

OXFORD PRESERVATION TRUST



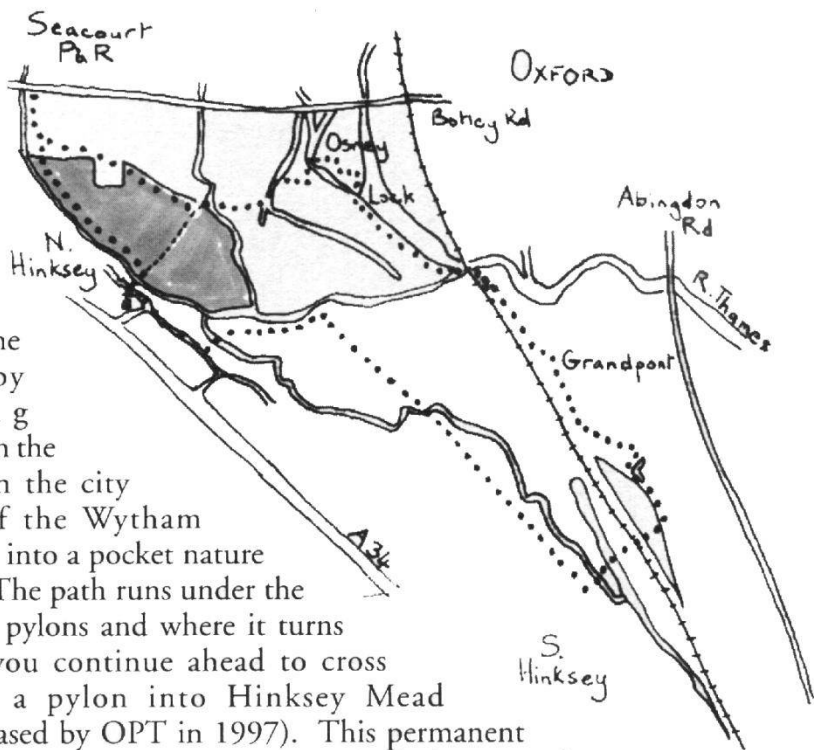
IN AND AROUND OXFORD

Since its foundation in 1926, Oxford Preservation Trust has sought to protect the City's beautiful green setting. Over the years, by purchase and through gifts, it has become the owner of about 400 acres of land - some let to tenants and some maintained by the Trust as a public amenity. In the case of tenanted land, wherever compatible with agricultural use, public access is preserved, and these routes through Trust-owned land and on public and permitted footpaths have been devised to encourage those who live in the area, and visitors, to enjoy a walk in the countryside.

Please be careful to shut gates and to keep dogs under control, particularly where there is livestock.

WALK NUMBER 4 - THE HINKSEYS, GRANDPONT AND OSNEY

The directions for this walk use the Seacourt (Botley Road) Park & Ride car park (or parking for the warehouse retailing on the south side of the road) as a starting point. The Park & Ride 400 or any number 4 bus from Castle Street could get you there; alternatively you could start from other points such as North Hinksey Village or Hinksey Park on Abingdon Road where there is parking available. There are several possible stops for refreshments - The Fishes at North Hinksey, The General Elliott at South Hinksey, The Waterman's Arms at Osney or The George by the Wytham Stream on Botley Road. Without stops the walk takes about two hours. The water meadows through which you pass may at times be wet under foot (and occasionally flooded).



Start the walk by going through the gate on the city side of the Wytham Stream into a pocket nature park. The path runs under the line of pylons and where it turns away you continue ahead to cross under a pylon into Hinksey Mead (purchased by OPT in 1997). This permanent pasture is managed to encourage a high diversity of plant species and is a splendid sight in early summer; the jewel in its crown is a colony of snakeshead fritillaries (in flower in May). Keep to the path by a line of poplars and along the edge of the meadow above the stream, crossing out of the field by a kissing gate and footbridge into Willow Walk.

Turn right across the stone bridge, then left along the road, and left again opposite St Lawrence church. Almost opposite The Fishes public house is Ruskin Cottage with its plaque recording John Ruskin's encouragement of undergraduates "to feel the real pleasure of useful muscular work" in improving the road through the village. At the far end of the field adjoining the pub cross the stile onto a permitted path. (The paths in this section of the route are open under the MAFF Countryside Access Scheme.) Walk straight ahead over a bridge with stiles crossing the Hinksey Stream. The path then turns diagonally right towards the line of pylons and a gap in the hedge where there is a footbridge over the Hogacre Ditch. Continue with the hedge and Bulstake Stream nearby on your left until you reach the old electricity service road, where you turn right. As you follow the track for about a mile you can see to the right Westminster College on the skyline and then Hinksey Hill

Golf Course, while on your left emerge views of the spires of Oxford rising above the trees. You cross a bridge on a slight rise and ahead of you are the church tower and rooftops of South Hinksey. Finally a stile brings you onto the Devil's Backbone, a raised causeway between South and New Hinksey.

If you are in need of refreshment at this point, turn right and find The General Elliott pub as you enter the village. Otherwise continue left coming to a railway bridge with Railtrack's "virtual quarry" in the sidings and then a bridge spanning Hinksey Lake. The kissing gate on your left brings you to the lake shore; you pass the open-air swimming pool and turn right between the tennis courts and the boating pond to leave the park through a metal kissing gate. Turn left across a wooden bridge and left again into the open ground behind the Marlborough Road houses.

Follow the left edge of the field near the stream until, where the path round the field curves right, you go straight ahead towards the hedge through a white-painted squeeze. A bridge crosses the ditch and a well-used path snaking through the vegetation comes out on a tarmac track. Cross the track into the Grandpont Nature Park and walk towards the two masts of the ice-rink and a gap in the hedge. Over a small footbridge, bear left; the path soon divides and taking the right fork with the railway on your left, continue to the river's edge.

Follow the Thames upstream to Osney Lock and as you emerge from the lock complex you see the Waterman's Arms. The walk continues down to the bottom of South Street (on your left), then turns right into West Street and left again into Swan Street through part of the Osney Conservation Area, a suburb developed in the mid-nineteenth century and known then, because the surrounding land was so frequently flooded, as Frog Island. Cross the bridge at the end of Swan Street and follow the footpath around a school playground onto Ferry Hinksey Road.

Turn left towards Osney Mead Industrial Estate and just before the junction with Osney Mead go onto the metalled track which branches to the right. A bridge crosses the Botley Stream and OPT land now lies to either side of the track. Turn right immediately through a kissing gate into Hinksey Meadow along a path at the edge of the field, the spire of "Botley Cathedral" prominent in the view ahead. This brings you back into the City Council nature park where the path soon bends right towards the Botley Road where you started out.