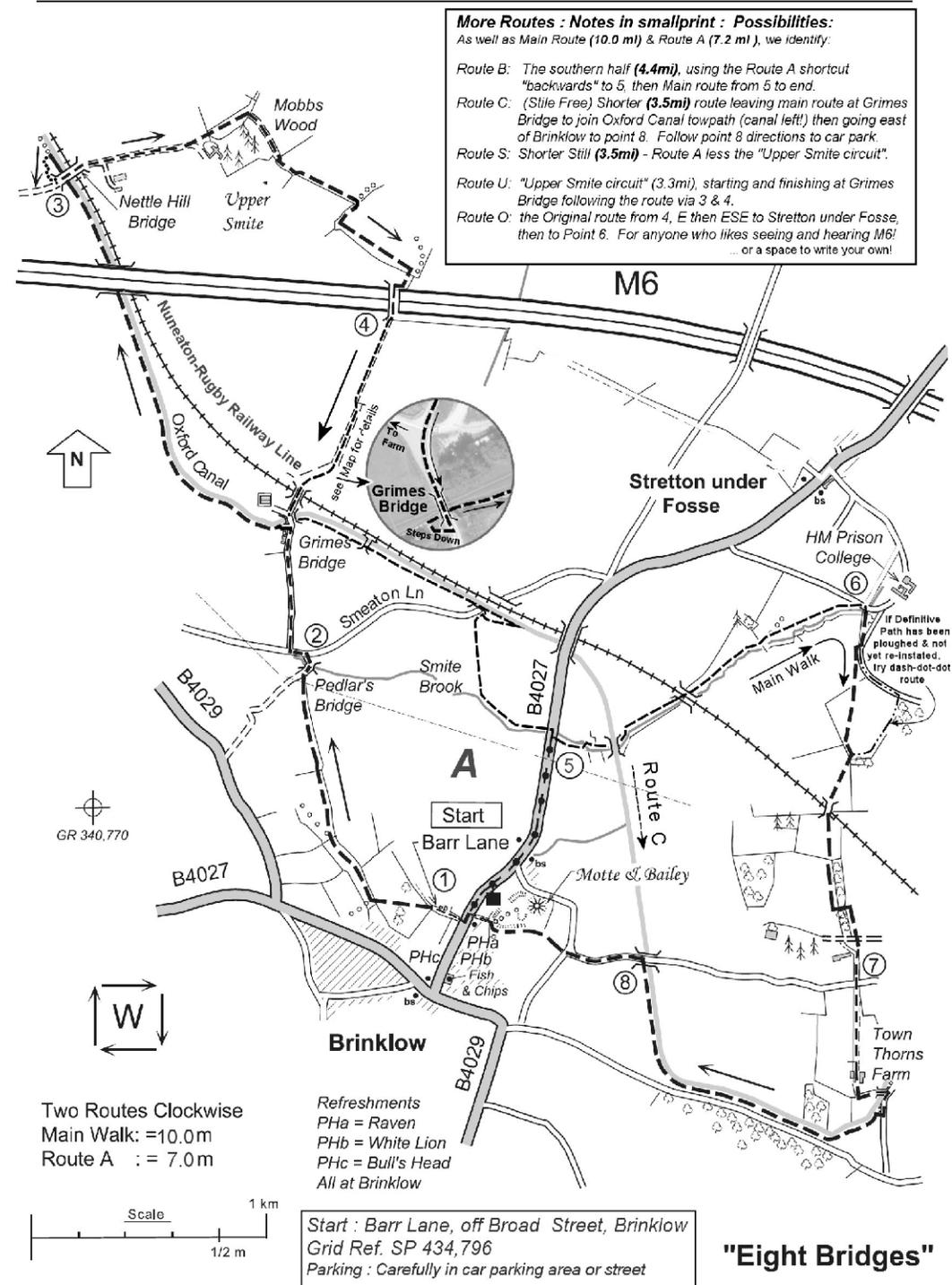


Main Walk

1. Where cart track starts at the end of Barr Lane **fwd** along track for 30m, thro' k/g on left into field, cross-field, aim to pass two isolated trees on left, **fwd** to hedge-line. Thro' k/g, **T/R** & with hg-right continue to field corner & thro' k/g. Take right path & keep hg-right to field corner. Thro' k/g, & **fwd** with hg-right under OPL thro' k/g in corner. **V/R** along bridle track ahead, cross over Pedlar's Bridge to road.
2. **T/L** & then shortly **T/R** & up road to reach Grimes Bridge over canal. **T/L** to gain access to canal towpath. Along towpath (canal right!), under M6 & then a metal bridge. After 70m, **T/L** to climb embankment using steps & hard path to reach track.
3. **T/L** over bridge along concrete drive for 500m. When drive curves right towards farm **V/L** to x-stile. Initially fc-left, then aim for far corner of pinewood, **T/R** over stile, **fwd** fence on right, wood further right over farm track. At end of wood x-stile to short fenced path. **T/R** & then shortly **T/L**, hg-right to next field boundary. Thro' gap ahead **T/R** & then **T/L** hg-right. Just before next field boundary **T/R** thro' gap. **Fwd**, hg-left follow field boundary round two sides of field to just before next field boundary. At WMP **T/R** to follow potholed road & go over motorway.
4. Immediately after bridge **fwd** down b/way (signposted Centenary Way), hg-left, to gate. **T/L** into enclosed b/way. **T/R** through three gates to farm track. **Fwd** over railway bridge then canal bridge (Grimes Bridge). **T/R** and descend steps to access canal towpath. **T/R** under bridge along towpath (canal left!) for 1 km to cross road below (Smeaton Lane). Don't descend the steep slope just by the bridge! **T/R** 100m after passing over road and descend sloping path with wooden handrail. **T/L** to road. Immediately **T/L** thro' gate onto path across fields towards power lines. Over s/b, thro' hedge-gap then head **H/L**, to pass thro' k/g and join stream on right. Thro' k/g, cross road. **T/R** then after 20mts **T/L** at WMP. (**Route A** - see below)
5. **Fwd**, stream on left, over s/b, then shortly **T/L**, cross bridge over stream, **T/R**, with woods on right to go thro' tunnel under canal. Over s/b to field. **Fwd**, stream **R** to pass under railway bridge. **Fwd** along path, stream **R** all the way to junction of b/way, f/p and road.
6. **T/R** into enclosed bridleway to shortly join drive. Follow drive for 20m then go thro' p/g on right. **T/L** & aim for & go thro' "posted gap" in fence, cross-field slightly right to reach far right corner. Thro' gap, **H/L** cross-field & over railway footbridge. **H/L** cross-field to reach right side of copse. Up field with copse left & **T/L** to go thro' gap between copse & old orchard. **T/R**, orchard right, up to corner & thro' gap. Over track, thro' p/g, cut across corner of field to meet drive thro' k/g. **T/L** down drive to cross road ahead.
