

# PATHS INTO THE PAST

A how-to guide for leading successful guided heritage walks



PHOTO CREDIT: New Heritage Solutions



This guide is a follow-up to that produced in 2016. This was towards the end of our National Lottery funded *Eighth in the East* project which explored the social and landscape of the United States Army Air Force in the East of England during World War Two. That document was put together by Project Manager David Cain and Community Archaeologist Martin Cuthbert who had realised that one of the best ways to reveal the size and importance of American wartime airbases was to lead walks around those that survived. By the end of that project around 2,000 people had taken part in one of these walks. But, it was only when those walks were evaluated that we realised that as well as a very effective heritage engagement activity our history walks were also good exercise. Our interest in history walks that had a positive impact on health and wellbeing was born.

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Since 2016 we have aimed to include heritage walks as a key activity in all of the projects we have led. Furthermore, we have worked on walking initiatives for organisations such as Public Health Suffolk and the Broads Authority. Over time we have learnt more about staging these walks, how they can be more effectively promoted and the positive outcomes they can promote for individual's health and wellbeing. So, the time is right for us to revisit this guide.

We are grateful to people who play the National Lottery for the funding which is distributed by the Heritage Fund. This work has been funded by the latter's Covid Recovery programme and we hope that it will enable other small arts and heritage organisations to embrace the possibilities of organised or self-guided walks.

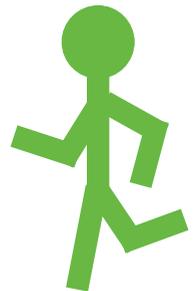


# WHO IS WALKING?

When we were planning our first heritage walks, we truly believed that we were designing them for everyone. But, as we have built up our experience of organising these activities we have realised that there are multiple audiences for walks that demand different approaches. In particular, the evaluation we carried out after our Paths Into The Past initiative with Public Health Suffolk in 2016/2017 showed us that our walks were attracting a particular type of person. In general, they were people with time on their hands who were pretty fit and active and who understood the health benefits of walking and were keen to learn about local history. They arrived with the correct footwear and clothing for the conditions, they had maps and refreshments. They didn't have a problem getting to the walk because they all had access to a car. In short, our walks were attracting walkers! It was only when we staged a walk for school students in Lowestoft that we realised that, for some, walking was not a familiar activity and location, distance and theme all mattered a great deal.

We put this learning into place during our National Lottery funded project in Tendring from 2017-2019. As part of Harwich Haven: Surrender & Sanctuary we built strong working partnerships with some key local organisations, notable the Harwich Society, Harwich Festival and Shotley Open Spaces. This meant that we could call on the local insight available in these organisations together with their recognised brand within the locality. In short, they could help us target specific audiences for our walks.

Most recently, Covid Recovery funding from the Heritage Fund has allowed us to explore another element to our walking offer which, frankly, we had ignored: distance. Talking to healthcare professionals in Ipswich and West Suffolk it became clear that not everyone is able to walk for 30 minutes - let alone the 2 to 3 hour airfield 'yomps' that we had curated in the past! We began to understand that just getting people out of their house for as little as 5 minutes could be the beginning of a journey to better health and well-being, as well as local knowledge. Our 5 Minute Wanderers were born...



# AUDIENCE

The type of people you want to attract to your walk will determine much about what kind of walk you stage. The question to ask is:

## Who is your walk aimed at and what are their needs?

Do you want it to be for everybody - in which case you will need to think about the difficulty of the walk (time and terrain), or is it aimed at a specific group of people?

### Think about:

#### Distance

How far is your walk and how long will it take?

#### Terrain

Is the route difficult in places, steep or marshy for example? Could you do the walk if you used a wheelchair?

#### Obstacles

Are there gates to climb over, busy roads to cross, farm animals present...?

#### Access

Do you need a car to get to the start of the walk or is it accessible by foot or public transport for your target audience?

#### Weather conditions

OK, so it can rain at any time of the year here in the UK but remember that having the proper gear might allow some people to walk in all weathers but its cost and availability is a barrier to others.

#### Content

What is the history that you want to feature? Different audiences will be attracted by different stories and so think about the age, gender and interests of your target audience.

