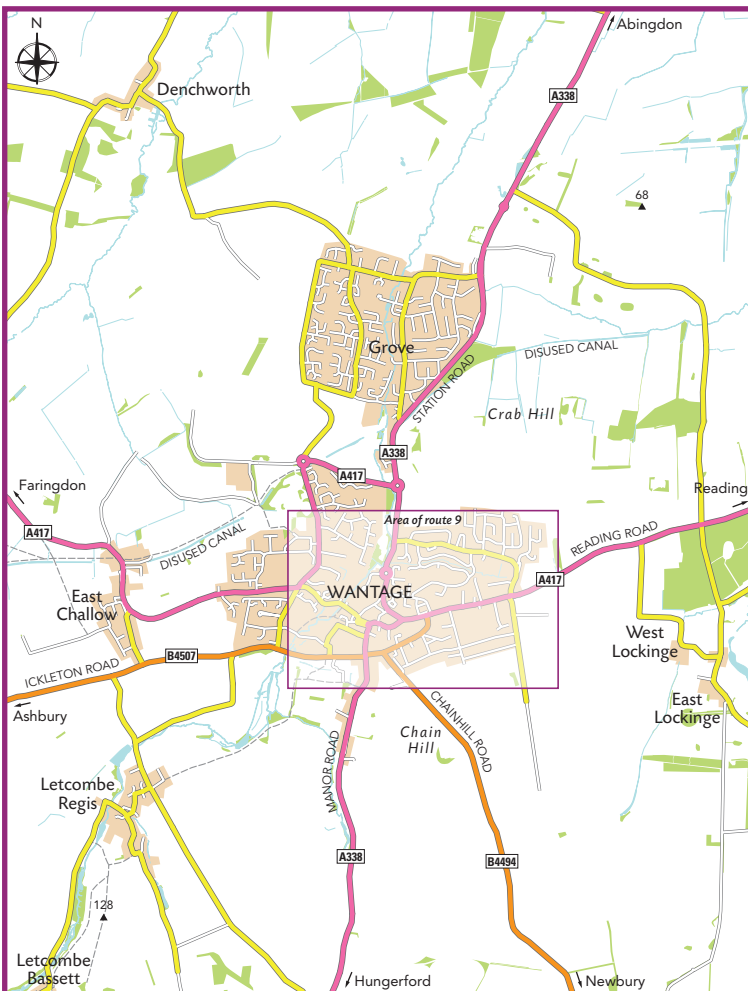


WANTAGE AREA WALKS & CYCLE ROUTES



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Route 9 - Springfield Walk



Wantage is a small town, compact enough to provide varied routes that can be easily walked in an hour or so. It is also a very old and historic market town: King Alfred the Great (849-899), was born here, according to his earliest biographer, and his statue presides over the Market Place. The town's old paths and waterways, often hidden now behind busy roads and shopping streets, are reminders of traditional crafts and industry which once made Wantage an important market centre: weavers and tanners, the Wantage Arm of the Wilts and Berks Canal, a Poet Laureate and the unique Wantage Tramway have all left visible traces that you can see as you walk. And the Letcombe Brook, which has watered the settlement here from earliest times, still flows through the town to the delight of the local ducks as well as human residents and visitors.

Vale & Downland Museum



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 going.

Time 90 minutes

- 1 From the Museum, turn right on to Church Street and walk to the end of the street where it meets Newbury Street. Cross (carefully) into



Newbury Street Terrace

Post Office Lane – almost opposite Church Street, slightly to your left. Pause to notice the old post box set into the wall of the building at the corner of Post Office Lane – the former Post Office, naturally! Continue along Post Office Lane as far as the Eagles Close almshouses (marked by a blue plaque on the end wall facing you); turn right and follow the lane to Ormond Road. You will see Alfredston Place opposite you which was once an old ironworks until it was converted into flats and houses.



