

**Start** with the Diss Beacon of Hope at your back, with the Mere on your left.

Take the Park tarmac path down the hill, and **follow Madgett's Walk around the edge of the Mere.**

***Diss Mere** is thousands of years old: a natural basin, created by the collapse of the chalk bedrock at the end of the Ice Age, it is about six acres of open water, around six metres deep, with a further 23 metres of mud beneath, making our Mere one of the deepest natural inland lakes in England. Some say Diss acquired its name from the Saxon word 'Dic' or 'Disce', meaning a 'ditch of standing water'. In Victorian times, the frozen Mere hosted ice carnivals with fancy dress skaters and Chinese lanterns, as well as a cricket match! Until the 1930s, people regularly swam in the Mere. Today, the Mere is renowned among local fishermen for its stock of Crucian Carp (*Carassius carassius*), the only member of the Carp family to be considered indigenous in south east England. They are very hardy fish, able to tolerate cold conditions and resilient to pollution. The Mere also houses a few non-native predator species, which can be a problem: on 25 August 2020, one lucky angler caught a 7 foot long catfish weighing 8 stone (which was immediately rehomed to a more appropriate lake)!*

**At Diss Town Sign, turn left up (pedestrianised) Mere Street.**

***Diss Town Sign** shows two scenes: **John Skelton**, Rector of Diss (1505-1529) and Poet Laureate, in his role as tutor to the young Prince Henry (later Henry VIII) and his sisters; and the noble maiden **Matilda** refusing the advances of King John, who murdered her with a poisoned egg in revenge. A legend connects the two: it is said that, to entertain his young pupil, Skelton fused several stories together, producing one in which Matilda escaped King John to join her newly married husband in a woodland: this may have been the original inspiration for the tale of **Maid Marian and Robin Hood!** Diss Town Sign was made in 1962 by Harry Carter, Norfolk's most prolific village sign maker (d.1983).*

*As you walk up Mere Street, look up to see historic Diss above the modern shop fronts: elaborate timber and brickwork over Tatters and Diss Discount; faded Georgian elegance above Poundland; and a huge, ancient wooden lintel on the British Heart Foundation. The elaborate wooden carvings on Holland and Barrett including one of our two carved dragon posts, depicting an angel.*

**Walk straight up across the Market Place**, passing Diss Museum on your right.

**Cross Church Street and continue straight uphill on Market Place**, past the gates to St Mary's Church on your right.

At the war memorial under the church tower, **turn left up St Nicholas Street** to start exploring the Heritage Triangle.

*St Nicholas is the patron saint of weavers, and for many years weaving was a key industry in Diss. The Triangle's historic yards were once the hub of the town's thriving manufacturing industry.*

**Turn right into Norfolk House Yard** (first turning on the right).

After Fredricks Fine Foods, **turn left by the spiral staircase into Cobb's Yard.**

*The modern sculpture in Cobb's Yard by Peter Hyde (Chairman of Diss Heritage Triangle Trust) celebrates the Heritage Triangle restoration project.*

**Coming out of Cobb's Yard, bear left** and cross the road, then **continue through the wide paved gap** between the shops.

Immediately ahead, you will see the large pink building which houses Diss Town Council. To the right, you will see the iron arch which signs the entrance to the Garden and Boardwalk. **Cross over Market Hill, and go straight through the iron arch** to discover the Boardwalk and Garden overlooking the Mere.

*[The Diss Heritage Triangle Restoration project](#) included the creation of the Mere Boardwalk and Wildlife Gardens - restoring a derelict piece of public land to the rear of the Council offices, and creating a floating boardwalk linking across part of the Mere. Please enjoy the beautiful view from here before returning to continue the Beacon Trail.*

Coming back out of the Boardwalk, **turn left** to continue on up Market Hill.

*Tudor House, 23 St Nicholas Street, has our second Dragon Post: on one side it shows the Annunciation with the Angel Gabriel and the Virgin Mary, and on the other, the Nativity.*

**Cross over St Nicholas Street** to the front of the Corn Hall, and **turn left** up the hill.

At the top, **turn right** in front of the old Crown Hotel onto Shelfanger Road.

**Keep straight on** past Harrison's Yard, and then Shelfanger Court, on your right.

**Turn right** into the car park, and walk down its left hand side.

At the end of the [Diss Citizen's Advice Bureau](#) building, you'll find a pretty path through trees along the edge of Parish Fields, a 400 year old historic meadow.

At the end of the little path, **turn right** and cross the car park to join the footpath by the lamppost. **Turn left.**

The footpath brings you down to Mount Street: **turn right.**

At the corner of the 16<sup>th</sup> century Saracen's Head Inn with its wonderful carvings, **cross the road into the churchyard.** Follow the gravel churchyard path around St Mary's.

*Dating back to 1280, **St Mary's Church** had Tudor Poet Laureate **John Skelton** as its Rector from 1504-1529, and Diss celebrated his 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2004 with a year-long festival. Skelton wrote some of his best poetry here in Diss, including 'Ware the Hawk', inspired by a day he found a local curate hawking inside St Mary's! **John Wesley** preached here on 20 October 1790 (aged 88), five months before his death; in 1785, Wesley had described Diss as "one of the most wicked towns in the*

*Kingdom” for gambling, gaming and cock-fighting. In the 18<sup>th</sup> century, Methodist preachers were regularly pelted and drenched in Diss.*

**Come out of the churchyard and turn left onto Church Street** (once known as Dirt Street!).

Walk down Church Street, passing [Diss Library](#) on your right.

**Turn right onto The Entry.** Keep following The Entry past the primary school, and continue down the narrow enclosed path between Rectory Meadow (home to [Diss Cricket Club](#)), and the school playing fields.

At the end of the path, **turn right** onto Victoria Road.

**Keep straight along Victoria Road**, passing [Diss Methodist Church](#) and The Causeway on your right.

*The current Diss Methodist Church was built in 1964, but Diss has a long tradition of Methodist worship, with the first Methodist Chapel in Diss built in 1789.*

**Take the next right into Mere Street.** Pass the Victorian Gothic [Diss United Reformed Church](#) on your right.

*Look at the narrow pale yellow building between two shops, with its unusual octagonal tower room at the top. This was once the camera obscura of Victorian Diss photographer [Cleer Alger](#) (1819-1883).*

**Turn left at Diss Town Sign** by the Mere.

**Follow Madgett’s Walk to the left around the edge of the Mere** back into the Park, finishing at the Diss Beacon of Hope.

THE END