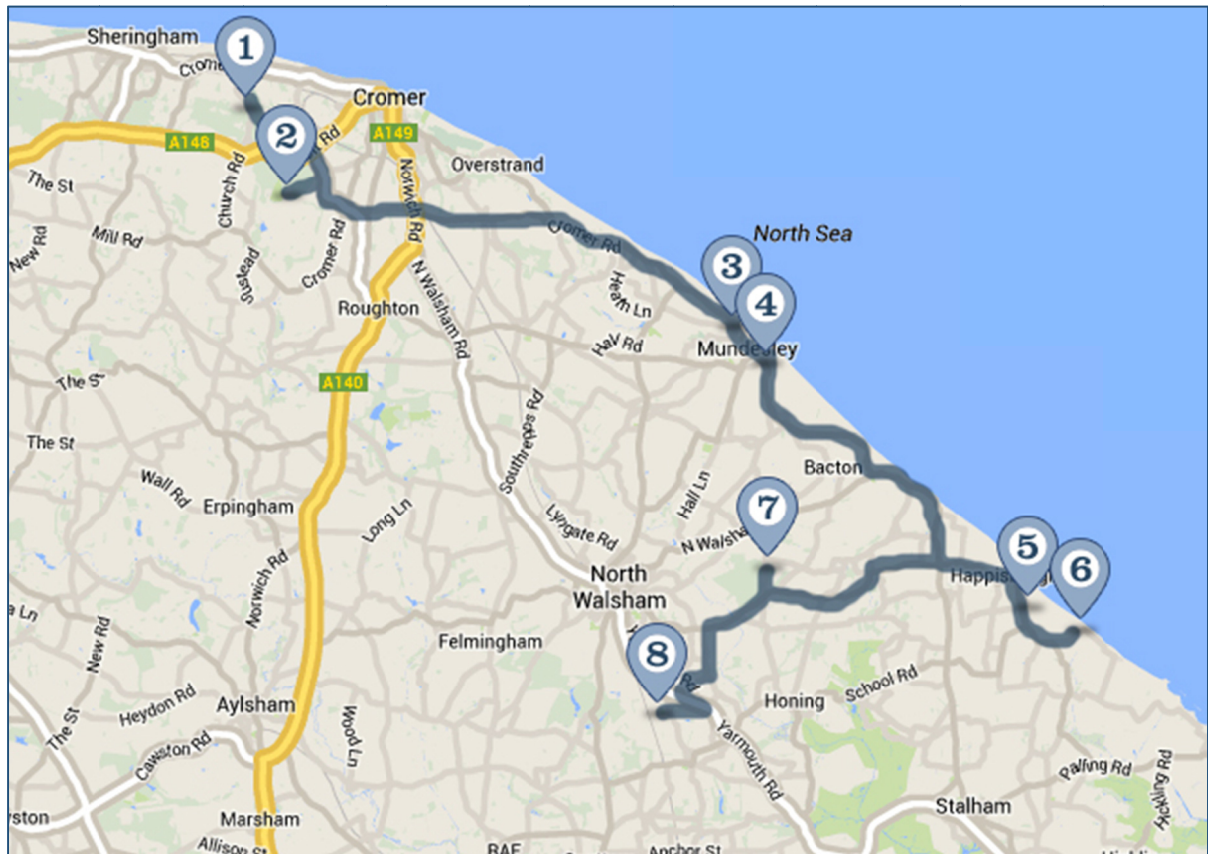


The Griffon Guide

The Ghost Hunters Trail

North Norfolk is home to no end of strange, supernatural tales, linked to its stately homes, coastal cliffs, marshes and woodlands. This trail will take you to some of the locations where ghosts and apparitions have been sighted. We can't guarantee you will have a supernatural encounter, but with the help of these tales, you can at least let your imagination run wild!

You could easily spend two days exploring all these destinations, particularly if you choose to take the suggested walks.





1. The Shrieking Pits

Roman Camp National Trust Car Park
Camp Road, Aylmerton NR11 8QQ
(map ref OS 618341)



In the woods near Roman Camp are a series of shallow depressions believed to be iron working pits from about the period 1000AD. Possibly because of an unusual combination of these landscape features and gradients with strong winds from off the sea this area became known as the shrieking pits; but according to local legend, there may be another cause of the eerie wails heard in this area. The story tells of how a wicked man killed both his wife and babe in a fit of anger and buried them in separate pits. The ghost of the mother in the form of 'the white woman', still wearing and ankle-length night dress she was dressed in when she was killed, searches from pit to pit clearly distressed, wringing her hands, wailing and calling for her lost child on moonless nights.

Park at the NT car park. There is a complex network of footpaths all around Roman Camp, so it is easy to devise your own circular route before returning to the car park. Alternatively, download and follow the 2 hour circular walk published by the National Trust here:
<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/article-1356403074288/>

This pdf download includes a map showing where to find the iron workings and earthworks on Beacon Hill.



