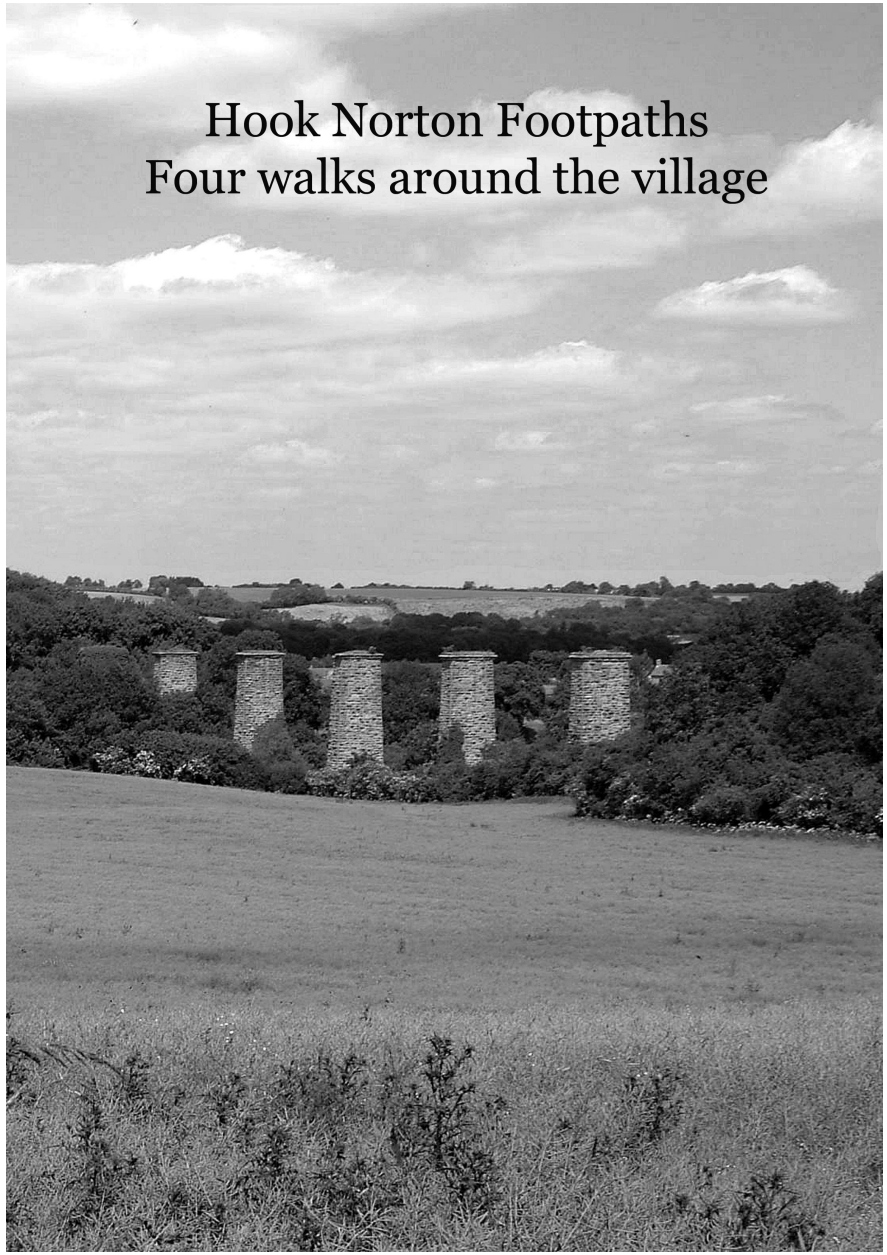
Revised edition prepared by Hook Norton Local History Society

Cover photograph © David McGill



appropriately called footpath ground. (There are no footpath signs currently here). As you cross this field look right to Butter Hill, mentioned in Ramble No. 1—one of the oldest names in the parish, called Butturhulle in the 12th century.

