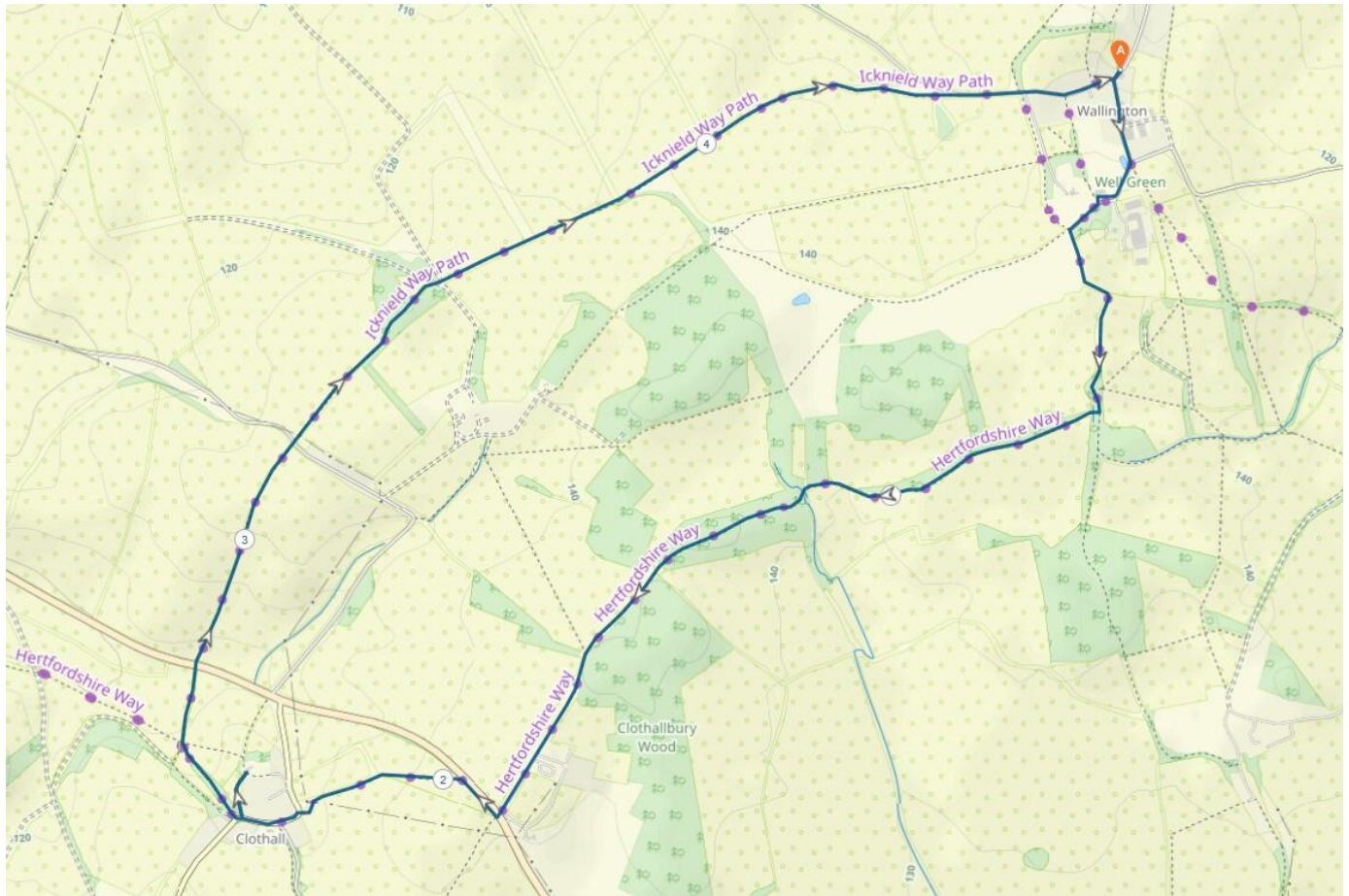




The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Wallington and Clothall



This 4.7 mile circular walk takes in the rural North Hertfordshire landscape around the small villages of Wallington and Clothall. Author George Orwell lived for a few years in Wallington, and his most famous novels - *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* - were in part inspired by events in the village.

