

Last full walk check			
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## Appleford / Didcot Circular

Walk Options	Distance	Notes
Appleford Circular	19km (11.8m)	
Appleford to Didcot	18km (11.2m)	A pleasant start with the advantage of finishing at Didcot with various refreshment options plus a frequent train service to London.
Didcot Circular	20km (12.4m)	
Didcot to Appleford	21km (13.0m)	No refreshments at Appleford

**Start and finish:** Appleford/Didcot stations

**Length:** 18km - 21km

**Time:** 5 hours 30 minutes. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.

**Transport:** Trains go from London Paddington. Journey time to Appleford is one hour 45 minutes (cut by 15 mins. if changing at Didcot), to Didcot 1 hour. Day return to Didcot for the Didcot circular, otherwise a day return to Appleford.

**OS Landranger Map:** 174

**OS Explorer Map:** 170

Appleford, map reference SU 525937, is in **Oxfordshire**, 8km south of Oxford.

**Toughness:** 3 out of 10.

**Walk Notes:** This walk takes in an attractive part of the Thames Valley south of Oxford, with a lunchtime stop in Dorchester-on-Thames. This handsome village is now bypassed by the traffic but used to be an important staging post between London and Oxford. It has retained a large number of coaching inns and other pubs, so there's plenty of choice for refreshment. You should be sure to visit [Dorchester Abbey](#), one of the few large monastery buildings to survive the Dissolution; it now functions as an impressive

parish church. In the afternoon the walk comes to the Wittenham Clumps, the name given to a pair of Iron Age hill forts set in a nature reserve managed by the [Earth Trust](#).

**Saturday Walkers' Club:** Take the train nearest to 9.30 am from Paddington Station to Appleford.

## WALK DIRECTIONS

### [1] ~~[Numbers refer to the map.]~~

**Appleford Start:** Coming off the platform *go up the footsteps and turn right across the road bridge. In 150 metres, fork left, along a minor road (passing by a green on your right hand side), your direction east.*

In 350 metres you pass by the church of St. Peter & St. Paul on your left hand side where you join a bridleway, your direction 100 degrees. After 40 metres follow the bridleway round to the left, your direction north. In 80 metres ignore a stile ahead to follow the bridleway round to the right, your direction 80 degrees. In 40 metres the bridleway joins the left-hand side of a field. After 450 metres at the left-hand corner of the field, *fork left* (passing to the left of a large oak tree) to follow a footpath *across the next field, towards a wooden footbridge*, your direction 100 degrees.

In 320 metres *cross the footbridge [2] and turn half left* along a footpath into a lightly wooded area, your initial direction 80 degrees. *After 80 metres turn left over a concrete footbridge* to continue along a footpath (with the Thames on your left-hand side). In 120 metres the footpath diverges from the Thames to follow the left-hand edge of a field round to the right. In 80 metres at the corner of the field, continue straight-ahead passing by a white metal post on your left, to go up a fenced in footpath, your direction 80 degrees. After 220 metres you *come out to a lane and turn left*. Now follow the directions from the Common walk directions section.

**Didcot start:** Coming out of the front of Didcot Parkway station, turn left (east). After about 200 metres, turn first left to

follow a small road (Cow Lane) through a narrow tunnel under the railway. On the other side, you will soon see a tarmac path/cycleway off to your left, (not the immediate left, parallel to the railway embankment, the next left, just before the houses). Take this. It snakes round the back of housing estates and heads generally north. Eventually, you come to a path junction marked with an ornate, National Cycle Route signpost. Take the path to the left signed to Long Wittenham, heading NW and following power lines. Eventually the path does a graceful loop round to the right to leave the power lines and head NNE. The path goes through a tunnel under a low bridge and you emerge alongside fields. Keep going along the cycle path, which at one point crosses a minor road, until you reach the houses of Long Wittenham. Carry on along the main drag passing the Pendon Museum and continuing to a road junction where there is a war memorial. (The memorial is slightly off to the right and not visible till you reach the junction). You now follow the walk directions from point [3] in the Common walk directions section below.