The path heads straight for the farm, however, turn left over the stile and pass between the farm buildings, then bear left down a slope to cross the stream by a bridge. This brings the path into the Blackmore area. This particular spot was also known as Beggars Head.

Turning right at the bridge the path eventually reaches a flat area that is opposite to the old ironstone face. The path goes straight for the viaduct piers. On the right is an area which is called the Lynches, once consisting of four 2 acre fields. Once through the piers the village is reached by following a path by the hedge on your right.

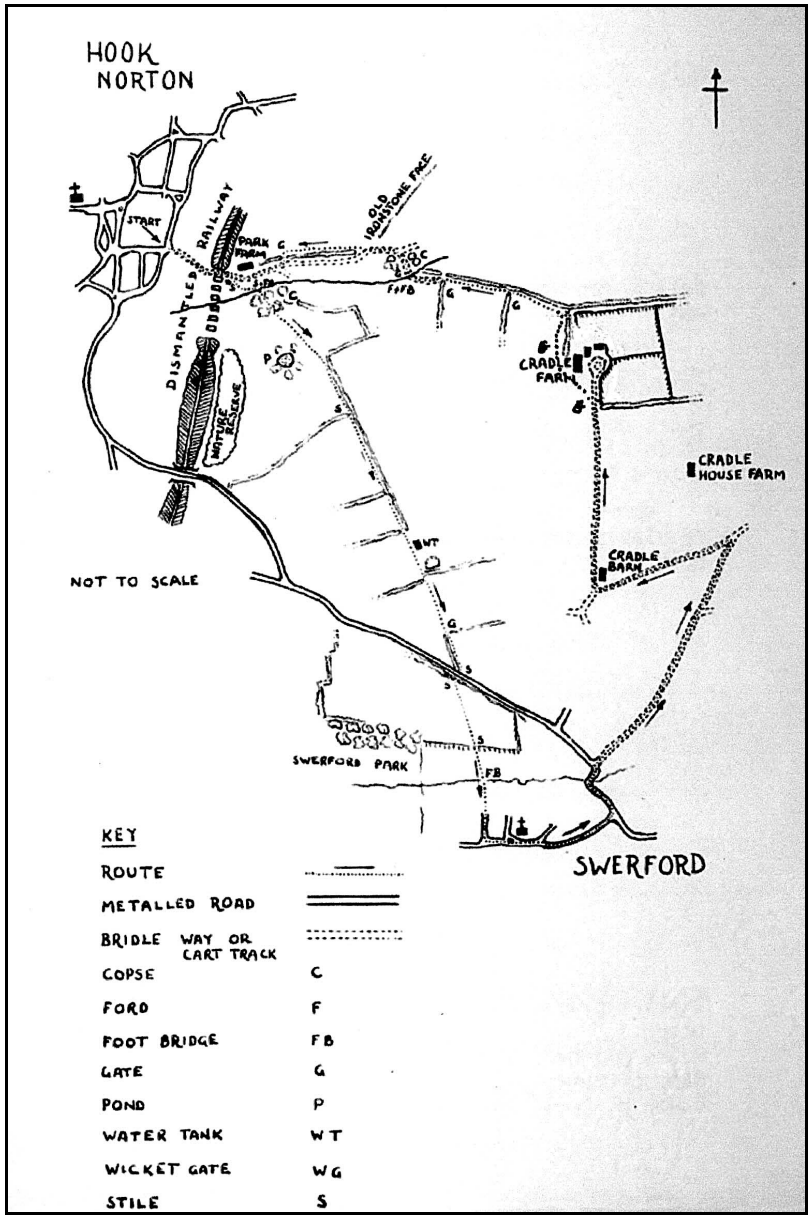
Hook Norton Footpaths

This booklet was originally produced some 20 years ago and revised in 2003. All of these rambles follow routes that were on the definitive map of Oxfordshire footpaths and may be started from Hook Norton Church.

Please keep to the routes, close any gate you may have to open, leave no litter and enjoy the beauty of our countryside. Keep your dogs under close control and remember it is illegal to take dogs without a lead into a field containing sheep.

