



Snipe Walk 9

The Vanished Village Walk

8.5 miles (13.5 km)

A longer walk, taking you to the lost medieval village of Fulbrook, once the site of the Duke of Bedford's castle, built circa 1400 but a ruin by 1478. The materials from the castle were later used to build the beautiful nearby mansion of Compton Wynyates. The ridge and furrow pastures are almost all that remain of the medieval strip fields that once supported a village here.

You will pass the clear remains of an ancient moat on the site of a now vanished manor house and evidence of a medieval mill. Fulbrook was one of the many villages almost destroyed by the Black Death in the 14th century but doubly unfortunate in that the surviving tenants were later forcibly evicted by the Duke of Bedford so the land could be enclosed as a deer park for hunting.

The walk is mainly through fields, passing several lovely typical red-brick Warwickshire farmhouses, but there are also short stretches on minor roads. A couple of major roads also need to be crossed. The walk can be shortened by parking a car near to point 3 on Heath End.

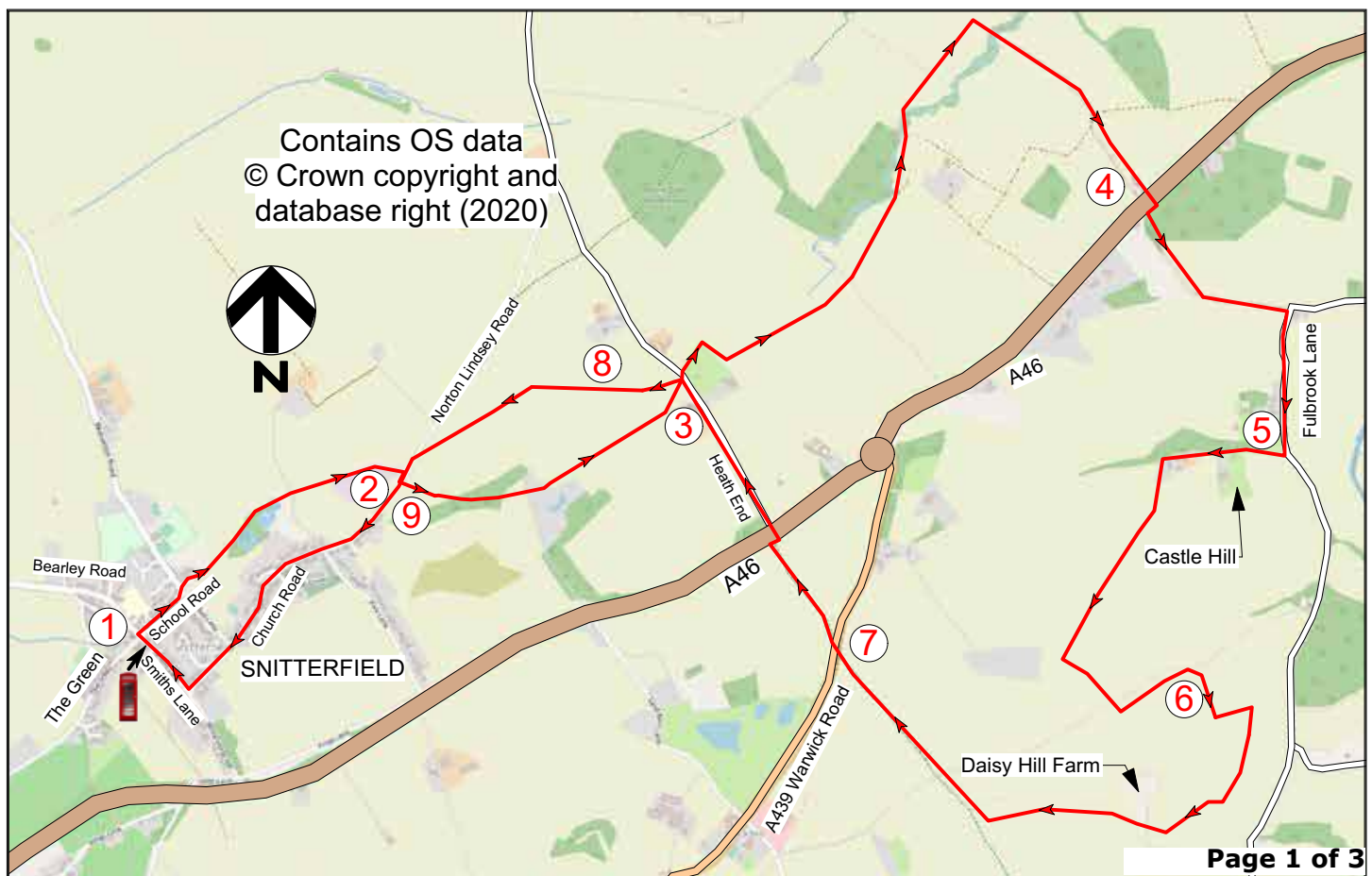
Start at telephone box near the crossroads of The Green, Smith's Lane, Bearley Road and School Road.

