Oxford Jubilee Walk
inaugurated on
23rd June 1985

A Simplified Map of
'The Hinksey Uplands'

with the route of a Walk, mostly on Public
Fieldpaths, arranged by the Oxford Group
of The Ramblers' Association in conjunction
with Oxfordshire County Council, commemorates
The First Fifty Years of The Ramblers' Association.

SYMBOLS:
- The Walk Route, with
  numbers indicating points
  of interest (see the Notes).
- Viewpoints, Heights in Feet.
- Other Fieldpaths.

Scale of One Mile

Composed from an Open-Source Walk, 1985
Introduction

Boars Hill: Boars Hill is the viewpoint from which to enjoy the vision of the city of “dreaming spires” made famous by Matthew Arnold. His Thyrsis (1866) sent pilgrims from Oxford up the “loved hillside” of Hinksey Ridge along the “track by Childsworth Farm” to seek out the Scholar gypsy haunts. Boars Hill soon attracted a remarkable community of poets and academics. Arthur Evans, Keeper of the Ashmolean Museum, who as an undergraduate had been one of the literary pilgrims, built Youlbury on the SW end of the hill. Robert Bridges went to live on the hill in 1907 and became a friend of Sir Arthur Evans, the one writing the Testament of Beauty there, the other his great book on the Palace of Minos. After the WW1 John Masefield, Robert Graves, Edmund Blunden, Robert Nichols and Gilbert Murray also came to live on Boars Hill and in Goodbye to all that Robert Graves describes the relief and tensions of the war shocked community. Bridges drew up a recantation of wartime hatred against the Germans, and Gilbert Murray campaigned for the League of Nations. They soon felt that there were too many poets on Boars Hill and that it was becoming a tourist attraction. It was in fact a direct result of the popularity of Matthew Arnold’s vision, first the poets and then the speculative builders which transformed Board Hill in the 1920s into a residential area akin to the Surrey pine and heather country house belt. Large houses set in their own grounds with rhododendrons growing happily on the acid soil and plantations of Corsican, Monterey and Scots pine and Norway spruce produced a landscape setting which Thyrsis would never have recognised as the sparsely populated heathland haunt of the Scholar Gypsy. There was then no legislation for the protection of rural amenities and, but the determination of Sir Arthur Evans and the intervention of the newly formed Oxford Preservation Trust the whole area would have been built up. In 1928 the Trust purchased “Matthew Arnold’s field” and other land to safeguard the views of Oxford. Sir Arthur, the excavator of Knossos, decided to erect a great Mound to enable people to see the immemorial view over the tree plantations.

The name Jarn Mound was taken from the old name of nearby Jarns Heath. In the large area where the excavation for the Mound had taken place he made a wild garden, not only with the local flowers beloved of the poets, the cowslips, primroses an fritillaries, but by bringing in different soils grew flora from all parts of the British Isles. In 1978 the Oxford Preservation Trust erected a memorial at the entrance of Jarn Mound gardens to the man who had been
the inspiration of the imaginative scheme to preserve Boars Hill and “who loved Antiquity, Nature, Freedom and Youth and made this Viewpoint and Wild garden for all to enjoy”.

**General:** The Jubilee Walk starts and finishes on the River, contrasting the newest buildings of St Ebbes Ice Rink Marina with the older structures of Christ Church and Folly Bridge itself, on the site of the oldest crossing of the river. The walk climbs through the “Hinksey Uplands” a name given to the hilly slopes of North and South Hinksey to the “warm, green-muffled Cumnor Hill” and the sandy ridges of Wootton and Boars Hill.

This countryside, so close to the City, so vulnerable to building development, is yet world famous as the land of “Matthew Arnold’s Scholar Gipsy” of 120 years ago. It became beloved by generations of City and University Walkers, whose comments and descriptions of the land, its natural history -and also “the gleaming lines of aggressive villadom” were published in “The Oxford Magazine” in 1904 (republished in 1912 by RT Gunther in “The Oxford Country): fascinating in their blend of details of bygone days and the origins of the present settlement; some quotations in the following notes.

**In spite of modern dwellings and highways, obtrusive pylons and the noise of today’s mechanical life, there remains great variety of natural beauty, scenic value, and historic interest; in this special Oxford countryside.**

1. **Folly Bridge and Grandpont:** the medieval “Great Bridge”, once a 42-arched causeway from the bottom of Hinksey Hill over the flood meadows of the river, was rebuilt in 1825. There was a ford here before the Norman conquest: the original Oxen-ford, (and the earliest Saxon settlement area lay under Speedwell Street nearby). Friar Roger Bacon in the C13 had an observatory-study on the bridge which became the Folly.

2. **Iron Bridge:** converted in 1972 as a footbridge from its former use as the Gasworks Pipe Bridge, Oxford Gasworks (1818) was on both sides of the River; but now replaced after years of “reclamation” by “new” St Ebbes, Dale Close, Preachers’ Lane, Thames and Trinity Streets.

