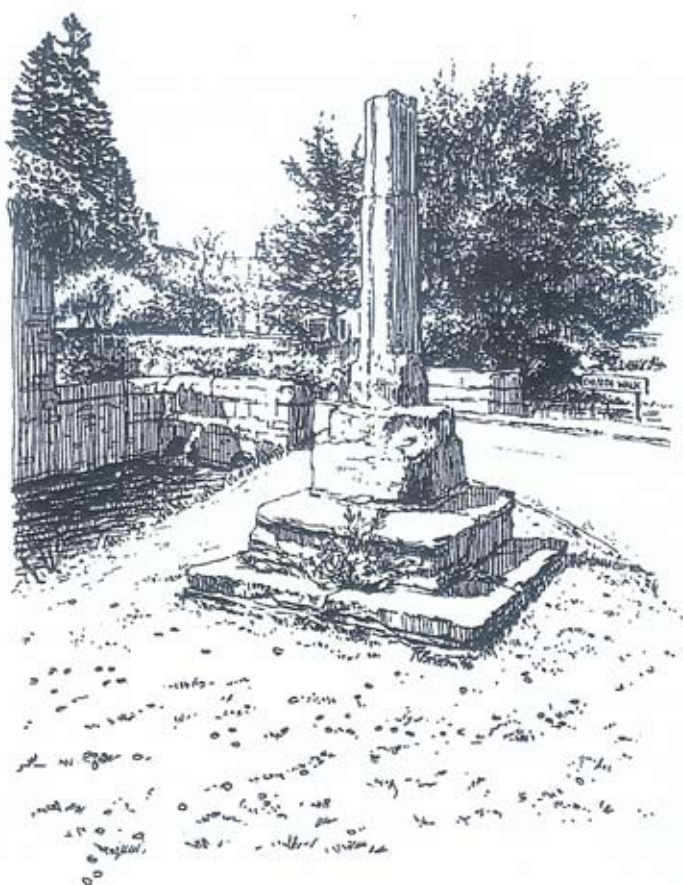


Walks In and Around

Ashton Keynes



A Footpath Guide
Second Edition

First Published 1996

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INTRODUCTION

In 2005 the committee of the Ashton Keynes Parish Council responsible for footpaths decided that the guide published almost ten years previously should be updated. There were two reasons for this. Owing to its popularity it had long been out of print, and the inevitable changes that occur to the topography of a region, particularly where extensive gravel extraction is undertaken, meant that some of the directions were no longer accurate. It is a tribute to the efforts of those responsible for producing the original booklet, however, that it has been possible to retain so much of their work. Each walk has been undertaken in both summer and winter conditions and revised where necessary. Approximate times to various key points on the route have also been recorded. In taking the opportunity to add a couple of extra walks, we have remained faithful to the original maxim that the walks should start and end in the village.

Norman Ames (Editor)

KEY TO MAPS

	Road		River
	Track		Lake
	Path		Stile
	Alternative Path		Gate
	Kissing Gate		

In addition to the map provided for each walk, we have included a general map of the area illustrating the routes of all of the walks.

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Wear sensible footwear

Most of the walks described here have some points which are very wet or muddy at all but the driest times of the year. Walking boots or Wellingtons are recommended at wet times. Even at the driest times a stout pair of shoes or boots is advisable.

Beware of changes in the weather

If you are setting out on a walk taking 2 or 3 hours, remember how quickly the British weather can change, even in summertime, and take at least a waterproof for all members of the party, especially children. There is nothing to spoil your enjoyment more than getting wet.

Plan stops

On the longer walks, especially with children in the party, a short break can revive tired legs tremendously. Where possible we have mentioned pubs that can be visited *en route*, but remember to plan your walk with opening hours in mind.

Respect the countryside

Don't do anything to frighten livestock – and in particular keep dogs and children under control. Make sure that all gates are shut after you and take your litter home with you.

Help keep paths tidy

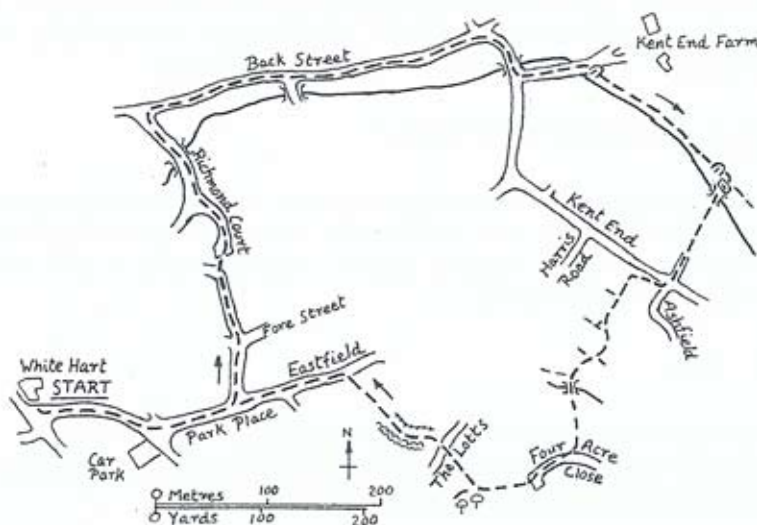
If you are a regular walker of our footpaths, you might like to put a pair of secateurs in your pocket occasionally, to cut back brambles around stiles, or, with a bin liner, you could clear small amounts of litter that you come across. In this way we can all improve the experience for each other.

Observe road safety

Although most of the walks are on footpaths or bridleways, there is a small amount of road walking. Unless there is a pavement, this should be on the right-hand side of the road, facing the oncoming traffic, and in single file.

Walk One THE EASTERN SECTOR

With its mixture of old and new housing, this short walk (1 mile) introduces some of the footpaths on the eastern side of the village.



Start at the White Hart Inn and turn left along Park Place. Keeping the dry stone wall of Cove House on your left, follow the road as it curves around to the left, and ignore an extension of Park Place going off to the right behind the Village Hall. Shortly after, take the first left hand turn, and continue on with the wall still on your left. After about 30yds the wall ends and the road then bends sharply to the right to become Fore Street. Turn left here (just before the road nameplate on the wall) along an unadopted lane, passing a line of three terraced bungalows on your left. As the lane veers to the left, carry straight on along a short footpath between two walls into Richmond Court. Continue in the same general direction through Richmond Court on the right hand pavement to the 'T' junction with Back Street. Turn right along Back Street; passing the Leaze on your right and a number of attractive houses, for example Pilgrim Cottage, Corner Cottage and Wall Cottage. Follow the road round to the right into Kent End, taking care, as it is a blind corner. Just after you cross a brook by the white railings, turn left into the road that leads to Kent End Farm, also signposted Thames Footpath. Following a second Thames Footpath sign shortly after, turn right through the wooden kissing gate into a field and carry on along the east bank of the brook.

(This part of the walk is often better undertaken in Wellington boots, and so if you are not appropriately attired, continue along Kent End for about 100yds, and rejoin the walk at Ashfield).

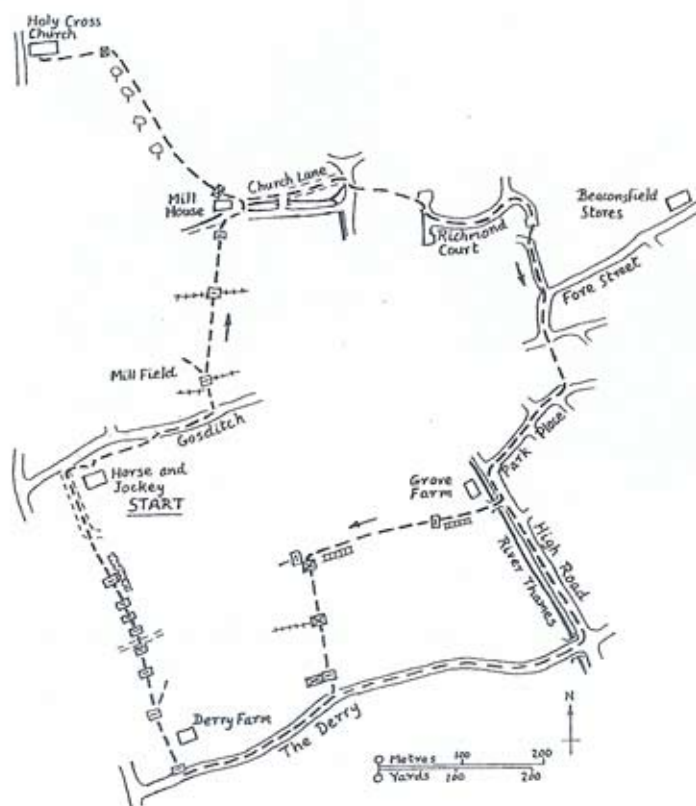


Back Street near Pilgrim Cottage

At the end of the field go through the gate, turn right over a stone stile and a bridge (which crosses a Thames back stream). Follow the path down between two houses, which brings you out into Kent End opposite Ashfield. Cross the road, proceed down Ashfield for about 10yds, and then turn sharp right along the footpath on the far side of the hedge towards Harris Road. Take the first path on the left after about 30yds, which runs between two houses, then ignore footpaths to the right after a further 30yds and again after 50yds, and continue past houses Nos: 22 & 23 (Hope Cottage). Ignore the footpath to the right along the far side of the latter residence. Keeping the open space on your left; stay on the main path until you reach a 'Y' junction. Take the left hand fork and cross a bridge with steel rails. The path now runs through an attractive little grove and comes out in Four Acre Close (although the road name is not visible from this point). Turn right and walk to the end of the Close. By No:11 take the path again as it forks right into a glade, and then take the first right turn, which leads straight into The Lotts. Cross the road, and slightly to the right you will find a small grassy area. Follow the path keeping the Toddlers' Playground to your right. You will shortly come out into Eastfield, where you turn left and continue along the road until you arrive back at the White Hart Inn. **30mins.**

Walk Two **WEST SIDE STORY**

A slightly longer walk (1 1/2 miles) taking in the more rural parts of the village. The stiles on this walk make it less accessible to the elderly and infirm.



