

## LOCAL INTEREST

### Buildings of particular interest on walk through Barnack

- ♦ Almshouses, dating from the 15<sup>th</sup> century, opposite the Millstone Inn.
- ♦ Row of former Maltings, straight ahead at the road junction on approach to Main Street.
- ♦ Old butchers' shop, with tiled panels at the front, on the right in the square.
- ♦ Old bakehouse, on the next corner.
- ♦ Kingsley House, the former rectory, at the corner of Bishop's Road. Charles Kingsley, author of *The Water Babies*, lived there as a child, 1824-32, when his father was rector.

### John Clare and Southorpe

In 1820, when he was 27, John Clare, the Helpston poet, met a Southorpe girl called Betty Sell at Stamford fair and used to visit her. Their friendship ended because his other girlfriend, Patty, who lived at Tickencote was "in a situation that only marriage could remedy".

### Southorpe

Until recently, Southorpe was little more than a string of farms and labourers' cottages. It had a school but no church or shop or public house.

### Limestone boulders

They appear to have dropped off the back of a lorry! Barnack Rag was quarried at the Hills and Holes from Roman times. The huge stones were taken on carts or sleds pulled by horses or oxen to Wansford where they were transferred to boats on the River Nene. The stone was used to build cathedrals, including Peterborough and Ely and some of the colleges at Cambridge.

### Southorpe Meadow

It is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) because it is one of the few remaining hay meadows with many wild flowers in spring and summer. Clearly visible ridges and furrows show that it was ploughed in the middle ages.

### Southorpe Paddock

Another SSSI of particular significance to botanists; it is a fragment of unimproved limestone and wetland grassland.

### Southorpe Heath

When John Clare was a young man a "heath" was a limestone grassland, grazed by the villagers' livestock. He used to spend Sundays and summer evenings on Southorpe heath with the gypsies and they taught him to play the fiddle.

### Walcot Hall

The Barnack quarries were re-opened to provide the stone for the building in the 1670s and the roofing slates came from Collyweston. The outer wall round the gardens dates from the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Its trees are of particular interest, some planted by Henry Nevile in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century. Three generations of the Dearden family who lived there from 1891 also planted trees. During the war the Operations Room of the US Eighth Army Air Force was based at Walcot.

### Hills and Holes

The limestone was deposited about 150 million years ago in the Jurassic geological period. Quarrying ceased in the 16<sup>th</sup> century and the pits and spoil heaps were colonised by plants. The area was grazed until the 1940s. Then the whole area became overgrown by trees and scrub. These are now managed by Natural England and sheep are grazed there in autumn to eat the coarser grasses and encourage the growth of 250 species of wild plants. It is particularly famous for the pasque flowers and 9 varieties of orchid. There are 28 butterfly species including the marbled white.



*Limestone boulders in Southorpe*



## John Clare Country Heath, Hills and Holes



*Southorpe Heath*

One in a series of circular walks issued by Parishes in Barnack Ward

## HEATH, HILLS AND HOLES

**Start and finish:** Barnack, Millstone Inn, tel. 01780 740296. Refreshments.

**Position:** about 4 miles from Stamford and 12 miles from Peterborough.

**Parking:** Roadside in Barnack, off road at Hills and Holes or at Ufford Bridge.

**Bus service:** hourly from Peterborough and Stamford.

**Distance:** 4 miles.

**Time:** about 1 ¾ hours.

OS map: 234 Explorer, 1:25,000.

