

Pilgrim Paths

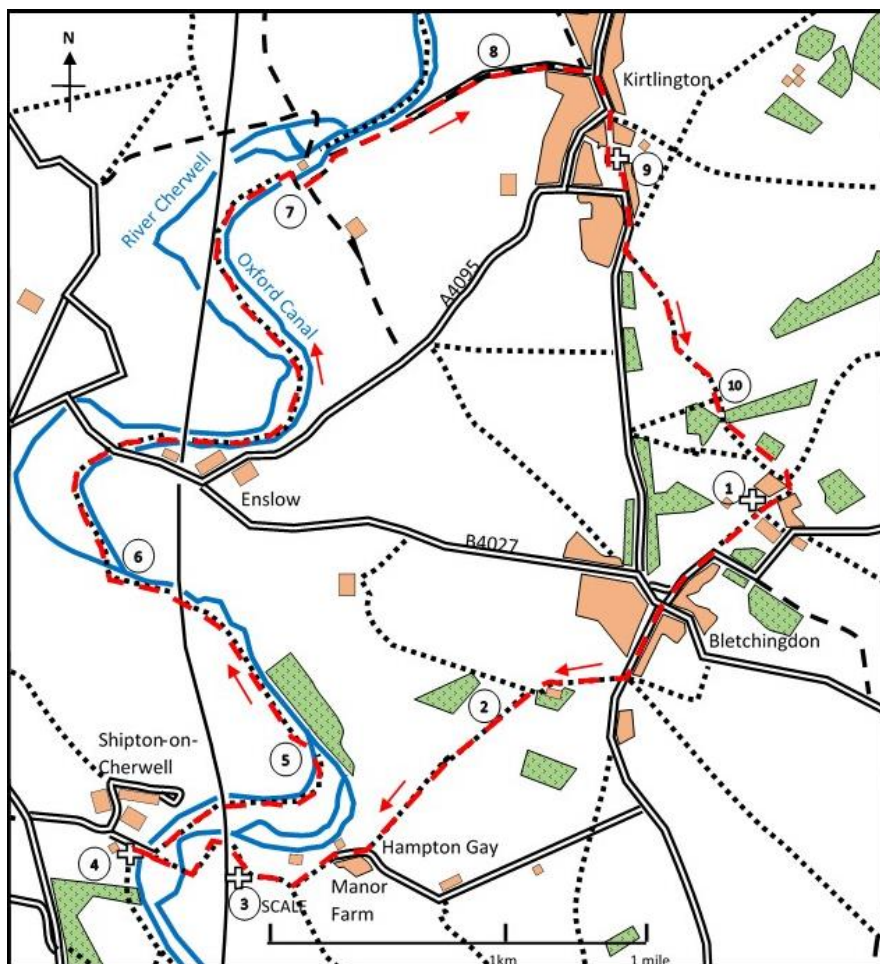
Bletchington, Hampton Gay, Kirtlington Circular Walk

Distance: 7.6 miles

A pilgrimage is a spiritual journey to a sacred place.

This leaflet offers Bible passages and reflections to accompany your journey, with suggestions of places to pause. Please allow much more time than you would usually spend on a walk to be able to contemplate the journey.

The circular walk may include road walking through villages, footpaths through woods and fields and negotiating some stiles. You may also encounter sheep, cattle or horses grazing in the fields.



KEY

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|--|--------------|
| | Pilgrim Path |
| | Road |
| | Bridleway |
| | Footpath |
| | River |
| | Railway |
| | Station |
| | Village/Farm |
| | Woods |
| | Church |

FOR ADDITIONAL WALKS
PLEASE FIND US ON
FACEBOOK
at
**Bicester and Islip Deanery
Pilgrim Paths**

START

Park in the church car park (1).

LOCATION: Church of St Giles, Bletchington



Pause, Reflect & Pray

Be with us, Lord God, as we set out today. Open our eyes to see the beauty of your creation and open our hearts to receive your love.

Amen.



The parish church of St Giles is believed to date from the eleventh century and has traces of Norman architecture still visible, including a Norman lintel on the south wall. There have been many additions and changes over the years from the 13th century Early English Gothic chancel, the 15th century nave and the 1695 four-centred arch south porch. A fragment of a 15th century wall painting survived the reformation and can be seen in the chancel.



