

Shrewton – ‘Sheriff’s town’ – comprises at least seven early settlements, which explains the proliferation of church buildings dating back to at least C13<sup>th</sup>, indicating a pious and wealthy population due to the rich arable farming in the area. A stroll around the village reveals its interesting ‘recent’ history; a walk further afield on the Salisbury Plain will treat you to Neolithic earthwork remains which pre-date Stonehenge. This guide gives a 5km circular walk between three churches which are cared for by the Churches Conservation Trust (CCT), whilst alerting you to some of the local features as you go.

Dogs are welcome – but please keep them on a lead in and around all of our churches.

### St Andrew’s, Rollestone



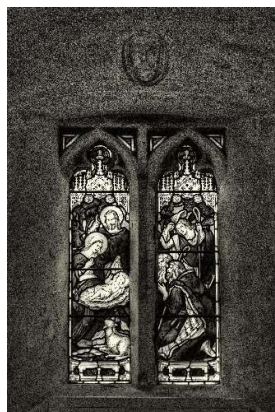
St Andrew’s Church looks out over the River Till. Like many of the local buildings, the walls have been constructed using limestone and flint chequers; the larger, more

expensive limestone blocks lending greater strength to the wall whilst also creating a decorative effect in contrast with the dark flints. An interesting thought at this church is that all of the windows have been dated to different times – have a look and see which ones you think look older? Bear in mind that the church was restored c.1845, and so some old-looking details could be trying to fool you!

### St Mary’s, Maddington (front cover)

Notice that the south side of the tower is built in smooth limestone ashlar blocks whereas the north face is built in C13<sup>th</sup> flint rubble. The ashlar work dates to the C17<sup>th</sup> when much of the church was rebuilt, and the church was again restored in the 1840s. Of particular interest in this church is some of the medieval graffiti which has been found – have a closer look at some of the stonework to see if you can spot any. You might find some elongated VV marks, often overlapping, which signify ‘Virgo Virginum’ dedicated to the Virgin Mary; or a historic symbol called a ‘hexafoil’: a six-petalled flower within a circle drawn by a compass, which was thought to provide spiritual protection by capturing the ‘evil eye’. In the porch, a pair of shears or scissors appears to have been carved into the soft stone; only one other example of this shape of inscription has been found in Wiltshire. It is thought that the symbol may be indicative of the importance of the textile or agriculture industry in this area.

### St George’s, Orcheston



The oldest part of this church is the north doorway, dated to the Norman period, although the walls of the nave and chancel are dated to the C13<sup>th</sup>. This certainly seems puzzling – a bit of a ‘chicken and egg’ situation! Many of the internal fittings and colourfully detailed stained and painted glass windows date from restorations undertaken in the C19<sup>th</sup>. While much of the interior of the church is quite austere, there is a quirky C12<sup>th</sup> carved head over the window at the west end of the north wall, and decorative stone carved cusped

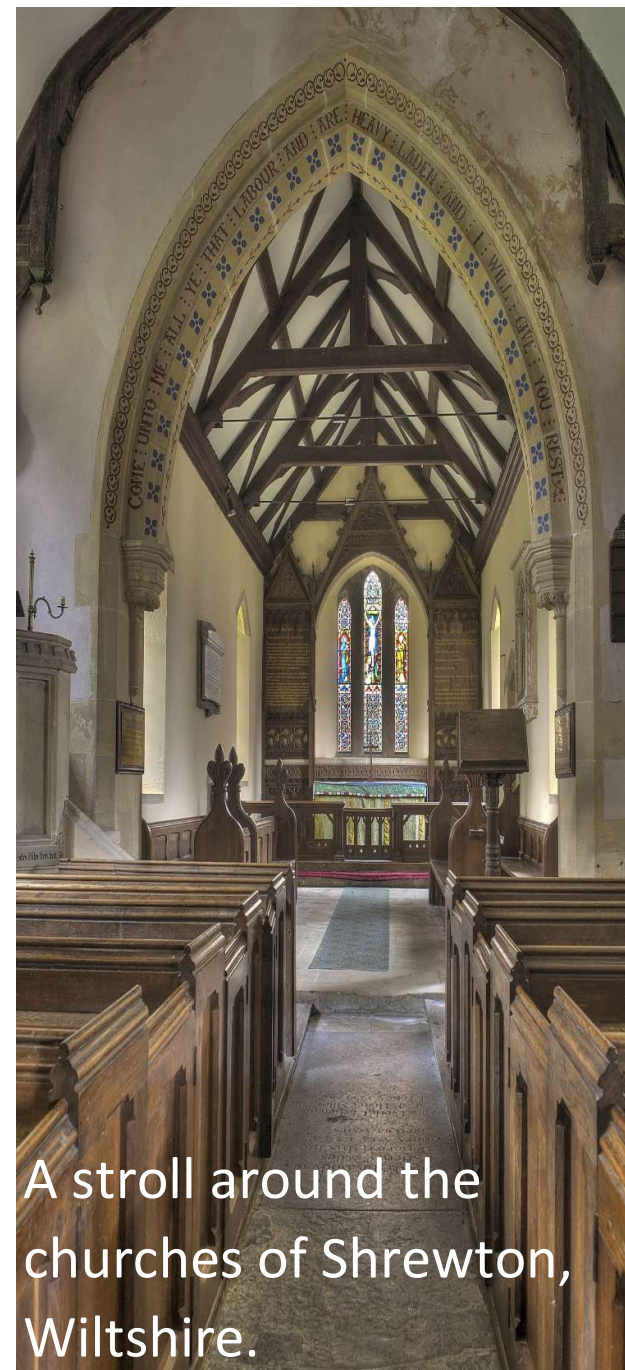
panelling to the intrados of the archway between the tower and nave. Some highly eroded remains of medieval graffiti were found in this church – see if you can spot any compass-drawn circles or intersecting arcs which might indicate apotropaic marks. There are three carved Grade II listed chest tombs in the churchyard which are



