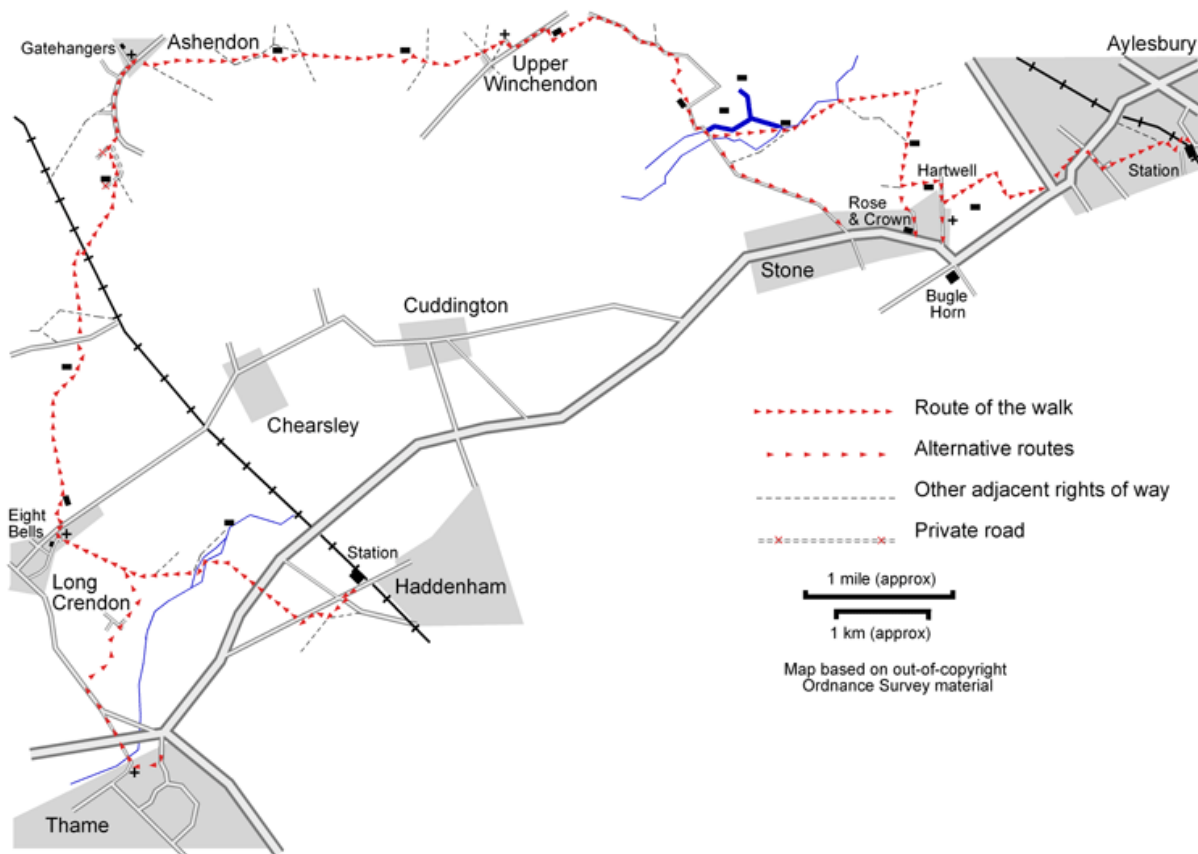


Haddenham or Thame – Long Crendon – Stone or Aylesbury

A rewarding but energetic walk. It crosses the Thame and goes up the open hills along the north of the valley. It is best done when it is reasonably dry underfoot; there are some arable fields to cross and some potentially muddy gateways, but the number is small relative to the length of the walk, much of which is through very pleasant pasture, with fine views. Much of the walk is on deposits of Jurassic age, and Portland limestone can be seen in many of the buildings and walls. If there is flooding or the river is likely to be full you should start from Thame, or possibly Long Crendon. The pub about half way has very limited opening times.

Checked 2009



Distances

Haddenham to Long Crendon	2.5 miles (4 km)
Long Crendon to A418 (Stone/Hartwell)	8.7 miles to 10.2 miles (14 km to 16.5 km)
Long Crendon to Aylesbury	11.5 miles (18.5 km)
Total	14 miles (22.5 km)

The route from Thame is about 300 yards shorter.

Two hills of about 80 metres (250 feet) and some smaller ones.

Travel

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

The 280 bus (two per hour, hourly on Sundays) links Aylesbury, Haddenham and Thame Parkway station, Thame town and Oxford, and can be caught on the A418 at Stone or Hartwell before the end of the walk.

