

of these activities, the modern conservation of heath involves the control of encroaching woodland. The re-establishment of a swathe of heather has been achieved by scraping away the surface layer of bracken leaf mould to expose the underlying topsoil. This allows the seeds of heather, ling, gorse and other heathland plants to germinate and spread. The patches of bare soil that remain for two or three years until a carpet of vegetation grows back provide valuable habitat for a range of invertebrates including the green tiger beetle and burrowing wasps.



*Gorse in flower*

**5** On leaving the wooded fringe of Hoe Common the path passes between two contrasting scenes. On the left is a view over the Whitewater valley, with a glimpse of the gravel 'mountains' at the Roostinghills gravel pit. On the right is an abandoned

gravel pit, last worked in the late 1950s. Natural regeneration has produced a mixture of wood, scrub and open areas that is of considerable value to wildlife. It is on private land and there is no right of public access.

**6** This stretch of the lane runs beside a well trimmed hedge consisting mainly of elm. Regular trimming or coppicing of elm allows it to survive the ravages of Dutch elm disease which is carried by a beetle that attacks only mature trees. The bridge at the bottom of the slope carries the defunct Great Eastern Railway.

The pond behind Manor Farm was made by damming a small stream to create a head of water. Water in the overflow channel formerly drove a horizontally mounted turbine which powered barn machinery.

From the cross-roads at Manor Farm a short cut can be taken along the road to Gressenhall Rural Life Museum.

**7** You have just walked up the valley-side slope to the plateau. The roughly level surface and the scarcity of trees and hedges allows wider views than in the valley. Turn right here along the Public Right of Way which crosses the road at this point.

**8** The route turns right at the crossing of two paths onto the footpath running between Quebec Wood and Gressenhall Mill.

**9** The tall hedge beside Mill Lane has a wide range of native trees and shrubs, including oak, field maple, holly, hawthorn, elm, dog rose, hazel, bramble, sloe, ivy, and wild privet. The large number of species indicates that this is an ancient hedge and has probably been a feature in the landscape for several centuries.

Further information can be obtained from:

Hoe Common Management Group  
David Knight 01362 668931

Wensum Valley Project, Beech House,  
Gressenhall NR20 4DR Telephone 01362 861183  
wensumvalley.project@norfolk.gov.uk  
www.wensumvalley.project.org.uk

Norfolk Wildlife Trust, 72 Cathedral Close,  
Norwich NR1 4DF, Telephone 01603 625540  
www.wildlifetrust.org.uk/norfolk

Gressenhall Rural Life Museum, Beech House,  
Gressenhall NR20 4DR Telephone 01362 860385  
www.norfolk.gov.uk/tourism/museums

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# Hoe Walk

A circular walk of about 6 kilometres  
(just under 4 miles) on footpaths,  
country lanes and farm tracks  
(allow about 2 hours)



Dogs are not permitted on the part of this walk which crosses Hoe Rough

## Hoe Walk

The circular walk is about 6 kilometres (just under 4 miles) long, on footpaths, country lanes and farm tracks. Apart from one section of arable field, the surfaces are mainly good and there are three stiles to cross. Allow about two hours to complete the circuit, although short cuts back to the start are possible from some points. Car parking is free at Gressenhall Rural Life Museum. **The route crosses Hoe Rough (3) where dogs are not allowed by Norfolk Wildlife Trust.** An alternative route is available via roads shown on the map.

### Landscape

In less than 4 miles this circular route passes through a variety of different landscapes that are the result of three kinds of influence:

#### Landform

The low lying valley floor, the sloping valley sides and the higher, flatter plateau level each produce a distinct kind of landscape.

#### Land use

Arable crops, livestock and fruit farming can be seen on the walk, but the rural scene is not entirely shaped by agriculture. Other land uses that have affected the landscape include education, wildlife conservation and mineral extraction.

#### Management interests

Much of the land crossed is in private ownership and managed on commercial lines. The management of other sections is influenced by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust, Hoe and Worthing Parish Meeting, the Wensum Valley Project and Norfolk Museums Service.

