

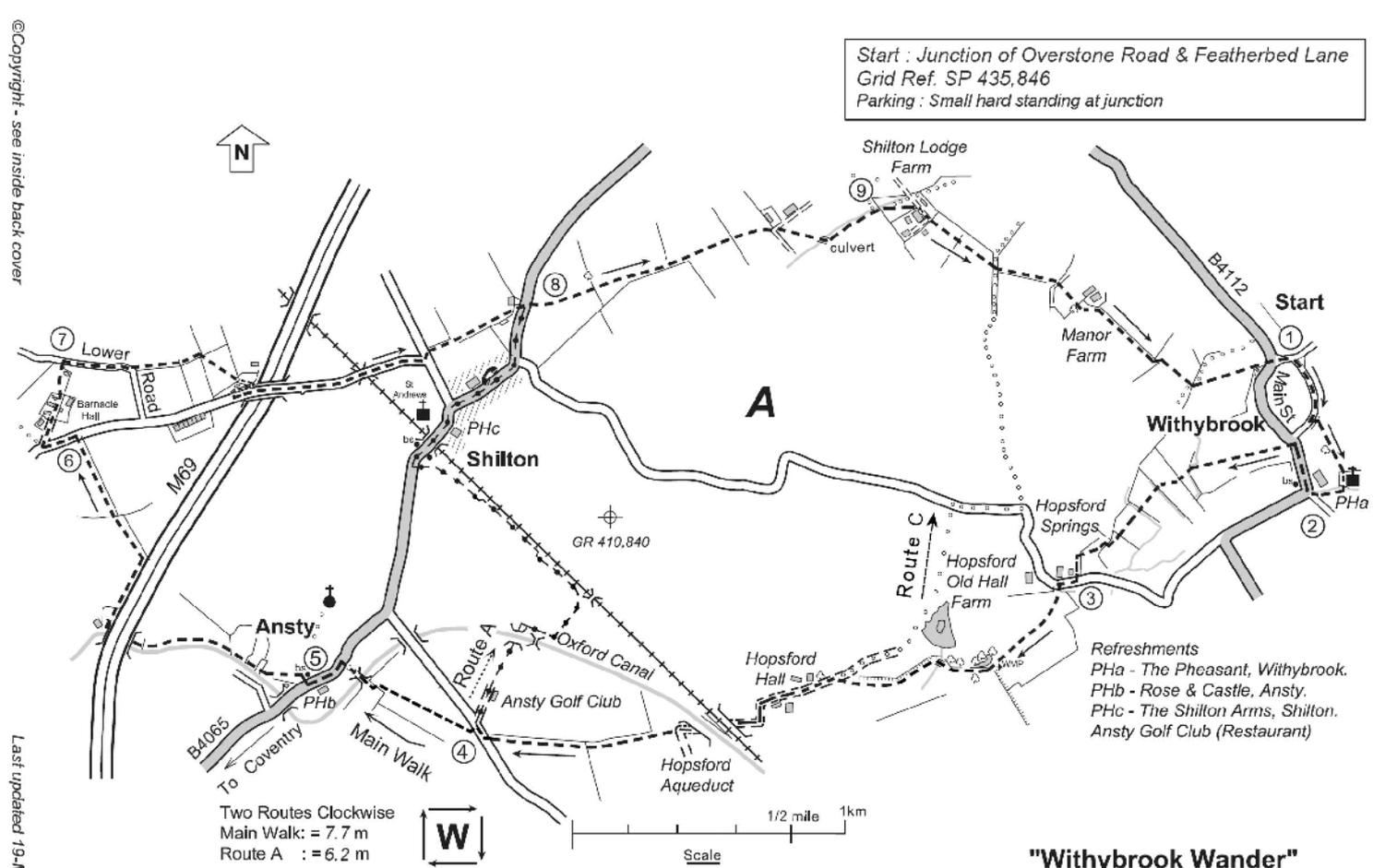
Main Walk

1. Walk South down Overstone Road, just past start of pavement on left climb bank and thro' k/g. Cross field down to church, thro' p/g and thro' churchyard to cross bridge. T/R to Main St. & Pheasant.
2. T/R up Main Street for 200m, & thro' k/g on left, opposite Overstone Rd. Cross-field with its ups & downs, keeping parallel with hedge on left aiming for gate. Over culvert into next field, **fwd** cross the next two fields via culverts, cross & exit the next field via a s/b & k/g near top right corner & then in 20m T/R thro' p/g, over s/b and stile. Thro' vegetation, (usually boggy) & T/L at top of bank to reach ranch fence. Thro' p/g & T/L down to road via p/g.
3. T/R along road. T/L opp. farm & go thro' gap beside f/g. Go **fwd** cross-field towards hedgerow on far side. Look, and aim for tall WMP ahead. On reaching field boundary and WMP, with pools up on right, pass into next field, keep right, with hg/bank right follow round and over f/b. **Fwd** past gap right along field edge, and as it bears right, follow to meet lane. T/L down lane passing Hopsford Hall on right, follow on under the railway & then Hopsford Aqueduct. When lane turns left, **fwd** cross-field to outward hedge corner. **Fwd** keeping hg-right onto road.
(Route A see below).
4. T/R up road for 20m, x-stile on left, next to gate, H/L cross-field to hedge opposite, T/R, hg-left, up field to outward hedge corner then exit thro' k/g (right of gate). **Fwd** over canal bridge thro' p/g, up enclosed path to road. T/L along road, on pavement, to reach Rose & Castle.
5. Thro' k/g opposite the Rose & Castle. H/L down field passing telegraph post to canal side via 2 stiles. **Fwd** canal left, thro' three k/g's & under motorway bridge (M69). Exit thro' k/g, T/R & up to go thro' k/g in hedge ahead. Keep motorway right up into field corner. T/L, hg-right continue up to corner & x-stile next to field gate just off field corner. **Fwd** hg-right, via k/g & s/b to road.
6. T/L & after 130m enter drive to Barnacle Hall & continue up drive to pass hall on right, across concrete yard. Thro' f/g ahead, aim for house opposite & skirt pool on your right to go thro' k/g to road.