7. **Fwd** down long drive & pass thro' farm buildings. Thro' k/g, **T/L** & go over canal bridge **T/R**. At the end of the canal house outbuildings **T/R** thro' gap into field. Hg-right for a short distance & thro' hedge gap to reach towpath. **T/L** along towpath, continue past car park/picnic site to first bridge over canal.
8. Up steps on the side of bridge to road, **T/L** (**fwd**) along road to junction, (Ell Lane) thro' k/g by WMP into field & **fwd** to pass between electricity poles to reach field corner & moat. Keep moat on right & follow round thro' k/g in corner. **T/L** to go thro' next k/g on left & follow enclosed path to road. **T/L** & shortly **T/R** into Barr Lane & the car park.

Route A At the end of Note 4, keep **fwd** along pavement on left then when possible cross to pavement on right into Brinklow and **T/R** into Barr Lane & car park.

See map for "More Routes" text box for other possible routes.



WALK 12 "EIGHT BRIDGES"

Start: Barr Lane, off Broad Street, Brinklow
Grid Ref: SP 434,796
Direction: Clockwise
Main Walk: 8.5 miles
Route A: 7 miles
OS Maps: (p=part)
Landranger 140
Pathfinder 956p
Pathfinder 936p
Explorer 222

Parking: Carefully in car parking area or street

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

This walk starts at **Brinklow**. Its name is thought to have originated from the old English *Brynca-hlaw*, burial mound of a man called Brynca or on the brink of a hill. The village's most notable feature is the *Motte & Bailey* known locally as "The Tump". At the foot of "The Tump" is the church of St John the Baptist, built around 1252 by the Augustin Canons of Kenilworth Priory. The Oxford Canal, open by 1794, used to contour through Brinklow. It was never truly competitive as it took the whole day to go through the village, crossing the main road twice, once between where Carlton House now stands and the iron gates opposite then behind The Crescent and Broad Street and again back through Dock Yard.

A more direct route was opened in 1834, by that date Brinklow had lost its "through canal". The only parts left with water can be seen from the footpath (ACW) from "The Tump" down to the corner of the main road leading to Bretford and the Brinklow Arm just south of the cemetery. There are many pubs in Brinklow, The White Lion being one of the earliest. Cross the fields to walk over Pedlar's packhorse bridge, restored in the 19th century. The bridge is on the route of a bridle way leading from the deserted medieval village of Upper Smite to Brinklow.