1 Turn right down School Road and continue until you reach a sharp bend to the left. Cross the road and turn right into Brookside. At the end of the lane,

passing a pretty half-timbered cottage, continue down a pedestrian track (this can be muddy after wet weather) and go through a rickety gate. Continue in the same direction across a ridge and furrow field, with Bell Brook to your right.

At the end of the field you will come to two gates. Take the metal gate in front of you and go over a small bridge to take a footpath along the side of a large pond. There are lovely views here across the water, with a variety of wild fowl to be seen. At the end of the path cross a bridge to reach a farm track. Pause here to look left at a lovely view up the hill over farmland. Turn right onto the track and then almost immediately left at a clear waymarked post. Follow the path down the edge of the field with the treeline on your left. At the end of the field keep on the same line to follow a track with the brook on your left and the Severn Trent works on your right.

2 Emerge from this track onto the Norton Lindsey road by the entrance to the Severn Trent site. Turn right down the road, passing the Domestic Fowl Trust entrance. Almost immediately you will see a metal kissing gate on your left – go through this, along a track and over a stile into a field. Cross the field aiming for the corner, passing between two telegraph poles. Go over the stile and turn left down a track between trees. Walk until you reach a small bridge (ignore the mown path on the right) which you cross and go through a gate. Continue in the same direction on a tree-lined path which soon opens up to a field with views of Red Hill Christian Centre to the right.



Follow the path to the left to meet a rough farm road. Turn left and walk a few paces along it to reach a field. Head diagonally across the field towards the right hand corner. Go through a waymarked wooden kissing gate and through the next field, keeping the hedge on your right until you see a metal gate ahead. Go through the pedestrian gate to the side of a field gate and into the next field. Continue in the same direction with the hedge now on your left, passing a very beautiful dead tree on your right. Go through a metal kissing gate into the next field. You need to head for the far left corner of this field (the gate can just be seen). However, there is often temporary electric fencing in this field and a direct route may not be possible, although there is always a way round! Go through the waymarked metal kissing gate to emerge onto Heath End Lane.

3 Turn left, cross the bridge and turn immediately right over a waymarked stile. Go down the right edge of the field to the corner where you go over a partially hidden wooden stile, a concrete bridge and a second stile to reach a field. Follow the right boundary, with the hedge on your right, for about 50 metres. Look out for a partially hidden double stile and bridge over the ditch in the hedgerow. Cross it and go straight ahead into a field. Follow the field boundary around two edges, ignoring the gate ahead, keeping the hedgeline and brook on your right. Eventually you will see a large gate opening ahead in the far field boundary. Before you reach it, veer right to the field corner to cross a concrete railed bridge. Go straight on down a narrow field to its end and through a (usually open) metal gate onto a track.

