

Walk 10: Woodley & Shiplake

This circular walk, starting in Woodford Park, takes you north, over the railway line and down to the river Thames at Sonning. You continue north into South Oxfordshire, through Sonning Eye and climb to Dunsden Green, once home of the WW1 poet Wilfred Owen, before turning East and following the footpaths to Binfield Heath. At Binfield Heath the route turns east and then south down to the river Thames at Shiplake. You wpass Shiplake Church which is well-known for its medieval stained-glass windows and the fact that it was the venue for Alfred Lord Tennyson’s wedding. From Shiplake College Boathouse, you follow the Thames Path back to Sonning and return to Woodley via King George’s Field and the Old Bath Road.

Some of the paths can be very muddy after rain and the path adjacent to Spring Lane can flood in very wet weather. There is one steep climb up to Dunsden Green.

Length

10.9 miles (17.5km). Allow 5 hours plus stops.

Starting Point

- Car** **Woodford Park Leisure Centre car park**, Leisure Drive (off Haddon Drive), Woodley, RG5 4LY. OS Grid Ref: SU 76237364. w3w: ///owners.grass.hotels
(Note: often busy on Saturdays until early afternoon – sports teams)
- Bus 14/19c** **Chequers** stop. Headley Road. Walk along Headley Road in the direction of bus travel, to the Oakwood Centre to enter Woodford Park by the right-hand side of the Oakwood Centre. Take the footpath that leads past the war memorial to the Coronation Hall. Turn left at the Coronation Hall and continue to the children’s play area. The car park and start of the walk are on your right.
- 13/19a** **Chequers** stop, Beechwood Avenue. walk along the right-hand pavement towards a pedestrian crossing, but do not cross it. Go straight ahead to reach a second crossing in front of the Chequers pub. Go over the crossing, turn right to the 14/19c bus stop.

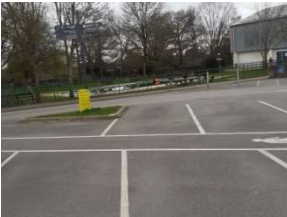
Refreshments

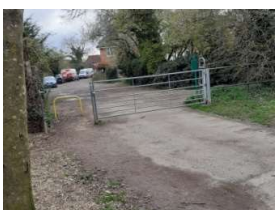
The Oakwood Centre Headley Road, Woodley. Across Woodford Park by the 14/19c bus stop.

In Sonning Village

- Coppa Club** South side of Sonning bridge
The Mill North side of Sonning Bridge
Bull Inn pub By the churchyard
The Village Hamper High Street just before point (26)
Flowing Spring pub Spring Lane, Playhatch. At point (12)
Plowden Arms pub Shiplake. At point (23).

Route Instructions (See maps below for numbered points)

- 1**  Starting at the Woodford Park Leisure Centre car park, walk towards the children’s play area and paddling pool. Turn right and follow the path past the paddling pool. Turn left, then right and walk between the lake and the all-weather pitch. At the end of the lake continue straight ignoring paths to left and right, bear slightly left and left again, past the gates to a grounds maintenance area on the left and school fence on the right, towards a metal gate. This is point **(2)** below

- 2**  Walk through the pedestrian exit at the left-hand side of the gate along the unmade road to the round-about junction with Reading Road and Western Avenue. This is point **(3)** below.

3



Turn right into Western Avenue, cross the road and walk along Western Avenue, past the school and church on the right, to reach the junction with Warren Road on your left. This is point **(4)** below.

4



Turn left into Warren Road, keeping on the left-hand pavement, continue ahead to the Sonning sign. Cross the road and, taking care, walk over the narrow railway bridge. Keep to the right when walking round the left-hand bend. Continue past the Old Bath Road turnings and walk to the A4. This is point **(5)** below.

5



Cross the A4 using the traffic island to the left and walk down the pavement on left-hand side of Sonning Lane, which is directly ahead, to the sharp right-hand bend at the bottom. The lich gate leading into St Andrew's churchyard is ahead of you. This is point **(6)** below.

Sonning was the location of an early Saxon minster. In 909 AD, this became one of two cathedrals in the See of Ramsbury and Sonning. Some Saxon stonework can still be seen in the church. The north aisle dates from the 13th century and the south aisle from the early 14th century. However, the church today is largely Victorian, with major restorations undertaken in 1852–3 and 1876.

6



Enter the churchyard through the lich gate and follow the path along the wall on the left. At the end of the wall take the middle path which goes diagonally left to exit the church yard by the gate next to the Little Deanery. This is point **(7)** below.

7



Take the left-hand pavement (Coppa Club on the right) to cross the bridges over the river Thames. Pass the Mill Theatre on the left. The French Horn is on the right. Just before the French Horn bear to the left to take the footpath next to the river. Walk to the entrance of an alley way to the right of Furleigh Cottages. This is point **(8)** below.

8



Continue to the end of the alley way. Turn left onto the road and then turn sharp right at Long Gardens and continue along the left-hand side of the road to reach the junction with the road from the Sonning Eye roundabout, on the right. This is point **(9)** below.

