

Withington Village Family Trail



We hope you enjoy exploring our beautiful village

Please respect the residents' privacy and do not encroach on any private property.



1. The Church of St. Michael



11. The Rectory



6.



10.



10.



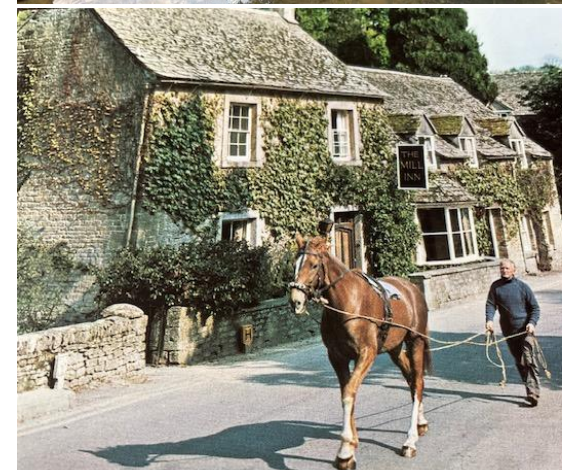
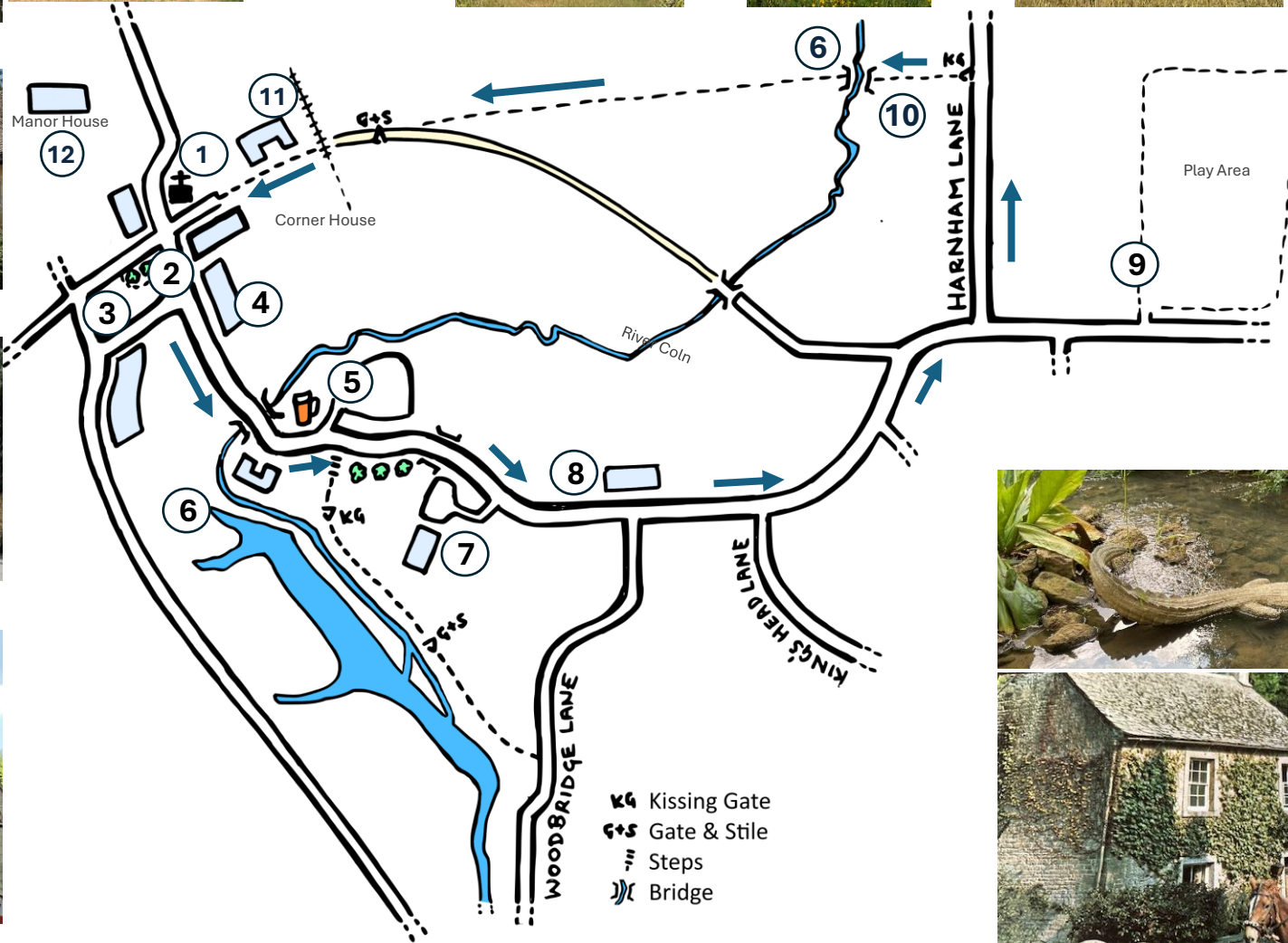
2.