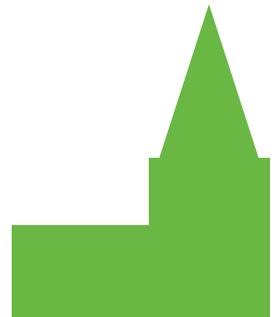
Also, think about people with different needs - eg the partially sighted, those with limited hearing or people with learning disabilities.

# OUR GUIDED WALKS

We want to get more people engaged with local heritage through healthy activity.

## OUR WALKS:

- **Give a history of both the built and natural features en-route**
- **Take in surviving structures, explaining their functions**
- **Point out the older historical sites in the area**
- **Explain the landscape changes due to the site's construction**
- **Include social histories and cultural impact or change**
- **Aim to get people active through heritage**



# PLAN YOUR ROUTE

Once you've thought about who you want to come on your walk then you can start to plan it. Often we employ an expert (a local historian, wildlife expert or university academic) and we work with them to produce a route that will engage our target audience. Sometimes our walks are self-guided (see below), that means that we have put together a walk with accompanying interpretation which people can do by themselves or in a friendship or family group.

One consideration is whether your walk will be on public or private land. We try to hold our heritage walks on public footpaths. Clearly, urban walks are more likely to be on public land than rural ones. But, if you are interested in featuring some surviving heritage that is away from a footpath or the public highway then you do need to get permission from the landowner well in advance of the walk. We look at Ordnance Survey maps to find out where the public footpaths are located. It is possible to view all of the Ordnance Survey mapping of the UK online, for free (a list of useful contacts is included below).

The next task is to think about what the walker will see, whether it is a feature in the townscape/landscape or something they can look at on a leaflet or via their smartphone. We call this 'interpretation' and when we plan walks, we use a host of visual tools as well as text so that we can try and convey what places or features might have looked like in the past. If you are organising a group walk you might think about distributing copies of archive images or including them on the information that appears on leaflets

or digital devices. But, remember to check copyright and make sure that everything is clear for the reader. There are a host of online resources for you to use. For example, start off with modern aerial photographic imagery, such as Google Earth and then turn to historic maps. The National Library of Scotland has a brilliant digital collection of maps (for England & Wales too!) which you can access online. Historic England has a fabulous photographic collection and some photo libraries, like the Mary Evans Picture Library, have photos going back to the beginning of the twentieth century and earlier. Again, do please check copyright - you'll be surprised how many organisations offer free resources for activities that are free for the user.

For much older historic sites then the first port of call should be the Heritage Gateway website. This offers a fully searchable database which has been put together over decades by archivists and archaeologists working for our county councils. These are searchable online. Just key in the place name and off you go...

Finally, make sure that you have tested the route. Maps and online research are great but you will learn so much more about your proposed walk by actually doing it. Think about walkers' comfort. Some of your walkers might need a toilet break, a cup of tea, or even a place to have a rest once in a while. Consider how many people can do the walk safely. And, if you are planning a walk where people need to use their car then think about where they are going to park!

# IT'S ALL IN THE TIMING

The British weather is unpredictable at best. You should always be prepared to postpone a walk if the weather looks bad (see below) and even the hardiest of souls will get more out of a walk if it is done in reasonable conditions. So, think about the time of year that you want to run your walks. Remember, that it is dangerous for people to be walking at night - so day-length might be an issue too.

There are also times in the year when your walk might link to other events that might support what you're doing. So, think about upcoming festivals or art & heritage weekends. These can make great 'umbrella events' under which your walk can attract a larger audience. But, make sure that you liaise with other groups to avoid direct clashes and benefit fully from shared marketing and PR (see below).

## And don't forget

When out walking, there are three important things to remember:

1. Respect people and places
2. Protect the natural environment
3. Enjoy it!

For more information, take a look at the Countryside Code and Highway Code websites, details can be found on page 13.



# PUBLICITY

You'll put in more effort organising your walk than you will running it. So you'll want people to find out about it and, hopefully, take part. We have used a lot of different publicity tools to advertise our walks. We use local parish newsletters, local newspapers and radio to let people know about our walks. We also put up posters in local Post Offices and on notice boards. We promote the events in pubs, libraries and doctors' surgeries, and, of course, we advertise it at the museum or historic site where the walk will start and finish. We also promote the events online, via our website and social media.