After 50 metres go through a (usually open) wooden gate and into a field. Keep the hedgerow on your right until, about half way down the field, you see a wooden farm gate on the right. DO NOT go through this but, instead, before you reach it cross the field to the opposite side - heading for a gap in the far hedgerow. Go through a metal gate and across a concrete bridge over the brook. Emerge in a field and veer right to walk up the field, keeping the treeline and brook on your right until you are half way up the field. Then head for a gap in the far left corner. Go through a (usually open) wooden gate and straight on through the next field, passing another beautiful dead tree on your left. Head for a (usually open) metal gate in the far boundary.

Go through the metal gate and turn right, passing through two wooden posts. Go straight on to go over a waymarked wooden stile to the right of a metal gate. Cross a bridge and go straight on (ignoring a route to the left) down a long track with the hedgeline on your right and eventually fields to your left. Keep on in the same direction for 500 metres then cross a small wooden bridge in a gap in the hedge. Veer right, walking uphill and keeping the hedgeline on your right. Go straight on to the end of the field to find a waymarked stile ahead of you. Cross it and go down steps to reach the A46.

4 Cross the A46 onto the central reservation and then to the far side (close to the Stratford Park and Ride sign). Continue straight on following a track to the left of a house, keeping the house's fence to your right. Almost at the end of the fence, fork

right down a narrow track, heading downhill to a field. Bear right with the hedgerow on your right. Sherbourne church is visible on your left. At the end of the field, immediately after where the path bears right, turn left over a wire stile into a field with the ditch and field boundary to your left. Go through the field and cross a double wire stile to go straight on through another field (still keeping the ditch on your left) towards a red brick house ahead. Cross another wire stile and go through a pedestrian wooden gate ahead to reach Fulbrook Lane.

Turn right along the lane. On your left, beyond the hedge, there is little to see except fields but it is here that the medieval village cottages are thought to have stood, now long demolished. Continue along the lane and as you reach the bottom of a hill, just where the telegraph poles cross the lane by a rough layby, look through a gate on your right. In this field you will see evidence of ridge and furrow (the medieval strip fields) and on the far side the remains



Fulbrook moats on a detail from 1886 Ordnance Survey Map

of a medieval moat. It was here that it is thought a moated manor house once stood. A second moat is hidden beyond. Pass Court Farm House and Court Farm Barn on the right. Before you cross the bridge look left - here once stood the village church.

5 Cross the bridge and turn immediately right down a tarmac drive marked 'Private Drive Castle Farm ...'. Continue down the drive, passing Castle Hill, a large modern barn conversion. On the hill once stood Fulbrook Castle. There is nothing remaining above ground but aerial photographs of cropmarks clearly show a quadrangular castle with a central courtyard



Cropmarks on an aerial photograph taken in June 1990 show the position of Fulbrook Castle. Crown copyright Historic England Archive

- even rooms and corridors can be identified. Cropmarks appear as light and dark marks. These relate to the differences in the soil below, caused by underground features such as walls. For example, parched lines of grass can

indicate the stone walls beneath as there is less moisture in the shallow soil.

Beyond Castle Hill look right as you continue along this drive: beyond the brook here once stood a medieval watermill, which was owned by a small nunnery in nearby Pinley. The area is overgrown but if you look carefully, opposite the metal silos by an open barn, you can see the remains of a dam and stone walls on the brook, which are thought to be what is left of a Medieval sluice. Local poet Mark Bullock has written a poem about Fulbrook, which honours the lost villages of Warwickshire. An excerpt is in the box below.

Continue past Bard's Barns and Castle Farm. After Castle Farm the track leads into a field where you turn left (ignore waymark sign), keeping the hedgerow on your left. Ignore a track leading off to the left that you pass fairly soon and keep straight on for about 300 metres. Where the field edge bears right do not follow it but look to your left to go over a partially hidden bridge and through a kissing gate. If you reach a telegraph pole you have missed it. Continue across

the field in the same direction towards a gate in the hedgeline ahead. It is to the left of the telegraph poles and to the left of a concrete water trough. Go through into a ridge and furrow field and continue in the same direction with the hedge on your right. Ignore a pedestrian gate on your right and continue uphill to the top of the field. DO NOT go through the metal gates ahead but turn left along the field boundary keeping the hedge on your right. Go through a kissing gate in the corner of the field and carry on into the next field in the same direction with the hedgeline on your right. At the end of this field follow a waymarked post to the left, keeping the hedgeline on your right. Keep going to the end of the field.

