

# Pensford to Woollard

- A 5 km (3 mile) circular walk starting at the Lock-Up



## Walk 3

One of a series of walks in and around Pensford



Pensford Local History Group

## Walking Route (A-U)

**A** **START** at the **Lock-Up 1** (at the junction of the High Street and Publow Lane). Next to it is the commemorative bench for **Acker Bilk 2**. Walk along Publow Lane on the pavement as far as the last house on the right and go through a kissing gate into a field. On your left, shortly, you see the **Pensford Memorial Hall 3** and Playing Fields.

**B** The footpath continues to move slowly away from the road and heads **DOWNHILL** to the left of All Saints' Church. If the last field is planted, it may be easier to walk down the left side and across the far end.

**C** There is a gate out into the road. Turn **RIGHT** onto the road and go **ACROSS Publow Bridge 4**. In front of you is **All Saints' Church 5**.



*NOTE: The stone with the date 1810 on the left parapet which is probably the date of major improvements to widen the old packhorse bridge.*

*NOTE: The grave of **Acker Bilk 2** is on the right as you enter the churchyard.*

**D** (**OPTIONAL DETOUR**) For a slightly longer walk (adding about 1.6 km (1 mile) in total to the walk), it is possible to see the Publow Oak – the 6<sup>th</sup> largest oak tree in England. If this option is attractive, **STAY** on the road and walk along it away from the bridge, taking the **FIRST LEFT** (Parsonage Lane). When the lane splits, take the **RIGHT BRANCH** (Blackrock Lane) until you reach Publow Farm on the left. Immediately after the gate into the yard is a footpath – take this and just past the last building is a stile into the field. Once over this stile, Publow Oak is 150 m (165 yards) almost straight ahead. The tree can be closely approached but please do not climb it or mistreat it in any way. **RETRACE** your route back to **All Saints' Church 5**.



**E** Go through the kissing gate to take the footpath **BETWEEN** the churchyard and the river, **CONTINUING** along the **LEFT SIDE** of the field. At the far end of the field, the path becomes a track and a bridge crosses the river.

*NOTE: The line of the original **Publow Mill** **6** leat on your left as you walk towards the farm buildings.*

**F** Keeping the river on your left, **CONTINUE** through four fields. In the last field, about 150 m (165 yards) on the left, is a wooden bridge across the river. Walk **ACROSS** the bridge and, from the right-hand side of the far end, you get good views of the remains of the old packhorse bridge and millpond, the site of **Woollard Mill** **7**

**G** Walk **BACK ACROSS** the bridge and **FOLLOW** the footpath to the **LEFT** through a kissing gate and **CROSS** the narrow footbridge over the quaintly named Candlestick Brook into **Woollard** **8** Turn **LEFT** on to the lane and **CROSS** the road at the row of cottages.

*NOTE: The right-hand cottage has a plaque indicating the height of the flood water when the River Chew flooded in July 1968.*

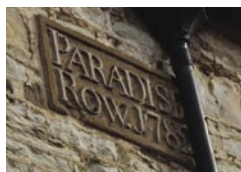
**H** Walk **ACROSS** the right-hand side of the bridge over the River Chew.

*NOTE: Just before you cross the bridge is a freestanding metal National Cycle Network sign. It is worth looking at in detail and is one of 1000 funded by Royal Bank of Scotland.*



**I** Walk **PAST Bell Farm** **9** and also the turning for Woollard Lane and **CONTINUE** to a row of terraced cottages on your right. **CROSS** the road and look back.

*NOTE: The name Paradise Row and the date 1782 in the middle of the row of cottages.*



**J WALK BACK** towards the bridge, staying on the right-hand side.



*NOTE: The plaque and stones next to Newbridge House. These are stones from the original bridge which was badly damaged in the July 1968 flood and which was later demolished.*

**K RE-CROSS** the bridge over the River Chew and **RETRACE** your steps back to the narrow footbridge over the stream.

*NOTE: Set into the wall on your right is a plaque (which may be hidden by ivy) to commemorate the Golden Jubilee (2002) of Queen Elizabeth II.*



**L RE-CROSS** the small stream using the narrow footbridge and go into the field through the kissing gate and turn **LEFT**. Walk along the **LEFT SIDE** of the field for about 120 m (130 yards) and, on the left are the ruins of the old **Tannery 10**. 40 m (44 yards) further on is a pedestrian gate which gives access to a small bridge.

