

PIDDINGTON

CIRCULAR WALK AND VILLAGE TRAIL

Circular walk 4.5miles / 7km Time 3hours

Piddington Circular Walk and Village Trail

The **Piddington Circular Walk** is an attractive rural route taking in Muswell Hill, the highest viewpoint in the southern half of Cherwell District. It starts from the village hall where there is usually ample parking (please see 'By Car' instructions below). With the co-operation of the landowners, all of the stiles on the route were replaced by gates in 2011, except for at point 7.

The **Piddington Village Trail** can be followed on its own as a linear route or as part of the circular walk. It takes you through the picturesque village noting points of historical interest. The route offers an easy level walk which is suitable for pushchairs and wheelchairs.

The circular walk is clearly described and waymarked but it helps to follow the information in this leaflet as you go. Please note changes can occur so before setting out on your walk, check on Cherwell District Council's walks pages for updates in the leaflet text or along the route - www.cherwell.gov.uk/circularwalks
The walk is explained and signed in a clockwise direction but once you have familiarised yourself with the route, you can walk it either way.

Getting there

The Piddington Circular Walk starts at the village hall on the Ludgershall Road.
To find it on a mapping website or using satellite navigation, the grid reference is 'SP641174' and the post code is OX25 1PU.

By Train: Bicester North station is between Banbury and London (National Rail timetable 115). Bicester Town station is linked to Oxford (National Rail timetable 116).

By Bus: Charlton on Otmoor Service 94 stops in Piddington and links to both Oxford and Bicester but this is an irregular service. Call 01865 331249 for details.

By Car: Park in the village hall car park. Occasionally this may be full when the hall is being used. If this is the case, please park responsibly on village streets. Large groups planning to walk the route should contact the village hall number ahead of time - 07926 620422.



Additional Information

The text of this leaflet can be made available in other languages, large print, braille, audio or electronic format on request. Please contact 01295 227001.

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 01295 227001

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ। 01295 227001

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。01295 227001

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01295 227001

All of Cherwell District Council's circular walks and rides are published on the council website and can be downloaded free. Leaflets can be purchased from Banbury Tourist Information Centre 01295 259855. For further information about circular walks and rides, please contact:-

21 Continue to and through the gate ahead onto the road. Turn right along the Arcott Road for approx 600 metres to its junction with the main road through the village. Turn right and then left along the Ludgershall Road, back to the village hall.

20 Turn left and continue straight along the field edge and through another gate.

18 Pass through gate and head down through the next field to a field gate/gap to the right on the next boundary ahead.

19 Continue along the field edge (on your left) and pass through the next gate ahead.

17 Follow the field edge all the way down the slope to the corner of the field and then bear right. When fencing is in place, you may find a stretch of wire that can be unhooked and allow you through. Carry on towards a gate (just to the left of a large oak tree).

16 Pass through gate, cross the main Thame Road with great care and go through two more gates.

15 Turn right along the path and continue, following the main track and signs along the edge of the wood. The track is deeply rutted in places and can be very wet and muddy during certain seasons so take care. A series of paths have been cleared through the main part of the wood if you wish to explore.

14 Turn right onto a footpath and continue along the field edge. Go through a gap in a fenceline (which may be in place) and continue to the corner of the field, turning right and then left through a gate into Piddington Wood.

KEY

- Route
- Other footpaths
- Steep
- Views
- Points of interest **A**

13 Continue along a deeply rutted track and then bear to the right of the hedge ahead, rather than going through the gate/gateway to the left. Continue with this hedge on your left until it ends.

12 Bear left and cross a bridge over the ditch. Stay close to the field edge and pass through four gates. Look back as you walk along this stretch to see Muswell Hill and the Civil War gun platforms (point of interest C).



1 Turn right out of the village hall car park and then turn left onto the main village street. Continue, past East Brook Close and the former village pub on your left.

2 Pass St Nicholas Church (don't turn right) and carry on for about 150 metres along Vicarage Lane to a gate on the right, just after the last of four bungalows. Go through the small pedestrian gate and follow the narrow path between the ditch and wire fence to another gate on the edge of the village.

