



Location Map

Acknowledgements

This leaflet was researched and written by members of the Sibfords Society

Watercolour illustrations by Nigel Fletcher

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The owners of the Bishop Blaize and Wykham Arms for allowing walkers to use their car parks

The landowners, whose co-operation helped make the walk possible

Additional Information

All of Cherwell District Council's circular walks and rides are published on the Council website and can be downloaded free. Leaflets can be purchased from Banbury Tourist Information Centre (01295 259855). For further information about circular walks and rides, guided walks and grants available for countryside access projects, please contact:-



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Cherwell District Council

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Village Trail 2miles / 3.4km Time 1.5hours

Sibfords Historic Village Trail

A two mile walk around and between the villages of Sibford Ferris, Sibford Gower and the hamlet of Burdrop.

- The Sibfords are eight miles west of Banbury off the B4035 Shipston on Stour Road.
- The route description starts from the car park of the Bishop Blaize Inn in Burdrop. Alternatively you can start from the car park of the Wykham Arms in Sibford Gower and follow directions 8-15 then 1-7.
- The cross field stretches of the route are steep, and can be wet and muddy, especially in winter.
- Many of the buildings described are private dwellings. Please respect the privacy of residents by viewing from a polite distance.

Places to Eat & Drink

Sibford Ferris Post Office and Shop

(01295) 788317

Open 5.30am - 6pm Mon - Sat, 5.30am - 1pm Sun

Post Office, newsagent, delicatessen and general store

The Bishop Blaize - Burdrop

(01295) 780323

www.bishopblaize.co.uk

Open every lunchtime and evening. Food every lunchtime and evening (check for exact times and reservations). Village pub serving traditional hearty food. Local real ales plus guest beers from small breweries. Extensive views from hilltop garden. Good Pub Guide listed.



The Wykham Arms - Sibford Gower

(01295) 788808

www.thewykhamarms.co.uk

Open every lunchtime and evening. Food every lunchtime and evening (check for exact times and reservations). Restaurant pub serving top quality food in informal setting. Local real ales plus extensive wine list. Well in floor of bar. Good Pub Guide listed.

Introduction to The Sibfords

Standing high on their hilltops, **Sibford Ferris**, **Sibford Gower** and the hamlet of **Burdrop**, have survived relatively unscathed and remain an oasis away from the hustle and bustle of 21st century

Sibford Gower Post Office c.1924



life; but like many Oxfordshire villages, great changes have taken place in the past few decades. Today's thriving community supports a shop, village hall, two pubs, two schools, three churches and can

draw on the rich legacy of the past through the largely unspoilt beauty of its buildings and wonderful rolling countryside.

Intriguing finds of flint arrow heads and the remains of two Iron Age barrows are clear links with the Ancient Britons who first settled here.

When William the Conqueror's great survey was made in 1086, it noted Henry de Ferrieres as the chief landowner at 'Sibforde'; and a Charter of 1216 mentions Thomas Goher as a landowner. It seems likely that these settlements were chosen for their position and proximity to the nearby ford and may have taken their names from these early landowners.

Primary School c.1900



The village school in Sibford Gower, endowed by the Town Estate Charity has provided a rich and free education to local children for almost 400 years. Many ancient grammar schools were endowed in this manner, but an endowed primary school of such antiquity is rare. The Town Estate Charity is still in existence providing one third of its annual profit for the benefit of the school - it is our most venerable village institution.

Sibford Ferris Manor c.1904



Walking around the villages it is still easy to see the ridges in the surrounding fields, marking the old-time strip cultivation. For centuries the land would have looked very different from today. No hedges marked boundaries, animals roamed in open common furze land and large areas of it were covered by woods. Enclosure (Gower 1773 and Ferris 1789) meant the loss of much common land, but the Enclosure Act thoughtfully added 10 acres of former furze land to the Town Estate to be farmed and the profit to be used to buy fuel for 'such of the poor people as do now and shall hereafter reside within the township'.

Many Sibfordians still recall days when the busy community boasted several shops, two post offices, blacksmiths, and numerous craftsmen and tradesmen, meeting local needs. Days when able-bodied men queued at dawn light for a days farm work are not so far gone. Still just within living memory, the only commercial transport to far off Banbury was the twice weekly carrier's cart - a boneshaking four hour journey away.

Sibford is still a true beauty spot and a desirable place in which to live. We hope your walk around our village will help you to appreciate this special corner of Oxfordshire through the living history around us today.

