

Acknowledgements

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Additional Information

All of Cherwell District Council's circular walks and rides are published on the Council website and can be downloaded free. Booklet packs can be purchased from Banbury Tourist Information Centre (01295 259855). For further information about any of the circular walks and rides, guided walks and grants available for countryside access projects, please contact:-



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Cherwell
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 North Oxfordshire

10

CIRCULAR WALKS

HORLEY

CIRCULAR WALK & VILLAGE TRAIL

Circular Walk 4.25 miles / 6.8 km Time 2.5 hours

Horley Circular Walk

Approx 4.25 miles / 6.8km

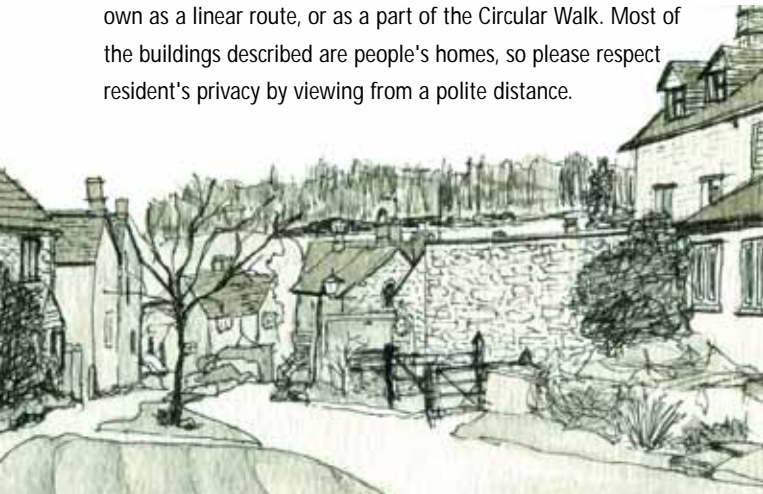
Horley lies 3 miles (5km) north west of Banbury, off the B4100 Warwick Road. There is no designated car park in Horley, so please park considerately in and around the village.

The route takes you along two sides of a valley, across farmland of rich, red ironstone soil, and through the picturesque villages of Horley and Hornton.



The Circular Walk route is described and waymarked in an anti-clockwise direction, but once you have followed it that way, why not come back and try it the other way around? Grazing animals are in several of the fields. Please keep dogs under close control and observe the Country Code.

The Village Trail (approx 0.5 mile / 0.8km) can be followed on its own as a linear route, or as a part of the Circular Walk. Most of the buildings described are people's homes, so please respect resident's privacy by viewing from a polite distance.



Accessibility and Terrain

With the co-operation of the landowners and farmers we are aiming to make this circular walk a completely stile free route. Barriers will be a mixture of field, pedestrian and kissing gates, as described in the walk directions. At the time of publication the stile replacement programme is ongoing. Please check the website or contact Cherwell District Council (details on back cover) for an update.



The Horley Village Trail and the section of the Circular Walk through Hornton (directions 9 & 10) are on surfaced roads and village streets. For the most part there is no pedestrian footway, but traffic is generally very light. Clump Lane (directions 1 & 2) is a stone surfaced farm track which has some potholes and can be muddy in winter. The rest of the circular walk is on cross-field and field edge paths, through a mixture of arable and pasture land. Please check the website for updates (e.g. flooding or maintenance work), or contact Cherwell District Council if you require more detailed terrain information.

Places to Eat and Drink

The Red Lion, Horley 01295 730427

Traditional village pub with a warm welcome serving real ales, including local "Hooky". Quiet garden at the back. Open most evenings plus Sunday lunch time, check for exact times.



The Dun Cow, Hornton 01295 670524

Friendly traditional village pub serving local and guest real ales and country wines. Freshly cooked traditional menu. Good Beer Guide listed. Open every evening plus Saturday and Sunday lunchtimes (can open weekday lunchtimes by prior arrangement).



