ASTON TIRROLD & ASTON UPTHORPE: HISTORY & WALKABOUT. THE ASTONS HISTORY GROUP



This walkabout will help you explore the villages of Aston Upthorpe and Aston Tirrold, and give you an introduction to their history.

It is dedicated to Stephen Whitwell, who carried out much original research into the villages' history, and who published the first edition of this guide in 1977.

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A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO OUR VILLAGES (see page 12 for map with key locations).

The twin villages of Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe are "spring line" villages, where streams and springs emerge from the chalk water table of the Berkshire Downs and eventually join the Thames further downstream. These waters create rich agricultural land around our villages, which together with the shelter of Blewburton Hill to the west and the Downs to the south, provided an advantageous setting for our villages to develop and prosper.

Aston Upthorpe

The name Aston came from the Saxon word Estune, or Eastune, and means "to the east of" - while "Upthorpe" (also a Saxon word) means "higher settlement". During the Saxon period we find Aston Upthorpe, the older of the two villages, under the Hundred of Reading while Aston Tirrold came under the Hundred of Moreton. A charter granted by King Edgar in 964 defined the boundaries of "Estune" as "10 mansae of land given to his wife Queen Elfthryth", and the detailed description seems to match closely the modern parish boundaries.

Aston Tirrold

The name "Tirrold" is believed to derive from the Norman name "Thorold". In 1166 the Earl of Warwick is recorded as returning a knight's "fee" held by Nicholas son of Torold, Lord of Aston, and it is tempting to link this Torold with a figure named as Turold in the Bayeux tapestry. We know William the Conqueror made several journeys within a few miles of these villages. Perhaps Turold rode in his retinue, took a liking to the place, and asked for the holding as a reward for his support of William.

ASTONS CHURCHES

For villages the combined size of Aston Tirrold and Aston Upthorpe it is unusual that we have three churches, but there was a strong nonconformist community in the villages in the 18th century which led to the building of a chapel in Spring Lane in 1728.

The larger, and probably older, of the two medieval village churches is **St Michael and All Angels** in Aston Street. There is evidence of a Saxon doorway, but most of the church dates from the Norman period. It is listed in the Domesday survey of 1066, and in 1080 was granted to Preaux Abbey by William 1. It was extensively modernised in the late Victorian period by the incumbent rector Sir John Leigh Hoskyns, who added the north aisle and removed the medieval box pews, wall paintings and wooden gallery. Despite losing these medieval attractions St Michael's remains a most attractive church.

As was common with many rural churches the stipend of St Michael's was in the gift of Magdalen College, Oxford, and its tithes were traditionally paid to an absentee rector with the management of the church and its services left to a poorly paid curate. In 1845 Sir John Leigh Hoskyns became the first truly resident clergyman. He found the condition of St. Michael's so poor that there was "moss growing on the altar". He was rector for sixty years and had a great influence on village life, including the establishment in 1847 of the National School in Aston Street.

The church of **All Saints'** in Thorpe Street, Aston Upthorpe, is a delightful rustic looking building with a steeple added in the late Victorian period. It has a 14th century roof, a 15th century west window, and a wooden porch probably dating from the early 17th century. Inside, on the north and south doorways, are medieval corbel heads of a king and bishop. The Victorian pews have 15th century bench ends, and some traceried panelling has also been retained.



Although there is no obvious sign of Saxon architecture, the Saxon battle of Ashdown, or Ascesdune, is closely associated with this site, and is now marked on most recent battlefield maps. The battle took place on January 8th 871 when the armies of King Ethelred and his younger brother Alfred (later King Alfred the Great) fought the Danes and won a great victory. The Saxon chronicles record that Ethelred took mass "in a tent" before the battle, and it is thought that this may have been on or near the site of the present All Saints' church.

All Saints' was, until the 19th century, a chapel-of-ease attached to Blewbury, and later Upton, parishes, with services being carried out by a local curate rather than the rector. This arrangement was still in place in 1845 when Reverand Sir John Leigh Hoskyns became rector of Aston Tirrold.

The two Astons churches were later joined together into one benefice, while today they are part of a much larger Churn Benefice, incorporating neighbouring villages.



