



STUCHBURY

HELMDON

A CIRCULAR WALK TO STUCHBURY

The Parish Plan survey in 2004 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 and the Helmdon Young Husbands Organisation (HY-HOs) have kindly helped with the printing costs.

This route starts and ends at Helmdon School; it goes to the farms that are all that remains of a lost village that straddled a track way dating back to Anglo-Saxon times. There are fine views across open countryside to admire on the way, especially from Stuchbury when you turn back towards Helmdon.

The full circle of approximately 3 miles can be walked in about 75 minutes but will take longer when the ground is wet or frozen! Parts of this walk can be very muddy when wet, or rutted in dry weather, and so stout footwear is needed as well as warm clothing for the exposed higher ground. Also do note that several stiles and narrow bridges must be crossed. 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, keep your dogs under close control and take your litter home. Particular care is needed to control dogs in the sheep pastures on the return leg of this route.

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

START

From the School head as if to go up Station Road then at the corner fork right into the lane sign-posted “village recycling centre” and ahead is a brick-built tunnel under the old railway. Go through the tunnel then fork right towards the sewage works! The next path is in fact a “Bridleway” as the signs show, and so is available to horse riders as well as walkers; horses and cattle may well have churned up the ground so care is needed to avoid stumbling. At the end of the roadway, go through the metal gate on your left, remembering to shut it securely behind you. With the hedgerow on your right, walk straight ahead to the next gateway, then straight across the next field to a ‘dog-leg’ bend in the hedge. From here the path goes diagonally to the right across a large field and cuts

through a line of trees that indicate where the line of the former Banbury to Northampton railway used to run. New gates and fencing protect newly planted trees here.

From the second new gate bear left across the corner of the field to a gate in the middle of the hedge that runs left to right ahead of you, with a copse of trees further ahead across the next field. This gate is on the Helmdon Parish boundary and leads from a stock grazing field into an arable field so shutting this gate is very important!

From the gate go directly across the arable field to the copse of trees; here the path winds through the bushes to the right, crossing a stream and uneven ground. When you emerge into the open, walk a few yards along the right side of a field to another stream crossing and the beginning of a rising walk up the right hand side of a large field. The path curves round gradually and continues up to a metal gate near two ponds. The official path goes through the metal gate and across one field to the open grass in front of Stuchbury Hall Farm. However, if this last field is full of cows, the farmer would prefer you to go off the official path, between the ponds, and then left up the grass track to the open area in front of the farm.

After a rest to admire the view, face the front of Stuchbury Hall Farm and note that the tarmac road ends at a gate on your left. From here you can see a lane, which is in fact the old Anglo-Saxon track, sloping down between high hedges. It goes down to a ford and you may wish to explore this diversion before heading back to Helmdon. But to complete this circular walk route you need to turn the other way and go to your right along the narrow road, passing some farm buildings on your left and then curving round to pass the entrance to another farm on the right.

Continue on the road to a pair of houses on the left and a gateway onto the Helmdon to Sulgrave road. If you are fed up with walking on muddy ground then turning right here will take you back to Helmdon on the road but in places there is no verge and so care is needed when traffic approaches.

But to continue our route on field paths, find the high stile on the right, just behind the open gate and step up over it. Now head diagonally across this grass field and look for a stile in the middle of the low fence between this field and the next. There are no visible traces of the old village here but some believe there were dwellings and a church hereabouts; you just have to use your imagination!

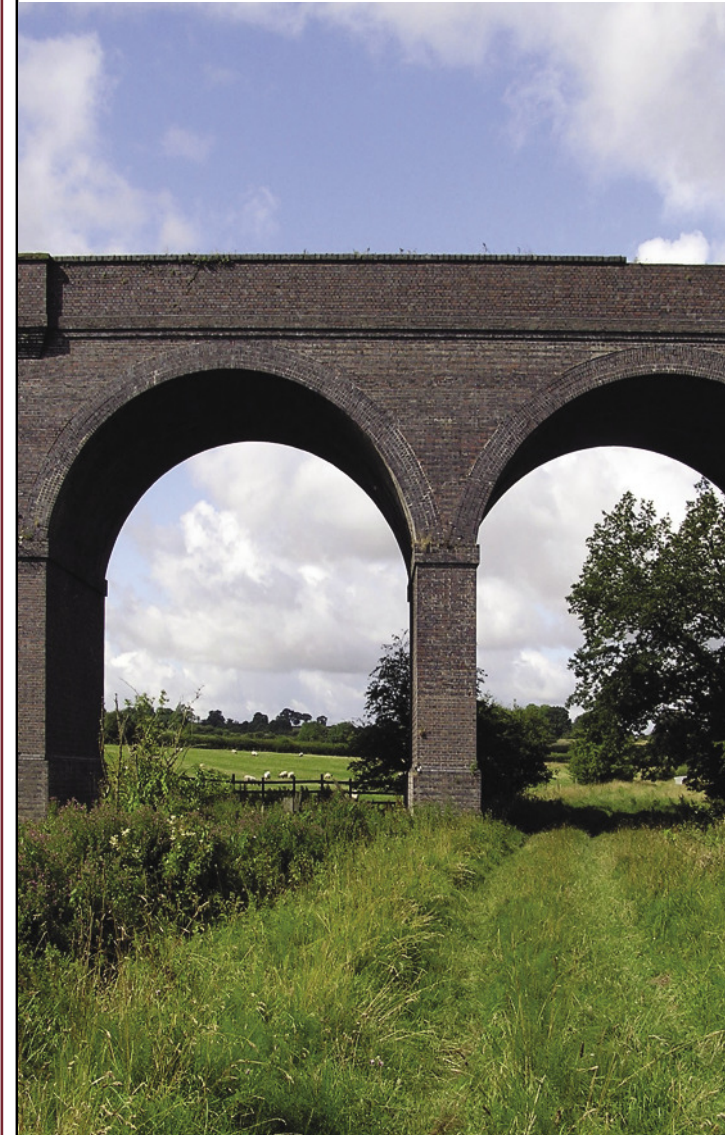
As the black arrow indicates, the path from the stile slants to the right across the next field to join the end of a farm track. Here the path goes through between the trees and a ruined old building, then into an arable field. Now the path runs down the left hand hedgerow on a wide headland. From the gateway near the next corner the path runs straight on across an arable field to a gap in a stout hedge where a wooden bridge crosses a stream that is the Helmdon Parish boundary. However, if this field is muddy then the grassy headland continues down the side of the worked ground and then round to the right to the bridge.

From the bridge follow the line pointed by the arrow, and bear to your right across this field towards one of the gaps in a thin old hedge near a large tree. Continue diagonally up across the next field towards the old railway line, just before the viaduct.

Cross over the old railway line and go through the gateway then diagonally to your right go down the slope of this grass field to meet the track of the old Banbury and Northampton railway again. The bottom of this field is often marshy but swinging round to the right and then left gives better footing; soon you are on planks across a ditch before stiles either side of the former railway. Ahead the path from the second stile goes slanting left across a grass field towards the school, and a stile in the corner next to the last of the houses is visible on your left. Climbing this high stile completes the circle!

HELMDON PARISH PATHS CIRCULAR WALK No 2

Helmdon to Stuchbury



Helmdon's Great Central Railway viaduct crossing the route of the former Banbury to Northampton line.