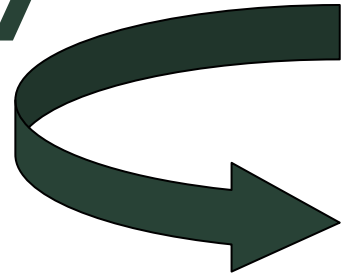# Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Bourton-on-the-Water to Bledington

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Bourton-on-the-Water** is in the Cotswolds and on the great Roman road, the Fosse Way, which has become one of England's best scenic through routes. It has a great many beautiful stone houses, cottages of various periods and an interesting church, rebuilt in the nineteenth century but incorporating a fourteenth-century chancel and a Georgian tower.

B **The River Windrush** is the real start of the Oxfordshire Way, though it reaches the Thames much more directly.

C **Wyck Rissington** is a lovely unspoilt village. Most of the stone houses and cottages behind the green date from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. The church contains some carved wooden plaques depicting the life of Christ, thought to be sixteenth-century Flemish work, and discovered towards the end of the last century at Wyck Hill House.

D **Salmondsbury Camp Iron Age hill-fort** covers about 60 acres and has massive earthworks.

E **Wyck Beacon** is a 6 foot high round barrow.

F **Gawcombe House** was rebuilt around the middle of last century, but has interesting original ancillary buildings, including a stable yard, dovecot and ornamental lakes.

G **Bledington** is an attractive open village around a large village green. The interesting church has a magnificent fifteenth-century clerestory, windows and glass and the masonry is of very high quality.
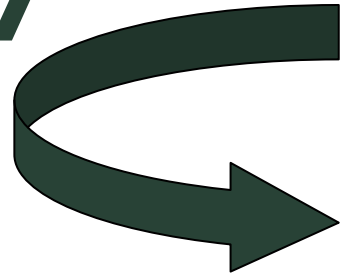
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Bledington to Shipton-under-Wychwood

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Bledington** is an attractive open village around a large village green. The interesting church has a magnificent fifteenth century clerestory, windows and glass and the masonry is of very high quality.

B **Bruern Abbey** was a Cistercian Abbey founded by Nicholas Bassett in 1147. The abbey was dissolved in October 1536. In 1720 a baroque country house was built on the site of the former abbey.

C **Shipton-under-Wychwood** has stone-built houses around a triangular green, mostly dating from the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. It has two outstanding buildings; Shipton Court and the Shaven Crown Inn. Shipton Court is one of the largest early Jacobean houses in the country, built about 1603 by the Lacy family. Although it has undergone a considerable amount of modernization, its essential character remains. The entrance front, facing west and visible from the A361, is elegant and well-proportioned. The Shaven Crown, built originally as a hostelry, became a guest house for Bruern Abbey and later an inn, and so has a five-hundred-year-old tradition of sheltering and sustaining travellers. The warehouse at Shipton railway station is a reminder that Shipton was once an important stopping place on the line.
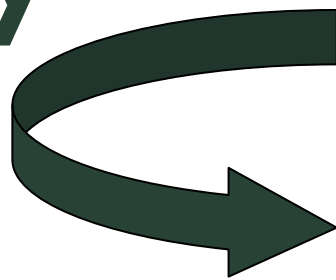
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Shipton-under-Wychwood to Charlbury

Points of interest

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B **Langley Mill**, beyond the winding river, is set in the angle of an ancient weir, enclosed by willows.

C Look for the grassy terraces and hollows between here and the river bank – all that remains of the **motte-and-bailey castle** of centuries ago.

D **Ascott Mill** is no longer in use as a mill, but has been converted into a private house in a delightful riverside setting.

E **Ascott-under-Wychwood** links the two settlements of Ascott Earl and Ascott d'Oyley. It has a small and simple early thirteenth century church. The **manor house** stands on an ancient site, within the bailey of the castle of Ascott d'Oyley, built in the middle of the twelfth century. It is mainly a sixteenth- and seventeenth-century building, but still has some medieval buttresses. Some of the original wooden mullioned windows have survived, and the farm buildings include a seventeenth-century barn with a dovecot in the gable and a brick and half-timber granary standing on staddle stones.

