



*We care for the Chilterns*

## South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers

# Mapledurham Estate Gates Project, Spring 2012

## Final Report



Mapledurham House, completed in 1612

# The Mapledurham Gates Project

A programme of replacement of stiles on Public Footpaths across the Mapledurham Estate with kissing gates, plus associated path improvements, planned and executed by volunteers of the Chiltern Society.



Across the old kitchen garden to the Church

## 1. Background

The Mapledurham Estate north west of Reading on the north side of the Thames contains some of the most attractive countryside in the Chilterns. The Chiltern Way Southern Extension passes through the Estate.

In November 2011 the Area Secretary for the Oxfordshire Rights of Way Group of the Chiltern Society submitted a proposal to the Estate for the replacement of 5 stiles by kissing gates. Mr Jack Eyston, the Estate owner, kindly gave his personal permission for the work to take place.

## 2. Summary of site work completed

In spring 2012, teams of South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers from the Chiltern Society installed five wooden kissing gates, erected ten waymark posts and carried out some path clearance in agreed areas.

## 3. Gates

The gates were Oxford-type wooden kissing gates supplied by Centrewire Ltd, the approved supplier to Oxfordshire County Council.

All gates were modified locally to have a square corral instead of the usual V-shaped corral: the additional space so gained eases walkers' progress through the gate.

Where necessary, a metre of extra wooden rail fencing was installed either side of each gate to comply with BS 5709.

This is current SCPMV practice which ensures that there is no barbed wire within a metre of the gate to catch on walkers' hands or clothing, and that any barbed wire stock fencing is supported by a separate straining post distanced from the gate.

The objective was to provide a stile-free circular walk from Caversham Heights to Mapledurham House. This would improve access to the elderly and less able and to provide an easy alternative route for visitors to this historic house which is open to the public.

The funding would be from the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE) and the work would be carried out by South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (SCPMV).

The work was planned for the Spring of 2012.



Installing Gate #1 on footpath 292/6

An added complication was that, for safety reasons, at two of the gates it was necessary to run underground electricity cables across the width of the gates for continuity of electric stock fences.

Gates were installed on Mapledurham paths 292/1, 292/5 and 295/6 at the following grid references:

Gate 1	SU 6937 7638
Gate 2	SU 6822 7668
Gate 3	SU 6731 7682
Gate 4	SU 6726 7675
Gate 5	SU 6709 7816

Photographs of gate installations can be seen in Appendix 1.

## 4. Other work

Whilst on the Mapledurham Estate, advantage was taken to assess other aspects of the ease of use of the Public Footpaths (not part of the original gates plan) and following consultation with the OCC Field Officer, and with the Estate's permission, the following additional work was included:

Ten new waymark posts (short signposts) were installed to help keep walkers on the correct

## 5. Volunteer time

All installation and clearance work was carried out by Chiltern Society volunteers who worked without payment or expenses, and met their own travelling costs.

Gates installed in place of stiles = 5  
Onsite labour = 177 man-hours

(Note nearly as much time again was required in detail planning and off-site preparation work.)

Waymark posts installed = 10  
Onsite labour = 28 man-hours

Total length of paths cleared = approx 800m  
Onsite labour = 29 man-hours

Total onsite volunteer time spent on this project = 234 man-hours.

All work was done in accordance with OCC and British Standard guidelines.

## 6. Finance

The Project cost of £1,326 (including VAT) was funded by the Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE). This was done under ENTRUST number 137171.014 'Mapledurham stile free circular walk' with landfill tax credits from Grundon Waste Management.

Additional 10% third party funding was provided by Oxfordshire County Council.

## 7. Publicity

All gates were fitted with a pair of plaques (one on each side) acknowledging the contributions from TOE and OCC (sample disc: see Appendix 3).

Notices of the stile-free walk have been sent to:  
Reading Association for the Blind  
Sonning Common Health Walks  
Caversham & District Residents Association  
Reading Tourist Information Centre  
Walking website: [www.walkinginberks.co.uk](http://www.walkinginberks.co.uk)

paths, and a certain amount of clearance of blocked or partially blocked paths was undertaken.

The most extensive clearance work was on bridleway 292/15, Jackson's Lane, which occupied a team of eight people and involved the use of a pair of chainsaws to clear fallen trees.



Mapledurham Gate #1 completed

The revenue expenses of the volunteers were covered by Oxford County Council Countryside Service.