The nonconformist **Meeting House** in Spring Lane (now called the United Reformed Church) was built in 1728. During the 17th century the villages were split by a growing disaffection within the established church. One of the villages' main landowners at that time, John Fuller, greatly disapproved of the licentious, drunken behaviour of the priest in Blewbury, and the practice of absentee rectors in the Astons. He rode all the way to Salisbury to beg the Bishop to intervene, but getting no joy he and his family became "dissenters". He allowed two clergymen dispossessed under the Act of Uniformity (1662) to hold services in his barn in Aston - probably the large

black barn attached to Manor Barn in Aston Street. In 1728 his sons Richard and Joseph gave land in Spring Lane for a Meeting House - one of the oldest of its kind in the country and well worth a visit. In 1705 they allowed one of their houses in Baker Street to be used as the manse; a role which continued until the 1970s. When it was sold off a new manse was built further along Baker Street and the community remains strong to this day.

EDUCATION IN THE ASTONS

Education for well off families in the villages was available through private tutors or "dame schools", but in the mid 19th century two schools were opened for the children of the farming community. Again the religious divisions in the villages were felt, with the owner of Manor Farm supporting the newly built Anglican National school in Aston Street, while the Slades of Thorpe Farm insisted the children of their workers attended the "dissenting" British School in Spring Lane.

The British School lacked the financial resources of the National School (which was part funded by the state) and eventually closed in 1906. The National School closed in 1971 when its remaining pupils were transferred to South Moreton Primary School, doubling the school population overnight. Temporary buildings were installed, which remained for nearly thirty years.

The diocesan divisions were still in effect at the time of the closure, and Oxfordshire County Council, as late as 1982, were recommending families in Aston Upthorpe to attend Blewbury School!

FARMING IN THE ASTONS

In the 18th century the Astons sustained three large (Manor, Copstyle and Thorpe), plus several smaller, farms and agriculture was the main source of employment. The main landowning families were the Fullers and the Slades, but in the 19th century both were badly affected by a long lasting agricultural depression.

By 1898 the Fullers were bankrupt and the farm was finally sold out of the family in 1900. The estates were bought by Mr J.F.K Cross - the younger son of a cotton industrialist from Bolton. He invested heavily in new machinery and brought in many new ways of farming, not all of them fully appreciated by the residents of the Astons.

In 1905 he built Carrimers Farm - one of the earliest examples in England of a modern Downland farm - allowing him to house his workers' families and stable the horses needed for working the fields up on the Downs. Until Carrimers was built the horses were stabled at Copstyle Farm and previously had a long, slippery and dangerous climb from the village. The last of the work horses used for pulling the old reaper and binder machinery were pensioned off in the early 1950s when tractors and combine harvesters replaced them.

The Slades occupied Thorpe Farm for over three centuries, but again their tenure ended as the 20th century began.

Modern agricultural methods have had an effect on the flora and fauna of this area, but modern farming has become more sensitive to these issues, and there are still quiet, unspoilt valleys and hills where beautiful native plants can be found for those who know where to look.

We no longer have a working farm based in the village, but the farmhouses, barns and workers' cottages remain to tell the villages' story.

THE WALKABOUT GUIDE

It is almost impossible to guide you around Aston Upthorpe and Aston Tirrold without some doubling back on the route. These are confusing villages, with roads that run in circles that are often crossed by footpaths and "lanes".

Please use the directions in this guide along with the map on the back page. The map is printed with

numbers to help you locate certain key sites along the way. Those numbers are repeated in the text so you can relate your position to that house or location. Not every house or place mentioned in the text however has been given a number.

START FROM THE VILLAGE HALL (1). The Village Hall stands on land purchased by public subscription in 1945. The first hall was a rented Nissen hut, but in 1964 a village resident, Paulise Lugg, built the present hall. She and her husband Herbert Lugg founded The Stockwell Players (to become the Blewbury Players after their deaths),



which held outdoor productions of Shakespearian plays and they wanted to have somewhere indoors to rehearse. (See also the section on Stockwells, in Thorpe Street.)

Directly opposite the Hall is **THE SMITHY**. At one time in the past the section between the barn and the house fell down leaving a gap for many years. Like many houses in the village it was originally several cottages, but it became a single dwelling after major renovation works in the 1990s.

Turn left towards **ALL SAINTS'** (2). The plastered nave is revealed as Norman by the small lancet window on the north side. The wooden porch is 17th century. The chancel and bell tower are Victorian and were built by P.C. Hardwick in 1859-60. It has a 14th century roof, corbels representing a king and a bishop, and several old bench ends. Inside the door, straight in front of you, is an area of medieval painted plaster probably dating from the 15th century and uncovered during renovation work in the late 20th century. The church would probably have been painted extensively over the interior walls, as wall paintings helped explain the scriptures to the mainly illiterate congregation of the day. The south chancel window shows St. Birinus, a local Saxon saint and first Bishop of Dorchester. Opposite the entrance as you go in is a modern wooden sculpture by Judy Massingham of the Madonna and Child with two children.

