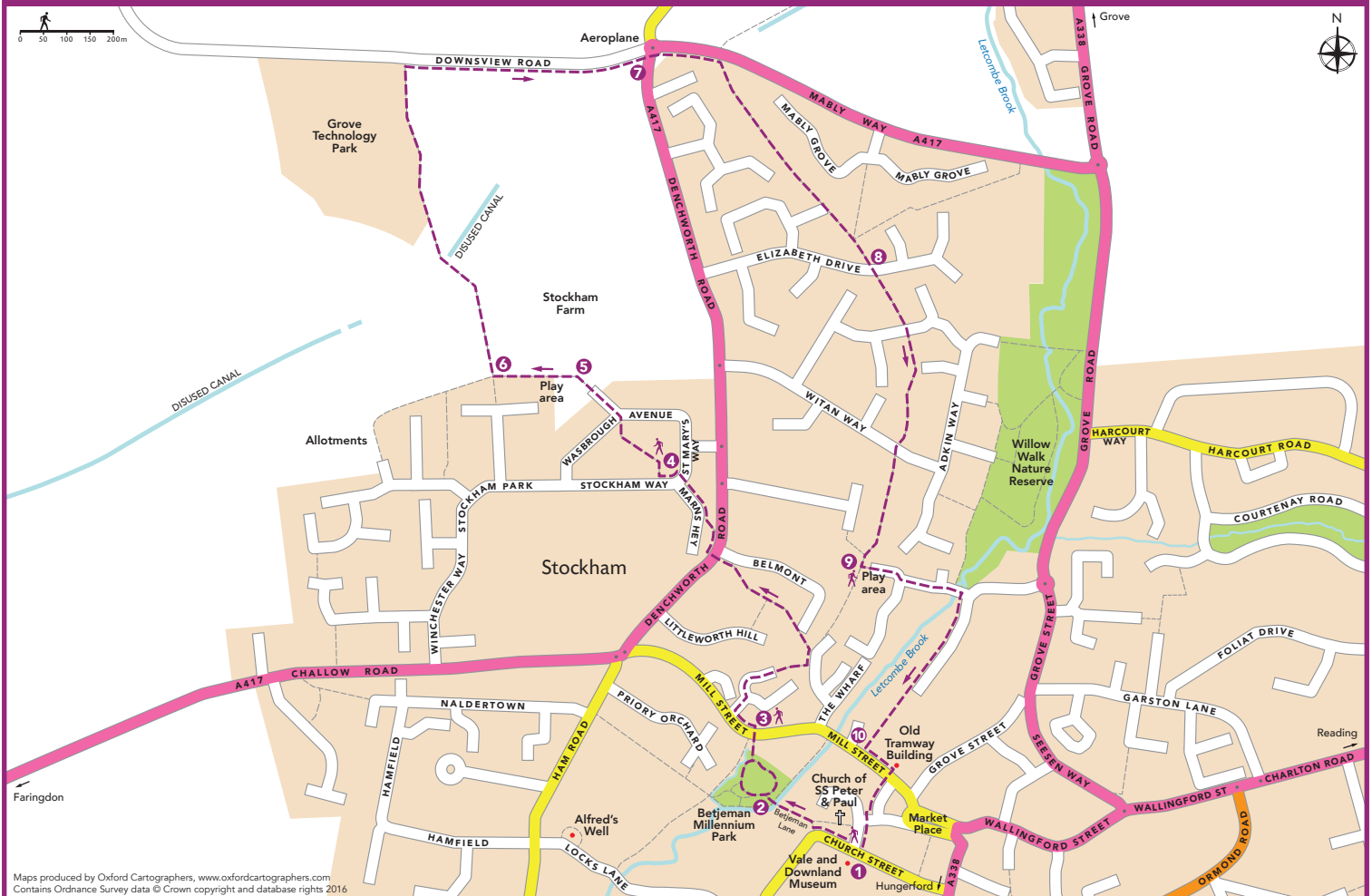


WANTAGE AREA WALKS & CYCLE ROUTES



Route 8 - Aeroplane 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



Time 1 hour

- 1 From the Museum, turn left on to Church Street (the thirteenth century parish church of SS Peter and Paul is opposite), cross the street



Parish Church

and bear right round the churchyard wall, and then left, past Old Church House, to turn into Betjeman Lane, which leads down to the Letcombe Brook past 'these old brick garden



Betjeman Lane

walls' mentioned in one of John Betjeman's poems. Cross the Brook by the iron bridge and enter the Betjeman Millennium Park, pausing to read the boards explaining Betjeman's link with Wantage and the beautifully carved extracts from his poems, strategically placed by the paths.



Sarsen Stones in Betjeman Park

- 2 Follow the main path either to right or left of the open-air auditorium to exit through the car-park of The Lamb pub.



The Lamb public house

- 3 Cross the road and turn left and then right by the row of houses into Rolls Court. Follow the road through cycle barriers into the Belmont footpath; turn left and go up Belmont footpath to Denchworth Road. Cross the road (when it's safe to do so) and proceed up the alley opposite, Marns Hey (named after Joe Marns, a local folk-dancer and Icknield Way Morris man) until it reaches Stockham Way.

- 4 Cross the road, turn left, and after 30 yards turn right, between the houses on to a footpath leading to an open field and play area. Cross it

diagonally towards the opposite left corner to exit by another narrow footpath to Wasbrough Avenue. Cross the road with care, and pass between the houses opposite to take the public footpath (marked as such on the open gate) towards Stockham House.

- 5 Bear left and follow the footpath beside a children's play area and then the houses of the Stockham estate on your left, and fields on your right.

- 6 After a row of houses, take a right turn and follow the path downhill. After curving to the left, it meets the wire fence marking the perimeter of Crown Packaging; take the right-hand path past the Crown premises till you reach the main entrance (no visible road sign). Turn right along the marked pedestrian footpath till you reach the aeroplane marking the site of the former Grove Airfield at the Mably Way roundabout.



Aeroplane monument

- 7 Cross Denchworth Road (leading off the roundabout to your right) to enter Mably Way. Go a little way to the right and take the footpath

signposted "Oxfordshire Circular Walk", leading off the road along the old track of the Wantage arm of the Wilts and Berks Canal, which takes you diagonally through the housing estate past Mably Grove to Elizabeth Drive.



Disused Wantage arm of canal

- 8 Cross the road and continue along the footpath, always straight ahead, past Bailey Close to Witan Way; cross and continue to follow the footpath until you reach a children's play area.

- 9 Skirt the play area by the left and turn left away from it, into and through the new Wharf development, over the Letcombe Brook bridge and then right, past various shops including Sainsbury's. Take the little lane to the right of W.H. Smith's opposite Sainsbury's (Angel Walk), which leads you through to Mill Street, where, immediately to your left, you can see the old Tramway headquarters building (now an estate agent).



Wantage Tramway Office

- 10 Cross at the traffic lights and go a few yards left and then right into Alfred Street and up past the King Alfred's Head to turn right and then left, between the church and The Swan pub, to return to the Museum.

Produced thanks to funds provided by SEEDA and Oxfordshire County Council through Oxfordshire Rural Community Council

Series Editor: Jean Nunn-Price MBE

Illustrations by Stuart Roper

Photographs by Dan Rolfe

Text courtesy of Bob McLatchie

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