**M CROSS** the bridge and immediately turn **LEFT** for about 50 m (55 yards) for a different view of the ruins from Candlestick Brook. **TURN AROUND** and follow the stoney path up the hill. At Birchwood House on **Birchwood Lane 11**, the lane becomes tarred. *NOTE: The views across from Birchwood House across to Pensford and to **All Saints' Church 5***



**N CONTINUE** for another 340 m (374 yards), past one kissing gate and take the second kissing gate on the **RIGHT**, almost opposite the entrance to **Lord's Wood 12**. Walk **STRAIGHT AHEAD** keeping the hedge on your left.

**O** After about 370 m (407 yards) at the bottom of the field, the path goes down to the left and, after about 20 m (22 yards), there is a kissing gate. **CROSS** the small stream go through another kissing gate and **CROSS** another stream.

**P** Go **UPHILL** through the woodland and, at the top, the path enters a field. Continue 30 m (33 yards) to a double kissing gate with a footbridge between. Go through these and turn **LEFT**. Just past a single oak tree, **BEAR RIGHT** and head **DOWNHILL** to the left-hand corner of the field and then go through the kissing gate that leads onto a wooden bridge. **CROSS** this bridge and walk up the field keeping the hedge to your left.

**Q** At the end of the field is a pedestrian gate which leads to a track that leads to Old Road after about 60 m (66 yards).  
*NOTE: The views back over to Birchwood House.*

**R** Turn **RIGHT** onto Old Road and walk **DOWNHILL** for about 40 m (44 yards). On the left, you will see the former council houses of Hillcrest.



*NOTE: Council houses Numbers 1-6 were the first in the village and some of the first in the country, built in the 1920s (this sign can be found on the wall of No 1).*

**S** **CONTINUING DOWNHILL**, Old Road becomes High Street at the point where it starts to descend at Leigh Cottage.

*NOTE: Leigh Cottage on the right, is a stone-built house which was the last thatched cottage in Pensford and was still thatched in 1978. The thatch was concealed under a "tin roof", painted light green. It was known as "the tin house" as a consequence and was originally a farm labourer's cottage for nearby Leigh Farm.*



**T** Approximately 100 m (110 yards) further **DOWNHILL** on the right is the **Old School House 13** and set into the wall just past it is a letter box.



*NOTE: The ER on the letter box is for Edward Rex VII. It is still in use although the opening is too small for many modern envelopes.*

*NOTE: The old terraced cottages on both sides. Near the bottom, on the left, is **The Old Bakery 14** with its original raised pavement.*

*Opposite is **Greens Folly 15**.*

*NOTE: The unusual house numbering (125-148) in the High Street indicating they were part of the **Popham Estate 16**.*



**U** A few more metres and you are back at the Lock-Up, just past the **George & Dragon 17** and **Village Green 18**.



*NOTE: The grooves in the paving slabs made by the stagecoaches as they went through the arch into the yard at the back of the inn at **The George & Dragon**.*

*NOTE: The house to the left of the pub has a "P" over the window, indicating it once belonged to the **Popham Estate 16**.*



## Points of Interest (1-18)

### 1 Lock-Up:

In C18, the Lock-Up would have been used for local drunks and for safe-keeping overnight of prisoners being moved by stage coach or awaiting trial by the magistrates who sat at The George & Dragon. This is a fairly rare survival and is Grade II listed. Probably built by the Popham Estate which owned much of Pensford and the surrounding villages and stocks may well have preceded it. It was last used in 1885 for a lad aged 14 who was found stealing mangel-wurzels (mangolds) from a farmer's field.