5. The Mill Inn



7. Village hall



The trail starts in the church.

1A As you go in, look up at the carving over the door.

The zig-zag pattern tells us that this was the doorway into the original Norman church which means it's nearly 1,000 years old!

Look carefully, and you'll see that the carving ends on both sides with a creature's head. Although they are damaged, what creatures do you think they might have been?

A _____ and a _____



1B As you enter the church, you are in the nave, which is the main part of the church. Stand and look round for a moment and imagine all the hundreds of people who lived in the village and have worshipped here since the first Saxon church was built in the 7th century – 1400 years ago!

1C Then turn to your left and behind the curtains you will see a very important-looking memorial, high up on the wall. It was put up by Sir John Howe, nearly 400 years ago in 1651, to remember his wife who had died a few years earlier.

How many children did they have? (The Howe family lived in a very big house nearby in Cassey Compton, which you will pass if you go to the Roman Villa.)

They had _____ sons and _____ daughters.

How do their clothes look different from yours?

Cassey Compton House, Grade II registered by Historic England >



1D On the wall at the back of the church there is a small plaque to commemorate the men from the village who died in WW1. They are all buried in war cemeteries in France and most of them had been pupils at the village school, just across the road from the church.

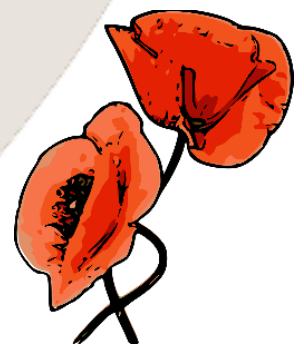
How many men died? _____

Turn around and start to walk up the middle of the church. On your left you will see 2 memorial plaques.

1E One remembers the men from the village who were killed in WW2. There were 3 soldiers, 1 airman and 1 Royal Naval officer who commanded a submarine. The submarine was on a secret mission in the Aegean Sea when it was sunk by a torpedo.

What was the name of the submarine? _____

(Hint : Look at the photo of the war grave. It will help you later on.)



1F The smaller plaque lists the names of 7 men who died when their plane crashed in a field near Withington. The crash was shrouded in secrecy, but the story goes that they were on a practice flight before being dropped as secret agents behind enemy lines in France!



1G A little further up the church in a recess on the other side, is a gravestone known as The Withington Plague Stone. It is dedicated to Honest John Stockwell. The poor man died of the plague and was buried the next day.

Do you know why he was buried so quickly? _____



1H Go into the side chapel next. On your left you will see a stained glass window.

It was designed by a famous stained glass artist called Sir Ninian Comper. He drew a strawberry plant in every window he made, and that was his signature. Can you see the strawberry plant in this window?

How many petals does the strawberry flower have? _____

When was the window made? _____

1I Leave the chapel and continue under the tower towards the altar. This part of the church is called the chancel and on your right you will see another stained glass window, which shows a picture of St Francis surrounded by lots of different birds. Can you count how many there are? This window is particularly beautiful when the sun shines through it.

How many birds are there? _____. And what did you like best in the church?

1J Leave the church now, and look for the war grave in the churchyard. You will find it round the back of the church, between two big yew trees.

The headstone is dedicated to Lance Corporal Ernest George Harris. He had been badly injured in WW2 and was sent home to Foxcote (a nearby village) where he died. Because he had been a serviceman he was entitled to be remembered with a special war grave headstone, like those used in many of the war cemeteries in France and Belgium. All these years later it is still cared for by the War Graves Commission and is cleaned every three years.

