

Alford & Rigsby

Start: Market Place in Alford (TF455760). There is free parking over the bridge at the rear of the South Street car park, and at the Millers Way car park (off East Street).

Distance: 8 miles.

Refreshments: Ice creams and cold drinks at the garden centre (near POINT F). Various possibilities in Alford and refreshments at the windmill (check opening times).

An easy walk from the ancient market town of Alford, (markets are held every Tuesday), out into the countryside with a gentle climb through woodland onto the Wolds. There are fine views as the route descends to the tiny village of Rigsby, then pleasant paths and tracks on the return leg. Allow about four hours.

The walk starts from the From Market Place. Turn left into West Street, passing the Manor House on the right.

The Manor House is Grade II listed, thought to be one of England's largest thatched Manor Houses. Recent research has dated the House to 1611.

Continue past the Half Moon pub on the left, then left into Chantry Road **POINT A**. Stay on this road almost to its end, and where you have views of open fields ahead, take the signed footpath right. Pass through a metal kissing gate and follow the field edge (watching where you tread as this has become a dog toilet), crossing a ditch to reach a path junction where you turn left, signed 'Mill Rundle Walk'. At the next footpath sign climb right, onto a disused railway embankment, route of the East Lincolnshire Railway **POINT B**. Walk left for a few yards, then descend right, through a kissing gate and follow the field path to a road. Turn right and walk into the village of Well.

Pass through the village and continue to a sharp right bend in the road. Here, go ahead through a kissing gate and follow the waymarked track beneath trees, ignoring all turnings. Eventually the track climbs and bears left **POINT C** look now for a waymark directing you right, over a cross-field path to join a track. Follow this, heading towards farm buildings. You'll soon be joined by friendly chickens belonging to the farm – Ulceby Grange, home to Lincolnshire Poacher cheese, milk, eggs etc. At a t-junction with the farmyard ahead, turn right, walking with a hedge left. Where this stops, continue a little further then climb a stile in the fence on the left **POINT D**. Cross the field to climb a further stile, then beyond this, continue to another by a field gate at the edge of a wood. In the wood, take the waymarked boundary path left and follow it to reach a road that you cross with care.

Walk down the driveway ahead, keeping left at outbuildings, then follow the field-edge path, hedge left. At a corner, a dogleg left and right will see you continuing in the same direction, hedge left. At the far end of the field, go right, then immediately left, the path again keeping to the left hedge. As the path descends, you have the unusual view of three distant wind farms – right to left, Skegness (offshore), Trusthorpe and Conisholm.

When you reach the road at Rigsby (an early Danish settlement – the village on the ridge), turn right and follow the road, passing a couple of houses before taking a driveway left, and passing the small church to the right. In a few yards climb a stile on the right, then head down the meadow, slightly left, to a stile at the bottom. Climb this and continue down to the bottom of the field, where, ignoring stiles left and right, climb the one ahead to reach a field edge in a few yards **POINT E**. Now strike out across the field (at the time of walking, this path was ploughed out), aiming for the right edge of distant woodland. This cross-field path brings you to a footbridge, cross, then follow the path, left initially, before bearing right towards the woodland, where at the corner you reach a lane. Turn right and follow the lane to a road, with garden centre left. Just before this, your route crosses for the second time, the course of the East Lincolnshire Railway **POINT F**.

The East Lincolnshire Railway was a main line railway linking the towns of Grimsby, Louth and Boston, thence on to London. It opened in 1848 and became part of the London and North Eastern Railway during the grouping of 1923, passing on to the Eastern Region of British Railways during the nationalisation of 1948. The line was closed to passengers in 1970.

Cross the road and climb the stile opposite, then follow the field path, ditch left, for just a few yards, before crossing a bridge and continuing, ditch right, to the bottom of the field. Go left for a short distance, cross the bridge at the footpath sign and turn left, following the field edge path, ditch left. Continue into the next field with Tothby Manor visible half-right. When you reach a corner **POINT G** a waymark post directs you right, across the field towards the manor. At the far side, you reach a moat, go left, then cross the moat to a stile. Climb this, then go half-right, passing a wooden building on your

left, to a further stile. Go over and walk through an old orchard, soon going half-left to climb a stile by a farm gate.

Walk right, down the farm drive, looking left to see the mill at Alford. If the sails are turning, you'll be in line for a cup of tea when you reach it! At a kink in the drive, climb the stile on the left and walk diagonally across the field to climb a stile in the far corner **POINT H**. Now walk, boundary right, to a metal kissing gate, pass through and continue diagonally across the field to go through another kissing gate and over a bridge. Ignore the footbridge left, but keep on in the same direction to the far corner of the field and through a wooden kissing gate. Walk ahead now, boundary right, to a gate with road beyond **POINT I**.

Here, you have a choice; back to your transport, or on, to the windmill. To miss out the mill, walk down this road to reach West Street. Turn left and retrace your steps either to the car park beyond the Market Place, or the one in Millers Way.

Walkers heading for the mill should shun the gate, but with your back to it, head to the top right corner of the field and a metal kissing gate. Go through and walk, boundary right to waymarks, directing you left, through a coppice and over a boardwalk, then right, into a further field. Walk ahead, boundary right to reach the road. Turn right and follow the pavement to reach Alford Mill.

This is the only windmill left in Alford; in 1932 there were three - each with different sets of sail (four, five and six). This remaining five-sailed mill was built in 1837.

The mill is over 30 metres high and has six floors. The mill worked until 1955, then after standing idle for two years it was restored to full working order and now is only one of three working mills in Lincolnshire. Its stone-ground flour is available from the well-stocked mill shop. There is also an adjacent teashop that uses the mill's products.

From here, it's a short walk on the same side of the road back into town, crossing to reach the Millers Way car park, or continuing, then turning left into South street and the car park located there.