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### 2 Acker Bilk:

Bernard Stanley "Acker" Bilk MBE was a celebrated internationally known clarinet player. He was born in Pensford in 1929 (in the present Post Office) and returned to live here in later life and died in November 2014. In 1962, his "Stranger on the Shore" was the biggest selling single of the year and stayed in the charts for 50 weeks, although its best position was number 2. He is buried in the churchyard of **All Saints' Church, Publow** 5

### 3 Pensford Memorial Hall:

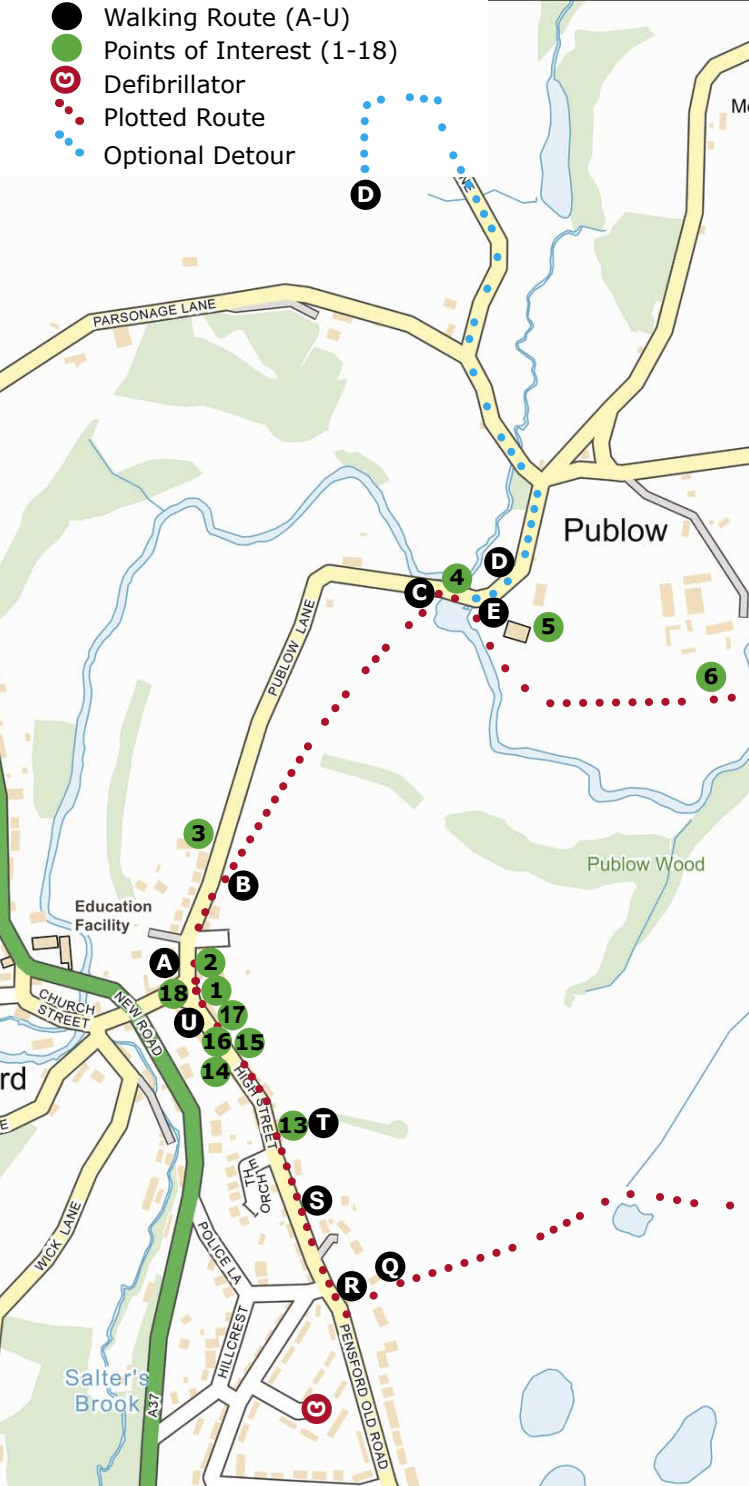
Publow and Pensford Memorial Playing Field and Village Hall (known locally as Pensford Memorial Hall) was originally an old Nissen hut given by Brigadier Newth of Amercombe House (north of Pensford on the A37) in 1948 as a memorial to soldiers killed in WW2. The current building was opened by **Acker Bilk** 2 on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 1966.

