

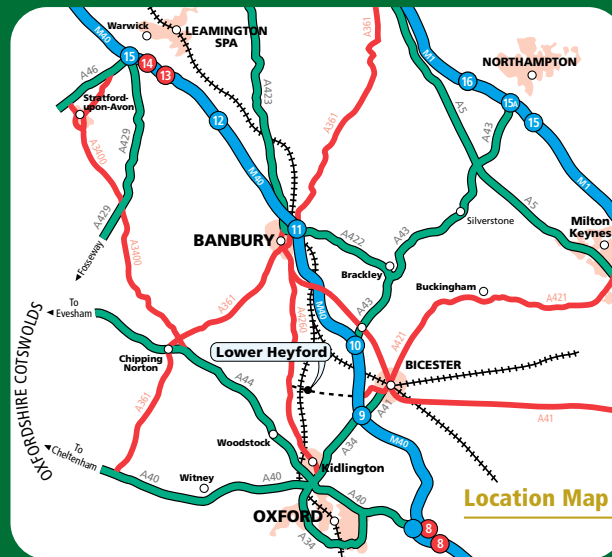
'Lock' by Jamie McKendrick

At the crank of the windlass in the racks
the paddle boards' square blocks of elm
are lifted in the lock head like two eyelids

so water sluices through the culverts
on either side of the lock's brick chamber
in swags and scallops and volutes

burled and blurred and bossed and scooped
like a crystal maelstrom in a bottle-neck
crizzling its uprush in a double ridge

till risen it overrides itself
and the sky resembles its reflection
on the stilled upheaval of one level



Acknowledgements

The production of this leaflet would not have been possible without the help of the following people:-

Mr Roger Bowen - Clerk to Lower Heyford Parish Council

Mr & Mrs Tim Davies - Grange Farm, Middle Aston

Paul O'Sullivan - Councillor, Deddington

Additional Information

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, guided walks and grants available for countryside access projects, please contact:-

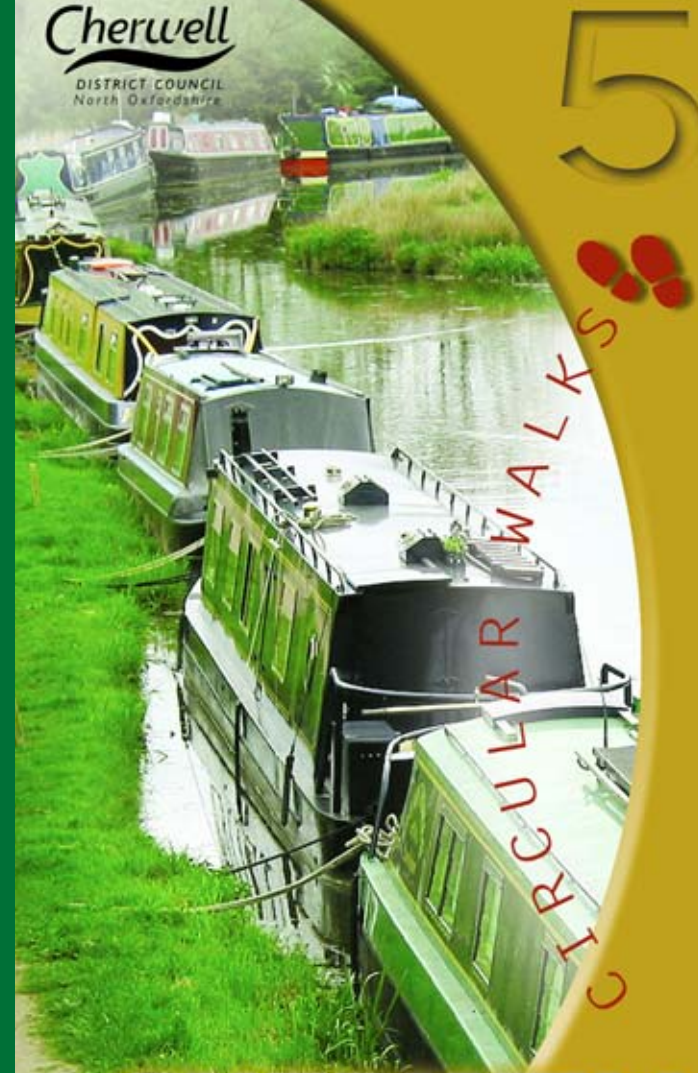


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Printed on Recycled paper

Designed by TCG Advertising and Design Ltd.

Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
North Oxfordshire



**CHERWELL
VALLEY
WALKS**

Distance up to 14 miles/22.5km Time up to 6 hours
Heyfords Walk 2 miles/3.5km Time up to 2 hours



Cherwell Valley Walks

The Cherwell Valley Walk offers you a wide choice of rural rambles through the heart of the Cherwell District, where the historic Oxford Canal parallels the beautiful River Cherwell for much of its length.

