

The Parish Plan survey found that many people wanted more information about the footpaths in and around the village. The working party that was formed to survey the network of paths and to promote their use has prepared this leaflet.

This route starts and ends at “The Bell”. Special care is needed crossing the B4525 (Welsh Lane) road near Falcutt but then farm tracks, paths across open fields and through wooded areas offer a very varied walk. There are plenty of views across open countryside; on a clear day the Chiltern Hills may be visible!

The first circle of approximately 5.5 miles can be walked in about 2 hours but will take longer when the ground is wet or frozen. Parts of this walk can be very muddy when wet and some are deeply rutted by tractors and horses, so stout footwear is needed as well as warm clothing for the exposed higher ground. There are only a few stiles on these routes but other hazards mean that anyone walking alone needs to be especially careful in several places.

Whilst enjoying the countryside do please respect its life and work: keep to the public paths, fasten all gates behind you, leave livestock, crops and machinery alone, take your litter home and keep dogs under close control. Particular care is needed to control dogs in the sheep pastures.

Ordnance Survey map number 207 in the Explorer series of 1:25000 scale leisure maps covers this area.

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## START

From “The Bell” head up Church Street on the pavement; then carefully walk at the side of the narrow road round the church. Continue on the road to Falcutt and at the T junction go right until you reach the main road. When it is clearly safe to do so, go straight across, then go left on the grass verge to the signed right turn into the track leading up to Falcutt Hall Farm. Be alert for farm machinery and other vehicles on this roadway, as well as horse riders here and throughout this walk, which is largely on bridleways not footpaths.

As you get near to the farm buildings go to the left of the barns, and go through the metal gate directly ahead. The path now runs straight across a pasture field towards a gateway in a plantation of trees; a small white notice beside the next gate is your target! After ensuring the gate is shut behind you, walk straight ahead on the track through the trees then continue straight on through the arable field that slopes gently down towards a belt of trees. When you reach the bottom corner of the field you may have to look carefully for the path that winds through the trees bearing to the right; also go slowly here, because beneath the long grass the ground can be marshy and very rutted. (NB. This section may be flooded in very wet weather). Soon you emerge from the trees and the path swings right to go through a brick tunnel under the former Great Central Railway from Helmdon to Brackley.

From the short tunnel the path now goes diagonally to the left up across a large arable field and then through a gap in the hedge onto mown grass alongside the road through Radstone village. Turn left and walk 75 yards, past houses on the other side of the road, to a left turn onto a track that is signed with a green fingerpost. You are now walking East towards Syresham, with the field you have just crossed on your left and paddocks on your right. The track soon goes up over the old railway and tall enthusiasts may be able to look over the parapet at where the trains used to run.

Continue on this track through large arable fields on both sides; after about 15 minutes the track slopes down to a gap in a line of trees. Our path now swings left over a ditch and doubles back along the other bank towards the left side of a very large field. Now veering right, start up the slope on the grassy headland, with the high hedge on your left. As the field narrows to a point you will be approaching the edge of a substantial line of mature trees; this is the edge of Shortgrove Wood.

There are good views here as well as chances to see deer and hear lots of birds; so rest and decide which route to take next.

## Choice Point

The rounded corner of this field is where you chose which route you wish to take back to Helmdon. You can extend your walk to about 7 miles by going through the gateway from the field onto a wide grass track that runs alongside the wood on the right; a black arrow marker points this way, which is described fully later.

But for the quicker way back look to the left, as another arrow indicates, and find a gap in the hedge which takes you through to an opening between two arable fields. Step a few yards to the right to the edge of the field that has a straight hedge running away from you on your right and towards where traffic can be seen passing right to left and vice versa. From here our path goes diagonally left across this arable field towards a copse of trees.

Where the path enters the copse you have to duck under a branch and negotiate a steep drop down; be careful here, especially if walking alone. The path now winds through some bushes, on rough ground, then into some closely planted pine trees for a few yards.

When you emerge from the trees, go diagonally to the small clump of mature chestnut trees in the middle of the field; notice the large house on your right which is Stockings Farm. From these trees walk straight on to the field corner. Continue at the same angle across the next smaller field to a gap in the hedge alongside the road, which is the B4525 again.

Be careful crossing directly over the road and find a small bridge over the roadside ditch; this takes you into the shrubby corner of a field. Now you weave through to the field edge from where our path goes across an arable field at a slightly widening angle from the hedge on your right.

Next you climb a stile into a small horse paddock and go straight across to a gate and stile, which also must be climbed to get onto a short track down to a narrow road. Turn left and walk 50 yards up to the Falcutt T junction; from here it's a right turn and a straight road back past the church and down to the pub.

## The Longer Route

Start along the grass track between the hedge on your left and the edge of the wood on your right; this is a bridleway and so horses may have cut up the ground as well as farm vehicles. If you are lucky you could see buzzards as well as deer whilst walking this track up to the B4525 road.

Cross over the road, veering to your left and to where a green fingerpost indicates the continuing bridleway. Continue along this grassy track beside the hedge on your left and with open fields on your right, until you see a red brick house with large gardens on your left. Here you turn left onto a gravelled track alongside the house and continue up a slight incline to where you get fine views of the valley with Helmdon on your left, Astwell to the right and Weedon Lois on the ridge beyond.

Continue down the stoned track to meet a narrow road where you turn left and walk along between open fields, with some views of Helmdon landmarks on your right, including the railway viaduct.

The road curves through some trees and high banks before passing a turning on your right and going slightly uphill to the Falcutt T junction where you were before (perhaps 2.5 hours ago!). From here it's a right turn and a straight road back past the church and downhill to the pub.



Railway arch approaching Radstone

# HELMDON PARISH PATHS CIRCULAR WALK No 3

Helmdon to Radstone & two alternative return routes



Passing Shortgrove Wood

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