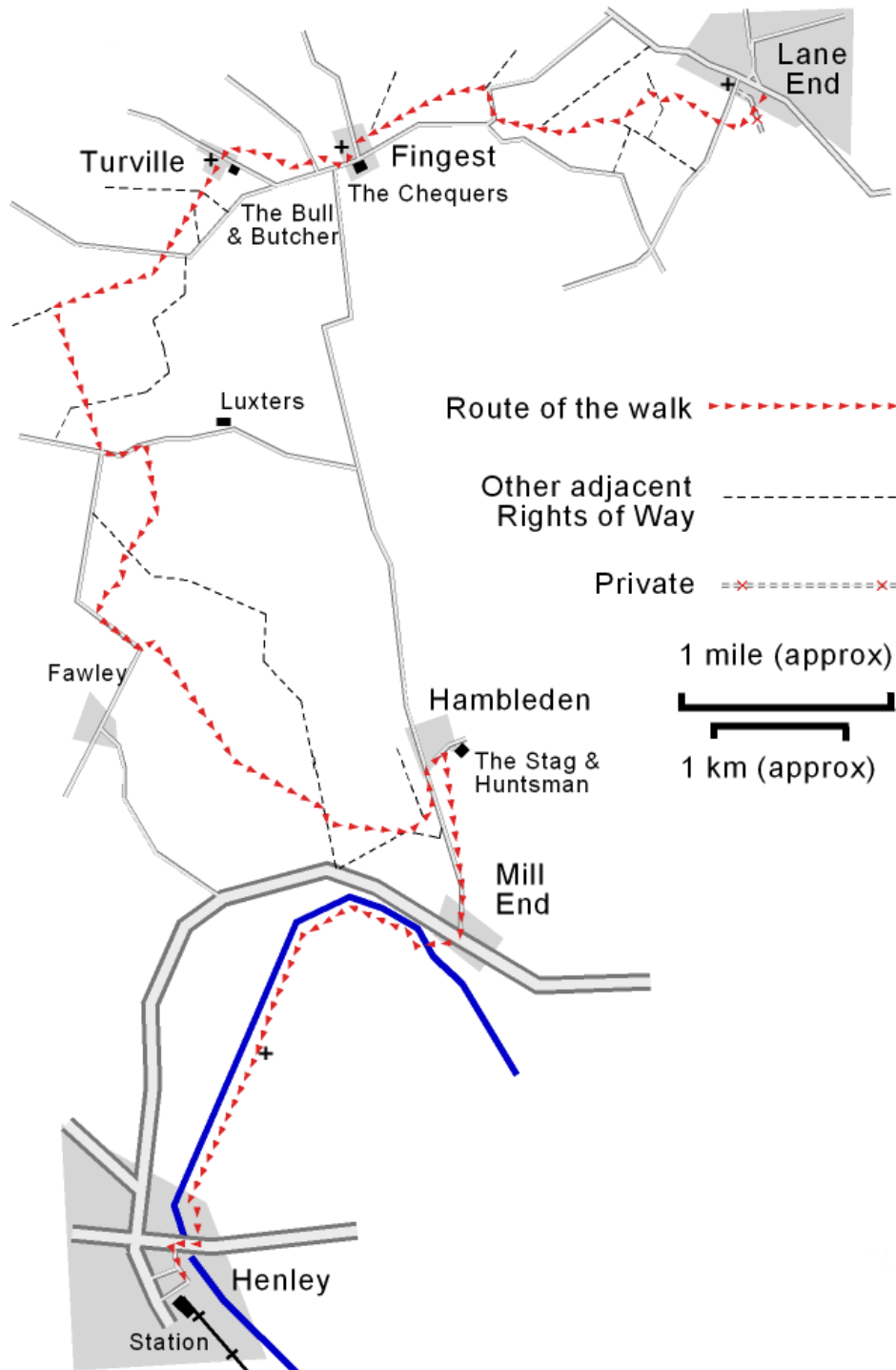


LANE END - MILL END (HAMBLEDEN) - HENLEY

A moderately hilly walk through some of the best of the Southern Chilterns scenery, red kite country, visiting three picturesque villages with characteristic flint and brick buildings, going through extensive beechwoods, and finishing down the Hambleden Valley to the Thames, with an optional three mile (5 km) riverside extension to Henley.