Theodore the Hermit

For many years between the wars and until he died in 1950, Theodore Lamb lived the life of a recluse in a shack on Sibford Heath. A skilled watch and clock repairer, Theodore plied his trade around the local villages. He also played various instruments and posed for photographs for which he charged a fee of half a crown. He travelled around, sometimes on a bicycle without tyres, sometimes on foot, and usually with some form of truck loaded with junk and, in the winter, his fire in a bucket as well. He always paid for his small needs, although when his clothing, which was often made from sacks, became less than decent he was banned from Banbury and had to wait at the door of the village shop to be served. He was always totally honest and completely harmless despite his appearance. He was an immensely strong man and once pulled a chicken hut for many miles back to Sibford taking several days over the journey.



Points of Interest

A **Bishop Blaize Inn** - Dating back to 1640, it was formerly known as the 'Old Inn'. The first record of the present name is from 1816. There was a wool market in Burdrop in the 18th century, so we assume the name change was a reflection of this (Bishop Blaize is the patron saint of wool combers).

B **Shepherd's Knoll** - This was part of a large barn used for storing fleeces before they were sent to market. The barn was converted into three cottages in 1815.

C **Coffin Walk** - Also known as Dead Man's Walk, it was the route taken by coffin bearers to burials at Swalcliffe Church, there being no C of E. Church in Sibford until 1841. This direct walk avoided Hawkes Lane, which was often flooded.

D **Water Point** - There is a 312 gallon tank behind this water point fed by a hydraulic ram from Ellywell (Holy Well) below the churchyard. Installed in 1847, at a cost of £50 by public subscription, to supply water for the residents of Burdrop.

E **Carrier's Cottage** - Carriers played a vital part in village life. Prior to the introduction of motorised bus services in the early 1920s they were the only means of commercial transport. This cottage was also previously a bakery.

F **Holy Trinity Church** - Prior to the consecration of this new church in 1841 the Sibfords were part of the ecclesiastical parish of Swalcliffe. The land was given by Rev William Gilkes and the design was by H J Underwood of Oxford. Built in local Hornton stone in the Early English style, it consists of a nave, transepts and shallow chancel. The porch was added in 1879.

G **The Primary School** - This endowed school dates back to 1623, although the present building only dates from 1866. The endowment comes from the Town Estate Charity, given to the community in 1560, allowing Sibford Gower and Burdrop children to be educated free (Sibford Ferris children had to pay until 1891). The 'New School' was built across the road in 1968 producing an unusual split-site arrangement.

H **The Tite** - A spring feeds the pool and has supplied fresh water for centuries. Used by villagers until mains water came in 1935/36.

I **The Wykham Arms** - Believed to have been named after William of Wykham who built part of Swalcliffe Church in the 14th century and Swalcliffe Barn in the early 15th century. The age of the building is unknown but during alterations in the 1950's, a penny dated 1537 was found there.

J **The Manor House** - Formed around the time of the Great War by linking and extending several old cottages and a barn. The tower was added later to give the impression of antiquity. It was the creation of



Frank Lascelles, a flamboyant local character who made his name directing spectacular pageants for state occasions. Famous artistic friends often visited him in Sibford, including Robert Graves, Ivor Novello and Noël Coward.

K **The Old Post Office** - This was owned and run as a post office by the Inns family, starting in 1884. In the early 20th century there were 3 bands in the village. The string band rehearsed here, whilst one brass band practiced at the Bishop Blaize and the other at the Quaker Mission Room, next to the Meeting House.



L **The Village Pond** - Fed by local springs for centuries. It overflowed across the village track until 1900 when the pond was kerbed and the ford piped. The horse chestnut tree beside the pond was raised from a conker picked up beside the

body of Joseph John Lamb, who fell and died while knocking down conkers for his seven year old son Theodore (see Theodore the Hermit).

M **The Old Vicarage** - Home to the vicars of Sibford until the 1970's. Note the false window painted on the first floor level, a result of the old window tax. The stone structure outside is a wellhead covering "Town Well". It is fed by a separate spring from the pond, and is still occasionally used to top the pond up.

N **Bond's End Lane** - Several cottages along this narrow lane sold bread, sweets, seeds and groceries until the early 1960's when the last shop closed. Other cottages, with springs bubbling up in the corners of their kitchens, were homes to outworkers who wove the renowned Shutford Plush.

O **Friends Meeting House** - The Sibfords have a long tradition of religious nonconformity. There has been a Quaker Meeting House on this site since 1678 (burial ground added later), and until the Methodist Chapel was completed in 1827 it was Sibford's only place of worship. (A Templar's Chapel existed in 1153, site unknown). The current building replaced the original in 1865.



P **The Sib** - The stream rises east of the village and joins the Stour at Temple Mill. These streams are unique in Oxfordshire, as they run west into the Avon/Severn and then Atlantic, and not east towards the North Sea.

Q **Oddie's Field** - Named after Robert Oddie, farmer and former headmaster of Sibford School. The undulating nature of this field is the result of clay digging to form bricks and tiles for building West Town House in about 1790. The large hole in the western half is the kiln position.

