

Fringford Historic Village Trail

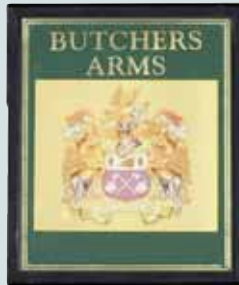
A one and a quarter mile walk around the village of Fringford.

- Fringford is four miles north of Bicester off the A4421 Buckingham Road.
- The route description starts from the car park of the Butchers Arms.
- The route is on metalled roads except for a quarter of a mile stretch which can be wet and muddy, especially in winter.
- Many of the buildings described are private dwellings. Please respect the privacy of residents by viewing from a polite distance.

Places to Eat & Drink

The Butchers Arms (01869) 277363

Village pub serving traditional and continental food. Local real ales plus guest beers from small breweries. Children's menu is available. Open every day from 12 noon until close. Food served from 12 noon until close except for Sunday (12 – 3.00 pm). Bookings are particularly recommended at weekends. Listed in the Good Pub Guide and Good Beer Guide.



Acknowledgments

This booklet was researched and written by Martin Greenwood for Fringford Parish Council. Watercolour illustrations and mapping by Julie Barrett. The photographs are courtesy of Margaret Allen, Fringford Village Hall, Bill Plumb, the Butchers Arms and Oxfordshire CC Photographic Archive. Thanks are due to the owners of the Butchers Arms for allowing walkers to use their car park

Additional Information

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

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

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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:-

