

North Rauceby and Sleaford

Start:	High Wood car park, Church Lane, North Rauceby
Nearest Post Code:	NG34 8QT
Grid Ref	TF009461
what3words	seagulls.zoos.making
Refreshments	The Bustard Inn, South Rauceby near walk end.
Getting there:	North Rauceby lies 4 miles to the west of Sleaford, just south of the A17. Church lane is a right turn off the B6403 when driving north from Ancaster.
Distance:	7.5 miles / 12km
Route Description:	A pleasant, easy walk following field tracks and paths with some quiet lanes. Note there are two busy crossings of the A15. Much of this route is a popular walk from the centre of Sleaford, however, for walkers wanting to avoid the town, this start-point with free parking is a useful alternative.

The Walk

From the Woodland Trust car park, you need to follow the road left, into North Rauceby. However, a useful tree-lined path runs through the wood parallel to the road – a pleasant alternative. This is accessed from the left corner of the car park (as you face the road). Follow this as far as you can, going right at the corner of the wood to reach the road, then continue left to reach North Rauceby village [A].

Turn right and cross to the pavement, then walk a short distance to climb a stile on the left. Follow the cross-field path to reach a boundary corner, then continue, boundary right to the far corner of the field. Pick up the boundary of the next field and walk just a short distance before passing through the hedge to reach another cross-field path. Follow this to reach the field edge where you turn right, ignoring the footbridge ahead. In a few yards, turn left onto a track – Drove Lane [B].

This is a route of great antiquity that once linked Sleaford with North Rauceby. It is interesting to note that although well-used, it doesn't appear on the map as a Public Right of Way. This omission is being remedied however, as Ramblers have applied to have the route added to the Definitive Map as a Public Bridleway. The application was submitted in January 2022. Wonder how long that will take to be processed? (Still waiting – August 2026.)

Follow the lane for around 10 minutes to reach a finger post on the right directing you diagonally across the field, aiming to the left of the line of trees on the far boundary. Cross into the following field, then walk right, boundary right, going left at the corner of the field [C]. Continue to a path junction where you go right, following a path between the two fields and heading for the clump of trees. Here, a track leads you to a lane where you turn left. Continue to reach the busy A15, cross with great care to a path that leads through bushes to a track – Drove Lane again. Follow this to reach a bridge crossing the railway.

Just beyond the bridge, a surfaced path goes right, take this, walking with a ditch to your left, crossing a residential road and continuing to reach the River Slea. Turn right, the few seats here make a handy mid-point stop.

The River Slea runs for 22 miles, rising southwest of Ancaster. In the 1870s, it was known for its pure water and was a renowned trout river, however, after Anglian Water took control of it in the 1960s, it rapidly degraded, due mostly to over-abstraction of its water for farming use. When this route was walked in July 2026, the river was dry from a point 100m west, with this section flowing due to water from nearby springs in Sleaford Fen.

You now follow the path with the river on your left for some distance, soon passing beneath the railway and shortly after, crossing the route of a disused railway. This is all that remains of the Sleaford to Cranwell railway [D]

This branch line connected Sleaford to the Royal Naval Air Station at Cranwell, where pilots and aircrew were trained during the First World war. The line opened in 1919, but the passenger service only ran until 1926. After the Second World War, the requirement for the branch declined further and it was closed in August 1956. You are standing on the site of the remote Slea River station, first stop after leaving Sleaford.

Eventually reaching the A15, follow the path right to the crossing point and once over, walk left to pick up the riverside path again. Continue for about a quarter-mile, then leave the river to follow the path across the field to a gap in the hedge, then continue to reach a farm. Bear right, crossing the yard and passing close to the disused limestone quarry, (and further right, more that 550,000 battery-housed chickens eke out their short life) from where the route climbs to the field edge [E]. Walk now, boundary left, to reach a farm track and here, jink left and right, then continue onwards, with the hedge now on

your right. Pass woodland on your right, then a short distance beyond reach another. Here, look for the waymarked path descending right, into the wood to reach a metal sculpture on the right [F].

The sculpture, entitled 'In the Field' represents the fields around the village of South Rauceby. It was created by Richard Farrington, a sculptor from Wiltshire.

Continue through the wood to emerge onto the estate driveway of Rauceby Hall, with its parkland ahead. Turn left, the driveway becoming a road – Pinfold Lane. Walk to its end and turn right at the t-junction, passing the entrance to Rauceby Hall on the right. Follow the pavement into South Rauceby, passing several notable buildings[G].

Rounding the bend, 'Sawyer's House' on the left was originally a late C18 barn, constructed of limestone rubble – now much altered. Notice the boot scrapers either side of the door – a once essential feature whose function in towns and villages has simply disappeared. The age of horse transport may seem very attractive from the perspective of today's traffic-polluted streets, but the inevitable equine fallout that went with it was rather less romantic. Towards the far end of the house is a type K6 telephone kiosk. Designed in 1935 by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. Both house and 'phone box are Grade 2 listed.

The Bustard Inn (also Grade 2 listed) is soon reached on the right. It was built in 1860, the date visible high on the gable. At the back (visible from Tom Lane) are the former brewhouse and stables built in the same year, but now much altered. It was built by the owners of the Rauceby Hall Estate to replace the Robin Hood Inn which was removed to make way for the new south gate entrance to Rauceby Hall Park. The Inn was so named as reputedly, the last Great Bustard in England was shot on Bustard Hill, which is sited behind the inn and is now known as Tom Lane.

Continue along the road, almost reaching the sharp left bend, where a finger post on the right directs you towards a gate with field beyond. Go diagonally left across the grass, but look right to see an early C19 5-storey tower mill, now converted to a dwelling. On reaching the far boundary, go right, walking with the trees on your left and passing the entrance driveway to Millfield House (once used as a Childrens' Home, but now in private ownership) [H]. Follow the property boundary round to the left, then strike out half-right across the parkland to reach a gate in the far corner. Go through and keep the hedge on your right for 300 yards where you go through a gate on the right. The grass driveway leads you to Glebe Farm, from where the drive is surfaced and you continue to the road, turning left.

You are on Church Lane again, retracing your outward route. You can continue along the road to the Woodland Trust car park, or go right, through the gate at the edge of the wood and return along the path to your transport.