around 200 years old – but can you read any of the writing in the soft limestone?

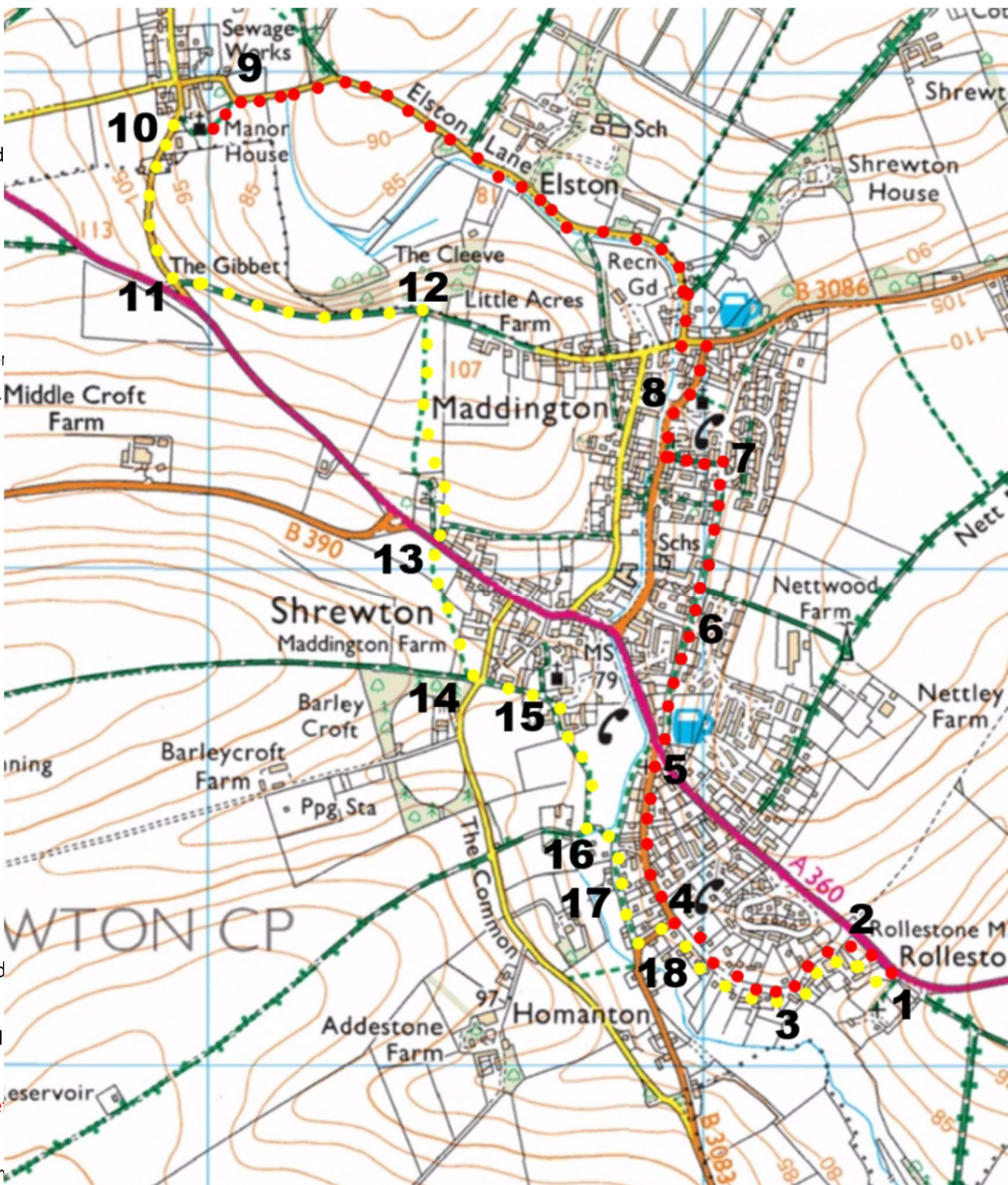
Other things to look out for on your way around Shrewton include the small