Now on to Grimes Bridge and the Oxford Canal. This canal was started in 1769 and was completed to Oxford in 1790. The canal bed is lined with puddle, a mixture of the right kind of soil and water to make it impervious. This was often trampled for hours by the navvies to get the right consistency. Take the track up the bank and over the steel viaduct to Mobbs Wood. Past the trees on the right are the remains of the abandoned village of *Upper Smite*. The villagers were evicted by the monks of Coombe Abbey in 1150 to make way for sheep.

Cross the M6 and fields eastwards to **Stretton under Fosse**, (*Straet+Tun* old English, farmstead or village on a Roman road). Through the village and down the drive towards the gates of HM Prison College at Newbold Revel. Sir Thomas Mallory, author of *Morte d'Arthur*,

lived in the old 15th century mansion. Sir Thomas died in Newgate Prison in 1470. The old house has gone and the present building was built in the early 18th century. Across the railway and past the old orchard, cross the road to Town Thorns Farm, with its many containers full of flowers during the summer. Over the canal and follow the water back towards Brinklow. Leaving the canal at the next bridge to pass "The Tump" into the village where there is a wide choice of refreshments.

Wildlife

Another high summer walk with some interesting canal-side sections. Keep an eye open for herons fishing along the canal early in the morning. If you reduce your pace and go carefully you can get quite close to these impressive birds.

At Grimes Bridge you access the Oxford Canal containing marginal meadowsweet, buttercup, common vetch with water dock, tall emergent sedge and grasses, bush vetch, herb robert, meadow vetchling, wood avens, lady's smock and germander speedwell.

On passing under the M6 you encounter a particularly rich stretch of canal embankment. This area contains common and bush vetch, hogweed, birds foot trefoil, yarrow, field forget-me-not, meadow buttercup, hedge woundwort, black medick, germander speedwell and ground ivy. The area also includes small wet patches with rushes meadowsweet, wild angelica, meadow vetchling and creeping cinquefoil. However, perhaps the most interesting species is the giant horsetail. Much larger versions of this species are commonly found as fossilised remains within carboniferous limestone dating back over 300 million years. The whole embankment is heavy with invertebrate life during the height of summer and this attracts a wide variety of small song birds.

The wet meadow to the south of Mobbs Wood is also very rich with stands of reed, tussocks of rush and expanses of marsh horsetail, great willowherb with tall sedges, water figwort and brooklime. The drier parts include common vetch, buttercup, yarrow, lady's smock and field woodrush.

As you follow a small stream and hedge alongside the prison college keep an eye open for marsh marigold. This impressively colourful early flowering plant has become quite rare because of past draining of wetlands and current ditch clearance work. Here it manages to hang on despite encroaching scrub along the banks of the brook.

On Route A you pass under Brinklow Arches. This was Brindley's largest aqueduct in terms of height combined with length. There were twelve arches, each with a 22ft. span, the highest being 37ft. 6ins. The whole structure was 300 ft. long, connected to a 600 ft. embankment at one end and 400 ft. at the other. It is only possible to see one complete arch today, the one over the Smite Brook. Beside it is the original top of the second arch. One side of the aqueduct was filled in in order to widen the channel, which used to be wide enough for only one boat. The other side has gradually been filled in with dredging.

Note on the east side of the aqueduct, in spring time, is a splendid bank of cowslips.

Either side of the railway line you will encounter some small broad leaf plantations. In the north, a thin shelter belt contains horse chestnut and hawthorn, some dogs mercury, ground ivy and hedge woundwort. In the south, the woodlands are a mix of oak, birch, ash and hawthorn with a ground flora dominated by nettle.

On rejoining the Oxford Canal you will encounter a rich mix of grassland and wetland species including hogweed, common vetch, meadowsweet, buttercup, herb robert, white bryony, wild parsnip and water dock with tall emergent sedges and grasses.

On nearing the road you will discover a small community woodland. This may provide some welcome shelter on a warm summers day. If you care to wander along the network of paths you will find that it is an oak and ash woodland with hawthorn, field maple, hazel, willow and dog rose. The ground flora contains abundant tall wood brome with wood avens, bramble, sweet woodruff, wood millet, honeysuckle and bluebell.

Beyond the woodland exists a strip of vegetation between the canal and road. Here you will encounter a mixture of grassland and woodland species including hawthorn, common vetch, wood avens, sweet woodruff, herb robert, wood brome, ground ivy, hedge woundwort, lords and ladies, bugle and occasional common spotted orchid. Includes some wet features with tall tussock sedges, rushes and grasses and marsh thistle.

The end of the walk is marked by the Brinklow Motte and Bailey. Although not tremendously rich, the area does include pignut and burnet saxifrage, two interesting short grassland umbellifers (related to hogweed). If you have the energy, be sure to make your way to the top of the castle mound where you can look down upon some fine examples of ridge and furrow.