

Welcome

Whepstead means 'the place where willow grows' and the village is a small community set in gently rolling Suffolk countryside. It was once the property of Bury Abbey until the Dissolution of the Monasteries in the 16th century, after which it passed into the hands of the Drury family. The Church is of great interest being dedicated to St Petronilla, the only such dedication in England. You can learn more about her within this guide.

The village originally contained 5 public houses: The Black Horse; The Greyhound; The Pear Tree; The Stag; and The White Horse. The 17th century White Horse remains and makes an excellent start or end to your walk. Please check their website for opening and food service times (closed Mondays) www.thewhitehorsewhepstead.pub. (tel: 01284 735760), but please note they get very busy on Sundays.

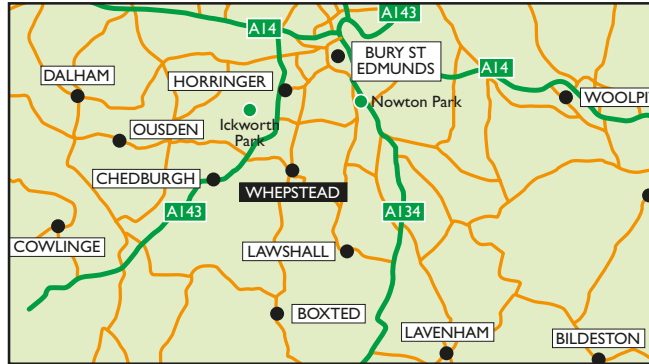
All 3 walks start at the White Horse pub car park **A** (Rede Road IP29 4SS) and there is also free parking at the Community Centre **B** (IP29 4TA). The centre is managed by the community and regularly used for activities including Keep Fit, Carpet Bowls, and the Cricket Club.

Please follow the Countryside Code:

- ✓ Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors.
- ✓ Leave gates and property as you would find them and follow paths.
- ✓ Leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home.
- ✓ Keep dogs under effective control.
- ✓ Plan ahead and be prepared.
- ✓ Follow advice and local signs.



Location



Directions

Whepstead lies on the B1066 approximately 5 miles south-west of Bury St Edmunds. Parking is available at the White Horse pub on Rede Road (IP29 4SS).

Public Transport

Whepstead is served by buses 15a Bury St Edmunds-Haverhill, and 374 Bury St Edmunds-Horringer-Hartest-Clare.

Visit www.suffolkonboard.com for timetables and www.travelineeastanglia.org.uk. (0871 200 2233) to plan your journey.

OS Explorer Map

Use O.S. Explorer Map 211 Bury St Edmunds & Stowmarket to enjoy this walk and the wider area.

Discover Suffolk

Discover many more walks and great days out in the countryside at www.discoversuffolk.org.uk.

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Circular Walks

Whepstead Village Walks

Churches, Rivers and Halls



The River Lark Walk

DISTANCE: 2½ miles (4.5km)

DURATION: 1½ hours approx.



From the White Horse pub car park **A** turn right on to Rede Road. After the hedge boundary of Black Horse Cottage (once The Black Horse), turn right onto the footpath **1**. Continue along the footpath with the tree belt on your right and open fields on your left until you reach a gate.

Go through the gate and over the stile to continue along the narrowing footpath next to a paddock. The footpath comes out on to Chedburgh Road **2**. Turn right and follow the road, passing in front of Ark House, Plovers and Broadgate Farm. Doveden Hall and its farm buildings are on the left.



Moated Doveden Hall has been known by various names including Dorrington, Duffin and Doveden. In 1292 its land was given to the Abbey in Bury St Edmunds to support St Petronilla's Chapel and leper hospital. Originally built of timber frame, it had major alterations in the late 16th century.

Continue along Chedburgh Road, passing Saxham House on the right.

The views on the left are of the fields once owned by the Abbey, and of Doveden Wood, an ancient woodland that shelters much wildlife. Saxham House is a Grade II listed house (c.1520) with 20th century alterations but the ancient construction is still visible with render removed and most of its hall still surviving.

Continue along Chedburgh Road which becomes Old School Road. Turn left at the T-junction onto Rede Road **3** and note the unusual Victorian post box with its hinged letter box. Turn right at the next junction onto Church Hill.

On the left side of the road was the site of poorhouses, now a small woodland glade. In the springtime, this area is carpeted with snowdrops and daffodils.

Just before the bridge over the River Lark turn right onto a footpath **4**. The footpath leads you beside the river through a small wooded area, favoured by grey squirrels and birds. Throughout the year snowdrops, bluebells and wild garlic grow alongside the path. There is a bench by a small meadow managed for wildlife where you can enjoy a short break. Ignore the footbridge on the left over the river **5** and continue along the footpath.

At Plumpton Hall in Whepstead is the source of the River Lark. The river's waters eventually flow into The Wash at Kings Lynn after passing through Bury St Edmund's Abbey Gardens, West Stow and Lackford Lakes, and Mildenhall before joining the Great Ouse at Ely. The river has been used for navigation since Roman times when it was used to transport building stone. Locks and staunches built in the 17th and early 18th centuries improved navigation but the increasing importance of the railways brought an end to navigation by the 1920s. Today, walkers can enjoy the river from the Lark Valley Path, a long distance path between Bury and Mildenhall.