The 110 (about two-hourly; no service on Sundays or bank holidays) links Aylesbury, Long Crendon and Thame and crosses our route just after the church. Coming from Aylesbury, get out on entering the village, just before the 30 mph speed limit (where our route leaves the village up the hollow way opposite). A few other buses serve the other end of the village; get out at The Square and go along the High Street to the church.

Detailed travel information for the whole of this area is available from the Traveline South East website www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk or telephone 0871 200 22 33

Refreshments

There are several pubs in Long Crendon; the Eight Bells (closed Monday lunchtimes) is nearest our route. The Churchill Arms is 500 yards away along the High Street.

The Gatehangers at Ashendon is open at lunchtimes on Tuesdays, Saturdays and Sundays only.

The Rose and Crown (pub and Thai) at Upper Hartwell / Stone is about 600 yards off the main route and the Bugle Horn about 800 yards a little later in the walk, both on the bus route.

Please always be considerate about muddy boots in pubs etc; either take them off, or cover them up. Never eat or drink your own provisions on pub premises (including the garden, if there is one).

Ordnance Survey Map

The start of the walk at Haddenham is on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map number 181, *Chiltern Hills North*. The route then goes on to number 180 *Oxford, Witney & Woodstock*, then returns on to sheet 181 shortly after Ashendon. The Thame start is on sheet 180.

Route

(Starting from Haddenham is not recommended if the river is likely to be full. Please see the note about starting from Thame at the end of this route description.)

On leaving Haddenham and Thame Parkway station, turn right, to walk along the verge of this busy road for 300 yards to a crossroads.

Turn left and almost immediately turn right on to a bridleway, which you follow for 250 yards to a path crossing with a kissing gate on the left.

Bear right across the field, returning diagonally to the road, aiming for where a line of trees joins the road.

Immediately before reaching the road, turn left to follow the permissive path on the field side of the road hedge for 200 yards.

Cross the road and cross a large field, bearing slightly left, to the very busy A 418. (The path is usually clearly visible across this field, parallel with the hedges on either side.)

Cross with great care and take the track ahead downhill.

Half right there are glimpses of Notley Abbey and of the well preserved sixteenth or seventeenth century dovecote with its tiled roof on the hillside above the abbey. The

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.

Where the track bears right after a clump of trees, continue ahead along the field edge to a stile. Go half left across the next field to a footbridge over the River Thames. If the river is full, even without flooding, the water may come up to about mid-calf for about 15 yards here. Once over the river turn left, and in 150 yards turn right to cross the two branches of the millstream (at the site of the old Notley Mill) and the left-hand stile ahead. From here to Long Crendon our route follows the Thame Valley Walk.

This is a 15 mile waymarked walk developed by Aylesbury Vale District Council with the help of the Aylesbury and District Group of the Ramblers' Association, based on a walk devised by Peter and Diana Gulland for our earlier publication *The Vale of Aylesbury Walker*.

Walk diagonally left across the field.

At the field corner cross a stile and a footbridge and continue along the edge of the next field, following the hedge as it bends to the right.

(**At a track crossing, the route from Thame joins from the left.)

Continue along the right-hand edge of two fields and at the end of the second field go through the second of two gateways on the right, and then immediately bear left, uphill, towards a small gateway at the far corner of the field.

Continue between fences, to emerge onto a drive (with a fine early eighteenth century house behind you on your right) leading to a crossroads, with the Courthouse opposite, and Long Crendon church on the right. (The Eight Bells pub is 150 yards to the left.)

The Courthouse (National Trust) 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.*

The High Street, which winds away to the left, 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.

At the crossroads leave the High Street (and the Thame Valley Walk) on your left and go ahead for a further 100 yards to reach a T-junction.

Turn right here, and 70 yards past the end of the speed limit, cross the road to go up a footpath, initially in a sunken hollow way.

At a stile in 100 yards, bear half right across a field aiming for a stile with a long barn behind.

Cross the stile, a footbridge and another stile into a farmyard, turn left, go through two gateways and then bear right past the end of the large barns to a stile and gate, and join a track bearing slightly left.

Go ahead along the track for the next half mile (0.8 km).

After crossing a stile by a gate across the track, bear slightly right down a small valley, passing just to the right of a clump of trees, then continue in the same direction up the opposite slope to a stile. Once over this, cross to the hedge 20 yards ahead and turn right, to follow the hedge/fence for 350 yards as it bends slightly left, then right, then left again, to a slight kink in the hedge.

