

## St Peter & St Paul, Checkenden – Black Horse, Scot's Common



St Peter & St Paul, Checkenden

Checkenden is a pleasant village with a manor house and a 12<sup>th</sup> century church that has notable features both ancient and modern. The walk, that goes through attractive nearby woodlands and along quiet Oxfordshire lanes, also features an outstanding public house.



The ancient is represented by the 13<sup>th</sup> century paintings of Christ in Majesty with his apostles painted on the walls of the apse and the modern by a highly unusual diamond point engraved window by Laurence Whistler. The Whistler window is in memory of Henri Kennington, friend of Laurence of Arabia, church warden and illustrator.

There is also the Ryder Memorial window commemorating the role of the arts in the enrichment of the Christian story and memorials including Admiral Isaac Manley who sailed with Captain Cook.



From the church entrance (1) follow the tarmac path to the far end of the churchyard and through a wooden gate. Go through the gate and bear right. Follow the metal railings around to the left and ignore the footpath that will go off to the right, after which you continue to follow the railings that bear left. You will now pass horse paddocks on your right and then enter trees and start to follow a wire fence on your left.

After a footpath comes in from the left, your path goes around to the right to a stile. Once over the stile you will get to two cottages and a lane at Hammond's End.

Cross the lane to the stile opposite and go straight across the field. Once over the field go over a stile into trees and follow the path that winds to the right and then left, looking out for the tree arrows that go downhill to a track where you turn left and continue downhill.

You will reach a crossing track, go over it and climb sharply uphill. When you reach another track turn left and follow it as it bends right uphill (look out for tree arrow) to a lane and Garsons Farm.

Turn left onto the lane and look out for the first footpath on the right that follows the side of the farm's machinery strewn yard. At the end of the farmyard go over a stile into trees. Just inside the wood follow the arrows that point you sharply left.

Continue until you get to a crossing track. Here turn left and quickly take a path to the right. Look out for the tree arrows and follow this path as it goes increasingly downhill to a stile and a magical view of Didcot Power Station.

Go straight across the next field to a stile with a white post to the left of a derelict barn. Once over the stile go right along a hedge and at the corner of the field go into lane and left to descend to Wellplace Farm.

At the T junction turn right on a Quiet Lane and Restricted Byway signposted 'Ipsden Heath 1'. This byway becomes a track and then a path and goes steadily uphill.



When the path becomes steeper as it reaches the trees of Ipsden Heath, ignore a track off to the right to Harwood Farm, however you will quickly get to a crossing footpath (lookout for the post on the left).

Turn right onto this narrow path through the trees. When you reach a wider track turn right onto it and follow it up to some horse

barriers and onto a lane. Turn right and then fork right at the first junction signposted Ipsden and Well Place. Keep straight on at the next junction that is signposted to nowhere. Continue until you turn left onto Cycle Route 5 just before a post box. You will soon reach the Black Horse (2).

There can be few more pubs as isolated as 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.



Continue down the lane from the pub for a short distance and take the first footpath on the right. Follow this track as it bends uphill back in the direction of the pub and when you have the choice of continuing along the track or forking left into the trees, decide on the latter.

Following the tree arrow when this path forks right, you will eventually reach a T junction. Turn left towards a pink house and go to the right of it. Look out for a stile in a gap in the hedge on your right opposite a wooden five bar gate just before an old iron one.

Cross the stile and go  $\frac{1}{4}$  left over the field heading towards a blue/grey barn to the left of a white house. You will reach a stile and then go forward through horse paddocks to a lane.

When you have crossed the lane go to the right of the aforementioned barn, then to the right of a garage on a concrete path to a stile. If you go straight over the stile you will reach another one which is broken, so it is safer to go diagonally to a small gate, then right the short distance along a path to the broken stile and then left over the opposite stile.

With a tennis court on your right you go  $\frac{1}{2}$  left on a grassy path, then to the right of a pond (but not sharp right). Follow this path along a wooden fence until it goes left just before a tree trunk cut into the shape of a chair. You will cross a track and then go  $\frac{1}{2}$  right over a stile past two fenced off trees to another stile in an iron fence. Turn left (you will already be able to see the church) and follow the path back to where you started.

*Location:*

SU663831  
Explorer Map 171  
Chiltern Hills West

*Length:*

5 miles / 8 kilometres

*Terrain:* This is a hilly walk taking in plenty of woodland with one or two short sharp climbs

