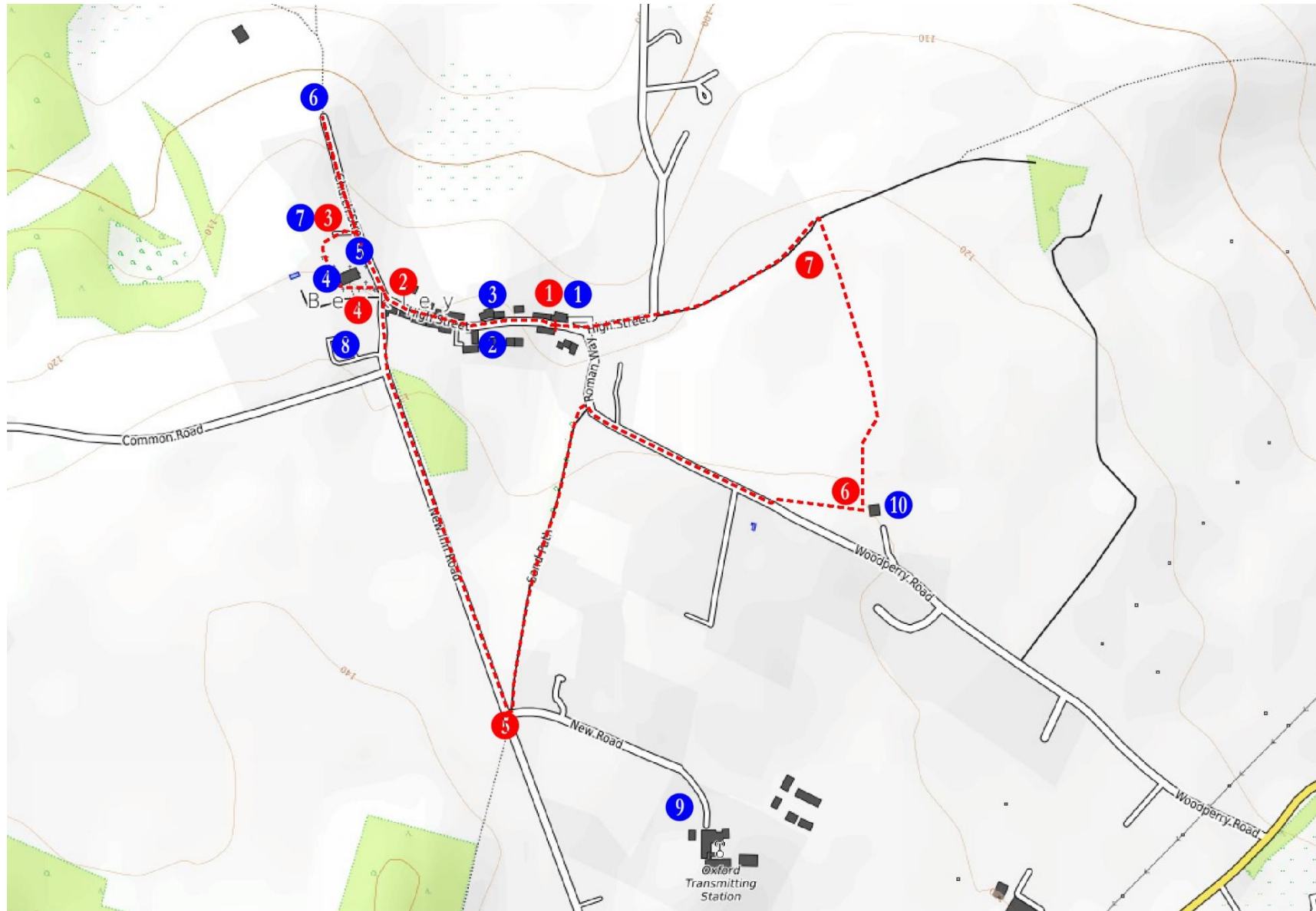


Walk 0 – Beckley Village Circular



Notes

This circular route of 2.2 miles, total ascent 267 feet, introduces the walker to the history, architecture and landscapes of the village. It can be abbreviated at 2 or 3 points. Most of the walk is on tarmac or gravel track, but there are two sections of grass path that may be muddy and slippery when wet.