Distance: 4.7 miles / 7.6 km

Ascent: 301 feet / 92 metres

Duration: 2.5 hours

Difficulty: Easy

Start / finish: Wallington village - Free parking is available opposite the village hall.
(What3words: quail.radar.informs)

Refreshments: bring a picnic

The walk starts and finishes at the small car park on The Street in Wallington, opposite the village hall.



To begin the walk head south up The Street with the red phone box on the right, pausing almost immediately to see the house once lived in by George Orwell and his wife Eileen, located just around the corner in Kit's Lane.



Orwell, an old Etonian whose real name was Eric Blair, came here in 1936 to escape London and try to become a full-time writer. The plaque on the cottage wall says that Orwell lived here until 1940, but within a year of his arrival he went to Spain to fight in the civil war. He suffered all his life from chest complaints and after returning from Spain spent time in hospital and abroad. Now a neat thatch, in Orwell's time the cottage was primitive, not unusual for that time, with a corrugated iron roof, and was known as The Stores. Orwell and his wife reopened the shop in the house, but it was never a commercial success.

Continue to walk up The Street passing on the left the black barn which is part of Manor Farm. The farm in Animal Farm has the same name.



Just past Manor Farm bear right onto the no-through road after passing a pond on your right. Keep going uphill then go up the steps on the right into the churchyard.



St Mary's church dates from the 15th century. Orwell married his wife Eileen here in June 1936. Inside, the pews are 15th century and the north aisle roof is also original, with carved angels on the beam ends.

Leave the churchyard through the gate in the south-western corner, then turn right onto the lane.

This is the route of the Hertfordshire Way which the walk follows to Clothall. Look for the roundels which waymark the Way. Make sure you follow white arrows on a green background (the reverse roundels mark the route of the Way in the opposite direction).



Follow the lane as it turns left and becomes a gravel track. Behind you there are views stretching away to the north and north-west.

After about 150 yards the track bears left, then after another 75 yards turn right onto the green lane between overgrown hedges.



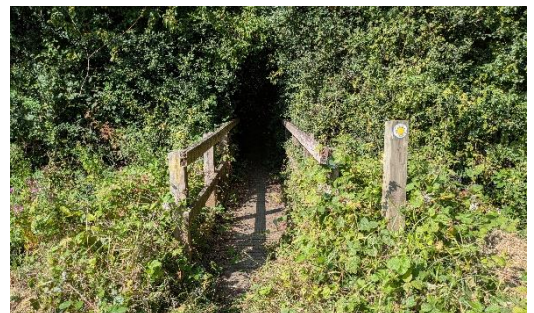
Further on the green lane makes a dogleg, then at the start of a straight section look for a small footbridge on the right. Cross over: beyond the bridge the route has a field to the left and trees to the right.

Continue along the edge of the field with trees and woodland to the right.



Eventually the path goes across a footbridge and into woodland beyond. The path turns left, then right, and continues on a wide grassy path through the wood.

The path continues in a southwesterly direction and emerges from the wood by a large multi-stemmed tree. Continue on the path with a tall hedge and woodland to the left and a field to the right.



The walk so far has run to the south and east of the crest of the chalk escarpment, which here reaches to just under 150 metres (490 feet) above sea level. On this high plateau between the headwaters of several rivers there are small irregular-sided fields, scattered woods, numerous greens or small commons, and winding lanes, many 'green' or unsurfaced. This landscape was at least in part created from former hilltop common grazing land or 'waste' in the 12th and 13th centuries, as population increases promoted piecemeal enclosures towards the edges of parishes throughout this part of Hertfordshire. Typically new farms clustered around a preserved piece of common land or green, as at Shaw Green south of Wallington. This process was perhaps at its height 800 years ago when King John was forced to submit to the Magna Carta in 1215 to fend off open rebellion by the English Barons.

At the end of the field, go straight on through the gap in the hedge. Continue along the edge of the next field, then between high hedges, emerging onto a wide track with farm buildings to the left.

Continue to the A507 road and cross with care. On the far side turn right on the verge and walk for 75 metres (still on the route of the Hertfordshire Way and signposted as the Highway verge link path).

