

# Findern - Willington Circular Walk

This walk commences in the village of FINDERN which is located 5 miles south west of Derby. Please park in the car park on Lower Green, next to the church.

The walk is 4 miles long (6.4 km) and takes a leisurely 2.5 hours. For a more detailed map you are recommended to refer to Ordnance Survey Explorer 259 (Derby) and 245 (The National Forests).

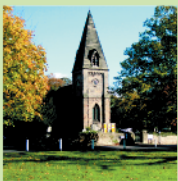
You will be walking through countryside which involves several stiles and fields with horses or cattle. This walk includes climbing a railway bridge with several steep steps.

Findern is a charming village. The pleasant traditional village green provides a centre to the village which has the local store on its edge and is of course overlooked by the parish church of All Saints. There are several white painted cottages close to the green which are thought to have been homes for velvet and silk weavers. During the mid 1800s silk weaving was a thriving local industry. In 1846 it is recorded that there were 22 looms in Findern. More recently this village has been affected by the building of the A50.



There is reference to Findern in the Domesday survey showing that it was part of the Manor of Mickleover under the ownership of the Abbot of Burton. The "Fyndene Flower", a type of daffodil, was thought to have been brought back by Sir Geoffrey de Fyndene from the crusades. The legend of this flower is that though the family name died out, in 1556, the flower will never become extinct. It's rumoured that some of these daffodils still exist locally.

All Saints Church was totally rebuilt in 1862-3 but contains a tympanum (decorative stone from over a door) from the original Norman church and an octagonal font from 1562. There is a monument to Isabella de Fynderne who died in 1444.



**1** Start your walk from the car park with All Saints Church behind you. Cross the quiet lane to head towards Chestnut Cottage opposite. Find the footpath beside this cottage. This takes you out of the village and across fields. Climb the stile and turn right through the field aiming for the left hand end of farm buildings. As the views open up, keep in line with the A50 road bridge. Climb the next three stiles which are close together and then walk up the steps to the road. Turn left and along the pavement over the road bridge.

**2** After the bridge turn left to follow the footpath as it winds down the hill, ignore the steps on your right. Follow the path all the way to Heath Lane. Cross the road carefully and continue along the Heath Lane pavement in the same direction. Continue along the track past Nadee Restaurant and go over the old road bridge, thereby crossing the Trent and Mersey Canal.



**3** Turn immediately right to walk along the canal towpath. Continue along under the canal bridge passing in front of Potlocks Farm.



The Trent and Mersey Canal had a dramatic effect on the growth of villages along its length. Willington village - like Shardlow further up the canal - became a small inland port. However with the railways arrival in the 1800s the canals gradually began to decline. For a period of time goods were transferred from the canal barges to the trains. Behind the hedge in the garden of Potlock Farm there are the remains of transhipment basins that would have been used to take goods off the barges on the canal before they were loaded on the trains. Today the canal provides a valuable habitat for wildlife, not only for common water birds such as Mallards, Coots and Moorhens, but also for dragonflies and frogs. Canal boating has in recent years become very popular and what was once a waterway to carry goods is now a way of life for many thousands of people or a unique holiday experience.



**4** Turn left approximately 100 metres after the footbridge to leave the canal and walk over to the railway bridge. Climb the steep steps taking time to survey the view.



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The railway bridge was assembled on site in 8 weeks, and opened to the public in February 2003. The ever-increasing speeds of trains, from 90mph to 125mph made replacing the level crossings essential.

**5** Follow the path which runs alongside the railway tracks for approximately 1/4 mile. At the playing field skirt around the right hand edge of the field. Turn right and walk along the pavement towards Willington village centre. Take care to cross the road on the straight section between Oaks Road and Hamilton Terrace.

**6** Walk underneath the railway bridge and through to the hustle and bustle of Willington. The Railway Station is on your left.

Take a moment to look at the new Willington Station which was opened in 1996. This replaced the previous one which was closed in the 1960s. When the railway originally arrived in 1838, the station was known as Repton and Willington as the village has always been slightly overshadowed by its more famous neighbour, Repton. Willington has a good selection of pubs and shops.



Cross carefully at the roundabout using the central reservation (opposite the Rising Sun Public House). Walk along the pavement with the Rising Sun PH on

your right. After 50 metres turn right on to the towpath at Willington wharf. This attractive area has plenty of seats to provide a welcome rest.



**7** Follow the towpath and after 1/4 mile, look out for a row of cottages on the opposite bank on the bend in the canal.



This attractive row of cottages were built to accommodate railway workers of the North Staffordshire Railway in 1904.

**8** Continue along the towpath, retracing your steps slightly, and then cross over the canal via the white footbridge. Travel along the boardwalk, turn right over a stile and head diagonally across the field (Potlocks Path) to another stile by the road. Beware of the traffic crossing the road and walking along the road verge. Continue along the pavement over the bridge. Cross the road at the bottom of the bridge taking advantage of the central reservation.



**9** Turn left and walk up into Findern Village passing the Wheel Public House, the white painted weavers cottages and through to The Green and back to All Saints Church and our starting point.

Jedediah Strutt of Belper and Milford Mill fame served his apprenticeship in Findern as a wheelwright. He had lodgings with a family of stocking makers and here he met his future wife Elizabeth, daughter of Thomas Woolatt. He went on to improve the stocking frame and become partner of Sir Richard Arkwright, who was engaged in cotton spinning. Together they established mills at Cromford, Belper and Milford. The partnership was dissolved in 1780, Strutt keeping the Belper and Milford mills.



South Derbyshire District Council gratefully acknowledges the assistance during the production of this walk, of Groundwork Derby & Derbyshire and the Findern Footpaths Group. [www.findernfootpathgroup.org](http://www.findernfootpathgroup.org)