Eagles Close Almshouses

- 2 Turn left along Ormond Road, past the boundary fence of St Katharine's House, till you see, on the other side of the road, the junction of Icknield Lane and Trinder Road with Ormond Road. Cross Ormond Road, and follow Icknield Lane all the way up to Springfield Road, passing between an indoor rifle range to your left and the Drill Hall to your right.

- 3 Turn right up Springfield Road; when it splits, continue up the hill and turn left into Larkdown. Walk all the way to the end where Larkdown meets Larkhill at a T-junction; you'll see allotments across the road.

- 4 Turn left and follow Larkhill down to the roundabout at Charlton Road, with the Lord Nelson pub on the left; go slightly left to cross Charlton Road at the pedestrian crossing. Continue along Charlton Road to Coopers Lane; turn right into Coopers Lane and follow it down until it becomes a path.

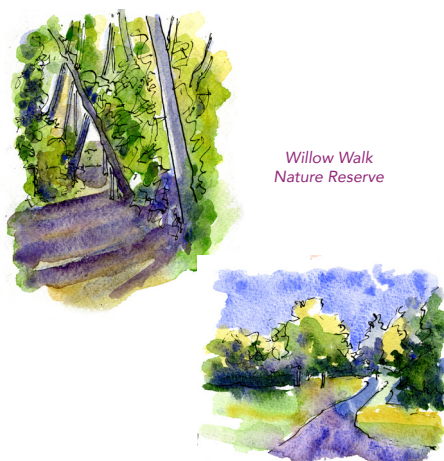
- 5 Follow this round when it bends to the right, cross a tributary of the Letcombe Brook and continue uphill, then bear left, skirt the children's playground and emerge on Tirrolds Way. You can cross here and follow the path alongside the brook, or, if it looks muddy, follow Tirrolds Way round to the right till you reach Courtenay Road; cross and go left along Courtenay Road (with the Humber Ditch on your left).

- 6 At the end of the green Courtenay Road bends right, follow it until it T's into Harcourt Road. Cross this road and turn left downhill to the pedestrian-controlled lights where you cross Grove Road.



Grove Road cottages

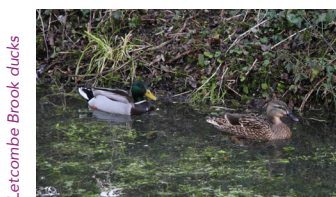
- 7 Turn right and walk a few yards along Grove Road and enter the Willow Walk Nature Reserve – marked by a sign on the fence. (It is a 15 minute diversion to explore the reserve if you wish). Follow the path down and then left (where a helpful information board tells you about the area's wildlife) and cross the brook.



Willow Walk Nature Reserve

fold line - non-printing

- 8 As you leave the reserve keep straight ahead and you will emerge from Liddiard's Close onto Adkin Way. Turn left to follow Adkin Way past Thornhill Close on your left; at the next right (Witan Way) cross and walk a short distance up Witan Way to take the signposted footpath on the left, which leads towards the town. Follow this former canal path as it passes the small play area and housing development on your left (with a nice view of the church up



Letcombe Brook ducks

ahead as you go along), until it emerges at The Wharf (with Letcombe Brook at the far side of a grassed area, usually frequented by ducks) to meet Mill Street. When you reach the Wharf, on



Sack Hiring Company Ltd

your left you can see a small oddly-shaped brick building, still bearing a blue sign announcing 'West of England Sack Hiring Company' – a relic of the Wharf's more industrial past, when

the Wantage Arm of the Wilts and Berks Canal was part of a busy industrial waterway. On your right is an old white cottage with a stained glass window depicting a teddy bear riding a bird.



Teddy bear window

- 9 On your right as you come to Mill Street is another wildlife information board. Cross Mill Street — and go straight on between the Wessex Flour Mill (Clark's) on your right and 'The



Mill



Bridge over stream

Old Mill' (now converted into flats) on your left, following the path of the Brook, which flows under Mill Street.

- 10 Cross the Brook by the first bridge you come to and return to Church Street and the Museum by way of Betjeman Lane, leading uphill to the thirteenth century parish church of SS Peter and Paul and so back to Church Street.



Churchyard path

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