





WALK 1

PARKS, PONDS AND DEFENCES THE HAWKESBURY TRAIL

Start Point	Hawkesbury Upton Village Hall
Distance	7km (4 1/2 miles)
Difficulty	Medium includes two short steep sections
Time	2-3 hours
Refreshments	The Fox Inn and Beaufort Arms

INTRODUCTION

This walk follows paths from the ancient villages of Hawkesbury Upton and Hawkesbury along the Cotswold escarpment past old settlements, medieval fishponds and deer parks to Horton Court, a remarkable manor house built in the 12th century.

Hawkesbury Local History Society and Horton and Little Sodbury Local History Group have produced detailed village heritage guides available from local outlets.

THE ROUTE

- 1 The walk starts from the Village Hall car park. Turn right out of the car park and continue down the lane to the pond, known as Farm Pool, noting the Somerset Monument ahead. Turn left at Farm Pool.
- 2 Turn left opposite Home Farm into Bath Lane marked Cotswold Way National Trail. After 200m turn right, leaving the Cotswold Way National Trail, and follow the hedge down across two fields, bear left in the third field towards the stile and through the wood to a lane below. Turn left into Hawkesbury village.
- 3 Take the path past the church wall, around the graveyard and continue to the far right hand field corner. Turn left and follow this lane past Upper Chalkley Farm towards Horton Court. Note Hawkesbury Common and Lower Woods to the right.
- 4 Continue past Upper Chalkley Farm. Beyond lie the once landscaped grounds of Horton Court. As the lane climbs at the boundary of Horton Parish, note the bank formations of the medieval fishponds in the woods on the left.
- 5 Note the large pond and causeway down to your left. Continue around the Church of St James the Elder and pass the gates to Horton Court. To rejoin the Cotswold Way National Trail continue down the lane, turn left on the path and cross the field keeping the hedge on your left to reach a gate at the woods. After 100m turn left up the steps. Exit the beech wood and follow the marker posts across the rough fields towards the lane.
- 6 Just before joining the lane take the path on the field side of the hedge. Take the second path off to the left - a bridleway. Follow the track across three fields and then turn right by a hedge (leaving the Cotswold Way National Trail) towards the village. Cross the cricket pitch to the main street in Hawkesbury Upton.

SOME PLACE NAME ORIGINS:

Horton	Muddy settlement
Chalkley Farm	Clearing in the limestone
Hawkesbury	Hafoc's fortified place



HAWKESBURY UPTON

This historic village is most remarkable for its 17th and 18th century houses lining the High Street and the old farm houses standing at the village edges. Many of the houses were connected with the prosperous 17th century weaving industry. There are two good pubs serving local beers and a village shop. The village green was formerly the centre of village activity: it was the site of the original market place, alive with stalls and stands

on market days, and it also the place where the maypole and stocks for displaying criminals stood. Unlike its neighbours at Wickwar and Chipping Sodbury, Hawkesbury Upton has not prospered as a market, probably because of poor road and railway access.

THE SOMERSET MONUMENT

High above Hawkesbury Upton and towering over the Severn Vale below stands one of the Cotswolds' grand gestures. The Somerset Monument was built in 1846 to commemorate Lord Edward Somerset, a Napoleonic war veteran who was a general at the Battle of Waterloo and nephew of the sixth Duke of Beaufort.





**Church of
St. Mary**

HAWKESBURY

The Saxon Charter of 972 re-affirmed the ownership of the manor of Hawkesbury, a large area including the Lower Woods, to the Benedictine Abbey of Pershore in Worcestershire. The Abbot or his steward would have been a regular visitor, collecting rents and administering justice. The Abbot's ownership of the manor continued until the dissolution of the monasteries between 1536 and 1539. The large size of the 12th century church of St Mary also reflects the historical importance of this village. Within the churchyard there are a fine collection of chest tombs. The final decline of Hawkesbury came when many of the villagers moved to Hawkesbury Upton during the 17th and 18th centuries, to work in the local weaving industry.