Checked 2008



Distances

Lane End to Hambleton Mill End	10 miles (16 km)
Hambleton Mill End to Henley	3 miles (5 km)
Lane End to Henley	13 miles (21 km)
500 feet (160 metres) ascent, much of it shortly after Turville.	

Travel

The number 12 bus from High Wycombe to Lane End runs half-hourly Monday -Saturday (9 till 5 approx, less frequent outside these times), hourly Sundays 10 till 8 approx. There is also the 339, hourly Monday to Friday only, which takes a more direct route.

Mill End (Hambleton) and Henley are on the Reading, Marlow and High Wycombe route with about two buses an hour (fewer on Sundays). There is a bus shelter at the Mill End stop for buses to Henley; it is not known whether buses in the other direction will stop if hailed from it!

Trains run from Henley to Twyford, with connections to Paddington and Reading.

Travel information for Buckinghamshire is available on www.buckscc.gov.uk/travelinfo or by telephoning 0871 200 22 33.

Map

The whole of this walk is on the O.S. Explorer map 171, *Chiltern Hills West*.

Refreshments

There are several pubs at Lane End.

The Chequers at Fingest.

The Bull and Butcher at Turville.

Luxters Winery and Brewery, nearly half a mile (0.7 km) off the route, sells drinks by the glass and packets of crisps etc.

The Stag and Huntsman at Hambleton.

There is a general store and post office at Hambleton selling fruit, ice cream, etc.

(The Walnut Tree at Fawley has closed.)

Henley has a wide choice of pubs, restaurants and shops.

Route

Get out as the bus enters Lane End and walk ahead towards the middle of the village to the Osborne Arms, opposite one of the village ponds.

While this part of the village retains its charm, most of Lane End is now a dormitory suburb. In the 19th century Lane End was one of the centres in this area for chairmaking, linked with the local craft of “bodging” or chair-turning, which was carried out by local men working directly in the woods, using pole lathes.

Go down a narrow path just to the left of the Osborne Arms to a drive and a brick wall.

Follow the wall slightly right, cross the gravel in front of a house, then go ahead by a wall again for a further 100 yards until the fence on the right ends.

Here bear right and go between trees to reach a road.

Cross the road and go up the drive opposite, which leads past the Forge Works to the former Jolly Blacksmith pub just beyond.

Take a path on the right immediately after this building, go through a kissing gate and continue into the corner of a wood (Fining Wood).

The path descends to cross a bridge in a gully, then climbs again, keeping just inside the edge of the wood for 250 yards, to a field corner, where the path turns left, following the wood edge, then forks. Here keep right to go downhill into another gully and shortly afterwards join a bridleway coming from the left.

Continue ahead along the bridleway for 30 yards then fork left, to a kissing gate at the corner of the field visible a short way away (the path may be very indistinct after leaf fall, but white arrows on trees show the way).

Go through the gate and take the field-edge path, with the wood on your right, keeping right after the next kissing gate, still along the field edge, to re-enter the wood at the next corner.

Follow the fenced path through the wood to a gate.

Go through the gate and follow the field edge ahead, turning right at the next corner, to reach a kissing gate at the far corner.

Go through the gate and continue gradually downhill, with a fence on the left and bushes on the right, and cross a stile, after which the gradient steepens and the view widens to reveal Fingest down the valley.

From here there is a very good chance of seeing red kites. They were introduced some years ago on the late John Paul Getty's nearby Wormsley Estate and have bred very successfully. These magnificent birds soar in wide circles for hours, and can be recognised by their deeply forked tails.

