

Nocton

Start: Free car parking at Nocton village hall (TF058642)

Distance: 7 miles.

Refreshments: Red Lion public house, Dunston

A pleasant walk from the attractive village of Nocton, using a mixture of field paths, woodland and quiet lanes. Generally level walking. Allow about three hours.

Nocton is (or was) an 'Estate Village'. The great and good lived at Nocton Hall, now a burned-out shell, and many of the buildings in the village are legacies of those who owned the estate. Viscount Goderich the first Earl of Ripon and his wife were Lord and Lady of the manor in the early 19th century. He held the office of Prime Minister for the shortest period in British history, from August 1827 to January 1828. Many of the old cottages and farm buildings in Nocton date from their time and they lavished money on the construction of Nocton's All Saints Church.

In 1936, Smith's Potato Crisps Estates acquired the estate and constructed a light railway to bring potatoes up from the fen for sorting before being sent by train to the Smith's Crisps factory on Newark Road, Lincoln. Smith's sold the estate in 1975 and the present owner grows bulbs for the flower market, rather than potatoes.

From the village hall car park, turn left and follow the road through the village. Nocton has its own 'village trail' so you might spot information boards and sculptures as you walk. At the bend in the road is the old post office built in 1833 as the village Poor House **POINT A**. It became a post office in the early 20th century. A little further on the left is Ripon Row, designed by Sir George Gilbert Scott for workers on the estate of Lord and Lady Ripon who owned the estate at that time.

Once out of the village, the pavement ends so walk with care on the roadside, passing Nocton Park on the right. At the entrance to Long Holt Wood on the right, just before the road bends right, cross and at the bend take the track ahead. As this bears left **POINT B** continue on following waymarks to reach the village of Potterhanworth. Pick up the pavement and follow the road up the hill, passing the church on the left. Opposite, the converted water tower was built in 1903 as part of an innovative water supply system from a borehole in a nearby field.

Continue to the road junction and turn right. Walk a short distance, then take a footpath left immediately after the chapel. Follow the well-defined path passing through three kissing gates, continuing ahead between fields (ablaze with daffodils in spring) to reach a driveway **POINT C**. Cross, pass through a kissing gate and continue down to a stile and footbridge, beyond which, follow the path heading towards the wood and going through a hedge boundary. Now pick up the left boundary, cross a footbridge and continue to a track junction. Turn right, then immediately left, over a footbridge and into Potterhanworth Wood **POINT D**.

Follow the path through the wood to a track junction and turn right, then continue to a lane where you turn left. Walk for a short distance to a bend in the road beyond a bridge. Turn right here onto a track and continue to a track junction where you go right **POINT E**. Before reaching the wood, turn left at the next footpath sign and follow the path with a stream on the right.

You are following the Car Dyke, thought to have been constructed early in the second century AD by Roman engineers for drainage purposes to produce more fertile land for corn crops. This 85 mile long ditch roughly marks the western edge of the Fens, running from Washingborough near Lincoln to Peterborough.

On reaching a road, go left and continue to Wasps Nest where, at a left bend, go right, over a bridge and onto a track. Fork left in a few yards and follow the track until it splits and here, take the waymarked bridleway ahead in the fork **POINT F**. At a track junction go left, then in a short distance turn right onto a broad waymarked footpath, which you follow between fields. Crossing the next field, the path narrows and reaches a cross-track. Continue on towards a lone tree, where you cross a footbridge **POINT G** and continue in the same direction, heading towards Dunston. Beyond the next footbridge, turn left and in a short distance you reach a residential road.

Walk to a road junction – Back Lane. For refreshment, turn left, then left again to reach the Red Lion pub **POINT H**. However, the walk continues right, following Back Lane as it bears left passing a school on the right. Just beyond, take the signed bridleway right and follow this to a path on the right,

which you take, walking field right, ditch left. The path enters woodland, turning left to become a track. On reaching a lane, go left and walk to a left bend, where you turn right **POINT I** on an unsigned path into woodland, then immediately left. Ignore a path joining from the left, but continue to a road. Ignore this, and take the path left, which leads you beneath a brick arch at one time a gated entry to the grounds of Nocton Hall and an avenue of Yew trees, to arrive at the church.

Follow the road right, noticing the sundial on the village green **POINT J**.

The sundial was designed to commemorate Queen Elizabeth II's Golden Jubilee. The hours represent Nocton's history through the ages; while on the base of the gnomon is inscribed the family name of each household in 2002.

Continue, keeping left to reach the main road. Turn right and walk for a short distance to the car park and walk's end.