Start in Gosditch, with your back to the 'Horse and Jockey' public house, and turn right. You will soon pass a red Post Office letterbox set into the wall on the right, and shortly after, on the left, you will see a footpath sign pointing to the left, adjacent to a Thames Water pumping sub-station. Take this path and cross into Mill Field by a stile. Take the right hand path which runs parallel to the school boundary fence; continue straight over the next stile and field and then across a final stile, which brings you out onto the Thames Path just above Brook End Cottage. Turning right, a short passage between Brook End Cottage and the wall of Mill House brings you out at the top of Church Walk. Turning immediately left over the river you can rest on the seat in front of Mill House and take in one of the most picturesque scenes in the village.

You may care to take a diversion here that will take you to the Church. From your seat in front of Mill House, continue to your left and follow the chestnut-lined footpath to the church. *You may see coal tits, goldcrests, squirrels, and fritillaries in the churchyard. At the beginning of the year, moreover, the snowdrops in the moat of Church Farm are a lovely sight.* Return along the footpath to Mill House.



Holy Cross Church - Ashton Keynes

To continue this walk, carry on along the left bank of the river, past the driveway of Glebe House on you left and the bridge on your right, *under which frequently lurk sizeable roach, perch or trout.* Carry on straight down Church Lane: *on your left the doorsteps of the terraced houses and on your right the plank stones are all of interest.* Cross the High Road and follow a tarmac pathway under lime trees a little to your right. You now enter Richmond Court. Continue straight ahead following the road as it bends to the left and take a right hand turn where the road forks by No. 23. At the end of the cul-de-sac, go through the passageway that takes you through

Cove House Gardens. As you emerge onto Fore Street, you can detour here by turning left, which will take you to the village store where you can stock up on provisions to keep you going for the second half of the walk!

However, the walk continues to the right, which brings you to Park Place. Go straight across the road and enter a passageway, forbidden to cyclists: *on the left attractive old cottages rise directly from the path side. Dormer Cottage is the first of these and Holly Lodge the last.* The path leads you out opposite the entrance to Thames View. Turn right here and walk straight ahead until you come out into the High Road opposite Grove Farm. Cross the road and turn left. Turn right almost immediately down the left side of Grove Farm and cross the first footbridge into the footpath (marked with a "footpath" sign). The pathway leads you by a stile and bar into a large field, where there are nearly always racehorses. Keep to the left hand side until you are almost across it, when you will encounter another bar and stile and a gate that will lead you into the corner of the next field to the left. Cross over here and then turn left and walk up the side of the field with the hedge on your left. Continue straight on through the paddocks, passing through a gate and a stile to emerge onto The Derry. Turn right and carry on up The Derry.

After passing some varied and attractive cottages, turn right over a stile onto a footpath in a field at the bottom of The Derry, just past the driveway to Derry Farm House. Keeping the hedge on your right, pass the tennis court on your left and cross the stile into the next field.

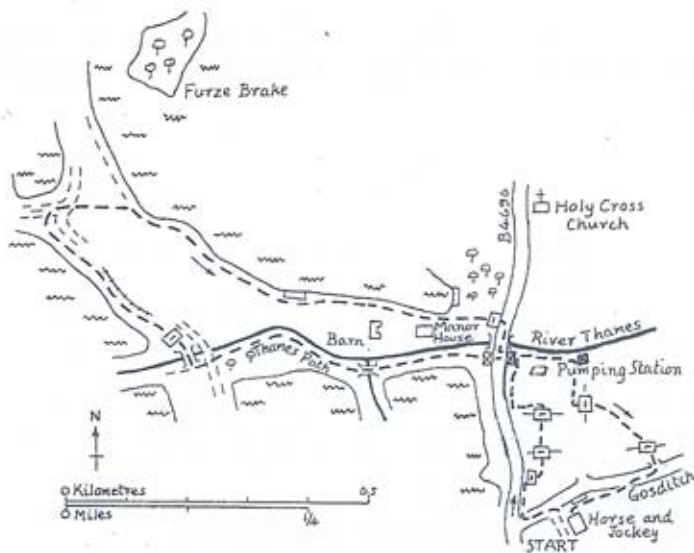
Walk straight across to the next stile, which brings you to the imposing poplar-lined driveway to Derryfields Farm; a V-shaped stile leads you into an area known as the 'Tunbury enclave' of rendered buildings; continue straight on over a stone stile, and keeping the hedge to your right (the path is a little narrow here), cross over two more stone stiles that flank the gate of a cottage. The path emerges onto the driveway of a group of cottages behind the Horse & Jockey and into Gosditch by the pub. **45 mins**
or 1 hr if the diversion to the church is included.

Variation.

Instead of taking the footbridge over the Thames into the field with horses, you can continue down the High Road alongside the river and turn right at The Derry, rejoining the walk where the footpath emerges from the driveway at the beginning of the row of cottages.

Walk Three **MANOR FARM LAKES**

A popular walk (1¼ miles) with Ashton Keynes residents to stretch the legs after Sunday lunch. It takes in part of the Thames Path, and views over several lakes.



Start at the Horse and Jockey Inn, near the western end of Gosditch. As you emerge from the pub car park, turn left and walk the few yards to the end of the street. Without crossing the main road, turn right along the tarmac footpath until you reach a stile. Climb over this, cross the field diagonally, climb over the next stile, cross the second field by walking roughly parallel to the road and go over the stile at the far side. You will emerge opposite a substantial iron fence surrounding a Thames Water pumping station. Turn left and then almost immediately right so that you are again walking parallel to the road, now between the fence and the hedge. At the end of this section of fence you will come to the Thames Path. Turn left, go through the gate and cross the road. *This road can be dangerous, as it carries a lot of lorry traffic.* Proceed straight ahead through another gate along the Thames Path. Keep an eye open for views of the lake on your left. This lake, with its small islands, is one of the best landscaped in the area. You may see red crested pochards and great crested grebes on the lake, and reed warblers and chiffchaff along the margins. The goosander is a winter visitor. You may also be lucky enough to spot a kingfisher along this section of the river.

After a couple of minutes you reach Flood Hatches. *This bridge originally had hatches underneath to control the water. They have now been replaced with a weir. The offshoot of the river here takes part of the water from the Thames to supplement the Swill Brook.* You can get a better view of the lake

you have just passed by taking the narrow path off to your left before crossing the Flood Hatches. This will lead you to the lake's edge. Cross the Flood Hatches and carry on a little further until you come to a bridge called Culli's Bridge, where a gravel operator's haul road crosses the river and footpath. Watch out for the Banded Demoiselle (a smaller relative of the dragonfly) in the summer, and mineral lorries throughout the year! Cross the river by the footbridge just ahead of you and immediately pass to the left of a stile.

The path leaves the Thames behind and is flanked by the haul road on its right and another attractive lake on its left. A few minutes later the path bears right and you come out to a fork in haul road. Turn half right and take the narrow path heading roughly one hand span to the left of the barn you can see in the distance ahead of you. *Note that the path can be partially submerged in winter.* As you near the lake, look over to the left where you will see an island called Furze Brake. *You can see both herons and cormorants here.* Turn right when you reach the edge of the lake and continue on past a small quay. You will shortly pass the barn and then a derelict manor house on your right. *The passage of time has left it isolated, well away from the modern village.* Keep close to the wooden fence on your left until you reach a stile. Climb over this, cross the road and then turn right. *Once again take care on this very dangerous road.*

You will shortly reach the point where the Thames Path crosses the road and where you were earlier. Turn left on to this path and continue with the

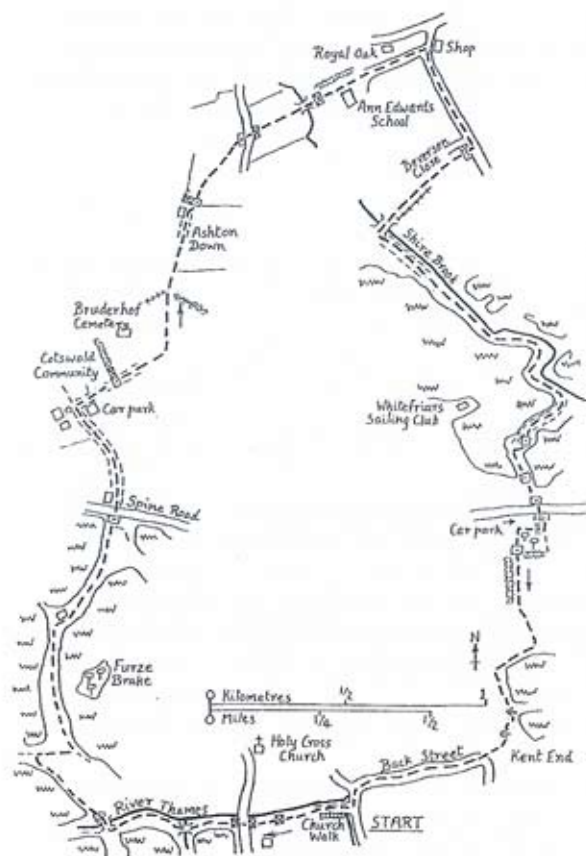


pumping station fence on your right. After a couple of minutes you will reach a gate. Do not go through this, but instead turn right and continue keeping close to the pumping station fence. As you approach the end of this

section of fence you will see a stile on your left. Cross into a field and head diagonally right towards another stile on the far side. Once over this, a narrow alley leads you straight ahead between gardens back into Gosditch. Turn right and you will shortly reach the start point. **45 mins**

Walk Four ASHTON DOWN AND WHITEFRIARS

A fairly long walk (6 miles) but rewarded by a convivial half-way house – and a chance to watch some sailing. Easy walking – and for once generally dry!