Principal equipment used by the group (tools trailer, chainsaw, power path clearing machines, power drills, etc) had been funded prior to this project by the Sustainable Development Fund of the Chilterns Conservation Board.

A map and useful information about the stile-free circular walk around the Estate has been produced by the Chiltern Conservation Board and is downloadable as a PDF file from their web site under Stile-Free walks.

Quick link to the downloadable map:  
<http://tinyurl.com/bl9w24z>

The CCB map can also be seen in Appendix 2.

## 8. Acknowledgements & thanks

The Chiltern Society greatly appreciates the support and help given by:

- Mr Jack Eyston, Mapledurham Estate
- OCC Countryside Service
- The Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment
- Grundon Waste Management Ltd
- The Chilterns Conservation Board

## 10. Links:

Chiltern Society: [www.chilternsociety.org.uk](http://www.chilternsociety.org.uk)

Chilterns Conservation Board: [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org)

Mapledurham House: [www.mapledurham.co.uk](http://www.mapledurham.co.uk)

OCC Countryside Service:  
[www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/countryside-service](http://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/content/countryside-service)

Trust for Oxfordshire's Environment (TOE):  
[www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk](http://www.trustforoxfordshire.org.uk)

## 11. Contact:

For enquiries about the Mapledurham Project or other Chiltern Society kissing gate projects in the Oxfordshire Chilterns, contact:

Alan Futter, Area Secretary 8B Rights of Way Group, Chiltern Society.

Email: [alan.futter@sky.com](mailto:alan.futter@sky.com)

tel: 0118 954 3266

For information about the work of the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers, including volunteering, contact:

Howard Dell, Facilitator SCMPV, Chiltern Society.

email: [info@dell.myzen.co.uk](mailto:info@dell.myzen.co.uk)

tel: 01494 764149



Mapledurham Estate: arable field with Park Wood beyond

Installed 11 January 2012  
Path 292/6  
Grid ref SU 6937 7638



Installed 8 February 2012  
Path 292/5  
Grid ref SU 6822 7668



Installed 24 March 2012  
Path 292/5  
Grid ref SU 6726 7675



Installed 24 March 2012  
Path 292/5  
Grid ref SU 6731 7682



Installed 9 May 2012  
Path 292/1  
Grid ref SU 6709 7816



**Appendix 1: 'Before and After' photographs of the five gate installations**

# Caversham Heights to Mapledurham: Stile-free Walk

A varied walk through rolling Chilterns countryside and the Mapledurham estate. The route takes you through woodlands and open countryside with some wonderful views over the River Thames. Mapledurham House and Watermill are situated by the River Thames and open to the public at certain times, a great place to stop for a cream tea.

**Distance:** 4.1 miles

**Start:** There is parking **P** at the Mapledurham playing fields just off the Woodcote Road (A4074).

**Access Information:** This is an undulating walk with some good views. There is a steep section which can be slippery at times through Park Wood just before you arrive at the meadow **5**.

**Refreshments:** Walkers can use **Mapledurham House's** tea room and access the river by payment of the entrance fee to the gardens (currently £1). However, this may not be possible if there is a major event in progress - check their Events Diary. Tel 0118 9723350 or visit [www.mapledurham.co.uk](http://www.mapledurham.co.uk)  
**The Pack Saddle** bar and restaurant at Chazey Heath, Tel 0118 9463000  
[www.thepacksaddle.com](http://www.thepacksaddle.com)