Continue downhill to a road (Fingest Lane).

Turn right and go along the road 200 yards to where the road bends right and there are a few steps and a stile on the left.

Go over the stile and follow the hedge round to the left (avoiding another path that crosses the field to the right) to the next stile.

Follow the path slightly uphill, with the hedge on your left, to the corner of a wood.

Pass a farm track down to Hanger Farm on your left, and continue ahead with the wood on your right, with another track joining from the right after 200 yards, to the end of the wood.

Follow the track ahead until it bears left, where you go over a stile ahead.

Continue along the edge of two fields separated by a stile, with Fingest church visible ahead, then pass between garden fences to a road.

Turn left for about 50 yards to the churchyard gate.

The most interesting feature of the church, apart from its lovely setting, is the large Norman tower with its later double saddleback roof. It has been suggested that the tower originally served as the nave and that the present nave was then the chancel.

Follow the path diagonally across the churchyard to another gate, turn right, and cross a small green to a path at the far side, hidden by a bush.

Follow the enclosed path to the corner of a wood.

Take the leftmost of three paths to go along the edge of the wood to a road.

Cross the road and take the path ahead, which contours the hillside (where, in places, the path can be very slippery in wet weather), to a stile into a field.

Cross the field diagonally down to a kissing gate in the far corner and turn left immediately down a stony track to the village green. (The Bull and Butcher pub is a short distance off your route to the left.)

Turville is surely one of the prettiest village in the Chilterns, with its typical brick and flint cottages, small green, quaint half-timbered pub, and village church in its quiet churchyard, all in a deep Chiltern valley overlooked by a windmill. It's not surprising that it is often used as a setting for films and television. The windmill, for example, featured in the film *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*. Author and playwright John Mortimer lives nearby, and the television film about his father, *Voyage round my Father*, which was Lord Olivier's last role, was made here, as were the two television serials *Paradise Postponed* and *Paradise Regained*. More recently, the television comedy series *The Vicar of Dibley* and the wartime drama *Goodnight Mr Tom* were filmed in Turville.

The parish church has a beautiful small stained glass window by John Piper, who designed the glass for Coventry Cathedral. He lived at nearby Fawley Bottom, just a mile from our route.

Cross the green towards the churchyard gate and go up a narrow lane to the left past attractive cottages.

At the end of the lane continue ahead up a bridleway for nearly half a mile (0.7 km), ignoring paths to left and right, with marvellous views of the upper Hambleton Valley opening up to the left and behind you, to a gate on to a lane, to the left of Dolesden Farm.

Cross the lane and continue in the same direction up a rough fenced track to a small wood, where the track bears slightly right. This is a good place to enjoy the classic Chilterns view behind you, including the windmill above Turville.

Follow the track uphill through the wood and continue in the same direction over a stile by a gate and along the crest of the hill to Southend Farm.

Cross a stile by the gate, and go ahead along the tarmac farm drive, keeping the farm buildings on your left, for 400 yards, to a stile on the left (opposite a short post-and-rail fence and a five bar gate in the corner of a garden).

Cross the stile and the field beyond to the corner of a wood, to the left of buildings in a dip.

Go over the stile into the wood, and go downhill between holly bushes, then up the opposite slope, keeping close to the edge of the wood, to a field.

Cross the field (the official route bears right for a 30 yards along the field edge to a waymark post and then turns left across the field) aiming to the left of electricity poles on the skyline near a group of trees, to a fence.

Do **not** cross the stile ahead, but turn left to go alongside the fence to a stile into the wood at the field corner.

Continue ahead downhill in the wood, cross a track in a valley and climb the opposite slope, keeping close to the edge of conifers for most of the way, to a stile at the top of the wood, into a field ahead.

Cross the field to a gate and stile near the far left-hand corner.

Cross the stile and take the road to the left into the wood for 500 yards (curving left, right, left and right again before straightening out for the last 250 yards) to a track on the right, with a tree with a thick twiggy trunk exceptionally close to the road just beyond it.