### Notes to map

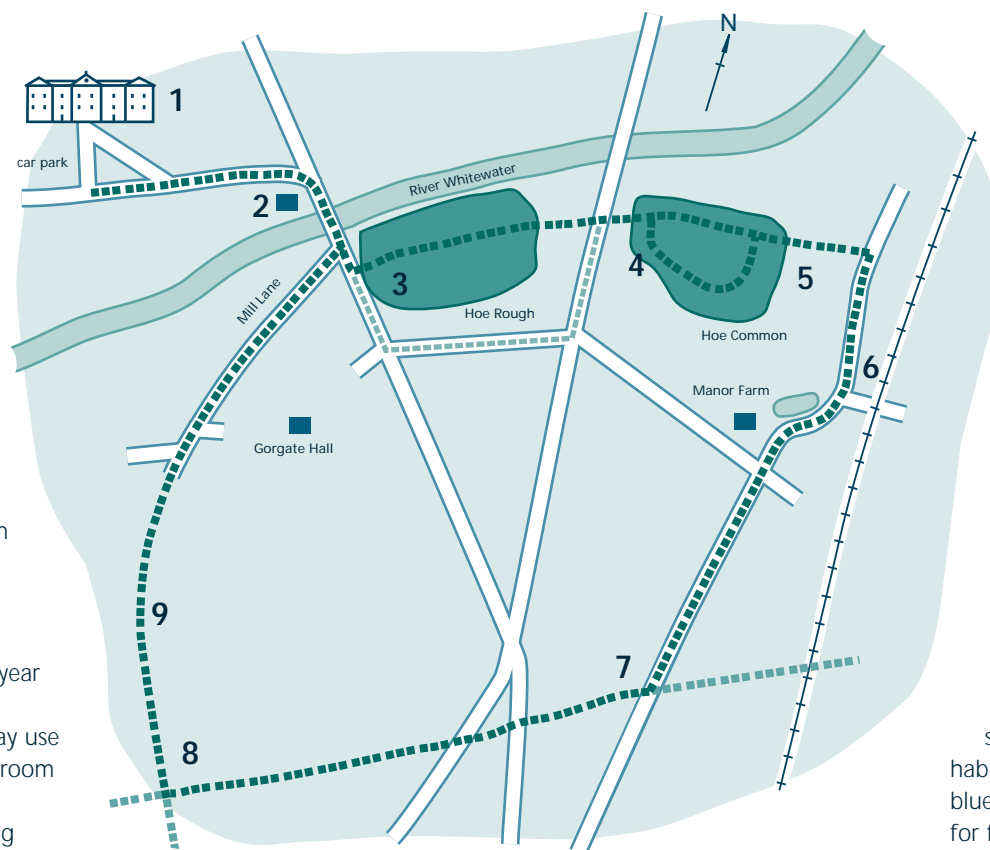
**1** Gressenhall Rural Life Museum is housed in a 200 year old workhouse and is open from Easter to the end of October. There is an admission charge but walkers may use the car park throughout the year, and toilets and tea room free of admission charge during opening hours.

Union Farm, part of the Museum, is managed using traditional methods and the horse power of two Suffolk

Punches. Other rare breeds of East Anglian livestock to be seen include Large Black pigs, Norfolk Horn sheep and Red Poll cattle. A network of paths gives access around the farm.

**2** The remains of Gressenhall Mill can be seen from the bridge over the river Whitewater, a tributary of the Wensum.

**3** Hoe Rough is a 10 hectare remnant of an older, larger Hoe Common. It is managed by the Norfolk Wildlife Trust as a nature reserve. The wildlife habitats include the river bank, a pond, woodland and heath. However, the main wildlife value is in the unimproved grassland, now a rare habitat. The large hummocky ant hills in the riverside meadow suggest that this land has probably never been cultivated. The ant hills support a distinctive community of small plants including thyme-leaved speedwell and mouse-eared hawkweed. The yellow



meadow ants themselves are a food source for birds such as the green woodpecker.

Since 1996 Norfolk Wildlife Trust has been removing self-sown birch trees in order to allow the heather to re-establish on this ancient heathland. The reserve is grazed by the Trust's 'Flying Flock' of sheep to maintain the tightly cropped grassland sward and to prevent encroachment of scrub. The crab apple trees on the reserve are thought to have originated from swill fed to pigs that used to be kept here.

*Small copper butterfly on bell heather*



**4** Hoe Common has a right of way straight along the northern edge (in line with the entrance track), but there is free access to all of it. A detour round the loop path passes through several of the constantly changing habitats found here. Patches of heather and grass are smothered by bracken and gorse, which are themselves invaded by the birch-oak woodland. Hoe and Worthing Parish Meeting, with the help of the Wensum Valley Project, manages the site to preserve areas of heathland, an increasingly rare habitat for species such as woodcock and the silver-studded blue butterfly. Traditionally, the gathering of wood and gorse for fuel and of bracken for animal bedding by villagers would have maintained the Common as open heath. In the absence