Many footpaths have not been used regularly and there is no track. If in doubt, check with a map.

Booklet prepared by Hook Norton Local History Group.
Walks planned by Percival Hackling.
Maps by Peter Granger.
Walks and maps revised by David McGill.



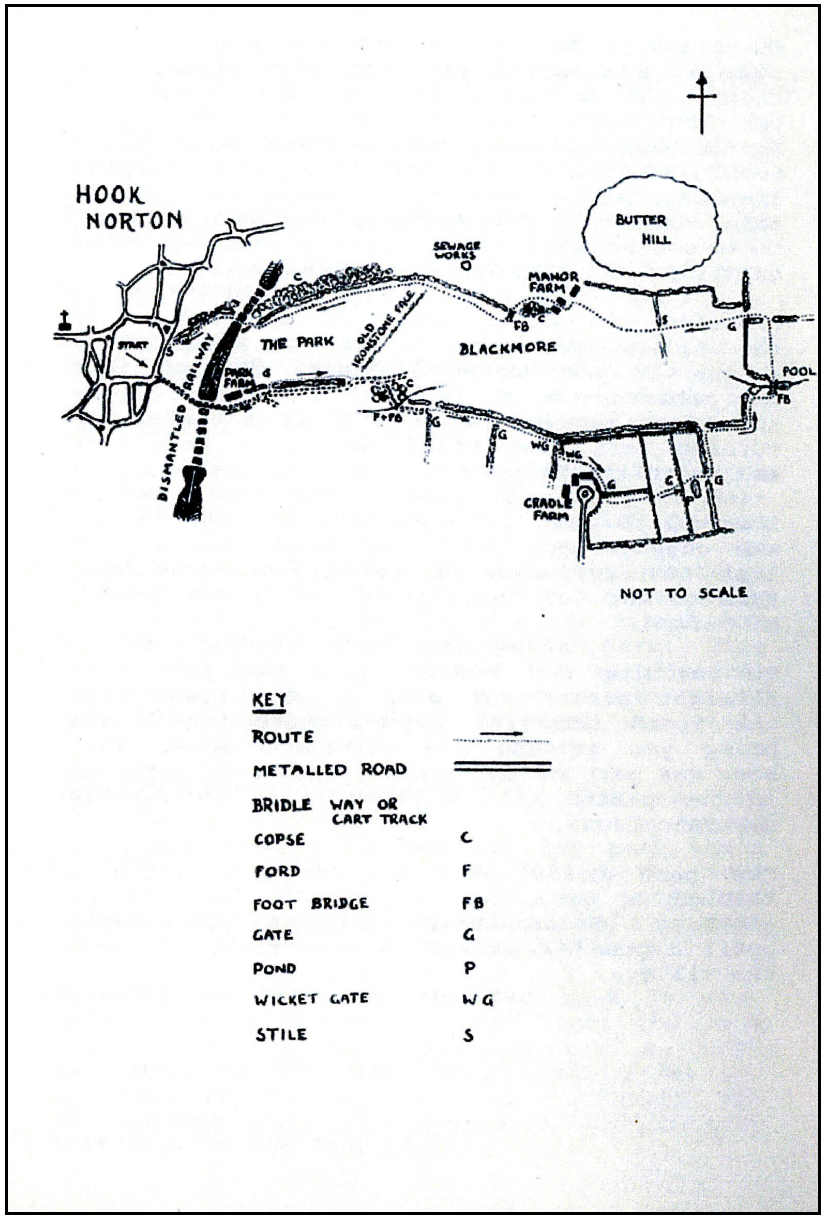
Ramble No. 4
The Park Area
3 miles/ 5 km

Start as in Ramble No. 1, however, instead of turning off to the right by the bungalow go straight on past Park Farm House on your left and through the gate or across the cattle grid in front of you. On your left is the remains of an old ironstone face with a hedge on top of it.

