



Warwickshire & Coventry
Historic Churches Trust



The Dassett Hills Walk

This walk around the Dassett Hills is suggested as a part of the annual sponsored Ride & Stride organised by the Warwickshire & Coventry Historic Churches Trust

The money you collect from your sponsors is divided equally between the church nominated by yourself and the County Trust, who are then able to make grants to needy churches. Where we can recover Gift Aid, we will retain the full amount of this, enabling us to increase our grant giving further.

This ride will take in churches at **Burton Dassett, Avon Dassett** (Churches Conservation Trust), **Farnborough, Fenny Compton** and **Northend**. You will find it helpful to have with you a copy of the relevant 1:25,000 OS map (Explorer 206). It is suggested that the Dassett Hills car park would be a good starting point but you can begin anywhere you choose as it is a circular route. It is hoped that most churches will be open. Some may be closed, depending on the timing of your ride, but they still count as a visited church.

At **Burton Dassett** you'll find ancient carvings, including a Green Man who greets you as you enter the building. Medieval wall paintings, recently uncovered and a slope up to the Chancel almost as steep as the hill it is built into.

At **Fenny Compton** the oak door in the north porch shows traces of bullet holes made during the Civil Wars in the 17th Century.

Safety is vitally important on the Ride. This year we have included a Risk Assessment on the website, and we would ask you to read carefully this document and the text of the blue Sponsorship form before you set out and to follow the advice given. This is of particular importance if you are travelling in a group or have younger children in your party.

The majority of the churches on this route are usually open for the Ride & Stride event. However, a list of open churches will be available on our [website www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk](http://www.warwickshirechurches.org.uk) where you will also find the necessary Sponsorship Forms and other information about the Ride.

This lovely walk takes you from the very top of the Dassett Hills in the Burton Dassett Hills Country Park and through the nearby hamlets and villages of Northend, Fenny Compton, Farnborough, Avon Dassett and Burton Dassett. It's the nearest you will get in Warwickshire to wild country, with its bare hills reminiscent of the Peak District. The 100-acre (40ha) country park was opened in 1971, and is set high above the noisy M40 motorway, which didn't arrive until a couple of decades later. It comprises a dramatic mix of rugged, grassy humps and hills with a quaint, small beacon perched on the highest point. There are a number of quarries around the side of the hills which may date back as far as the Iron Age. Today they are covered in grass and offer welcome shelter for picnicking visitors. The view from the top of the hills is quite outstanding.

Initially the walk descends into Northend hamlet then field paths lead you into the village of Fenny Compton. Fenny is an unusual, but not infrequent, prefix in the Midlands and indicates the presence of wetland. The village lies below the Dassett Hills, which give rise to at least seven springs. It was to harness these, to supply around 40 consumers in the village, that one of England's smallest water supply companies was established in 1866.

You pass by several very attractive cottages to reach the impressive Church of St Peter and St Clare - only two churches in England carry this unusual dedication. When you visit the church take time to read about Elizabeth Croke whose body has lain in the churchyard since 1719.

The walk continues over Windmill Hill offering fine views over the surrounding countryside. You then descend into the peaceful village of Farnborough to be greeted by more old stone cottages and the excellent Butchers Arms Inn. The village also has a fine church and a magnificent hall. At the time of the Domesday survey (1086), the Bishop of Chester owned most of the land around here but, in 1322, it was sold to a John de Rale (Raleigh). Unfortunately the Raleigh family had difficulties during the Civil War and, after the Restoration, the estate was purchased by the Holbech family in 1684. They laid out a terrace walk from Farnborough Hall that stretches along the top of the Dassett Hills. In the landscape style of the day, it is flanked by an Ionic temple and an oval pavilion. Their barn now houses the Edgehill Battle Museum.

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The walk continues through the village of Avon Dassett, then ascends into Burton Dassett, passing by the 12th-century Norman All Saints Church. The hills of the Burton Dassett Hills Country Park have been a constant theme throughout this walk and you finish with a flourish on the last of them, Magpie Hill, to enjoy the fine views.



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1. From the car park in the country park descend the footpath to the right of Bonfire Hill into the village of Northend to arrive at Hampden Court
2. Go right along the main street in the village for 300yds (274m), then right again through a pair of kissing gates. Follow the footpath heading generally eastwards towards Fenny Compton, crossing a mixture of pastureland, cultivated fields and several stiles.
3. Enter Fenny Compton over a stile, then head along Grant's Close into Avon Dasset road. Walk past Duckett Cottage and go through the handgate to the right of the village church. Now bear right and cross over pastureland to a road known as The Slade. Go left along the road past a large farm barn, then right over a footbridge into a large cultivated field. Follow the footpath signs and cross this field to a second footbridge, then walk up the next field, aiming for a marker post in the hedge ahead. Here go left and walk along the field edge - from the top of the hill there is a fine view of the landmark four-sail windmill at Chesterton and the Post Office Communication towers near Daventry. Follow the direction of the waymarkers, climb Windmill Hill, then descend over farm fields and a hedged footpath into the village of Farnborough, emerging on the main street near the Butchers Arms.
4. 4 Head right, along the main street, and bear right past the entrance gates to the National Trust's Farnborough Hall. Continue up the road to the left, past the lake walking along the well-used footpath inside the trees. At the end of the woodland continue along the road for about 500yds (457m), then go right over a stile and across a couple of cultivated fields into pastureland. Descend to the left of a large barn which brings you to the village of Avon Dasset.
5. Go left past the church and in 75yds (69m) go right up a track to the right of the Avon Inn into open countryside. Up to the right is the impressive building of Bitham Hall. The waymarked footpath hugs the top of fields until you arrive in the village of