circular stone building with a domed roof by the roundabout at the south end of the High St. This is the ‘Blind House’, or lock-up, thought to have been built around 1700 to house prisoners *en route* from the Assize courts in Devizes to their destination at Fisherton Gaol in Salisbury. Near the north end of the High Street a plaque marks the birthplace of Sir Cecil Chubb, who gave the Stonehenge site to the nation in 1918.



A stroll around the churches of Shrewton, Wiltshire.

1. Park on grass verge at St Andrews Church (turn L before Shrewton village sign on A360 if approached from south)
2. Return towards the A360 on foot and turn L and L into Rollestone Road.
3. Follow Rollestone Road as it turns to the right.
4. Continue straight on when you reach the tarmac of Salisbury Rd noting the Flood Cottages as you pass on L hand side.
5. At junction with A360, take footpath opposite. **!!! Busy and fast road, cross with care!!!**
6. Cross Highfield Rise by the yellow grit bin. Continue straight at the first footpath crossing.
7. Soon after the path emerges onto the residential street, look for footpath sign on a lamp post on the right hand side pointing to a L turn down an alley that emerges next to the Methodist Church (Cafe open Tues 9.30-11.30, Sat 9.30-14.00 and Sun 12.00-15.00).
8. Turn R out of Methodist Church and follow road past Shrewton St Mary's church and the Plume of Feathers pub, turning L, then R up a narrow path before you get to the thatched building on your R. Follow path and turn L when you reach Elston Road. **!!! No pavement along parts of this section and the road can be busy!!!**
9. Over the hill, as you enter Orcheston on a sharp right hand bend, take footpath via stile on left taking you to **St George's Church, Orcheston**.
10. Exit St George's at other end of the graveyard past the little brick building and turn L onto the lane.
11. Just before A360, take the Bridleway on the left and continue until distinctive v-shape configuration of gates leading into horse paddocks on your right, before you reach any buildings.
12. Go through the v-gates and follow left hand side of field through paddocks to wicket-gate in far left corner. Go through and follow down to the A360.
13. On opposite side of the A360 is a stile into fields. Take this and head diagonally over two stiles, heading towards left hand end of woodland ahead of you on the high ground. **!!! 5 stiles on this brief section, we recommend you avoid it with dogs !!!**
14. Turn L at the woodland and straight over the lane, following an old buttressed wall until it ends with a gap leading to **St Mary's Church, Maddington**.



15. Return to the gap and turn L, follow track round to the right with black barn on your left and over the stile into sheep field (NB there are dog gates on these stiles).
16. At end of field turn L and follow path over footbridge and turn R at the T-junction of footpaths.
17. Continue straight, past The Fleming cottage and turn L onto Salisbury Road opposite Graten Cottage. **!!! Free range chickens !!!**
18. After 50yds turn R back onto Rollestone Road and retrace steps back to St Andrew's.

Before Step 9 on the walk, you can choose to do an additional (possibly muddy) loop in Orcheston by taking the bridleway on your right at the top of the hill, and turn R when you reach the road, to include a visit to another church dedicated to St Mary, the interesting Georgian Orcheston House, and the cob and thatch cottages at the end of the lane. Retracing your steps past the caravan site along the road is a very pretty and geometric chequerboard gable end wall of flint and limestone. Following the road back towards St George's, you will come across some more of the 'Flood Houses' built after a severe river flood destroyed a number of homes in the village in 1841.