

Oakley Countryside Walks

Countryside Walk 10 – circular walk Oakley-Piddington-Brill-Oakley (11.3km, 7 miles, approx. 3 to 3½ hours)

Walking to Piddington is not something that one would automatically think of doing when living in Oakley. However, it is a very pleasant walk with fantastic views from Muswell Hill along the way. Walking boots or good quality gumboots are essential as the ground is rough and muddy in places. The walk can be reduced to 2 hours by starting and finishing in Brill.

Starting at Oakley church walk along the pavement of the B4011 towards Bicester. On reaching the telephone box at the end of Turnpike proceed along the verge on the left hand side of the B4011 (be careful of the traffic!). After about 80m cross the road and pass through entrance to Oakley Barn on the right hand side of road. Turn immediately left and cross a first stile leading into a field (Point A on map) and then a second stile in a gap in an earth bank. Follow the visible path across the field (this section can be very muddy). On reaching a hedge go over the stile and then walk parallel to the line of trees/hedge on left hand side. Pass over the stile to the left of the gate at far end of the field and continue down the track in front of the gate. After about 60m the track bears left. At this point turn right and pass through the gap in hedge on the right. Then turn immediately left, proceed for 10m and go over the stile on the left. Follow the path across the field passing by the electricity pole. In the far corner of field go through the kissing gate and over a small foot bridge, continue for a further 10m past a wooden post with a footpath marker and turn right into Span Green a grass and woodland track (starting at Point A on the map). Walk along the Span for 1km.

At the end of the Span one arrives at a small tarmac road. Proceed straight (do not turn left) up the road for 600m until a crossroads is reached (Point B on the map). Turn left at the crossroads and follow the road marked Piddington/Bicester. This road is quite busy and it is important to stand to the side when vehicles are passing by. Continue up the road for 800m and having passed the drive way for Middle Farm on the left hand side one arrives at a public footpath sign pointing right. Pass over the stile near the sign and walk through the grass field following alongside the left hand side of a wire fence with Bicester straight ahead in the far distance. This is the top of Muswell Hill with excellent views all around. 9 km away on the right hand side is the cathedral like £275m Greatmore Energy from Waste Plant that came into operation in 2016. In the far distance, past Bicester, is the Ardley Energy from Waste Plant that is also operational, generating a distinctive plume of water vapour. It is good to know that our rubbish is no longer going to landfill and some electricity is generated from it.

At the far end of the field pass over a stile, turn left onto a driveway (Point C on the map), continue for 30m and pass over another stile on the right. Follow along the footpath heading towards Piddington keeping the wire fence on the right hand side. The path goes down the hill, through a kissing gate, along a short section of track, through a second kissing gate, along the edge of a large field and finally arrives at a hedge with two sets of gates. Having passed these gates head straight down the grass field towards a house with solar panels. 30m before arriving at the hedge at the lower side of the field turn right and follow the contour until reaching a bridge over a stream on the far side of the field. 50m past the bridge on the right hand side is a gap in the hedge with a stile. Pass over the stile and head up the field aiming for a pair of large trees on the horizon. Pass through a kissing gate by the left hand tree and then continue diagonally left across the subsequent field and through another kissing gate. Then proceed up the hill with the wire fence on the right hand side past a new-build asymmetrical Elizabethan-style mansion house.

After the house cross a wooden bridge and veer left through a small forest plantation. On arriving at horse gallops pass through two gates and proceed across the subsequent field in the direction indicated by the footpath marker. On the far side of the field pass through a gate, over a bridge and through a second gate. Continue across the next field and over a stile. Ignore the Conservation Walk sign and instead walk ahead between large clumps of brambles to a stile in a hedge and enter the next field. Proceed straight ahead between two low trees towards Brill Hill. After 200m one arrives at a bog caused by a small stream

coming down the hill. Do not attempt under any circumstances to cross the bog as it is impassable except in very dry weather in summer. Instead walk up the hill beside the stream in the direction of a wooden post. On reaching the post cross the stream on the planks and walk down the hill again. Having arrived towards the bottom of the field turn right and head towards Brill Hill. At the far side of the field and to the left of a big tree pass over a stile and continue across two horse paddocks and through a gateway. 20m past the gateway follow the clearly marked footpath leading off to the left between wooden fencing. At the end of the field pass over the stile and turn right onto the tarmac road (Point G on the map). After 120m turn left and walk up the driveway leading to Springfield Farm. On nearing the house follow the footpath that passes through the top of a paddock below the garden and then enter a track that leads around the side of the garden.

Pass through a kissing gate into Brill Common. Turn right and walk up the steep bank. The path becomes a track that leads around the lower side of Brill Common. Follow the track, cross the tarmac road and continue along the track on the lower side of the Common below the Windmill. The track arrives at a small road coming down from Brill. Cross the road onto another track that follows the contour and pass by 16 Hill House. Continue along this track for about 200m. On arriving at a pair of cottages at the end of the track follow a small pathway that starts between the cottages (no's 17 and 19). After crossing a section with water springs the path rises up and then descends sharply. At the end of the descent go over two sets of stiles and proceed across the field to a further stile to the left of the house, "The Wrens" on Brill Road. (Point H on the map).

Turn right onto Brill Road, descend it for about 300m and then veer right onto the bridleway opposite the bungalow. Follow the bridleway for about 50m and then go over the stile on left hand side. Walk down across the large field aiming straight for Oakley church in the distance. Cross over the stile at the lower, right hand side of the large field. Continue across the next field and walk parallel to the hedge on the left side. Pass through the kissing gate on the far side of the field, cross a track and go over the facing stile. Then cross a small first grass field, go over a stile in a gap in a hedge and then bear slightly right across a larger second grass field towards a new house. Pass through the kissing gate in front on the new house, walk down the track to the Nap and turn left to arrive back at the church.

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The Countryside Code (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-countryside-code/the-countryside-code>) must be observed when walking:

Respect other people:

- consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors
- leave gates and property as you find them and follow paths unless wider access is available

Protect the natural environment:

- leave no trace of your visit and take your litter home
- keep dogs under effective control

Enjoy the outdoors:

- be safe, plan ahead and be prepared
- follow advice and local signs

For all the walks it is best to use Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 180 (can be purchased at the Book House or Martins in Thame). This provides clearer mapping than the mini-map accompanying the text above.