

walk in the footsteps of shakespeare

A guided trail around Billesley, Wilmcote and Aston Cantlow.



visitchurches.org.uk/shakespeare

Walk in the footsteps of Shakespeare

Canal towpaths, open countryside, ancient woodlands and unusual churches. This trail links the villages of Wilmcote, Aston Cantlow, and Billesley - each claiming its own special connection to William Shakespeare.

There are two circular routes – a walking route mainly on public footpaths, and a road-based route for cyclists and those with limited mobility (though please be aware the country roads are often narrow and without pavements). Both routes are about 8 miles long, but can be explored in sections.

Below you will find more detailed maps of each section of the trail: Wilmcote to Billesley, Billesley to Aston Cantlow, and Aston Cantlow to Wilmcot.

Getting here

Bike:

The long distance Route 5 of the National Cycle Network (between Reading and Holyhead) passes through the area.

Car:

The area lies north west of Stratford and is reached via the A46 (Stratford-Worcester).

A note on the walking route

The terrain is relatively flat but uneven. There are some steep parts, which are slippery when wet (these are marked on the map). Please make sure you are appropriately equipped. Stout walking shoes or boots are recommended. The route is not suitable for people using wheelchairs or pushchairs. The route takes you through open farmland and fields where livestock may be grazing. Please act accordingly and abide by 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.

Navigation

We recommend this trail be used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey's Explorer maps (205 and 220) at 1:25 000 scale. These show alternative public paths as well as longer signed routes and other useful information.

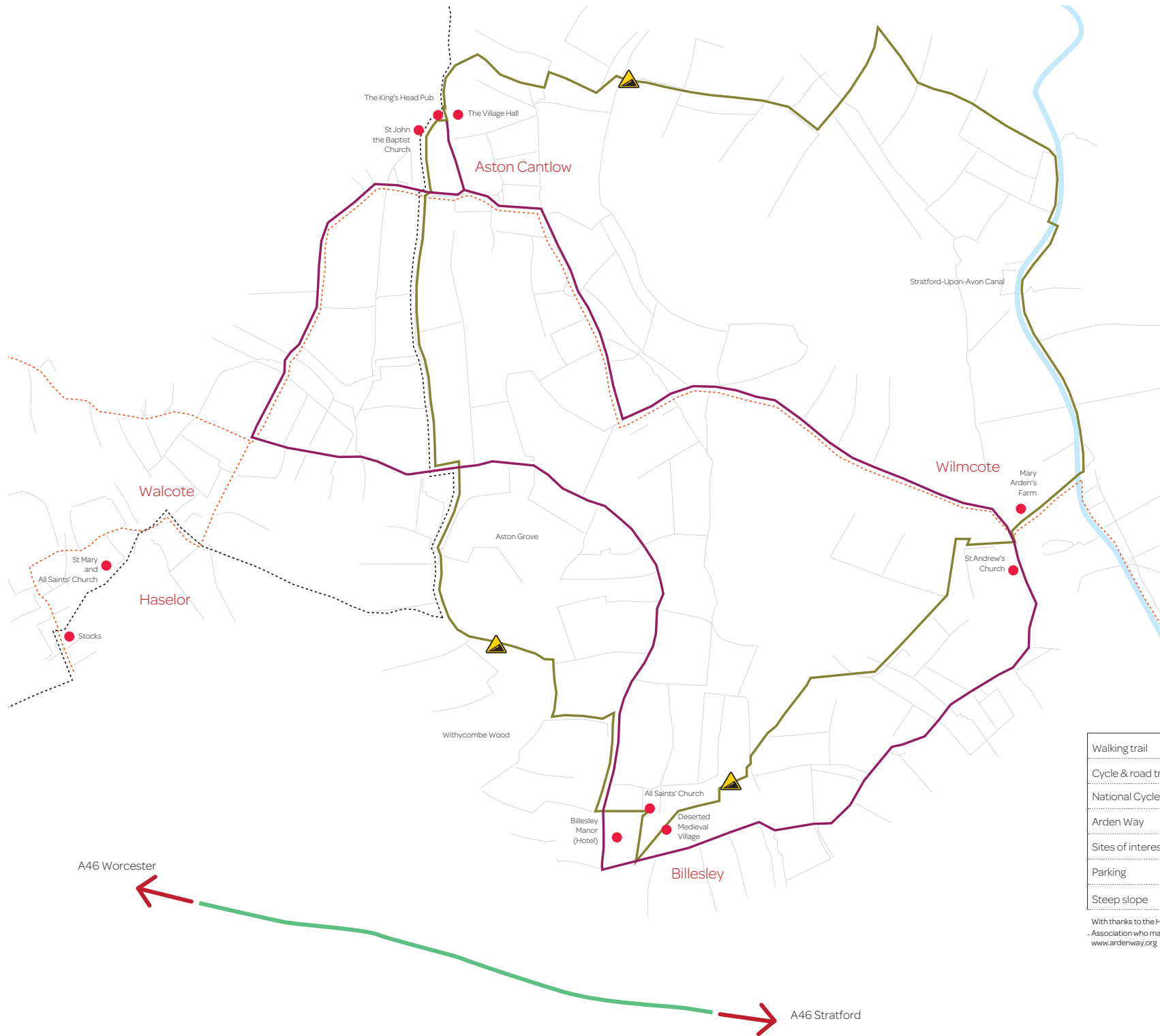
The little church at the heart of the trail