Points of Interest

A Field Names

Several of the fields along this walk have interesting names. Clump Lane and Clump Ground indicate the presence of clay pits, used to make brick. Copt Hill Leys means hill with either a peaked or flat top, with the leys being grassland. A name combined with top, middle, or bottom remembers the person who acquired that field in the 1766 inclosure, and its location relative to their other allocations, thus 'Ragnell Bottom'. Names such as Brook Field are recognisably descriptive; but Wroxton Meadow was the burial place of old farm horses and not Horse Close.

B The Roman Vineyard

Look right as you walk across Steps Meadow towards the stream. The distant south facing bank was once a vineyard. In the nineteenth century the remains of a substantial Roman villa were found to the east of Horley.



C First and Second Lower Ground

This is a good stretch to pause and admire the surroundings. The hedgerow to the right provides a warm sheltered site for early spring flowers. The soil is coloured rich red by the ironstone. In the air Buzzards, Hobbies and a Barn Owl can occasionally be seen.

D The Lake

This lake is rich in bird life, with some rare winter visitors.



E Hornton

Dating back to the Saxon period, the village name is thought to have come from the Great God of the Woods, a giant with an antlered stag's head which was known as Hoehn or Hornan. Followers of this god or a Saxon leader using the same name may have settled along the stream that rises in the valley.

Hornton stone been quarried in and around the area for generations, its distinctive colouring is to be seen in the walls of every conceivable type of building in the region from cottage to church. Geologically known as ferruginous limestone of the middle lias, this scientific name captures nothing of the rare colour qualities of Hornton Stone that can range from a warm light brown, through brown-purple, grey and green to various shades of mauve and blue.

F Ragnell Bottom and Wroxton Meadow

The land is marshy, and in spring there are Orchids and Kingcups. It is a place to hear the Snipe 'rhodding'. The handsome Redstart frequents this area.

G Horley Brook

On the left the brook flows down to the old mill race sluices and mill race. You can also see the ancient fishponds.

H Nature Reserve and Ironstone Railway

The old Ironstone Railway once transported locally quarried ore to the railhead in Banbury (see Banbury Fringe Walk for further details). The track and surrounding woodland are now a nature reserve run by the local Wildlife Trust (www.bbowl.org.uk). Long Eared Owls, various Hawks and Crossbills can be seen here at different times of the year.

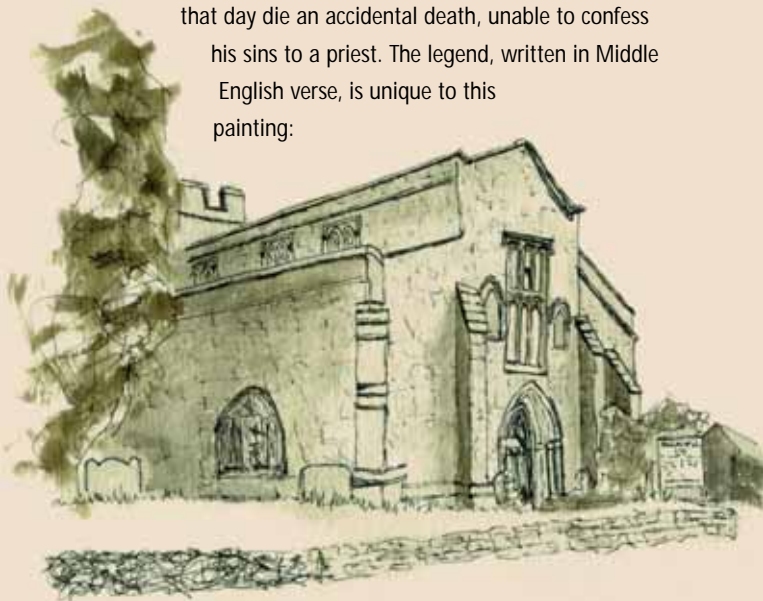
Introduction to Horley

Horley lies between two streams, and its name means 'clearing on a tongue of land'. The village is probably of Saxon origin. Medieval Horley belonged in part to the cathedral of Lincoln, which explains why such a small village has two manor houses. Bramshill was the Lay manor and Horley Manor was the Prebendal (church) manor.



