

A Kedington Hills Circuit

There used to be a newspaper cutting on display in the porch of Kedington church which read –

'Sir,

I note the correspondence regarding a proper Christian response to bats in the spire. As the incumbent of a typical Anglican parish, I can assure you that the only answer is to get the bats baptised and confirmed.

In my experience, you will never see them again'

This has now been removed but the church is well worth a visit. This can be at the start or end of this 5.5 mile walk around the hills of Kedington area. Take [Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 210 Newmarket and Haverhill](#) for reassurance.

Park in the community centre/library car park. This can be found down the side (left as you face it) of the 'Barnardiston Arms' public house (01440 703145). The car park is only open when the community centre is in use so it is best to check with the booking manager on 01440 703491. Other parking alternatives are a small lay-by opposite the church or parking by the shops on Westward Deals. These directions start from the community centre.

Walk back to the pub and continue along the road over the bridge and past the shop. Ignore a turning to Wixoe and Yeldham on the right and another into Westward Deals. On reaching the junction at the top of the hill turn left and almost immediately right into Dash End Lane. At the next junction veer left into Taylor Farm road and follow the twists and turns of the metalled surface. Soon you will run out of road at a right-hand bend into a farm yard.



Continue ahead left of the buildings along a vehicle track (fingerpost) which soon becomes a green lane climbing steadily uphill.

At a footpath junction turn left (waymark). Head gently downhill now on a section that can be soggy in winter.

Cross a rough track and enter livestock (cattle or horses) paddocks through a gate.

Turn sharp left and stay with the hedge on the left. Enter a second paddock and continue in the same direction. Pass a small weather station. In the corner turn right and head downhill keeping to the left of buildings. Go through more gates and join a hedge on the right. You will soon come to a vehicle track where you turn right. This lane will take you past Barnardiston church. This is not usually open but there is a sheltered bench in the churchyard. If you are in luck and are offered the key (the key holder lives nearby) take a moment to step inside to absorb the atmosphere of this Grade 2 listed church. Much medieval woodwork is on show but there are also obvious cracks in the walls.

Continue past a few houses to the next junction and veer right along Hundon Road. At the next junction, not much further on, turn left down Water lane (signed to Sowley Green) which drops to the A143. Turn left and cross with care. Having crossed you will find a section of the old road and follow this past Jaybeth Animal Sanctuary to a finger post pointing right. The path crosses a footbridge then goes through a short unkempt section

into a field. Stay with the hedge on the right heading towards a grand house. You will reach a minor road where you turn left. Follow this Quiet Lane for some way. You go over the brow of a hill (ignoring all footpath signs) until the road eventually becomes sunken with high banks on both sides. At an 'S' bend there is another footpath sign on the left and this is the path you should take. (If in need of refreshment continue along the road for a further 10 minutes into Great Wratting where you will find the 'Red Lion' on the left – 01440 783237). Follow this field edge path with the hedge on your left until you come to a T junction of paths. Turn left to follow another field edge footpath with a ditch and an area of scrub on the right. You are now on the Stour Valley Path and you follow this all the way back to the car park. Go through a kissing gate in the field corner and cross a series of small paddocks (more kissing gates) to reach the A143 again. Go straight across, with care, and use a footbridge to skirt a private garden then continue to the right of a hedge ahead. This leads into a small copse (more waymarks and three footbridges) where you are directed onto the edge of a neighbouring field then right and right again into another field. Follow the headland on the right until you reach electricity carrying poles. Head into the field under the cables until you reach a double pole. At this point you turn half right and head towards Kedington church. You can either enter the graveyard by the corner gate or continue down the side of the churchyard until reaching the road. Turn left. Kedington church is usually open and is well worth a half hour of anyone's life.



Figure 1 - Inside of Kedington Church



Figure 2 - Display at Kedington Church

It boasts higgledy-piggledy box pews, a three-decker pulpit complete with hour-glass and wig stand, a gallery and a wide variety of monuments to local families, particularly the Barnardistons. This family, lords of the manor from C13 to 1745, has a vault beneath the centre isle which contains 54 coffins, the oldest going back to C16. The church toilet is twinned with others in the Zambia and Burundi. There are seats in the churchyard.

There is a story that another local family gave rise to the term 'roundhead'. A member of the Samuel family while apprenticed in London took part in a procession. He had cropped hair whereas most of his contemporaries still had flowing curls. Queen Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles 1, is said to have noticed young master Samuel and commented 'What a handsome round head'.

After your visit, cross the road and head down an avenue of chestnut trees (another fingerpost), passing Kedington Primary School and on reaching the road continue in the same direction to return to the car.

The walk is between 5 and 6 miles and will take up to 3 hours.

Roger Medley
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