

Stoke Row

Maharajah's Gift, Philanthropist's House



Maharajah's Well

Stoke Row stands out from many of its Oxfordshire neighbours for the simple reason that it's not particularly pretty. The pub and church tick the right boxes but the village's one unique attraction is a gift from the East.

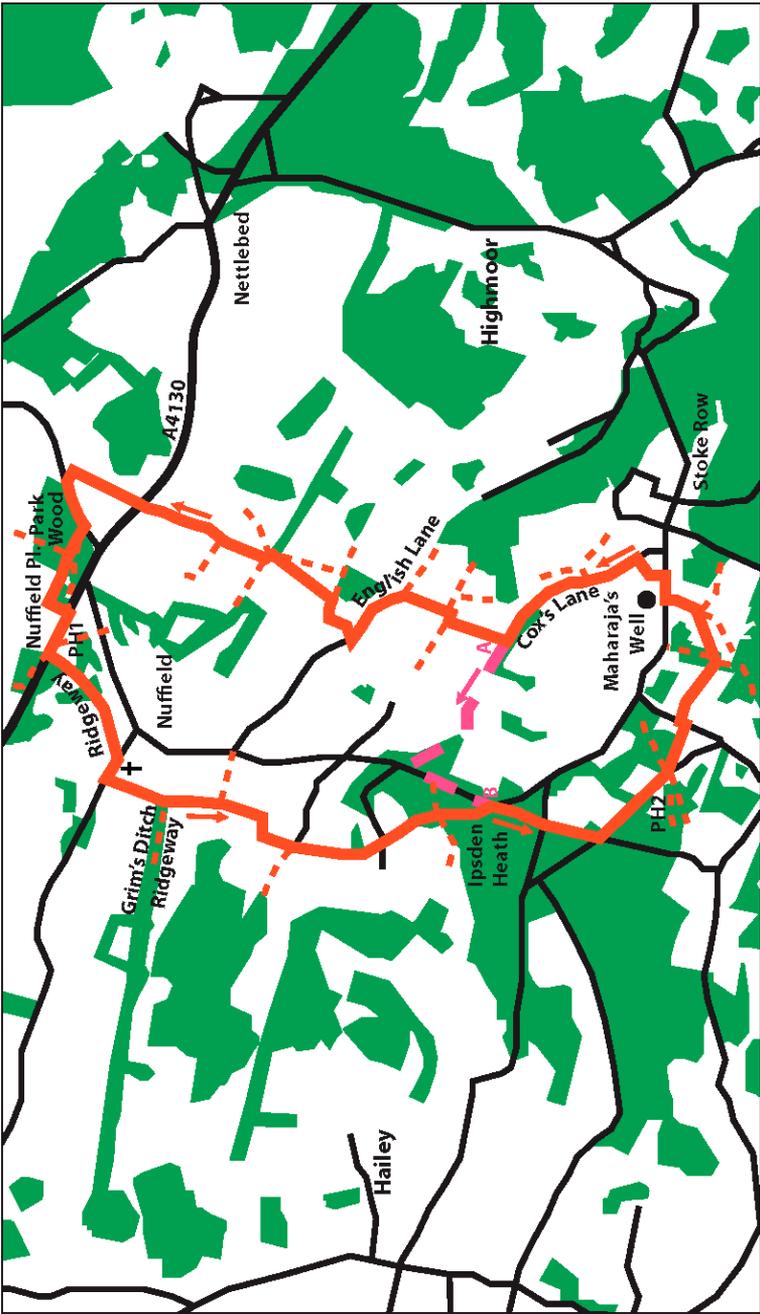


The Maharajah's Well was given to the villagers by the Maharajah of Benares, a friend of a local resident who lived and worked in India and who had sunk a well in Azimurgh to help the local community.

The maharajah returned the favour in 1863, donating the money for the construction of the 368ft deep well that served the population of Stoke Row until the Second World War. Adjacent to the well is a cherry

orchard that replicates the mango grove next to the well in India.

From the entrance to the well take the footpath between Well Cottage and the cherry orchard. At the end of the path turn left onto what is Cox's Lane.



When the tarmac ends just after Plum Tree House, follow the restricted byway $\frac{1}{4}$ right. After about 730 yds / 670 mtrs look out for a stile on your right. This is Point A.

Short Walk from Point A

For the short walk, do not turn right at Point A. Follow Cox's Lane, a pleasant journey until you reach a junk yard at Kit Lane. Pass the skips and turn left on the lane at the end of the track. Now walk 650 yds / 600 mtrs to Point B.

