

About 50m along, cross a stile on your left. This footpath now follows the line of the hedgerow on your right for about 200m. A stile marks the edge of the field. Here you bear slightly left and head for the next stile which is clearly visible across the field. Cross over Barkham Brook and also, after 30m, a dirt track called Nashgrove Ride, to follow the footpath along a fairly faint footpath in the grass.

*Just before you reach the farm buildings, turn round to look at the attractive view of Barkham Church and the large white house, Barkham Square, in their countryside setting.*

Follow the narrow footpath alongside the sheds which leads to Edneys Hill. Cross the road and take the marked footpath opposite. When it changes to a track, keep straight ahead until its junction with the Barkham Road (B3349).

*There are some fine ash trees in the hedges at the junction of the path with the track. Further on in the hedge on the left, there are six splendid hybrid black poplars.*

Turn right at Barkham Road and follow the pavement on the right until you reach Sandy Lane on the left. Turn into Sandy Lane and walk straight on, ignoring the public footpath sign to the right at Vine Ridge (unless you are returning to the Leathern Bottel).

*During the First World War, thousands of horses from Ireland were driven along Barkham Road from Wokingham Station to the remount depot at Arborfield to be broken in for the troops on the front lines. This was mostly done, 500 at a time, in the middle of the night. In the woodland at Sandy Bottom foxes, small mammals and woodpeckers are still to be found, despite recent development.*

At the end of the woodland, Sandy Lane becomes a road again. Between the houses to the left, you can glimpse attractive views across the countryside. Continue along Sandy Lane until it meets Bearwood Road. Cross the road with care and your walk is complete.

## THE COOMBES AND BARKHAM

A circular walk of about 3 1/2 miles, it should take about 2 hours. If walked a second time, it is worth doing in reverse order to enjoy different views.

The first section is in the historic parish of Barkham. For a more extended walk in The Coombes see 'Rambling for Pleasure around Reading' a booklet produced by the East Berkshire Ramblers' Association and obtainable in local bookshops.

Most paths are marked with signposts or Countryside waymarks. Some are bridleways used by horses, (byways open to all traffic). There are two short stretches along pavements. Some footpaths can be very wet and muddy, so wear stout shoes or gum boots. Please follow the Walker's Code.

This walk can be joined at various points along the route. Limited parking is available in Coombes Lane, from which the description of the walk begins.

You can start from the Leathern Bottel public house by walking along the Barkham Road and taking a signed footpath to the right. Buses run from Wokingham Town Centre along the Barkham Road. Wooseshill residents can join the route via Fox Hill Woods off Dorset Way/Limmerhill and on to Highlands Avenue. The car can be left at home.

### FOLLOW THE COUNTRY CODE

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work	Leave livestock, and machinery alone
Guard against all risk of fire	Take your litter home
Keep dogs under close control	Help keep water clean
Keep to public paths across farmland	Protect wildlife, plants and trees
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls	Take special care on country roads
	Make no unnecessary noise

*This leaflet was produced with the assistance of*

Wokingham District Council  
Public Rights of Way Officer  
Mr Graham Barnwell,

Vic Bates Cartographer Ltd  
01624 844113

*Always wear appropriate footwear and take care when walking in the town or countryside. No responsibility is accepted by the authors of this leaflet for the state or condition from time to time of the paths comprised in these walks.*

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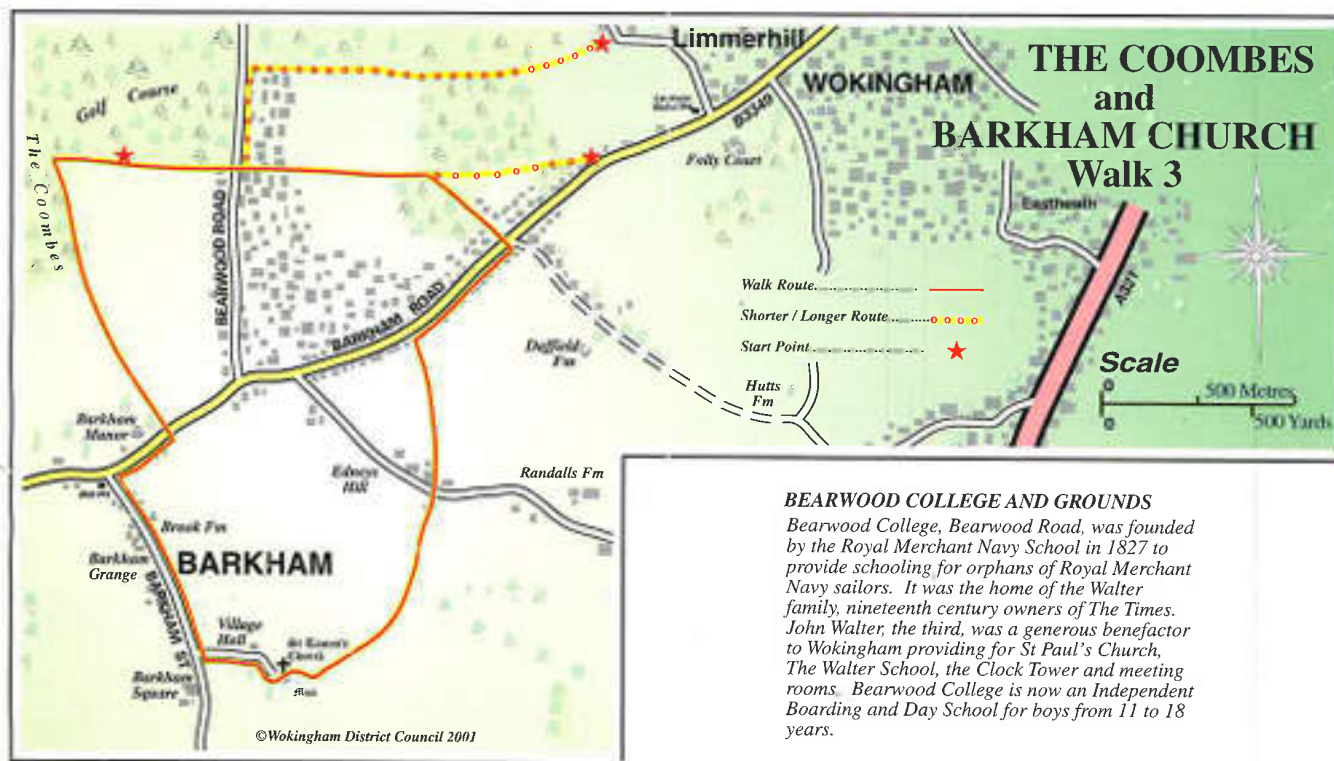
## WALKS From WOKINGHAM TOWN