3. **Railway Bridge** now carrying the Main line: the “second” line to London, opened 1863. (The first line, of 1844 ended at Western Road – see no 21) Monument on towpath near Bridge: Edgar George Wilson died aged 21 after rescuing 2 boys from drowning (1889). Industrial Estate by the Riverside since the late 1960s, with fairly effective tree and shrub screening.

4. **Osney Island, Osney Lock.** Part of the site of great Augustinian Abbey (of which only and archway and farm building remains). Now a Conservation Area of 1850 terrace housing, riverside “Watermans Arms” pub, marina and Thames Water Docks.

5. **Willow Walk:** at the North Hinksey end the scene of Ruskin’s famous social experiment, that undergraduates should also do hard manual labour. Oscar Wilde, Alfred Milner, Arnold Toynbee made a hopelessly uneven road.
6. **North Hinksey (Ferry Hinksey)** a Saxon village (Hengists or Stallion Island) on a terrace of river gravel: early ferry across Hinksey Stream. Good C17 stone houses, St Lawrence Church: Norman with later tower. Southern Bypass. Ready for use 1939 but closed during WW2 and used as a storage depot for military equipment and ammunition.

7. **Raleigh Park.** A new park created for the post WW2 estates at Botley. From it Westminster College is visible but turn and look back at the fine view of the Spires of Oxford. “At the top ... are the earliest bluebells” 1904. The early C17 Conduit House was built on the hill above North Hinksey and leaden pipes laid to carry spring water from the well-house to the Carfax Conduit in the centre of Oxford donated by Oto Nicholson for the citizens (but since C18 in Nuneham Park).

8. **Cumnor Hill:** now a highway and ribbon development. Hurst Hill: with magnificent wide-ranging views of White Horse Hill, “Skutchamfly Nob”, Farringdon Clumps, Fyfield; the Hanboroughs; Wytham; Elsfield, Brill Chilterns; and Whittenham Clumps. Chawley: home of a brickworks until the 1930’s “from Snow bunting barn under the Hurst ...there are new houses and invitations to come and build. What will it all be like in 50 years hence? (1904)

9. **Powderhill Copse:** “plenty of hazel catkins and the brilliant pink hazel flower ..... a vista of larches.” The fern under its oaks has put on a tinge of red.

10. **Hen Wood:** the sandy subsoil here supports both conifers and Oak. **Youlbury:** once Sir Arthur Evans’s home: a scout camp.

11. **Picketts Heath:** and Pickett’s Heath Farm. The names of a local farmer before the building up of Boars Hill. **Jarn Mound:** Sir Arthur Evans’s viewpoint mound: but the trees have grown. **Matthew Arnold’s Field:** purchased in 1928 by Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT).


13. **The Fox Inn:** The only Inn on Boars Hill and Hinksey Hill: a social an refreshing centre for over a century.

14. **Foxcombe:** Foxcombe Hall (Open University) formerly Ripon Hall (Theological College now merged with Cuddesdon) formerly the home of Lord Berkeley (1902) though build (1890) for the President of Trinity College

15. **Berkeley Corner:** here Lord Berkeley placed a stone seat for the enjoyment of the view.

16. **Old Golf Course 1891-1905:** from near Chilswell farm over “four great fields”, wild roses in the hedgerows, hazarded by long grass, buttercups, cowslips and daisies, down either side of Happy Valley. Oxford Preservation Trust (OPT) bought these fields to preserve the view.
17. **Chiswell Farm:** “where of a summer afternoon you would sometimes linger .... After your round for a substantial tea in the farm parlour” (1904)

18. **Happy Valley:** This is one of the two public field paths from Chilswell down to South Hinksey and at its head was the Oxford University Gold Clubs Club House; on wider more public ground (having been in the cramped and private Headington Park).

19. **Footbridge over bypass to South Hinksey.** “In the Hinkseys nothing keeps the same”. (Matthew Arnold).

20. **South Hinksey:** still a pleasant village with C13 Church of St Lawrence but physically cut off by the bypass from the country uplands: the necessary footbridge does its best to restore the link.

21. **Jacob’s Ladder** crossed a wide extent of railway marshalling yards; a footbridge linking Sough Hinksey and New (1850s) Hinksey and the first along Oxford Station, at the end of Western Road, the line being Marlborough Road.

22. **Lakes:** gravel extraction for the 1844 railway created the large Hinksey lake filled from natural springs: became a reservoir with further filter beds and red brick waterworks in 1850’s. converted to recreational use after 1934.

23. **Eastwyke Farm:** The Farmhouse is early C17. This was the site of a “fort” with trenches, part of the French style fortifications of the Royalist City during the Civil War.


**Please remember the Country Code**

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Shut all gates
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public paths across farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep wall water clean
- Protect wildlife plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise
- Wear stout footwear and practical clothing; the countryside can be wet and muddy even in summer
- Please walk in single file through standing crops