

Around Swannington

15 mile cycle tour

The history of Alderford dates back to at least the Domesday Book where it was recorded as Alrelie, meaning the ford at the alder trees. The village centres round the lovely 14th century church of St John the Baptist. The church has a tall slender tower and sundial over the porch which reads, 'Redeem the time'. The south porch door has fine 14th century iron work on the knocker. Inside the church is a seven-sacrament font which is of particular interest as there are only 40 examples of these known to exist, and all but two are found in Norfolk and Suffolk.

Next to Bernard Matthews Poultry Farm is Great Witchingham Hall, headquarters of the Company. The original house was owned by the Tompson family who built the south wing in 1812. In 1872 it was rebuilt by the Viscounts Canterbury who inherited it from the Tompsons, hence a blend of Tudor work and Victorian masonry. The late 17th century Squire of the Manor was Oliver Le Neve who fought the last recorded duel in Norfolk in 1698. He killed Sir Henry Hobart of Blickling at nearby Cawston where a memorial stone now stands.

The Little Witchingham church of St Faith is mainly 14th century and has the remains of an early mediaeval crucifixion carving in the outside wall of the chancel. There are also traces of wall paintings and a 14th century font said to have come from Whitwell near Reepham.

Booton's history dates back to at least the Domesday Book where it was recorded as Botuna. On the left, Booton Hall nestles amongst the trees. This is an early 17th century house although some remodelling took place in the mid 18th century. In 1677 Christopher Layer, Squire of Booton and also Sheriff of Norwich, lived here. His nephew and heir, also Christopher Layer,

was the only militant Jacobite to come out of Norfolk. He died for his beliefs at Tyburn in 1723.

The Booton Church of St Michael and All Angels, often referred to as the Cathedral of the Fields., has many ornate pinnacles and turrets and was once described as 'very naughty but built in the right spirit!' It was designed by the eccentric amateur architect the Reverend Whitwell Elwin who was rector here from 1850 until his death on 1st January 1900. He is also noted for his literary talents and edited the famous Quarterly Review for John Murray, also from Booton. Among his literary friends, many of whom came to stay at the Rectory, are Thackeray, Scott and Lockhart.

Across the fields from the church, the large 15th century church of St Agnes, Cawston can be seen with its enormous 119 foot high tower.

Brandiston is a small parish of a few houses, a hall and a church. The track on the left leads to St Nicholas Church and Rectory built in 1865. The church has a 12th century round tower with the nave dating from the 14th century with an interesting sundial in the churchyard.

Haveringland was referred to as Heveringalanda in the Domesday Book, the parish church of St Peters can be seen on the left. The estate behind the church belonged to the former Haveringland Hall, now demolished. It was built in the mid 18th century for the Fellowes family by Blore, the architect responsible for Buckingham Palace.

To the south west of the village is the site of an Augustinian Priory founded in 1210 by William de Gyney, Lord of Haveringland. In 1264 the village was granted exemption from all tithes by Pope Clement IV. One hundred years later Pope Urban V took the priory into his protection and it was dedicated to the Virgin Mary, St Michael and St Lawrence. The priory was eventually suppressed in 1528.

The village of Felthorpe was referred to in the Domesday Book as Faltop. On your right you will pass the entrance to Felthorpe Hall, built around 1825 with additions in 1935. The Hall was used as a Red Cross Hospital during the First World War. It opened on 11th November 1914 and closed

on 14th January 1919 having cared for some 432 patients.

The village of Swannington was known as Sveningatuna at the time of the Domesday Book and is a small village with many attractive cottages. As you go over the bridge, the village pump, built in 1888 in memory of Hastings Parker, can be seen on the left. To the east of the village is the moated Tudor Swannington Hall, said to have been Oliver Cromwell's headquarters. As you pass through the village, the Swannington Rectory and the 13th century Church of St Margaret can be seen on the right. The Rectory was built in 1635 and was the parsonage of the Royalist, Edmund Duncon. Inside the church is a 13th century octagonal font made of Purbeck marble. The Communion Rail dates from 1660 and there is a wall painting of St Christopher in the south aisle. Kett's Lane is named after the famous leader of the peasants revolt in Norfolk, Robert Kett. The revolt was sparked by the enclosure of common land which people had previously used for grazing animals, gathering fuel and recreation. He was captured near here on 28th August 1549 and hung at Norwich Castle Gaol.