Continue straight on through another field until, going down a dip, a ford is crossed (there were at least six fords in this parish many years ago). On reaching the next field continue with the hedge on your left until reaching the Cradle lands. The area on your left is known as Blackmore and was the site of a mill in 1260. (You are in fact doing the end of Ramble No. 1 in reverse).

At Cradle lands the path goes through a small gate in the left hand corner of the field and turns right through one more when it turns sharp left, with the house on your right. Straight down the centre of the field, passing into the next which has a small pond, hidden behind undergrowth, on the right, and through two more gates passing into another large field. This area has been much enhanced by the planting of a number of tree clumps. Go into the next field, keeping the hedge on your left, and, turning left through a gate cross the stream by the bridge into another field. (The small pond by the bridge was, for many years, where the village lads used to go swimming).

Go up the left hand side of this field make for the next field where, turning left through a gap the path goes across a field,



Ramble No. 1
Swerford village and back
5 miles/ 8 km

Leaving the Church, walk down Middle Hill to the left of The Sun and on crossing the stream turn left up Park Road and continue upwards past the junction with Park Hill.

Entering the 'park', which has been in existence since the 14th century at least, immediately in front will be seen the railway embankment and viaduct pillars. The railway line was opened in 1887 and the last regular train ran in 1951. This area used to be the village cricket ground for many years.

Just past the bungalow by the pillars cross a stile on your right; take the path bearing left towards a large tree and down the slope till a bridge is reached crossing the stream leading into a small spinney, which has been here for some time.

Bearing right, then left, you will emerge before a steep bank at the top of which a clump of trees and a pond will be on your right; also more viaduct pillars. Between here and the pillars are a number of earth banks, all that remains of the old ironstone workings from 1902 to 1920. Cross over the stile into the field and carry on up the hill keeping the hedge to your left. (Please note there is no gap at this stile for dogs.) As you head for the top of the hill look left to Grounds Farm (built 1707/8) and right to a wooded former railway embankment, now a nature reserve.

A stile at the top of the hill brings you to a field with the path

following the hedge on your left. At the highest point of the hill is a field to be crossed; make for a large tree, passing a small water tank on the way.

From here is a good view of Swerford distinctly cut into two parts and behind the village on the far hill can be seen the old coaching inn, The Mason's Arms.

The path now heads directly for Swerford Church, across another field, through a gate, down the slope, along the left side of a hedge until a broken stile brings one on to the road. Crossing this road a further stile on the right leads the path across a large field with a fence, the path still going straight for the church, and in the bottom a bridge takes you over the river Swere. As you cross this field to your right is Swerford Park, mentioned in the 13th century.

After crossing the bridge a track will bring you to a road where, turning left, you pass the church with its 13th century spire. Just past the church, on the left, is a lane, and looking down will be seen more earthen banks, all that is left of a Norman castle dismantled 1154. (Signposted).

Follow the road till you come to a T-junction where, turning left you come to the site of an old mill. There has been a mill here since the 11th century. Turning the corner, take the lane on your right. Follow the lane until a track turning sharp left leads to Cradle Barn. On reaching the barn turn right where the track leads to Cradle Farm.

Walking along this track you get a view, on your right, of the Swere valley with Cradle House a field or two away, whilst in

On reaching the Banbury road the path goes straight across and down to the right over the field into the bottom where two stiles bring you to the old ironstone face. This area was part of the largest ironstone workings in the parish and in it were at least three separate faces.

The path heads straight for the village, through a gate, and over a stile, passing another old ironstone face on your left, until a pond is passed on your right to reach the village.

for many years, where the lords of the Manor caught small game for their table. A warrener was still living at the lodge in the 19th century.

This is where, by turning left, you can take the shortened walk of four miles (6.5 km) by going along the road until meeting the path again by Nill Cottages. For the full walk, turn right and walk into the entrance to Lodge Farm. Opposite the entrance to the stables is a field. Cross the stile here and walk across exiting over the stile in the far corner. Walk across the next field which gives you a good view of the Stour valley, reminiscent of open down land as it was in the 13th century when part of the East field.