The Grade 1 listed St Etheldreda's church is listed in "England's Thousand Best Churches", by Simon Jenkins. It contains one of the country's largest and most impressive medieval wall paintings (c.1440) of Saint Christopher.

Popular still as the friend of travellers, the mythical St Christopher was widely revered in medieval times. It was thought that anyone who looked on his image would not that day die an accidental death, unable to confess his sins to a priest. The legend, written in Middle English verse, is unique to this painting:



*"What art thou and art so young? Bore I never so heavy a thing"
"Yea I be heavy no wonder this for I am the King of bliss"*

For centuries children have had a special place in Horley, beginning with the trust founded by Michael Hardinge in 1627. His endowment established a school and provided an education to village children for some 400 years. Children from the orphanage in Wroxton Lane attended, as did evacuees from East London who lived in Horley during WWII. The school closed in 1969 and the Michael Hardinge Trust now maintains it as a rural studies centre for visiting schoolchildren and as a village hall.

The shape of the modern village is a legacy of the local Enclosure Act of 1765, which swept away the ancient systems of land tenure. Until the mid-twentieth century Horley was largely an agricultural settlement with quarrying and weaving providing alternative employment. The parish still contains five working farms, and many old farmhouses, although few residents now work on the land. The water-powered corn mill was demolished in the mid twentieth century and the mechanical remains of the Old Flour Mill were dismantled for the war effort. Horley remains a small village of about 120 houses, many of the older ones were originally constructed of coursed rubble but later fronted with dressed Horton stone. There has been extensive rebuilding and renovation in recent decades, and infill with new homes.

Circular Walk Directions




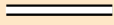

8 Once through the gate, turn to your right and walk towards Hornton. The route of the footpath is a long straight line through the centre of the field. At the far end fence go through a kissing-gate and across a paddock, then through another kissing gate between two cottages.

9 Walk along the Lane and emerge into the village facing the Village Green. Turn left, then at the junction left again (Dun Cow on your right).

10 Follow the road up the hill (past the sports ground) for about a half-mile. Stay on the left, as there is a good verge on this side, and you will be more visible to traffic coming downhill towards the village.

11 Just before Manor Farm (the highest point of the walk), turn left at the footpath sign, through a gap in the hedge. Turn half right, and go diagonally across the field, towards the house. A pedestrian gate and a kissing gate take you through a corner of the garden.

KEY

- Route 
- Road 
- Wooded Area 
- Track 
- Scrub/Marsh 



7 Head uphill and along the wire fence on your right. As the field narrows towards the far end, bear left and go through the kissing gate in the hedge.

6 At the far end of Second Lower Ground, go through a wooded field corner, down a short slope and through a kissing gate into the lake paddock. Continue straight ahead, through the field gate.

5 Go through the field gate. You are into the first of two long fields known as 'First and Second Lower Ground'. Walk along the hedge on your right. To your left the ground slopes down to the valley bottom.

3 You are now in Steps Meadow. Cross the field diagonally left (across the slope of the hill), looking towards Hadsham Barn on the hilltop ahead.

4 Go through a gate and down a short steep slope to the stream. Go over the plank bridge and through another gate. Now head uphill towards a field gate.

2 After passing the entrance to Bramshill Park Farm on the left, the lane gently falls and then rises. After a short plateau the lane falls more steeply. Approaching the bottom (just before the lane bends left), turn right, to go up the bank and through a gate.

1 The walk starts at the northern end of the village, near the Church. From the small grass triangle at the road junction, walk out of the village along Hornton Lane. Just before the last house on the left (Clump House), turn left and walk up Clump Lane (an ancient bridleway that was formerly the main route between Horley and Hornton).