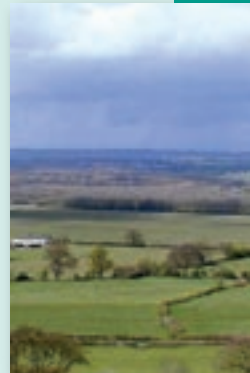
LONG BARROWS

Sited on Hawkesbury Knoll, high above the hamlet is one of many ancient long barrows found throughout this part of the Cotswolds. These were places of the dead, used to house the remains of many people, although it is not known whether these represent hierarchies or family groups. Long barrows date to the Neolithic period over 6000 years ago and were usually sited in prominent locations in the landscape. These monuments are important in the Cotswold and Severn regions and some even have hidden entrances at the side of the structure, presumably as a ruse to confuse tomb-robbers in a manner familiar to us in the Pyramids of Egypt.

LOWER WOODS

As you walk along the route you'll see a huge area of woodland to the west. This is Lower Woods, one of the largest oak and ash woods in England. Viewed from the air, Lower Woods is a complex mosaic of traditional woodland, separated into twenty-three distinct woods and coppices by ancient north-south and east-west routeways, and surrounded by extensive commons and isolated farmsteads, each with their irregularly shaped fields. The landscape demonstrates the relationships between woodlands, farms, commons and hamlets in the medieval period. Although exploited by man for over a thousand years, only small parts of Lower Woods have ever been clear-felled. This past management, their age, size, and the nature of the soils and the complex geology, make Lower Woods outstanding in Britain as an ancient and ecologically important damp oakwood. Designated by English Nature as a Site of Special Scientific Interest, it is now managed as a nature reserve by the Gloucestershire and Avon Wildlife Trusts.

In Saxon times the woods were known as Horwudu (meaning muddy wood) and lay in the northern part of the forest of Alveston and Horwood (later known as Kingswood Forest), a royal hunting reserve created at the coronation of Henry I in 1100 AD, which included a vast area from the Cotswolds escarpment to the River Severn. Henry III removed its forest status in 1228 in exchange for a payment of 150 pounds. Kingswood Forest held much woodland, but the term 'Forest' did not refer to trees; it meant an administrative area in which the King held the hunting rights, protected by special laws enforced by appointed officials. The King owned the deer and wild boar, but not necessarily the land.



Lower Woods
Photograph by
Mike Martin



DEER PARK

Shortly after Upper Chalkley Farm a stream marks the boundary between the parishes of Horton and Hawkesbury. It is the “aescwyllan broc” (Ashwell brook), mentioned in the charter of 972 that re-affirmed Hawkesbury to Pershore Abbey. It also marks the northern edge of Horton’s Deer Park - woodland and fields that were set aside for keeping deer and may have been used for royal hunting trips. In a survey of 1548 the Park was described as “*a close called le park containing by estimation 120 acres*”. An imposing high bank is visible, following the parish boundary by the stream, enclosing the fields forming the deer park. This boundary earthwork would have been set with a fence of wooden palings (known as the Park Pale) to contain the deer.

MEDIEVAL FISHPONDS

A readily available and plentiful source of fish was essential to the medieval manor house - for feast days and Fridays! In this part of South Gloucestershire, manorial fishponds are often found at or near the foot of the Cotswold scarp. The ponds would have held fish such as carp or tench. Walking up the approach road to Horton Court you can see the outlines of a remarkable system of ponds on your left. Although these lower ponds are now drained and are somewhat hidden in the woods, the main upper pond close to the Court is still filled with water.

HORTON COURT

Horton Court is probably the oldest rectory in England. The first elements of the house were built in the 12th century, though there were major rebuilding programmes in the 14th, 15th and 18th centuries. The formal garden was laid out in the 1520's and still represents perhaps the earliest renaissance garden in England. The Norman hall and ambulatory are now owned by the National Trust; they are normally open on Wednesdays and Saturdays in the summer. The rest of the house is private. At the time of the Domesday survey in 1086, the Manor of Horton was held by Robert de Todei, standard bearer to the conqueror King William. The banished Saxon owner had been Ulf, an illegitimate son of King Harold. In 1125 Robert's daughter Agnes, wife of Hubert de Rya, made a grant of the manor, as a prebend, to the Cathedral Church of Salisbury - that is the land provided income for a canon or other member of the chapter of the Cathedral. For more than 400 years a succession of prebendaries and sometimes laymen held the manor. In 1546 Horton was taken by the Crown. Soon after, in 1554, Sir Clement Paston acquired the Lordship, and his family retained the rights and privileges until the end of the 18th century.

Horton Court 0117 9372501 www.nationaltrust.org.uk



Horton Court