### Common walk directions:

*After 120 metres fork right* passing a green [3] on your left (with a war memorial). *In a further 40 metres turn right* along a main road for 20 metres, *to then turn left along a car wide byway*, your direction 70 degrees. After 550 metres *at a T-junction with a road turn left. In 30 metres turn right along a car wide tarmac track*, your direction 40 degrees. In 750 metres you pass by New Barn Farm on your left hand side as the car wide tarmac track swings round to the right, your direction 60 degrees. After 200 metres, *immediately before the double metal field gate entrance to Northfield Farm, turn left* along a car wide

track between hedgerows, your direction 350 degrees.

In 800 metres go through a metal gate (to the right of a metal fieldgate) into a field to continue along its left-hand side.

**[4]** After 200 metres *at the bank of the Thames turn right* along the Thames path, your initial direction east.

*After 3.2km, (having gone through gates and crossed footbridges along the way), you come to a weir. [5] Turn left to go over the footbridge across the weir, to then cross Days Lock to go through a metal kissing gate and a metal gate to come out into a field. Veer left along a footpath across this field, by a three-way signpost, to leave the Thames Path, your direction east.*

In 130 metres go through a wooden gate to go along a fenced in bridleway (between fields), your direction 70 degrees. In 450 metres the fenced in bridleway reaches a cross paths at the corner of a field. Continue ahead along a car wide fenced in path on the right hand side of the field, your direction 110 degrees. After 180 metres, *turn left* along an unmarked fenced in car wide footpath, your direction 10 degrees. After 200 metres the footpath joins some garden fencing (on its right hand side). After 120 metres you *come out onto a lane to continue ahead*, your direction north.

*After 60 metres turn right*, along a car wide track footpath, your direction east. In 80 metres (the track having swung round to the left), *turn right* to follow a footpath *across allotments*, your direction east, towards the left side of a gable of a white painted house. **[6]** In 100 metres go along the left side of the white painted house, and after 20 metres turn left along a shingle driveway, your direction north to reach the **Fleur de Lys** pub on your left hand side after 120 metres, with the Abbey off to your right hand side. The Fleur de Lys is a possible lunch stop. Others include The George Hotel, 40 metres further beyond on the left, and a

further 70 metres on the right is the White Hart Hotel.

After lunch backtrack to [6]. Having passed by the white painted house on your left-hand side, *turn left along the left-hand edge of the allotments*, your direction 190 degrees. In 120 metres at the left-hand corner of the allotments *follow a shingle enclosed path to the left. After 70 metres turn left* along a road to then after 50 metres *turn right* along Wittenham Lane, a car wide shingle track, your direction 190 degrees. After 160 metres you go through a metal gate to go along an enclosed footpath along a field boundary.

In 180 metres at the corner of the field go through a gap to go along a footpath through a narrow field, aiming for a prominent field corner post (not initially visible) on its far side, your initial direction 210 degrees. After 200 metres go past the corner post to continue alongside the field boundary fence on your right-hand side, your direction south. In 160 metres **[7]** ignore a footbridge (crossing the Thame River) to your left to *turn right along the bank of the Thames (or Isis, as it is also called upstream from here)*, your direction west.

*In 1 km cross over Little Wittenham Bridge* (which consists of an east and west bridge crossing an eyot). Having crossed the Thames, continue along a car wide track to cross a tributary after 35 metres, to then go up and round to the left. In 120 metres follow the track round to the right to *pass by the church of Little Wittenham [8] on your right hand side. Turn left* through a wooden gate (to the left of a wooden fieldgate).

*You now have a choice of two routes (i) or (ii)*

**(i)** Take the footpath along the right hand side of the field, (signposted Wittenham Clumps), your direction 190 degrees.

After 320 metres at the right hand

corner of the field go through a metal gate (to the right of a wooden fieldgate) to continue up a broad grass track towards Wittenham Clumps, your direction south. After 400 metres at the top **[9]**, *by a brick encased concrete pillar* (with a Northmoor Trust Wittenham Clumps toposcope atop), *turn left*, your initial direction east *to contour round to the right* of the fenced in wood on your right hand side. In 120 metres with a metal gate off to your right (leading into the fenced in wood), fork south down a footpath, and in 70 metres *at a cross paths turn left downhill towards a metal gate*, your direction 130 degrees. [If pressed for time, continue down towards the car park. **[10]**]. After 70 metres cross a car wide track (with a double metal field gate on your left-hand side). Rejoin the route at the asterisk [\*] below.