As you leave All Saints', turn left and left again up the small rough lane beside **THORPE FARM**. This fine farmhouse was probably built by the Slade family, who occupied it from 1521 to 1912. It includes a huge 16th century tithe barn within its grounds. There used to be another barn on the right which was called the hay barn when still in use, This was latterly demolished and a new barn style building built in its place.

The original outbuildings and barns of Thorpe Farm on your left were converted to residential use in the 1970's. **THE GRANARY** and **OLD CHURCH BARN** are accessed from Thorpe Street; the third barn, **ROSE BARN**, is now accessed from Spring Lane. The Granary is a fine example of a corn storage barn raised on staddle stones.

(On the right just behind Thorpe Farm House you will see the beginning of an old track which used to run to the beginning of Hagbourne Road, but which is now blocked).

The main lane continues past the converted barns and was once part of the main trackway from Cholsey to Blewbury and would have been a muddy nightmare for travellers during the winter months.

Walk up this lane past the large tithe barn on your right until it bends round to the left. Instead of following the road to the left, go up a flight of rough cut steps in front of you and through into a field at the top of the bank (Picks Field). You will see in front of you and away into the distance a trackway cut into the slope of the hill. It was once wide enough for carriages and carts. You can still walk the well worn lane across the field until you reach a stile on the left which takes you back onto the track alongside Blewburton Hill, and on down into Blewbury.

Unless you wish to continue to Blewbury, retrace your steps back to All Saints Church, then carry straight on, with the red brick wall of Thorpe Farm on your left and an open area on your right. (This

corner originally belonged to Thorpe Farm, but became part of The Smithy's grounds at the beginning of the 21st century).

Further along on your right is the **OLD BOOT HOUSE**, a very popular village pub until its closure in 1992 (called then The Boot). Its main clientele were the jockeys and employees of the various stables in the villages - in the 1960s there were four separate equestrian establishments.

Next on your right is **STOCKWELLS COTTAGE**, partly 16th century. Its north end was a shop until mid way through the 20th century. After this is a converted barn called Oakwood barn (originally Stockwell barn). Opposite is **OLD SARUM COTTAGE**, late 17th century, two cottages combined into one in 1984. The next house on the left is **MYRTLE COTTAGE** - thatched, with brick infill - also 17th century.

Further on on the right is **STOCKWELLS**, set back down a driveway - once three, or even four, cottages of varying ages, the oldest part being probably 16th century. Here, between 1935 and 1973 the owner, Mrs Paulise Lugg put on annual productions of Shakespearean plays in her garden. She also owned nearby Edlins, which housed her historic costume collection (now housed at the National Trust's Killerton House in Devon). The tradition of open air Shakespearean plays is now carried on by The Blewbury Players.

You will now come to the junction of Thorpe Street with The Hagbourne Road. At this junction on the left is a semi-detached house built by John Morris (his initials JM and the date 1912 are on the gable) who converted part of the then farmyard into the first racing stables in the village.

These stables were later taken over by Frank Cundell, a very successful trainer of the 1960s and 1970s, and thereafter by a series of owners until their eventual closure in 2004. The site, originally a part of Thorpe Farm and dotted with old barns in the last century; was eventually sold off separately and new houses erected in 2014.

On the left is a 17th century thatched cottage - now called **SLADE FARMHOUSE**, because of its links to Thorpe Farm - at one time part of the racing stables. Up this road on your left, but not visible from the road, is **BLEWBURTON HALL**.

The last remaining equestrian establishment in the village is now **UPTHORPE STUD**, occupying much of the land between the Hagbourne Road and South Moreton.

(In the 1980's racing of a different nature came to the villages with Frank Williams and Patrick Head of Grand Prix Formula One fame living in The Rectory, Aston Street and Popes Farm respectively).

Walk a short way up Hagbourne Road. To your right is a brick Victorian cottage once called **ACACIA COTTAGE**, but renamed **LANGFORD COTTAGE** when its then owner moved into a "new " Acacia Cottage, seen just to its left.

Turn around and retrace your steps back to the junction of Thorpe Street with Hagbourne Road. Now take the road to the left. On the corner here is (3) EDLINS - a pretty William and Mary house. This house was built on the site of an older cottage, part of which remains as the present kitchen. Some trace of the older narrower windows can be seen in the brickwork.

