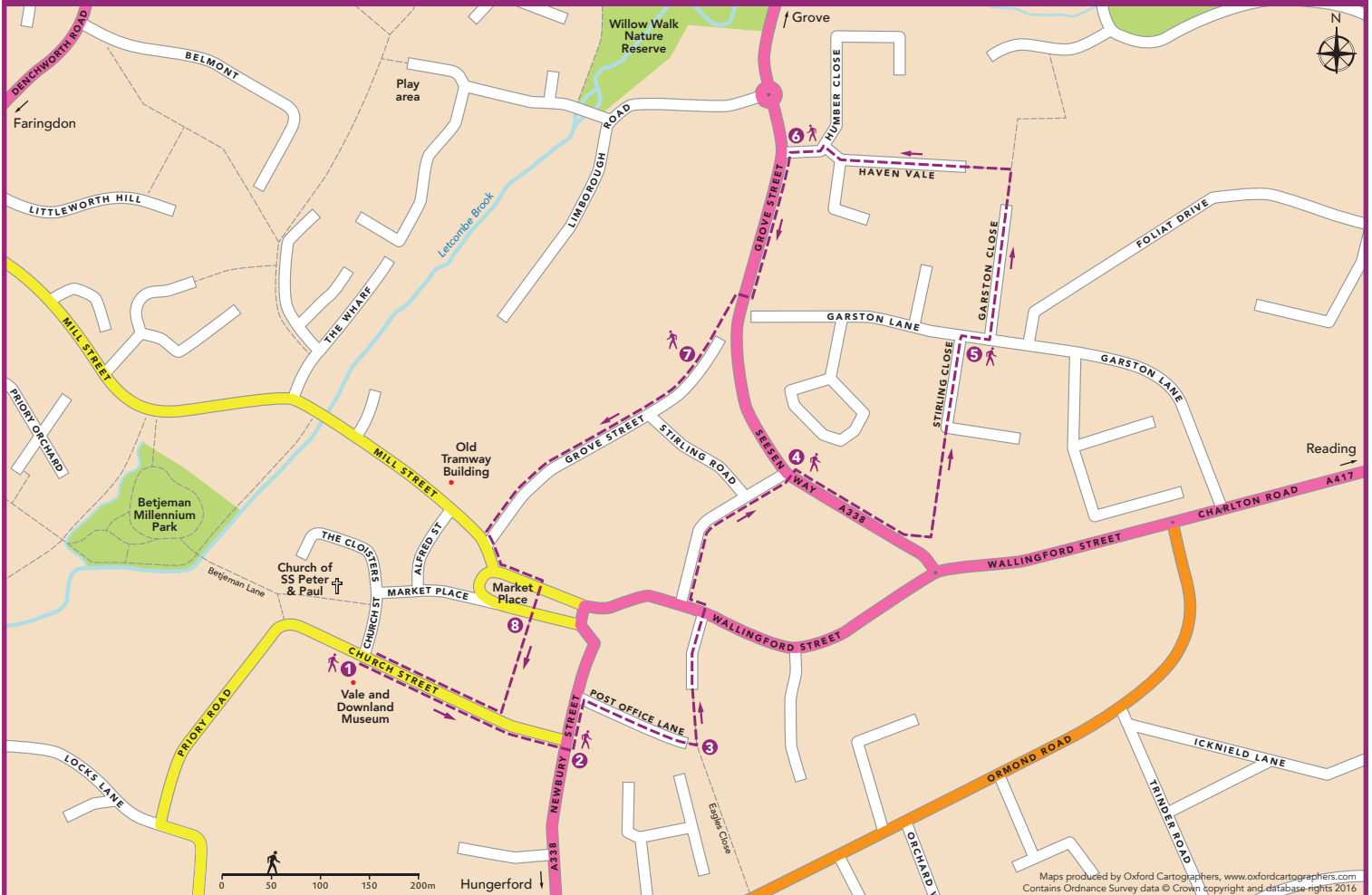
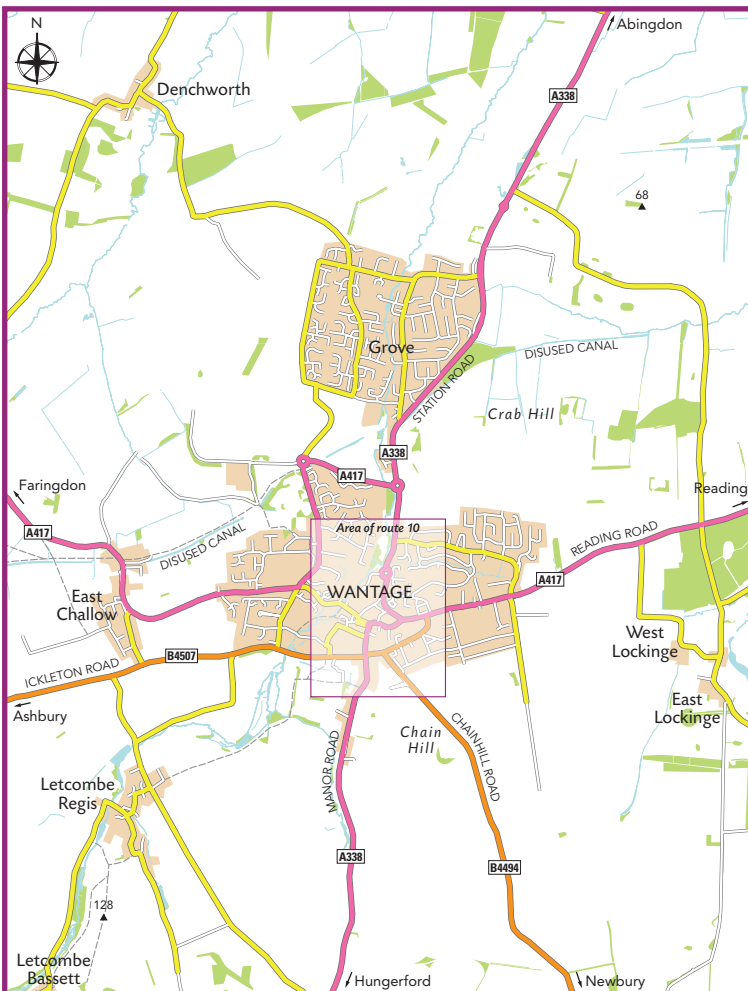