6 At the end of the field do not go down a slope to a gate but go straight ahead into a slightly overgrown copse. Turn right over a gated bridge. Go straight ahead, slightly uphill with the hedge on your left. Daisy Hill Farm is visible to your right. After 200 metres keep a look out for a slightly hidden wooden waymarked stile on your left. Cross it and go straight ahead in the next field, with the treeline and good views to your left.

When nearly at the brow of the hill turn right to cross the middle of the field, heading for the right boundary. Head for the right-hand gate of the two ahead: a large metal farm gate with a waymarked wooden stile to its right. Cross the stile and go straight ahead in the next field with the hedgeline on your left. Continue uphill, bearing right to go through a waymarked metal pedestrian gate in the wire fence. There are fine views behind you of Sherbourne church and Warwick on the horizon. Head diagonally right towards a metal gate in a gap in the hedgeline. Daisy Hill Farm is on your right. Go through the gate, cross a tarmac drive and continue through another (waymarked) metal gate.

*The mills are gone,
the sluices silted that fed the wheels
that turned bread
from dead stones spinning
to alms for the poor nuns of Pinley.
The full brook flows now
to no purpose but its own.
of the village all is gone
but the ghost of its memory,
the dressed stones stolen,
re-used unlike the people,
who scattered to the four winds*

Head straight on across a small field to go through another pedestrian gate into a large field. Keep straight on with a wire fence on your right. Go through a metal pedestrian gate at the end of the wire fence into a field. Turn left and head downhill with the hedgeline on your left, soon going through a farm gate (usually open) with wooden pedestrian gate to its left. Keep straight on in a large field, heading downhill until you reach a waymarked wooden stile. Cross it and go straight on uphill with the hedgeline on your left. Where the hedgeline turns sharp left at a waymarked post, stop and look right. Turn right across the field heading towards a waymarked post at the end of a hedge on the opposite side of the field. Walk to the left of the waymarked post, heading uphill with the hedge on your right. At the end of the field go through a gap in the hedgeline ahead to reach the Warwick Road (A439).

7 Turn right to walk along the verge for a few paces before crossing the road to go through a gap in the hedge just before the triple chevron signs. Go through the gap (gate is usually open) and bear half right to go across the field towards the far tree line. The path here is usually clearly visible between two types of crop. Exit the field through a (usually open) farm gate to reach the A46. Turn right to walk a few metres along the verge before crossing the road to go down Heath End. Walk down the lane, eventually passing Oldhouse Farm on the left until you reach the Severn Trent Works on the right. Opposite is the metal kissing gate you came through on the outward journey. Go through it and follow the brook, keeping it on your right.

8 Go through a waymarked metal kissing gate and keep straight on in the same direction, still with the brook on your right. Veer to the right of a large metal farm gate to go through a waymarked kissing gate and keep the brook on your right. Carry on and go through another metal kissing gate to the right of a metal field gate. Keep on in the same direction between the brook and a hedge. When you are almost at the end turn right through a kissing gate, bridge and second gate. Turn left along a path with a metal fence on your right. Go through a metal kissing gate and continue in the same direction until you reach a metal gate to exit onto the Norton Lindsey Road.

9 Here you turn left, either to reach the Severn Trent works entrance where you can retrace your steps cross country, or, for a circular walk, continue along the road, passing Pigeon Green, Jago Green and later St James the Great church on your left. Walk down Church Road until you reach Stocks Green, a triangular junction with a horsechestnut tree where the village stocks once stood. Turn right here onto Smith's Lane to soon reach your starting point at the telephone box.

If you would like to read more about the lost village see Snipe magazine, issue 55, available on Snitterfield Parish Council website.