The main starting point is Heyford Station where car parking is available as well as a rail link for those without, or not wishing to use, private vehicles. Other villages en-route can also be used as starting points, but please take great care when parking along their narrow country lanes.



- The walk is designed to be followed in a figure of eight, starting off in a clockwise direction towards Steeple Aston and is 14 miles/22.5km in length.
- The **southern loop**, returning via the Heyfords after crossing the Causeway, is about 7 miles/11km (follow instructions 1-16 and 29-30). A **shortcut** heading east from Steeple Aston is 4 miles/6.5km. The **northern loop**, starting from North Aston and heading back north along the canal towpath after crossing the Causeway, is about 6 miles/9km in length (follow instructions 25-28 and 15-24).
- The Heyfords Circular Walk, described separately in this leaflet and devised by Lower Heyford Parish Council, is 2 miles/3.5km in length. A shortened version of this can be enjoyed by assisted wheelchair users.

The route is waymarked along its full length but it helps to follow the information in this leaflet as you go. Please take great care when crossing roads and the railway line. You are advised to wear stout, waterproof footwear. During the winter months, certain sections of the valley bottom tend to flood. Please turn back if conditions are too wet. Remember to follow the Countryside Code.

Places to Eat & Drink



The Bell - Lower Heyford
(01869) 347176

Open lunchtimes and evenings. Check for times and reservations. Ivy clad village pub serving real ales. Bar snacks. Restaurant serving modern cuisine plus traditional pub meals. Garden

Oxfordshire Narrowboats Shop - Lower Heyford (01869) 340348
Open 9am - 5.30pm every day.
Refreshments, canal crafts, groceries and narrowboat hire



Harris Stores - Steeple Aston
(01869) 340281

Open Mon - Sat 7am - 8pm,
Sun 8am - 6pm. General store and Post Office

The White Lion - Steeple Aston
(01869) 340307

Open every evening plus weekend lunchtimes. Village pub serving real ales. Garden



The Red Lion - Steeple Aston
(01869) 340225

Open lunchtime Tues - Sun and every evening. Check for times and reservations. Traditional village pub serving local real ales. Bar snacks. Restaurant serving 'Honest English' cuisine. Garden

The Barley Mow - Upper Heyford
(01869) 232300

Open every evenings and lunchtimes. Village pub serving real ales. Bar snacks at lunchtimes. Garden



11 Just past entrance to Middle Aston House on the right, turn left along track and continue until a field gate on the right. Bear right downhill (via telegraph pole), towards the wooded area.

8 To continue on the main route turn left at Church and continue along North Side for about half a mile (for alternative route back to Lower Heyford (and a closer view of **The Eyecatcher**), turn right onto Cow Lane before reaching the Church and follow the waymarks back to the Canal).

6 Follow concrete track to field gate and then continue up lane to main road, turn right into **Steeple Aston**.

4 Cross line and follow field edge to next stile. Pass through small plantation, cross over stile and follow field edge to gap in the hedge. Notice the **Eyecatcher** over to your right along this stretch.

3 From stile, head diagonally up the hill towards the railway line.

12 Pass around corner of wood and then bear diagonally left to gap in next field boundary. Cross over footbridge and stile. Bear right and head across next field to right of oak tree.

10 Turn right on reaching road and notice Warren Lake over to your right. Walk along road into and through Middle Aston.

9 Just before Westfield Farm, and sharp left bend in road, turn right off road onto main track. Pass through wooded areas know as 'Three Corner Clump'.

7 Turn right again at village shop then down the dip and up Paines Hill.

5 Pass through gap, stay close to field edge and proceed to kissing gate. Head straight across next field to second kissing gate.

2 Turn sharp left off the towpath just before the **Mill House** and pass through metal gate. Bear round to right over bridge, then over a second bridge and follow track straight onto the stile with stone uprights.

1 From the station car park in Lower Heyford, cross over the railway line using footbridge. Exit from platform and turn left onto **Oxford Canal Towpath** (do not cross or pass under canal bridge). Proceed along the towpath to the lift bridge.

13 Pass through kissing gate and continue in same direction.

14 Ignore main gate over to right and continue on to small white gate, and through it to the **Causeway**.

15 Proceed straight ahead through three gates and then turn left through the fourth.

16 Turn directly right to join the **Oxford Canal Towpath**. Once on towpath turn left to continue with the main walk or right to go back to the start via Upper Heyford (go to instruction 29).

17 Continue to follow towpath until you reach the brick road bridge at Somerton (No.196). (To view the **Poem Sculptures**, continue along towpath past bridge for short distance. Retrace your steps under bridge and then up to road to rejoin main walk).

