



Walk 9 - TO GORING HEATH

Another slightly longer walk which covers ground you will undoubtedly recognise from many of the other walks. The walk has some rather long sections of roadside walking but it does add some paths and allows you to look at our sister village - but do take care. It is about seven miles in length so allow about two and a half to three hours.

Walk up the High Street, turn right onto Hardwick Road and, as in previous walks, walk directly to the black gates at Hardwick West Lodge. Go through the gates and follow this pleasant avenue until it reaches the junction at the entrance to Hardwick House. Take the road which is second from your left and which leads to Mapledurham. This bridle road also leads pleasantly to another pair of black gates at the east end of the drive. Go through and continue until you see a kissing gate on your left, go through and walk uphill to the top left hand corner of the field you have just entered. In the corner you will find another kissing gate, go through and walk on the narrow path slightly to your right as it bears right and drops until it reaches a main track coming down from your left.

Turn right onto this new track and follow it as it wanders enjoyably through the woods. When the path reaches a junction with other paths take the one almost directly ahead. This leads uphill through Hollycopse and then it emerges into a much lighter area. Pass between the house and cottage and follow round to the left where the road is metalled. Join this road and follow it as the land flattens; you are at Collin's End. King Charles is said to have ridden here from Reading Gaol in 1648 to play bowls.

Go straight down this road until you meet a crossroads; your route is directly ahead but an old diversion was to take the track on your right leading past Rose Cottage through Coxsetter's Wood to the second 'King Charles Head' - now sadly also a private house. However you carry on the straight route, a further footpath joins on your right that also comes from the Goring Heath to Chazey Heath road and allowed a different return route after the diversion to the pub.

The metalled road turns right to join the Goring Heath to Chazey Heath road, however your track leaves at this turning and heads directly ahead. This bridle road leads pleasantly to the side of the old Goring Heath Post House. Turn left here onto the main road from Goring Heath to Path Hill. After about fifty yards you will see a new footpath sign on your right (the footpath has been diverted since I first wrote about it). Turn right down the narrow entrance and through the new kissing gate, the footpath now follows the hedgerow on your right towards Ladygrove Farm which you can see in the distance. The path leads to a kissing gate, go through and down a short narrow lane that brings you out at Ladygrove Farm where you turn left onto the road (take great care from now on).

An alternative route to the footpath is to walk further down the Goring Heath to Path Hill road, past the beautiful, thatched, Querns Farm, to a cross roads where two minor roads marked as restricted byways meet yours (the left hand one is also marked as Bunce's Lane). Turn right and follow this byway (the old village boundary) to Ladygrove Farm, again turn left when you reach the main road.

Follow this road with great care past Ladygrove Farm, past Copyhold Farm, and past a lane on your left which you will recognise from Walk 6. When the road forks take the left hand fork to Whitchurch Hill. As you pass through the village you will pass a footpath sign at Hod's Corner and the Well (Walk 7). Walk past Butler's Farm and the pond. Go past the village green and the entrance to Bozedown House, now occupied by Castrol, and along to the junction of this road with the main road from Cray's Pond to Whitchurch.

The house on your left at this point was once a public house (note the hop leaf sign on the roadside wall), then it was a blacksmith's shop and afterwards premises for specialised vehicle repairs. Walk across the road at this junction, with great care, to a footpath which starts behind the hedgerow to the left of the field gate.

The footpath leads safely to a wide green verge and continues along to a track that drops gently down to meet the one from Beech Farm, which is to your right, they meet just above the War Memorial.

If you have a large party, children or dogs, then it might be safer for you to cross the village green to the side of St John's Church, walk alongside the fence until you are opposite the concrete road to the right of St John's Rooms (Goring Heath Parish Rooms). Cross over and walk down this road until you reach the sign and kissing gate at the road entrance to Beech Farm; as requested do not go down the road but enter the field and go straight across to the wire fence on the opposite side. Turn left at the fence and follow it to a kissing gate, go through and straight across the farm road, across the grass verge, round the farm's outbuildings to another kissing gate and through to and down a pleasing fenced lane with lovely views to meet a further kissing gate and enter the field (which may have cattle or sheep in it - take care with children and dogs). Follow the edge of the woodland on your immediate right until you reach the kissing gate above the War Memorial.

At the War Memorial cross over to the Foxglove Manor entrance, onto the high level footpath and down to the Firhill Cottage, Uplands Cottage and Lynches Lodge entrance. Cross over to the right hand side of the road; take care here and also through the defile. This leads back to the High Street and your starting point.