Start in Church Walk, near the centre of the village (you may park by the high stone wall on the left). Keeping the river on your right, continue along the road until it becomes a gravel track and then a footpath as it passes between two houses. Ignore a fork to the left immediately after these houses and proceed along the river bank on the Thames Path, passing a

pumping station on your left, until you reach the Cirencester to Wootton Bassett Road (B4696)

Cross over the road and continue along the river bank. After about 10 minutes, cross a track (known as a haul road) used by mineral lorries, and then immediately take a path off to the right over a footbridge. The path leaves the Thames behind and is flanked by the haul road on its right and another attractive lake on its left. A few minutes later the path bears right

and you come out to a fork in the haul road Turn to your right and follow an indistinct path which takes you initially almost directly on a line to Ashton Keynes Church, clearly visible in the distance. When you reach the lake turn left. The course of the path is now clearer as it follows along the side of the lake. *If you look over to the right there is a small island called Furze Brake. Both herons and cormorants can be seen nesting in the highest branches of the trees there.* In due course, you will pass a derelict stone field barn on your left as you reach a wider track. Turn right and follow the track until it bends around to the right. Take a left fork here and after 25yds cross over a stile ahead of you on to the Spine Road. *You will see what appears to be a thatched bus shelter opposite. It is in fact a milk stand.*

35 mins



Cross the road and walk up a drive into the 'Cotswold Community'. *This is a residential centre for young people with social difficulties and is very much a community of its own - so please respect their privacy.* Just after the

visitors' car park on the right you will find, indicated with a yellow arrow, a tarmac road off to the right Take this, but as it bends to the left carry straight on by climbing over a metal gate. You are now on a gravel track leading to a stile. Go over the stile and follow the track straight on, as it gradually rises. *If you look to your left you will see the Bruderhof Cemetery. The Bruderhof (brotherhood) were asylum seekers of mostly German origin. They were pacifist, fundamentalist Christians escaping Nazism. They took up residence at what is now the Cotswold Community in 1936 and later also at Oaksey Park Farm. They lived in the area for several years, eventually moving, it is thought, to Paraguay. The cemetery is still visited by descendants, so if you decide to go there, please treat it with respect.*

The path curves to the left as the incline continues This is Ashton Down and, although it is only 68 feet higher than Ashton Keynes, as the path levels up you will get a view over the gravel works and the surrounding villages. After a stretch on the level you reach a barn on your left. Bear right here and as the path ends, cross the stile to the right of a metal gate. **1 hr**

Head diagonally across the field towards what appears to be the far corner, and you will soon see a stile in the hedgerow to provide reassurance *(This field can sometimes be rather overgrown, and so the line of the path is not always clear. The stile is some 100yds from the left hand corner of the field as you face the road).* Cross the stile with care - it opens onto the road. Cross the road and pass through the gate, which is normally left open, directly opposite. Proceed straight across the field and then go over a bridge crossing Shire Brook, the County Boundary, on the far side. *(The path is not clearly defined across this field. If it is planted, you will need to turn right*

just inside the gate and walk around the perimeter.) Go through a gate and continue in the same direction keeping to the left hand edge of the field. The path takes you past Ann Edwards School on the right, and then, as it becomes a road, past the back garden of the Royal Oak Public House on the left. After a short distance you reach a T-junction and a shop on the far side of the road. Turn right and walk along the pavement for about 400 yards. Just past a turning called Beverson Close, you will see, on the right, a bridle-path signposted to Ashton Keynes, which you take.

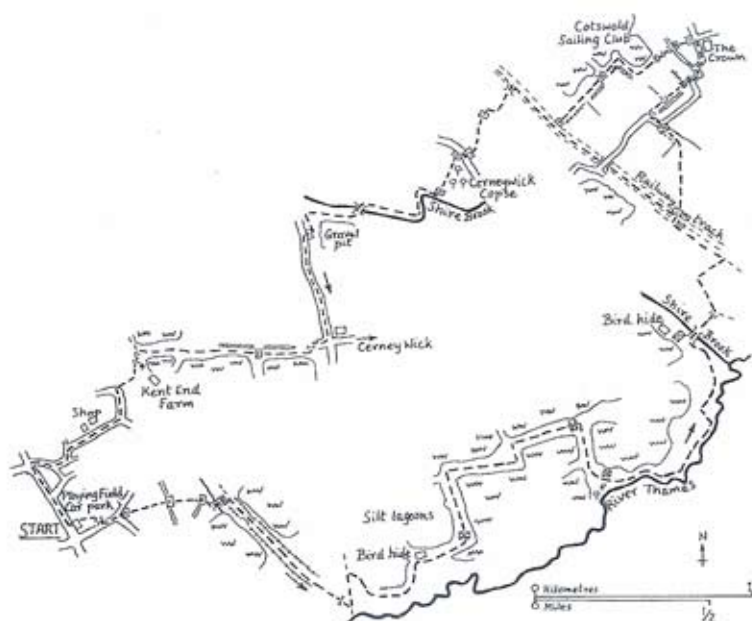
As the metal railings of the Industrial Estate on your left come to an end, a wooden bridge takes you over Shire Brook again. You then turn immediately left on to a track, which takes you round the edge Whitefriars Lake. *The Whitefriars Sailing Club is based here and you will see dinghy racing on summer Sundays.* Continue on this track for about 20 minutes when, about half way along the bottom of the lake, you will see a 'V' shaped stile on the left hand side. Cross this stile and the pass between two lakes along a narrow path. *You can see orchids along here when they are in season.* Go through a second 'V' shaped stile and then finally exit on to the Spine road over an ordinary stile. Cross here to the path opposite, continue in the same direction over a cycle trap and then, after 50yds, turn right over a second cycle trap, into the area behind the Visitors' Car Park and Picnic Area.

Cross the picnic area and head for the far left corner where you will pick up a path that goes through the trees and a hedge, via a stile, to a large field. Follow the path keeping the hedge line on your right, until it comes to the Kent End lakes. Here the path turns sharp right and, shortly afterwards, to the left. You will then see some overhead cables coming in from your right. As these meet the path, turn right through a kissing gate and go along a path edged by a tall Leylandi hedge on the left. After passing through a second kissing gate, continue straight ahead past some house until you reach the road (Kent End), where you turn right. This road soon becomes Back Street and after a few minutes you will find yourself opposite Church Lane, leading round into Church Walk.

2hrs 15 mins

Walk Five *SHIRE BROOK*

A longer walk (6 miles) for which you will need strong shoes, as part of the path is liable to flood! A visit to Cerney Wick adds an extra ½ hour.



Start at the High Road Playing Field car park. Make your way diagonally across the playing field to the right-hand car corner, cross over the footbridge and turn left. Make your way to Happy Land/Cricklade Road junction (approx 30 yards). At the green footpath sign, climb over the stile and walk diagonally, across the field (*you may at times encounter maize over 6 feet high in the first field. The path, however, normally remains visible*). Cross the stile into the next field and continue in the same general direction. On leaving this second field over the stile, follow the path parallel with a back stream of the Thames on the left hand side for a short distance, before turning left to pass through a 5-bar gate. Then turn right on to the Thames Path, which is fenced on both sides. *Some interesting fossils were found here during the excavation of the lakes. They can be seen at the Gateway Centre on the Spine Road.* Follow this path, passing through lakes (*look out for wildfowl such as coot, swans, great-crested grebe, and tufted ducks here*) and then fields until you meet a bridleway.



Footbridge over ditch

Turn left at this junction, and then right shortly after towards Cricklade (both signposted 'Thames Path'). Walking this long stretch will take you past an ornithological hide on your left, and later through a couple of 5-bar gates, with lakes to the right. *The reed area approaching the hide is home to reed buntings and reed/sedge warblers. Around the hide cetti's warblers can be heard and, if lucky, glimpsed. The hide formerly looked out over a silt lagoon, but is now turning to extensive reed beds. What remains of the lagoon is good for waders and flocks of gulls, especially in winter. The path turns sharp right just after the second gate and, after approximately 300 yards as it bends around to the left, it meets up with the River Thames, meandering in from the right, behind a tall line of poplars.*



From here follow the path for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, with a lake away to your left and the Thames on your right, until you reach another 5-bar gate

with 'Private Road No Access' sign. *The notice on the gate refers to an earlier time when the area was being worked by a mineral extraction company. You can find out more from the information board here.*

1hr 05mins

Turn sharp right immediately before the gate, crossing Shire Brook, which marks the Wiltshire/Gloucester border, and continue along the path. *In winter, Hailstone House can be seen on the hill to the right. Turn left at the next junction towards South Cerney, and left again at the following junction, both of which are signposted. This section can be very muddy. Both great-spotted and green woodpecker are in residence here, as well as deer. Approximately 300yds down this lane you should take a turning to*

your right, just past a stable block in the trees on your right, and then within a few yards, turn left on to the old railway track. *This was originally the track of the Midland & South Western Junction Railway (MSWJR), later incorporated into the Great Western. Services ran from Cheltenham to Southampton via Cirencester, Swindon and Andover. It was heavily used during WW2 as a branch served Tidworth Camp on Salisbury Plain. The line was closed in September 1961.*

In order to visit the Crown Public House at Cerney Wick, go straight across the stile to the left of the metal gate here (instead of turning left), then cross the field diagonally to the far left hand corner. Exit through a metal gate at the end of a short wide track on to the road and turn left. After about 50yds turn right through a kissing gate. With the hedge on your right, pass through another kissing gate and two metal gates to re-join the road. Turn left and you will reach the pub in a couple minutes. The return footpath starts almost directly opposite the pub. Follow the direction to Ashton Keynes. After crossing a field and then a road, pass into the next field. Here you must cross to the right over a raised walkway into the property of the Cotswold Sailing Club. Follow the boundary fence around the lake and in due course look for an arrow pointing to the left. After crossing a bridge, continue along the left hand field boundary until you rejoin the railway track over a stile. Turn right (and then pick up the narrative at the paragraph after next).

Follow the railway track under a red brick road bridge. Approximately 300yds after the bridge is a sign to Cerney Wick on your right. *(This is the point at which you would rejoin this route had you detoured to Cerney Wick)*



Bridge over track bed of former MSWJR

Continue on for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile until you see another signpost on your left, indicating 'Ashton Keynes 2miles'. **1hr 30 mins**



Cross over the footbridge and head for the gate opposite, which is about 75yds from the left corner. Climb over the stile, and keeping to the edge of the field with the ditch on your right, proceed until a stile brings you out into a lane. Turn right on to the lane and then left after approximately 20 yards. Go over the stile and following the hedge on your left, (*there are little owls in the copse here*) you will come to another

stile in the corner of the field. Cross this and turn right. Follow the footpath, ensuring you keep the Shire

Brook on your left at all times until, after passing a lake on your right, you enter a wooded section and then reach a footbridge marked with a yellow arrow. Cross over the bridge and follow the path around the field (with ex-gravel workings on the left) until you come to the road.