2. The Man Who Loved Books

Felbrigg Hall, Aylmerton NR11 8PR
(map ref OS 619339)



William Windham III (1750-1810) inherited Felbrigg Hall and estate in the late 18th century. William was a Tory and acted as Secretary for War (1794-1801) and later became a Whig. He will be best remembered in this county as a man who loved books and his magnificent library is preserved in the hall. Sadly, it was also by a cruel twist of fate that books were to hasten his death. The library at the house of one of his friends in London caught fire. Windham was helping to evacuate the collection and went back for just one more lot and some timbers collapsed upon him causing an injury. He bore it with fortitude for over a year until 1810, when he died after an operation attempting to alleviate his pain. Poor William never got to look at all his books in full retirement and leisure, at least, not in this life.

In the 19th century Augustus Hare recorded that he was told upon a visit to the hall that 'Mr Windham comes every night to look after his favourite books in the library. He goes straight to the shelves where they are; we hear him moving the table and chairs about.' Among the books he most highly treasured were those given to him by his friend Dr Johnson, including the great man's personal cherished copies of Iliad, Odyssey and the New Testament. It is said when this specific combination of books are laid out in the library the ghost is most likely to appear, but he does not like crowds. I was told by a member of staff that he has been seen 'quite recently'. You might be lucky to glimpse him when all the visitors have gone home and its

dark outside. His ghost appears to look at his beloved volumes sat snuggled up in his library chair, lit by the gentle glow of a ghostly fire in the grate. If there is any noise or hint that someone is near he just fades away.

Park in the Felbrigg Hall car park. There is an entrance fee to see the property and gardens, though it is free to walk around the estate. For further details, see the National Trust web site here:

<http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/felbrigg-hall/>



3. Black Shuck

**Overstrand Car Park, Pauls Lane, Overstrand NR27 0PF
(map ref OS 624340)**

One of the most ancient tales found along the Norfolk Coast is that of the great, shaggy, black devil dog known by a variety of names – Old Shuck, The Shuck Dog and the most popular – Black Shuck. Alleged sightings and spectral activities ascribed to Shuck are particularly prevalent in the area between Weybourne and Overstrand, notably Shuck's Lane between Beeston and Overstrand. Said to date back centuries it has been suggested that Shuck is derived from the Saxon word, Scucca, meaning devil or demon.



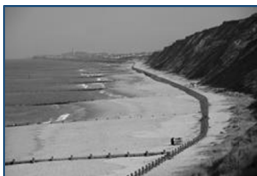
You could make a stop anywhere along this coast to get a sense of Shuck's hunting grounds. We suggest Overstrand, as there is an excellent walk along the beach and/or cliffs to Cromer and back from here. Listen out for the howls of the devil dog!



4. The Lone Coastguardsman

**Beach Road Car Park, Mundesley NR11 8BH
(map ref OS 631336)**

The North Norfolk coast was once rife with smuggling. One Coastguardsman thought he had tamed an informer and strode out along the cliff path between Bacton and Mundesley to intercept a smuggling gang. He had already sent a boy to summon the local troop of yeomanry for back up and he went to the agreed place and shone his lamp to lead the smugglers into the trap. What he did not realise was that the boy was in the pay of the smugglers, no troops would be coming and the lamp he was carrying would simply lead the smugglers to him.



The Coastguardsman was a tall and well-built man so when the shadowy shapes of the smugglers started to bob along the moonlit beach he thought the troopers would be in position. He shouted the word and led the attack. He was alone, the smugglers were many; the coastguardsman was mercilessly cut to pieces and his body parts flung over the cliff edge and washed out to sea. Ending his days in such a horrific way and having no grave, the lone coastguardsman was doomed to walk the coastal path between Bacton and Mundesley for evermore – especially on stormy night when his whoops and hollers may be heard above the crash of the waves.

Park at the Beach Road Car Park. You can either follow the beach or road

in the Bacton direction to reach Mundesley cliffs. There is a slipway which will take you up to the cliff walk from the beach, passing the lifeboat station. From here you can follow in the footsteps of the Lone Coastguardsman by taking the footpath along the cliffs. Most choose to return when they reach the Bacton Gas Terminal and its intimidating security fences.



5. The Headless Smuggler

**Cart Gap Car Park, Cart Gap Road, Happisburgh NR12 0QL
(map ref OS 639329)**

In the early 19th century Happisburgh was a small fishing village nestling cheek by jowl with the sea on the North-East coast of Norfolk. The village was also notorious for another business – smuggling. All could benefit if they helped the smugglers; lace, silk, baccy, tea and spirits – all duty free – could be yours but if you crossed the smugglers, or worse, informed on them to the customs men, merciless retribution would be your reward.

One night a group of farm labourers were returning home when they observed a glowing 'form' coming up the road from Cart Gap. Two of the men were intrigued and brave enough to try and see the apparition again. On several nights they waited to no avail until about a week later, when their wait was rewarded and they hid in the hedge until the phantom passed them. These men could see the ghostly smuggler also wore a leather belt, with a huge buckle with a pistol tucked into it. They also discovered the ghost had not been decapitated but rather like some hideous knap sack the head was still attached by a single strip of skin. The labourers bravely followed the apparition along the road to Well Corner where it dropped its bundle into the well and then appeared to disappear down the well himself.