On reaching the Stour stream, which starts only a few hundred yards to your right follow it round the edge of the fields until a crossing point is reached, then make for the large tree which will now be seen to be two. At the second tree bear right to the secondary road where there is a footpath signpost. Turn left to Swalcliffe Grange Farm, then left again takes you down a track to a wooded area. This was the site of stone quarrying and lime burning for many years.

Crossing the Stour again at the bottom of the hill, bear right across a field until a gap in the hedge is seen. Continue on this path until the Nill Farm complex is reached. Turn left and walk towards the right hand edge of the fir trees and the track will join a farm road and on to the Banbury road at Nill Cottages.

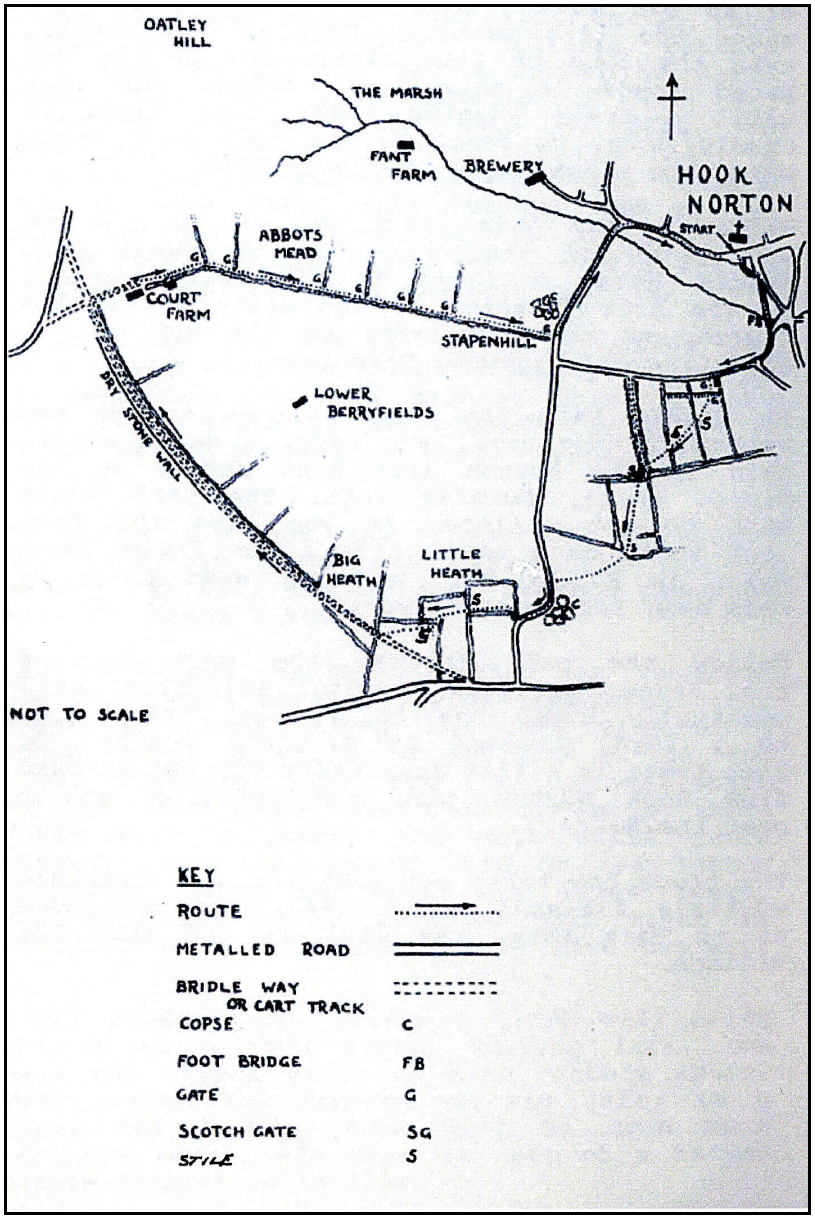
Lower Nill Farm is comparatively new, there was only a barn and a windmill here in the 19th century, when it was all part of Nill Farm on the top road, belonging to the Bishop of Oxford.

the near distance is the spire of Bloxham Church, and on your left, at the top of the hill, the Old Highwood Farmhouse.