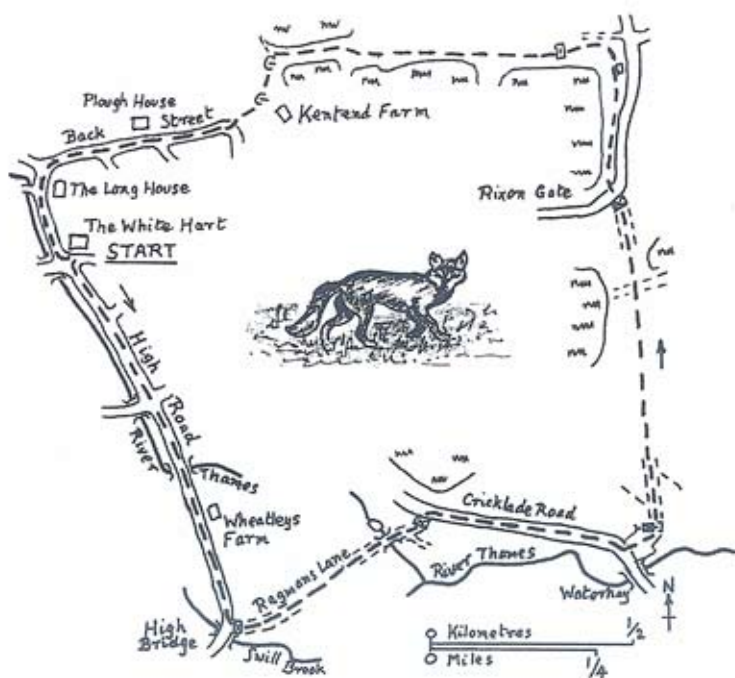
These gravel workings are excellent for bird-life. Look out for ducks (teal and gadwall), herons, egrets and waders such as redshank.

Turn left and follow the road for approximately $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. When you reach a minor road off to the left to Cerney Wick, turn right down a track on the other side of the road, signposted to Ashton Keynes. *Lapwings, golden plover, skylarks, linnets, meadow pipits and yellowhammers visit the field to the north. In summer, these are joined by sand martin flocks.* **2hrs**

After crossing a stone stile, you will see a lake and fence to the left and a hedge on the right. At the end of the hedge, continue straight ahead keeping the boundary to your left until you reach and pass through a kissing gate on the left by a signpost in the corner. Follow this path down past various houses until you meet the road (Kent End) and then turn left. Follow the road and turn right into Fore Street, where you will find the shop and post office. Go to the end of Fore Street, turn right down Park Place and then left when you reach the main road by the stone cross. You will shortly arrive at the Playing Field Car Park on your left. **2hrs 30mins**

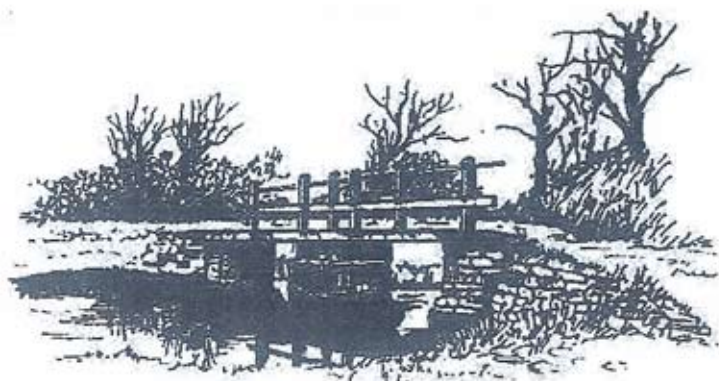
Walk Six WATERHAY

A 2 mile tour of the lakes on the eastern edge of the village.



Start at the White Hart Inn in the centre of the village and set off in a southerly direction along the High Road so that the river is on your right. Carry straight on over the crossroads and then pass Wheatleys Farm on your left. You will shortly come to a stone bridge (High Bridge) where the road crosses Swill Brook. *Keep a look out for little egrets feeding here.*

Turn sharp left immediately before the bridge on to a bridle path known as Ragman's Lane. *Take care as the path can be very rutted in places, and remember to leave gates as you find them.* When your way is barred by what appears to be a pond (in fact part of the River Thames), cross over the wooden bridge immediately to its right.



The Thames at Ragman's Lane

Walk straight on through the field, where the path is now narrower, ignoring the wider track crossing in front of you. Leave the field through a wooden gate and join the Cricklade road. Turn right here and continue along the road until you reach Waterhay car park on your left. **30 mins**



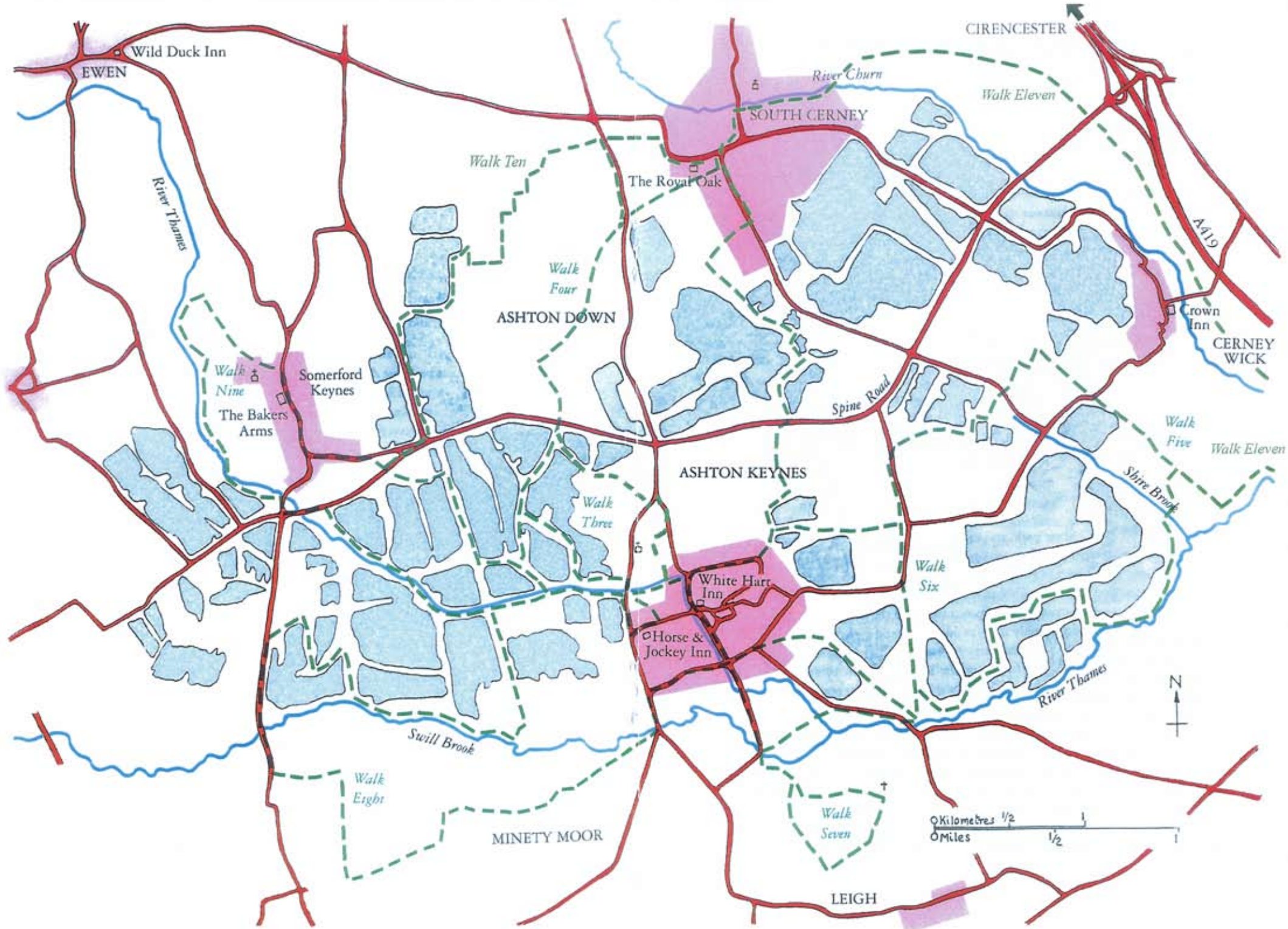
Waterhay

Walk across this car park towards a 5-bar gate on the far side. Turn left immediately before the gate on to the footpath. Ignore the Thames Path as it comes in from your left after a couple of minutes, and ignore it

again shortly afterwards as it turns off to the right. You are now on a wider, grassy track running parallel to a set of overhead power lines on your right. *Although this section of the walk is popular with horse riders and dog walkers, there is still plenty of wild life to be seen – so keep your eyes open.* In due course, you will reach a tarmac road after passing through a gate. Go straight across the road and pick up the bridleway again. *As you follow this path, look to the left and you may see small ducks, grebe or geese on the lake.* When you meet a cross-track, turn left on to the grassy path, sign posted to 'Ashton Keynes ¾ mile'.