### *The Coombes & Barkham Church Walk 3*



*A circular 3 1/2 mile walk*

Wokingham District Council



### START HERE:-

From the lay-by in Coombes Lane, off Bearwood Road, walk along the track into the woods. After about 500m, having passed some houses and a field to your left, and with parkland to your right, turn left into a bridleway.

*The woods are The Coombes, once part of Windsor Forest, and now in private ownership. They contain a number of public rights of way and many good walks can be taken within them. They are especially beautiful in spring-time when they resound with bird song. To your right is the Bearwood Lakes 18 hole championship Golf Course.*

Continue along this bridleway, ignoring other bridleways and footpaths which join it from both left and right, until you reach the Barkham Road (B3349).

### BEARWOOD COLLEGE AND GROUNDS

Bearwood College, Bearwood Road, was founded by the Royal Merchant Navy School in 1827 to provide schooling for orphans of Royal Merchant Navy sailors. It was the home of the Walter family, nineteenth century owners of *The Times*. John Walter, the third, was a generous benefactor to Wokingham providing for St Paul's Church, The Walter School, the Clock Tower and meeting rooms. Bearwood College is now an Independent Boarding and Day School for boys from 11 to 18 years.

*The College welcomes local people who would like to visit the buildings or walk in the grounds, where there is a large lake. Please contact the College on 01189 786915 to make arrangements for your visit.*

At the end of the bridleway, to the left across the field, is a large rookery. On your right is Barkham Manor. The current Manor House was built in the 18th century on the site of the 16th century house. Today it is divided into smaller residential units.

*Although some of the grounds have been developed, the original stew-ponds, once stocked with fish for Fridays and Lent, can just be seen from the path.*

Turn right at Barkham Road and walk along the pavement past the junction with Barkham Street until you face the Bull Public House. Taking great care of the traffic on the Barkham Road, cross into Barkham Street to the pavement on the left hand side of the Bull.

*The Bull at Barkham was built as an Inn in 1728 with a forge attached. The smithy was still in operation in recent times. The Forge has now been converted into a restaurant but you can still see parts of the old floor and walls. Inside some of the blacksmith's tools are displayed and on the wall of the bar in the pub there are two photographs of the Inn and Forge as they were in the last century.*

Continue along the pavement on the right hand side of Barkham Street for about 600m, passing a barn on staddle stones and an old farm waggon and crossing Barkham Brook, until you meet Church Lane on the left. It is signposted 'St James's Church and Village Hall'. Cross Barkham Street and walk along Church Lane as far as the church gate.

*The Village Hall was built in 1983 and is used as a Community Hall for Barkham. The Parish Council meets there. The present church dates from 1862. It is on the same site as the earlier church and built by the third John Walter with materials taken from it. The spire was renovated in 1991.*

*The Rev. David Davies, rector of Barkham from 1782 to 1819 was author of 'The Case of Labourers in Husbandry'. This classic study gave a detailed account of the poor conditions of agricultural labourers in Barkham in the eighteenth century and was a call for fair wages and social reform. Another widely known rector in Barkham, from 1886-1930 was the Rev. P H Ditchfield. He was a much respected antiquarian and local historian. He wrote many books and articles on rural England, including the history of Berkshire. The graves of both men are to be found in the churchyard.*

Follow the footpath to the right of the fence round the churchyard and, just before reaching a pair of cottages with a moat almost all the way around them, turn left along a signed track.

*In the churchyard is a very large Cedar of Lebanon, planted in 1788 by Mrs Leveson Gower, owner of Barkham Manor House. Church Cottages, around which there is a moat, are on the site of an earlier 15th century manor house.*