3 Go through gate, bear left and continue through the next field towards the gates in the field boundary to your left. Notice Muswell Hill ahead of you.

4 Pass through the kissing gate and head slightly right and up the slope (through the ridge and furrow field) towards the next field boundary. Remember to look back and see the Manor House (No 1 in the Village Trail).

5 Go through two gates and walk through the next field keeping close to the field edge. Go through the next gate and continue straight on across a track and then adjacent to it to another gate and gateway.

6 Go through gate, continue steeply uphill and pass through another gate. Take care as this next stretch is steep, uneven and can be slippery when wet. Remember to take a break and look back to enjoy the view of Piddington village. Continue, staying as close to the field edge as conditions allow, until the path levels out and the ground slopes steeply away to your right (the Wilderness - see point of interest A).

7 Cross stile in the corner of the field (or go through gate if it is unlocked) and turn right along a tarmac drive. You are now on a brideway which marks the county boundary with Buckinghamshire until the end of direction 13.

8 You are now near the summit of Muswell Hill. Take time to enjoy the view and pick out the features as described in this leaflet (point of interest B). Continue along drive until you reach the Brill Road and cross with care.

9 Go through bridlegate adjacent to a field edge plantation of trees and you will start to descend along the bridleway. Pass around the corner of a fenced area.

10 Continue downhill, staying fairly close to the field edge on your left. This section is quite long and steep so take your time and remember to enjoy the view. Notice Oakcroft Farm below.

11 Head straight on through a scrubby area, pass through a gate into the next field and continue to the road ahead which brings you to the flat. Go through field gate, cross the Thame Road with great care and through another gate.

Preparation

- Wear appropriate clothing and strong, comfortable footwear. Trousers, strong boots or wellingtons are recommended as parts of the route are very steep and are very often wet and muddy.
- Carry water.
- Take a mobile phone if you have one but bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas.
- If you are walking alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.

Things to remember

- Much of the route is across grazing land so if you bring your dog with you, keep it under close control and on a lead through stocked fields. However, current advice recommends you should not walk between a cow and her calf and, if you are threatened by cattle, you should let the dog off the lead.
- You may come across temporary fencing not mentioned in the leaflet as farmers will use this in different places to manage their livestock throughout the year. Provision for walkers to get through this fencing safely should always be made – please let us know if this is not the case
- Ground nesting birds can be disturbed by dogs, particularly in the Spring, so please keep them under close control.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Remember that the countryside is a working place - leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates and property as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.
- Take great care when crossing the busy roads.
- Many of the buildings described are private dwellings. Please respect the privacy of residents by viewing from a polite distance.
- Park your car responsibly. Do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home.

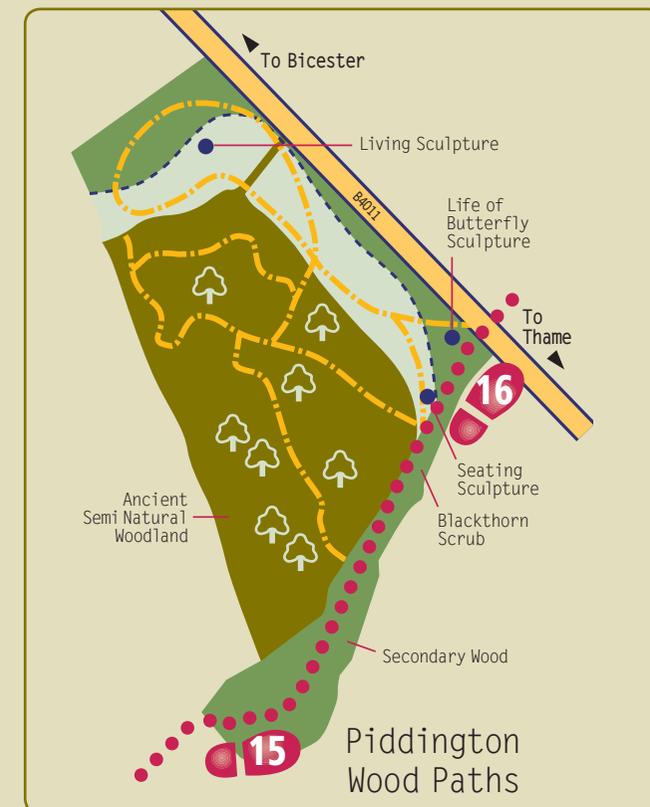
Points of interest

A The **WILDERNESS**, a strange dark area of uneven ground adjacent to point 6, is said to have been a Roman signal station for Alchester (as Bicester was known then). In the dark ages the area was left to become overgrown, as the Anglo-Saxons believed all Roman sites to be haunted. So beware.

