

Occold Circular Walk

Occold known as '**Acholt**' in the Domesday Book, the name meaning Oakwood or thicket, appears to have been a thriving village in the 1860's, with a large number of businesses; sadly even the village post office has gone, but despite the changes the village and its school continue to thrive.

The Circular Walk of 7.5Km (5 miles) begins at the Village Hall car park, behind the **Beaconsfield Arms Public House**. From here walk down the edge of the playing field with the hedge on the right, to a stile.

Walk to the right side of an electricity pole in the field and then south to a collection of buildings on the **Barrack Road**. Turn left down the road for 200m then turn right through **Wingfield Farm**, walk straight and out through the opposite hedge into a field, where there is usually various types of Herbs being grown.

Go straight across the field which slopes downwards and over a bridge; cross another field to come out onto the B1077 opposite **Thorndon Hill Farm**; go left down the road, being cautious of fast moving traffic. After 300m turn left onto a cart track and over a stream into a field, heading up the field to the right of a hedge on the horizon. Now go through a large gap in the hedge and you will be able to see a good view of the village and surrounding countryside, including the beginning of this footpath.

Turn right and follow the field hedge to the bridge in the corner; cross the bridge which comes out into natural meadow which is covered from spring until hay time in a wide variety of wild flowers.

Cross the meadow diagonally to the beginning of the drive passing a pond on your left and out onto **Dublin Road**.

Turn right down the road passing several houses, and a large bungalow on the left, with a garden that is occasionally open to the public, continue past a pond to the far side of **Burnt House Farm** and turn left onto a field edge.

Where the field edge stops go right across a small section of field and left down the field edge over a field opening with the field edge now on the left, turn left at the corner - walk 50m and go right across a field onto **Bulls Hall Road**.

Cross this farm road and onto a bridleway heading towards an electricity pole in the far hedge to the left of a large chestnut tree - this comes out onto **Benningham Green** which is common land.

Walk diagonally across the common to come onto a dirt track with sloe and bulleuses on either side. Where the track veers right turn left onto a grass track and then right onto a footpath. Cross the sleeper bridge and follow the field edge to a wooden bridge.

Cross here and turn left down the side of a small copse. Follow the copse down to the left, at the edge of the copse cross the field towards a telegraph pole and over a culvert.

Continue over the next field following the line of the telegraph poles to come out over a bridge at the side of **Benningham Hall**.

Legend has it that a maid of the hall was murdered one Sunday morning when the rest of the household were at Church and the body was thrown into the fire. The culprit was caught and hanged from the gallows oak. Once a chapel stood nearby but all that remains is a field by that name. In the past, coffins have been unearthed.

Cross the farm road and onto a track towards a black building and onto a large field. Head straight across the field with farm buildings in the distance. Come out through a small group of beech trees into another field and walk approximately 70m down the field edge. Cross diagonally to the left coming out onto the road opposite a field gate and stile, ignore these and walk right down the road to another farm gate which is a brideway.

Cross this grazing land going through a gate at the far end; turn left down the farm track to a stile on the right, diagonally over the next two stiles, and come out onto **Church Farm** drive with a well stocked goldfish pond opposite, which has access to it from a footpath and is a conservation area for all to enjoy. Turn right down the farm lane coming out onto the road next to **St Michael's and All Angels Church**, turn left into the village towards the school, just before the road forks turn right down a narrow alley between houses and out onto the playing field and car park.