**(ii)** Fork left along a clear grass path, an unmarked public bridleway, your direction 160 degrees. In 100 metres the ground on the left slopes down to the Thames (which is here hidden behind trees) and in 40 metres ignore a grass path down to the left to the river, which is now visible. Continue in the same direction between some bramble bushes on the left and a small pond on the right, then walking gently uphill aiming for the upper-left field corner. You can see Dorchester and its Abbey below on the left beyond the meandering Thames and across the river meadows. Round Hill, one of the Wittenham Clumps, is towering above on the right. You leave the field through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate (having ignored an earlier combination of such gates away on the right) and bear left along a wide forest track, passing the first of several 'Earth Trust - River of Life' blue-ringed marker posts.

In 70 metres ignore a right forking narrower path (an unmarked public footpath) and in 100 metres pass another Earth Trust marker post. In 50 metres ignore a path turning left and in 130

metres another one (leading to a bird hide). In 110 metres you pass a newly landscaped fenced area with a bench and an info panel. Here a cascading set of small ponds in a sloping clearing is aimed at creating a habitat for Great Crested Newts. In 180 metres, at a four-way junction of forest tracks and by a bench overlooking a large clearing on the left, you turn up to the right along a permissive path, leaving the public bridleway. You initially have a high wire fence on the left and in 120 metres, at the corner of the fenced area, continue uphill along the path. In 100 metres fork right with the main path, ignoring a minor grass path forking left, and in 50 metres at the top of the rise, another forest path joins from the left. In 30 metres you have a part-wooded valley on the right below, with one of several ponds visible at its bottom. You gently descend along the path hugging the left flank of the valley towards its upper end.

In 150 metres turn right at a T-junction with a wide grass track coming down from the left, to go through a shallow dip by a small pond on the left. In 60 metres turn left along a clear path across a grassy area, staying just to the right of an overgrown area to the right of the pond and in 40 metres veer right with the path through the forest, initially gently uphill. In 140 metres continue along a stepped section, initially still with a gentle gradient. Higher up, in about 100 metres, bear to the right with the stepped path by a low marker post on the left, and at the top of the steps ignore faint paths to the left and right and continue to a T-junction with a gravel forest track at the top of the wood in another 10 metres. Round Hill is visible ahead and above through one last line of bushes and trees. Turn left along the track and in 60 metres leave the wood through a metal gate to the right of a double metal field gate and turn left along a clear path at a T-junction towards Castle Hill. The Main Walk has joined from the right down from Round Hill.

**[\*]** After 30 metres go through a metal gate . After a further 10 metres (at a path fork), *fork right*, your direction 140 degrees, to go down and then up some steps. *At the top of the steps turn left to contour round to the right* of the wooded area of Castle Hill Fort, your initial direction 120 degrees. In 160 metres you pass by a large stone with a Little Wittenham Nature Reserve Poem Tree plate on it, your direction now south.

After 180 metres (at a point where the path curves round sharply to the right), *veer left* down a gravel path, *towards a car park below*, your initial direction west. In 150 metres by some double wooden gates **[10]** (leading to the car park) *turn right* along a footpath with a fence and lane beyond it on your left hand side, your initial direction 240 degrees.

*After 450 metres, turn left* through a wooden gate (15 metres to the left of a wooden field gate). Cross over the road and go to the left of a wooden field gate to go up a footpath (signed 'Arboretum'), initially along a car wide track, your direction 190 degrees. After 120 metres, the footpath becomes a car wide grass track along the side of a field, (bordered by a fence on your right hand side).

In 400 metres (the car wide track having curved round to the right), just past a wooden signpost on your left hand side, cross over a stile into the corner of a field to continue along its left hand side, your direction 240 degrees. After 170 metres at the left hand corner of the field go through a double wooden fieldgate to continue along the left hand side of the next field, your direction 250 degrees. **[!]** In 220 metres *turn left through a fence gap [11]* (next to a wooden mini pylon with a grey transformer box) *to then turn right along a road* after 20 metres.

