

Offley Palace is said to have been built in the eighth century by the Saxon King, Offa, from whom the village probably takes its name. According to local legend, Offley Palace once stood where Offley Place, currently a training and conference centre, now stands. However, it may have been at Little Offley, one of four manor houses in the parish. Much of it was built in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.

The Three Springs Walk

With its sunken lanes, ancient hedges and irregularly shaped fields, the countryside around Offley is in many ways typical of much of the Chilterns. The sheep grazed meadows south of the Red Lion were once commonplace but are now unusual in this largely arable area.

While most of the route is through open farmland, there is much to be seen and enjoyed in the surviving hedgerows and small woodlands or 'springs'. Just past the second kissing gate is a huge ash, distinguished by its pale grey, ridged bark and multiple stems growing from a trunk bent onto its side. The tree's shape suggests that it was once a landmark or boundary tree, possibly laid as part of a hedge.

Following the byway to Glebe Farm, a strip of woodland and remnant hedge marks the historic boundary between Lilley and Offley parishes. You may see pheasant among the coppiced hazel and mature beech trees, a clue perhaps as to why this woodland cover has been allowed to survive. Elsewhere hedges have fared less well; some grubbed out to make way for farm machinery. Even here, we can still enjoy what remains - the lone holly bushes and pollarded hornbeam on Luton White Hill, and the broken line of oaks in the fields north of the A505.

Above Lilley Hoo Farm, the woodland makes a welcome change from open countryside. These trees are relatively young, having grown up on formerly grazed common land. Other wooded areas have been there much longer, as their names suggest. Mazebeard Spring, Newfield Spring and Mead Springs were probably small areas of coppiced woodland, the word spring referring to the regrowth of shoots from trees cut close to the ground. This traditional method of woodland management ensured a regular supply of material for fencing stakes and rural crafts.

This is one of a **series of walks** through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It follows **rights of way** most of which are waymarked as follows:



Footpath (walkers only)



Bridleway (horse riders, cyclists and walkers)



Byway (open to all traffic)



Please be considerate in the countryside - keep to footpaths, especially through crops, and leave farm gates as you find them.

The Red Lion is a friendly traditional country pub with a selection of ales, wines and spirits. Home-cooked food is served lunchtimes and evenings. Accommodation is set in its own peaceful gardens. Cyclists and walkers are welcome. Enquiries phone or fax 01462 768281.



The **Countryside Management Service** works with communities in Hertfordshire and north London to care for and enjoy the countryside. For more information contact us at:

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Supported by the Chilterns Conference and Offley Parish Council

Cover photograph by Brian Sawford

Chilterns Country

Pub Walk: **The Three Springs Walk, Offley**



Walk Description: **Short route 2.7 km (1 3/4 m) fairly flat, no stiles**
Long route 8.5 km (5 1/4 m) gentle hills, no stiles

Start and Finish: **The Red Lion Pub, Offley**

Walking time: **Short route 45 mins to 1 hour**
Long route 2 to 3 hours

How to get to Offley

The nearest train station is Hitchin. From here the number 100 and 101 bus runs to and from Luton, stopping in Offley, every day except Sunday. From the bus stop walk down the High Street to the Red Lion pub. For details call Hertfordshire Traveline on 0845 724 4344. The CMS recreational cycle ride number 16 passes the Red Lion at Offley. Contact the CMS for a leaflet or pick one up in the Red Lion. If you need to come by car, please park in the Red Lion car park.

Notes on the walk



The Red Lion pub is in the oldest part of the village, known as Bottom End. With Offley Place and the church close by, this area would have been the hub of the village in the days before the Offley Hill road. For the best views, you are recommended to do the walk in a clockwise direction, so begin by turning left out of the pub and taking the footpath on the other side of the lane.