F **Charlbury** lies in the valley of the Evenlode. The gloving industry flourished here until quite recently. The Great Western Railway arrived in 1853 and **Charlbury station**, designed by Brunel, became an important stop on the Paddington/Worcester line. Almost the whole of the centre of town forms a conservation area. The **church** was originally Norman, but enlarged in the thirteenth century and restored in 1874. **Church Street** used to be the site of the market. The **fountain** in the green was erected in 1897. Anybody interested in the history of the area can visit the small **museum** adjacent to the Corner House.
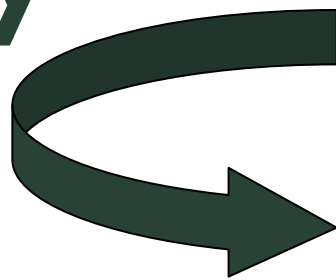
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Charlbury to Stonesfield

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map.

Points of interest

A **Charlbury** lies in the valley of the Evenlode. Originally the whole area was forested. As the forest was cleared, Charlbury became a market town and the land was farmed. Tracks connected the town to Enstone, Chipping Norton, Burford, Witney, Stonesfield and Woodstock. Most of these became the roads of today but there are several places where the old track remains and the road has taken a different path. Sheep farming, in the fields beyond the farmhouses' working strips, gave rise to the gloving industry, which flourished until quite recently. The Great Western Railway arrived in 1853 and **Charlbury station**, designed by Brunel, became an important stop on the Paddington/Worcester line. The station is now a listed building. Almost the whole of the centre of town forms a conservation area. The **church** is dedicated to St Mary the Virgin; some of the Norman arches of the original building survive, but the church was enlarged in the thirteenth century and restored in 1874. Other buildings include the **Friends' Meeting House** (1779), the **Methodist Chapel** (1823) and the **Baptist chapel** (1823). Church Street used to be the site of the **market**, which extended behind the Bell Hotel. The **fountain** in the tree-lined green Playing Close, was erected in 1897. Anybody interested in the history of the area can visit the small **museum** adjacent to the Corner House, a community building donated to the town after the war.

B **Stonesfield** has an Early English **church**, which suffered what was referred to as 'lunatic restoration' when in 1876 a new north aisle was built, completely destroying the small scale of the church. The stone roof tiles of the villages and towns of Oxfordshire, are known as **Stonesfield slates** because they come from the parish of Stonesfield. The mining of these stones stopped early in the twentieth century and they can now only be obtained at great expense and good luck when an old house or barn is demolished. You can still see a few signs of the old quarrying operations. Most were small and only worked by two or three men, either in the sides of steep valleys or holes in the ground around 60 feet deep with galleries leading off them. Large stone slabs were brought to the surface and left for the frost to split them into thin layers, after which they were fixed to battens in the roof. The village is well-know to geologists for the remarkable **fossils** found in the neighbourhood. There is a fine **Georgian manor house**, with a large garden occasionally open to the public.
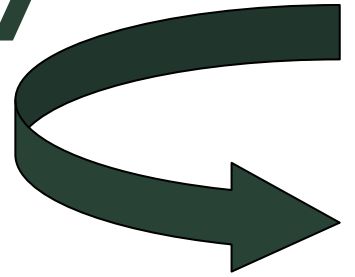
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Stonesfield to Kirtlington

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

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B One of the few **commons** in north and west Oxfordshire, a steep hillside meadow stretching down to the river with its **bathing place**, is a great place for a rest or picnic. The **hedge** along the top of the common is at least 500 years old.

C From here the Oxfordshire Way follows the Roman road **Akeman Street** for 6 miles. For much of its length Akeman Street acts as a parish boundary between Combe and Stonesfield.

D At the **Stonesfield Steps** you can clearly see the blocked-up gate in **Blenheim Park Wall** where the ancient route Akeman Street, one of the principal highways across England, passed through.

E **North Drive**, a great mile-long tree-lined drive, forms a grand vista to **Bleinheim Palace**.

F **Grim's Dyke earthworks** are clearly visible. Grim was a by-name of the heathen god Woden. The Anglo-Saxons often attributed to him the building of the prehistoric earthworks they encountered.

G **Dornford Lane** is an ancient green lane, coming into existence around 1100 for the purpose of carrying supplies from the royal demesne farm at Steeple Barton to the royal manor of Woodstock. It is very different from Akeman Street, following the valley as much as it can, curving when it suits it and having high ancient hedges alongside it.

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Points of interest

H Unmistakable signs of old **Whitehill village** can be seen in the pasture fields. The village was deserted long ago, but it is not known why or when.

I Here you leave behind the furthermost part of the dip slope of the Cotswolds and West Oxfordshire district. From here you are in **Cherwell district** and clay country, intermingled with the Corallian limestone of the Oxford Heights.