Grade 1 Listed All Saints' Church was built in the 11th century to serve the village of Billesley. In the 14th century, Billesley suffered a run of bad harvests and plague epidemics. The church fell into disrepair, but was saved when remodelled in the 17th century to become the estate church of Billesley Manor.

In 1976, All Saints' future was secured when it passed into the care of the Churches Conservation Trust. Assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, and with support from local communities, the Trust is working to preserve the church, along with its links to one of England's most famous writers.

This pamphlet has been created in collaboration with the Aston Cantlow and District Local History Society. We hope you enjoy the trail.

Always follow current UK government guidelines for COVID-19 (<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus>) when enjoying these walks and check the most up to date advice before setting off.



Walking trail	
Cycle & road trail	
National Cycle Route 5	
Arden Way	
Sites of interest	
Parking	
Steep slope	

With thanks to the Heart of England Way Association who maintain the Arden Way
www.ardenway.org

Trail highlights: Aston Cantlow - Wilmcote

(3.2 miles)

Leaving the village, you will find yourself wandering through wild meadows between vast fields of wheat, oats and grazing livestock.

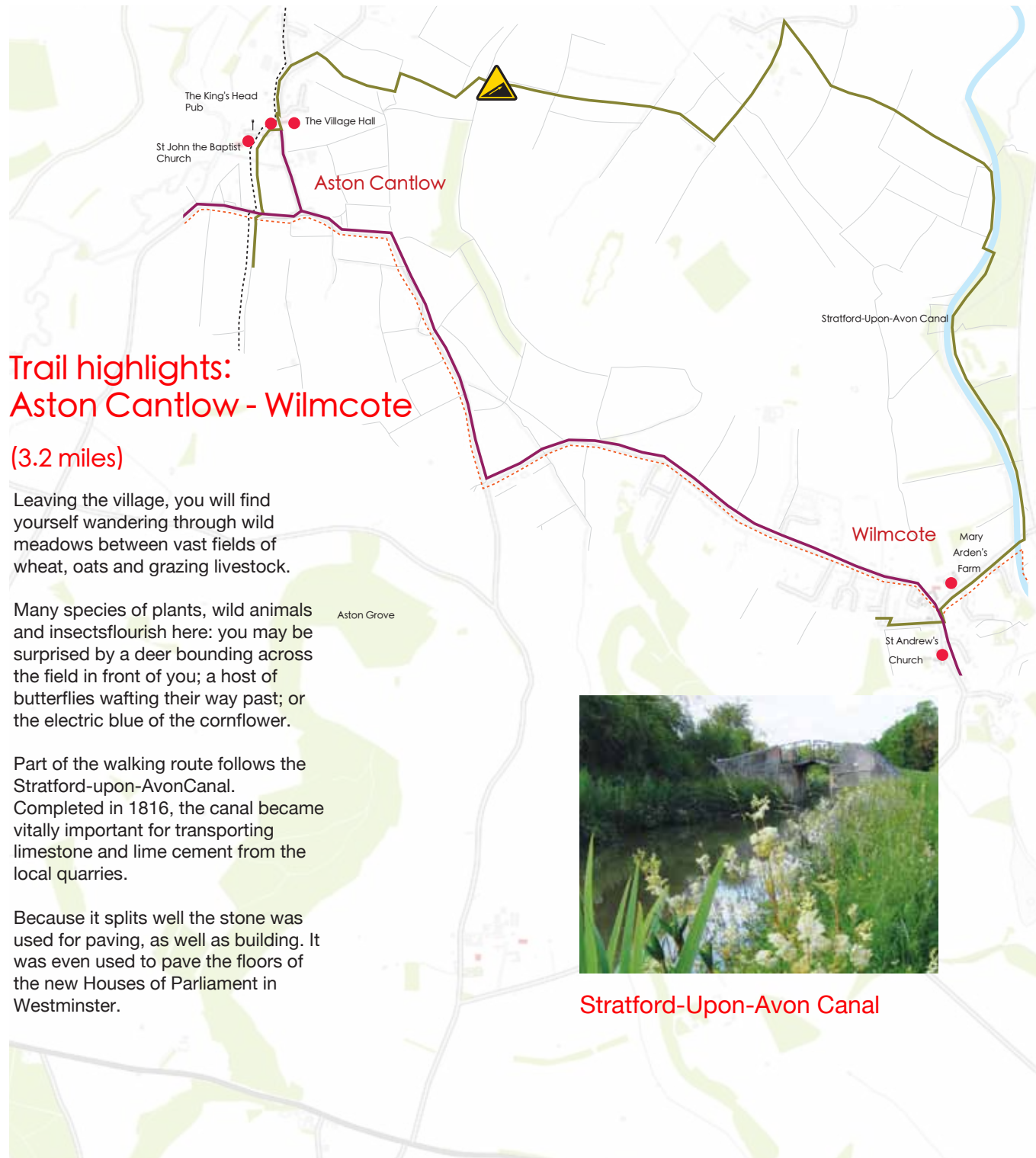
Many species of plants, wild animals and insects flourish here: you may be surprised by a deer bounding across the field in front of you; a host of butterflies wafting their way past; or the electric blue of the cornflower.

Part of the walking route follows the Stratford-upon-Avon Canal. Completed in 1816, the canal became vitally important for transporting limestone and lime cement from the local quarries.

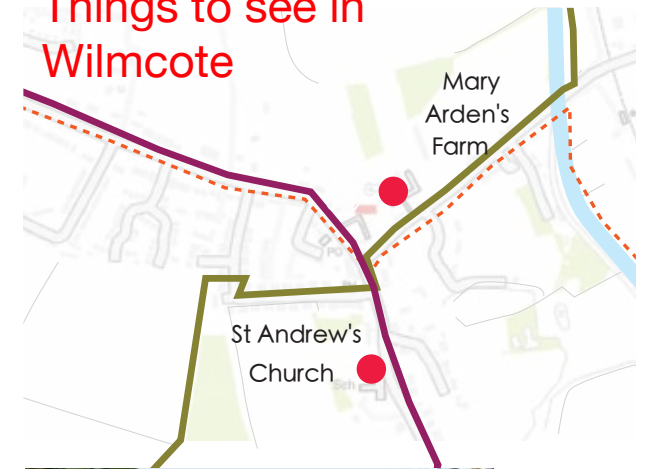
Because it splits well the stone was used for paving, as well as building. It was even used to pave the floors of the new Houses of Parliament in Westminster.



Stratford-upon-Avon Canal



Things to see in Wilmcote



St Andrew's Church

Built in 1841 to serve the growing population drawn to work in the quarry, its design by William Butterfield is admired as a pure specimen of the Gothic Revival.