After the third kissing gate (built by CMS volunteers), walk for about 20 paces through some woodland, and veer right onto a surfaced track. At the next field boundary you will see Lilley church across the valley in the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



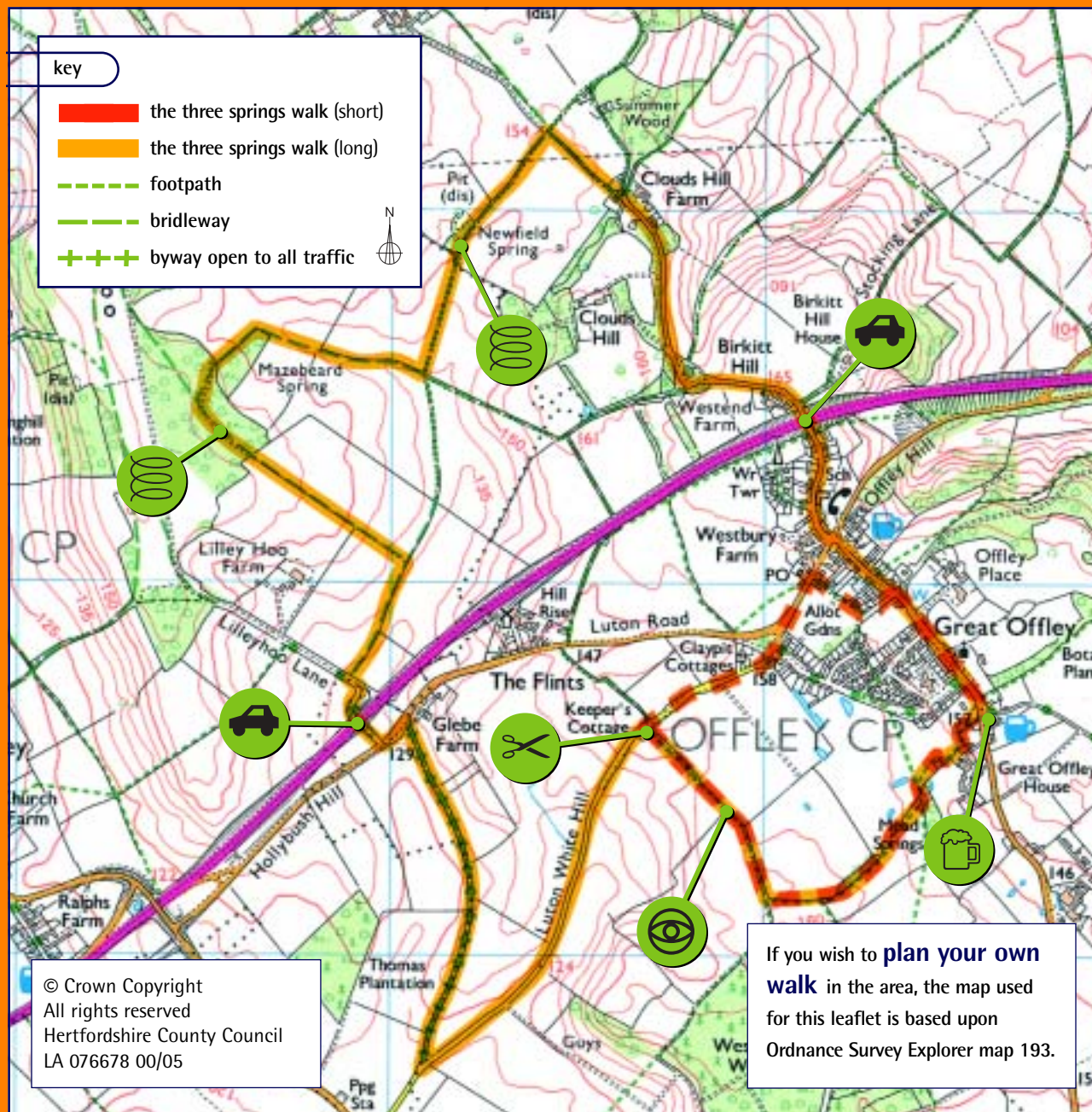
When you reach the road, turn left, or for a short cut right, and go past Salusbury Lane. Beyond the allotments, turn right and at the end, left, to emerge near the Church.



Please use these safe crossing points under/over the A505.



After crossing the A505 turn right then left to follow the walk route up the hill and into Mazebeard Spring. Follow the path through Newfield Spring noticing Little Offley, visible at the end of an avenue of lime trees, on your left as you emerge.



scale: 1 kilometre

Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy