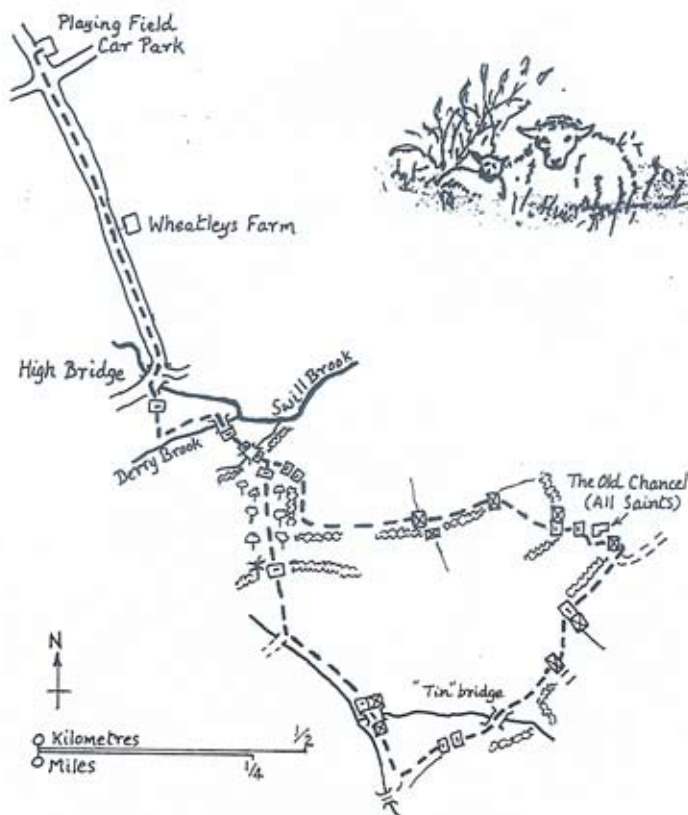
You will cross a stone stile after a couple of minutes. Now keeping the boundary fence on your left, keep walking for about 10 minutes until you can proceed no further. Here you will see a signpost in the hedge.

Turn left through a kissing gate and follow the path through conifers and small trees. Go through a second gate, keeping the houses on your right and ignore any driveways crossing your path. You will eventually emerge onto a tarmac road called Back Street. Turn right here and follow the road. *Look out for the Plough Inn – an old building on your right. This is now a private house, but the West Country Ales sign can still be seen on the wall, as can the date when it was built – 1694.* When you reach the end of Back Street, turn left on to the High Road, passing the Long House. You will shortly be back at the White Hart, which is still a public house! **1hr 10 mins**



Walk Seven **THE OLD CHANCEL AT LEIGH**

A 2½ mile walk away from the lakes of the Water Park, where old-fashioned field patterns and hedgerow birds abound.



Start from the car park of the High Road Playing field adjacent to the children's recreational area. With your back to the car park turn left, carry straight on over the crossroads with the river on your right and then pass Wheatleys Farm on your left. You will shortly come to a stone bridge (High Bridge) where the road crosses Swill Brook. Cross this bridge and immediately on your left you will see a narrow, quite well hidden, footpath. Follow this through the trees and over the stile. Go straight over the field; the path is slightly raised here, then turn left along Derry Brook. Just before the corner, turn right over a bridge and stile. Go diagonally left across the field to the bridge and pair of stiles, flanked by two large plank stones. Having crossed these, continue with the hedge on your right and go over the double stile in the corner of this field. With your back to the stile, look straight ahead, and you will see a metal gate in the far hedge of this next

field. Follow the path to it as it goes around the edge of the field, keeping the boundary on your right. Climb over the gate, and again keeping the hedge on you right, continue on to another gate. Climb over this gate also. Cross the next field heading diagonally to the right hand gate of a group of three ahead of you, with a stile on its right hand side. Cross the next field to the stile opposite, which is only a short distance away.

This brings you to the Old Chancel on the original site of the 13th century All Saints, Leigh. In 1896 the main body of the church and the tower were moved, stone by stone, to their present site in Swan Lane because of flooding. The churchyard is still open for burial and is maintained by Leigh Parish Council. If you want to get the key to the Chancel, follow the instructions on the notice on the south door.

Pass to the right of the Chancel and go through the gate, by the bench
35 mins



Turn right and follow the right edge of the field to a gate and stile in the corner. Cross the next field, slightly towards the left of middle, and head for a metal gate. Pass through this and continue on so that you pass

close to the end of the hedge on your left. Continue in the same general direction as the field widens.

Cross the brook via a 'tin' bridge and head for the double stile which is in the far left-hand corner of the field. Climb up over this and proceed straight ahead across the field to the stile opposite. *This stile may not be immediately visible in summer because of foliage.* Do not cross this, but turn right and continue with the brook on your left until you come to a gate. Pass through the gate, over a bridge and then over a stile to the left of a second gate. Turn left and follow the brook. When you reach a point where the brook passes through a pipe under a track from the next field, note a metal gate ahead of you in the corner of the field. *The pipe itself may be obscured by foliage along the bank in summer, but you will be able to see where the brook is forded by the track coming in from the left.*

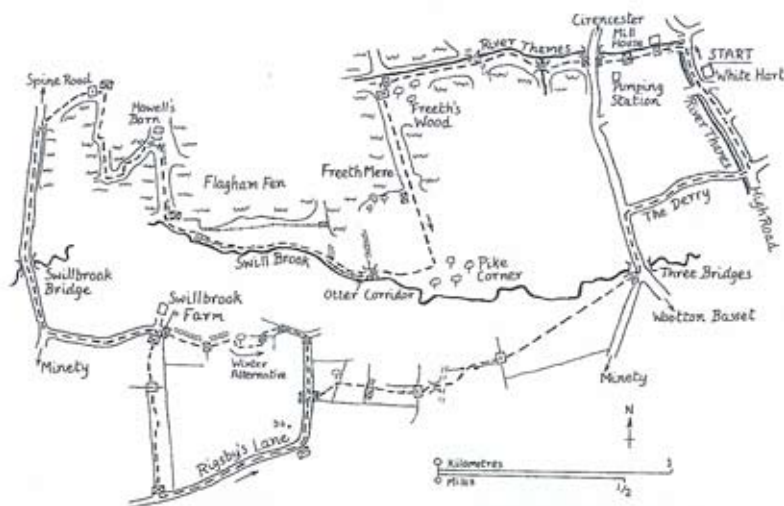
Do not proceed to this gate, but turn right instead, and head across to the far side of the field to a point about 50m to the right of the gate, where you will find a stile in the hedge. *Keep you eyes open around here as you may be lucky enough to see deer.*

Cross over this stile and the ditch after it, and come up into a tree plantation. *There is a badger sett on the right.* Continue straight on, following the way marks. Pass over the stile at the end, turn left and retrace your steps back to the car park.

1hr 10mins

Walk Eight **THE SWILL BROOK & MINETY MOOR**

This 9 mile walk shows you the contrast between the lakes to the north of Swill Brook, and the remote fields to the south



With the White Hart Public House on your right, set off in a northerly direction along the High Road. After 200m turn left into Church Walk. Keeping the river on your right, continue along the road until it becomes a gravel track and then a footpath as it passes between two houses. Ignore a fork to the left immediately after these houses and proceed along the river bank on the Thames Path, passing a pumping station on your left, until you reach the Cirencester to Wootton Bassett Road.

Cross over the road and continue along the river bank. After about 10 minutes, cross a track used by mineral lorries, and then ignore a path off to the right over a footbridge. *Here the path runs along a small wood to the south. This stretch of the Thames is rich in songbirds, including gold crests and long-tailed tits.* Immediately after passing over a wooden stile across the Thames Path, turn left following a sign to Pool Keynes.

With the lake (Freeth Mere) on your right, walk in a southerly direction along a wide grassy track. Ignore a gate on your right at the end of the lake and continue until you reach Pike Corner (indicated by an information board).

35 mins

Now follow the path as it turns to the right. After 250m take the left hand fork and, shortly after that, cross over a wooden bridge. Bear left and keeping close to the wire fence on your left, follow a much narrower path along the line of a small river called 'Swill Brook'. (The *original path was on the other side of this fence, but this has now been designated an 'Otter corridor'*.) Keep an eye open for the yellow arrows indicating the path's direction as it twists and turns. Flagham Fen will shortly appear in front of you.

45 mins



View of Swill Brook

As you continue to keep close to the wire fence, your path will turn sharp left here in a westerly direction along a wide strip of grass. (You will see to your right that Flagham Fen has been surrounded by an electric fence. This is to facilitate the breeding of beavers on the lake). In due course you will pass a football pitch on your right, and then reach an information board about the 'Otter Corridor', and shortly after that the path will turn to the north so that the Flagham Fen will be close by on your right. At this point, you will encounter a wooden gate. Pass to the left of this gate along the narrow path with the wire fence on your right. *It is well worth scanning the lake on the right for gulls, tern and a variety of wildfowl.* After a few minutes you will come to a new house incorporating an older building, known as Howells Barn.

1 hr

Continue along the path here as it bends around in a 'U' shape and after 10 minutes turn left just before a metal gate. You are now entering a nature

reserve run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust although it is in Gloucestershire! *You may see hobbies here in the summer catching dragonflies in their claws.* After a further 5 minutes the path joins a tarmac lane running from the Spine Road to Minety. **1hr 15mins**

Turn left along this lane and continue for 10 minutes until you see a bridle path sign on the left pointing between a small public post box and a sign for Swillbrook Farm. Follow the bridle path, which at this stage is another tarmac lane, and proceed for just under 10 minutes until the lane bends round to the left. Here you will see a metal gate ahead and another on your right. *Here you have a choice, depending upon the conditions. If it is wet underfoot, it is recommended that you take the shorter alternative route, described in the text inset in the third paragraph below. You should in this case deduct about 15 minutes from the subsequent timings indicated.*



Swillbrook Farm

Pass through the right hand gate and head in a southerly direction for the small gap opposite you in the hedge on the far side of the field. *You should note that there is no footpath visible in either this or the next field.* Pass through the gap, crossing a ditch that has been forded by a wooden structure (known as a 'jump fence'). Walk uphill across the next narrow field, keeping parallel to the right hand hedge. Go through the metal gate in the top right hand corner. **1hr 55mins**

Turn sharp left and pass through the moveable stock barriers of Rigsby's Lane - an old 'Green Lane'. You are now heading east. *Note that this lane is often heavily overgrown and muddy.* Ignore the first set of aluminium gates on either side of the lane encountered after about 10 minutes, as well as the single aluminium gate on the left after about 12 minutes. The lane bends around to the north after about 15 minutes by an old wooden gate on the right. Continue along the lane ignoring a wooden hunting gate with two yellow arrows on it on the right, and then similarly ignoring a rusting iron gate on the right. You will now come across the second set of aluminium gates, one on either side of the lane. Pass through the gate on the right. *Ignore the text inset in the next paragraph.* **2hrs 20 mins**

Pass through the gate ahead and walk along the left hand hedge until you reach a metal gate in the far left hand corner of the field. Go through this gate and continue to a tree at the right hand end of a short length of hedge in front of you.