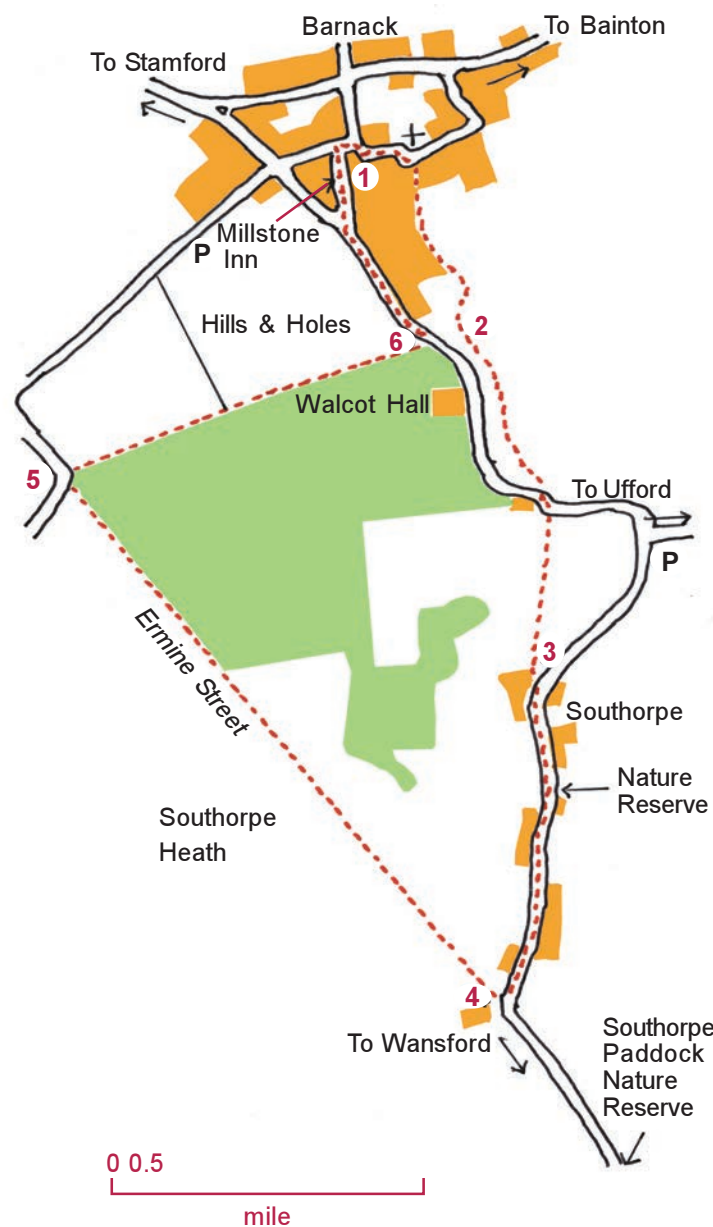
### THE WALK

**1** Leaving the Millstone Inn, turn left down Millstone Lane, then right into Main Street, noting the attractive stone buildings. Bear right in the square and continue round the bends, passing Bishop's Road. Opposite Barnack church, take the footpath to the right of the post office. Walk between the ivy covered walls to the finger post at the end of the path. Follow the direction of the "Footpath" sign, keeping the cricket field wall on the right. Continue behind the bowling green.

**2** Go through the kissing gate into the grass field and, keeping the hedge on the left, head for the wooden post. Follow the direction of the arrow to the white kissing gate opposite the cottages. Cross the road and take the footpath across the arable field in the direction of Southorpe. The path is usually clearly marked. If not, aim for the farm buildings in the trees.

**3** Cross the stile and take the footway through Southorpe village, pausing to look at the 2 lumps of limestone on the right by the telephone box. Then cross over the road by the signpost to Southorpe Meadow Nature Reserve. Continue through the village, carrying on if desired over the old bridge to visit Southorpe Paddock.

**4** Look for the public bridleway sign just before the last farm, and go through the gate into the grass field. Keeping the wall to the left, head for



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the gateway. The arrow on the post shows the direction over the next grass field. Aim for the far corner where there is an ash tree beside the gate. This straight section is part of the old Roman road, Ermine Street.

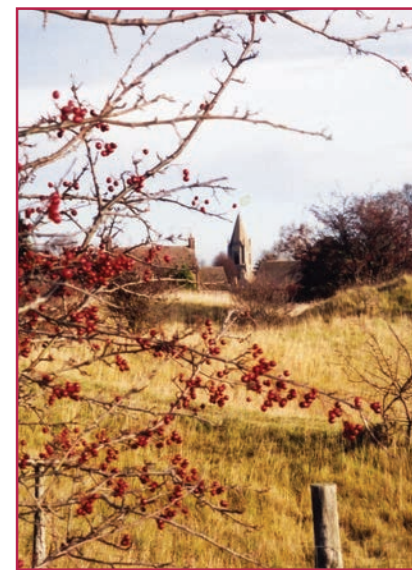
Continue, with an arable field to the left and a hedge or wall on the right until the path is joined by a hard track and then the Walcot wall comes into view. At this point you may hear the noise of planes from Wittering and traffic on the A1. Keep the Walcot wall on the right and pause to look at Walcot Hall in the distance at the end of an avenue of lime trees.

**5** Soon after, go through the white gate and turn right on to the footpath, still keeping Walcot wall on the right and an arable field on the left, to the gate into Hills and Holes.

This route is designed to keep the best until last! You may decide to spend some time exploring the Hills and Holes. The board at this entrance shows a "Limestone Walk" but there are many other paths. Other information boards give details of the flora and fauna.

If you prefer to continue the walk, keep Walcot wall on the right as far as the gate opposite the cricket field.

**6** Turn left and head along the footway towards Barnack. Cross Saxon Road and take the right fork into Millstone Lane.



Barnack Church from Hills & Holes