Mary Arden's Farm

Once the home of Shakespeare's mother, now a living history museum and working farm.



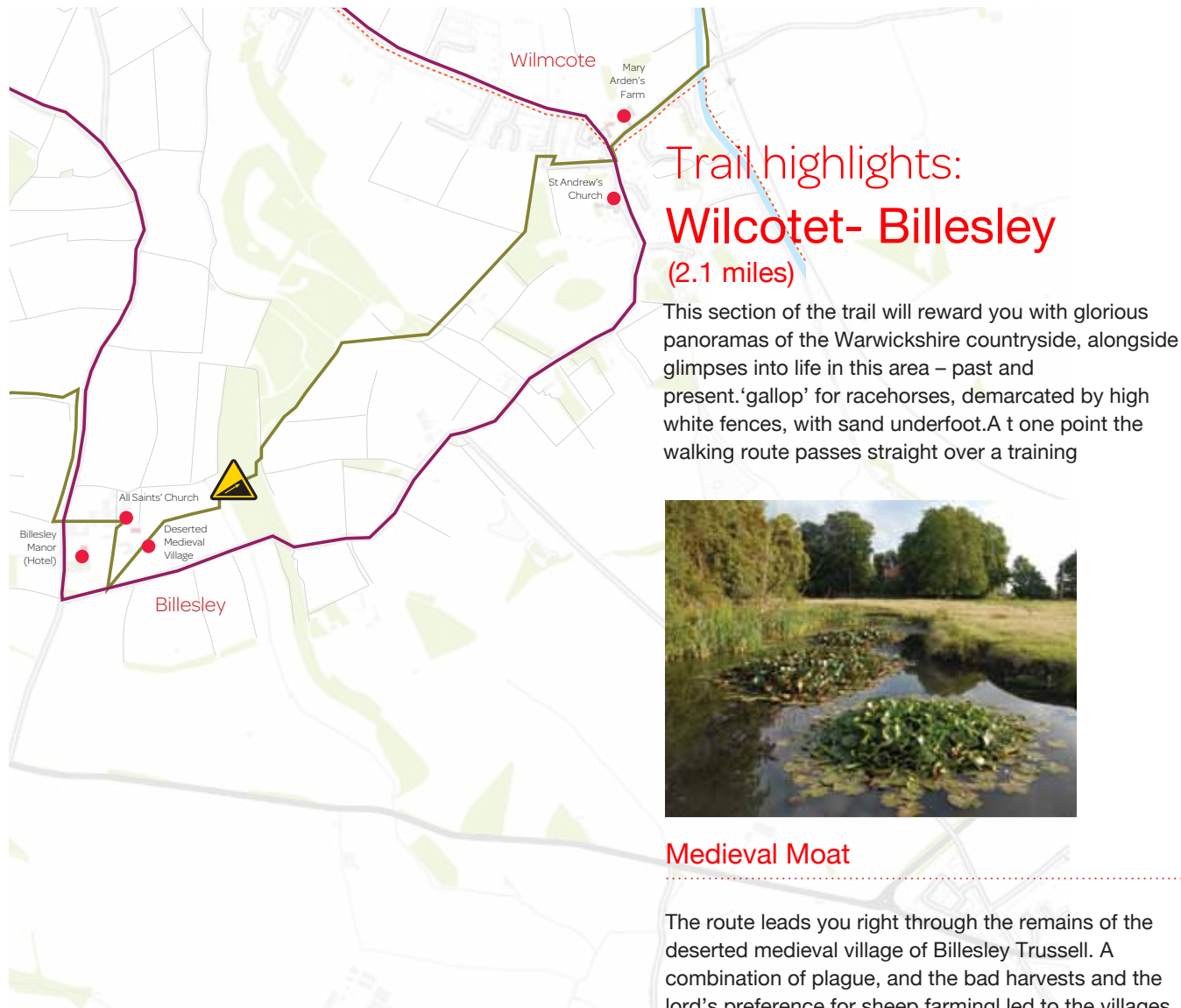
All Saints' Church

Dating from the 11th century, it is said that William Shakespeare married Anne Hathaway here. Evidence indicates that this is where their granddaughter, Elizabeth; wed.