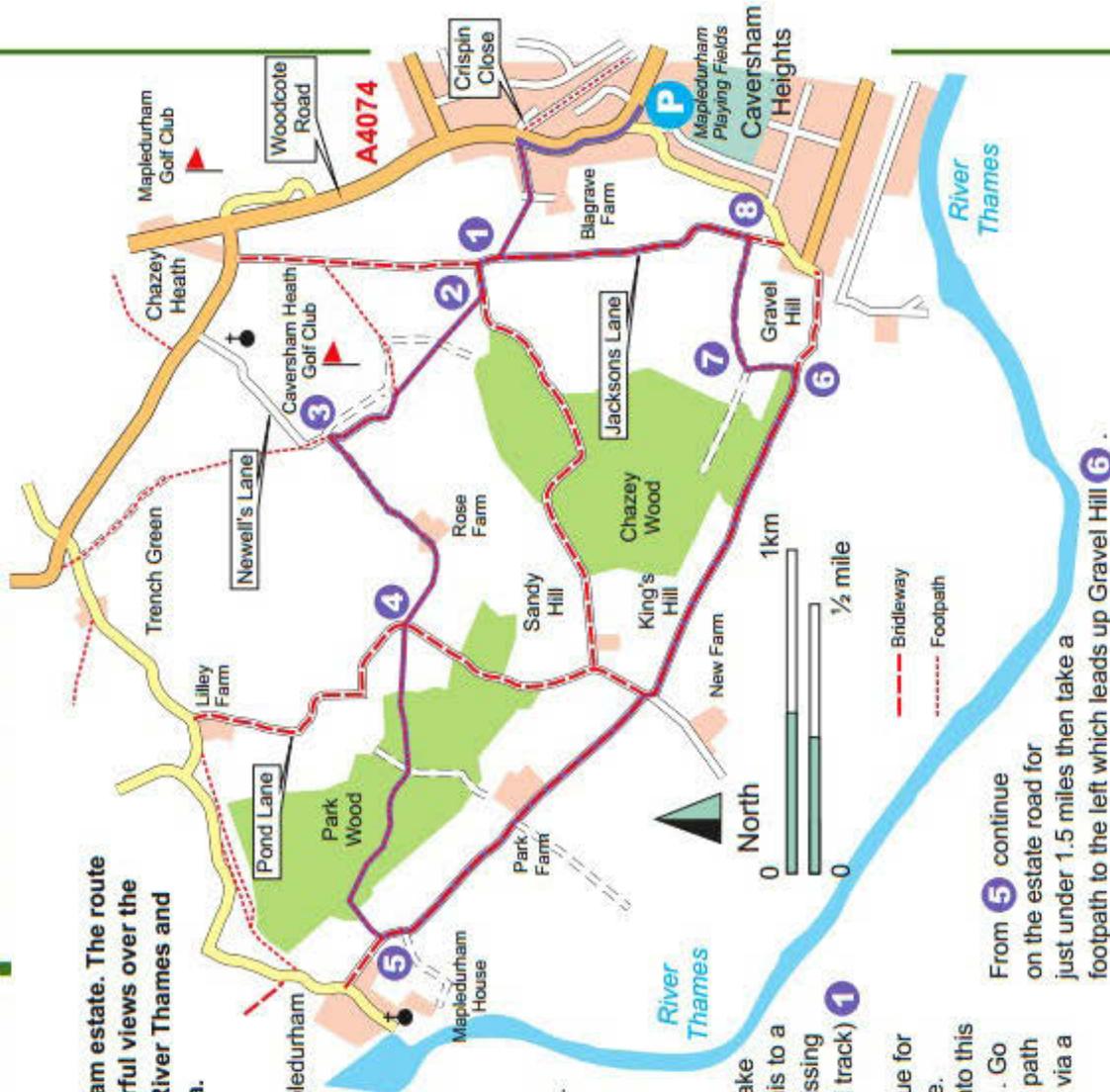
**Route:** Exit from the Playing Fields, turn left along the Woodcote Road and take the third turning left along the track opposite Crispin Close. Continue along this to a kissing gate at the edge of the golf course. Walk across the field to another kissing gate, just after the kissing gate turn right into Jackson's Lane (an unsurfaced track) **1**

Walk along this for about 100 yards then turn left onto an estate road. Continue for 100 yards and take a footpath to the right **2** along the side of the golf course. Continue down and up a bit until a footpath is reached on the left. Turn left onto this path **3** and continue past Rose Farm until a junction of roads is reached **4**. Go through the kissing gate directly opposite and continue straight ahead on this path through Park Wood, past the Pan statue, down the hill and across a meadow via a couple of kissing gates.

When you reach the estate road at point **5**, you can either turn left to continue the walk, or to go to Mapledurham House, the Watermill and Church turn right and then shortly left. There is generally access to the Church but not the river when the House is closed.

From **5** continue on the estate road for just under 1.5 miles then take a footpath to the left which leads up Gravel Hill **6**.

Towards the top of the hill the path turns to the right **7**, follow this until Jackson's Lane brideway is reached. Turn left onto this brideway **8** and continue for just under half a mile, then take the footpath on the right back to Blagrave Farm and the Mapledurham Playing Fields.





**Acknowledgement plaque fixed to each gate**