenham is signposted from Kirton which in turn is signposted from the A14 as you approach Felixstowe. There is no public car park at Falkenham. However, as you drive through Falkenham from Kirton, you will see a sign under some trees on your left to Falkenham church. The authors normally park here as the road is quite wide.

Terrain: Very easy.

There is only one very gentle uphill climb. There are no facilities (shops, pubs, toilets etc) on this walk so make sure you have all you need.

Distance: 4.5 miles.

If you take public transport to Kirton, you will need to add on 1.1 miles each way between Kirton Green and Falkenham.

Points of Interest:

- Riverside walking
- The Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path (SCHP)
- A historic waterway
- Land reclamation.

Detail

From Falkenham to the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path.

Continue down the road to pass the last house on the right. Just after the telephone box, but on the opposite side of the road, follow the signed footpath that cuts across the cultivated field. When you meet the road, turn right to walk through Lower Falkenham until you get to the T-junction. Turn left. You have now joined the Suffolk Coast and Heaths Path (SCHP).

To the River

Those of you who have done the March walk will recognise this section although seasonal changes and the fact that you are walking in the opposite direction will add to the interest. Walk down the road and continue as it turns into a wide gravel track. Soon it bends to the right and then to the left as it descends into the low lying reclaimed land alongside the historic Kings Fleet waterway. (See the section called "Kings Fleet" in the March walk). Continue along the track until you reach the dyke and then climb the steps on to the top of the dyke where the river suddenly comes into view. It is possible at this stage to turn right at the signpost and follow the SCHP signs for about a mile back to Felixstowe Ferry where there are toilets and cafes, and where you can also catch a bus back to Felixstowe. However, make sure that you have checked the bus times before you start the walk.

Along the dyke

To continue the walk, ignore the right turn along the SChP and go straight ahead along the dyke which turns sharp left through a broken down stile to go alongside the river. Pass the area near the Felixstowe Water Ski club pontoon and then continue along the dyke as it follows the river round to the left. At a sharp right turn by a broken down stile, there is a public footpath signpost pointing left off the dyke. Before leaving the dyke, take stock of the extent of land reclamation as indicated by the difference in the high water mark indicated by the mud on the river and the level of the water in the drainage channels on the land side of the dyke.

Land Reclamation

The building of dykes started before 1200. The river was driven back in stages with earlier dykes taking the higher ground. The work was hard and progress was so slow that little change would be seen within a worker's lifetime. The work was continued into the mid 1600s when the last recorded dykes were built above Woodbridge. The result was the much narrower Deben River you see today.

The Return to Falkenham

To continue the circular walk, follow the direction of the signpost across the gap in the wide drainage channel that runs parallel to the dyke to go alongside a smaller drainage channel on your right. Follow its bendy course until you come to a wooden footbridge. Cross the bridge and turn right. Keep the next drainage channel on your right until you come to a second wooden footbridge

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The reeds in the drainage channels are an excellent environment for birds such as Reed Warblers and Reed Buntings. The Reed Bunting is characterised by the white marking that runs from the base of its beak down to its neck. This is most obvious in the male as the rest of its head is black. This can be seen in the right photograph below. Although not so obvious, the same moustached marking is sported by the less striking female as shown in the left photograph. These birds are constantly flitting from reed to reed and pose a challenge to amateur photographers like the authors.



Again, cross the bridge and keep right so that you continue to follow the drainage channel on your right. Ignore the first gap which crosses into a cultivated field and continue to a second gap where there is a low signpost. This directs you onto a farm track that has a winding drainage channel on its left. Take this right turn. Follow it as it gently climbs up to the road by an electricity pole. Turn left and walk up the road. At the T-junction, cross the road and follow the signposted path to return across the cultivated field that you used at the start of the walk. Turn left up to the road to return to the start.

References

Ordnance Survey map Explorer 197, Ipswich, Felixstowe & Harwich. 1998

Suffolk Estuary. W.G.Arnott. Norman Adlard & Co Ltd, 1950

The Birds of Britain and Europe. Hienzel, Fitter & Parslow. Collins 1974