



Shenington and Alkerton

Circular historic village trail



Distance 1.5 mile/2.4km
Time 1 hour



Cherwell
DISTRICT COUNCIL
NORTH OXFORDSHIRE

About Shenington

The Anglo-Saxon villages of Shenington and Alkerton are mentioned in the Domesday Book and both have Norman churches. Alkerton has always been part of Oxfordshire but Shenington was an isolated part of Gloucestershire until 1844. The two parishes were merged in 1970. On the western edge of the Parish, Shenlow Hill, at 227 metres above sea level, is the highest point on Edgehill and commands fine views to the Malvern Hills in the west and to Northamptonshire in the east.

Shenington was home to RAF Edgehill during World War II and part of the old airfield is used by a thriving Gliding Club and School. In one corner of the airfield, a go-cart club has operated for many years and has provided schooling for some of Britain's top racing drivers. The old ironstone quarry have been remediated to provide new habitat for wildlife.



The 170 dwellings and 380 or so inhabitants are now without a village shop but are still served by Shenington's Bell Inn and Church of England primary school. Shenington Village Hall, originally established as a Reading Room and Library, now serves both villages and is a venue for club meetings, social events and elections. The proximity to Banbury and the M40, the school, the beautiful countryside and the charm of the old hornton stone buildings, have combined to make the parish a desirable area in which to settle.



Getting there

Shenington and Alkerton lie six miles out of Banbury off the A422 Stratford upon Avon Road. Travelling towards Stratford, you will see a sign post for the villages on the left of the A422 almost two miles after Wroxton. There is no designated parking in either village. Please park considerably so as not to inconvenience residents or other road users.

The circular walk is clearly waymarked but it helps to follow the information in this leaflet as you go. **Before setting out on your walk, please check the council's website for updates in the leaflet text and along the route: www.cherwell.gov.uk/circularwalks**

Acknowledgements

This leaflet was originally compiled by Peter Allen of Shenington with Alkerton Parish Council. Illustrations by Nigel Fletcher. Thanks to the landowners whose co-operation has made this walk possible. Designed by Cherwell District and Oxfordshire County Council's design team.

01295 221980 wellbeing@cherwell-dc.gov.uk

Circular historic trail directions

August 2020 edition*

The walk in this leaflet is based on village streets and official public rights of way (footpaths or bridleways). The publishers accept no responsibility for any loss, injury or inconvenience sustained by anyone using this leaflet.

1 Start from Bell Inn (A) on Shenington Green (B) walk to the main through road (Rattlecombe) turn right and walk along the front of a short terrace of cottages to the end cottage, Knapp House (C) (on the opposite corner of Stocking Lane is Top Farm House (D)).

See step by step guide for detailed route description



Key

- Route ●●●●●
- Other paths - - - - -
- Permissive paths ▬▬▬▬▬
- Points of interest A
- Pub

*Please check www.cherwell.gov.uk/circularwalks to ensure you have the latest version of this map including any temporary alterations

Distance **15 miles/24km**
Approximate walk time **1 hour**

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August 2020 edition*



1 Start from Bell Inn (A) on Shenington Green (B) walk to the main through road (Rattlecombe), turn right and walk along the front of a short terrace of cottages to the end cottage, Knapp House (C) (on the opposite corner of Stocking Lane is Top Farm House (D)).

2 With Knapp House to your back, cross the road onto the Green. Immediately on your right is Longworth (E). Walk along the right side of the Green. Ahead of you is little thatched Thimblestone Cottage (F) connected by a garage to Oriel Farm (G) (Oriel House (H) is across the green to your left).

3 Pass Thimblestone Cottage and continue along the far right hand side of the village green. Where the road forks, take the right fork down a narrow lane called Pig Market Lane (although no nameplate is obvious here) Senendone House (I) is on the left and Mizpah Cottage (J) is the second cottage on the right.

4 At the bottom of the lane continue for about 50m and then turn left over a stone stile.

5 Follow the path diagonally and very steeply downhill, crossing an overgrown farm track (Mill House (K) and its associated barn conversions are at the top of the track). Bear right and continue to a gate in the bottom corner of the field.

6 Go through the small pedestrian gate (which can be a bit tricky to open) and turn left along the hedge side. In the field to your left are the Fishponds which are difficult to see (L). After a short stretch of path, pass a hedgeline on your right and enter the next field. Immediately bear right and walk diagonally across this field and then through a broad field edge to a small stone bridge across the Sor Brook (M).

7 Cross over the bridge and into the garden of Brook Cottage (N) Bear left and follow the signs up some stone steps (which can be slippery after rain), past the remnants of a tennis court on your right. Straight ahead is a short slope leading up to a stile.

