



Circular walks

in Oxfordshire



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www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/walksandrides*

Three walks around
Wantage, taking in:

- * Letcombe Regis
- * Letcombe Bassett
- * Childrey
- * West Challow
- * East Challow



Wantage

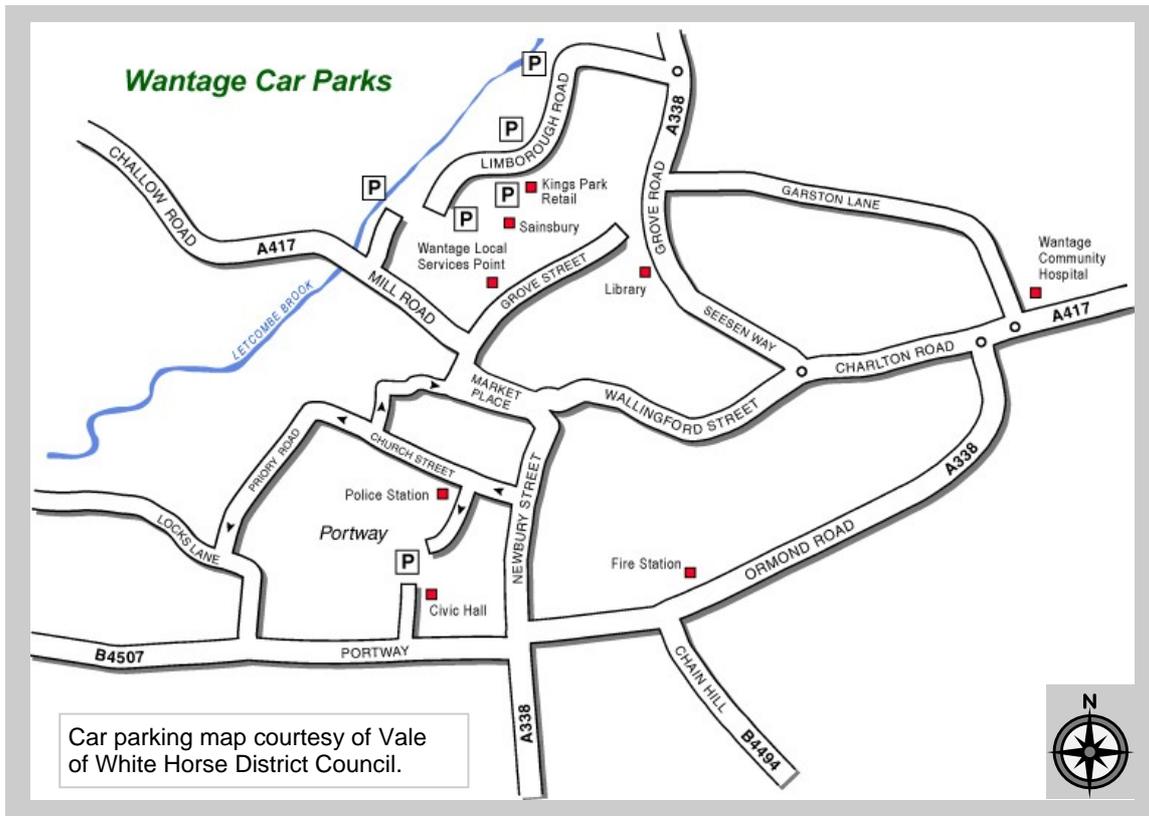


**OXFORDSHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL**

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Getting to the start

There are several car parks in Wantage. The long stay car park is located off Limborough Road, OX12 9AJ. Limited street parking is also available in the villages along the route.



Public transport

For timetable enquiries, please call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33.

You will also find information and Oxfordshire County Council public transport timetables in most Oxfordshire libraries and Tourist Information Centres. Alternatively, write enclosing an A5 stamped addressed envelope to: Oxfordshire County Council, Public Transport, Speedwell House, Speedwell Street, Oxford OX1 1NE.

Easy-to-follow routes

Each walk is marked with metal signposts where the path leaves the road, and with waymarks on gates and stiles at every change of direction.

The appropriate Ordnance Survey map to use on this route is OS Explorer 170.



When out walking, it is always wise to let someone know where you are going or, if possible, have someone with you. Take your mobile with you, and make sure it is fully charged. If you use your car to access the route, please park with care – do not block farm gateways or village facilities, and do not leave valuables in view.

Please follow the Countryside Code:

- Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Points of interest

- A** A mill has probably been on the **Clarks Mill** site since Saxon times. The mill race, which the path follows, powered the mill until the middle of the 19th century when a gas engine was installed providing steam power. In 1910 the new mill was built incorporating roller plant. The flour is sold to local commercial bakers.
- B** Downland turf stretching up to the Ridgeway is excellent for training gallops and has resulted in racing stables being set up at **Letcombe Regis**. The turf is springy and rarely becomes waterlogged in winter.
- Like the rest of the village, St Andrew's Church is of mixed periods. Fragments of mediaeval glass and a simple Norman font can be found inside.
- C** **Letcombe Bassett** was immortalised as Cresscombe in Thomas Hardy's 'Jude the Obscure'. The village is famed for its racehorse stables and was formerly well known for its watercress. The old cress beds, fed by clear springs, can still be seen at the bottom of the hill. The central channel was used to control the water flow to the gravel beds on either side.
- St Michael's Church is of Norman origin. Inside, 17th century table-tombs are carved with skulls, reflecting the obsession with death during the plagues.
- The oldest building after the church is the 14th century Rectory Barn, which has four bays divided by mediaeval crucks (half trees connected together) supporting a long thatched roof.
- D** At **West Challow**, one of the oldest bells in England is housed in the bellcot of the little stone-roofed church. 'Paul the Potter made me' is inscribed in Norman-French on the bell, which was probably cast in 1290.
- E** Opposite the church in **Childrey** is the early 16th century manor house (remodelled during 1900) of the Fettiplace family, one of the greatest local landowning families in the Middle Ages. Charles I spent a night here in 1644 on his march from Oxford to Marlborough. Also during the Civil War it is believed that the mediaeval glass in the church was nearly all destroyed by Roundheads pursuing the King's troops. Only one window survived, now the north window. It tells the story of the Virgin Mary's life but mistakes were made in its repair – Mary's head was replaced by a man's.
- The Cedar of Lebanon tree in the old Rectory garden is thought to be the oldest living in Britain, planted by the rector, Dr Edward Pocock in 1646.
- F** The **Wilts & Berks Canal** was opened in 1810 to connect the Thames at Abingdon with the Kennet & Avon Canal at Semington. A branch was constructed to serve Wantage and carried flour, malt, corn, bricks, tiles and timber out of the Vale and brought in coal, iron ore and stone. Competition from Brunel's Great Western Railway and the lack of water resulted in the canal being abandoned in 1914. It is now being restored by the Wilts & Berks Canal Trust.

If you would like to give us feedback about these walks, you can email countryside.reviews@oxfordshire.gov.uk You can also upload photos of your walk online at www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/countrysidephotoupload Alternatively, call 01865 810226 or write to: Oxfordshire County Council, Countryside Service, Signal Court, Old Station Way, Eynsham, Oxford OX29 4TL.