*In 150 metres* where the main road swings round to the right, *continue ahead along a minor road* (signposted North Moreton / South Moreton), your direction 230 degrees. *In 180 metres* where the

road swings to the left *continue ahead along the left hand side of a field*, your initial 230 degrees.

**[!]** *After 900 metres, at the corner of a field* leading into the next field **[12]** with a car wide track veering to the left into a field on your left hand side.

**Appleford Ending:** *Cross over into the next field ahead, and turn right*, your direction 330 degrees, going up a very slight incline along the side of this field with a lightly wooded area on your right hand side.

In 500 metres at the right hand corner of the field, turn half right through a lightly wooded area to go through a metal gate after 40 metres into the next field to go down its left hand side, your direction 320 degrees. After 150 metres ignore a car wide gap on your left hand side to follow the field edge as it curves slightly to the right, your direction now 350 degrees. After 200 metres at the corner of the field go through a metal gate into the next field to go along its left-hand side.

After 100 metres *cross over a road and turn left* along its grass verge. *In 50 metres turn right* (signposted Long Wittenham 1 mile) to cross a wooden stile (to the left of a metal fieldgate) to go along the right hand side of a field, your direction 10 degrees.

After 700 metres at the right hand corner of the field *cross over a footbridge and turn right* to go along the right hand side of a field. In 350 metres follow the field edge round to the left (with housing on your right hand side).

After 280 metres go over a car wide track and in a further 50 metres *turn left along a lane*, your direction 230 degrees. In 40 metres you pass by the [Pendon Museum](#) **[13]** on your right hand side and in a further 130 metres *turn right along an enclosed footpath*, your direction 340 degrees. After 70 metres you emerge into

the corner of a field to follow its right hand side. After 100 metres ignore a concrete footbridge off to your right, to continue for a further 150 metres, to cross over the wooden footbridge **[2]**, to backtrack along the route that you followed on the way out.

After 320 metres cross over into the next field and veer right (to join a bridleway) along its right hand side. After 550 metres the footpath comes out to a car wide track with the church of St. Peter & St. Paul on your right hand side. In 350 metres you reach a small green on your left-hand side. Continue ahead along main road for 150 metres to Appleford station.

**Didcot ending:** On reaching the corner of the field at point [12], don't turn right, but continue on in the same direction. The path, though, is to the left of the hedge ahead. This leads you to the B4016 by a signpost 'Didcot 1 ¼ '. Cross it a little to the right and continue down the driveway to Ladygrove Farm. At the farm you then go left then right though the farm yard (past a pond with a large weeping willow tree) to a stile at the back. After crossing the stile, turn left along a left hand field boundary. At the field corner, turn right and, shortly after, turn left through a gap, then right to follow the tree line down the right hand side of this field. Follow the path to the left at the next corner down to a two-railed footbridge and stile that lead to the A4130 which you cross (carefully). Go right then left down some steps onto a cycle path that meets up with the one you came out on. You come back to the ornate cycleway sign at a junction near power lines. Here you go straight on (avoiding the path to the right) and follow the meandering cycle route back to Cow Lane, where you go right, through the tunnel under the railway, and right again to find the station.

(It is also possible to retrace the Didcot morning route from point [13] (don't go

right onto the enclosed footpath, go straight on). This longer option would be useful if there was a chance of missing the last Appleford train).

### **Lunch and Tea places:**

**The Fleur De Lys** *High St, Dorchester-on-Thames, OX10 7HH (01865 340502)*

**The George Hotel** *High St, Dorchester-on-Thames, OX10 7HH (01865 340404)*

**The Plough** *24 High Street, Long Wittenham, OX14 4QH (01865 407738)*

**The White Hart Hotel** *High St, Dorchester-on-Thames, OX10 7HN (01865 340074)*

**The Prince of Wales** *113 Station Road, Didcot OX11 7NN (01235 511380) - opposite Didcot station entrance.*

Dorchester-on-Thames is located 9km from the start of the walk at Appleford, 11 km from Didcot.