Billesley Manor

A new manor house was built in the 17th century. It is now a hotel.



Medieval Moat

The route leads you right through the remains of the deserted medieval village of Billesley Trussell. A combination of plague, and the bad harvests and the lord's preference for sheep farming led to the village's demise. Look out for the moat that once surrounded the village's manor house. Keep an eye out for the ornate Victorian bus shelter, transplanted here by a local landowner to be used as a hunters' refuge.

Trail highlights: Billesley - Aston Cantlow (3 miles)

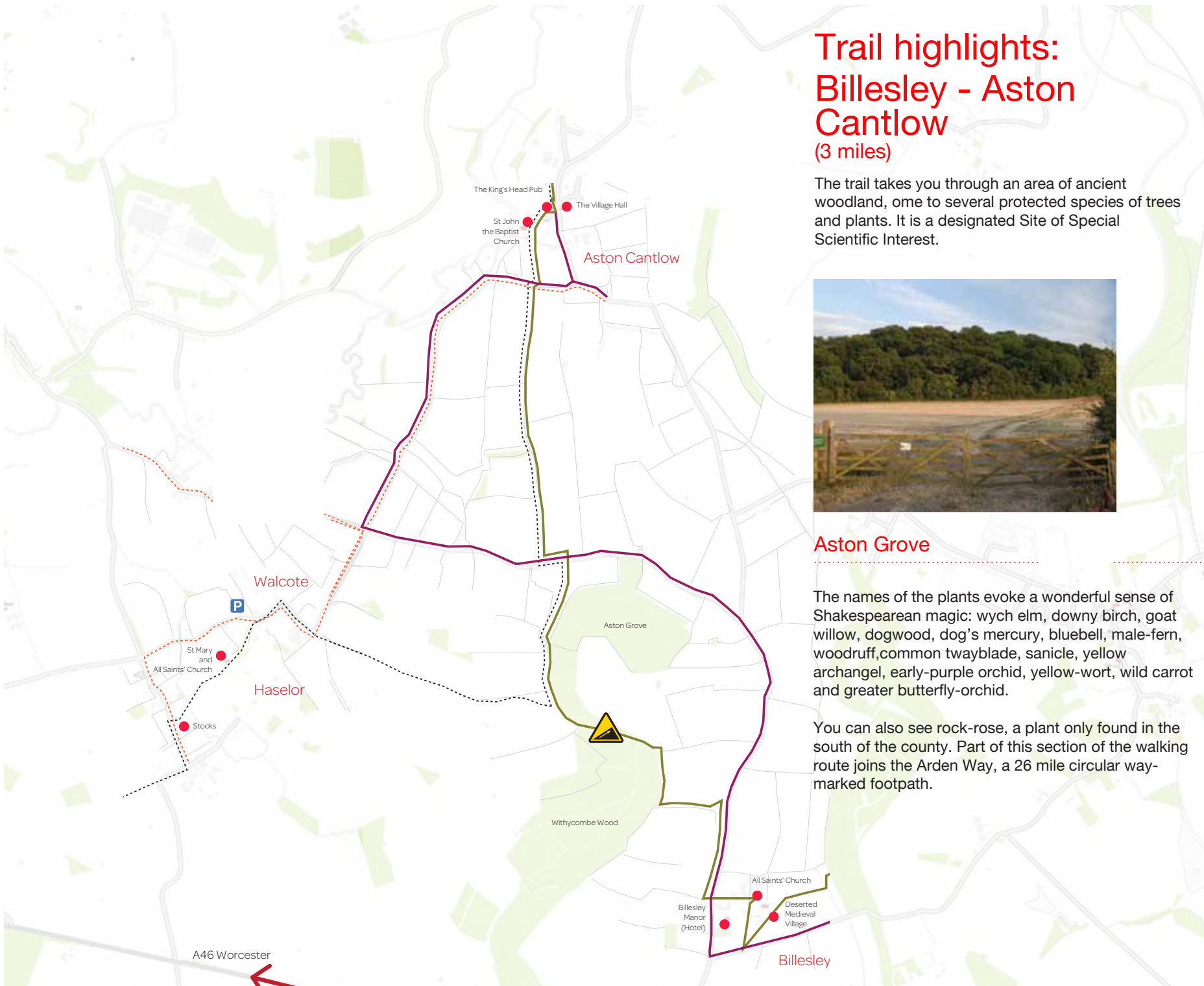
The trail takes you through an area of ancient woodland, ome to several protected species of trees and plants. It is a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest.