18 Turn left off towpath and follow road over two bridges, passing Mill House on the left.

19 Turn right off the road through gate. Continue along field edge (hedge to your right) through three sets of gates.

20 Turn right through single gate and then immediate left. Stay close to field edge and then proceed straight ahead through two gates and along track.

21 Turn left onto farm road. Walk up the hill to main road.

22 Turn left and follow road with care.

23 Turn right just past gatehouse and go up driveway

24 Keep to main track and pass Church and Hall. Continue to main road at **North Aston**.

25 Turn left and walk past drinking fountain on left and village green on right.

26 Turn left onto Middle Aston Lane. Pass Nicholson Nurseries and then Hendon Farm. Take care along this narrow road.

27 Turn left onto bridleway signed to **Grange Farm**.

28 Just before farmhouse bear right onto track and pass through gate. Stay close to field edge and walk straight ahead to small white metal gate and through it to the **Causeway** (see instructions 15 and 16).

29 Proceed along **Oxford Canal towpath** through several gates, past Heyford Common Lock (bridge No.200) and under the railway bridge.

30 At Allen's Lock (bridge No.204), continue straight on to complete main walk or turn left across canal bridge to join The Heyfords Circular Walk.



KEY

- Route ●●●●●
- Heyfords Circular Walk ●●●●●
- Alternative Route - - - - -
- Points of Interest B
- Built Up Area
- Wooded Area

NOT TO SCALE

Points of Interest

The **Cherwell Valley** is an Environmentally Sensitive Area. This designation recognises that it has a special ecological and landscape character that should be protected and enhanced through sensitive farming practices. The valley retains traditional habitats including flood plain pasture and meadows, ancient hedgerows, pollarded trees and broad-leaved woodland.

A The **Oxford Canal** was one of the earliest to be built in England (1790) and was the first to connect the industrial Midlands with London. Although challenged by competition from the Grand Junction Canal (1805), and the coming of the railway in 1850, it continued to carry commercial traffic up until the 1950's and now has a new lease of life as a recreational waterway.



B The **Mill House** is late 18th to early 19th Century but is probably built on the same site as the Mill for which the course of the River Cherwell was diverted in the mid 16th Century.

C The **Eye Catcher** was one of a number of features in the landscape designed for Rousham Park by William Kent (1685-1748). Others include the Gothic Mill, also in Steeple Aston Parish, and the North and South Roundels (clumps of trees) in Lower Heyford.



To view the **Eye Catcher** more closely, go down Cow Lane from Steeple Aston and follow the waymarked route around Folly Field.

D **Steeple Aston** is a beautiful village with over 30 Grade II listed buildings in its conservation area. The name Aston (east village) reflects its position (with its neighbours Middle and North Aston) as the easternmost settlement against the river.

E The **Causeway** provided a route across the wet Cherwell meadows to Somerton Mill. It was constructed just wide enough to take horses and carts and, therefore, suffered considerable damage as a result of some use by tanks during the second World War.

F **Poem Sculptures**
Sculptor Michael Fairfax and poet Jamie McKendrick worked together on a series of artworks for the Oxford canal in a project funded by Cherwell District Council and Southern Arts. For the Somerton installation Michael has inscribed Jamie's poem 'Lock' onto a set of four sculptures carved from old lock timbers.



G The village green is the main focal point of **North Aston** around which a few houses are scattered. The wooden signpost on the green was erected to celebrate the Queen's Golden Jubilee in 2002. Designed and carved in the village, it depicts the Hall, Church and notable characters from North Aston's past. The Church of St Mary and North Aston Hall are the earliest buildings and stand in parkland. It is in this area that the mediaeval village of North Aston was located before its abandonment in the fifteenth century.

H **Grange Farm** is what remains of the ancient village of Nethercote which is mentioned in the Oxfordshire Domesday. It is likely that the desertion and depopulation of Nethercote came late in the 15th Century when it was leased as grazing land. Physical traces of the old village remain in Sheep Field adjacent to Grange Farm, which is full of banks and hollows.

Heyfords Circular Walk

Approx 2 miles / 3.5 km

1 From the station car park in Lower Heyford, cross over the railway line using footbridge. Exit from platform and turn left onto canal towpath (do not cross or pass under canal bridge). Proceed along the canal, past the lift bridge. This southern section of the Oxford Canal was opened in 1790 and the Lower Heyford Wharf was an original feature. The tall red brick building behind the boatyard worksheds is a classic early 19th Century Canal House. The Oxford to Banbury branch of the Great Western Railway was opened in 1850 and Heyford was one of the three original intermediate stations. The flood meadows of the River Cherwell run along this stretch and at times of flood these can resemble a lake. For those using pushchairs or wheelchairs, cross the lift bridge and follow the village route back to Heyford Station.