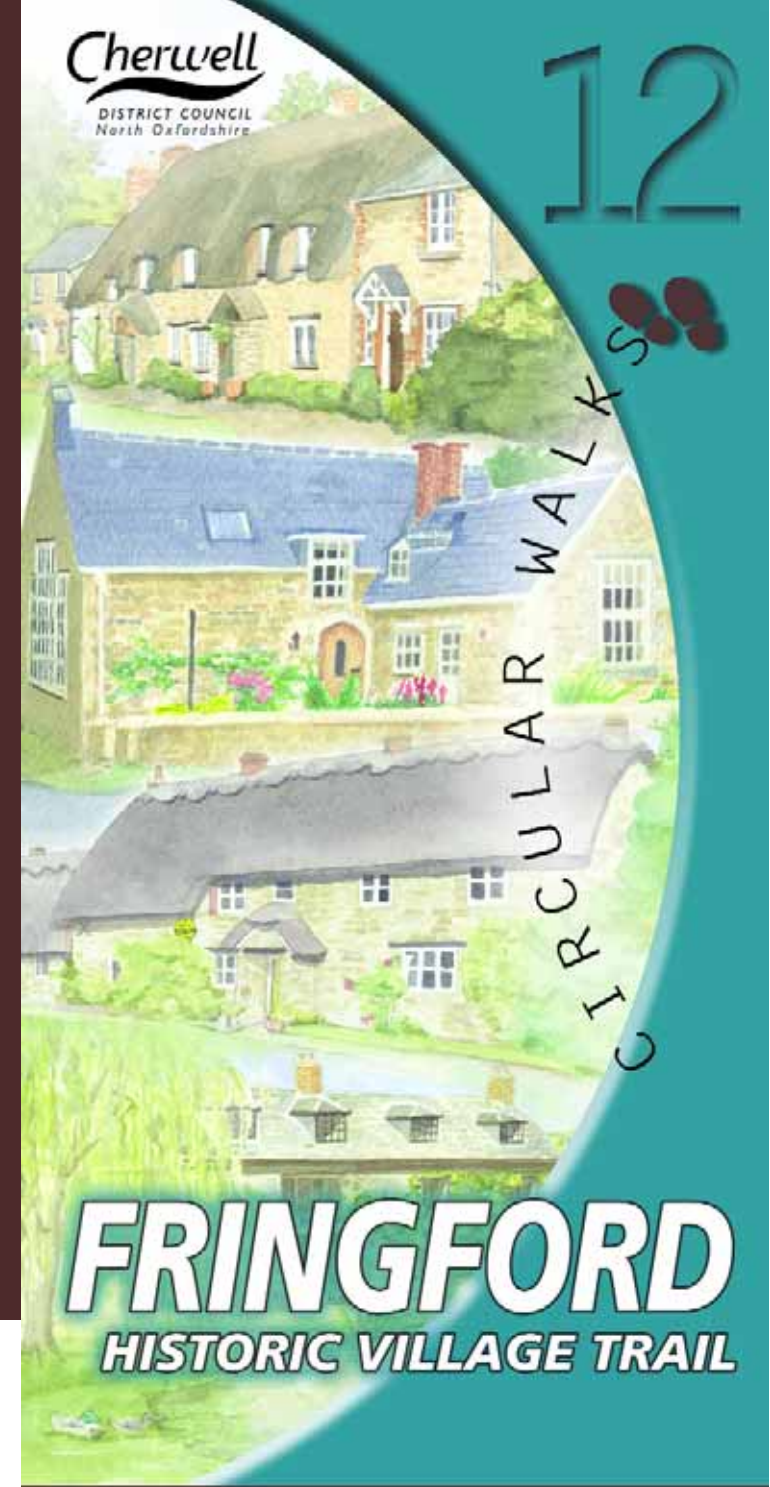


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Printed on Recycled paper

Designed by TCG Advertising and Design Ltd.

Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
North Oxfordshire



Village Trail 1.25 miles/2 km Time 1 hour

Introduction to Fringford

Fringford is an ancient site which seems to have been occupied for most of the past 2000 years. The village lies on sloping ground in a loop of a tributary of the River Ouse. The name is thought to mean 'ford of the people of Fera', a Saxon tribe or family group. There are traces of an earlier Romano-British settlement in Crosslands, a road in the centre of the village. Excavations in Farriers Close in the 1990s also revealed evidence of Saxon and medieval settlements. Significant medieval remains have also been found at Fringford Manor.

Friendly Society Procession leaving Church c 1900/10



In the 17th century, there were some 30 houses and a population of about 130. The Enclosure Award of 1762 left the village tightly controlled, although, unlike many other villages in the area, Fringford had no manor house after the 16th century. In the 18th and 19th centuries the village was dominated by the Trotman and Harrison families, the squires of Shelswell Manor. In 1844, it was reported that 'Nearly if not the whole of Fringford is the property of JHS Harrison Esq.' Shelswell Manor was abandoned in the 1960s and finally pulled down in the 1980s.



In the 19th century, the village was also dominated by a series of well-connected, wealthy rectors who were prepared to make substantial contributions to the church and parish. By 1801, there were some 50 houses and a population of 252. As with other villages in the area, the population was largely dependent on agriculture. It reached its peak of 479 in 1871 but by 1901 had fallen to 335. In 1951, there were still only 331 inhabitants.

The Old Bake House, 1940s



At least until 1939, the village had several shops, a post office, and numerous craftsmen and tradesmen catering for local needs. Until the 1920s, the carrier's cart was the only commercial link with Banbury and Bicester. James and William Grantham operated from Fringford from 1870 until the 1920s. After that, local connections were mainly by omnibus. Other recurring village names include the Gibbards, who farmed at Laurels Farm from c.1860 to 1939; the Prices, who were painters, decorators and plumbers from the 1860s until after the Second World War; and the Plumbs, who were blacksmiths from the 1890s until the 1940s.

Since the War, following a number of housing developments, the population has nearly doubled to about 600. Initial housing developments in the 1960s, in Church Close and St Michael's Close, were followed by those in Manor Road and later ones in Crosslands and Farriers Close. Fringford remains a lovely village with a classic Village Green. It still has a thriving primary school and a pub but no shops. We hope that your walk will help you to appreciate this beautiful corner of Oxfordshire and the rich heritage of the village.