Go through the gap in the hedge and continue, with the hedge now on your right, to a plank bridge and stile in the corner of the field.

Go diagonally left up the next field, making for the brow of the hill, then around the outside of the perimeter fence of Wombwells Farm to another stile in the field corner, to emerge at a road.

Go down the road 50 yards to gates into the field on your left.

Cross this field, passing 100 yards to the right of old farm buildings (converted for housing), to a gap in the hedge with a waymark post and plank bridge.

Bear slightly left across the next field, very slightly uphill, to a stile (there is another path going uphill further to the left).

Go diagonally down the next field (noting the ridge and furrow of ancient cultivation) to a stile in line with the farm buildings to the left of the summit beyond.

To your left you can see Chilton House. This was rebuilt for Lord Chief Justice Carter in 1740, and was a “reduced model” of the then Buckingham House, later to become Buckingham Palace. The palace subsequently had a new facade added in 1913, so the two buildings no longer look similar.

Continue diagonally over the next field to a gate and footbridge.

Once over the footbridge, follow the path through the wood, to cross the railway with care.

Go ahead up the next field to a gate and stile.

Go slightly left up the next field heading for a gate and stile just left of a clump of big trees.

Go ahead along the field edge and over three stiles to cross a farm drive.

Cross the stile opposite and continue with a large shed and then a steep slope on your right, to a stile on to a drive.

The view to your left is to the hill-top villages of Chilton and Brill. In mediaeval times Brill was a royal hunting lodge for the then extensive Bernwood Forest.

Continue ahead up the drive, with a tarmac private road joining from the right, to a public road, and turn left.

Continue up the road, ignoring turnings to the left until you reach Ashendon Church.

(The Gatehangers pub is 200 yards down Lower End, the road on the left immediately before the church.)

Parts of Ashendon Church date back to Norman times. Clear explanations of the points of interest are displayed.

Immediately past the church, go along the path to the right, beside the village hall, into a field.

Half left, you will see Watbridge Farm in the middle distance, and Upper Winchedon church against trees on the skyline; this is your direction for the next 2 miles (3 km).

As you come out into the field, straight ahead on the next ridge you can see the metallic dome of the Upper Winchedon observatory of the Aylesbury Astronomical Society. To the right of this on the more distant Chiltern Hills a sharp eye on a clear day may be able to pick out the Monument on Coombe Hill. Further right is Ellesborough church (below

the skyline), then the wooded summit of Pulpit Hill (Iron Age fort), then the white mark of Whiteleaf Cross. Then comes the Risborough Gap, with Lodge Hill rising out of it, then, further right, Chinnor Cement Works and the telecommunications tower at Stokenchurch.

As you move forward, Waddesdon Manor, built by Baron Ferdinand de Rothschild in the late nineteenth century, will come into sight on the wooded hill to your left.

In the upper part of the field the banks running down the hill are probably medieval property boundaries of the early village.

Bear left down this large field to a stile by a large tree 50 yards from the corner of the field.

Continue in the same direction diagonally over four more fields to a double stile with a plank bridge, then continue in the same direction over another field to another double stile with a gate 30 yards to the right of it, 200 yards before Watbridge Farm.

Go either over the stiles or through this gate, and 100 yards further on go through a bridle gate, continue in the same direction beside fence posts, then cross two fields, to the right of the buildings. At the far right corner of the second field, take the stile and footbridge to the left of the pond.

Follow the stream to the right 60 yards to cross a footbridge.

Bear half left, and go diagonally across four arable fields, to the left-hand corner of a small wood. The route should be marked out on the ground (though the farmer has two weeks' grace after ploughing); if it is difficult to see, look for hedge gaps in line with the left-hand corner of the wood four fields away (except in the second field, where you should aim for the middle of the wood).

On reaching the wood, cross the stile by the gate and skirt round to the left of the wood for 100 yards to cross another stile.

This is Decoy Wood. It is private, but you may be able to glimpse a slight hollow, the remains of the old decoy, a curved pond round which wildfowl were decoyed by a trained dog into a net at the end.

Turn left and go along the field edge and through a gate near farm buildings (Decoy Farm) to join a concrete farm track, which you follow up the hill to the right.

There is well-preserved ridge and furrow in the field.

As you reach the top there is a fine view to the left over the flat land towards the north-western corner of Buckinghamshire, with the old Westcott airfield (marked by lines of poplars) in the middle distance. On the hill to the right of that, Waddesdon Manor is just visible above the trees, and further to the right and further away, Quainton Hill with the mast on the top of the hill and the windmill lower down.