In the census for 1841 this house is listed as **HEADLANDS**. Is the modern name EDLINS a version of how locals said Headlands? Census information was, in the main, given in oral replies to the census collector who interviewed each householder.

Next door to Edlins on the left are two cottages **EDLIN COTTAGES** that were built in 1964 on the site of an old barn and cottage.

Next on the left is **ORCHARD HOUSE** built in 1910 for Alec Morris, brother of Major John Morris. It was later owned by William Piggot Brown who at one time owned Upthorpe Stud, Upthorpe Farm, The White House, and the stables on Thorpe Street. The estate was broken up in the late 1970s.

To the right is **MEADS**, built around 1946, and originally a bungalow. On the same side and just beyond on the corner of Thorpe Street and Fullers Road is **OLD PYLES** - mainly 16th century and

17th century. It was once owned by Tracy Reed, daughter of Carole Reed, director of "The Third Man". Bill Simpson of Dr Finley's Casebook fame also lived there at this time.

Facing you across Fullers Road is **CROFT HOUSE**, built about 1800 by one of the Slade family, who also owned Hagbourne Mill where blotting paper was first made by accident when a paper making process went awry. There is an attached cottage to the right of the front door.

Originally the whole of the south side of The Croft was orchard land and belonged to Croft House, The detached houses along that side of the road were built in the 1970s.

On your left as you face Croft House is **THE WHITE HOUSE**, an enlarged 18th century house. In a map and photo of the 1890s another wing can be seen in what is now its front garden, and also a cottage linking the main house and the barn. By 1910, when Orchard House was built, this wing had disappeared. Possibly lost in a fire, and the cottage's reef was reject to

disappeared – possibly lost in a fire – and the cottage's roof was raised to give a single roof height. Most of the garden was sold to the Morris family and is now part of Orchard House's grounds.

On the corner of The Croft and Moreton Road is **CROFT CORNER**, a range of 18th and 19th century buildings arranged around an enclosed courtyard. A 1930's photo in the History Group's archive shows it as a village shop.



Turn left and proceed up Moreton Road - the parish boundary between Aston Upthorpe and Aston Tirrold runs down the middle of the road. (Moreton Road was called Lower End in the 19th century.) To your left past the end of The White House is the rear entrance to **ORCHARD HOUSE**.

A little way further up on your left is the **RED HOUSE**. Its exterior appears Georgian or Victorian, but inside there is evidence of a much older dwelling with timber beams dating from C16 and C17. It was once owned by the village doctor who would have delivered many of the local babies and who went by the wonderful name of Dr Breach. Sir Richard Abercrombie, the distinguished town planner, lived there after the Second World War.

Opposite is **UPTHORPE FARM** (though it is in fact in Aston Tirrold) - no longer a working farm - which used to be called Lower Ham Farm. Two large 18th century barns adjoin the farmhouse.

Along the south side of Moreton Road are a range of what were previously farmworkers' cottages - the earliest built in 1882. On the left hand side of Moreton Road there used to be a number of thatched farm labourers' cottages.

Turn around and walk back the way you came. Cross over the junction of The Croft with Thorpe Street, and continue straight along Fullers Road.

On your left, adjoining Croft House is **SUGGETS**, an old cottage of 16th century origin. Originally two cottages, it has two inglenook fireplaces. It once housed the village cobbler, and when the old bread oven was uncovered in the 1990s a number of lasts and shoe leathers were found inside. Suggets at one time housed a village shop in its single storey north wing.

On your left beyond the cedar bungalow is the substantial 17th century **POPES FARM**, named after a village family. From the 1930s through to the 1970s it was a very successful racing stables, managed by Frank Cundell.

The **CHEQUERS GARAGE** on your left just before the pub, was originally housed in part of an old barn. It was replaced by the current garage in the 1960s.

THE CHEQUERS INN (4) to your left is well worth a visit if you have time, a pleasant country pub (18th century) with excellent food.

Standing with the Chequers on your left, you will see **CROSSWAYS** - a timber framed 17th century house with tiled roof, previously thatched. Note there is another CROSSWAYS in Aston Street in Aston Tirrold.

You are now at the crossroads of Baker Street, Fullers Road, Thorpe Street and Spring Lane with the Chequers Inn on your left.

Continue straight on across this junction up Spring Lane, past the War Memorial. On your left are two houses built in the 1980s (one accessed from Baker Street) on a piece of land called Baggs Patch. This once housed the village stocks and stray animal pound. Dirt and muck scraped off the roads was stored here and auctioned once every three years.