R **Mulberry Cottage** - Believed to have been built at the end of the 18th century, it was originally 3 cottages of unusual design; being 3-storey with one room on each floor. Two fossils unearthed here in 1986 have been identified as bivalves from the Jurassic period, approximately 180 million years ago.

S **The Old House** - Probably 16th century of yeoman design, it was lived in by generations of the Lamb family until recently. It remains virtually unaltered, with the exception of the outbuildings on the right-hand side, now joined to the house.

T **The Old Bake House** - Probably older than The Old House, it was the first Post Office (first telegraph to Sibford 1896). There is a stream running through the cellar.



U **Sibford Ferris Manor House** - The Manor or Great House was built in 1666 by Thomas Walford and re-fronted in the 18th century. It was bought, in 1797, by Joseph Harris, a Quaker, who sold it to the Society of Friends in 1842 for 'the purposes of a school.' The Manor was sold in 2001 and redeveloped into apartments. The School now occupies a site to the south of Main Street

V **Maria's House** - Named after Maria Payne, servant of shopkeeper Susanna Farden, who kept a post office, then a wool shop. Formerly, 2 cottages stood on the grass area outside this house. The end part was Jeremiah Lamb's smithy in 17th century.

W **Pettifer's Piece** - Formerly a barn and stable and once home to the 'parish' bull. Cows were brought from various farms to be served by the bull.

X **Medieval Fish Ponds** - Used to supply trout and carp to the ancient Manor House and is prone to flooding today.

8 Pass The Wykham Arms (I) (turn right into or out of The Wykham Arms if you are starting from here) and opposite is the Manor House (J). Continue past the Methodist Chapel (1827) and at the cross roads turn left along Main Street.

9 The first house past the telephone kiosk was The Old Post Office (K). Carry on to the village pond (L), passing the 'Frog Crossing' sign on the right. Retrace your steps to Bond's End Lane, passing the Old Vicarage (M) on the corner.

10 Go down Bond's End Lane (N) and at the end turn sharp left and take the public footpath furthest left. Continue along the narrow path, passing a wicket gate on your left, through which the Friends Meeting House (O) can be seen.

11 On reaching the road turn right, downhill. Pass the entrance to Sycamore Close then take the footpath on the left. Go through a kissing gate and between houses to reach a kissing gate looking down over fields.

For those who would like to venture further afield we recommend the OS Explorer sheets 191 and 206.

KEY

Route ●●●●●

Other Paths ●●●●●

Points of Interest B

7 Emerge into a field planted with ornamental trees. Bear right and follow the path through the trees, then straight through a kissing gate. On reaching the road (Temple Mill Road) turn right and walk uphill.

6 Turn left along the road and continue to the far corner of the Endowed Primary School (G). Turn left onto the public footpath beside the school and follow it down through a wooded area (you can take a short detour just before the bottom to see the school pond fed by the Tite (H)).

5 Continue across the next field and through a kissing gate to the right of some buildings (Wheathills Farm), pause and look at the view behind you. Turn right and walk up the farm track to the road (a short detour to visit the Church of Holy Trinity (F) is worthwhile at this point).

4 Near the bottom of the dip (after the speed limit signs) go through the kissing gate on the right. Head diagonally right across the field, through the next kissing gate and over the footbridge crossing Ellywell spring (D).

3 Continue along the lane, and on your right after the right hand bend is an old Water Point (D). Opposite on the lower roadway is Carriers Cottage (E). Carry on down the hill, passing the Bishop Blaize on your left, and join the main road.

2 On reaching the main road, bear right towards Banbury. After about 50 metres turn right along a gravelled public footpath (The Jitty) and at the end turn right again. Pass the village Surgery and 50 metres further on, note the public footpath to the left known as Coffin Walk (C).

1 From the Bishop Blaize (A) car park, walk straight out over Burdrop Green passing a terrace of cottages on your right including Shepherd's Knoll (B).

17 Cross the road onto the path and look over the wall; depressions in the field near the Sib show the position of medieval fish ponds (X). Follow the road uphill and take the right hand fork back to the Bishop Blaize.

16 At the T-junction turn left down the hill towards Sibford Gower and Burdrop, passing Maria's House (V) and Pettifer's Piece (W) on the right.

15 Continue along the road, passing the Old House (S) and the Old Bakehouse (T) on your right. To the left is the arched gateway through Sibford Ferris Manor (U).

13 Walk up the steep slope of Oddie's field (Q). Near the top, walk alongside a tall garden wall to your left, then through a kissing gate onto Woodway Road and turn left.

14 Pass West Town House on the left, and the junction of Hook Norton Road on the right. Pass several terraced cottages on the right, the last of which is Mulberry Cottage (R).

