

EWERBY & HAVERHOLME LOCK FROM FERRY FARM BRIDGE

We begin this walk at Ferry Farm Bridge named on some old maps as “Halfpenny Bridge” and also known locally as “Ha’penny Hatch” [A]. There are two conflicting versions of how these names came about. The first is that the “halfpenny” relates to the passenger charge here in the days when there was a ferry, and later a tollbridge. The second tells that local children were paid a halfpenny to jump onto boatloads of hay, their weight flattening it sufficiently to prevent it catching here and at Town Bridge in South Kyme.

Near to where the walk leaves the navigation to head for Ewerby is Appletreeness – the “Headland near the Apple Tree” [B] - though the name does not appear on OS maps. This was originally the terminus of the Kyme Eau, a tidal, though navigable channel that stretched from here to the River Witham. As a commercial waterway it preceded the Sleaford Navigation by several centuries, for it certainly existed before the year 1343 when there was a petition to King Edward III from Gilbert de Umfraville for the right to charge tolls in return for dredging, delineating and maintaining the channel. We also know that building materials for Tattershall Castle, begun in 1434, were transported on the waterway.

St. Andrew’s church in Ewerby [C] is one of a local group distinguished by their design of tower surmounted by a broach spire – that is to say one meeting flush with the tower edges and having no parapet – and this one is particularly impressive, rising to a total height of 172 feet. On the green nearby stands the village cross, for this was once a small market town. Ewerby was also part of the Haverholme estate and retains its connections with the former owners in several ways. Inside St. Andrew’s is a monument to the one of the Finch-Hattons, the 12<sup>th</sup> Earl of Winchelsea, and the village inn also retains the family name.

In the shallow valley to the north stands Haverholme, [D] the “island between two rivers” of the “Old” and “New” Sleas. It was here that Cistercian monks from Fountains Abbey in Yorkshire, who had been given the land by Bishop Alexander, founded a priory in 1137. However they soon found the swampy low-lying land unhealthy and not to their liking and within two years had moved on to Louth Park. In 1139 the site was then offered to Gilbert of Sempringham to establish a Gilbertine priory. The Gilbertines were unique in being the only monastic order founded in England and also in admitting both monks and nuns. Being a small and impoverished order they could not therefore afford to be so choosy. Despite some complaints and being only a small community, they remained here until the Dissolution in 1538.

The priory then passed, as a private residential property, through various ownerships during the next two and a half centuries. It was much extended, particularly by Sir Jenison Gordon in 1788, before coming into the possession of the Finch-Hatton family, the Earls of Winchelsea. They too altered the house, most significantly in 1835, going on to hold the property until the 1920’s when, having fallen on hard times financially, they were forced to sell up. The family included several eccentric members, one of whom fought a duel with the Duke of Wellington and another who kept a tame lion on the drawing room sofa. (Though the beast was eventually dispatched to London Zoo!) Another lived in Kenya for several years around the end of WWI and became involved with Karen Von Blixen during the period in her life of which she later wrote in her book “Out of Africa”, subsequently a well-known film. Our walk passes through part of the former deer park. Following the sale, all the deer were killed on Boxing Day 1926 and the house was demolished in 1927, but for the surviving tower, the balustraded terrace and parts of the walled garden that we see today.

We rejoin the navigation at the elegantly arched Haverholme Bridge. [E] This dates from 1893 and bears the arms of the Earl of Winchelsea to acknowledge the fact that he agreed to fund the extra cost when the local authority would only pay for a simple bridge. Because a parish boundary runs along the river here half the bridge is in Ewerby and half in Ruskington. A few yards upstream is Haverholme Lock, where a new footbridge and bywash have been installed by the Sleaford Navigation Trust. With a rise of nearly ten feet this was the deepest lock out of the seven on the Sleaford Navigation and for a while, after the navigation ceased operating, it was roofed over by the owners of Haverholme Priory for use as a boathouse. The old pump machinery beside the lock was driven by a water turbine and supplied water to the house.

Cobblers Lock [F], eight miles from the River Witham, is the current head of navigation where full length narrow boats can turn. When in operation, the rise was 7 feet 6 inches. A few yards away the Old River Sleas has its confluence with the “New Sleas” that had, once straightened and widened, become the Sleaford Navigation. Half a mile further on we pass Appletreeness again as we head back to Ferry Farm Bridge.

## EWERBY, HAVERHOLME LOCK FROM FERRY FARM BRIDGE.

START: Ferry Farm Bridge (near South Kyme) (Grid Ref. 152502)

DISTANCE: 7¼ miles (12.5 kilometres)

MAPS : OS Landrangers 121 (Lincoln) and 130 (Grantham) Explorer 261

REFRESHMENTS: Hume Arms, South Kyme. Finch Hatton Arms, Ewerby.  
Stores & PO in Anwick.