Continue for another 100m along the left hand hedge and then through a metal gate on your left. Head diagonally right for a short distance until you reach another metal gate in the corner. Proceed through this and along a track. As this track bends to the left go through a metal gate on the right hand side and on to a somewhat overgrown footpath. *This is Rigsby's Lane - an old 'Green Lane'*. Proceed along this path for about five minutes until you come to a set of aluminium gates, one on either side of the lane. Pass through the gate on the left. *You have now returned to the main walk.*

Cross the field to a gap in the hedge on the far side almost directly ahead of you. *There is no footpath visible here or indeed in any of the subsequent fields, but you will find the direction indicated with yellow arrows at many of the stiles.* You will see two metal gates in the hedge on the far side of the next field. Head to the one on the right and cross the stile immediately to the left of the gate.

Keep close to the hedge on your left when crossing the next field and leave it by a stile in the far left hand corner, having crossed a ditch with the assistance of a hand rail.

2hrs 45 mins

Bear very slightly left when crossing the next narrow field, pass over a stile in the opposite hedge and then a narrow footbridge. *Here you will be cutting across the remains of another green lane.* Proceed straight ahead into the next field. Now head diagonally left so that you meet the left hand hedge about a quarter of the way along. Pass through this hedge at the opening and then turn sharp right so that you are now walking parallel to it. Cross a stile ahead of you in the corner of the field and you will emerge into a much larger field. Head across to its far left hand corner where you will exit over a stile at a road junction.

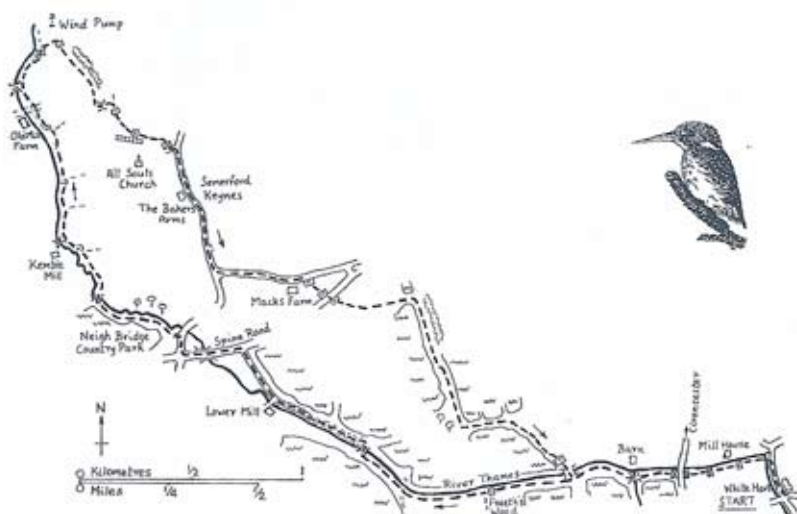
3hrs 15 mins

Turn left onto the Cirencester to Wootton Bassett Road. After 10 minutes, turn right into The Derry and then, after another 5 minutes, turn left at the cross roads. This is the High Road and you will be back at the White Hart Public House within a few minutes.

3hrs 35 mins

Walk Nine **KEYNES TO KEYNES**

This 6 mile walk follows the Thames Path upstream, and returns via Somerford Keynes village.



With the White Hart Public House on your right, set off in a northerly direction along the High Road. After 200yds turn left into Church Walk. Keeping the river on your right, continue along the road until it becomes a gravel track and then a footpath as it passes between two houses. Ignore a fork to the left immediately after these houses and proceed along the river bank on the Thames Path, passing a pumping station on your left, until you reach the Cirencester to Wootton Bassett Road.

Cross over the road and continue along the river bank. After about 10 minutes, go across a track used by mineral lorries, and ignore a path off to the right over a footbridge. *Here the path runs along Freeth's Wood to the south. This stretch of the Thames is rich in songbirds, including gold crests and long-tailed tits.* Continue on and then go over a stile (placed across the path to discourage cycling). Keep to the Thames Path, ignoring a turning to the left here to Poole Keynes. Eventually the path curves round to the right and the houses of the Lower Mill Estate come into view, as does a lake to your left. Ignore a wide track crossing in front of you over the river, but shortly after, cross a narrow metal bridge on your right, as directed by a signpost. *Both nightingale and kingfisher inhabit this area.*

Turn left after the bridge onto a track, which quickly becomes a tarmac road. *Over wintering wildfowl may be seen on the lake to your right.*

After about 10 minutes, you reach a 'T' junction at the Spine Road.

40 mins



Lake at Neigh Bridge

Go over the road and turn left, walking along the combined footpath and cycle track. After 200yds turn right at Neigh Bridge, and then left onto the Thames Path just past the entrance to the car park. Shortly the lake of Neigh Bridge Country Park comes into view. Although the path is sometimes indistinct, keep the River Thames, which now follows a somewhat meandering course, on your right and the lake on your left. *This is another location where you may see a kingfisher. The lake was notorious for being the dumping ground for the corpse of an underworld character called Chalky White.* At the end of the Country Park a substantial wooden bridge takes you into the next field.

55 mins



Footbridge over Thames

Follow the path, keeping the field boundary on your left, and in due course pass through a wooden kissing gate into the next field. Continue to keep the field boundary on your left and shortly you will reach a turning off to the left. *Although you do not take this turning as part of the walk, it is worth climbing on to the footbridge to view Kemble Mill.* In a few minutes, after ignoring a path across the field on your right you will reach a metal kissing gate. Now you are walking along the river bank. Pass through a second metal kissing gate and continue, with the aid of the yellow directional arrows, past the buildings of Old Mill Farm on your left. You will now come to a footbridge in the corner of the field. Do not cross this bridge, but turn right up the field, keeping the boundary on your left and the farm buildings behind you. Shortly before reaching the top of the field, turn left over a small bridge into a field containing the tower of a disused wind pump (now unfortunately without its windmill). **1hr 15 mins**



Turn sharp right at the end of the bridge, leaving the Thames Path, and continue along the boundary for about 100yds. Turn right across a stile located on the far side of a pair of metal gates. Now follow the path for about $\frac{1}{4}$ mile, keeping the field boundary on your left. You will notice in due course a line of telegraph poles coming in from your right. About 50yds before you would be due to pass under the wires, turn left,

crossing a pair of stiles at either end of a footbridge. Shortly, you will come to a signpost. Turn right here, follow the path, and then cross a stile into the next field. Traverse this field diagonally to the far left hand corner where you will reach a narrow stile immediately adjacent to a stone wall. Having crossed this stile, continue along the frontage of a house for about 30yds, and then take the path across the field towards a telegraph pole in the far right corner. Pass through the smaller of a pair of wooden gates, and climb down onto the road. Turn left and then almost immediately right at the 'T' junction. You will reach the Bakers Arms Public House after about 150yd **1hr 35mins.**

After a further $\frac{1}{3}$ mile, take the first turn left into Water Lane. Soon after the pavement ends you reach Macks Farm on the right. Climb over the stile at the end of the farm buildings, duck under a wire fence, and head across the field to a point in the far hedge, just to the left of the avenue of trees. Go

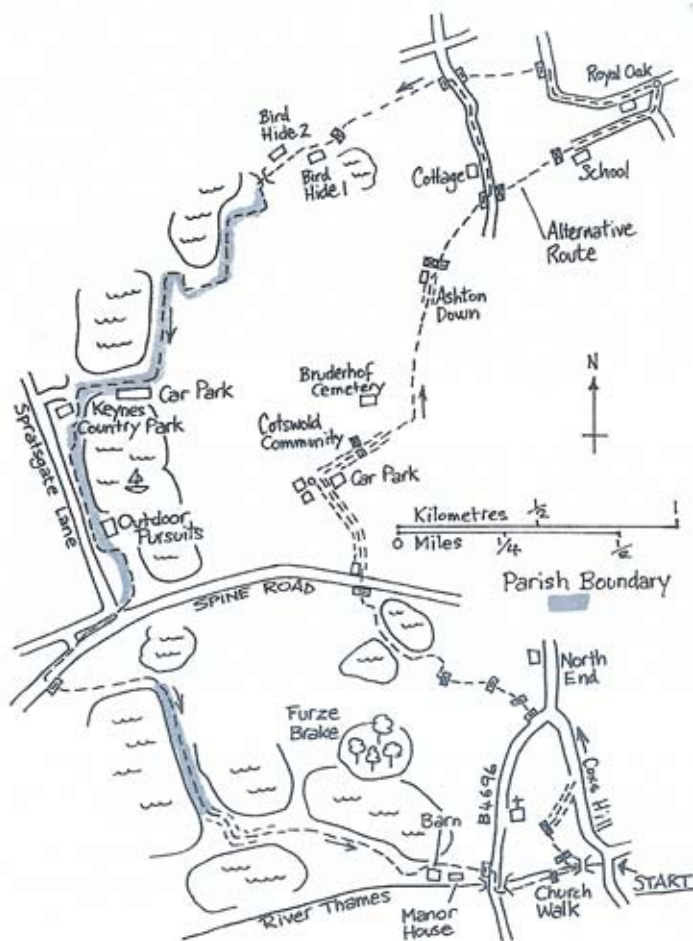
over a stile onto the Spine Road. *(As cattle are frequently kept in this field, the line of the path is indistinct. It is possible to avoid it by continuing along Water Lane until it joins the Spine Road, turning right, and then locating the stile as it exits from the field.)* **1hr 55mins**

Cross over the Spine Road itself, then the stile, and proceed along the narrow and sometimes indistinct footpath ahead. *(This is a landfill area, the geography of which is frequently changing. It is necessary to watch out for directional arrows.)* After about 100m the land rises slightly and the path passes through a thicket of brambles. You will now see a track crossing in front of you. Go over this track and continue on the narrow footpath as it heads off diagonally to the left. *There is normally a directional arrow on a post here.* The path now becomes more clearly defined and widens as it meets another path coming in from the left. *This is an excellent area for wild flowers - scabious, harebell and wild phlox.*

You now pass between two lakes as the path bends around to the right. Continue on the right hand of two parallel tracks *(the left hand one at a slightly higher level is privately owned.)* Towards the middle of the right hand lake, the path suddenly becomes much narrower, and eventually, as you near the end of the lake, a post with an arrow will direct you to the left. Follow as indicated, and then, shortly after, turn sharp right just before you reach the mineral lorry track. The footpath, often heavily overgrown, follows along the edge of this track for some way now. Continue on as the track and path turn to the left along the bottom of the lake. At the end of the lake, the track suddenly turns to the right but the path itself becomes indistinct. Follow the lorry track round to the right and to the point where it forks. You will see a barn in the distance at this point and the footpath signs on your right. Turn to the right taking the enclosed narrow path that runs roughly parallel to the right hand fork of the lorry track, about 3m to its right. In due course, you will cross the footbridge over the river that you ignored on the way out, and re-join the Thames Path. Turn left and retrace your steps to the White Hart Public House. **2hrs 30mins**

Walk Ten **AROUND KEYNES COUNTRY PARK**

A fairly long walk (6miles) incorporating some of the boundaries of the parish.



