

# Brill and Boarstall

A 3 or 4.5 mile walk starting at Brill Windmill with extensive views of the surrounding countryside and skirting the ancient forest of Bernwood.

## Circular Walk

### Directions

- From Brill Windmill, turn down the metalled road, South Hills, on the edge of the Common.
- Bear left just before the end of the tarmac and walk along the track, then along a footpath between hedges along the end of the houses and across a field to the road. Turn right at the road and then right again along a bridleway just after Nashway Farm.
- Almost at the end of the bridleway, turn right again to follow a series of waymarked paths just the other side of the hedge from the B4011 Bicester to Thame road. For the short cut, turn right along Span Green Road; for the main route, head left to cross the road just opposite Boarstall Wood Cottage.
- After a short way, turn right across fields, aiming for the right hand side of a small wood. Go over the bridge and turn left through woodland. Cross another field and a sleeper bridge and head for Boarstall Church.
- At the road, turn right and walk through the village to the turning for Boarstall Duck Decoy. Turn right opposite Manor Farm to continue the walk.
- Cross the road and follow a minor road towards Touchbridge Farm. After 100 yards turn right to follow a footpath through fields and across a bridge back towards Brill.

### Features of Interest

- 1 Brill Windmill. This historic post mill dates from around 1680 and was used to mill corn commercially until 1917. It was restored in 1947 and is now owned by Buckinghamshire County Council. The mill underwent further restoration work in 2009.



The relative height of Brill (615 feet above sea level) makes it an ideal site for windmills, the first record of one being in about 1252.

- 2 The ground around South Hills is rather 'hummocky', the result of clay extraction to feed the pottery tile and brick works which were an important feature of Brill from the 13th to the 19th century.

Extensive views of woodland can be seen to the right of the path. These are the remnants of the ancient Royal Forest of Bernwood. This was not one large patch of woodland but more a patchwork of woods with villagers growing crops and grazing their animals in the gaps. During Tudor times, the forest covered approximately 8,000 acres.

- 3 The trees beside the track at this point are of several species including Scots pine, larch, horse chestnut, sycamore and willow.

- 4 Just before Boarstall Church is the remains of a mediaeval moat, now overgrown and wooded.

- 5 Boarstall Church was built in 1818 and glimpses of Boarstall Tower can be seen from the churchyard. The tower was built around 1312 as a fortification for a mansion subsequently used as a royalist stronghold in the Civil War



and demolished in 1778. Another moat surrounds three sides of what is now the garden. The fourth side was filled-in during the seventeenth century and replaced by a fine gateway.

- 6 Just off the route is Boarstall Duck Decoy. Constructed in the seventeenth century, it is one of only four working decoys in the country. Originally ducks were caught as an important source of winter meat but nowadays they are ringed for research purposes and then released.
- 7 The steeper land to the left of the road is known as Muswell Hill, meaning 'moss hill' a name which probably came about as a result of the springs which can be seen emerging from the hillside.
- 8 Touchbridge Farmhouse is an attractive brick building with an unusual greensand stone extension. This type of stone is seen frequently in buildings in East Anglia, the Brill area being one of its most westerly outcrops.
- 9 The short cut runs along Span Green Lane which is thought to be an old drovers' track for taking stock to market in Oxford. On both sides of the track are ancient hedgerows which provide a wealth of habitat for wildlife.

#### Follow the Countryside Code:

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

#### Further Information:

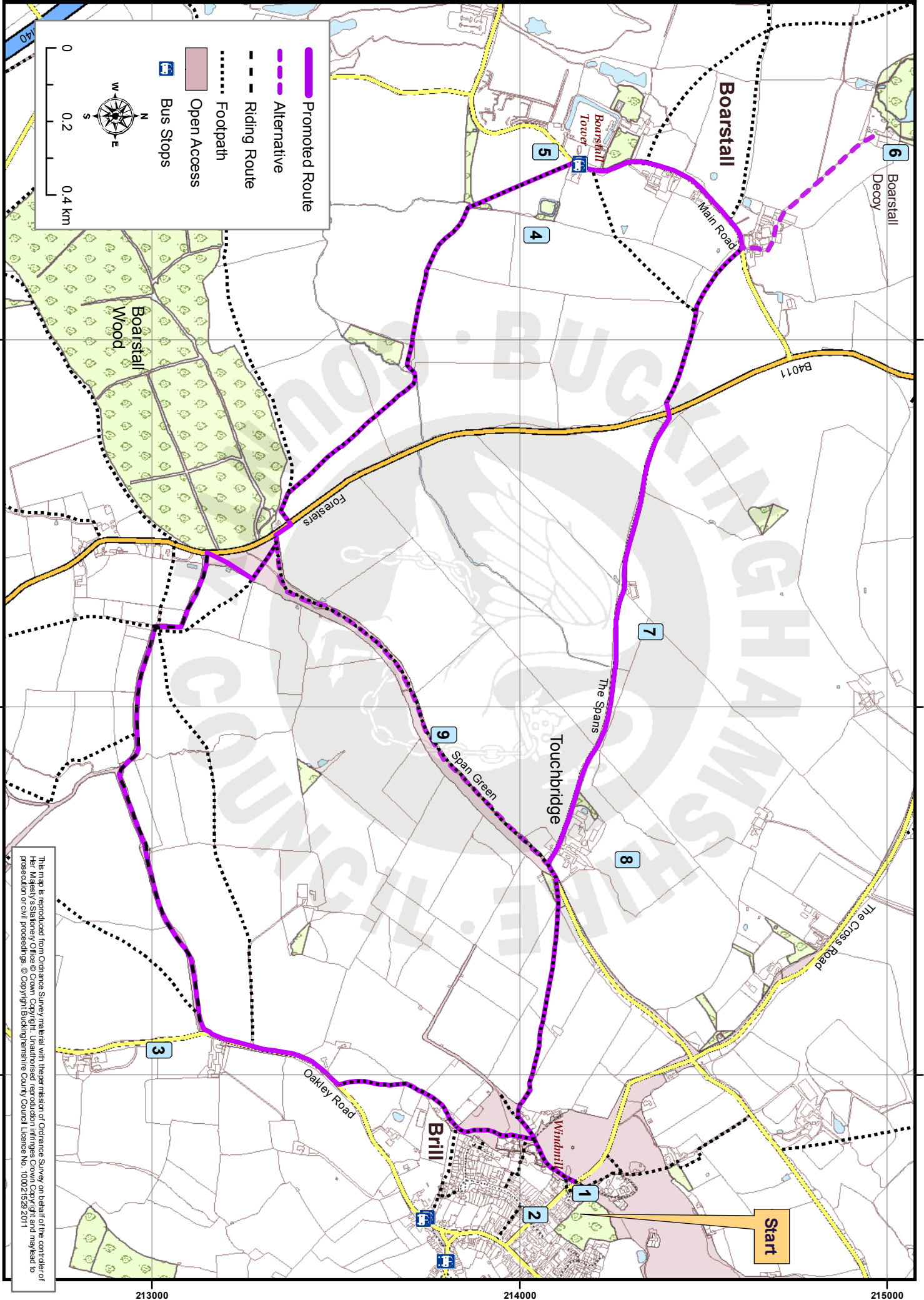
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# Brill / Boarstall Circular Route



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