At Cradle Farm, just before the house, turn left down a bridleway, and keeping the fence on your left go through the next gate and cross the field to the bottom, turning left through the gate and continue on the path. As you pass the farm look ahead to a small hill a few fields away. This is Butter Hill and has been known by this name for over 800 years.

Follow the path through the gate keeping the hedge on your right, and this will eventually bring you to a rough track down to a ford, crossed by a wooden bridge. On your right is a flat area where the two streams from Hook Norton join and continue on to meet the Swere.

The track now takes you past the old ironstone workings finished about 1946, and continues on to Park Farm, the viaducts and then the village.



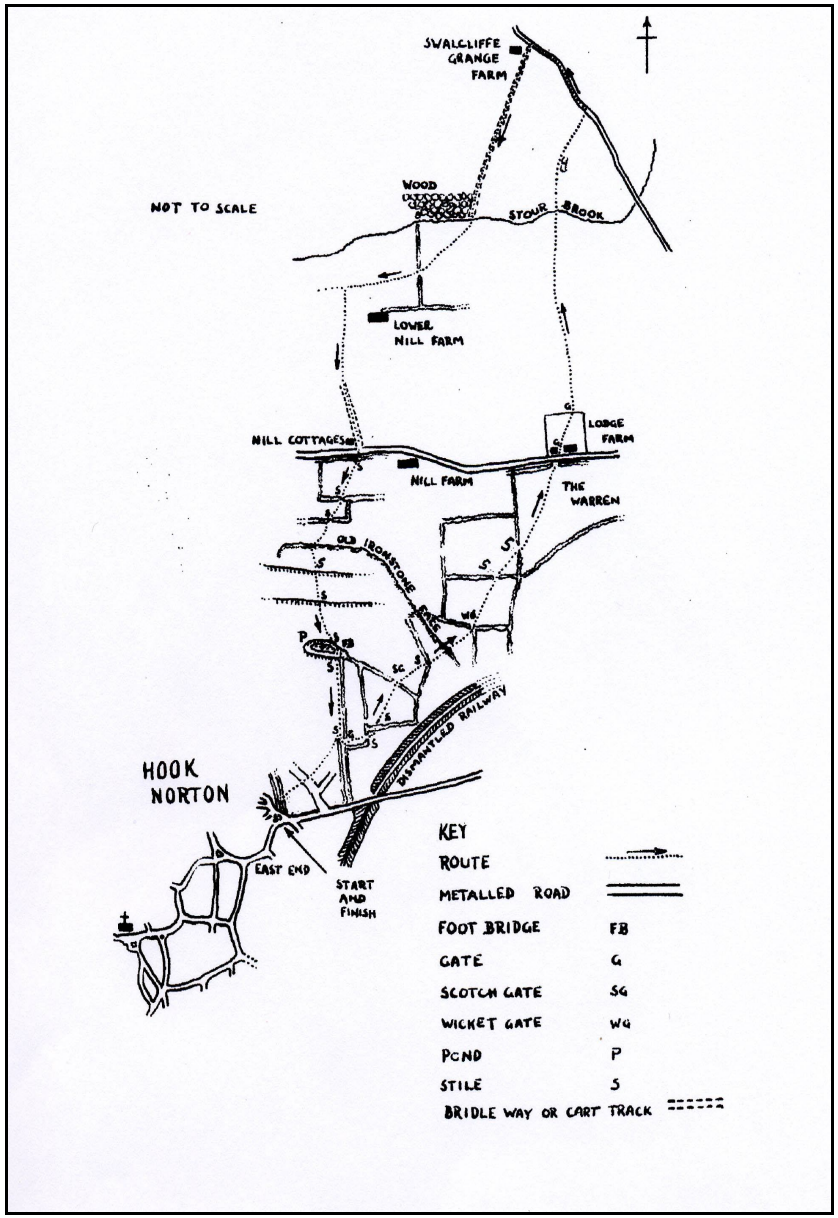
Ramble No. 3
Lodge Farm and the Stour Valley
(Full walk 6 miles/ 9.5km—can be shortened to 4 miles/ 6.5 km)

After leaving the church make your way to the East End of the village where turning into Hollybush Road a path on your right starts the walk. Continue on the path between the houses in Ironstone Hollow and you emerge through a gate into a field. Continue on the path and above it you will soon see a stile into a field going off to the right. Take this path and left through the first gate where ironstone working remains can be seen.

Crossing the next two fields, going downhill to a stream, the path goes over and through a gate into another field. Walking across the field you then cross over a gulley into another field. Keep walking diagonally across rather than going round the left hand edge. The path leads up to the top corner of the field where, turning left over a stile, another field is crossed onto the top of the hill.

As you pass up this field look back for a good view of the village and old viaducts. Looking west, you are on an area which has been called Rydon for over 700 years.

Butter Hill mentioned in Ramble No. 1 can be seen to the south east, while the hill due east joining the one you are on is called Council Hill, probably after a William Counser who owned the land here in the 16th century. Turning right at the last stile, a hedge is crossed into a large field which brings you to the Banbury road and Lodge Farm. This field was part of a Warren



Ramble No. 2
South Hill and The Heath
4 miles/ 6.5 km

From the church go through the gap to the left by The Sun and go down the hill until the stream is reached, then follow Burycroft Lane until the last house on the left where you turn left onto the footpath.

After passing through two gates bear right through another and immediately in front across the field is a stile. The path passes over this and crosses the next field, bearing slightly left to a gap in the hedge which leads to a path adjacent to the allotments. This goes down to a stream and a stile. As you cross the last two fields look left where, on the banks, will be seen remains of early ridge and furrow cultivation.

Past the stile at the end of the path go straight up the hill bearing right to a stile at the top of the field. From here the path goes straight across the field to the road.

Turn left here and follow the road until a track turns right to a gate, where turning left, you are in Little Heath as opposed to Big Heath which is passed later. This and Big Heath were allotments for many years. Keeping the hedge on your left make for the next field where the path goes diagonally right to meet the bridleway; then turn right into Big Heath.

Eventually the track turns right past Court Farm, and the remains of a stockman's dwelling that was still being lived in at the turn of last century. Through the next gate you are in a

large field, part of which was and is known as Abbots Mead; (Church land for many years). Look left to Oatley Hill Farm, while in front is a good view of the village with the brewery in the foreground.

Between Oatley Hill and the village is a large flat area which seven hundred years ago was known as The Marsh, and later as the Great Meadow; being low lying there would have been plenty of moisture for growing meadow grass.

Nearer the village, Fanthill Farmhouse can be seen in the same area, while slightly to the left the ground here has been called Flexland since the 13th century from the growing of flax.

The path now drops away and around here there are several springs which all feed the main stream through the village. (It must be noted that after a lot of rain can be quite difficult to cross through some of the fields). Further on the path rises up a small hill called Stapenhill (another name used for over 700 years) and continues with the hedge to the right as far as the road.

The way you have just come down was known as The Great Pool Road in the 17th century which for years was one of the major routes to and from the village. The pool itself was somewhere in the flat area, which in the years before modern drainage would have been more liable to flooding. On reaching the road turn left to the village.

Hook Norton Village Museum and Archive

Situated within the
Hook Norton Brewery Visitor Centre
the Museum is open on weekdays from
9.30AM until 4.30PM.

Hook Norton Brewery Visitor Centre
Brewery Lane
Hook Norton
Banbury
Oxon OX15 5NY

Telephone 01608 730384

Access to the Archive is by appointment,
please contact the Archivist, Barbara Hicks
Telephone 01608 737017

Hook Norton Local History Group

Monthly meetings are held on the first Tuesday at
7.30PM in the Brewery Visitor Centre.
All welcome.