

Oakley Countryside Walks

Walk 12: Bernwood Forest - Circular walk including perimeter of southern part of Bernwood (10.4 km, 6.5 miles, approx. 2½ to 3 hours)

This circular walk takes one through the northern part of Bernwood Forest and around the perimeter of the southern part of the Forest. Gumboots are needed in wet conditions when some short sections of the walk flood. In drier weather walking boots are sufficient.

The walk starts at Bernwood Forest car park on the road between Oakley and Horton-cum-Studley. Exit the bottom of the car park and walk down the main avenue leading into the forest. Continue along the main avenue for 1500 metres (m). The avenue descends gently, does a slight "S" and then climbs up gently. After the "S" there is a track leading to the left with a wooden post with a no horse riding sign, a footpath sign and a Bernwood Jubilee Way sign (point A on the map). Do not take this track – look instead for a small footpath starting on the right hand side of the avenue, approximately 10m before the wooden post. Proceed along the footpath for 40m through a wooded area and arrive at a stile with a footpath marker. Pass by the stile into a large field. Walk straight ahead down the grass verge on the right hand side of the field. After 300m pass over a stile in a gap in the hedge and continue down the right hand side of the next field. On arriving in a third field turn left and follow the grass verge along the left hand side of the field beside a small wood. After 400m one arrives at a stile in a hedge. Climb over the stile aim left and cross a short section of field to a gap in the hedge on the left. In the gap pass over another stile and follow the footpath diagonally across the next field to a hedge that runs alongside the Worminghall to Stanton St John road. Pass over a stile in the hedge and turn right into the road.

After 200m turn left into the small road (point B on the map) signposted to Commonleys Farm. Continue down this small tarmac road; after 700m (level with the entrance to the Farm at point C) the road becomes a track. Proceed down the track for a further 900m (ignoring a side track that leads left) until a large field is reached. This field surrounds the southern end of Bernwood Forest. Follow around the edge of the field, with the forest on the right, for 1000m. The field bends to the right and keeping alongside the forest on the right continue for another 750m. Then walk diagonally left across the field towards a gate and a large water tank on a trailer. Pass through the gate and follow a rough track alongside a hedge on the right. After 700m one arrives at a crossroads (roads leading to Stanton St John, Oakley and Worminghall) at point D on the map.

Turn right onto road leading to Worminghall. After 450m turn left down a signed footpath. This footpath continues straight for 500m, passing through a first kissing gate, a section along the side of a field, a second kissing gate and a section through forest (that floods in wet weather). The footpath emerges on a large field. Walk alongside the bottom edge of the field (100m) and at the end turn left into a footpath traversing a section of scrubland. After 50m turn right over a small bridge made from two wooden sleepers. Continue along the footpath that passes over a larger bridge and arrives at kissing gate leading into the Bernwood Meadows Nature Reserve. Enter the large field (that in May and June is covered with a carpet of orchids) and walk along the right hand side of the field for 250m. At the far end there is a display board that provided information about the meadows. Behind the display board pass through a kissing gate (point E on the map) and turn left onto a track. Continue up the track for 200m and on arriving at a wooden bench turn right into a grass track. After 250m the grass track joins the main avenue that leads back to the car park.

An alternative way of doing this walk is to take the track that goes straight through the centre of Bernwood Forest as marked on the map. To get onto the track start at the car park, walk down the main avenue for 750m and turn right at the intersection of tracks with the bench and display board. After 1000m turn right onto the Worminghall-Stanton St John Road and after 75m turn left beside a large gate and take the track straight for 1500m to the end of the forest (do not take any of the left or right side tracks)

This walk is the final one in the series of 12 walks prepared by the Oakley Footpath Correspondent. The 12 walks have covered the majority of the footpaths in the Oakley parish. This area is blessed with a huge number of footpaths and many other walks are available if one starts at Brill, Wotton Underwood, Worminghall and other villages.

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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.