*NOTE: This dance poster inside the Hall is believed to be from the 1950s.*



# Walking Map

- Walking Route (A-U)
- Points of Interest (1-18)
- Ⓢ Defibrillator
- ⋯ Plotted Route
- ⋯ Optional Detour







Passion Alpacas

Endip View

WOOLLARD LANE

8 Woollard

9

I

H

J

K

C

L

PUBLOW LANE

7

G

M

10

F

Birchwood House

N

11

P

O

BIRCHWOOD LANE

12

### 4 Publow Bridge and River Chew:

Publow Bridge is medieval in origin but has been altered several times over the years. The date 1810 probably indicates the year when major



work was carried out, perhaps to widen the bridge. It has two arches, the one nearest All Saints' Church is the main one used for the flow of the river. Under the arch furthest from the Church are wooden slots which were probably used for sluice gates to control the water flow for Publow Mill.

### 5 All Saints' Church, Publow:

The Church is open to visitors as per below unless there is a service or private function:-

SUMMER (BST)

- Saturdays, Sundays and Bank Holidays

WINTER (GMT / UTC)

- Sundays and Bank Holidays

The building is Grade I listed and is indeed the only building of this class in the Parish of Publow with Pensford. Much of the Church dates from C14 and the tower is C15. The bells at All Saints' have often been referred to as one of the best peal of six bells in Somerset. Quite a statement when you consider that there are over 300 towers. Close to the gate on the right is Acker Bilk's grave with a poem he wrote about his youthful experiences of the River Chew. He asked to be buried as close to his beloved river as possible. On the river-side of the graveyard, it is possible to see the top of three arches from a small bridge that was used to provide water to Publow Mill.

Next door to the Church is the old Publow Vicarage built in C19 and now privately owned.



## 6 Publow Mill:

Up to C19, there were around 40 mills along the 27 km (17 miles) length of the River Chew, though not all were active at the same time. The battery mills at Publow and Woollard originally produced iron but were later converted to copper production. The line of Publow Mill leat is still clearly visible as a shallow depression to the left of the footpath between the Church and Church Farm where the mill was situated.

## 7 Woollard Mill:

The river has been excavated to provide a large pool to supply water to the mill. The mill was on the land on the other side of the river adjoining Mill Lane. A good view of the site is available by walking across the wooden bridge over the river. At the end of the mill pool closest to the wooden bridge, there is a ruined stone bridge that crosses the far side of the river.

This is thought to be part of an C18 packhorse bridge, possibly forming part of the original route from Keynsham Abbey (through Woollard, along Mill Lane, over the River Chew and along **Birchwood Lane** **11**) to the Cathedral at Wells.



## 8 Woollard:

Woollard has been designated a Conservation Area since 1990 and has a number of Grade II listed buildings, including the telephone kiosk (now housing the defibrillator), Bell Farm (formerly The Bell Inn), Newbridge House and Paradise Row (probably originally miners' cottages). Opposite Bell Farm is Mill Lane which was the original road out of Woollard past the mill. The building on the corner of Mill Lane, now split into two private homes (Chew Cottage and Newbridge House) was originally a Chapel and stonework patches on the external walls where large arched windows once were are clearly visible.

## 9 Bell Farm:

Until the dissolution of the monasteries, it was Priest House and, Newbridge House opposite was a chapel or chantry. There is evidence in both buildings of stonework which came from Keynsham Abbey and was incorporated into the buildings when they changed into a farm and a house respectively.



## 10. Tannery:

The ruined building was a tannery, providing significant quantities of leather. A water wheel used the stream to provide power for the required functions. The structure fell into disrepair toward the end of C19 and is one of the largest industrial ruins in the Chew Valley. One of the buildings has a barely legible date of 1852 or 1857.



## 11. Birchwood Lane:

In medieval times, this was the main route between Keynsham Abbey and Wells Cathedral used by pilgrims and for goods traffic. Bell Farm would have offered pilgrims a welcome place to stay overnight. This was probably an old drove giving access to the tannery and Woollard Mill. The only building up Birchwood Lane to Lord's Wood is Birchwood House which is on the left as the footpath becomes a tarmac lane. This was originally (in the 1760s) two farm cottages and associated buildings for pigs and other animals. The current owners have made significant improvements and it is now a single property.



## 12. Lord's Wood:

The privately owned wood has many public footpaths and is worth a detour. The pool in the wood once provided water to Woollard Mill during periods of low water. A 0.8 km (0.5 mile) leat or channel ran from the pool to the Mill.