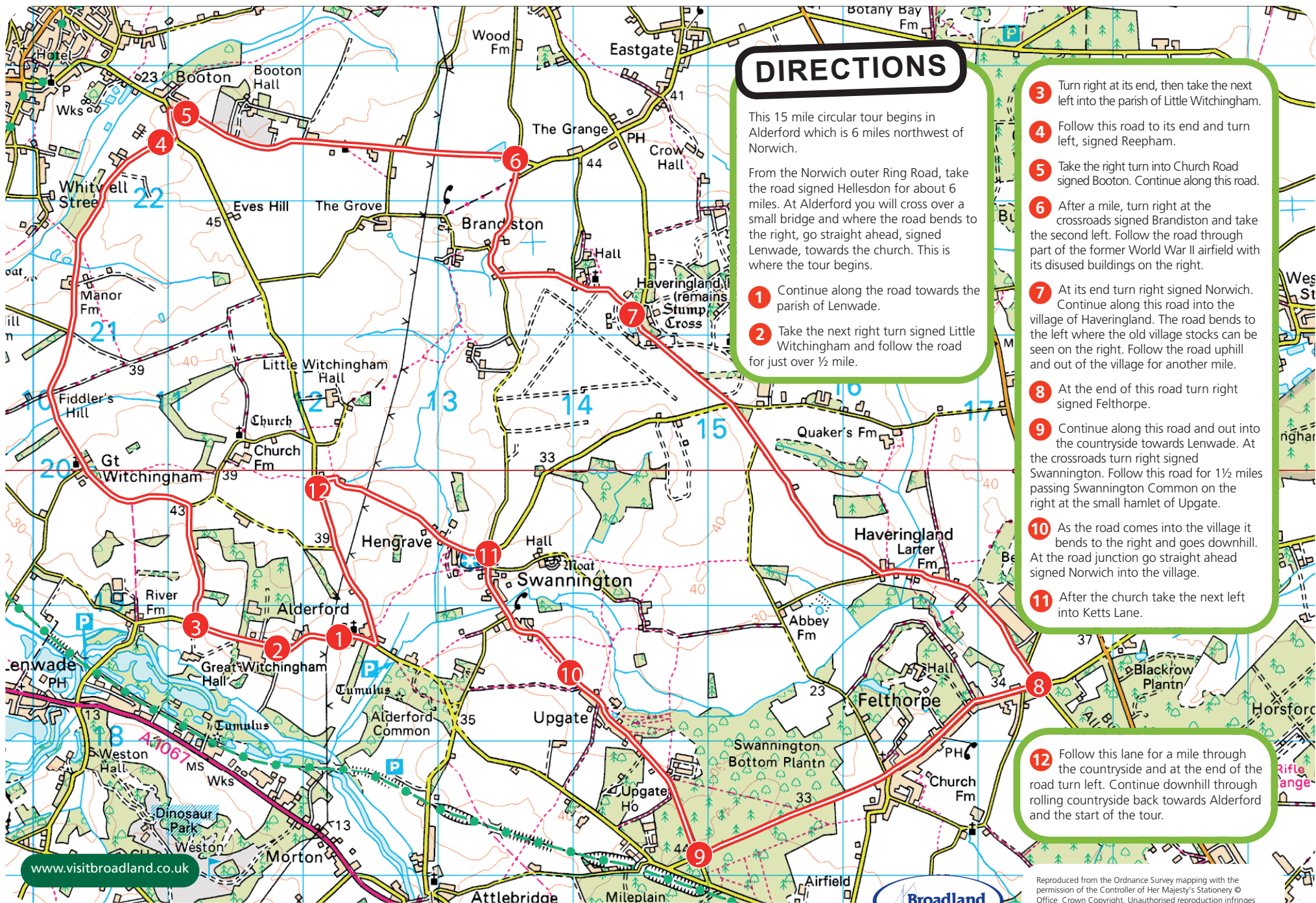
Useful telephone numbers

Aylsham Tourist Information Centre 01263 733903
Easter – 30 September open daily 10am-4.30pm.
October – Easter 10am-2pm (closed Wednesday & Saturday).
Broadland District Council 01603 431133
Local Police (non-emergency number) 0845 456 4567

Useful websites

www.sustrans.org.uk
www.ctc.org.uk
www.nationalcyclingstrategy.org.uk
www.rospa.co.uk
www.heron.nhs.uk





DIRECTIONS

This 15 mile circular tour begins in Alderford which is 6 miles northwest of Norwich.

From the Norwich outer Ring Road, take the road signed Hellesdon for about 6 miles. At Alderford you will cross over a small bridge and where the road bends to the right, go straight ahead, signed Lenwade, towards the church. This is where the tour begins.

- 1 Continue along the road towards the parish of Lenwade.
- 2 Take the next right turn signed Little Witchingham and follow the road for just over ½ mile.

- 3 Turn right at its end, then take the next left into the parish of Little Witchingham.
- 4 Follow this road to its end and turn left, signed Reepham.
- 5 Take the right turn into Church Road signed Booton. Continue along this road.
- 6 After a mile, turn right at the crossroads signed Brandston and take the second left. Follow the road through part of the former World War II airfield with its disused buildings on the right.
- 7 At its end turn right signed Norwich. Continue along this road into the village of Haveringland. The road bends to the left where the old village stocks can be seen on the right. Follow the road uphill and out of the village for another mile.
- 8 At the end of this road turn right signed Felthorpe.
- 9 Continue along this road and out into the countryside towards Lenwade. At the crossroads turn right signed Swannington. Follow this road for 1½ miles passing Swannington Common on the right at the small hamlet of Upgate.
- 10 As the road comes into the village it bends to the right and goes downhill. At the road junction go straight ahead signed Norwich into the village.
- 11 After the church take the next left into Ketts Lane.

- 12 Follow this lane for a mile through the countryside and at the end of the road turn left. Continue downhill through rolling countryside back towards Alderford and the start of the tour.