J **Flight's Mill** is now a private residence, which acquired its name in 1692. There is evidence of two thirteenth-century mills on opposite sides of the river.

Oxfordshire Way

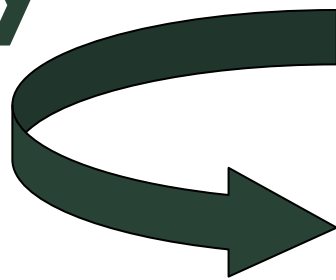## Points of interest from
Kirtlington to Weston-on-the-Green

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Kirtlington** has existed since Saxon times, and its **church** dates from the twelfth and thirteenth centuries.

B **Kirtlington Park Palladian mansion** was built between 1742 and 1746 for Sir James Dashwood. It is in private ownership and no footpath goes close enough for the house to be seen, but a distant view of the south front can be glimpsed if you look back after leaving the village.

C **Weston-on-the-Green** is now a village of mixed architectural styles and periods. The **stocks** still stand on the green. The **church** has unexpectedly grand door-cases, for a little village church. The font is Norman and the altarpiece is a painting attributed to Pompeo Batoni. **Weston Manor**, now a hotel, was originally a medieval building and was remodelled about 1540 by Lord Williams of Thame, who also built Beckley Park. The present façade was built around 1820 and during the nineteenth century much of the interior was remodelled.
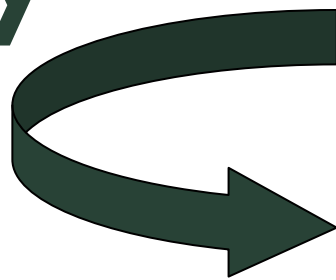
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Weston-on-the-Green to Islip

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

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B **Islip** has many attractive buildings including the **Old Rectory**, built in 1690 by the Rector Dr South who also founded and endowed the village school in 1710. Other buildings included **Manor Farm** in Upper Street (sixteenth century) and a **house in High Street** (seventeenth century), formerly the King's Head Inn. Islip lay on the coach route from London to Worcester and had at one time twenty-one inns. Now there are only two, **the Red Lion and the Swan Inn**. In the last field you crossed before entering the village once stood a palace of Ethelred the Unready, where in AD 1004 King Edward the Confessor was born. When King Edward built Westminster Abbey he gave it to the manor of Islip. Simon of Islip became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1348, and John of Islip became Prior of Westminster in 1500 and presided over the building of the Henry VII chapel.

As befitting for a village with such history, **Islip church** dominates the village. In the Civil War, Islip was an important outpost in the Royalist defence of their headquarters at Oxford, and in 1645, Cromwell defeated he Royalist forces at Islip Bridge, the **bridge over the River Ray** at the southern end of the village. The old stone bridge was rebuilt in 1878. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when drainage and new cuttings partially tamed the River Ray, Islip was a prime source for fish supplies.
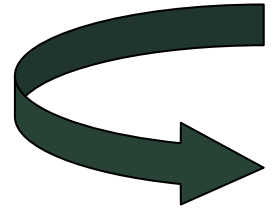
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Islip to Beckley

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Islip** has many attractive buildings including the **Old Rectory**, built in 1690 by the Rector Dr South who also founded and endowed the village school in 1710. Other buildings include **Manor Farm** in Upper Street (sixteenth century) and a **house in High Street** (seventeenth century), formerly the King's Head Inn. Islip lay on the coach route from London to Worcester and had at one time twenty-one inns. Now there are only two, the **Red Lion and the Swan Inn**. In the last field you crossed before entering the village once stood a palace of Ethelred the Unready, where in AD 1004 King Edward the Confessor was born. When King Edward built Westminster Abbey he gave it to the manor of Islip. Simon of Islip became Archbishop of Canterbury in 1348, and John of Islip became Prior of Westminster in 1500 and presided over the building of the Henry VII chapel. As befitting for a village with such history, **Islip church** dominates the village. In the Civil War, Islip was an important outpost in the Royalist defence of their headquarters at Oxford, and in 1645, Cromwell defeated he Royalist forces at Islip Bridge, the **bridge over the River Ray** at the southern end of the village. The old stone bridge was rebuilt in 1878. Until the latter part of the nineteenth century, when drainage and new cuttings partially tamed the River Ray, Islip was a prime source for fish supplies.