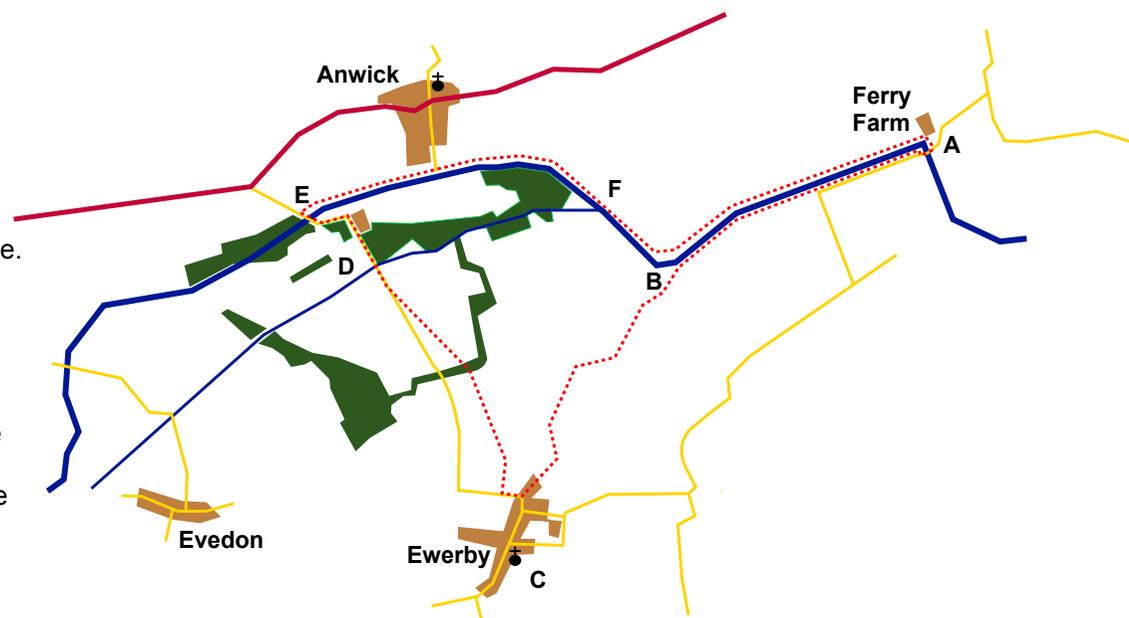
PICNICS: Haverholme Lock, Cobblers Lock, embankment at Ferry Farm Bridge.

TERRAIN: Grass paths by the navigation, field headlands, roads and some arable fields.

NOTES : There is limited roadside parking at Ferry Bridge but more space is available half a mile away at the bend in the lane at GR153499, which is on the walk. The route is well waymarked though after rain it may be muddy approaching Ewerby. Also between Ewerby and Haverholme a mile of the route is over arable land, but if conditions are poor underfoot (or if walkers simply prefer) the road provides a good alternative.

### ROUTE INSTRUCTIONS.

- (1) Leave Ferry Farm Bridge along the south embankment of the Sleaford Navigation with a road below on your left. When the road bends left stay on the embankment for a further half a mile to a waymark, at a point where the navigation begins to swing right towards woods.
- (2) Bear left here onto a grass track that soon comes alongside a dyke. Cross the dyke at a bridge and then immediately turn right along a field edge, heading towards Ewerby church seen ahead. From a footbridge and waymark keep half right along the edge of the next field to another waymark. Now bear left by a stream and, heading for Ewerby church once again, join a track heading uphill into Field Lane and its junction with Main Street in Ewerby village. (Keep ahead 300 yards for the church and inn.)
- (3) Otherwise bear right for 200 yards to a two-way footpath sign and footbridge on the right. Walk straight out over the field (the right-hand path of the two) aiming just right of a distant farm and towards a waymark in the hedge ahead. After the hedge bear half left to a nearby footbridge then keep directly ahead towards the middle point of distant woods. Another footbridge soon comes into view confirming the correct line.



- (4) On reaching the trees walk through them to another footbridge at the far side and bear slightly left to meet a farm track. Cross it and keep forward, now heading for a point between The Lodge (a cottage) and Haverholme Priory ruins, both seen ahead. Join the road at a footpath sign and turn right for half a mile to reach Haverholme Bridge.
- (5) (To see Haverholme Lock go along the short footpath from the car park. Return or cross the lock footbridge and come back on the opposite bank)
- (6) Cross Haverholme Bridge and turn right alongside the navigation. (In half a mile the lane on the left leads into Anwick.) At Cobblers Lock you will need to turn left just beyond the lock itself in order to cross the bywash channel and resume walking by the navigation.
- (7) It is now two miles back to Ferry Farm. Just before the house, by-pass a wire fence and, staying by the water's edge, pass the front of the house to join the road through a gap in a high hedge. Turn right onto Ferry Farm Bridge.