(There should be a Public Footpath signpost; the extra detail is given only as a precaution in case it is missing. If you come to open fields on your left, you have gone 400 yards too far. Luxters winery and brewery is 300 yards further along the road.)

Follow the track into the wood for 50 yards to a gate below electricity lines.

Follow the track ahead, roughly at right angles to the electricity lines, dropping very slightly into a dip across the head of the valley on your left, to a stile into a field corner. (Fading white arrows on trees show the correct route.)

Cross the stile, turn right and follow the field edge to the corner of the wood.

Turn left, and follow an old hedge and fence to two gateways.

Ignore a fenced track to the right and go across the next field to a stile at the nearest point in the hedge ahead.

Cross the stile into the fenced path ahead, and turn left for a few yards to a gap in the fence on the right.

Go through the gap and cross the field ahead, then follow the curving track to the left, with the fence on your right, to a stile on your right. (The route on the ground does not quite agree with the route shown on the Ordnance Survey map here.)

Go over the stile to pass to the left of converted farm buildings (Lower Woodend Farm).

Go through the gate ahead and follow the drive to the road.

Turn left, and go along the road 150 yards to Roundhouse Farm.

It is said that the tower was added to the farmhouse here in order to improve the view from Fawley Court, three miles (5 km) away, though intervisibility now seems doubtful. Fawley Court is hidden beyond the woods you will see on your right after you turn left here.

Turn left and go along the track, which narrows to a path at a house on the left. (There is a seat with pleasant view of the Thames Valley towards Henley).

After the seat, the path continues with a field on the right to enter woodland ahead.

Follow the path, keeping just to the right of the top of the ridge, in pleasantly varied woodland for almost a mile (1.4 km) before bearing gradually down the left-hand side of the ridge to come out of the wood, with a fine view towards Marlow (hidden by the wooded hill ahead) and of the Thames towards Henley to the right.

Bear left downhill to cottages and a roadway and turn right for 100 yards.

You will see that the second cottage has a monogram “WHS” above the door. This is the first indication of WH Smith’s association with Hambleden. Having made his money by building up a successful chain of newsagents from railway bookstalls, he acquired Greenlands, the nearby house on the Thames and the large estate which went with it, including most of Hambleden. He went on to a successful political career, becoming eventually First Lord of the Admiralty and Leader of the House of Commons, and was created the first Viscount Hambleden. On his death in 1895 he was buried in Hambleden churchyard.

Turn left along a bridleway between hedges to the corner of a wood (or for buses continue on the roadway to the main road and turn right, but take great care crossing the main road).

Continue, keeping close to the lower edge of the wood. Ignore the first track branching left, and continue 250 yards to a path bearing left (opposite a path that enters the wood from a field diagonally behind you on the right).

Go up the path on the left, through a clearing to a path junction, just before the crest of the hill.

Continue ahead, descending gradually, and passing the former school (given to the village by WH Smith) on tarmac, to a road junction.

Take the minor road ahead towards Hambleden village for about 100 yards, to a kissing gate. Here our route turns right, but it's worth continuing ahead to look at this very attractive village.

Hambleden has been described as one of the prettiest villages in England, both for the harmony of its brick and flint cottages, and for its position in the lovely valley running down to the River Thames. It has been in the ownership of the National Trust since 1944.

The parish church has several interesting features. There is a touching monument to Sir Cope D'Oyley, his wife and all ten of their children. Apparently those who carry skulls died before their parents. In front of the memorial is an oak chest which belonged to Lord Cardigan, who led the ill-fated charge of the Light Brigade. Some richly carved wooden panels used as an altar in the south transept are said by tradition to be from Cardinal Wolsey's bedstead!

As well as that of WH Smith, the churchyard contains the grave of Major George Howson, who started the tradition of wearing poppies on Armistice Day, and set up a factory for making them. There are also two 18th century mausoleums. Beyond the church is the Manor House, originally built in 1603, and birthplace of Lord Cardigan.