Flora Thompson

(1876 - 1947)

Fringford in the 19th century is now forever associated with Flora Thompson's Lark Rise to Candleford trilogy. In it she recalls her childhood, as Flora Timms (Laura), in the hamlet of Juniper Hill (Lark Rise) and at school in Cottisford (Fordlow) before moving to Fringford (Candleford Green). The fictitious town of Candleford is a combination of Banbury, Bicester and Buckingham. It is a unique and vivid picture of village life at the end of the 19th century. There is hardly a page without a memorable phrase waiting to be quoted. She largely bases Candleford Green on her childhood memories of Fringford, where she worked in the village post office from 1891 to 1897. (The 2008 BBC series has Laura working in the post office in Candleford). In many respects, village life had changed very little in the decades before 1876 when she was born. Deference to those above you was the norm and 'Every member of the community knew his or her place and few wished to change it.'! It was a defining moment just before the agricultural depression of the 1870s and 1880s and before the impact of major changes in health, housing and education. Flora wrote poems and short stories for many years but it was not until 1945 that the Lark Rise trilogy was published.



Points of Interest

A **The Cricket Ground** – It was presented to the village by Henry Chinnery in 1901, although Flora Thompson says that the rector in the 1890s put cricket ‘upon a proper footing, with an eleven of young men and practice nights for boys’.

B **The Green** – The classic setting of a medieval village grouped around the Green survives. The old farmhouses, Laurels Farm and Green Farm on the left and Hall Farm beyond the Village Hall, all date from well before the Enclosure Award of 1762. In the 16th century, there was also a manor on the far side of the Green, on the site of the Old School (P).

C **The Primary School** – This Church of England school was opened in 1973 to replace the old National School on the other side of the Green. In 2003, the Playgroup also relocated into a new building on the school site.

D **Hall Farm (formerly Fringford Hall)** – It dates from the early 17th century, with later alterations, but part of the north end may date from the 14th century. The Addington family have owned the farm for some 400 years, although they have not lived here since 1746. Dr Anthony Addington was doctor to William Pitt the Elder (the 1st Earl of Chatham) and to George III during his ‘madness’. In 1788, he was the only doctor successfully to predict the king’s recovery from what is now known as porphyria. His son, Henry, became Speaker and Prime Minister (1801-4) and the 1st Lord Sidmouth.

E **The Old Forge** – Dating from the mid-18th century, it used to be the forge, and later also the sub-post-office where Flora Thompson worked as assistant postmistress from 1891 to 1897. Note the AA sign which is the original from the 1920s.



F **Stone Gap Cottage** – This cottage, the old sweet and cigarette shop, is part of a line of four cottages, along with The Cottage, Fox Cottage (formerly Amberley) and Bakery Cottage. These all date back to the mid-18th century or earlier. James Grantham, the carrier, lived in Amberley, where you can see the old cart entrance with wide plank doors.



G **Folly Cottages** – There used to be a line of six cottages here, all dating from the early 18th century. You can see where some of the old doorways have been blocked up.

H **The Lodge** – It was built in the Gothic style by Henry Chinnery in 1898 when he was rebuilding Fringford Manor. Just beyond the Lodge there used to be two sets of gates at the entrances to the Manor – one set spanning the present road and the other where the drive from the Manor meets the road.

I **Fringford Manor** – It was converted from a farmhouse in 1899-1900 by Henry Chinnery, who leased the property from John Dewar-Harrison. In 1948, Dewar-Harrison converted the Manor into six houses for some of his workers. There were more conversions in the 1980s. In No.6, Laura Powell ran the Post Office (said to be the smallest in England) from 1949 to 1986. Manor Farm, opposite, was built in the 1980s on the site of the Manor’s kitchen garden and orchard.