12 On exiting the garden turn half right to go diagonally downhill to the opposite side of the field. At the fence go through a kissing gate and continue, bearing slightly right, across the field called Lower Ground.

13 Go through a field gate then left, to walk along the top edge of Wroxton Meadow with the hedge on your left. Continue, passing through a broad gap in an old fenceline. As you approach the end, bear right to pass through an old gateway over a culverted stream.

14 You are now in Bridge Meadow. Walk ahead for about 50 metres, then turn right. Go through a pedestrian gate, over the plank bridge and out through another gate. Follow the path diagonally left through a marshy field margin, then across the field corner and through a kissing gate.

15 Cross the meadow bearing slightly right, heading for a gap in the trees. Go through the gap (bridging a stream) and into Coleman's Brookfield. Bear left then walk along the bottom edge of the field, alongside Horley Brook. Through the woods at the opposite edge of the field are the Nature Reserve and Ironstone Railway.

16 At the end, go through a kissing gate, out onto Wroxton Lane and turn left. Now follow the Village Trail instructions to walk back to your starting point.



Horley Village Trail

1 Walk along Wroxton Lane, into the village. On the left, after the house called Horley Mill is a garage (with a circular window) that marks the site of the eighteenth century Horley water corn mill. It closed around 1924, but the **Old Mill Race** can still be heard if you listen carefully.



2 Continue walking up Wroxton Lane. Look left to **The Lawns** that was used as an orphanage early last century; continue along to **Greystones**, where from 1919 the orphan girls were housed.

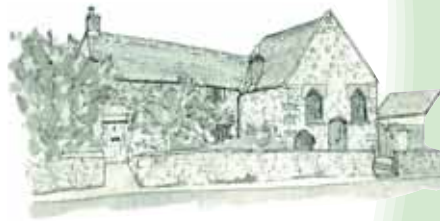
3 Further up on the right is **Midhill**. Built in about 1791 as several dwellings called Shagweavers' Cottages; they faced north to avoid sunlight on the cloth. Adjacent **Ivy Cottage**, and **Rivendell** (opposite), were part of Midhill tenements, labourer's cottages originally housing up to 50 people.



4 The barn at the rear of **Apple Barn House** was used in the late nineteenth century to store apples going to Covent Garden from Horley's many orchards.

5 **Chapel Cottage** is one of the oldest cottages in the village and still has a circular bake oven to the rear. It adjoins the former Wesleyan **Methodist Chapel**, which was built in about 1791. Outside of Banbury, it was the first methodist Chapel in the local area. It is now a private house.