Continue to a cattle grid at the top of the hill.

Up the road ahead (not on our preferred route) are Rothschild estate buildings, as can be seen from the five arrows coats 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.

Go over the stile to the left here, towards the church. (Alternatively, in muddy weather you may like to continue ahead to the through road, where you turn left.)

At one time Upper Winchendon was larger than it is now. To your left you can see the remains of the fish ponds – two small ones at the bottom of the slope, and, just 100 yards to your left, a larger one for the use of the Manor House in the days of its greatness.

Continue ahead and turn right on to the stony track just before the church.

Parts of the church date back to Norman times, and there is a Norman arch in the porch. The church is usually locked, but the exterior is attractive and the porch offers shelter and (not very comfortable) seating. The entrance to the churchyard is at the far end.

Turn away from the church and go up the track to the road and turn left. (Beware of hidden drainage channels in the left-hand verge.)

On the left of the road, but only just visible, is The Wilderness, a remnant of a once great late seventeenth-century house and gardens, the home of Lord Wharton, an influential member of Oliver Cromwell's House of Lords, and of his descendants the Marquess and the Duke.

Aylesbury can be seen on the right, dominated by the County Council tower block, and on a clear day the Chilterns are visible beyond, stretching left past Ivinghoe Beacon and the white lion at Whipsnade on into Bedfordshire.

Continue 500 yards to Eythrope Park Farm on the right.

Go down the farm drive and turn left after the fine old house on the left.

Follow the field edge to a tarmac drive.

This is Eythrope Park, acquired by Miss Alice de Rothschild about the same time as her brother acquired Waddesdon.

Turn right along the drive, for three quarters of a mile (1.2 km), noting the fine trees, to where, after passing a concrete drive to the right, it bears slightly left, right, and left again, with a low wooded hill 300 yards ahead.

You have now joined the North Bucks Way, the first of Buckinghamshire's promoted routes, devised by the Ramblers in the 1970s. It runs from the Ridgeway at Great Kimble to Wolverton.

Go over the stile behind one of the largest chestnut trees on the right, bear left and go uphill, heading a little to the right of the wooded summit of the hill ahead.

Take the path into the wood for 100 yards, and then follow it as it bears left, to go along the left-hand side of a hedge, down to rejoin the tarmac drive.

Extensive new mixed-species tree planting has recently taken place on former arable land to your right.

Follow the drive ahead, with glimpses of Eythrope Pavilion to the left.

Eythrope Pavilion was built for daytime occupation only, Alice de Rothschild having been advised that to sleep near water would exacerbate the rheumatic fever from which she suffered. She therefore always returned to Waddesdon Manor for the night.

Continue past Bridge Lodge, a typical Rothschild estate house, to a bridge.

Strictly speaking this is not the River Thames, which is 100 yards ahead, but a diversion of it for the artificial lake on your left.

From here, the shortest and least muddy (but perhaps the least attractive) way to the A418 and buses is to continue up the tarmac drive/road ahead a little over a mile (nearly 2 km). (The next way out to the A418 is nearly twice that distance from here.)

The stop for Aylesbury is to the left, that for Haddenham over the road and to the right.

To continue towards Aylesbury, shortly after the bridge turn left, and watch out for a curiosity amongst the trees on your right.

Follow the track (later concrete) half a mile (0.8km) to a gate leading to stables.

Go over the stile next to the gate and continue ahead to a footbridge over a sluice.

Note the five arrows coat of arms of the Rothschild family on Weir Lodge opposite, and the ceramic panels with the words Concordia, Industria and Integritas.

Continue alongside the old channel of the River Thames and over a footbridge over the new channel to a kissing gate.

Details of the recent work here are given on a display board.

After a further 150 yards, with the river curving away to the left, go through the bridle gate ahead, and along the left-hand edge of a field 300 yards to gates taking you back to the riverside.

Continue beside the river to a gate into a fairly large field, where the North Bucks Way turns away to the right along the field edge.

Follow the Thames Valley Walk diagonally right across this field.

Go along the edge of the next field, and then up a fenced track, to the beginning of a small wood.

Turn right here and go up the edge of the field to Waddon Hill Farm.

Pass between the farm buildings, and after the last building take the stile on the left and continue ahead on the left of the hedge, to another stile back into the field you have just left. (This is the official route, but most people seem to stay on the right of the hedge.)