After visiting the church turn right through the metal gates and take the path until you come to a road. Continue straight ahead (it is advisable to stay on the left side of the road). At the crossroads with the B4027 cross over, taking care. Continue straight onto Oxford Road, signposted Hampton Poyle. At the end of the row of houses on the left there is a junction of footpaths; take the footpath on the right marked 'Hampton Gay 1'. Continue towards a barn in the far corner of the field, passing through a gate with a stile. Take the path to the right of the leylandii hedge to the end of the barn and go through a gate into a small paddock, following the footpath signs around the farm buildings. Turn right along the farm track for 100 metres until you reach another farm track on the left. Turn left and you will almost immediately reach a footpath going diagonally right through a series of seven gates (2). (At certain times of year, these fields are made into temporary paddocks and you may be directed to take an alternative route instead). The path continues into a field in the same direction as the path through the gates, with a small wood a short distance to the right. Follow the path across the field to a stile on the right. Cross over and continue along the path as it drops downhill to a metal gate and ditch. Cross over the stream, through the gate, across another field and through a second metal gate, where you meet a tarmac road. Turn right and continue along the road, passing Manor Farm on the left and into a field. As you continue walking, the derelict manor house of Hampton Gay will be on your right.



The 16th century manor house was destroyed by a fire in 1887. Originally the manor stood at the centre of a village, with a church, a mill and cottages to house the villagers. Today these ruins stand alone in the middle of a field and the remains of the cottages lie underground, marked only by raised plots and ways between the manor and the church.



As you cross the field St Giles' Church (3) will appear ahead of you. A path to the right will take you to the church. Enter St Giles' Church via the churchyard gate.



LOCATION: Church of St Giles, Hampton Gay



Photo: Barbara Walton



St Giles' Church is not usually open, however a key can be obtained with prior arrangement from the churchwardens. It is an unusual church, on its own in the middle of a field, with no water or electricity. The church was rebuilt in 1767 by The Rev'd Thomas Hindes, whose extended family owned the manor at the time. The current church shows this Georgian rebuild in the gallery, the coving and the panelled ceiling on the inside, and the stone ball finial and weather vane on the roof. A subsequent rebuild was undertaken in 1859 by the curate, The Rev'd Francis Hingeston, to convert the church to Early English Gothic style.



Photo: Barbara Walton

Pause, Reflect & Pray

As you stand in the field behind the church looking at the manor, see the ridges on the landscape, which is all that remains of the village, consider our human frailty and fragility and the almightiness of God.

Yesterday, today and forever more you remain God.

Thank you for your faithfulness in our weakness, your courage in the hard times, and your peace in times of rest where we can just be in your presence. Amen.

After visiting the church, retrace your steps back to the churchyard gate. Facing towards the derelict manor house, take the path leading off to the left. Follow the path, with the church now on your left, towards the river and railway bridge.

Stop at the bridge, the site of a major railway crash on Christmas Eve 1874. A train of 13 carriages and 2 engines left Oxford on the way to Birmingham Snow Hill. A wheel broke and carried numerous carriages into the canal below, killing 34 people and seriously injuring 69.



Pause, Reflect & Pray

While this decade was part of an era of growth through the Industrial Revolution, it was also the time of many terrible rail disasters.

Thank you, Lord, for the great men and women who used the creativity you gave them to imagine and design the machinery and technology that powers our world today and keeps us safe. May future generations continue to develop and flourish as we look to conquer the new dragons of climate change and environmental degradation. Amen.

Pass underneath the railway. Follow the footpath marker across the field between the telegraph poles aiming towards the footbridge and Holy Cross Church (4) at Shipton-on-Cherwell, visible ahead on the far bank. Cross over a stile by a farm gate and then over a second stile. If you wish to visit the church, cross the canal bridge. A short distance after the bridge a path on the left leads up to the church.



LOCATION: Church of the Holy Cross, Shipton-on-Cherwell



This Grade 2 listed church stands above the flood plain of the River Cherwell, alongside the Oxford Canal, in the Deanery of Woodstock. The Saxon font is evidence of the church's medieval history and it is recorded that a Saxon chancel arch had to be demolished in the 1831 rebuilding. The cross by the churchyard gate appears to represent several periods. The shaft is probably late medieval, the head 19th century, while the massive base is thought to be 12th century. Prior to the rebuilding, it stood near the west end of the church. That it became a venerated object is suggested by the earliest recorded dedication of the church to the Holy Cross.



Pause, Reflect & Pray

As you walk along the canal, reflect on the beauty of nature.

God, we thank you for the trees, the flowers, the grass and the water.

All of your creation which you have given us for our enjoyment.

Thank you Lord. Amen.

If coming from the church retrace your steps to the canal bridge. Cross the canal and then walk under the bridge to pick up the path on the right bank of the canal. Alternatively, if just continuing the walk, turn right at the bridge and along the canal path under the bridge. Continue along the path beside the canal for a little over three miles which in places can become flooded, eroded or narrow. Cross to the left bank at Shipton Weir Lock (5), continuing towards Enslow.



Pause, Reflect & Pray

Reflect, as you walk along, how Jesus and His disciples must have walked many miles in His ministry to the sick and to teach.