9



Continue straight ahead, along the 'no through road', passing the Reading Sailing Club on the left, to the end of the road. Pass through the wooden gate to the Sonning to Playhatch main road. This is point **(10)** below.

10



Cross the main road and take the footpath immediately to the right of Spring Lane. (*Note*: this path can become flooded in very wet weather). Walk past the allotments on the right and under the gravel works chute to a wooden footbridge. Cross the footbridge and continue on the footpath which turns left just before a line of trees ahead and exit onto Spring Lane. This is point **(11)** below.

11



Turn right, cross the small bridge and walk along Spring Lane, passing the Flowing Spring Pub on the left, to the junction of the lane with the Reading to Henley Road. This is point **(12)** below.

12



Carefully cross the main road, go through the metal barrier, and climb the steps opposite to join the footpath the other side of the hedge. Turn left and follow the (permissive) path, keeping the hedge on your left, until reaching a footpath on the right which runs uphill between two hedges. This is point **(13)** below.

13



Follow the path uphill between the hedges and continue straight on once the hedge on the left ends until reaching a hedge in front of you at the top of the field. Turn left and follow the path along the hedge to the end of the field. Pass through the gap in the hedge and bear right, keeping the hedge on the right, walk to a metal barrier to the road. This is point **(14)** below.

14



Exit the field through the gap on the left of the barrier and turn right. Keeping to the right-hand side of the road follow the edge of the road and then the pavement to reach the Green at Dunsden Green. This is point **(15)** below.

15



Cross the road to the corner of the green and then bear left and follow the pavement on the edge of the green round, past the telephone box (now a book exchange), to the corner of the green. Turn right into the small road with the green and the Wilfred Owen information board on your right. This is point **(16)** below.

16



Continue along the road, which bears left and passes Orchard Cottage, before it turns to the left to the drives of some house. There is a wide footpath (Tagg Lane) immediately in front of you. This is point **(17)** below.

17



Walk along Tag Lane. (*Warning*. This footpath can be very muddy in wet weather). After about 700m there is a footpath leading uphill on the right. This is point **(18)** below.

18



Turn right and take the path uphill between the hedges. When the hedge on the left ends, continue straight on with the other hedge on the right to the brow of the hill. Just past the top of the hill keep on the footpath which leads to the right through the hedge and then left to continue on the other side of the hedge. Continue with the hedge on left, past a line of trees on the right, to reach the road. This is point **(19)** below.

19



Turn right, walk to the end of the road where it joins the main road, opposite Binfield Heath Church. Turn left and walk along the left-hand side of the road (*blind bend*) for about 300m to reach a footpath sign on the right. This is point **(20)** below.

20



Cross the road and take the footpath, keeping straight on through two fields. Passing through the gap in the right-hand corner of the second field, continue downhill and through the woods next to a chain-link fence. On leaving the woods bear left into the field, following the path uphill, with the fence and trees to the left, to where the path leads through a clump of trees on the left and the path crosses a tree-lined path. This is point **(21)** below.

21



Continue straight across this footpath and follow the wide path which leads across the field and then bends to the left, passing a group of trees on the left. Continue through the gap in the trees. Keep right, ignoring the path to the left, and continue on this path as it follows the edge of the fields, turning first sharp right and then sharp left, eventually reaching the concrete farm track to Shiplake Farm. This is point **(22)** below.

22



Bear left and walk along the farm track to the road. Cross the road. Turn right and walk to the junction with the Reading to Henley road. The Plowden Arms pub is on your right. This is point **(23)** below.

23



Carefully cross the road and take the lane immediately opposite (Church Lane) which leads to Shiplake Church. Follow the path down past the church on the left. At the end of the church yard keep right and walk downhill past the college on your left. At the bottom of the hill follow the path to the left into Shiplake College boatyard and walk through the boatyard to the grassy area with the river Thames in front of you. This is point **(24)** below.

24



At the red sign for Shiplake College, turn right, cross over the foot bridge and follow the Thames Path back to Sonning Footbridge. This is point **(25)** below. *Note: It is 3.4km from point (24) to point (25).*

25



Turn left and cross the footbridge. Carefully cross the road, turn left and cross Sonning Bridge to reach the entrance to the churchyard to the right of the Little Deanery. This is point **(26)** below.

26



Enter the church yard and follow the path on the left next to the wall to reach the main gates. Exit the church yard and walk past the Bull on the right to reach the High Street. This is point **(26)** below.

27



Turn right and walk uphill. (The Village Hamper is on your left). At the end of the High Street turn right and follow Pearson Road to the left-hand bend. Turn left into Sonning Lane and continue uphill to the Berkshire County Sports Club on your left. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing and go through the gap in the hedge. Do not go straight ahead but immediately turn left and go across the tarmac car park to the minor lane that joins Sonning Lane. This is point **(27)** below.

