

Tiddington – Thame – Long Crendon – Chearsley - Aylesbury (The Thame Valley Walk)

A lowland walk with the river Thame rarely more than two fields away, visiting the largely unspoiled villages of Chearsley and Nether Winchendon and (if you wish) the picturesque High Street of Long Crendon. The field edges on the approach to Shabbington can be hard work if the vegetation is high, as can a number of arable fields after ploughing, but in good conditions it is easy walking.

Distance

Tiddington to Thame	5 miles (8 km)
Tiddington to Aylesbury (excluding any detours)	16 miles (25 km)

(Various intermediate distances are possible.)
No significant hills.

Ordnance Survey Maps

To do the whole walk you need the O.S. Explorer sheets 180 Oxford and 181 Chiltern Hills North, but you can start from Haddenham or Chearsley using the 181 only.

Transport

The 280 bus (two per hour, hourly on Sundays) links Aylesbury, Hartwell, Haddenham & Thame Parkway station, Thame town, Tiddington and Oxford.

The 261 from Aylesbury to Chearsley and Long Crendon (and Thame) has only a limited service, and none on Sundays or bank holidays.

Haddenham & Thame Parkway station is on the main Chiltern line from Marylebone and High Wycombe to Bicester, Banbury and the Midlands. Aylesbury is on the line from Marylebone via Amersham.

Except on Sundays, when the last bus is in the late afternoon, there is a frequent service between Aylesbury bus station and Haydon Hill, with a bus stop in Meredith Drive, north east of the end of the walk, between the railway bridge and the A41. (Less frequent buses go as far as the roundabout south west of the railway bridge.)

Refreshments

The Old Fisherman at Shabbington.

The nearest refreshment opportunities in Thame are 600 yards off the route.

The Churchill Arms and the Eight Bells on the route in Long Crendon and a number of others pubs elsewhere in the village, also a chip shop, Indian restaurant and convenience store.

The Bell at Chearsley 400 yards off the route, also a village shop.

The Crown at Cuddington, off the route. If you divert to Cuddington, it would be a pity to miss Nether Winchendon.

The Rose and Thistle on the A418 at Upper Hartwell is not indicated on the O.S. map (but the Bugle Horn is).

Route suggestions

To start from Tiddington, turn south, and take the Oxfordshire Way.

To start from Haddenham & Thame Parkway station, walk eastwards to the edge of the old part of the village at the Rising Sun pub, and turn left. There is no public way over the airfield or from the

industrial estate. If you come to Haddenham by bus, get out at the post office, at the northern end of the village.

To start from Chearsley, take the 261 bus from Aylesbury to Chearsley village green. Go down School Lane and Lower Green Lane and you are on the edge of the 181 map and of the village. Thame is a possible start/end point (there are bus stops at the sharp bend SW of the church), as is also Long Crendon.

The short cut through the Long Crendon industrial estate is mostly pleasant, and there may be items of interest to the mechanically minded. It avoids a long stretch of road – but it also avoids the very attractive Long Crendon High Street, and the pubs.

The eastern end of the Thame Valley Walk itself is attractive, but the way from there to Aylesbury station is not – though it may be better when the present extensive housing construction is completed. You may prefer to walk via Lower Hartwell or to take the bus from Upper Hartwell.

Points of interest

Long Crendon High Street has a wonderful collection of old houses, many thatched. From the early 15th century until the industrial revolution, Long Crendon was a major centre of needle making as a cottage industry; many of the cottages have large windows to give extra light.

The Courthouse at the far end dates from the 14th century, and was probably first used as a wool store. The manorial courts were held here from the time of Henry V until recent times, with accommodation for the poor on the ground floor. *The upper floor is open from April to September: Wednesday 2.00 to 6.00, Saturday, Sunday and bank holiday Mondays 11.00 to 6.00.*

The imposing parish church, with a magnificent 16th century east window and fine monuments, is unfortunately *not generally open to the public.*

Notley Abbey was founded in the mid twelfth century by a branch of the reformed Augustine order, and surrendered to the king on 9 December 1539. Near the abbey is a well preserved sixteenth or seventeenth century dovecote with its tiled roof on the hillside above the abbey.

In Chearsley tile-topped walls and houses with uneven or rounded corners are evidence of witchert construction. Witchert is a yellowish clay traditionally used for building locally. The walls are topped with tiles to prevent the rain washing away the soluble witchert.

Chearsley church has an interesting combination of old and new features.

Nether Winchendon has a number of houses dating back to the 16th and 17th centuries, and the church has some pre-Victorian furniture.

Eythrope Park is a Rothschild estate, acquired by Alice de Rothschild at about the same time as her brother acquired Waddesdon, and on many of the buildings can be seen the five arrows coat of arms, signifying the five sons of Baron Mayer Amschel von Rothschild who went out to found banks in the five principal financial centres of Europe in the nineteenth century.