B On a clear day you can see for miles from the summit of **MUSWELL HILL**, sometimes as far as the Cotswolds. See if you can spot Bullingdon Prison in the distance and the crossroads known as the Piddington Pitches down below, where the Parliamentary army pitched during the civil war. In 1152 a chapel was built on Muswell Hill by Ralph the hermit and the parishioners of Piddington used to hold a procession to it on the feast days of the Holy Cross. In 1488 the lord of Muswell granted them a right of way to the chapel across his land for six shillings and eightpence. The last ruins disappeared in about 1800.

C A large part of **MUSWELL HILL** is a Local Wildlife Site which has been selected due to the presence of lowland meadow which is an important national habitat. Although not visible from the circular route, **BOARSTALL** was important in the Civil War as a royalist stronghold. What can be seen (looking back from point 12) are the gun platforms which the Parliamentary army cut into the side of Muswell Hill. They were trained on Boarstall's fortified manor house. All that remain today are the tower, moat, church and landscaped gardens. Boarstall Tower and surrounds are now owned by the National Trust and the gardens are open to visitors.

D **PIDDINGTON WOOD** (and Little Wood which you will have already passed) is an isolated block of ancient woodland which is a remnant of the Bernwood hunting forest. Ancient woodland is land that has been continually wooded since at least 1600AD and so is rich in wildlife.



In medieval times Bernwood covered 200 square miles and 50 parishes including Arccott and Piddington. The Woodland Trust purchased 9.7 hectares in 1989 with the help of a grant from Cherwell District Council (CDC). Prior to this there was no public access due to the impenetrable nature of the wood and private ownership. The system of 'rides' or paths which once existed through the wood has been recreated, allowing walkers to leave the main circular walk for a while and enjoy the wood even more. The woodland was expanded in 2002 (again with the help of CDC) to include 5.9 hectares of neighbouring farmland. A number of sculptures produced by Sue Benenson were added in 2003 expressing several stages in the lifecycle of the Black Hairstreak butterfly and its relationship to the woodland habitat.

Take time to explore the wood if you can, particularly in the Spring when the display of flowers is a sight not to be missed. You can find out more about the Woodland Trust by looking at www.woodland-trust.org.uk or telephoning (01476) 581111.

Piddington Village Trail

The picturesque village of Piddington can be enjoyed as part of the overall route as well as by those who only want a short stroll.

Turn right out of the village hall car park. Then turn right onto the main village street (Thame Road) and continue to the junction with the Arncott Road. Turn around here and you will be ready to stroll back through Piddington, noting its historical features.