When did he die? _____ and how old was he? _____

Now follow the rest of the trail through the village, leaving through the churchyard gates.



The little bears are watching you as you leave the churchyard ---- so beware!!

But where are they? _____ And how many are there? _____!!!

The house opposite the churchyard gates is the Corner House. It is very old and has seen many changes in its lifetime. In the 15th century (500 years ago) it was a resting place for pilgrims on their way to the holy shrine at Hailes Abbey. They would have been given a meal and a bed for the night.

For a while it housed the village police station on one side, and on the other side there was a small, dark room which served as the village prison for people who broke the law – and that room is still there!



It has also been a public house called The George – and in the garden there is a five-seater “privy” dating from that time!

Can you guess what a “privy” is? _____

The house adjoining the Corner House is called The Forge. It was a working forge a long time ago.

Who do you think might have worked there? _____

And what would he have made? _____

2. The stone building across the road is now a school and nursery. It became a school in 1857 when the School House was added on at the front. The schoolmistress lived there with her mother. Before that, in the past, the building was used for a very different purpose.

It was the Court House for The Manor.

What do you think would have happened there? _____

Walk across the road to a small triangle of grass with a bench. This is all that remains of the village green where the school children used to dance round a tall wooden post, with long coloured ribbons in their hands, weaving complicated patterns with their ribbons as they danced.



Do you know the day of the year when they did this? M _____ D _____

What was the post called? A M _____ P _____

Walk up the road from the green, with the oldest cottages in the village on your right. Stop at the end and turn left and keep walking for about 100 yards until you come to another left turn. This little lane is known as Dark Lane and it is easy to imagine how dark it would be in the winter as there are no street lights in the village.

3. Walk halfway down the lane and you will come to a pair of large iron gates. Hidden behind the high walls is a very old, large house. It used to be the Summer Palace for the Bishops of Worcester and it still has a magnificent medieval hall. This house has two names which are written on the wall beside the gates.

Please remember that the house and gardens are private and that public access is not allowed to any part of the grounds.

Write the names here: M_____H_____and H_____

4. Carry on down the lane, and across the road you will see a large building called Withington Court. It was built in 1763 (nearly 300 years ago). It's called a Court because the Bishops of Worcester used to hold their Moot Courts there, which dealt with any church-related offences – like not attending church often enough!

5. Turn right and walk down the hill to the Mill Inn. For safety, go through the small gate on your left and stand in the garden, but keep away from the river. If the Inn is open you can go inside and see all the historical beams and fireplaces – and perhaps you might have time for some refreshment.

On Ordnance Survey maps this building is marked with the letters PH. Do you know what PH means?

P_____H_____

6. Just across the road from the Mill Inn is a large, L-shaped building, with steps going up the outside wall. It's now a private house called the Mill House, but it used to be the village mill. The original mill was listed in the Domesday Book, but this house dates from 1670.



Who do you think lived and worked there? The M_____

And what would he have done? G_____ the c_____ to make f_____.

(If you would prefer a longer walk, turn to page 9. This extra loop takes about 20 mins and leads you along the river, rejoining the trail at the village hall.)

Leave the Mill Inn garden and follow the road to your left (being very careful to listen for cars as there is no pavement) and walk round the bend past a very high wall on your right. This is all that remains of a bridge carrying the railway line through the village.

7. You will come to a turning on your right with a sign on the bank at the entrance

saying : Withington Jubilee Hall.

Why is it called the Jubilee Hall? _____

Walk up this little road and you'll come to the village hall, where all sorts of village events take place. Beyond it is a long, woodland area which you can wander through if you like. You'll see that lots of the trees had to be cut down because they had a disease called Ash Dieback, which killed them and made them unsafe as they might have fallen down and hurt somebody. Healthy new trees will be planted in their place.

You are now standing on part of the old railway line, which ran from Andoversford to Cirencester. Sadly, it was closed more than 60 years ago because it cost too much to run.

(If you took the extra loop, you will rejoin the trail at this point.)

8. Go back to the main road and turn to your right. Beyond the wall on your left is a large house. It's now called Withington House, but it used to be a farmhouse, lived in by the Dancer family who owned many fields in the middle of the village.

Opposite this house there is a road called Woodbridge Lane. There's a row of cottages on the left, where the farmhands and other village work men used to live.