After the meadow bear left to follow the footpath around the edge of the field to a small wooden footbridge. Cross over and continue straight ahead across the field, you'll see the River Lark again on the other side. Continue on the footpath to Rede Road **6**. Turn right and follow the road uphill to return to the White Horse pub **A**.



Whepstead Village Walks

Churches, Rivers and Halls



St Petronilla Church Walk

DISTANCE: 3½ miles (5.5km)

DURATION: 2 hours approx.



Turn left at the White Horse Pub **A**, picking up the blue walk to **4**.

Continue over the River Lark taking the inclined footpath on the right to avoid road walking. This path leads to St Petronilla's Church and 15th century Whepstead Hall **1**. The Hall is private, but the Church is always open.

St Petronilla's Church is the only church dedicated to St Petronilla in England. This unusual dedication may be because in 1535 part of the income of the leper hospital of St Petronilla in Bury St Edmunds was derived from revenues in Whepstead.

Petronilla is an early Christian saint who died in Rome at the end of the 1st century. Her true identity is a bit of a mystery: it's thought her first name was Aurelia; that she was St Peter's daughter; that she was a convert of St Peter (his "spiritual daughter"); or St Peter cured her of palsy.

It's said she was so beautiful that St Peter locked her in a tower to keep her from eligible men including a pagan king Flaccus. Afraid of marriage Petronilla went on a hunger strike from which she died. Her remains are entombed in St Peter's Basilica in the Vatican.

In the 17th century, on the same night Oliver Cromwell died, the church lost its spire. Inside are beautiful stained glass windows and a rood loft stairway built into the window bay.



The church's longest serving vicar was Reverend Thomas Image (1798-1856); his portrait is in the vestry (sometimes locked) and the family tomb is in the churchyard. He added the slate roof, a gallery (later removed), re-ornamentation of the font (later disappeared), and stain glass in the east window.



Reverend Image helped the poor, lending money to repair and extend poorhouses. Driven by high infant mortality rates, he arranged for his son, a surgeon, to vaccinate the village children against Smallpox, 20 years before such vaccinations became compulsory.

He was also a keen fossil collector and in his collection was a sea turtle, found in Barnwell Cambridgeshire, and now at the Sedgwick Museum, Cambridge.



From the Church continue along the road passing the Tudor Barns on the right. At the junction with Bury Road turn left and follow the pavement. Before the Community Centre **B** turn right and follow the footpath through two metal gates. The Archery Club Ground is the other side of the fence.

At the bottom of the slope, cross the small wooden bridge and turn right. Follow the hedge line round the edge of the field to eventually pass between houses and the Methodist Church. At Rectory Road **2** turn left. You are now following a section of the Bury to Clare long distance footpath, (green discs). At the footpath **3**, turn right, up 3 steps, and keep following the Bury to Clare Walk through a tree belt all the way to Brockley Road (B1066) **4**.

Cross Brockley Road with care and continue following the Bury to Clare Walk, uneven in places, following the stream on your left.

Turn left across the wooden bridge **5**, leave the Bury to Clare Walk, and turn right downhill, crossing a wooden bridge at the bottom of the field. Follow the blue walk **5** back to the White Horse pub **A**.



The Manston Hall Walk

DISTANCE: 5 miles (8km)

DURATION: 2.5 hours approx.



Follow the Green Walk to **3**.

Continue along Rectory Road, which soon becomes Straight Road, and immediately after Hawkes Farm on the right, turn right onto the footpath **1**. Pass beside and then around the

back of farm buildings and with the large field on your left, head towards the row of poplar trees.

Continue along the footpath, following the field edge, and at a waymarker post **2**, turn right through trees to cross a stile and walk across a meadow (which sometimes has cattle), towards a gap in the trees, passing Manston Hall, an ancient Manor House, on the left.

Manston Hall is mentioned in the Domesday Book and held significant land holdings. The mid-16th century hall you see today is a thatched former manor house which has been extended and restored. In November 1876, its thatching became a press story: the owner refused to pay the thatcher his beer money (thatching was a thirsty business and it was customary to add the price of beer to the bill), so the thatcher took him to court and won!

At the end of the field, by the metal gate, cross the stile and join Tuffields Road. Turn right and follow the road. Just before the junction with Brockley Road, use the footpath **3** to cut the corner, cross over the road and join the footpath on the other side to avoid road walking. You'll soon meet a junction of paths.

Go straight through the hedge up 2 wooden steps and turn left. At the trees turn right and follow the footpath keeping the trees on your right. Continue until you cross a footbridge into Rushbottom Woods **4**. You now join a section of the Clare to Bury long distance path. Turn right, following the edge of the woods, keeping to the right at all times.

Just before Stone Cross Farm **5**, at the waymarker and by a wooden footbridge, turn right and keep on the Bury to Clare Walk crossing the field to a large oak. Continue following the waymarkers, eventually turning sharp right to cross a field. At the end of the field bear left to reach a wooden footbridge **5**.

Before the bridge, turn left and follow the path downhill to cross the wooden footbridge. Follow the blue walk **5** back to the White Horse pub **A**.

