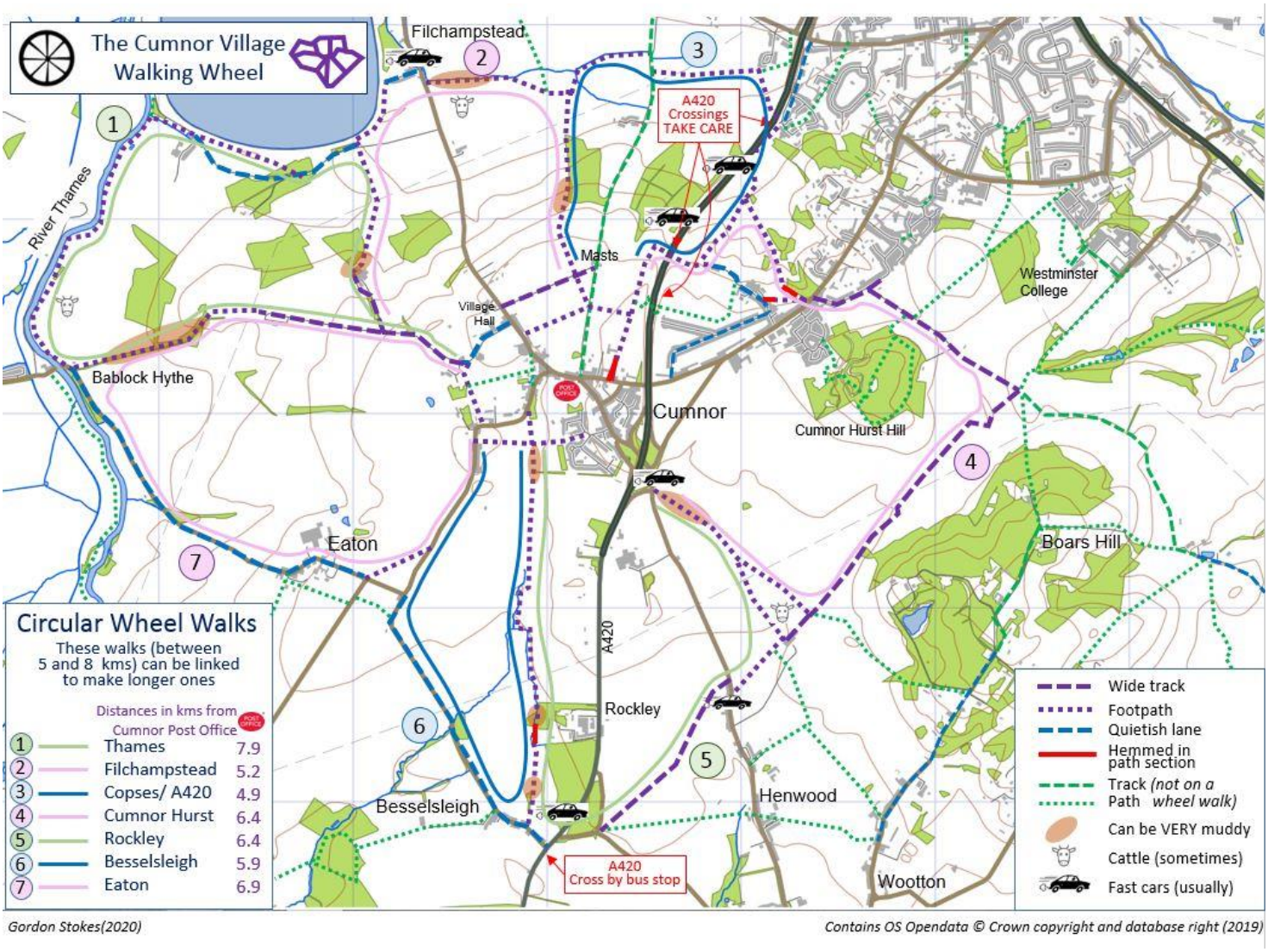
This piece was published in the June 2020 Cumnor Parish News. While it will hopefully be of general use it was written during the Covid-19 lockdown. And things can always change, so my apologies for any errors or inconsistencies

The Cumnor Village Walking Wheel

On various exercise walks it occurred to me that many form an extremely rickety cartwheel shape. They are shown on the accompanying map. The walks range from 5 to 8 kms (3 to 5 miles). You can link them to make longer walks – or you could string them altogether for a circular walk of about 16kms (10 miles). I apologise for the village-centric nature of the map. People in other parts of the parish may not find it so useful, but some walks can be done from most parts, and you may be able to take a bus, drive, or cycle to another part – and you don't have to start in the village. If you don't know the paths well you'll need another map for detail, but hopefully this will give ideas for walks.



Mud, sweat and tears

Up to the time of writing it's been generally very dry and sunny (with some notable wet spells). Most routes involve some muddy stretches in 'normal' weather and I've marked some sections that can get very muddy indeed, due to ploughed damp fields, or where walkers are channelled through paths with few alternatives which often encourages mud.

I've also marked some sections as "hemmed in" in red. These are generally short sections where it would be difficult to stay more than 2 metres apart from other walkers. In most of these you can see both ends at once, so in times of coronavirus please wait if someone is already using the stretch. On nearly all other paths you can find a 'snicket' or space to keep your distance.

As a rough rule you can cycle on most of the routes shown as tracks, but ones shown as paths are either not suitable, or not bridleways.

The A420 – Take Care

Some paths involve crossing major roads or walking short stretches of other roads that can be busy. Routes 3 and 4 involve crossing the A420 dual carriageway (on public footpaths where the central barrier has gaps to allow you to pass through). TAKE GREAT CARE, as even at 70mph it doesn't take cars long to get to you, and, of course, many travel faster (due to reasons that truly escape me). But it's much safer to cross from the outside of the bends where you can see further so I recommend Route 3 as anticlockwise and Route 4 as clockwise. You can avoid crossings altogether by using the Oxford Road bridge and Norreys Road at the Cumnor end and Nobles Lane and Orchard Road at the Eynsham Road end.

Be considerate

Most paths cross farmland – don't frighten livestock, and don't trample over crops. Leave gates as you found them, or obey requests to close them, for example. We still have some ground-nesting birds such as skylarks who nest in what looks like scrubland. Do please bag your dog's poo and take the bags with you – nearly all do, but we all know how unpleasant it is to tread in it.

Other paths

I've marked paths that form the wheel in mauve, but also show other public footpaths in green. The walk ideas are not prescriptive and some lovely walks aren't part of the wheel. Notable is the track North from St Michael's Church down Denman's Lane, past the phone masts to Denman's farm and to the Farmoor – Eynsham Road. This can be used instead of parts of Routes 2 or 3 quite easily. You can also extend walks by adding bits to the loops – Westminster College, Boars Hill, or to Appleton from Besselsleigh and back to Eaton.

One path I have omitted from the map is the continuation of the path from Oxford Road, behind the school (Routes 3 and 4) which goes through Saddle Copse close to the A420 and goes to another A420 crossing near Hid's Copse. Even in bone dry weather this is boggy, the path disappears in places, and the stiles and ditch bridges by the A420 are rickety. Go as far into the wood as is practicable but I wouldn't recommend using it as a through route. If I knew how to get it fixed I would – maybe other people do?

Old Father Thames

Unfortunately the River is a barrier. There used to be a ferry at Bablock Hythe. If this could be reopened, or a bridge built, it would open up a host of walks and cycle routes, as well as completing a gap in the Thames Path National Trail for long distance walkers. That would be great!