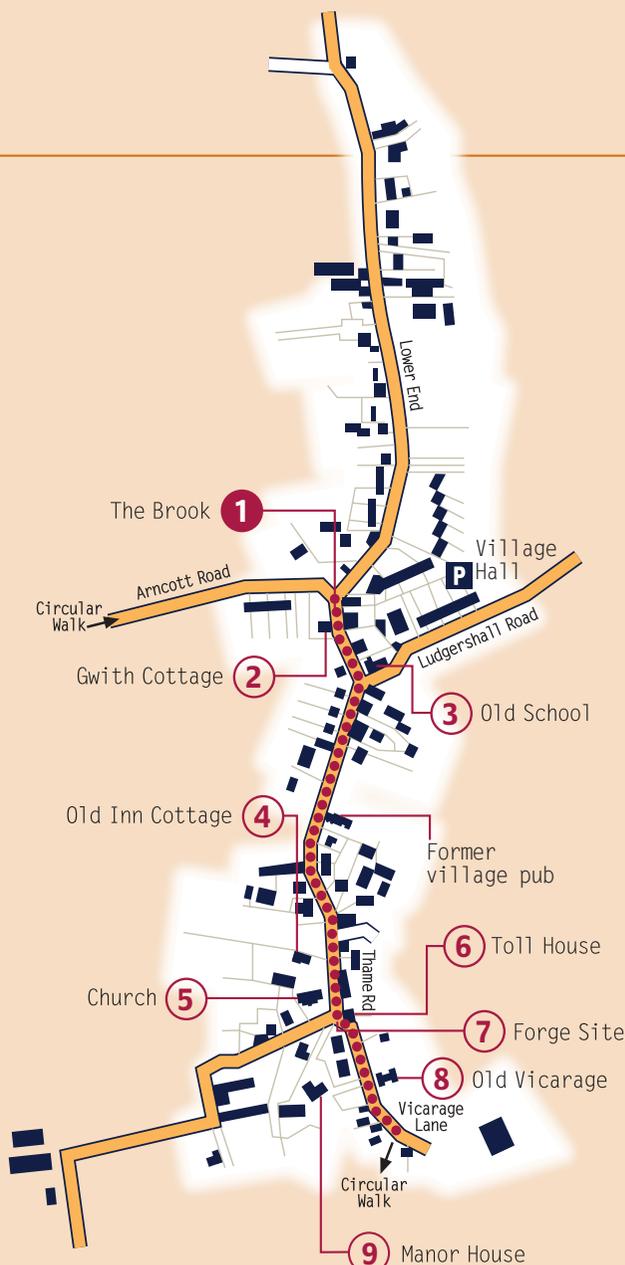
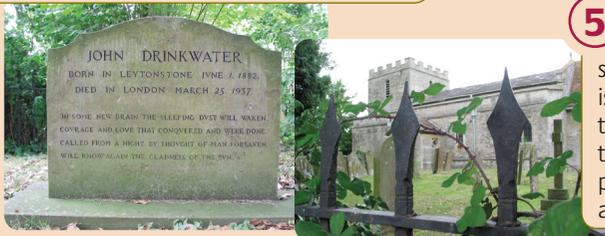
1 The Brook - Note the brook running along the right hand side of the street. It was the primary source of drinking water for the village prior to 1886.

2 Gwith Cottage - On the right just after the junction with Arncott Road, this cottage used to be the wheelwrights. The census of 1851 showed 13 craftsmen and tradesmen in the village, including a baker, blacksmith, shoemakers, bricklayers and carriers.



3 The Old School - On the left at the junction with the Ludgershall Road. Now a private house. Built in the 1860s, it was attended by up to 44 children from the village and surrounding farms.

4 Old Inn Cottage - Next to the church is the Old Inn cottage, a small thatched house, which is said to have been the inn for the masons who built the church.



5 The Church of St Nicholas - The church with its sturdy squat tower has parts dating back to 1300 and is worth a visit. A fact sheet can be found on the wall to the left of the door as you enter. Under a tree opposite the church porch is the grave of John Drinkwater, the poet, who spent his youthful summers here with relatives at Manor Farm.

6 Toll House - The small brick cottage just over to the right from the church gates used to be the toll house at the Piddington Pitches crossroads until it was removed and rebuilt here.

7 The Old Forge - The parking area at the junction of the Thame Road and Vicarage Lane is the site of the village smithy, which closed in the early 1900s.

8 The Old Vicarage - Bear left along Vicarage Lane and pass what used to be the vicarage on your left. In 1823, after the previous one had become too dilapidated to repair, this was the new vicarage, formed by knocking two cottages together. Before 1923 vicars of Piddington were appointed by election, with all adult inhabitants entitled to vote. To ensure that such occasions ran smoothly, refreshments would be provided for the electors. After the 1821 election the church received a bill for 14 gallons of ale!

9 Manor House - The Manor can only be seen from the circular walk. So for those interested and able, go through the first two gates of the circular route and a view of the Manor will be revealed if you look back. The side you can see is the oldest part of the building, dating from the seventeenth century.



If you do not plan to continue on the circular walk, turn around and make your way back through the village to the village hall.