B The name '**Noke**' is derived from 'the oak tree', recalling the origin of the village as a clearway in the forest. There are still a few of the ancient oak trees surviving. The **church** dates from the thirteenth century and was restored in 1883. When Edward the Confessor granted the fees of Islip to the Abbey of Westminster, part of the parish of Noke was included in the grant. Those who paid their tithes to Islip buried their dead in Islip churchyard and to this day the path from Islip to Noke is therefore known as the '**Wake' or 'Coffin' path**. **Manor Farm** dates from the late sixteenth to eighteenth centuries and the **Old Rectory** has a central block dating from the seventeenth century with later extensions. **The Plough Inn** was originally a cottage and probably dates from the seventeenth century.

C **Beckley** stands on a ridge of the Oxford Heights, 350 feet above the plain of Otmoor. **Otmoor** contains a layer of Oxford clay and for centuries was a swamp, used for wildfowl and fish and ringed by rough pasture. This way of life persisted for centuries, until the moor was forcibly enclosed in 1830 and the Otmoor Riots that followed are famous. 'Progress' won in the end and the River Ray was rechannelled, although these measures were never wholly successful and the moor remains a haven for birds and plants. The **church of St Mary** was originally Norman, rebuilt in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. **Beckley Park**, now a listed building, was built around 1540, possibly as a hunting lodge, though the history of the site and three moats goes back many centuries before.
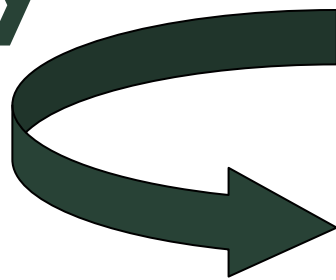
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Beckley to Waterperry

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Points of interest

A **Beckley** stands on a ridge of the Oxford Heights, 350 feet above the plain of Otmoor. Otmoor contains a layer of Oxford clay and used to be a swamp, used for wildfowl and fish and ringed by rough pasture. This way of life persisted for centuries, until the moor was forcibly enclosed in 1830. The Otmoor Riots that followed are famous. 'Progress' won in the end and the River Ray was re-channelled, although these measures were never wholly successful in draining the moor and it remains a haven for birds and plants. Some say that Lewis Carroll had the idea for Alice's chess-board in *Through the Looking Glass* after looking down on the different coloured fields of Otmoor from Beckley. The **church of St Mary** was originally Norman and rebuilt in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries. There is some early stained glass, wall paintings and a Jacobean pulpit.

B **Beckley Park**, now a listed building, was built around 1540, possibly as a hunting lodge, though the history of the site and three moats goes back many centuries before.

C **Waterperry** has an interesting and attractive church, with a surviving Saxon arch and unusual wooden tower. The eighteenth-century box pews still have their original brass candlesticks and there is a seventeenth century three-decker pulpit. The church also has some good glass, armorial bearings and monuments and several brasses. **Waterperry House** retains a seventeenth century wing, though most of the house was remodelled in the eighteenth century. Part of the gardens now form **Waterperry Gardens**, offering day courses for gardeners, plants for sale and a café.
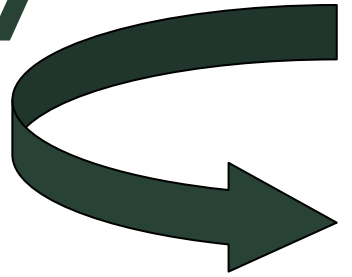
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Waterperry to Rycote

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

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B The **church**, isolated above the main settlement of Tiddington, is on the hill in the tiny hamlet of Albury. It is a nineteenth-century building on an ancient site.

C **Rycote** is one of the most remote and fascinating settlements along the Oxfordshire Way. The **chapel** was consecrated in 1449 and restored and opened to the public in 1967. Henry VIII, Elizabeth I, James I and Charles I were all visitors at **Rycote Park** and worshipped in the chapel, which accounts for the splendour of the royal pew. Rycote Park fits peacefully into its setting. It was much larger originally but much of it was burned down in 1745. The ruins were finally cleared from the site in 1800 and the turret and some stable buildings that survived were converted into the present house around 1920.
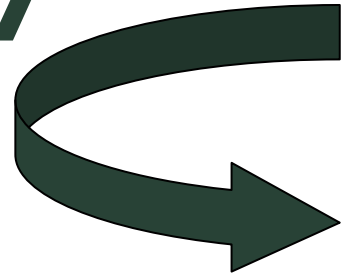
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Rycote to Tetsworth