## WANTAGE AREA WALKS & CYCLE ROUTES



### Route 10 - Harcourt Walk



The ancient market town of Wantage sits on the Letcombe Brook, at the foot of the Berkshire Downs. The town is characterised by 16th century timber framed houses refaced in the late 18th and early 19th centuries in red brick. In 1847 Wantage became an educational and spiritual centre for the Oxford Movement, and the vicar of the parish church, Rev William Butler, was responsible for several fine buildings in the town centre.

This walk begins at the Vale and Downland Museum, well worth a visit in its own right. The building, a 17th century merchant's house, contains permanent local history galleries including interactive media and films, temporary exhibition areas, a Tourist Information Centre, a shop and an excellent café for lunches, snacks, drinks and home-made cakes – just the thing to fuel your walk or reward you afterwards! Do check opening hours before you go.

Vale & Downland Museum



**1** From the Museum, turn right on to Church Street (the thirteenth century parish church of SS Peter and Paul is opposite), and walk along to the T-junction with Newbury Street. The



old building to your left at the end of Church Street, a Chinese restaurant, at one time housed King Alfred's Kitchen, a tea-shop run by Lady Penelope Betjeman, during the time when she and Sir John Betjeman lived in Wantage.



**2** Cross Newbury Street with care, walk a few yards left and turn right into Post Office Lane: note the old post box set into the wall of the building in the corner – the old Post Office, naturally! Follow along Post Office Lane and turn left when you reach Eagles Close almshouses – marked by a blue plaque.



Built in 1867, there is a former water pump in the almshouses' gardens. Thomas Eagle left the land "...out of respect to the memory of his beloved and affectionate wife, a native of Wantage, as an asylum for decayed housekeepers". The interesting ecclesiastical features reflect the church's involvement with housing. Today the almshouses provide attractive housing for retired people in the town.

**3** Turn left towards Wallingford Street. Cross the street and go left and then right on the lane leading beside Waitrose up to the library at Seesen Way.

**4** Turn right and proceed to the pelican crossing. Cross the road and turn right again and walk along until you reach the steps leading up to Stirlings. Follow the path through Stirlings, under the archway of the old stables of Stirlings House (see the plaque on the left under the arch as you go through), until you come out on to Garston Lane: you will see the junction with Garston Close almost opposite you to your right.

**5** Go along Garston Close to Haven Vale, there is no street sign this end but it is just beyond the parking area. Turn left to walk through Haven Vale and then Humber Close until you reach Grove Street. (To your right, set back from Grove Street, is an attractive row of old cottages.)



**6** Turn left on Grove Street and walk towards town; when you reach the traffic lights, cross the road to continue down the blocked-off section of Grove Street, admiring the old black and white weavers' cottages just before the closed-off section begins and, further down, the Georgian Clock House on the left. Number 57 is the oldest house in Wantage and is being restored.



**7** Follow Grove Street to the Market Place; turn left and pass in front of the former Town Hall on the corner of the Market Place. Cross the



Market Place at the double set of pedestrian-controlled traffic lights, past the statue of King Alfred in the middle of the square. This statue was commissioned by Robert Loyd-Lindsay, Baron Wantage who was a founder member of the British Red Cross, and the sculptor was Count Gleichen formerly known as Prince Victor Ferdinand Franz Eugen Gustaf Constantin Friedrich of Hohenlohe – Langeburg. Local tradition has it that it is a likeness of Baron Wantage.



**8** Between Costa Coffee and The Bear Hotel, take either the Arbery Arcade or the VC Gallery (originally built to display a series of paintings by Desanges of recipients of the Victoria Cross, including Lord Wantage), which will lead you back through to Church Street and (a little way along to the right, across the street) the Museum.

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Further copies of this route and others in the series are available from the Independent Advice Centre, Market Square, Wantage