7. T/R down road & when road turns right **fwd** over stile. Hg-right to hedge end, thro' gap on right. H/L cross-field to opposite corner. X-stile into garden, keep conifer hedge right to go thro' p/g onto farm track. T/R along track & follow round to main road. T/L, along road for 650m going over motorway to T- junction. Thro' k/g to the left of Jasmine Cottage on opposite side of road. Hg-left & thro' k/g, **fwd** hg-right followed by fc-right to just before barn. Thro' k/g on right, cross muddy field to go thro' f/g ahead onto road. X-stile over road on the right.
8. H/L cross-field thro' k/g, right of lone tree (or farm house). **Fwd** to pick up hg-right until hedge turns right. **Fwd** cross-field to x-stile & s/b. **Fwd** towards right side of farm buildings and corner of farm track. H/R, (or round field edge), down to stream, & go over culvert. T/L, stream left, to field corner.
9. **Fwd** over s/b & thro' p/g. V/R cross-field, aiming for left of farm buildings ahead. Thro' p/g, T/R & **fwd** on drive to go thro' p/g (in f/g) ahead. **Fwd** cross field to go thro' k/g ahead. V/L cross field to go thro' another k/g. **Fwd** over bridle path, thro' gap, to continue hg-right. Over track to x-stile ahead. **Fwd** cross-field thro' two k/g's & over s/b. H/L to pick up hg-left to reach field corner. Thro' k/g & continue on the same line as last field, down cross-field to reach p/g's. Thro' gates to go up cross-field keeping parallel to hedge on near right, aim for left of bungalows. Thro' k/g **directly** onto road, pavement to right, cross into Overstone Rd, **fwd** to parking area.

Route A At the end of Note 3 T/R up road to enter Ansty Golf Club on right. Fwd up drive and straight on passing clubhouse on right to go under canal bridge. T/R, canal embankment right for approx. 150m past bridge on right to WMP. T/L across course to reach & T/L at railway, keep as near as is practical to fence on right for 700m. Exit course via stile off corner, up walkway and x-stile onto road. T/R along main road, 250m after Withybrook junction x-stile on right. Continue with Note 8

Route C Shorter (3.9mi) using drive to Hopsford Hall to NE then North.