For the long walk, turn right over the stile (if you get to a crossing farm track, you have missed the stile and gone too far) and then uphill to another, then follow a barbed wire fence. At the far end go over a stile and right. After a short distance turn left over a stile and onto a footpath that follows another wire fence. At the bottom of the field turn left (onto English Lane).



Just before you reach English Farm, you see a large barn on your right, turn towards it on a track that is only marked by a small tree arrow. Go behind the barn until forking right (unmarked) past a shed and a derelict building. You then cross a stile next to a 5bar gate and go

diagonally across the field to the far corner. At the end of the field turn left onto a track and follow it quickly around to the right, walking towards a telecommunications tower and row of telegraph poles, and subsequently the A4130.

The track will change to tarmac and, on reaching the A4130, you cross over and continue straight, following the path under the telegraph poles.



At the next 5bar gate, turn left along a lane and take the first footpath on the right at Mayfield into Park Wood. Follow the main track and you emerge at Nuffield Place, the old home of Lord Nuffield who, after leaving school at 14, designed his first car in 1912 and became known as the 'English Henry Ford'.

William Morris went on to donate much of the fortune he made from the motor industry to Oxford University. He lived in Nuffield Place from 1933 – 1963 and on his death it was left to Nuffield College. The house, that is full of artefacts from his life, is now managed by the National Trust.

Turn left from the entrance, walk to the A4130 and go right the short distance to The Crown (PH1). Billing itself as the best pub in Nuffield, it is the only pub in Nuffield. Just past it you will take The Ridgeway through a collection of houses and onto Huntercombe golf course.



The path is clearly marked, initially passing the 4th tee, then over a fairway into trees. Go ½ right across another fairway and into trees again. Continue to follow the arrows, heading towards and passing the

clubhouse until leaving the course through a metal kissing gate. Now go ½ left over a field towards the church.

Turn right onto a lane and just after Nuffield church turn left. You now have outstanding views of Oxfordshire. When The Ridgeway goes right following Grim's Ditch, keep straight on.

After climbing through woodland and emerging into the open, ignore a path to the left, go along the edge of the field and through a copse, and then skirt around Ridgeway Farmhouse.



The path crosses a driveway and then, at the front of the house, goes left over a field to follow a wooden fence and hedge to a lane. Cross the lane and go through the kissing gate at the far end of the field and along a wire fence.

Once through the ornate kissing gate at the end of that field, continue straight across the front of the house at Homer Farm, picking up the track that goes downhill past a barn to a T junction with another track. Cross to the kissing gate opposite and make your way downhill to another kissing gate into the copse in front of you. The narrow path is usually overgrown with nettles as you continue into the trees of Ipsden Heath. Ignore a crossing bridleway and continue straight. You start climbing and, after a track comes in from the left, the path widens and becomes muddy in winter.

At the top of the incline go left through a set of wooden poles near a small Woodland Trust sign and turn right on the road. (You can continue through the wood but the terrain can get increasingly very muddy). This is Point B.

Long and Short Walk from Point B

Turn right at a crossroads signed Ipsden and Well Place via a 'Quiet Lane'. Go straight over the next crossroads signed to nowhere and then left at the following crossroads. You then reach a pub not to be missed - The Black Horse (PH2).



There can be few pubs more isolated than this one. If you were in the desert it might be an apparition. But here it is, dispensing quality local beer in a public bar that still looks like a public bar and a lounge that looks more like a lounge than my own. There are hanging baskets and well kept gardens that are clearly well thought of by the local

farming clientele. From the pub continue down the lane the short distance to a junction of paths on the left.



Take the one over a stile next to a wooden 5bar gate and follow the edge of the wood on your left until the trees end.

Keep straight on, aiming for a stile just to the left of the building in the distance. Turn left onto the lane and quickly right over two stiles. Continue with the edge of the field on your right, and then over a stile made from a tree trunk and into trees.

None of the following paths are marked but first of all go straight, along the path in front of you. You will then bear left and reach an old shack that looks like the remnants of two old railway goods carriages, continue and then turn right between two fences. Go over a stile in the fence on your left and then ½ right over two fields to a lane.

Now turn left, passing a sign for Woodside Farm and Beech End. Turn right at the road past a line of rather unattractive bungalows back to the Maharajah's Well.

Starting Point: Maharajah's Well

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Explorer Map 171

Chiltern Hills West

Length:

Long Walk: 7¾ miles / 12.47 kilometres

Short Walk: 3½ miles / 5.6 kilometres

Terrain:

A good mixture of woodland and meadow. Can be muddy in places during the winter but not too physically demanding.