Route notes

- 1 From The Abingdon Arms, turn right up the High Street.
- 2 Turn right down Church Street. Pass the school playing field onto the gravel track to a farm gate up a rise to the left. Here there are splendid views over Otmoor. Re-trace your steps back up Church Street to the driveway on your right leading up to Beckley Primary School.
- 3 Continue up the driveway and turn left through an iron gate into the churchyard. Walk round the back of the church and down past the entrance porch.
- 4 Leave the churchyard and take the second turn to the right (care – narrow road) up New Inn Road. (**Optional diversion:** After 100 yards, it's worth turning right for a short distance on Common Road to glimpse the front of Grove House.)
- 5 Continue up New Inn Road to the brow of the hill, where turn sharp left.
- 6 Walk down Sand Path emerging onto the road. Turn right up Woodperry Road. Beyond the cultivated field on the left, enter the village playing field and walk across to Beckley Village Hall.
- 7 Turn left from the hall, pass the children's playground and cricket net to the hidden corner of the playing field, from which a permissive grass path leads down to a gravel track, the route again of the Oxfordshire Way. (**Optional diversion:** Walk right for 100 yards or so to admire the panoramic views, then retrace your steps.). Walk down the hill into the old village, past the small village pond, and so back to The Abingdon Arms.

Points of Interest

- 1 The Abingdon Arms is a community pub owned by the Beckley & Area Community Benefit Society. The building is Grade 2 listed dating from around 1700. The blue plaque on the pub's front wall records its association with the author Evelyn Waugh. Other writers were also associated with Beckley, and probably frequented The Abingdon Arms, including Lewis Carroll, CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien and RD Blackmore. The Abingdon Arms has a lovely rear garden, which enjoys splendid views over Otmoor. It is said views of the chequered Otmoor field and ditch pattern inspired the chess board in Lewis Carroll's *Alice Through the Looking Glass* (1871).
- 2 Beckley Art Box: Purchased by the Parish Council, has been repurposed as a community art gallery in which local artists, and the village primary school, have displayed a wide variety of paintings, photographs and sculpture.
- 3 Manor Farm House: Known to be the vicarage during the 1800s, Manor Farm House is a Grade 2 Listed Building dating in part from the 17th century but essentially Georgian in character. Fields behind include the wildlife pond seen from the rear of The Abingdon Arms. Traces of Richard of Cornwall's Palace foundations were observed in the field in 1830, and many musket balls have been unearthed over the years giving a hint of the battles fought across the lands surrounding Beckley.
- 4 The Church of the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary: Part of the north chancel wall and the font date from the Norman period (12th century), but most of the church's structure, some remaining glass, wall paintings and the main door from the 14th century. The church clock, still in operation, was made in Salford and installed in 1883.
- 5 Bee and Church Cottage: Dating from the 16th century, the Bee name derives from Edward Bee, who bought much of Beckley in 1710 from the Duke of Bedford and was the first owner of Grove House. Bee Cottage was mentioned frequently in CS Lewis's diaries and was the meeting place of a literary group known as The Inklings which included CS Lewis, JRR Tolkien and Owen Barfield. Barfield's daughter Lucy became CS Lewis's goddaughter, who lent her name to the heroine of Lewis's *The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (1950).
- 6 Views over Otmoor to the north: In the foreground can be seen the Otmoor RSPB reserve, beyond which are the church towers of Charlton on Otmoor and Oddington; and in the far distance is the modern recycling plant at Ardley.

- 7 Beckley Primary School: Replacing very cramped premises elsewhere in the village, the school opened on its present site in 1895. The foundation stone, which can be seen in the wall of the late Victorian school hall, was laid by the Bishop of Oxford on 18 April that year. The school has expanded since, and the pupils' comings and goings, singing and games brings youthful joy to local residents.
- 8 Grove House was built by Edward Bee, a wealthy silk merchant, probably in the 1700s. Bee Cottage in Church Street (see POI 5) was supposedly used to house his domestic staff. From 1820, Grove House was occupied by the Cooke family who, in the 1880s, opened the orphanage for girls in Church Street (now New Ridge) and an orphanage for boys behind the church.
- 9 Beckley mast: First erected by the BBC in the early 1960s, the mast is now a comprehensive telecoms facility. It can be seen for many miles around, day and night, a modern-day homing beacon!
- 10 Beckley Village Hall: The light and airy village hall was constructed in 2016/7. It has some interesting features, including sedum rooves and a gabion wall. The hall represents a contemporary counterpoint to old Beckley.