Of course, social media can be problematic. Leaving aside some of the issues surrounding so called fake news, or aggressive language, social media does also require certain skills. Twitter can be a useful way of telling people about what you're doing, but to build up followers you have to be active on it almost daily and who really has the time for that! A Facebook page might be useful but, like Twitter, it requires constant management and you can't guarantee that a particular target audience can be reached. In our most recent work in Bury

St Edmunds we did come to appreciate one feature of Facebook which was incredibly useful: the community page. These are moderated and reach out to people who live in a particular place or share a particular passion. They are private groups that you have to ask to join. However, we found that when we approached these groups about our walks we were welcomed in and users were keen to hear about what we were planning. Such groups are also great for getting feedback.

In your publicity be clear about what you're planning, times and starting places. The numbers you can accommodate may be limited and so you will need to set up a booking system and that needs to be properly and sensitively managed in case people are disappointed and have missed out. Ensure that people know how to contact you by phone or email in case they - or you - need to cancel. In the event that you do cancel a walk, we'd also recommend having a staff member on site, if safe to do so, to inform people who may still arrive for the walk.



# A WALK THROUGH HISTORY

## WALK 9: NUTHAMPSTEAD AIRFIELD.

SUNDAY 28<sup>TH</sup> FEBRUARY 2016 9:30AM.



Join us as we lead a walk through the historic airfield at Nuthampstead, home to the 55<sup>th</sup> Fighter Group and the 398th Bomb Group of the 8th USAAF during World War Two.

If you're interested in landscape history, airfield archaeology, or just fancy the chance to have a walk in the unique landscape of this World War Two airfield, this walk is for you.

Parking is at Anstey Village Hall, Anstey, SG9 0BY  
The Village Hall is situated to the rear of Anstey First School

### Distance:

**Guided Walk** 3.5 miles (from the Village Hall to the Woodman Inn, Nuthampstead)

**Un-Guided** 1.6 miles (from the Woodman Inn back to the Village Hall)

**Total 5.1 miles**

We should arrive at the Woodman Inn, Nuthampstead at 12:30pm. The guided walk will finish here and you must make your own way back to Anstey Village Hall of your own accord. Directions can be given.

Please bring your own refreshments or alternatively book lunch at the Woodman Inn.

An alternative lunch venue can be found at the Blind Fiddler Pub, Anstey.

Bookings are Essential.

**Terrain – Leisurely.**

**Cost – Free.**

What to bring- Outdoor shoes and clothing appropriate to the weather.



# SAFETY

You must have plans in place to respond effectively to health and safety incidents and other emergencies that might occur at your event. The Health and Safety Executive has put together a great toolkit to help you plan in a safe and responsible way (see below).

It's also your responsibility to make sure that there are trained first aiders on the walk. If you are unable to provide them from your staff, there are alternatives. You can contact your local St John's Ambulance Service, who can provide this service for you. There are also other independent first aid providers.

You will also need a number of marshals to help you steward your walk. It is important to consider having marshals, as this will enable the walk leader to concentrate on guiding the walk and delivering their talks. Again, the Health and Safety Executive can give you information on this.

We use volunteers to help us ensure our walks are marshalled and stewarded. Our marshals help with car parking and then ensure that the participants are safe during the walk. They wear Hi-Vis clothing and are given a safety briefing prior to the walk.

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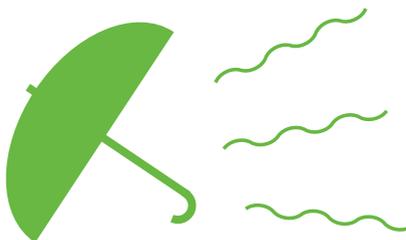
# WEATHER

The British weather is unpredictable. Although some walks could be possible in either rain or sunshine, you will need to plan for all eventualities. In particular, take note of weather warnings from the Met Office.