Go through the gap in the hedge, then cross the field heading for the right-hand end of the line of telegraph poles, following the direction of the Hertfordshire Way arrow. When you reach the fence turn left and then go down the steps to reach the village street in Clothall.

Note - If the footpath across the field has not been reinstated, you might prefer to turn right and walk anti-clockwise around the edge of the field to reach the steps.

At the foot of the steps, turn left to walk through the village.

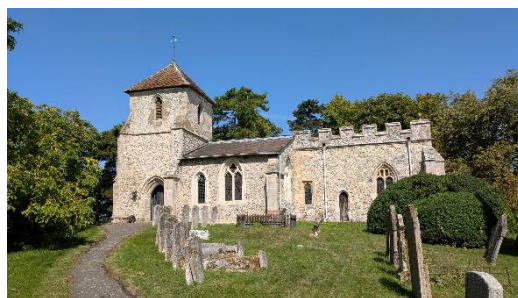
If you would like to visit the church, go past the post box and a noticeboard, turn right at the sign for Public Footpath 7, then go across the small meadow and through the gate into the churchyard.

Much of the church of St Mary the Virgin is 14th century, including the south door and its iron hinges and the tower which incorporates the porch, a relatively unusual arrangement. The font in Purbeck marble is 12th century.

A delightful east window depicts leaves and birds, many local species but some distinctly exotic: the glass is 14th and 15th century and possibly unique to England.

Return to the road, turn right and almost immediately right again onto Public Bridleway 5, still on the route of the Hertfordshire Way.

Go down the hill and through the metal gate, then after a short distance bear right at the fork in the path, and go through a second metal gate in the fence ahead.



The route leaves the Hertfordshire Way here and follows the Icknield Way Trail back to Wallington.

Turn right and keep to the left of the hedge. Cross the road and head uphill on the Icknield Way.



The landscape ahead is very different from the one encountered on the first half of the walk. Much of it is almost treeless and hedgeless, with far-reaching views (on a clear day) over the rooftops of Baldock to the north and north-west.



In both Clothall and Wallington parishes the mediaeval open fields, once managed in strips, were never formally enclosed (as they were, by Act of Parliament, in most places). Instead the strips were gradually amalgamated, resulting in the huge and largely featureless fields seen here today. In the area there are also strip lynchets - sudden steep changes of level - which may date back to the Bronze Age. These have been created by centuries of ploughing which pushed soil downhill.

George Orwell loved the countryside and its wildlife. He undoubtedly walked the paths and tracks around Wallington when he wasn't occupied with writing, looking after the shop, tending to his goats and hens, and cultivating fruit and vegetables in the garden. Later in his life, living back in London and working for Tribune magazine, he often wrote about the countryside and wildlife in his column 'As I Please'. He died from TB in January 1950, aged just 46.

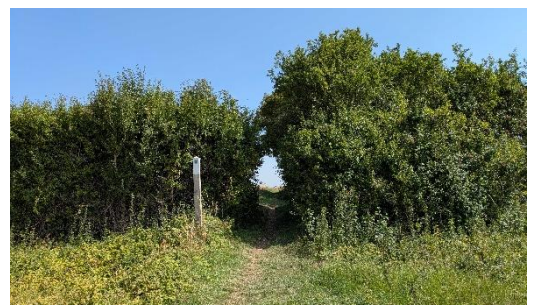
Cross over the minor road and keep going along the Icknield Way with a hedge on the right and the large field falling away over the steep scarp to the left.

Further on the route passes through a small wood.



Cross a track and keep going straight ahead.

Further on after a dip in the land, the route passes through a gap in a hedge.



Just over 1½ miles after joining the Icknield Way the route starts to descend towards the road on the outskirts of Wallington.

Join the road and continue along it back into the village. Keep straight on along Kit's Lane to pass the house where Orwell once lived, before returning to the car park.



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This route last walked by CPRE in August 2025.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and promote the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone. For more information on our work, or to sign up for our newsletter, make a donation, or volunteer with us, please visit www.cpreherts.org.uk

CPRE Hertfordshire is a registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.