


Canons Ashby – 1km

1000 years of history and wildlife!

Most people come to the Elizabethan Manor house at Canons Ashby and overlook the parkland right on its doorstep... so why not explore a little further when you visit and find out more about the estate's wildlife and archaeology?

Start: Canons Ashby car park – grid ref: SP577506 – OS Landranger map 152

How to get here & facilities...

10 miles NE of Banbury. Bus service from Banbury, near , or taxi bus from Weedon Lois (not Sun). The Macmillan Way long-distance footpath and National Cycle Network route 70 pass the house. Easy access by car from M40 exit 11 and M1 exit 16.

WCs and baby-changing near house, car park, Cottage Garden tea room, National Trust gift shop and second-hand bookshop. Guide book and leaflets available.

Admission fee. NT members get in free. The property is closed to the public in Jan and Feb, but there is still access to the wider estate, contact us on 01327 861900 for more info.

Look out for...

Medieval farming

Ploughing caused the ridges and furrows you can see in the fields. The Domesday Book tells us that in 1086 there were three ploughs led by oxen working on this arable land. There were also pigs, sheep and chickens.

The Deer Park

This was originally created in the 1500s. The roe deer were kept for both decoration and food (Park Cottage was once the estate's deer larder). However, on one snowy day in 1947, all the deer escaped by walking across snow drifts over the high perimeter fence! Since then, sheep and cattle have grazed here instead.

The Piping Shepherd Boy

There's a legend about the lad whose statue you see in the Green Court, north of the house. Some say that during the Civil War (mid 1600s), a real shepherd boy played his flute to warn the household of enemy Cavaliers in the area. They say the unfortunate boy was caught and hanged...

Medieval castle

A high, strong wooden wall stood proud on the mound of Castle Hill, protecting a timber keep inside. It was a safe haven for people and animals in case of attack. We've found medieval pottery from the 1100s and Civil War cannon balls here.



Green Woodpeckers like the woodland pasture habitat at the top end of the park, near Castle Hill. Listen for the sound of tapping in the tall trees.

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Five bat species can be found at Canons Ashby. Long-eared bats live in the animal byre on the paddock, and Daubenton's bats (pictured here) roost in the tall oak trees around the park.

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Depending on the season, you can spot snowdrop, field geranium, campion (see left) or yellow rattle in the paddock's wildflower meadow. Hare and butterfly such as fritillary, orange-tip, peacock and holly blue make their home here too.

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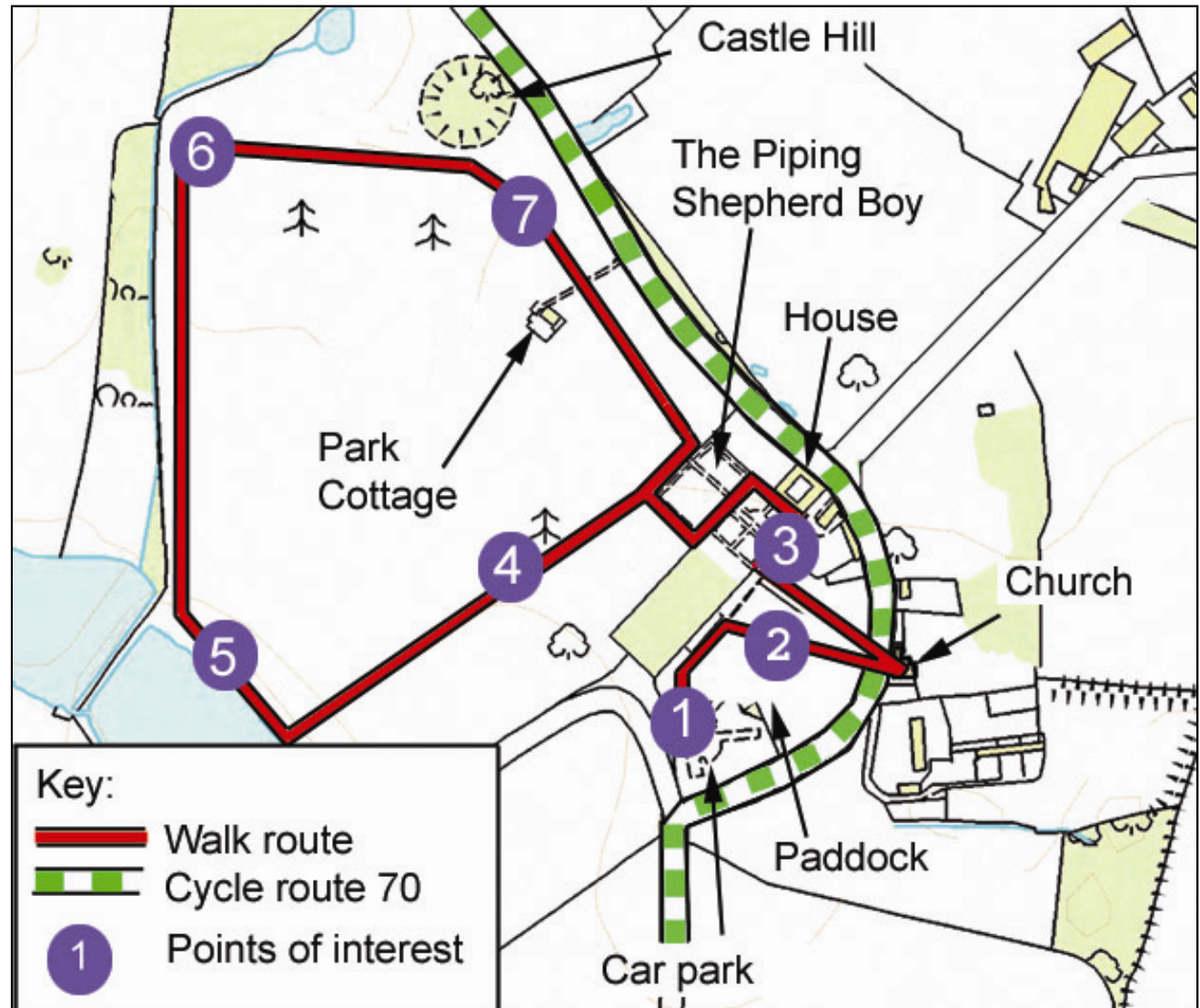
Walk terrain & accessibility...

1km (2/3 mile) easy route across gently undulating, gravel and natural grassy paths. There are steep steps to climb and the ground can be boggy in places after wet weather. There is minimal sign-posting in this special area.

Walk directions...

1. From the car park, follow the path towards the house. Heading for the church, take one of the routes mowed across the paddock.
2. Pass the dew pond, where thirsty horses would have stopped to drink, then go through the wooden gate and cross the road to the church. This was once a medieval priory, until its destruction during the dissolution of the monasteries in the 1530s.
3. Return towards the house and into the walled garden. We've started an ambitious five year project to restore the garden's complex Victorian design – go to the apple store to find out more.
4. After exploring the walled garden, find the steps into the parkland, diagonally opposite the gate you entered by. Go down them, turn right and then walk down through the park towards the lake.
5. When you reach the edge of the pasture by the lake, turn right and keep walking with the water on your left-hand side, crossing the medieval ridges and furrows.
6. At the corner of the park, turn right again. Walk up the slope to the tree-topped mound of Castle Hill.
7. Walk towards the house past the ornate gate and return to the walled garden via the steps. Treat yourself to a cream tea in the Cottage Garden!

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