WALK 13 "WITHYBROOK WANDER"

Start: Junction of Overstone Road & Featherbed Lane

Grid Ref: SP 435,846

Direction: Clockwise

Main Walk: 7.5 miles

Route A: 6 miles

OS Maps: (p=part)
Landranger 140
Pathfinder 935p
Pathfinder 936p
Explorer 221p
Explorer 222p

Parking: Small hard standing at junction

Brief Information and Outline of the Route

This walk starts at **Withybrook** (*Wythibroc* in the 12th century Willow-Tree Brook) originally a chapelry of Monks Kirby. The village lies on a tributary of the River Sowe. From the junction go down Overstone Road, the route leaves the road towards the church via a stile. Before crossing the stile look to the left where amongst the trees, and snowdrops in springtime, some 19th century tombstones can be found. We haven't been able to find out why they are isolated from the church grounds.

Over the meadow to All Saints Church, to the east of which is a field with some earthworks. Back up Main Street pass The Pheasant and over the fields past Hopsford Spring to Hopsford Old Hall Farm with the site of an old village and manor house nearby.

Forward across the fields to a pool and evidence of the old Oxford contour canal that ran behind Hopsford Hall. Under Hopsford (*Apleford* in DB) Aqueduct and on to **Ansty** (*Anestie* in the DB, track linking other routes).

Cross the road opposite the Rose and Castle and down to the canal side. St James' Church is on the hill to the right. The spire was designed and built in Victorian times. The graves of six airmen who died in 1941 are in the churchyard. Beside the church is Ansty Hall, built in the 17th century and now a hotel. Under the M69 and right up to Barnacle Hall.

Then east to skirt around **Shilton** (*Scelftone* in DB, farm on a ledge) with its St Andrew's Church. Through Shilton Lodge farm and back to Withybrook. In Withybrook at the junction of Featherbed Lane and Overstone Road is a young oak planted on the 50th anniversary of the victory in Europe, May 8th 1995.

Wildlife

A summer walk that includes small wetland areas and old pasture. Worth taking a small pair of binoculars and spending a little time trying to spot small birds among tall wetland vegetation and low scrub. Also keep an eye open for butterflies. Brimstone and orange tip are generally common in the more wetland areas but meadow brown, ringlet and skippers are frequently encountered in and around the grasslands.

The first area of particular interest you encounter is around Hopsford Springs. The ground here can be very moist and supports a wide variety of wetland plants including a number of tall grass and sedge species as well as a variety of rushes, great willowherb, water figwort and brooklime. This type of vegetation extends along the brook and is set in an area of old pasture. Keep your ears open for the distinctive sound of warblers that inhabit the area.

On the way from Hopsford Springs to Hopsford Hall you encounter some part wooded pools. A small fragment of meadow still remains in the area and supports species such as buttercups with the early flowering lesser celandine, and pignut. The pools are generally fringed with ash and hawthorn and contain willows at the water's edge. The area supports species such as lesser celandine, lords and ladies, ground ivy, red campion, wild angelica, meadowsweet and marsh marigold as well as tall sedges, reed and yellow iris along the wet banks of the pools and in shallows. The wetland character of the area continues on past the pools beyond which is a large open pool containing some wildfowl. Plenty of bird life in the area, occasionally visited by curlew, therefore it is advised to make a quiet approach on a warm still day. Passing below the twin bridges for the railway line and canal you cannot help but feel that you have crossed through a gateway to another land. An expanse of grassland may be under threat from the nearby golf course. This is currently unmanaged grassland containing occasional lesser knapweed, goat's beard, rosebay willowherb, common vetch and hawkweeds. More wetland features are encountered along the canal which loops back on itself in this area and is encountered again beyond the golf course.

Beyond the M69 and once you have reached the country road you might wish to take a short break. Agrimony, lesser knapweed and goat's beard occur along the road verge and you may be lucky enough to find the former in flower with its tall spike of delicate yellow flowers.

Apparently in Ansty it was the custom, many years ago, to pay for the catching of sparrows 2d/dozen young and 4d/dozen old.

Evidence of ridge and furrow farming abounds in this area. The field after the Bulkington Road (at the end of Note 7) is a valley that looks as if it was farmed that way. In certain light conditions it is quite spectacular.