Maybe greet boaters as they chug along the waterway.

Jesus' encounters with people were life-changing.

How might you represent Him today?



Where the canal and river divide (6), follow the path over the bridge. On approaching Enslow, where you cross under the B4027, continue along the towpath (not over the bridge), signposted 'Lower Heyford 5'.

Continue along the route through Enslow and on to Pigeon Lock (7).



At Pigeon Lock you will go under a bridge. Follow the path up the steps and across the bridge over the canal to the right bank, as shown. On the left, you will see a dirt road going slightly uphill, running parallel with the canal. Proceed along the road and onwards, past Kirtlington Quarry (8)

(now a nature reserve and SSSI, with a geological trail) and into Kirtlington. As you pass by a village green on the left, you will meet the main road (A4095) and turn right. It is advisable to cross with care and walk on the pavement on the left. Continue until you come to The Dashwood cafe on the right. Do not follow the A4095. Instead, cross over the small road leading to the village hall and take Church Lane towards St. Mary's Church (9) as marked on the photo.



LOCATION: Church of St Mary the Virgin, Kirtlington





King Edward held a meeting of his Council (which included the future St. Dunstan) at Kirtlington in 977, but nothing visible survives from this period. The earliest known record for the parish church of St. Mary the Virgin is in the Domesday Book of 1086. The oldest visible parts of the church are the 12th century Norman arches supporting the bell tower in the centre of the church and a tympanum over the vestry door.



Photo: Barbara Walton

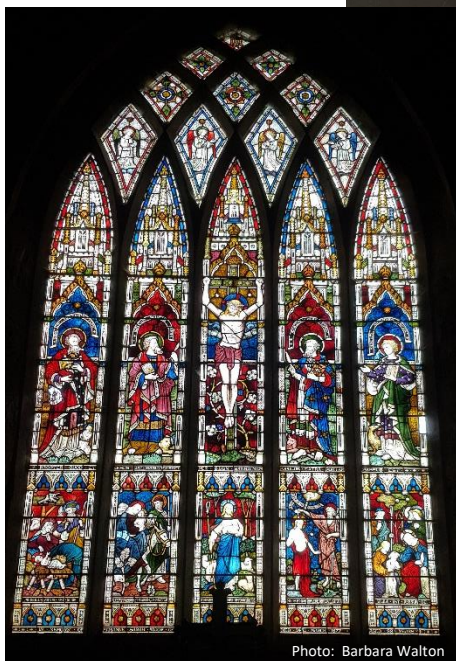


Photo: Barbara Walton

The stunning Victorian stained glass behind the altar, is a commemorative window to Marianne Sarah Dashwood who died in 1877. The Dashwood family was responsible for several generations of refurbishing the Lady Chapel, which has various commemorative plaques to former members of the family.

Pause, Reflect & Pray

Standing in front of the altar and looking at the middle two stained glass panels which show Jesus as the good shepherd tending his sheep and Jesus giving his life for us on the cross, reflect on what it means to give your whole life to Jesus.

Father, help us to understand the depth of your love for us and how we should reflect that love into the lives of those around us, giving ourselves, our time and our finances for your glory. Amen.



Turn left on leaving the church, go to the wooden gate and continue down the path, with the playing fields on your left. On reaching the road continue straight ahead, until you reach the stone gate posts that form the entrance to the drive way of Park House (shown here) on the left. Ignore the first footpath by the Park House entrance but continue a further 40 metres to take a footpath on the left (signposted 'Bletchingdon Park ¾'). Cross the double stile into a small

paddock, where you bear slightly right across the paddock to reach another stile. Cross this stile and enter a field (shown), following the footpath down to the bottom right corner of the field (as marked by the arrow). On reaching the bottom corner turn left and continue along the track towards a wood.



After about 250 metres turn right off the track, following the footpath through a gate in a wall. After going through the gate turn left to follow the path to a gate between two plantations (10). Continue straight ahead up a slope, following the permissive path, with a fence on your left, and into a small paddock along the outside of part of the converted stables of Bletchington Park. Bear right across the paddock to the stile in the far right corner, following the permissive path. Cross the stile and continue past the stables up a gravel drive back to the Church of St. Giles, Bletchington.



Pause, Reflect & Pray

We have come to the end of our walk, taking the experience with us ...

May the raindrops fall lightly on your brow.

May the soft winds freshen your spirit.

May the sunshine brighten your heart.

May the burdens of the day rest lightly upon you

And may God enfold you in the mantle of his love.

Old Gaelic Blessing

END

PLEASE MAKE SURE YOU FOLLOW THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE.

LEAVE GATES AND PROPERTY AS YOU FIND THEM AND WALK ONLY ON
DESIGNATED PATHS.