The farmers told their story to the village council and an investigation of the well was seen as the best way forward. After several failed attempts, a bundle was found, containing the body of the unfortunate sailor, his wounds corresponding exactly with the spectre seen by the locals. Investigation of the known smugglers 'runs' soon revealed signs of a mortal struggle; a large pool of congealed blood and a pistol were discovered near Cart Gap. For some reason the smugglers had disagreed, perhaps over the division of spoils.

After driving through Happisburgh you will pass Well Corner in Whipwell Green, where the corpse was discovered. After parking at Cart Gap, you might like to explore the beach and imagine where the mortal struggle took place. If you are in need of refreshments, Smallsticks Cafe is also nearby.



6. Bloody Will Suffolk

**Gibbet Piece, Witton Woods Car Park, North Walsham
NR28 9UE
(map ref OS 631331)**

William Suffolk was born and bred in the hamlet of Swafield near North Walsham. He worked hard on the family smallholding to support his wife, four children his long widowed father. All seemed well in this typical country family until Will's wily eye rested on their attractive young



neighbour, Mary Beck. Their relationship resulted in Mary falling pregnant. She gave birth to the child in secret and Suffolk was 'confederate' in the child's murder and disposal of the body.

Some time later, Will met Mary on her return home after selling three bushels of wheat, the profits of which Suffolk considered his. Mary indignantly said it was not hers to give because she owed her brother the money. The argument soon escalated as Suffolk made advances towards Mary and she rebuffed him. Suffolk demanded to know why she yielded to him the night before to which she stated she would yield no more, nor did she wish to be in his company again. This was too much for Suffolk and he struck her a mighty blow with the cudgel he was carrying and felled the girl, whereupon he rained a further three massive blows upon her head with his stick, cracking her skull. He then dragged her lifeless body across the cart track and left her head in the rut, stamping it to a hideous pulp for good measure.

Found guilty of the murder, Suffolk was executed on Norwich Castle Hill where he was hanged before a large crowd. The body of 'Bloody Will' was parboiled, tarred and placed in a gibbet cage, then carted back to near the scene of his abominable crime. The whole sordid tale was recorded on broadsheets and ballads and was even the subject of church sermons around the county – a salutary tale to warn of the dangers of illicit passions.

Only a few years ago, children were playing in the woods near the site when they came across a skeleton, lying in a mossy glade. Not daring to touch the horrific discovery, they ran home and reported the matter to their parents who after a little persuasion came to investigate. Despite finding the exact spot there was no trace of any remains. Could it be the earthly remains of 'Bloody Will' still cannot rest in peace?

Park at Witton Woods Car Park. The path to Gibbet Piece is marked by a contemporary totem style sculpture. You can download a map of all the walking trails here: http://www.northnorfolk.org/files/Bacton_Leaflet.pdf

Both the yellow and red marked trails pass along Gibbet Piece.

7. The White Lady

**St Mary's Church, Westwick Road, Worstead NR28 9AL
(map ref OS 630326)**



Many a fireside around the Worstead area has been graced by this ghostly tale. A White Lady is believed to appear in the tower of St Mary's Church as the clock chimes midnight on Christmas Eve.



Back in 1830 it was the custom for the senior bell-ringer or the sexton to ring in Christmas Day for a few minutes. On this particular evening, a group of locals had gathered in the nearby King's Head and the subject turned to the White Lady. It was the usual custom for a small group from the inn to go over and witness the Christmas bell ringing. On this occasion, one wag piped up that he was not afraid of any White Lady and that he would go alone, ring the bell and, if he saw her, he would give her a kiss.

His compatriots soon heard the church clock strike twelve but no Christmas bell rang. They waited, minute after minute, but no peal rang out so they grabbed lanterns and rushed across to the church. Climbing the church tower they began to hear a disturbing gibbering. In the chamber they discovered their friend in a crouching position, his limbs shaking, his eyes rolling, paralysed with fright.

Restoratives administered back at the inn, he only recovered enough to open his eyes and whisper, "I've seen her! – There!! There!!!" before he lapsed back to unconsciousness and died later that same day. The Worstead Church burial register records one Green Potter, aged 65, who was buried in the churchyard on January 3rd.

A postscript to this story may be found in 1975, when Diane Bertelot was visiting the church with her husband Peter and son David. Her husband snapped a photo of Diane while she was praying. They thought nothing more about it until one of their friends noticed a figure sat behind Diane in the photo. It appeared to be a woman dressed in a bonnet and long white dress.

Upon their return the next year, the local vicar explained the legend, saying the ghost is a healer who will appear if someone is ill. Diane had been taking antibiotics at the time.

You can see the photograph here:

<http://paranormal.about.com/od/ghostphotos/ig/Best-Ghost-Photos/White-Lady-of-Worstead-Church.htm>

You can park directly in front of the church before seeking out the White Lady. If she doesn't make an appearance, console yourself with a visit to the local inn of the same name.