8 Turn left after crossing/going around the stile and follow the grass path beside the garden wall and through a short avenue of trees. Continue straight on through a stoned courtyard to Well Lane. Follow the lane passing Barn House (O) on your right, then Alkerton House (P) and The Well House (Q) on your left.

9 At the junction with the main road, Alkerton School House (R) is on your left, and facing you across the road is Alkerton Rectory (S).

10 Cross the road to the War Memorial and then head straight uphill. Almost immediately, bear left off the main track towards St. Michael's Church (T) and the Old Rectory (S). Go through the church gates if you wish to visit the church. If not, turn left just before the gates and go carefully down the rough stone steps (which can be slippery after rain), through the gate and into the lane below.

11 Return to the main road and walk downhill, passing Adze Cottage (U) on the left.

12 Continue downhill across the road bridge over the Sor Brook. Immediately after the bridge (and just before Tanner's Cottage (V)), turn right and after 30m go through a kissing gate.

Alkerton School House



13 Bear left and then right to keep walking straight on parallel to the Brook. After about 120m, notice the waymark on the telegraph pole pointing left. So turn sharp left just after this and walk directly uphill towards a stand of trees. Continue uphill, keeping the small belt of trees on the right, and then through a kissing gate into Shenington.

14 When you reach the main road, turn right and continue uphill. If you want to visit Holy Trinity Church (X), cross the road on reaching the triangular green, passing Lower Farm (W) on the left, and go up the steps and through a gate into the churchyard.

Preparation



- Wear appropriate clothing and strong, comfortable footwear. Trousers, strong boots or wellingtons are recommended as parts of the route are often wet and muddy.
- Carry water and take a mobile phone if you have one but bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas. If you are walking alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.

Things to remember

- Much of the route is across cultivated and grazing land. If you bring your dog with you, keep it under close control and on a lead through stocked fields. However, current advice recommends you should not walk between a cow and her calf and, if you are threatened by cattle, you should let the dog off the lead.
- You may come across temporary fencing not mentioned in the leaflet as farmers will use this in different places to manage their livestock throughout the year. Provision for walkers to get through this fencing safely should always be made – please let us know if this is not the case.
- Ground nesting birds can be disturbed by dogs, particularly in the Spring, so please keep them under close control.
- Respect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Remember that the countryside is a working place - leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates and property as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.
- Take great care when crossing or walking along the roads.
- Park your car responsibly. Do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home. **Please do not park on the village green.**

15 Leave the churchyard the way you entered and continue uphill on the main road, passing first the Old Bakery (Y) and then the entrance to Cotman House (Z) on your right. The old Shenington C.E. School (A2) is opposite.

17 After passing the semi detached cottages (C2) on your left you pass The Bay (D2) and Rectory Farm (E2) on the right then Stoneholt (F2) on the left.

18 At the end of Kenhill Road is the large field known as The Lynchetts (G2). Double back along Kenhill Road to The Bell Inn, to finish your walk.

16 On reaching the Village Hall (B2) bear right (back past The Bell Inn which is across the Green on your left) passing The Limes on Kenhill Road.

The Green, Shenington



Seasonal tips

The route can be overgrown with nettles, grass and crops in spring/summer obscuring the terrain and signs. Stretches of the route can be waterlogged in the winter or after heavy rain, particularly around gates.

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Shenington and Alkerton



Points of interest

A The Bell Inn

The Bell Inn has been an inn since at least 1765, but the building existed as early as 1690. The initials E.S.E. 1700 over the door are those of Symon Edwards. The Edwards family were always masons but wills from 1747 show that they were also brewers. The small stone-framed oval window is a peculiar feature common to several old properties in the village such as Stoneholt (F2).

B Shenington Village Green

Shenington Village Green is split into several parts by roads. Old maps show a village pond in the area in front of the Bell during the 1700's but it had been filled in by 1813.

C *Knapp House* Knapp House was the village shop from the 1860's until 1973.

D *Top Farm House* Formerly one of the village farmhouses in the 1920's.

E *Longworth*

Longworth on the corner of the main green opposite Top Farm House was also previously a farmhouse incorporating a butcher's shop, which closed in 1971.

F *Thimblestone Cottage*

This little thatched cottage appears on Robert Whittlesey's Map of 1732 as a pub called the Nag's Head, whose last landlord, Thomas Barnes, died in 1866.

G *Oriel Farm*

Oriel Farm is the old slate-roofed house linked to Thimblestone Cottage by a garage. It was a working farm until 1939 when the Air Ministry commandeered its land. Its name is a potent reminder that from the sixteenth century most of Shenington was owned by Oriel College, Oxford. In 1920–1924, Oriel sold the last of its Shenington properties.