On your right are two pretty Victorian cottages built for farm workers, now extended. Note the attractive design in the brick work which is a very traditional local style for the area, and can be seen on other houses around the village.

Further along on your left is **THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE**, the site of the British School mentioned in the introduction to this "Walkabout". This school was started in 1827 - although not in this building by the Presbyterian minister at that time, the Reverend George Marris. In about 1840 his pupils wrote a short history of the village which gives us a delightful insight into village life at that time. The teacher's house attached to the original school buildings was later doubled in size (as was the schoolmaster's house at the National School in Aston Street). After its closure in 1907 the school continued in use as the Chapel's meeting room, but the teacher's house was rented out to a local family. The property was eventually sold in 1971 – as was the Manse in Baker Street - and the funds used to build a new hall for the chapel - now called The Centre for Reflection. (It is thought that a stream to the right of the house, now culverted, gave rise to the name of Spring Lane.)

Carry on up Spring Lane until you reach the **(5) UNITED REFORMED CHURCH (URC)** on your left. This chapel, built in 1728, is of grey brick with red dressings and a double hipped roof. In the 1860s the twin porches were added, one of the galleries removed and the pulpit moved from the west wall to the east. At the end of the 20th century oil lamps and candle holders were re-installed recreating much of the original atmosphere. Sometime between 1886 and 1930 the old diamond pane glass was replaced with the plainer style you see today. The chapel is usually locked, but if it is open please go inside and take a look around. At the rear of the chapel is the **CENTRE FOR REFLECTION.**

In the graveyard is a tomb dedicated to a veteran of the Battle of Waterloo - James Pope. He and his wife Elizabeth, who accompanied him to the wars, returned to live in the village after his fighting days were over. He built and lived in a cottage, no longer standing, called Waterloo Cottage.

Carry on past the United Reformed Church and round the right-hand bend, with a high brick wall on your left. Carry on until you come to a gateway on your left where you will glimpse **COPSE STYLE FARM HOUSE**. It is an imposing 17th century house with seven bays of brick with a tiled roof, with a beautiful pond and spring to the front of the house. Further round the bend are a range of old stables and outhouses.

Turn around and make your way back past Copse Style Farm keeping the brick wall on your right. With the chapel car park to your left you will see in front of you, where the brick wall ends, the start of a footpath - known as The Lanes. Continue along this footpath until it meets Baker Street. Go straight

across the road and through a set of white barriers, then continue down the footpath (still part of The Lanes). This will lead you to Rectory Lane, once called Mill Lane.

To your right you will see the rear of a thatched cottage - **LAVENDERS**, probably 16th century. Originally two farm cottages, it became one property in the 20th century and was extended in 1923 and again in 2009. You can just see its *privy* (outside toilet) behind the house.



To your left is a footpath leading into the churchyard of St Michael's, with a glimpse of the garden and outhouses to the rear of **ASTON MANOR**. Originally Rectory Lane ran through the Manor grounds to link up with The Croft, but just before the First World War the new owner of the Manor (Mr Cross) applied to change the route and create a new footpath away from his grounds, making Rectory Lane the quiet cul-de-sac it is today.

Go straight across the end of Rectory Lane up the path to the church with the wall of the Manor on your left. You will now emerge into the grounds of St Michael's churchyard, with the wall of the Rectory to your right. Follow the path keeping the front entrance of the church on your left. Do go in and look around if the church is open.

SAINT MICHAEL'S CHURCH (6) is thought to be late Saxon in origin but now of mainly Norman construction, with a perpendicular west tower. The church was much "restored" in the 19th century by the rector, Sir John Leigh Hoskyns, who removed medieval wall paintings, carved galleries and box pews, while adding a new north aisle. Such restoration was common during the Victorian period.

Sir John also pulled down the old 16th century parsonage and barns adjoining the churchyard and in 1846 built a new rectory, now called The Old Rectory. You can see this to your right as you pass through the churchyard.

Follow the pathway through the churchyard and down the steps into Aston Street. Turn left and follow the road slightly downhill keeping the church on your left.

On your left, past the end of the churchyard wall, you will see the drive of **ASTON MANOR** - a handsome brick house built about 1700 with seven bays and a shell hood over the central door. We do not know who built it but the Fuller family lived there for 200 years. It was probably not called The Manor until the 20th century - in earlier censuses it is called Aston Farm.



