

Pattishall Millennium Walk

(OS Map Pathfinder Weedon Bec and Roade SP65/75 or OS Explorer 207 Northampton South).

This way marked, circular route visits 8 of the 10 way points on the Pattishall Civil Parish Boundary, reviving the old tradition of 'Beating the Bounds'. Although some of the walk is along local lanes, much of the route follows the established network of footpaths and bridleways in the Parish. The total estimated distance is 18 kilometres but it can be combined with other footpaths to make three shorter, circular walks.

Start: Holy Cross Church (Way point 1, map reference SP672543)

The Pattishall Millennium Walk begins and ends in the Forget-me-not 2000, Wildflower Garden in the church yard of Holy Cross. From any of the three church yard gates turn right along Church Street, past a row of old cottages to the entrance of Manor Farm. The footpath is sign posted and starts at the stile on the right, alongside the drive. Cross 3 stiles and follow the footpath towards the farm gate in the right hand corner of the large field, be sure to close it behind you. The footpath continues over the 'Downs' across two further stiles and two footbridges. After the second bridge you will be walking alongside Pattishall Brook which rises in the field behind Astcote and marks the Parish boundary at this point. In the corner of this field you will find the junction of a stream and the brook, **way point 3**, Cornhill/Bugbrooke Wharf. This stream is the North Western boundary of the Parish and runs from Geese Bridge on the A5, **way point 2**, to meet the brook at the foot of Cornhill. The name Geese Bridge has a link with Weedon, in seventh century AD local inhabitants were troubled by wild geese, which ate their corn.

Turn left along the short track, cross the stile and join Cornhill. Turn right, follow lane under the Railway bridge and on to The Wharf Inn at Bugbrooke, your first opportunity for a refreshment stop. Continue to the road junction, turn right, cross the bridge over the canal and immediately right again to take the steps down on to the towpath. Here we join the Grand Union Canal walk and follow the towpath in the direction of London, take care it can be slippery if wet.

Continue under the next canal bridge and onto the second at Scurf Lane. Leave the towpath, turn right across the bridge onto Scurf Lane. As you begin to climb the hill, look to your left, you will see an attractive, grassy knoll atop with a small spinney of trees, this pretty landmark will be visible again as we look back across the Nene Valley when we reach the fields below Gayton. Continue to the crest of the hill to **way point 4 Phipps Farm**, where the parish Boundary crosses the lane. You are now on a ridge with fine views in all directions. After passing Scurf Barn, look out for a small ornamental lake, down in the field to your left, just beyond it you can see the Bugbrooke/Gayton cross roads, another corner of the parish boundary, **way point 5**.

Follow Scurf Lane along the ridge to the crossroads with Banbury Lane, which neatly divides the parish north south. Cross Banbury Lane and continue towards Dalscote until the next junction. (A short detour to the right will take you into the village, where you can find refreshments at the Eastcote Arms and a restful stop for Lunch). Keep on left past the houses until you reach Dalscote House. Turn left into Anna's Lane and then left again in 50m to join the bridleway, (probably the original Anna's Lane) to Gayton. The bridleway is a 'green lane' bordered on either side by an ancient hedge of Field Maple, Hawthorn, Crab Apple, Elder and Blackthorn. At the bottom of the valley, cross the footbridge over the stream at **way point 6, Dalscote Bridleway Footbridge**. Climb up the short bank and turn to look back at the old Willow trees that line the stream, this is a quite spot, ideal for a picnic.

Continue uphill, across the field and turn right as you join the lane from Gayton towards Eastcote. About 500 metres after The Old Wilds the lane turns sharp right, leave the road and continue straight on, along the Bridleway, another 'green lane', until you meet the lane to Tiffield. Turn right to **way point 7 Folly Farm**.

As the lane turns right we join the bridleway to Caldecote. After 300m the bridleway turns sharp left (at this point the footpath back to Astcote via Beggars Lane is through the gate on the right). The bridleway follows the path of the stream, ignore the track to the left but keep on through the gate into the next field. Follow the hedge, the bridleway diverts through the next gate on your left and continues on the other side of the hedge, before setting off at a diagonal to the opposite corner of the field. Watch for the footpath marker on an electricity pole. Go through the gate and turn left up to the next gate. Here the bridleway turns right and follows the field boundary, then a dog leg around the next field before turning right alongside a strip of ancient woodland including Oak, Ash, Beech and Chestnut to **way point 8, Caldecote Bridleway/A5 junction**.

Turn left down the A5 for 500 metres, carefully cross the A5 onto the lane to Duncote. In the middle of the village turn right following the lane past Duncote Farm and continue until it bends to the left. At this junction you will see two large farm gates with a small gate on the right. Go through the small gate and join the Bridleway to **way point 9 Astcote Thorns**.

Keep the Thorns to your right until the path switches and the hedgerow is on your left. You will pass the track to your right at Astcote Lodge, which leads back to the A5 and Astcote. Follow the line of the ancient S shaped hedge, as you crest the hill you will be at the highest point of the walk (The trig point beside the Wireless Mast is 162m). Pause to enjoy the view, from Cold Higham Church to your left to Holy Cross Pattishall and on around the skyline revealing many of the landmarks you have already passed on the walk. Most of the Parish is visible from this point. Continue along the track until you reach a gate into the next field. Keep the zig zag field boundary on your left, then through another gate into a large field usually home to many sheep. Again follow the field boundary until the gate which emerges onto the lane to Potcote. Turn right and follow the lane to the junction with Banbury Lane - the old Drovers Road from Banbury to Northampton. Turn right again, pass Cold Higham Church on your left, and follow Banbury Lane to the junction with the A5 at The Four Pillars Restaurant, **way point 10**.

Turn left, follow the A5 North past the Red Lion pub, carefully cross the A5 at the pedestrian crossing and turn right into Pattishall Village. Walk on down hill to the sharp right hand bend and on to the village green, into Church Street and back to Holy Cross Church.

Well done, you have walked the Pattishall Millennium Walk (18 km)!

Notes

Pattishall is a village set between Roman Watling Street (A5) and Banbury Lane, an ancient drove way. It is approximately 6 kilometres north of Towcester. The surrounding villages are Bugbrooke to the north, Gayton and Tiffield to the east, Litchborough, Cold Higham and Grimscote to the west and Greens Norton to the south. The parish of Pattishall includes the villages of Astcote, Dalscote, Eastcote, Fosters Booth and Pattishall.

Beating the Bounds

The Vestry had the responsibility of walking the boundary of the Parish at Rogationtide - the three days before Ascension Day. The incumbent, parish officers, prominent vestrymen and a good many school children employed for the occasion, armed with the authority of a wand of office, checked that boundary stones were in position and that no buildings encroached, unrated, on parish territory. The custom continued well into the 19th Century, long after maps made the occasion irrelevant.