H *Oriel House*

Oriel House, another reminder, can be seen on the left-hand side of the green. College records show that it was leased to Thomas Grime, the Butler to Oriel College, in 1569. Oriel House was also used as the Rectory for a period in the 1800's and more recently as a doctor's surgery.

I *Senendone House*

Senendone House on the corner of Pig Market Lane is another old farmhouse. Senendone is the Domesday Book name of the village that became corrupted into Shenington. It meant "shining hill".

Immediately to its left is the site of the Red Lyon Inn destroyed by fire in 1721. In a traditional position close to the Church, this was probably Shenington's original and major inn.

J *Mizpah Cottage*



Is the second cottage down on the opposite side of Pig Market Lane. It has a plaque on its front wall commemorating the Great Fire of Shenington on 13 May 1721, which swept through the village destroying many of the thatched properties.

K *Mill House*

Large 17th century house with a tall stone wall curving round its southern frontage. Together with the barn conversions on its left, it was operating as Mill Farm until the late 1980's.

L The Fishponds

These ponds were the mediaeval equivalent of modern fish farms. They had certainly gone out of use before 1732, when an Oriel College estate map showed only the field name – Pool Close. The ponds were restored in 1989.

M Sor Brook

Sor Brook was the boundary between the old Parishes of Shenington and Alkerton. It rises just east of the Severn/Thames watershed and joins the River Cherwell at Adderbury. It may take its name from the Sor Family who were sub-tenants in one of the four Shenington Manors from 1132.

N Brook Cottage

Brook Cottage has four acres of landscaped gardens which were established in 1964 by Kathleen and the late David Hodges.



O Barn House

A Grade II listed building dating from the sixteenth century and formerly known as Anderton's Farm.

P Alkerton House

The oldest house in the Parish. Its earliest datestone is 1415, with another of 1633. The initials on this, "BG" may refer to Bret Goodwin who later became Lord of Epwell Manor. The Gothic porch dates from an 1834 restoration.

Q The Well House has a wellhead pump outside which gives this road its name – Well Lane.

R Alkerton School House

Alkerton School House, built in 1871 to accommodate 58 children, was never attended by more than 17. It was closed in 1905 and the children absorbed by Shenington School.

S Alkerton Rectory

Alkerton Rectory is a notable example of regional Jacobean architecture. Now a private house, it was built in 1625 for Thomas Lydiat (1572–1646), a Fellow of New College, Oxford, chronologer, cosmographer and reader (librarian) to Henry, Prince of Wales (eldest son of King James I, who died in 1612 aged 18). Lydiat was rector of Alkerton from 1612–1646.

T St Michael's Church

St Michael's Church, Alkerton was built about 1200AD. A guidebook is available inside the church.

U Adze Cottage

The roadside elevation has a thatched staircase projection on the left. On the rear side, there is a bread oven bulge. A datestone JE/1716 above the entrance is dedicated to John Edwards, a mason, whose father owned the Bell Inn in Shenington.

V Tanners Cottage

Originally a Methodist Chapel established in 1819. It is a reminder of the strong influence of evangelical Protestantism at that time.

W Lower Farm

Largely of 18th and 19th century construction, this building can be identified with the site of the original Sugarswell Manor, the largest of the four Shenington Manors.

X Holy Trinity Church

Constructed mainly during the 12th to 15th centuries but the west tower was added later. A guidebook is available in the church.

Y The Old Bakery finally closed in 1954.

Z Cotman House

Just seen behind stone walls and mature yews, was once the rectory. It was partly rebuilt after the fire of 1721 and is notable for an 18th century stable, coach house, tackroom and brew house.

A2 Shenington School

The former school was built in 1871, the same year as Alkerton school.



B2 Shenington Village Hall

Originally a cottage given to the village as a reading room and library in 1911 by the Earl of Jersey, from nearby Upton House.

C2 1 and 2 The Green

A pair of semi-detached cottages, built in the 17th century. The right hand cottage is notable for the staircase tower at the rear. Renovation in the 1970's uncovered remains of a cobbler's workshop in the basement of the left-hand cottage. This property was the last village shop between 1971–1985.

D2 The Bay

A thatched 17th century cottage with a slated bread oven projection on the left.

E2 Rectory Farm

Rectory Farm is so called because its owner, the Earl of Jersey, gave it to the Church. A working farm until the 1980's, its barns were converted to domestic dwellings between 1991–1997.

F2 Stoneholt

A late 17th century residence with a two-storey staircase projection to the rear. It was a Hook Norton Brewery ale house known as Top Pub from 1898 until 1946.

G2 The Lynchetts

A fine example of mediaeval field terracing and a reminder of the old open field system that existed in the Parish before it was enclosed in 1780. The bridle track is known as Stratford Way and you can follow it for a couple of hundred metres to Shenington Airfield to watch the gliders.