This property was one of the Fuller farms sold to Mr Cross in 1900. Soon after the First World War Mr Cross doubled the size of the house at the back, and across the road built a dairy building and coach house. This latter housed the huge batteries that provided electricity to the Manor House – the first such in the village. The dairy building was demolished in the 1980s.

At the front of the Manor Mr Cross created an artificial pond (now dry) by diverting the stream. This stream once powered a grist mill in Mill Lane, now Rectory Lane.

The old tithe barn on the left, which you will see just beyond the Manor, is called **MANOR BARN** but is much older than the Manor itself. There is another barn attached to the rear which used to be called the Play Barn, where Mrs Cross would hold parties for the village school children. It is believed that this may have been the barn where the first dissenter meetings were held in the village. The grounds include a grain barn raised on straddle stones.

Beyond the Manor Barn on your left is a footpath that crosses the corner from Aston Street into the end of The Croft. This is the public right of way created by Mr Cross to divert public access across his land. Aston Street continues down a slight hill and then, as it crosses a stream, becomes The Croft.

Just before the stream you will pass on your right a sequence of houses of varying styles. These were built in the 1970s originally as 'Cotswold' style bungalows, but have gradually been extended and re-styled, and in one case demolished and a modernist house built. It is suggested you turn around here and follow Aston Street back up the other side, keeping the church on your right.

On your left you will see **RACES FARM**, converted from the Manor's coach house into offices in the 1990s, and more recently into two extremely attractive residential units (2013).

Past Races Farm on your left you will come to **MANOR FARM HOUSE**. It was built to house the farm manager in Mr Cross' days and was designed and built in 1934 by Williams Clough-Ellis of Portmerion fame - our villages' second famous 20th century architect! It originally had a central drive and a classically symmetrical design, and was known throughout the village as "the Doll's House".

On your right is **THE OLD RECTORY**. In 1914 the then Prince of Wales (later Edward VIII, then the Duke of Windsor after his abdication) spent a night "encamped" in the Parish Room at the Rectory with other members of Magdalen College Officers Training Corps. This is the only recorded visit of royalty to Aston Tirrold.

Either side of the Rectory driveway are two 20th century houses, **TANGLEWOOD** and **ARMADALE**. By the early 1960s the Rectory was in dire need of restoration and the church authorities decided to sell off two plots of adjacent land to raise the money needed to refurbish it. The sales went ahead but not the refurbishment, and in 1977 the Rectory itself was sold off.

Opposite the first of the two newer properties you will see **1 and 2 ASTON STREET**. The centre part of these cottages is early 17th century and is perhaps the remainder of an older more substantial building. The north end wall collapsed during building works in 1972, and the high repair costs meant that the owner's plan to unite them into a single cottage remained unfulfilled.

Beyond these houses on the left is one of the few surviving cob walls in the village. It runs in front of two attached 18th century cottages **PEAR TREE COTTAGE** and **JERVIS COTTAGE** - both extended in the late 20th century. Pear Tree Cottage has an outbuilding which once housed the laundry for The Manor.

Next to these cottages and behind a brick wall on your left is **CHESTNUTS**. Extended in the latter part of the 20th century, it dates in parts from 16th century and retains many original features.

Beyond Chestnuts, to the left down a driveway is **THE STUDIO**, built in 1906 by Maria Wyatt as an art studio, with a glass roof on the north side. It is now a separate house and much enlarged. The Studio boasts a real "ghost" – a woman in a long grey dress - seen by several people over the years and believed possibly to be Maria Wyatt. She is buried in the Presbyterian graveyard, with the inscription "She died 3 May 1906 at The Chestnuts, Aston Tirrold, where she had passed the last thirty eight years of her life"

Opposite Chestnuts and on the corner of Rectory Lane and Aston Street is **(7) CROSSWAYS**, with a Georgian façade but with much evidence of an older 15th or 16th century cottage within.

Continue past the junction of Rectory Lane and Aston Street and continue up Aston Street heading south. On the right past Crossways, and set back from the road, is the attractive thatched cottage **TWITTEN**, recently revealed as a medieval *hall house* and therefore much older than previously thought.

To the left is **APPLETREE COTTAGE**, an ex tied cottage of 17th century origin, which had a thatched roof until its replacement by tile after WW2. It has been significantly increased in size in recent years.

Beyond Appletree Cottage on your left is **No 9 ASTON STREET** - one of the last houses in this street to be occupied as a tied cottage. Tom Powell was one of the last tenants living in an agricultural tied cottage in the village. After his death it was sold and sympathetically extended — the weather boarded "barn" to the right of the building being built in the late 1990s. Note the original shutters still in place on the front of the house.