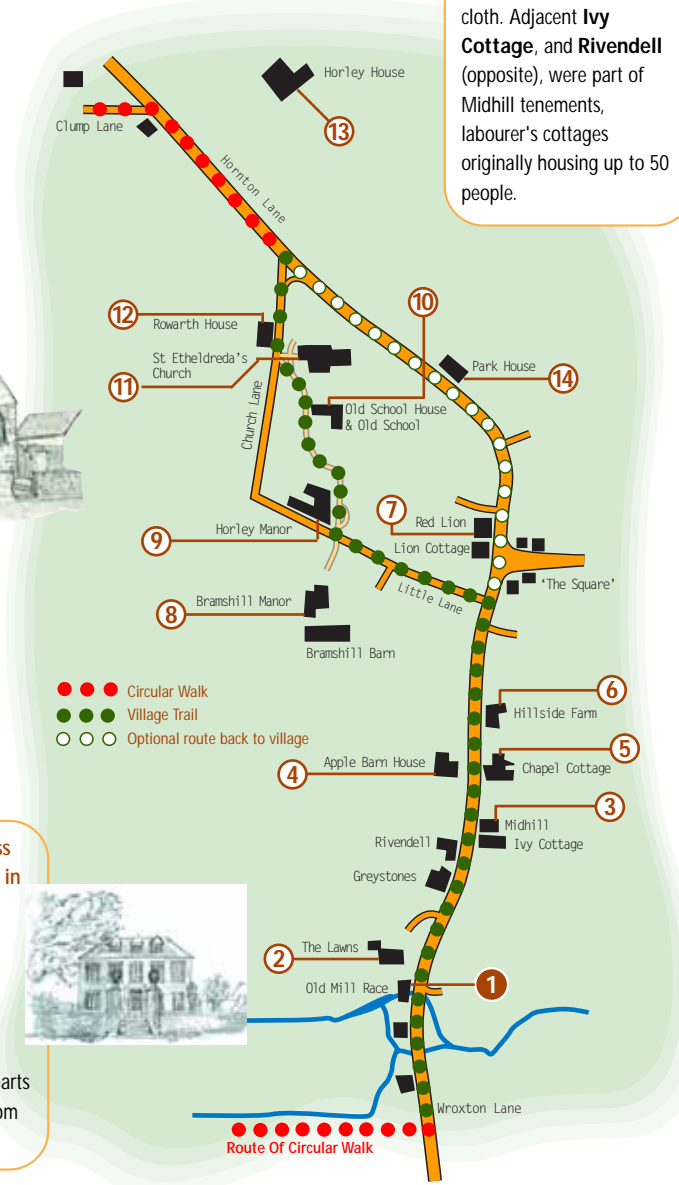
6 **Hillside Farm** was once a main farm and also housed the Post Office. Note the bricked up door. There are fragments of thirteenth century stonework still visible in the walls.



7 Continue up Wroxton Lane to the **Red Lion**. The houses around the main junction form **'The Square'**, with several dating from the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries. The Red Lion pub once also served as the village bakery and next-door **Lion Cottage** is one of the few remaining thatched properties in the village. Looking up Banbury Lane, the village cricket field is on the left and is a social centre for the village in summer.

8 Turn back, then right up Little Lane until you reach **Old Manor Court cul de sac on the left**, with an ancient Mulberry tree on the corner. Look up to **Bramshill Manor**, which was originally the lay manor house. Outwardly of the seventeenth century, it is the truncated portion of a once much larger building, the foundations and some internal works are medieval. The adjacent barn conversion **Bramshill Barn** has an original Elizabethan door. Continue up Little Lane as far as the iron gates on your left.

9 Turn right, and go across the gravelled semi-circle in front of **Horley Manor**. The handsome front dating from around 1700 is superimposed on a late Tudor and early seventeenth century building, which replaced the prebendal (church) manor house. Older parts of the building can be seen from Little Lane and Church Lane.



10 Continue along the footpath ahead. Manor Orchard, on the right, used to be the old village green. Stay on the path as it turns left, then right. The thatched building you pass on the right is the **Old Schoolhouse**, and adjoins the **Old School** (see 'Introduction to Horley') with its vaulted classrooms of 1842 and 1899 and modern extension.



11 **St Etheldreda's Church** dates from the twelfth century with additions to the sixteenth century. Saint Etheldreda (or Audrey) was a seventh century Anglian Princess who founded Ely Abbey. Pictures in the stained glass windows include two canons of Lincoln Cathedral (see 'Introduction to Horley'). Bear left around the Church.

12 Descend the steps from the main door of the church, opposite is **Rowarth House**, the former vicarage. Built around 1667, the front was altered in the nineteenth century. Turn right and walk along Church Lane. At the junction with Hornton Lane you have reached the starting point of the Circular Walk.

13 If you turn left and walk out of the village towards Clump Lane you will pass some fine double fronted houses of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. A long cut stone wall on the right identifies **Horley House**, which was used as a German POW camp during World War II: the prisoners built the bridge over the stream between Horley and Hanwell.

14 If you turn right to walk back into the village you will pass **Park House** on your left. It is believed to be the oldest house in the village, with architectural traces dating from the early 1400's and rumoured to have a tunnel connecting it to the church.