## 13. The Old School House:

In 1813, a charity school was established in Publow Parish in a building owned by the Popham Estate, possibly here. At some point, it became the National School because, following the 1870 Education Act, the National School was enlarged to accommodate 120 pupils ranging in age from 4-14. There were two classrooms, one for infants and one for mixed (older) pupils. By 1912, Publow School was in a bad state of repair and the Parish Council met to discuss its future in light of the complaints it received from school inspectors and the changed requirements of the Government.

A new school was needed. But, by

November 1915, the Publow School closed: pupils now went to the new (current) school which had opened in 1896 (see Walk 1 for further details). Publow School's buildings continued to be used until the 1950s for various purposes, before being sold and converted into two private homes.



## 14. The Old Bakery:

Many of the buildings at the bottom of the High Street were originally shops, including

the old Post Office, a bakery, a general store, a Co-Op, a bicycle shop. The Old Bakery dates from early-C19. In front is a remnant of the original cobbled and raised village pavement.



### **15. Greens Folly (143-147 High Street):**

Dating from 1782, these terraced cottages were built for miners. In 1806, they were listed as a range of buildings let to Mrs Green, hence the name. This implies they were not owned by the Popham Estate. She was widow of Daniel Green who also owned Paradise Row in Woollard which bears the same date.



### **16. Hunstrete Estate (known locally as the Popham Estate):**

The Popham family, whose seat was Hunstrete House in Chelwood, owned much of Pensford and surrounding villages until their properties were sold at auction in 1911 and 1917. The houses in the High Street are numbered according to the Popham Rent Book.

### **17. The George & Dragon:**

This old coaching inn was a stop for stage coaches on the Bristol to Wells Road when the High Street was the main road before the A37 / New Road was built. It bears the date 1752. It had stables at the back, its own bakehouse, garden and orchard. The story goes that the horses found it difficult to pull the coach from the inn to the top of the High Street as it was so steep, so locals from the inn were paid to help push the coach. Only when they reached Leigh Cottage were they paid!

### **18. Village Green (triangle):**

The small grass triangle is all that remains of the original village green where regular markets were held from C14. Pensford Market was one of the most important in the county, specialising in broadcloth for which the West Country was famous. Excavations during C19 revealed the remains of a Market House where the triangle of grass lies in front of the Lock-Up. The market was considered the best place for public punishment which explains the site of the Lock-Up.





## Sponsorship and Acknowledgements

The Pensford, Publow and the Stantons Community Trust (PPSCT)

<http://www.ppsct.org.uk>

Publow with Pensford Parish Council

<http://www.publow-with-pensford-pc.gov.uk/pc/>

BOHIL (business occupational health)

Tel: 01761 231327

Dustin' Time (cleaning contractors)

Tel: 07711 160544

The Hollies (bed & breakfast accommodation)

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Tel: 01761 490217

The Pig near Bath (rooms and kitchen garden food)

Tel: 01761 490490

The Rising Sun (public house)

Tel: 01761 490006

TrueSpeed Communications Ltd (data communications)

Tel: 01225 300370

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## Walk 3

### A circular walk from Pensford to Woollard

Map	Map not to scale as re-sized for print
Distance	5 km (3 miles)
Time	Allow a minimum of 2 hours
Terrain	Medium. Mainly along footpaths, which can be muddy in wet weather, and with some quiet lanes
Start	Lock-Up, BS39 4HW

#### Getting to Pensford:

Road	Pensford is on the A37, approx 11 km (7 miles) south of Bristol and 18 km (11 miles) west of Bath
Bus	All buses through Pensford stop at Pensford Bridge
Parking	There is no public car park in Pensford and on-road parking in the village centre is very limited. Please consider using public transport, car-sharing or parking outside the village centre. Please park considerately
Refreshments	There is a coffee shop, a convenience store and several pubs

- This booklet is free but if you wish to make a donation towards its costs, or to a local charity, please use the appropriate donation box
- If you don't wish to keep this booklet, please pass it on

#### More Information:

A downloadable version of this booklet and links to more information about Pensford and surrounding areas are available on the Publow with Pensford Parish Council website

<http://www.publow-with-pensford-pc.gov.uk/pc/>