Next on the left is **ABBEY THORN COTTAGE** - probably late 16th century. It was restored and extended in the 1970s.

Opposite is **(8) THE OLD SCHOOL HOUSE**, a National School built in 1847 by the Rev. Sir John Leigh Hoskyns. An attached schoolmaster's house can be seen to one side. An infant's class was added in 1866 and the Gothic porch to the front in 1910. It was closed in 1971 when the children were sent to South Moreton School.



In the Village Plan of 1969, an area to the left of the school (site of an old thatched cottage) was "set aside" for possible school expansion. After the school was closed this land was sold and a new home built, **HEATHERALS**.

On your left is the 17th century **BLACKSMITHS COTTAGE**. It was a working forge up until the First World War, and possibly for odd jobs after that. The wooden clad outbuildings beyond still house a complete working forge with fireplace, chimney and bellows all in place.

Next on your left is **SKIRMERS**, another 17th century house with an attractive tile hung gable end, with substantial 20th century additions to the north and east ends.

Opposite is **(9) THE CLOSE**, a series of small housing units designed originally for older village residents. It was built in the 1950s with more units being added in the 1970s to form a lovely three sided site.

Next on your left is a timber framed cottage called **(10) TIRROLD HOUSE** (once called The Cottage). English Heritage was consulted when restoration work was being planned for what was thought to be a typical ex tied farm cottage of 17th century origin. In fact the end facing onto the street was found to date from 1286 and is believed to be one of the oldest examples of a continuously inhabited house in Europe (note the new carvings now included in the original window). The other part of this house, running parallel with the road, may have been built on the site of the old Hall and is of 16th century origin.

Beyond and to your left is another small section of cob wall and behind it **FREELANDS**, a house of 20th century origin that once housed The Toro Coffee Company, a distribution company for Kenyan coffee. Past Freelands is **FILBERTS COTTAGE**, a 21st century recreation of an older Filberts Cottage which at one time housed the laundry for Filberts - a Victorian photo of the cottage shows it with a particularly tall chimney.

Continue up Aston Street to the junction with Baker Street, where there is a small grassed triangle.

For safety walk in single file round this corner keeping the brick wall to your left. Note the unusual white gate set into the garden wall of Filberts - this is listed in its own right.

Follow the path round to your left under the chestnut trees. This is known as the Lollingdon Track where you will see **FILBERTS** on your left. Filberts has a Georgian facade but dates from around 1745. In the 1970s a single storey extension was added to the left, which in turn had a second storey added at the beginning of the 21st century.



The track leading past Filberts eventually leads you to the moated **LOLLINGDON FARM** and then on to Cholsey. Lollingdon is a corruption of the Latin name Lulla and evidence of some Roman mining has been found on Lollingdon Hill.

Just beyond Lollingdon Farm there is archaeological evidence of the remains of several houses – perhaps a site of an abandoned medieval village or a larger community. The poet John Masefield lived at Lollingdon for several years and wrote "On Lollingdon Downs" while here.

Opposite Filberts is the five acre **ASTONS RECREATION GROUND** owned and managed by the parish councils. It was purchased in 1897 by public subscription in honour of Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee. Chestnuts and limes were planted to mark its boundaries. Since then it has hosted many a village event and is extensively used.

A new pavilion was built in 2009, replacing one built by the village football club in 1968, which in turn had replaced an earlier (thatched) pavilion which had burnt down "in mysterious circumstances" in 1967. The current pavilion was the last of several improvements to the grounds which culminated from a recreation survey carried out at the time of the Millennium, which included a new hard surface play area and a youth shelter.

It is believed the adventure playground dates originally from the 1953 Coronation celebrations, but it has been added to and improved on several occasions, the most recent being in 2013.

Turn back along the track until you come out onto the road once more. (For those who do not want to walk up Chalk Hill walk straight over the road and into Baker Street, leaving Aston Street on your right).

Alternatively, continue up Chalk Hill to where it meets the A417. The two farm cottages you will pass on your left were built by Mr Cross in 1911. At the top junction there is an 18th century cottage, much enlarged in the late 20th century.

There used to be a turnpike house at this junction, now demolished. The A417 was an early toll road constructed round about 1760 – appearing on the 1764 John Rocque topographical map of the area.

(The passing of the Turnpike Acts from the 1760s encouraged the building of better maintained roads for the coaching services from London to Bath and Bristol).