7 Cross stile and continue along track to Upper Heyford water treatment works.

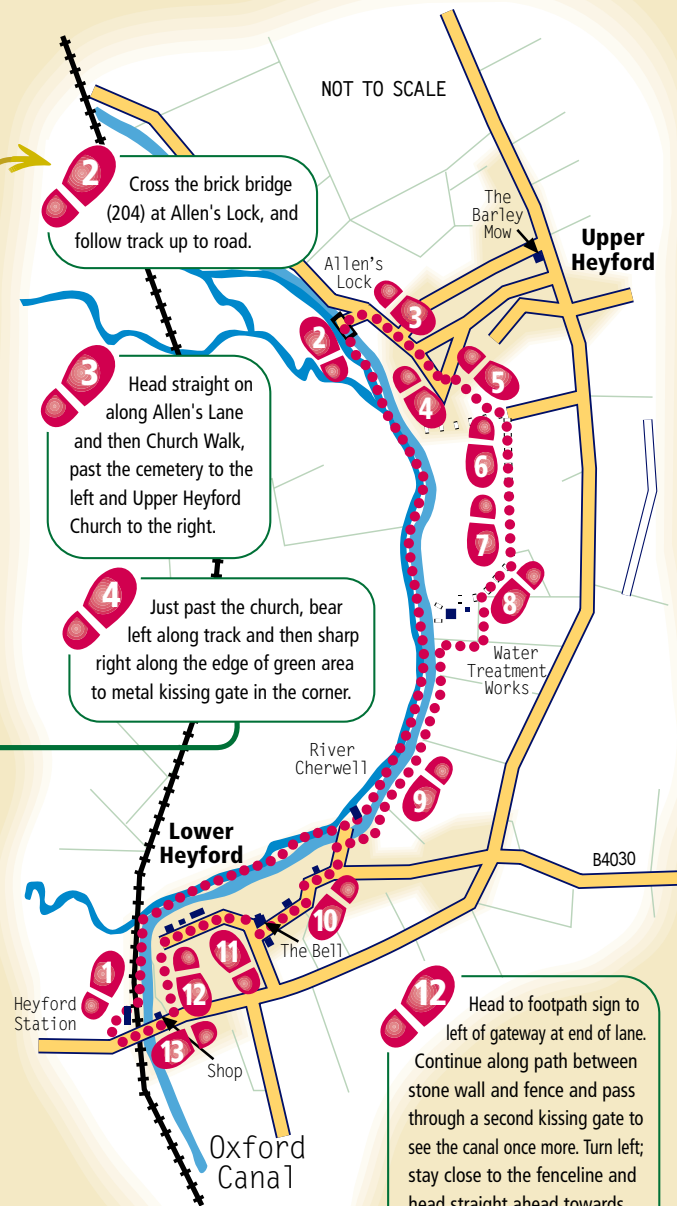
6 Turn left and then immediately right onto concrete track.

5 Bear left from this point across field to another metal kissing gate on the next field boundary.

8 Bear left over stile just before gates and continue along field edge. Turn right at corner of works and then left to follow field edge back to Lower Heyford (The path crosses the parish boundary from Upper Heyford to Lower Heyford at the waterworks stile).

9 Continue along this stretch of the route, which runs parallel to the canal, and then walk along the edge of the village playing field. Join concrete track and walk down to the road adjacent to the Mill lift bridge over the canal. Turn left onto Mill Lane and enter the village of Lower Heyford.

10 Turn right into Freehold Street and then right into the Market Square. After turning right into Freehold Street, White Horse Cottage can be seen on the right. This is a 17th Century cottage that as the name infers was once an inn. Just through the double bend on the left is a traditional red painted telephone kiosk, which has been listed to preserve the character of this corner. A number of interesting old buildings are passed including Paine's Cottage, Forge House, Town House and College Farm House before reaching the Bell Inn on the corner of the Market Square. The Bell is late 17th/early 18th Century and has a most unusual narrow window extending to the full height at the rear. Markets were once held regularly in Market Square, the last being around 1900.



2 Cross the brick bridge (204) at Allen's Lock, and follow track up to road.

3 Head straight on along Allen's Lane and then Church Walk, past the cemetery to the left and Upper Heyford Church to the right.

4 Just past the church, bear left along track and then sharp right along the edge of green area to metal kissing gate in the corner.

11 Bear left along Church Lane, past the frontages of the Church, Manor Cottage and Manor House on the right. The Manor House was built in 1669 on site of an earlier house; St Mary's Church was first dedicated in mid 11th Century and has some interior stonework dating back to the 13th Century.

12 Head to footpath sign to left of gateway at end of lane. Continue along path between stone wall and fence and pass through a second kissing gate to see the canal once more. Turn left; stay close to the fenceline and head straight ahead towards corner of stone wall. Follow wall to next kissing gate.

13 Turn right onto main road. Pass the Boatyard and Canal Cottage and cross canal bridge back to Heyford Station.