Start in Church Walk, near the centre of the village (you may park by the high stone wall on the left). Cross over the bridge with white railings, turn left and follow the path until you see a memorial gate ahead of you. Go through this and walk up the path towards the church. About half way along you will come across a pair of metal gates, one on each side of the path. Go through the one on the right and head across a field, passing to the left of a bungalow opposite and head for the left hand corner. *This field is sometimes planted and so the path is obliterated. In this case turn left just inside the*

gate and walk around the perimeter. Turn left on reaching the road and proceed for about 100m to a 'T' junction. Turn left here, taking care on this very dangerous road (the B4696), and after about 50m (just before the entrance to the 'Old Brickyard') cross over a stile in the hedge on the right hand side of the road. Shortly you will come to a pair of stiles. Cross these into the next field, and then head diagonally left to a stile in the fence opposite you, indicated by a raised post. Again cross into the next field and proceed straight ahead. At the far side cross a stile into a band of trees and after proceeding a short distance ahead, turn right onto a track. Follow this as it bends round to the left and then meets a wider track. Turn left onto the wider track and follow it as it turns to the right between two lakes. Eventually the track bends sharply to the left. Take a narrower path off to the right just after this bend. After about 50m, as this new path turns to the left, continue straight on instead and cross a stile ahead of you on to the Spine Road. *You will see opposite what appears to be a thatched bus shelter. It is in fact an old milk stand.*

30 mins

Cross the road and walk up a drive into the 'Cotswold Community'. *This is a residential centre for young people with social difficulties and is very much a community of its own - so please respect their privacy.* Just after the visitors' car park on the right you will find, indicated with a yellow arrow, a tarmac road off to the right. Take this, but as it bends to the left, continue straight ahead on a track and then climb over a stile to the right of a metal gate. Follow the track as it gradually rises in front of you. *If you look to your left you will see the Bruderhof Cemetery (for further details, see Walk 4)*

The path then curves to the left as the incline continues. *This is Ashton Down and, although it is only 68 feet higher than Ashton Keynes, as the path levels up you will get a view over the gravel works and the surrounding villages.* After a stretch on the level you reach a barn on your left. Bear right here and as the path ends, cross the stile to the right of a metal gate.

Head diagonally across the field towards what appears to be the far corner, and you will soon see a stile in the hedgerow to provide reassurance (*This field can sometimes be rather overgrown, and so the line of the path is not always clear. The stile is some 100yds from the left hand corner of the field as you face the road*). Cross the stile with care - it opens onto the road.

This is a dangerous road so proceed with great care. The walk will take you along this road for about 7 minutes. If you would prefer a safer alternative, follow the inset paragraph. It will add about 20 minutes to the

times stated. If you are happy to use the road continue to follow the text and ignore the inset paragraph.

Turn left and proceed along the road. After about 7 minutes, look out for a sign on the left warning of a cross-roads ahead. Turn left about 50m before this sign and cross a stile in the hedge.

Cross the road and pass through the gate, which is normally left open, directly opposite. Proceed straight across the field and then go over a bridge crossing Shire Brook, *the County Boundary*, on the far side. *(The path is not clearly defined across this field. If it is planted, you will need to turn right just inside the gate and walk around the perimeter.)* Go through a gate and continue in the same direction keeping to the left hand edge of the field. The path takes you past Ann Edwards School on the right, and then, as it becomes a road, past the back garden of the Royal Oak Public House on the left. After a short distance you reach a T-junction and a shop on the far side of the road. Turn left and follow the road for a short distance when you will come to the South Cerney War Memorial at another 'T' junction. Turn left again and follow the road round past the front of the Royal Oak Public House, and after a couple of minutes, you will come to a playing field on your left. Continue along the road past the children's recreational facilities until, immediately after a wheelchair ramp at the end of the playing field, you see a stile in the hedge. Turn left over this stile and follow the path across the field running parallel to the hedge on your left. At the end of this field you will see a telegraph pole on your right and behind that, a flagstone stile into the next field. Cross here and continue in the same direction until you pick up the hedge line again on your left. You will then cross a somewhat ramshackle bridge over a brook and reach a narrow strip of field, where you will see a stile in the hedge opposite. Cross the road with care and then the stile in the hedge opposite. *You pick up the walk again here.*

Follow the path across the field, through a gap in the hedge and on into the next field. *You can sometimes see deer to your right.* About 100m after this last hedge, the path turns left through a gate and then immediately right. You will shortly come to a bird hide on your left. *You can pause here a while and look out for some of the many species of bird to be found in this area eg Pochard, Egret and Cormorant.*

1hr 10 mins

Continue on past a second bird hide on your right and then shortly after, cross over a bridge. Follow the path round to the left as it runs parallel to a 'haul road' for mineral lorries, and then after 250m, as it turns to the right and crosses the 'haul road'. After another 250m the path turns left again.

Now follow it as it runs parallel to the side of a lake formed from mineral workings, then along the bottom and up the other side in a series of right turns. About 50m up the far side you will see a gap in the hedge on your left and another path running parallel to the one that you are on. Join this new path and turn left. You will now see on your right the smaller of the two lakes that form Keynes Country Park. Continue for about 500m keeping this lake on your right. The larger of the two lakes will now come into view ahead of you. The path now bends to the right as it runs between the lakes and you will shortly see on your left the shop and administrative offices of the Cotswold Water Park. *It is worth stopping here for a while to see some of the exhibits. You can also buy light refreshments, if you wish.* **2hrs**



Keynes Country Park.

Continue on now with the longer side of the lake on your left. You will pass a number of items of recreational equipment. Ignore a small car park with an exit to the road about two thirds of the way along on your right and continue to the end of the lake where the path forms a 'T' junction. Turn right and shortly after you will come out at a point where a branch of Spratsgate Lane meets the main Spine Road. Although you need to turn right along the Spine Road, this is best achieved, for safety reasons, by following the cycle track. It crosses Spratsgate Lane and then runs parallel to the Spine Road behind a line of trees. It then bends to the left and runs along the Spine Road itself. You will shortly cross another branch of Spratsgate Lane. Stay on the cycle path for about 100m beyond this point,

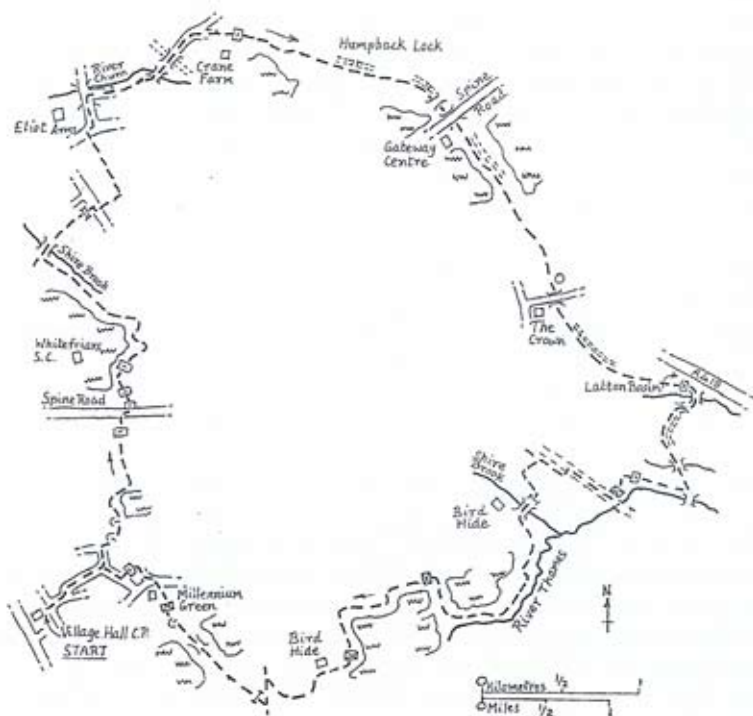
and look out for a stile in the hedge on the opposite side of the Spine Road. Cross over the road, then the stile, and proceed along the narrow and sometimes indistinct footpath ahead. (*This is a landfill area, the geography of which is frequently changing. It is necessary to watch out for directional arrows.*) After about 100m the land rises slightly and the path passes through a thicket of brambles. You will now see a track crossing in front of you. Go over this track and continue on the narrow footpath as it heads off diagonally to the left. *There is normally a directional arrow on a post here.* The path now becomes more clearly defined and shortly widens as it meets another path coming in from the left. *This is an excellent area for wild flowers - scabious, harebell and wild phlox.*

You now pass between two lakes as the path bends around to the right. Continue on the right hand of two parallel tracks (*the left hand one at a slightly higher level is privately owned.*) Towards the middle of the right hand lake, the path suddenly becomes much narrower, and eventually, as you near the end of the lake, a post with an arrow will direct you to the left. Follow as indicated, and then, shortly after, turn sharp right just before you reach the mineral lorry track. The footpath, often heavily overgrown, follows along the edge of this track for some way now. Continue on as the track and path turn to the left along the bottom of the lake. At the end of the lake, the track suddenly turns to the right but the path itself becomes indistinct. Follow the lorry track round to the right where it forks. You will see a barn in the distance at this point. Take the footpath that leads ahead between the two arms of the fork. You should now be heading roughly one hand span to the left of the barn. *Note that the path can be partially submerged in winter.* As you near the lake, look over to the left where you will see an island called Furze Brake. *You can see both herons and cormorants here.* Turn right when you reach the edge of the lake and continue on past a small quay. You will shortly pass the barn and then a derelict manor house on your right. *The passage of time has left it isolated, well away from the modern village.* Keep close to the wooden fence on your left until you reach a stile. Climb over this, cross the road and then turn right. Once again, *take care on this very dangerous stretch of road.* You will shortly reach the point where the Thames Path crosses the road. Turn left through a gate on to this path and continue with the pumping station fence on your right. After a couple of minutes you will reach another gate. Go through this gate and then after another couple of minutes, cross a stile. In a few moments, you will come out into Church Walk.