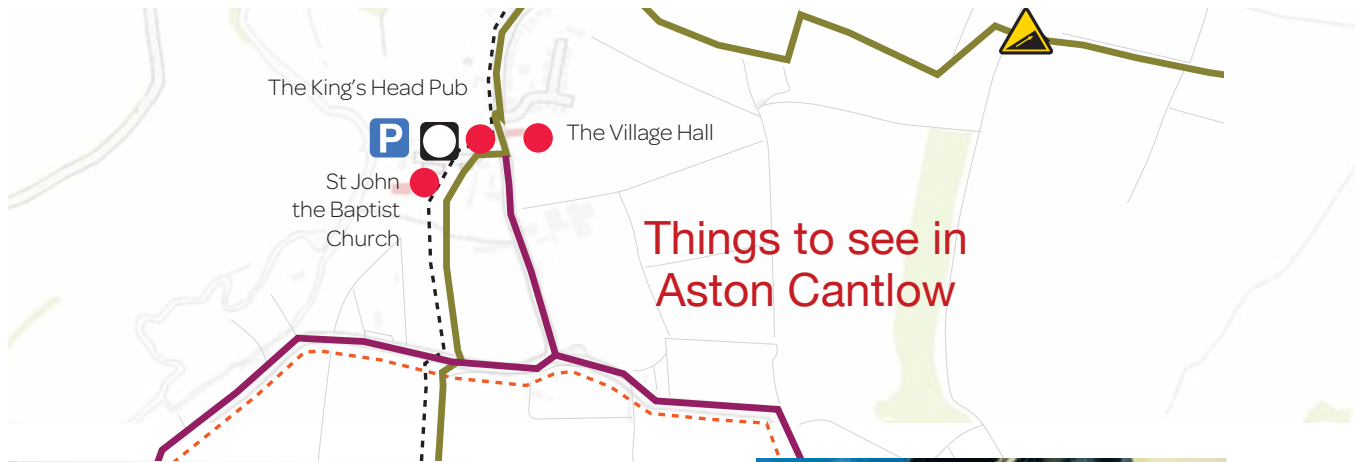


Aston Grove

The names of the plants evoke a wonderful sense of Shakespearean magic: wych elm, downy birch, goat willow, dogwood, dog's mercury, bluebell, male-fern, woodruff, common twayblade, sanicle, yellow archangel, early-purple orchid, yellow-wort, wild carrot and greater butterfly-orchid.

You can also see rock-rose, a plant only found in the south of the county. Part of this section of the walking route joins the Arden Way, a 26 mile circular way-marked footpath.





Things to see in Aston Cantlow



St John the Baptist Church

This 13th century parish church is where William Shakespeare's parents, Mary Arden and John Shakespeare, married in 1557.



The King's Head Pub

Reportedly where Shakespeare's parents celebrated their wedding.



The Village Hall

Formerly the medieval Guild Hall, it was once also used as the local jail.

Churches Conservation Trust

The Churches Conservation Trust is the national charity protecting churches at risk. We care for the churches vested in us by the Church Commissioners of the Church of England, repairing the damage from sometimes years of neglect, and work with local communities to bring them alive again.

All of CCT's resources are free, but as a registered charity we rely on donations and are grateful for any support to care for this national heritage for the enjoyment of all. If you enjoyed this walk, please consider donating to CCT at visitchurches.org.uk/donate



visitchurches.org.uk

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