J **St Michael’s and All Angels Church** – The earliest part of the present stone church dates from the early 12th century but it stands on the site of an earlier wooden building. The church was largely rebuilt in the 19th century, thanks to the considerable personal wealth of three ‘regal rectors’- Henry Roundell, Henry de Salis and Cadwallader Coker. The church is one of ten in the Shelswell Group of Churches which are now combined under one rector.

K **Church Farm House (formerly Eton College Farm)** – This was probably a timber-framed farmhouse of the 16th century which belonged to Eton College until 1921. For many years the house was divided into three cottages and included a dairy.

L **Ghost Alley** – It is an apt name for what was once a rather spooky path. This was the route for the hand-bier (carrier for wheeling coffins) for ‘walking funerals’ from the undertaker, Billy Judd, on Rectory Lane.

M **Rectory Lane** – This was a very old road, probably used by drovers in Saxon times. They used to take their sheep to Brackley, which was a thriving wool centre. The old lane went round to the left of the Bancroft property and continued across the field down to ‘Fera’s Ford’ and up to Willaston and the old Shelswell Manor.

N **The Old Rectory** – In 1756 it was a mere thatched cottage, too small for the rector’s family. The Rev’d Roundell (1814-52) enlarged it considerably and refaced the whole house with local stone. There used to be a school in the barn next door before the National School was built.

O **Fringford House (formerly Rectory Cottage)** – It used to be on glebe land owned by the rector. The small central core dates from the 17th century. The south wing was added in the late 19th century and the other extensions in the 1920s. Candleford Mews, next door, used to be its stables and outbuildings.



P **The Old School** – It was built as a National (i.e. Church of England) School in 1866 by the rector, Henry de Salis, on land leased from John Dewar-Harrison. In 2004, it was converted to a superior private dwelling. The Old School House behind it was built in 1876 and the headmasters lived here until 1964.

Q **The Old Bake House** – Dating from the 17th century, it was still a bakery in the 1960s. The pond used to be the village pond but the Shelswell Estate sold it to a previous owner of the house who erected the original fence around it.



8 Coming out of the Church, turn right and follow the grassed path around the side of the building. Then bear left and head for the corner of the churchyard. Pass through gate (lift central latch) and enter Church Lane, noting Church Farm House (K) on the left.

9 Continue up Church Lane and, just after Church Cottages, turn right along the footpath Ghost Alley (L). Follow the long boundary wall of the Old Rectory to Rectory Lane (M).

10 Note the Old Rectory (N) on the right and Fringford House ahead (O) before turning left up Rectory Lane. Pass the old village pump outside Pump Cottage which supplied water to Rectory Lane properties and the Old School until the 1960s.

11 Pass Farriers Close on the left and then note the Old School House and Old School (P) also on the left and the Old Bake House (Q) and pond over to the right.

12 At the crossroads, continue straight on across the Green and retrace your steps back to the Butchers Arms.

7 Retrace your steps, enter the churchyard and visit St Michael's and All Angels Church (J) if you wish.

6 Continue past the Lodge and Manor Road, noting the courtyard at the back of Fringford Manor (I) on the left, the path and gateway to Manor Farm on the right and the old stable yard for the Manor at the end of the road.

5 Pass St Michael's Close on the right and follow the road round to the Lodge (H), opposite the churchyard which is on the left.

4 Continue along Main Street past Church Close on the left, noting Folly Cottages (G) and other thatched cottages on the right.

3 Proceed down Main Street past the play area, noting on the right Hall Farm (D), the Old Forge (E) and Stone Gap Cottage (F) with other thatched cottages.

2 Pass the Primary School (C) and then the Village Hall on the right.

1 From the Butchers Arms, walk past the Cricket Ground (A) and then bear right once you reach the large horse-chestnut tree in the middle of the road. Note the old buildings of Laurels Farm on the left and the Green (B) ahead of you.

KEY

- Route
- Other Paths
- Points of Interest
- Trees, Hedges and Woodland
- Buildings