Continue along the field edge to a plank bridge on the left just before the field corner.

For buses back to Haddenham or on to Aylesbury and/or the Rose and Crown pub (about 600 yards away), instead of crossing the plank bridge on your left, you can go ahead into the next field, where you bear slightly left to a squeeze gap. Go past old farm building on your left, to exit on to a minor road, which you follow to the A418. The bus stop for Aylesbury is to the left, for Haddenham over the road and to the right.

To continue to Aylesbury, cross the plank bridge and stile to the left and head slightly left across two fields, to the left of farm buildings, to a minor road at Lower Hartwell.

Turn right and go up the road 250 yards to a stile on the left.

Note the characteristic rounded corners of one of the houses, constructed of witchert, a local clay traditionally used for building.

For buses back to Haddenham or onwards to Aylesbury, and/or for the Bugle Horn pub, continue up the minor road half a mile (0.8 km) and turn left at the main road. The bus stop for Haddenham is on the other side of the road.

A short way along the minor road is a structure in Egyptian stile over a spring, dating from 1830, and you cross an ornate bridge, constructed to allow private access under it from the part of the grounds of Hartwell House on one side of the road to the other.

To continue on foot to Aylesbury, go over the stile.

To your right are the grounds of Hartwell House. The house was built for the Hampden and Lee families in the 16th and 18th centuries. From 1809 to 1814 it was the home of Louis XVIII, exiled King of France and his family. When he returned to reclaim the throne, he laid out an English Garden at Versailles, modelled on that of Hartwell.

It subsequently became the home of Ernest Cook, heir to Thomas Cook of tourism fame, then a finishing school and secretarial college.

In more recent years it was lovingly restored at great expense and converted into a luxury hotel and restaurant, and it has been used for at least one high level diplomatic meeting. Many of the rooms are as they were in the 18th century. The main hall features a Jacobean staircase, with 24 carved figures surmounting the balusters, including more recent additions such as Sir Winston Churchill and GK Chesterton.

In front of the house you may be able to see the equestrian statue of Frederic, Prince of Wales, the son of George II and the father of George III, and said, by his mother, to be “the greatest ass, the greatest liar and the greatest canaille and the greatest beast in the whole world.”

Follow the path to a squeeze gate, then over a footbridge, on to a golf course.

Continue ahead (possibly glimpsing through the trees ahead the spire of Aylesbury church above the rooflines), to a hedge at the far side of the golf course, with playing fields beyond.

Turn right for 400 yards (initially with the hedge on your left, then going through a squeeze gate and continuing in the same direction along the edge of the sports field to the rough ground at the end, where you turn left.

Just before you reach the rough ground, there is a gap in the fence on your right, leading to a pleasant pond, to which access seems to be allowed or at least tolerated.

There is exceptionally well-preserved ridge and furrow here, though a substantial part of it has recently been levelled for the playing field on your left.

The official route along the near edge of the rough ground to a gateway in a mesh fence is disused, and people mostly loop round the far side of the rough ground and come back to the gateway.

Go through the gateway and ahead to cross Coldharbour Way, the outermost road in Aylesbury, and continue ahead, at first alongside the bus lane and then on the pedestrian/cycle way to the left of the road hedge, 600 yards to traffic lights.

Turn right, and immediately after the first road on the left, Battersby Mews, turn left along Thame “Road” (though this is only a footpath!).

Follow this to the end and go over the new bridge over the railway.

For the railway station turn right. The bus station and the town centre are ahead.

Starting from Thame

To start from Thame, make for the church.

Coming from Haddenham or Aylesbury, get off the bus at the first stop in Thame, continue ahead, then turn right next to the cricket field.

Opposite the church go down the disused road for Long Crendon, over the river bridge (entering Buckinghamshire), to the by pass.

Cross with care, go up the old road opposite and continue along the present B4011.

130 yards after the footway changes sides turn right at a stile.

(If the fields are flooded, you can continue up the road to Long Crendon, then at the square turn right along the High Street, to the church. The High Street has many attractive old buildings, and you might indeed choose to go this way to see them.)

Go along the left-hand side of two fields, then diagonally left across two more fields, to a stile and footbridge into the Crendon Industrial Estate.

The exit from the estate is opposite where you entered it, but you may need to zigzag past construction work, to exit along Ridge Way.

Continue along the right hand hedge then ahead to go through a hedge gap.

Turn left along the field edge to the next field corner, where you join the route from Haddenham described above (**) and turn left for two fields.