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

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B **Tetsworth** has **sixteen listed buildings** as well as modern development, the latter due to its proximity to the A40 and now the M40. **The Swan Hotel** is an Elizabethan coaching inn, remodelled about 1700.
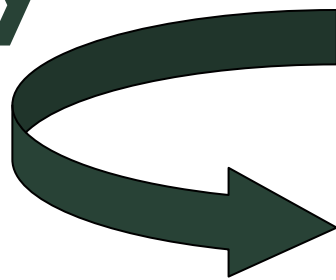
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Tetsworth to Pyrton

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Points of interest

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B **Adwell House** in the tiny village of **Adwell**, was rebuilt in the late eighteenth century and is noted for its Grecian staircase. The nearby parish **church** was rebuilt in 1865, although vestiges of the original twelfth-century church were retained. The village also has several **seventeenth-century cottages**.

C Today there is barely a 'village' at **Wheatfield** – its few inhabitants are scattered in isolated farms and groups of cottages and its **church** in the middle of parkland is the only physical sign of its existence. Up until the eighteenth century, the medieval church stood in a street of old cottages, but when Wheatfield Park was rebuilt, the cottages were felt to spoil the appearance of the park and so demolished. Today all that remains of Wheatfield Park is the stable block and outbuildings that form part of **Park Farm**. The house was destroyed by fire on New Year's Day 1814, but its foundations can still be seen between the church and the farm. Among the parkland and roadside trees you will discover the now rare sight of **live elm trees**, some of the few remaining examples of what was originally one of the county's most profuse hedgerow trees before the ravages of Dutch elm disease in the mid-1970s.

D **Model Farm**, which was built in 1857, was so called as when it was built it was one of the most technically advanced farms in the country. It is considered as an early example of the mechanization which has revolutionized modern agriculture.

E **Pyrton** has wonderful **snowdrops** early in the year and a seventeenth-century **manor house**, hidden within the park.
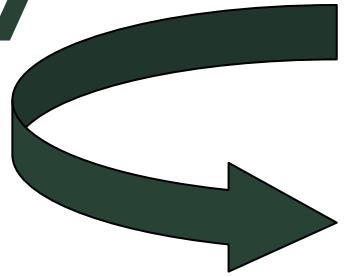
Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Pyrton to Christmas Common

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Pyrton** has wonderful **snowdrops** early in the year and a seventeenth-century **manor house**, hidden within the park.

B You are now encountering the last major change of terrain in the county, entering onto the chalk uplands of the **Chilterns**. The contrast with the rest of Oxfordshire can be noticed in the hanging beechwoods, bluebells, flint churches and cottages roofed with thatch or clay tiles.

C **Christmas Common church** is a nineteenth century building. **The Fox and Hounds** is a good pub with seating in a garden outside.
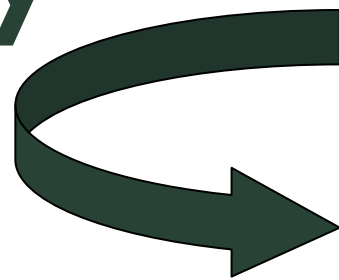
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Oxfordshire Way

Points of interest from Christmas Common to Henley-on-Thames

To be used in cross-reference with the letters marked on the map

Points of interest

A **Christmas Common** church is a nineteenth-century building. The Fox and Hounds is a good pub with seating in a garden outside.

B The little **church in Pishill** was built in 1854 to replace a Norman building. There is some good Victorian glass and an interesting thatched barn behind the rectory incorporating a thirteenth-century blocked window.

C These dense woods form part of the **Warburg Nature Reserve**, belonging to the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. The woods are crossed by nature trails and worth a tour, you may see deer.

D The **ruin of St James** was once the parish church of Bix, when the hamlet was mainly in the bottom of the valley.

E **Henley Park** has many fine mature oak, lime, beech and chestnut trees. The Mount is a large mound on your right.

F **Henley** has old wharves and numerous Georgian houses and coaching inns, which together with the variety of modern shops signal centuries of quiet prosperity. There is a youth hostel on the right as you enter the town, many pubs and hotels, a railway station and bus and coach services.

The Oxfordshire Way ends at the banks of the **Thames** in Henley. Many of the streams that the Oxfordshire Way passes flow into the Thames. You can get a good view of the river from **Henley Bridge**, upstream to Gloucestershire and down stream along the Regatta course to Temple Island and eventually London.

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