In a village history written originally in 1921, and now re-printed by the History Group, Lucy Fuller (the last Fuller to live in the village) recounts old tales of the sound of a ghostly coach and four heard racing along this road in the dead of night.

As you turn right and into Baker Street you will see on your right a row of six terraced houses called **DOWNS VIEW.** These were built in the 1960s and replaced a row of thatched cottages.

A bit further on the left is another of the old green lanes, this one leading to the back of Copse Style Farm. We suggest you walk about 20 yards up this track, which is also a bridleway.

On your right, you will see **FINCHES** - once a tenanted farm occupied by a family called Finch. It was included in the sale of property to Mr Cross in 1900. In the garden to the right of the house is an original privy, or outside toilet.

Turn around and walk back to Baker Street and turn left. Immediately on your left on the corner is **ROSE COTTAGE**, previously called The Old Post Office. For many years this was the Astons' post office. The weather boarded barn beyond was the shop and sorting office. Letters were delivered from Wallingford and sorted here by hand before being delivered around the village by bike. This continued up to the 1970s.

Opposite Rose Cottage are two houses built in the early 1970s. The right hand one was the new Manse for several years after the Old Manse was sold. Both of these houses were built on the site of another old thatched cottage long since demolished.



Further along on this side is **THE OLD BAKEHOUSE**, dating from the 17th century. It has a barn attached to one side. Next to The Old Bakehouse is **KEEPERS COTTAGE**, another house with 17th century origins, with a 19th century barn behind.

Opposite is a 1970s house, **LITTLE FINCHES**, named as such as it was built on land belonging to Finches Farm. This is the last house on this side for a while.

On the right as you go up Baker Street are a range of houses built between 1948 and 1988. One of these houses (now called the Old Post Office) used to be a post office and village shop - built for the postmistress by her father who was in the construction business. When she retired in 2006 the post office closed. In 2009 a postal "Outreach" service opened in the Village Hall. The successful opening ceremony led to the "Astons Cafe" being set up which continues to operate each week hosting a variety of community and social occasions.

Beyond the Old Post Office is **THE BALDONS**, an enlarged 17th century cottage.

Keep going straight along Baker Street and on your right you will note the open fields that form a delightful open area at the centre of the village. Although these are not common lands, they illustrate the importance of retaining the historic green open spaces which are characteristic of this Downland village. This space is divided into two paddocks - Manor Paddock which belongs to The Manor, and Miller's Field.

To your left here you will see the imposing **OLD MANSE (11)** - a 17th century brick and timber frame house of some size - originally called Alnwicks. In the 18th century it was once owned by the Fuller family, and was given by them to house the local Presbyterian ministers. It was sold in the 1970s when maintaining such a large house became financially unsustainable.

Adjoining The Old Manse is a house called **THE LANES**. Despite being linked, it has always been a separate house. Was it named after its position adjoining "The Lanes" that bisect the village, or after a previous owner? Certainly a family called Lane are known to have lived there in the past. In the latter part of the 19th century it was a cobblers and boot makers shop, and appears in photographs at that time as a rendered house. In recent years this rendering has been removed to expose the original beamed construction.

Beyond The Lanes is a C20 house, **PILGRIMS LODGE**, and next to that a converted barn - **THE BARN**. The Barn was originally in the grounds of **SPRINGFIELD HOUSE** (the Pilgrim's Lodge site was also part of Springfield House's grounds) and was converted to residential use in the 1970s.

SPRINGFIELD HOUSE, on your left beyond The Barn, is largely 18th century with earlier sections, and used to be one of several village racing stables. To the right of it is an attached cottage, and next to that another attached building - **THE COACH HOUSE.** To the right of this are two 20th century houses built on land that also belonging to Springfield House, known as Baggs Patch.

Follow the road round a left hand bend, taking care on the blind corner, until you reach the War Memorial on your left and The Chequers pub on your right.

You have now come to the crossroads in the middle of the village at the junction of Baker Street, Thorpe Street, Fuller Street and Spring Lane. Cross straight over the road into Thorpe Street and retrace your footsteps back to the Village Hall.

We hope you enjoyed your tour of the historic villages of Aston Upthorpe and Aston Tirrold.

List of sites referred to in the text of the Walkabout and marked on this map :

Village Hall
All Saints' Church
Edlins
Chequers Pub
United Reformed Church
St.Michael's Church
Crossways (Aston Tirrold)
The Old School House (Aston Street)
The Close
Tirrold House
The Old Manse