You should not undertake any walks in strong winds, during a thunderstorm or in any other severe weather. If it becomes necessary to either cancel or postpone a walk, it is advisable to make an early and clear decision so that people do not travel. We advise giving twenty-four hours notice, if possible. This will give you time to get the message out.

# INSURANCE

For any public event, you will need to have insurance. It is worth checking any existing policies you or your organisation may have, as walking events or public events may already be covered as part of your existing insurance. We have public liability insurance which enables us to host public events such as these. In any event, please contact your insurer prior to the walk to let them know the exact details of your planned activity.



# OTHER ESSENTIAL INFORMATION

You will need to tell people the length of the walk and its duration in terms of time. In our experience, a three-mile walk will take three hours to deliver. This is because you will be stopping to give historical information as you go along. A rough guide is to allow one hour for each mile to be walked, although this will vary depending on the number of stops.

Not all of our walks are circular. Where possible, we try to make our walks start and finish at the same point, and would recommend you do so too. However, sometimes this is not possible.

When the walk is not circular, we try to finish at a pub or another place where people can get refreshments and use toilet facilities. We also provide them with details of the route back to the start. If your walk is not circular, you must make people aware of this in your advertising.

In addition to this, you will need to give your walkers some practical guidance before they arrive.

We ask people to bring clothing appropriate to the weather. We also give guidance concerning the terrain. Is the route flat? Is it on grass or road? Is it accessible for pushchairs and wheelchairs?

# FEEDBACK

Naturally, you will want to make sure people enjoy your walks. There will be things you can learn from each event that will enable you to make the next event better. We ask people for formal and ad hoc feedback, as this ensures we are able to evaluate our work and put suggestions into practice.

We use a sign-up sheet at the start of the walk so that we know who is with us and also how we can contact them after the walk. We ask for their name, postcode and contact details. We also formally review each walk as soon as possible after it has taken place. These debriefs enable us to discuss what worked well and also to identify and implement any necessary changes before the next event.



PHOTO CREDIT: John Birsall



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# THANK YOU

There will be a number of people who will have made your walk possible, such as local landowners, historians, volunteers, refreshment providers and museum staff. Sometimes, in the rush of the event, these contributions can be overlooked. So don't forget to take the time at the end of the walk, and when writing a review of the event, to thank all those who made it possible.

# WALK CHECKLIST

Date	Location	Distance	Duration

	Yes	No	Notes
Draft route planned			
Toilets at start/finish			
Refreshments available			
Car parking			
Permissions in place from landowners			
Route walked			
First Aider			
Marshals			
Insurance for event			
Booking system in place			
Walk promoted			
Walk notes prepared for talk			
Weather checked			
Feedback system in place			
Review taken place			

# CONTACTS

*The contact information provided was correct at the time of publication.*

**Ordnance Survey:** <https://osmaps.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/>

**National Library of Scotland - Maps:** <https://maps.nls.uk/>

**Historic maps:** [www.old-maps.co.uk](http://www.old-maps.co.uk)

**Heritage Gateway:** [www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway](http://www.heritagegateway.org.uk/gateway)

**Historic England - Photographs:** <https://historicengland.org.uk/images-books/photos/>

**Historic England - National Heritage List:** [www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list](http://www.historicengland.org.uk/listing/the-list)

**SHARE Museums East:** [www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk](http://www.sharemuseumseast.org.uk)

**National Lottery Heritage Fund:** [www.hlf.org.uk](http://www.hlf.org.uk)

**Highway Code:** [www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-pedestrians-1-to-35](http://www.gov.uk/guidance/the-highway-code/rules-for-pedestrians-1-to-35)

**Countryside Code:** [www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code](http://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code)

**Health and Safety Executive:** [www.hse.gov.uk](http://www.hse.gov.uk)

**St John's Ambulance:** [www.sja.org.uk](http://www.sja.org.uk)

**Ramblers:** [www.org.uk](http://www.org.uk)

**Living Streets:** [www.livingstreets.org.uk](http://www.livingstreets.org.uk)



**Disclaimer:** The information in this guide is intended to support you to deliver a heritage walk. You should refer to the appropriate legal bodies when organising your walk. The authors of the guide bear no legal responsibility should you fail to follow relevant laws and statutory obligations.



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