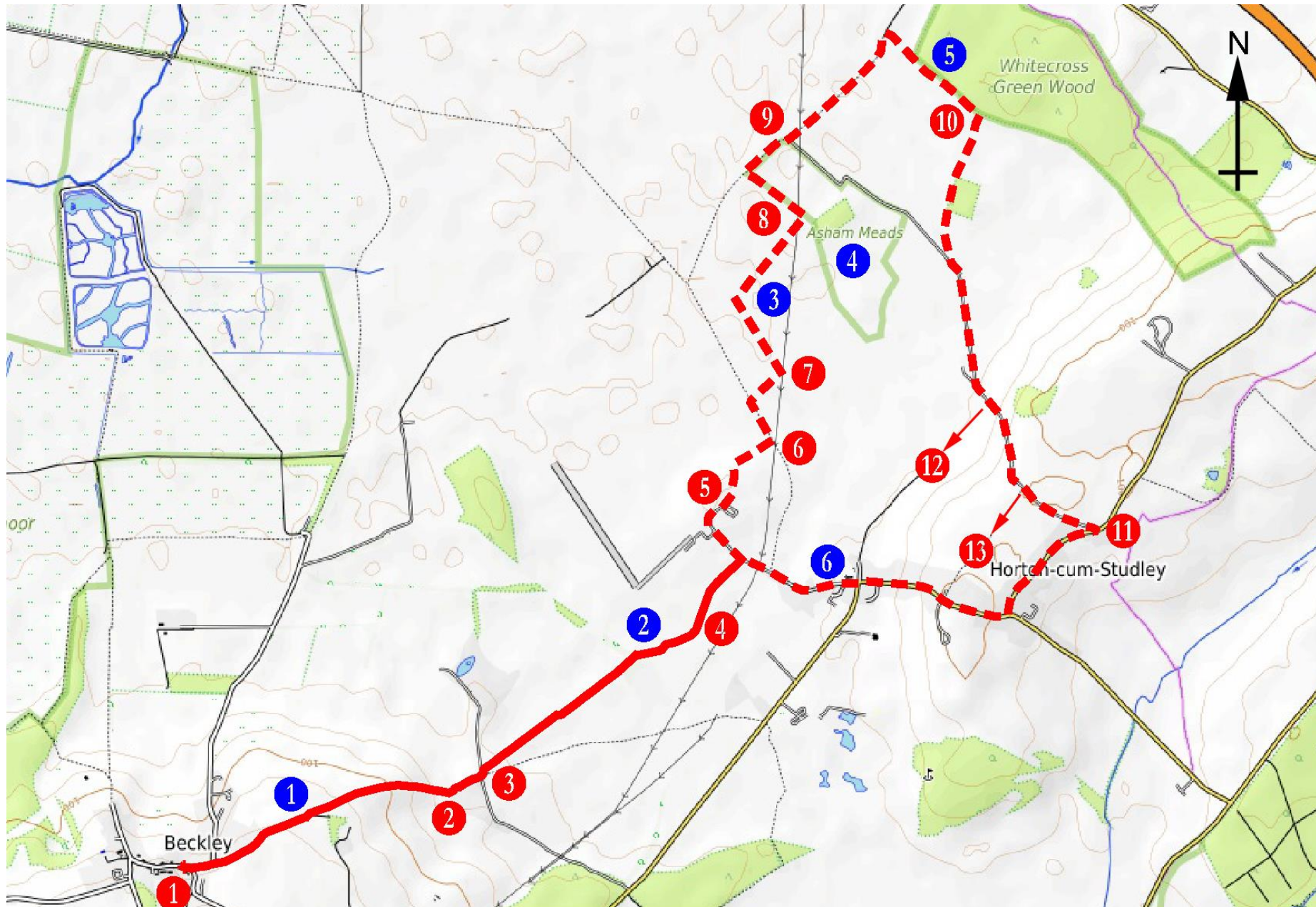


Walk 5 – Beckley to Horton Cum Studley and return



Notes

Starting from The Abingdon Arms, this is a walk of 8.2 miles with total ascent/descent over the walk of 450 feet. The route is flat apart from two short, gentle/moderate climbs. The walk follows gravel tracks, grassy paths and cultivated fields which, in winter or following heavy rain, are likely to be muddy. Livestock may be encountered, and dogs must therefore be kept on leads.

Shorter alternatives are possible. For shorter circular routes in Horton cum Studley, the circular part of this route excluding the sections from Beckley and return (4.2 miles) or Walk 8 (3.1 miles) are suggested.

