



SHINFIELD PARISH WALKS

WALK 5: THREE MILE CROSS AND WOODCOCK LANE

LENGTH: 3 miles, no stiles.

Some paths may be very muddy. Appropriate footwear is recommended. Dogs should be kept on a short lead.

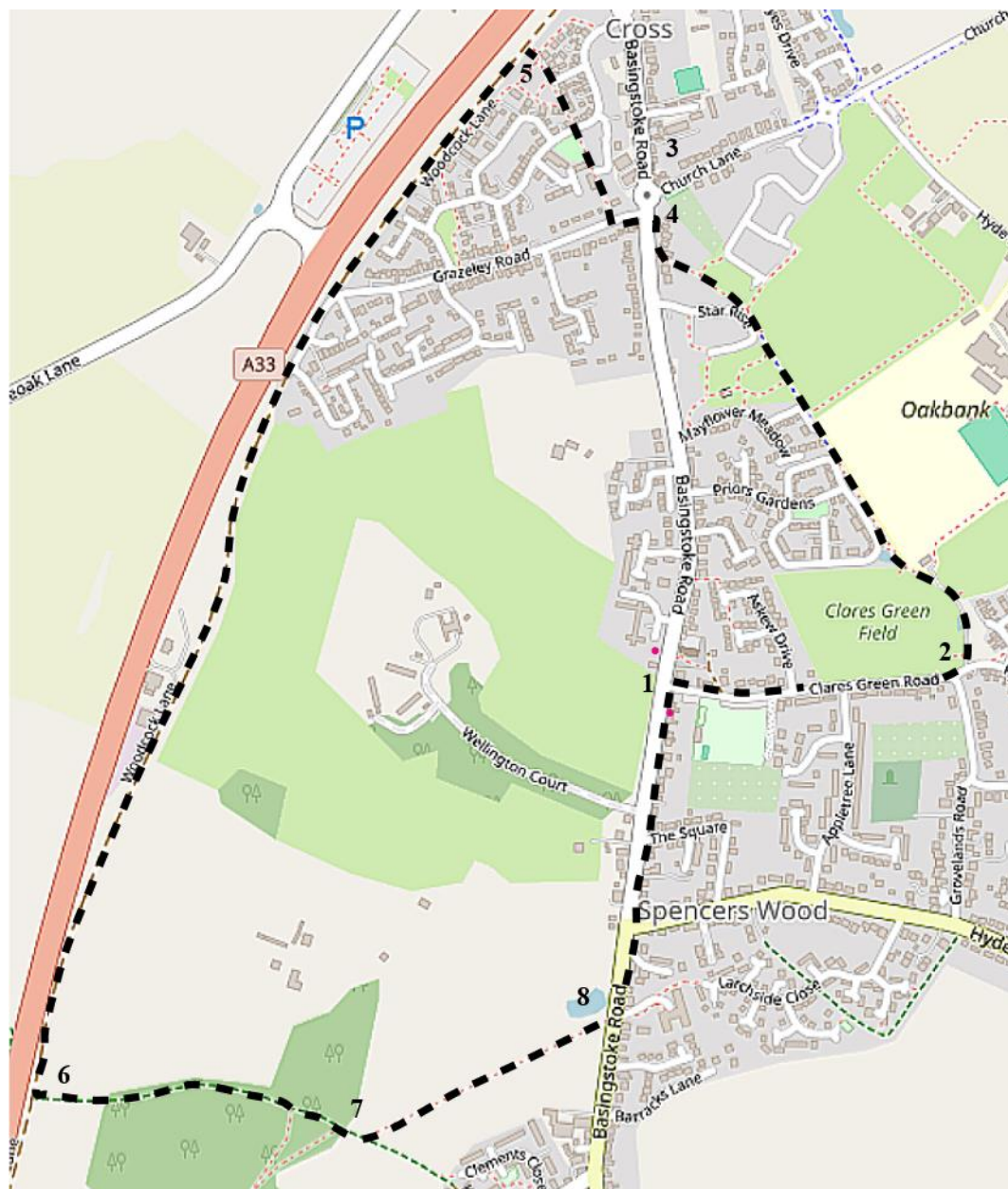
STARTING POINT: Entrance to Spring Gardens on Basingstoke Road.