2hrs 45mins.

Walk Eleven *SOUTH CERNEY and CRICKLADE*

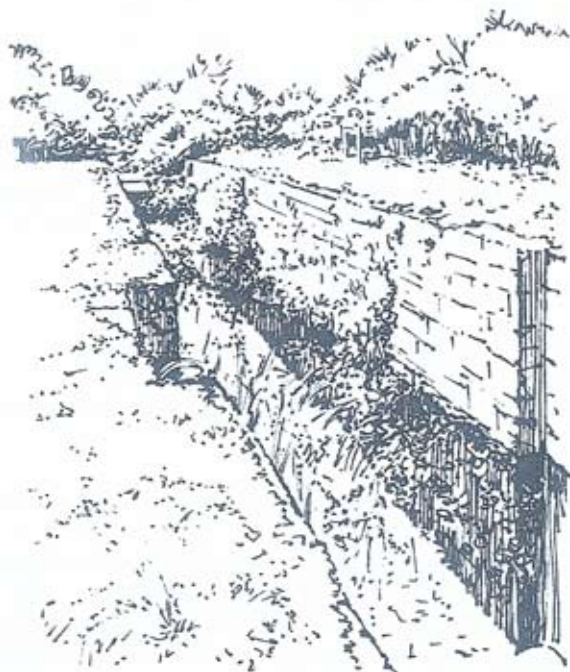
This long walk (12 miles) takes you along the towpaths of two canals



Park in the Village Hall car park located off the road behind the garage. Leave the car park through the vehicle entrance, turn left, immediately right, and then shortly after, left again. As this road bends to the right you will be in Fore Street. At the end of this road turn left. Look out for a signpost on your left after about 50m. Do not turn right here but continue forward for another 50m. As the road bends to the left, turn right by a stone wall and follow the narrow path between some houses. Go through a kissing gate and after a couple of minutes through a second. Continue ahead now keeping close to the hedge on your left. Follow the path as it bears round to the right, and after a further 400m., turn sharp left through a gap in the hedge. Proceed ahead, again following the line of the hedge on your left. Eventually the hedge bends to the right at the end of the field, but you continue ahead over a stile. Passing a car park on your right, you will shortly come out on to the Spine Road.

Cross over this road and turn right, walking along the cycle track. After about 100m, turn left on to a footpath through the trees. You will cross a stile after a few minutes and a second one a few minutes after that. Ignore the yellow sign pointing to the left at this second stile. You will shortly reach Whitefriars Lake. Turn right and follow the path around the lake. In due course you will see the Whitefriars Sailing Club situated on a promontory on the far side in the lake. The path shortly merges into a wider grass covered area and becomes less distinct. Continue on, keeping the lake on your left, and note that the path eventually becomes visible again as it narrows considerably. Note also the electricity transmission lines overhead, running in the same direction as the path. When you reach a 'T' junction turn right over a bridge crossing Shire ditch, which marks the border between Wiltshire and Gloucestershire. Follow the path until it comes to an end at the main road (Broadway Lane). Cross over the road, turn right and almost immediately after turn left along a narrow path running alongside a bungalow. 1hr

You will come to a 'T' junction shortly where you turn left and cross a metal stile. Follow the path until it becomes a tarmac road and then continue in the same general direction. In due course you will reach the main road, which you cross over, turn right and then almost immediately left, following the direction of the road sign to Cirencester and Preston. Keeping to the pavement on the left of the road continue past the Eliot Arms Public House and on to a bridge. Cross over the road at this point and then turn right into a much narrower road with the unusual name of Bow Wow. *As you proceed along this road, note the attractive willow trees overhanging the river Churn on your left.* In due course the road bends to the left over a stone bridge and then starts to ascend. At the top of the hill you will cross the track of the disused Midland & South Western Junction Railway (*See Walk Five for an historical note*). After a further 250m you will come to a footpath crossing the road. Turn right here following a sign to Crane Farm. Shortly on your left you will see Boxwell Springs lock on the Thames and Severn Canal. *There is an information board here giving some of the history of the canal.*



Boxwell Springs Lock

As you pass this lock the path starts to bear round to the right into Crane Farm. You, however, stay on the former towpath of the canal by crossing a stile here. Continue on the path keeping a lookout for a disused lock called Humpback lock, and later another lock by a restored house. Pass under an old brick bridge here and then under a more modern bridge which carries the Spine Road.

2hrs

You will see on your right the Gateway Centre which consists of an outdoor clothing and accessories shop as well as an information centre with a cafeteria. There is a well preserved mammoth's head exhibited here, which was unearthed locally during mineral extraction. You can shorten the walk at this point by going up to the Spine Road from the Centre and turning left. After about 2miles (just past Fridays Ham Lane on the left) you will come to the car park on your left which you passed through earlier on the walk. Retrace your steps to Ashton Keynes

Carry on along the towpath. After approximately 15minutes you will come to an old canal round house by a lock on your left and a country road crossing in front of you. Go over the road and re-join on the towpath.

If you turn right along this country road you will shortly reach the Crown public house where you can take some refreshment. You can also shorten the walk here, by following part of the route set out in Walk Five. Go to the inset piece of text and then to the sentence starting 'The return footpath'. Follow the instructions until you reach Fore Street in Ashton Keynes, and then re-trace your steps.



The Crown Inn - Cerney Wick

After another 15 minutes you will arrive at a place called Latton Basin, which is the old junction of the Thames and Severn Canal with the Wilts and Berks Canal. You will pass an information board on your right and shortly after leave over a stile. *It is worth stopping to read this information board, although note that on the map shown there, your direction of travel will be from left to right.* Turn sharp right onto a road over the river, and then right again following the gravel path as it bears round to the left over a cattle grid. As the path swings right into the drive of the restored lock keeper's cottage, keep to the left and follow a much narrower path. This crosses a wooden bridge and then turns to the right. Follow it as it descends and then bears right up a bank. Turn left at the top of the bank along the towpath of the old Wilts and Berks Canal.

In due course you will cross a wooden bridge over a stream and come out into more open country. *On your left you will see an area known as North Meadow and an information board. North Meadow is an important nature reserve, rich in both fauna and flora.* Continue in the same direction until you encounter another bridge which crosses the Thames. Do not go over this bridge but turn right along the Thames Path. *If you wish to visit Cricklade you can turn left here instead and follow the Thames Path into the town centre.* Follow the path as it meanders close to the river bank. Go over a stile into the next field and continue on the path as it turns sharp left. You will soon see an old railway bridge ahead of you. Follow the path as it bends to the right and widens a little. Ascend a bank and pass through a

metal gate onto the track bed of the old Midland & South Western Junction Railway that you crossed over much earlier at South Cerney. Turn right here and after 250m turn left at the sign post. Follow the path as it bears to the right and after a further 200m turn left at the sign post. After a while the path bears round to your left taking you back in the general direction from which you have just come. However, after another 250m you turn right over a low wooden barrier and follow the narrow path. *You can sometimes see deer in the field to your right. To your left and slightly behind you, Hailstone House is sometimes visible on the hill, particularly in winter when the trees are not out.* The path shortly crosses the county boundary at Shire Brook via a narrow bridge where you reach a 'T' junction with a metal gate on your right. *If you pass through the metal gate you can visit a bird hide which will be on your left after about 50m.* **3hrs 30 mins**

To continue the walk, do not go through the gate but turn left and follow the track. In due course a lake will come into view on your right, and the path will get closer to it as it bends around to the right. Shortly you will see another lake appearing from your left. The path eventually bends around to the left and passes through a gate. The lake on your left is known as Manorbrook Lake. Continue on the path as it follows the lake and eventually passes through a second gate. You will then pass a bird hide on your right. When in due course the path comes to a 'T' junction, turn left and then right after 50m. Continue along this gravelled path between two wire fences. About 100m after crossing an iron bridge, you will come to a path off to the left and then another off to your right. Ignore both of these and keep straight on until you pass through a kissing gate into the Ashton Keynes 'Millennium Green'. After a couple of minutes go through a second gate into the Bradstone Sports Field. Pass fairly close to the pavilion (the path is not visible here) and then join the gravel track used by cars. Follow this until it bends to the right where you will find a gate in the hedge. Pass thorough this gate onto the road and turn left. You will shortly come across a signpost on your right indicating a path along a track between some houses. Turn right down this track, which shortly becomes a footpath. Cross over a stile and then bear to the left. The path passes between some houses before coming out into Kent End. Turn right and continue to Fore Street which is the third turning on your left (the first being immediately opposite the point where the footpath comes out into Kent End). Now retrace your steps to the Village Hall car park. **4hrs 40 mins**

LOCAL PUBLIC HOUSES

The Horse and Jockey Inn, Gosditch, Ashton Keynes (01285) 861270

(All walks)

The White Hart Inn, High Road, Ashton Keynes (01285) 861247

(All walks)

The Crown Inn, Cerney Wick (Walks Five and Eleven) (01793) 750369

The Royal Oak Inn, South Cerney (Walk Four) (01285) 860298

The Bakers Arms, Somerford Keynes (Walk Nine) (01285) 861298

The Wild Duck Inn, Ewen (Walk Nine detour) (01285) 770310



"The White Hart"



"The Horse & Jockey"

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