

Louth & Hallington

Start:	<i>St. James Church, Louth</i>
Nearest Post Code:	<i>LN11 9YE</i>
Grid Ref	<i>TF326873</i>
what3words	<i>life.shorts.bets</i>
Refreshments	<i>Numerous options in Louth, Crowtree Café on Crowtree Lane (point F).</i>
Getting there:	<i>Stagecoach bus routes from Lincoln, Grimsby, Horncastle, Mablethorpe etc. Car parking around the town.</i>
Distance:	<i>4 miles / 6.4 km. Can be extended to 5.4 miles / 8.7 km</i>
Route Description:	<i>An easy walk from the town of Louth, into the Lincolnshire Wolds. Some easy climbs and a busy crossing of the A16 (Louth bypass).</i>

The Walk

Start at St. James Church and walk into Westgate .

The church is mainly 15th century, replacing earlier 12th and 13th century structures, with the spire being completed in 1515.

Westgate has many fine Georgian properties, and these replaced equally grand two-storey mud & stud houses that stood along the street in the 1500s. Here, from medieval times lived the landed gentry and wealthy merchants with interests in the wool trade. It was largely their money that contributed to the construction costs of St James 'built on wool money' as the saying goes.

The 17th century Wheatsheaf public house on the right is one of a very small number of surviving pre-18th century buildings in Louth and its shape – two low storeys with steep pantile roofs and rendered walls – may give some insight into the scale and form of the town's earlier properties.

At the end of Westgate, enter Westgate fields and follow the path that runs its length.

In the 19th century this area was originally separate fields and the old boundaries can be seen as overgrown hedges running down to the river. Louth Corporation, as it was then, purchased Westgate Fields for public use in the 1930s, following the landowner's death.

Leaving Westgate fields at the far end, turn right (Crowtree Café is opposite) and follow the road passing the old Mill House. You can see the dried-up mill leat down to your right. It was once a water-powered corn mill, but ceased operations after the disastrous Louth Flood of 1920. Cross the footbridge and look down to see where the mill leat now diverts to join Hallington Beck. A little further towards Louth, the Beck merges with Welton Beck to become the River Lud.

Continuing to the car park at Dog Kennel Farm. This was built around 1826 and was one of 4 kennels used for the newly-formed South Wold hunt. Walk through the car park and the gate beyond to enter a field at the back of the farm and following the path to reach the Louth Bypass, which you cross with extreme care, climbing the steps on the far side.

Follow the field-edge path initially left, then right, boundary right, climbing slightly then descending to a junction of paths and tracks; here, you have a choice [A]. For the shorter walk, turn left and walk, hedge right, to a gate. Beyond, go half-right to reach a lane. Cross, and walk ahead down the field, keeping the cottage to your right – Do not follow the driveway to the property. This bridleway is easy to see in summer with crops in the field – in winter it's a mess of tractor tracks. Cross a footbridge and continue to climb an old railway embankment (more of that later), then beyond a plantation you reach a causeway spanning two lakes. It's always worth pausing here to see what wildlife is around. On the far side, climb the bank and beyond the gate, turn left [D]. The longer route joins here.

For the longer walk, from [A], take the signed path ahead, following the field edge and climbing to reach a cross-track. Go ahead across the next field (fine views from here) to the far side where you access a lane [B]. Go left, walking downhill and keeping right at a junction, then right again to a further junction with Home Farm on the left. Just beyond the farm drive, there is a permissive path on the left. Go through the gate and walk to the top far corner of this old orchard. Go through the field gate ahead into a paddock, then walk to the top left corner. Here, another field gate gives access to a grassy strip going left between paddocks, towards stables. On reaching them, go right, through a gate into what's usually an extremely muddy

field. Follow the left boundary to a stile in the top corner of the field. Once over, you are standing on the track bed of the Louth to Bardney railway, with Hallington station to your right [C].

The Louth & Lincoln Railway to Bardney opened in 1876 with Hallington station being the first stop west of Louth. Through services to Lincoln were soon abandoned and passengers had to change trains at Bardney to continue their journey. The hoped-for freight income didn't materialise and the Great Northern took over the services in 1881. It was never a money-spinner and the line closed to passengers in 1951 with freight following a few years later.

Beyond the track bed, head out across the, going through a gate on the far boundary. Now go half-left, crossing uneven ground (there are extensive earthworks in this field, but it is not marked as the site of a medieval village) to reach a footbridge. Cross, and climb to a gate and the field edge beyond. Walk left alongside the field, boundary left (don't follow the lower path), eventually reaching a path junction [D]. The shorter route joins here.

Continue following the field edge for a short distance, then at a finger post, go left, crossing the railway again, then following a wooded path, then a field edge, to reach a water-management structure.

This is the Louth flood alleviation scheme. It cost £6.5m and took 2 years to complete, opening in 2017 and protecting the town from the floods that happened periodically. In times of heavy rain, the sluice gates are closed and the floodwater allowed to back up and settle on the field away to your left. The whitewashed house in the distance had a new, protective stone wall constructed, should the water reach that level!

Follow the path alongside the fence to reach the road and go right, under the bypass, then enter Hubbard's hills on the left [E]. You can follow the tarmac path ahead through the valley, but I prefer the higher path, especially in winter when there are no leaves on the trees obstructing the view. To reach this, take the steps, going left at the top.

Hubbard's Hills was purchased in 1906 for £2025 – that's around £160,000 today. Following a number of improvements to the park, including the building of the memorial to the benefactor, Hubbard's Hills was presented to the people of Louth on August 1st 1907. The Name 'Hubbard's Hills' is a misnomer. The hilltop along which you are walking is 'Hubbard's Hill', named after a local tenant farmer Alexander Hubbard who died at the end of the 18th century. On the western side of the valley is 'Fisher's Hill', named after another tenant farmer. The valley in between is called 'Hubbard's Valley' on early editions of the Ordnance Survey maps and through it runs either Hallington Beck, or the infant River Lud (depending on which Ordnance Survey map you look at).

The path eventually reaches the road by the Old Mill House – your outward route. Re-join the road (Crowtree Lane) and go right, along the road, passing Westgate fields to your left and Crowtree Café left [F]. Continue to reach the start of the pavement, then follow the road to its end, passing the buildings of King Edward VI Grammar School on the left [G]. Cross to Gospelgate, walk a few yards then go left, into Schoolhouse Lane.

On the corner are almshouses, known as the Bedehouses and beyond, another part of King Edward VI Grammar School (the school has a number of sites around the locality). Both are dated 1869, when the site was rebuilt. the school and Bedehouses originally being under one roof from 1766, the boys in the upper part, with twelve women of the Bedehouses living below. The old wall on the left is probably the most celebrated in Louth, being remembered by the poet Tennyson when he attended the School between 1816 (aged seven) and 1819: "How I did hate that school! The only good I ever got from it was the memory of an old wall covered with wild weeds opposite the school windows."

Continue on, going right into Westgate where the church comes into view – your starting point.