28



From the car park turn right and walk down the lane. Turn left just before the houses in front of you and take the footpath which leads between the hedge on your left and the tennis courts on the right to King George's Field. This is point **(28)** below.

29



Turn right and walk down the right-hand side of the field, past the cricket nets and fitness equipment and the children's playground to the exit by the school entrance to reach Pound Lane. This is point **(29)** below.

30



Turn right, walk up Pound Lane to the roundabout and follow the pavement round to the right to walk along the footpath along the side of the A4 to the pedestrian crossing. This is point **(30)** below.

31



Cross the A4 and enter Holmemoor Drive. Turn right and walk along Holmemoor Drive and then the Old Bath Road, passing West Drive on your left, to reach the junction with Warren Road on your left. This is point **(31)** below.

32

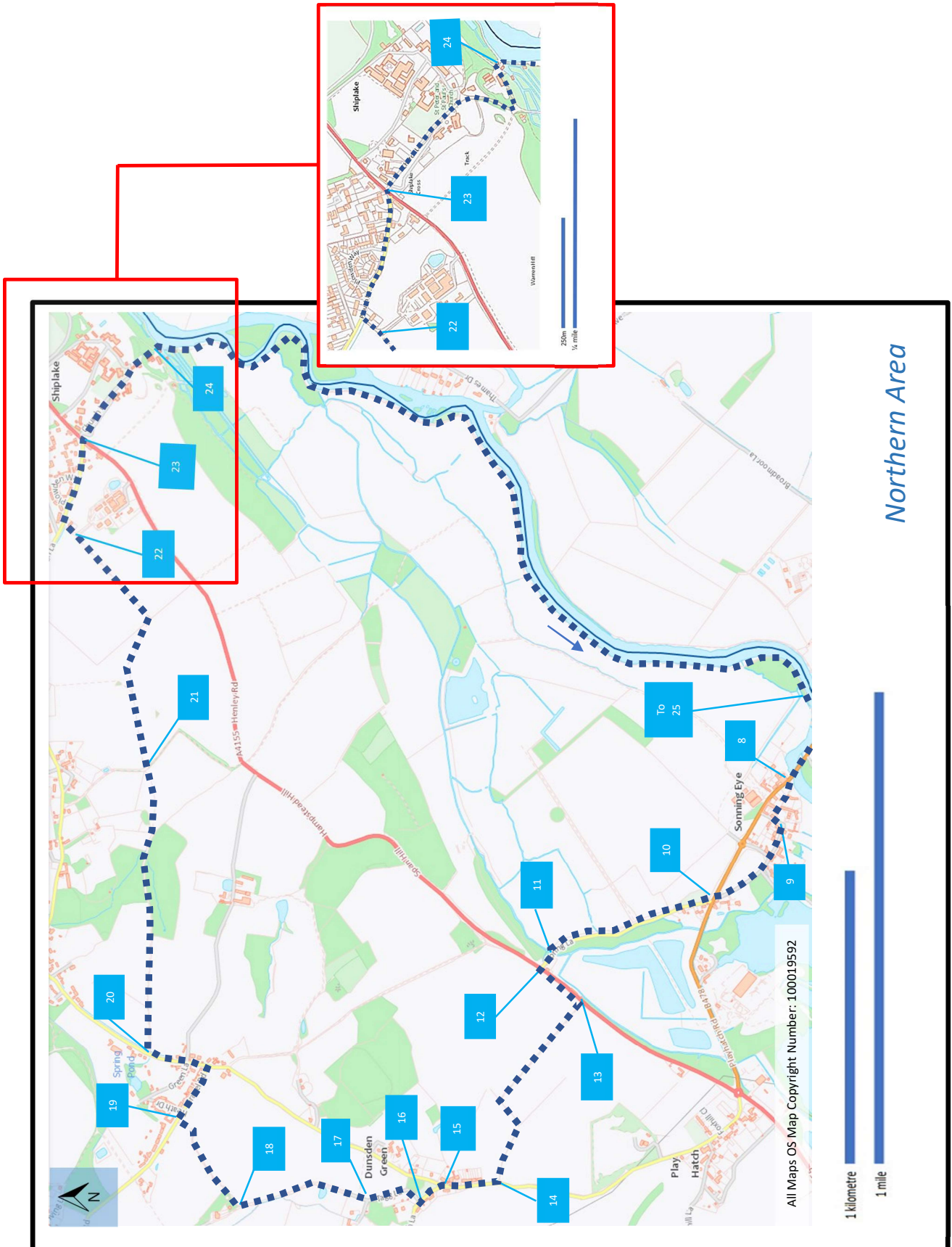


Turn left into Warren Road, cross the railway bridge and continue to the junction with Western Avenue. Cross Western Avenue and turn right. Continue to the entrance to Woodford Park on your left. Take the unmade road, walk through the gate and continue between the lake and the all-weather pitch. Turn left in front of the paddling pool and then right to reach the car-park. This is point **(32)** below

33



Journey's end.



Northern Area