Route Notes

- 1 From The Abingdon Arms turn left down the High Street, crossing Otmoor Lane and joining The Oxfordshire Way, an uphill track for 3-400 yards which then veers left through a cultivated field and a metal pedestrian gate into high parkland.
- 2 The Oxfordshire Way descends to take the right hand of two stiles, following a brook, beyond which ancient fishponds can be glimpsed, and Middle Park Farm. The path crosses the waterway and emerges briefly on to the farm track, before leaving The Oxfordshire Way at the gate to Beckley Park and entering parkland with a field hedge on the right.
- 3 A 3-plank ditch crossing and waymarked stile lead into the next field, its hedgerow continuing on the right. The path leaves this meadow over a double stile (where another path between hedgerows to the left returns towards Beckley – an option for the return journey) and continues ahead with a hedgerow on the left, through the next field.
- 4 In the fourth field, the path continues ahead with the field hedge to the left and exits on to a private roadway after a stable yard to the right. The route is to the left.
- 5 Ventfield Farm, Beggars' Roost and Yew Tree Cottage are passed on the left, then the path appears to enter but actually passes to the left of West Hill Farm. The walk passes through an unmarked gate, then straight ahead and down sloping sheep pasture to emerge through a pedestrian gate on to Ragnall's Lane.
- 6 The path turns left to follow the lane for 2-300 yards before turning to the right through a metal barred farmyard gate with a machinery barn at its left. The footpath is not signed here. The route continues forward with a hedge to the right.
- 7 The track continues ahead through a gap in the field hedge, where the path turns left along the wild perimeter of the cultivated field, with boundary hedge on the left. At the far corner of the field, the path turns right, following the hedge on the left past a boundary gap to the field corner, and turns right again. After turning right round the field corner, a waymark footpath sign can be seen to the left, and a footbridge and stile carry the route into Asham Meads, a nature reserve.

- 8 Following the meadow perimeter to the left, a stile in the hedge at the field corner ahead takes the path, turning right, into a green lane (bridleway) for some yards.
- 9 At a junction of paths, the gravel bridleway zigzags right and left then ahead towards Manor Farm. Just before the farm buildings a footbridge and gate in the right-hand hedge takes the path through horse grazing and out again at the far end of the field by another gate and footbridge close to the corner of Whitecross Green Wood. The wood is now to the left of the path which after another footbridge just before the field corner will pass an inconspicuous entrance to Whitecross Green Wood, offering interesting diversions of the route
- 10 At the field corner the path turns right along field boundaries, leaving a small copse on the left and crossing a cultivated field before turning left on a farm track towards Gardener's Barn. Here the path forks left as a concrete track uphill, becoming a lane again for about half a mile before emerging on to Brill Road in Horton cum Studley.
- 11 On Brill Road, the route turns right to the junction with Oakley Road and Horton Hill, then down Horton Hill to the Church, following Church Lane and the private road to join the Beckley path by the Stable on the left.

Alternative one:

- 12 At Gardener's Barn, forking right across a cultivated field will shorten the route by about a mile, crossing a footbridge and following the path into Mill Lane through a small close of houses to the bottom of the village, turning right past the church of St Barnabas. The route continues down Church Lane and into the private road, where on the left the footpath retraces the earlier route back to Beckley and The Abingdon Arms.

Alternative two:

- 13 For a slight abbreviation of the full route, having climbed the concrete hill track, the lane proceeds briefly past a poplar and between ash trees, then an unmarked right turn takes the path across a cultivated field, crossing a ditch by a pedestrian gate and between two properties, emerging through another pedestrian gate into a short driveway and out onto Horton Hill opposite Studley Priory. It then descends to the church and returns to Beckley as above.

Points of Interest

- 1 It's worth taking the time to pause here for landscape with views out to the Chilterns on the distant right (East), arcing round to include Shotover Hill to the south, then Brill and Muswell Hills more centrally (North East), to Graven Hill towards Bicester on the left (North).
- 2 A pond to the left: moorhens and herons might be seen and looking diagonally to the right the roofs of Studley Priory might possibly be seen among hillside trees.
- 3 There are wide wild margins in these fields with diverse butterfly population in the summer months

- 4 Asham Meads is a BBOWT nature reserve of three ancient meadows. home to rare communities of botanical gems, rare butterflies, birds and hares. The BBOWT Asham Meads website has more information.
- 5 The ancient woodland is a BBOWT controlled area of great beauty and SSSI. Plentiful blackthorn hosts a population of scarce Black Hairstreak butterfly; Purple Emperor and White Admiral butterflies have also been recorded here. A rich variety of wildflowers is found here. Roe deer are seen; grass snakes and great crested newts inhabit; nightingales have bred here regularly. There are many choices of route on entering the wood, where **dogs must be on a short lead at all times.**
- 6 St. Barnabas is a Butterfield Church of beautifully shaded polychrome brickwork, containing a unique wall-mounted painted war memorial with portraits of the fallen, and a window by local, internationally known artist Nicholas Mynheer.