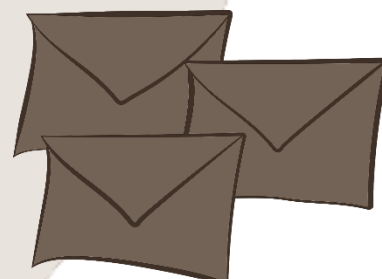
There would have been several families living in each building, and conditions would have been very cramped and extremely hard, with outside toilets and no running water. The children would almost certainly have had to share beds and sleep "head-to-toe"!



Can you guess what "head-to-toe" meant? _____

Another name for this road was Post Office Lane. Why do you think it had that name?

Who might have lived and worked there? _____



9. Follow the curves in the road, straight past Harnham Lane up to the Playing Field, on the left.

List all the things you can see there: _____

What would you add if you lived here? _____

10. Turn around and walk back to Harnham Lane. Go almost to the end and stop at the little gate, from where you can see the church. On your left is a row of historic cottages, more than 250 years old. Originally they were six tiny homes, set in a large orchard, where they kept pigs, chickens and ducks.



Go through the gate and walk down the field and across the bridge over the River Coln. You are walking on an ancient Right of Way which the cottagers would have used when they went to sell their produce to the people in the big houses near the church. They also went that way to church – which they were expected to do every Sunday!

(This path can get very muddy in the winter so that you need to wear wellies!)

Carry on walking across the fields and you will come to the old railway bridge. During the First World War, hospital trains would have travelled over this bridge, carrying injured soldiers from the battlefields to the special hospitals in Cheltenham where they were nursed and helped to recover.

There used to be a railway station in Withington. From that little station, villagers could have caught trains to Cheltenham or Cirencester, and from there they could have connected with other trains to get to anywhere in the country!

11. Keep walking under the bridge past a large house on your right which used to be the Rectory.

Who do you think would have lived there? The R_____

The footpath now becomes very deep, between high stone walls, which the villagers call The Gulley. Originally this might have been a Ha-Ha, (which would have been part of the garden) and the footpath to the church went right past the front door of the rectory. In the 1860s, the Rector objected to his parishioners walking so close to his house, so the path was dug deeper and redirected through the Gulley – just so that he didn't have to see his parishioners walking past on their way to church!



12. Keep walking through The Gulley and you will come to the church gates. Now look across the road. Hidden in the trees behind the school playground is the Manor House. There has been a building on this site since the 15th Century (a long time ago) when the Bishops of Worcester owned it. It is a Grade II listed building, which means it is very important and is protected. The last addition to the house was in 1927.

You've reached the end of the trail. We hope you've had fun and thank you for visiting our lovely village.

If you are following the extra loop, climb the steps opposite the Mill Inn car park and follow the path through the gate into the woods.

As you enter the woods, look over the fence on your right and you'll see some tall, wooden boxes.

What are these boxes called?

B _____

What lives in them?

B _____ and what do they make?



Carry on walking through the woods, being very careful not to trip over the tree roots that grow across the path. The lake you are passing on your right is in the grounds of the big house which you walked past in Dark Lane. You can often see swans and ducks swimming there.

How many can you spot today? _____

You will soon come to a stile. As you climb over it you are entering the garden of Riverside Cottage, so please stay on the path (and if you have a dog, keep it on a lead) – but beware! Something is lurking in the river!!

What scary creature lives in the water? A C _____ ?

And who else stands nearby, showing you the way to go ? A B _____

As you leave the garden, turn to your left and you will pass between two brick walls, which used to be part of a bridge carrying a railway line out of the village on its way to Cirencester.

Follow the road uphill until you come to a stile on your left. Climb over the stile and follow the path through the trees. You are walking along part of the old railway line, which used to run from Andoversford, through the villages, to Cirencester. Sadly, it was closed more than 60 years ago because it cost too much run.

As you walk along through the trees you'll see that lots of them have had to be cut down. They had a disease called Ash Dieback which killed them and made them unsafe as they might have fallen down and injured somebody. Healthy new trees will be planted in their place. Keep walking and you will come to Withington Jubilee village hall, where lots of events take place.

Why do you think it is called the Jubilee Hall? _____

(Now rejoin the main trail on Page 7, number 8.)