OS grid ref: SU 751667
Lat/long 51.39779,-0.97288
w3w: /// during.knots.lights

CAR PARKING: Verge parking on Basingstoke Road

BUS: Reading bus **600**. The nearest bus stops are marked in red, St Michaels Hall.

ROUTE: (numbered points on map are described below)



1. START at the junction of Basingstoke Road and Clares Green Road and walk down Clares Green Road to the sharp corner at the bottom of the hill.

This walk begins with the pub to your right and Spencers Wood village hall on your left. Beyond the village hall is St Michael's Church. The hall and church are typical of the well-constructed village buildings dated from the 1900s. The walk passes the recreation ground which is used for sports, fetes and carnivals, and the modern pavilion. The pavilion is home to a pre-school group in part and is available for community events in the other part. Further along Clares Green Road is a Local Wildlife site now hidden by tall trees, until you reach the junction with Ryeish Lane. This is called Clares Green Field and is managed by Wokingham Borough Council's Countryside Service.

2. At the corner where Ryeish Lane starts, turn left onto the track that leads to the sports pavilion.

- Just before the pavilion, follow the footpath on the left of the hedge.
- Continue over the hill passing access points to Mays Farm SANG on the right and Parklands on the left.
- At the bottom of the slope bear left to walk between houses to reach Three Mile Cross.

Parklands has some comfortable seating for a rest, and a view out over Reading, and there is a very comprehensive play area down near Three Mile Cross. A SANG is a Suitable Alternative Natural Green Space and is provided by developers to mitigate space lost to development.

3. Look around Three Mile Cross.



You will notice the ancient pub and the village store with its post office. Many of the small buildings are listed as being historically significant. Mary Russell Mitford lived in the small cottage here in the 1820s and 30s. She wrote for journals and the theatre and was a friend of many literary contemporaries such as Elizabeth Barrett Browning.

4. Cross carefully over to Grazeley Road, keeping to the right-hand side footway.



- After 40m, just past two houses together, there is a narrow path which starts as gravel but becomes a footway after a short distance. This is Caribou Walk, which leads to Elk Path.
- Walk straight ahead to the streetlight at the entrance to Byway 25 – Woodcock Lane.

Caribou Walk and Elk Path are recent replacements for Footpath 26 and follow the same line.

5. Follow Woodcock Lane all the way to Point 6.

Woodcock Lane was the 'Low Road' to Swallowfield, Riseley and Basingstoke, before the 'High Road' (Basingstoke Road) paved by Mr Macadam around 1850. The noise of traffic on the modern bypass may affect the birdsong along the route. Look out for violets and primroses in spring. This part of the walk is muddy in wet weather.

6. Just after a point where the Lane swings left, turn left into the edge of the woods, and walk uphill beside a small stream, following the path as it swings to the right.

The large white building at the top of the fields on the left is Highlands, which began as an 18th century hunting lodge. The trees are secondary growth of ash, sycamore and oak. During the 19th and 20th centuries, bricks were made from the clay dug out of the ground here. The clay pits now form ponds which often dry out in summer.

7. Turn left through a kissing gate onto the open field known as Spencers Wood Common and follow the footpath across to another kissing gate and the Basingstoke Road.

If there are horses in the field, make sure any dogs are on a lead. The well in the centre of this field supplied all the water for many families until after the Second World War. The pond near the road was the drinking source for horses pulling carts up the hill. As you come out from the footpath, you will see several shops nearby, including the post office and bakery.

8. Cross the road and walk uphill back to the start of the walk.

Many of the houses are good examples of late Victorian/Edwardian architecture and have interesting brick features. The library opposite is a listed building which was donated to the village as a school in 1889. Note the spectacular avenue of Wellingtonia conifer trees further up the hill that show on the skyline for miles away – they were planted to commemorate the Duke of Wellington's victories against Napoleon.