Also at the top of the village, and easily missed, is the Stag and Huntsman pub. As you leave Hambleden, note the graceful 18th century former rectory on the hillside just outside the village.

From the kissing gate, the path bends gradually right, approximately parallel with the right-hand field boundary, to reach a kissing gate to the right of a small bridge.

The bridge is over the Hambleden Brook, one of many Chilterns chalks streams that periodically dry up, as the result of lack of rainfall and excessive extraction of water from the aquifers.

Cross the track here, and continue forward through the next field, again roughly parallel with the right-hand field boundary, making for the right-hand far corner of the field.

Go through the kissing gate at the road junction, cross the side road, (there are toilets in the car park 50 yards behind you to your right) and continue ahead on the pavement, initially on the left of the road, but crossing shortly before the junction with the main road.

Even if you are finishing the walk here, it is worth continuing to Hambleden Lock. Cross this busy road with care and turn right. The official route is not along the drive to Hambleden Marina but just beyond it, along the public footpath to the left at the far side of a cottage, needing great care along the road edge for about fifteen yards.

On reaching a gate, turn right between fences just to the left of the tall white building (Hambleden Mill) to reach the long walkway across the top of the weirs to the lock.

Hambleden Mill and the Mill House, to your right as you cross, together form one of the most photographed spots on the Thames. Both are 18th century, but there is said to have been a mill here since the 16th century.

Extension to Henley-on-Thames

If you are continuing to Henley, cross the lower lock gates and turn right. Directions are hardly necessary – simply follow the river bank for the next three miles (5 km). *However, there are likely to be diversions during Henley Regatta week.*

We are now in Wokingham Unitary Authority (formerly part of Berkshire), and shall be until we cross the river again on reaching Henley, in Oxfordshire.

In half a mile (0.8 km), the large white house on the opposite bank is Greenland, built about 1810 and later enlarged for WH Smith. It is now the Henley Management College. Though it is still a beautiful house, the effect is somewhat marred by various modern extensions and annexes.

Another half mile (0.8 km) brings us to Temple Island, and at the further end of it is the elegant folly designed by James Watt in 1771. We are now on the longest straight stretch on the whole of the Thames.

Just beyond the island is the start of the Henley Regatta course. In 1829 the first Oxford and Cambridge boat race was held here. The regatta has been held every year since 1839, and for a few weeks every summer the fields on this side of the river are full of tents and enclosures, and the river even busier than usual, with boats of every kind.

In another quarter of a mile (0.4 km), shortly after passing, on our side of the river, the small village of Remenham with its Victorian church, the handsome brick facade of Fawley Court can be glimpsed between the trees on the other side. It is claimed that Sir Christopher Wren had a hand in the design of the house, which was completed in 1684. In the 1770s James Wyatt carried out a lot of work in the interior, and around the same time the park was laid out by Capability Brown. Since 1953 the house has been owned by the Polish Congregation of Marian Fathers. *Open to the public from March to November, on Sunday, Wednesday and Thursday afternoons.*

From here to Henley the path passes some interesting houses and rowing club headquarters.

Approaching Henley, note the Edwardian boat houses on the other side.

As we near Henley Bridge, the path leaves the river for a very short distance. On reaching a road, turn right to cross the bridge.

The elegant five-arched bridge replaced an earlier wooden one in 1786. The stone masks on either side represent Isis and Father Thames.

Beyond is the impressive parish church, whose tower dominates the town and has been visible since we rounded the bend in the river at Temple Island.

Once over the bridge, to reach the station, turn left.

For buses, go straight ahead along Hart Street. Those for Reading stop on the left before the next crossroads; those for High Wycombe stop in Bell Street, the next turning on the right, before reaching the impressive Town Hall. Because of the one-way system, buses on both routes seem to be going in the same direction, but from different stops.

Route devised by John Esslemont