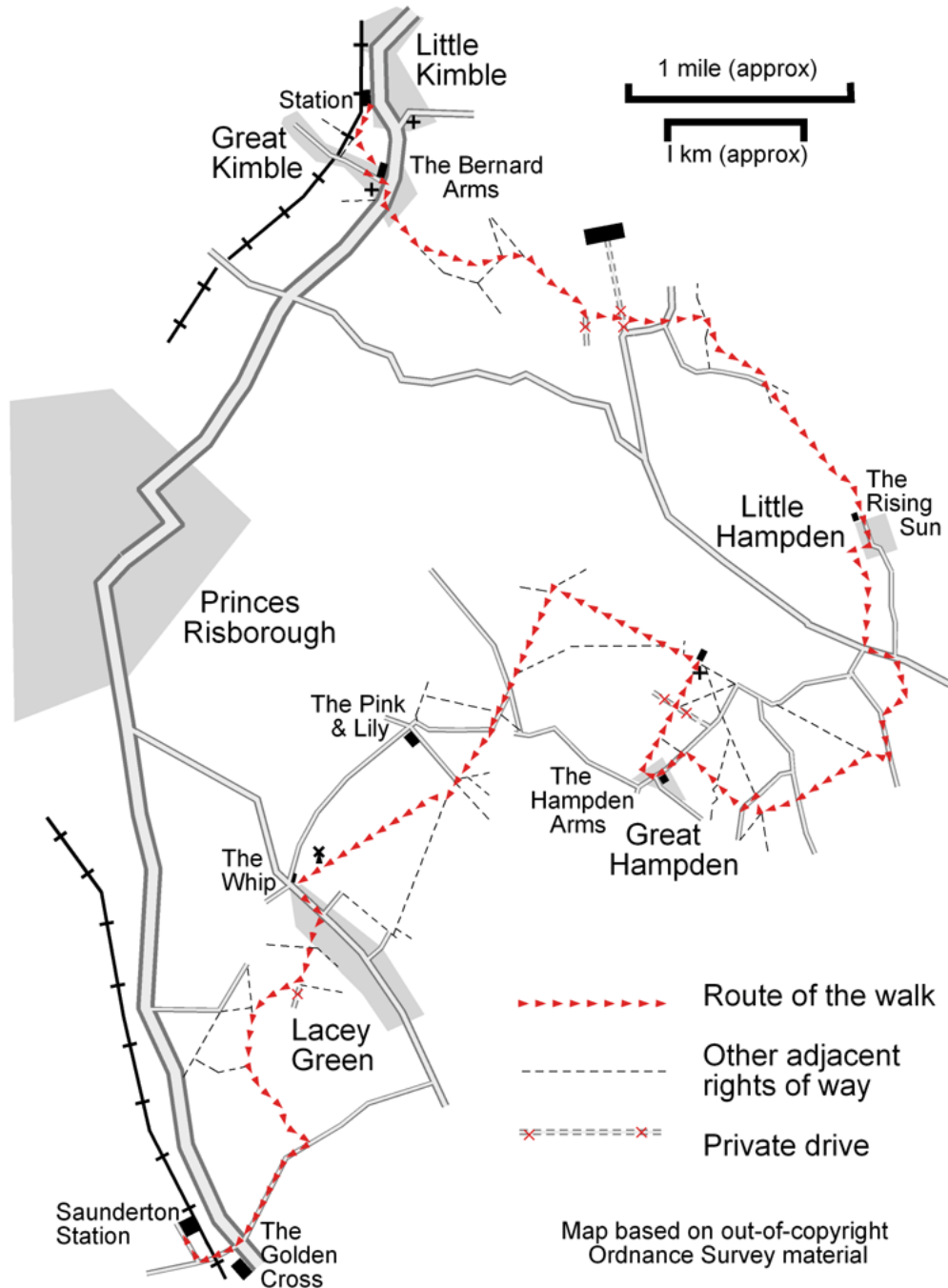


## LITTLE KIMBLE – LACEY GREEN -- SAUNDERTON

A classic Chilterns walk, taking in some of the finest and most typical scenery, with an opportunity to see some remarkable early wall paintings and cross the Prime Minister's front drive. There are interesting links with John Hampden, a hero of the English Civil War.

The walk follows the ancient earthwork Grim's Ditch for some distance, and passes one of the oldest windmills in Britain.

Checked 2009



## Distance

Little Kimble to Great Hampden	6 miles (9.5 km)
Great Hampden to Lacey Green	3 miles (5 km)
Lacey Green to Saunderton	2.5 miles (4 km)
Total	11.5 miles (18.5 km)

Several steady climbs of about 40 metres (130 feet).

## Travel

Little Kimble is on the branch line between Princes Risborough and Aylesbury, with connections from Marylebone, High Wycombe and the Midlands, and from Harrow and Amersham via Aylesbury.

Saunderton is on the main Marylebone – High Wycombe – Princes Risborough – the Midlands line. There is a good bus service between High Wycombe and Aylesbury stopping at Great Kimble and Lacey Green (hourly on Sundays).

Buses from/to Great Hampden and Saunderton are too infrequent to be likely to be of use.

Detailed travel information for the whole of this area is available from the Traveline South East website [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk) or telephone 0871 200 22 33

## Ordnance Survey Map

This walk as far as just past Lacey Green is on the Ordnance Survey Explorer map number 181, *Chiltern Hills North*. It then goes on to *172 Chiltern Hills East* for the last two miles (3 km). However, we have given all distances for this last section, so a second map may be superfluous.

## Refreshments

The Bernard Arms at Great Kimble, near the start.

The Rising Sun at Little Hampden, closed Sunday evenings and all day Mondays (but open for Bank Holiday Monday lunchtimes). Strictly NO BOOTS, NOT EVEN CLEAN ONES.

The Hampden Arms at Great Hampden.

The Pink and Lily at Parslow's Hillock, 600 yards off the route.

The Whip at Lacey Green.

The Golden Cross at Saunderton, at the finish, open all day and has ice cream.

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).

## Route

**All Saints' Church, Little Kimble, is renowned for its fine 14th century wall paintings, arguably the best in Buckinghamshire. The collection of saints includes St George, St James, St Christopher and St Francis preaching to the birds.**

**In the chancel is a group of floor tiles from the 13th century, with an Arthurian theme.**

Visiting Little Kimble parish church means walking along the footway beside the main road for 500 yards (800 yards if you come by train). If you would prefer a more rural start to the walk, see below. Bus passengers should alight at the Little Kimble All Saints' Church stop, a quarter of a mile north of Great Kimble. If arriving by train, turn right on leaving the station, cross the road and walk for 300 yards until you reach Ellesborough Road (signposted Wendover) on the left. The church is just a few yards along this road.

On leaving the church turn left, left again at the main road, and at the end of the layby cross this very busy road with great care and continue on the footway over the brow of the hill, passing the Bernard Arms, to Great Kimble Church.

---

For a more rural start to the walk, bus passengers should alight at Great Kimble Church.

Train passengers should turn right for a few yards on leaving the station, and take an enclosed path that leads into a field.

Go half way along the field, then turn left (opposite a stile on your right), and follow the path down into a dip, slightly right across the next field then up the next field, then turn right to pass to the left of a school, to a road.

Turn left up the road, to a T-junction with the main road, with the Bernard Arms on your left and Great Kimble church on your right.

---

**The refusal by John Hampden, at a meeting in this Church in 1635, to pay the ship money tax demanded by Charles I, was the first in a series of events which led to the Civil War. John Hampden (known as the Patriot) played a leading part in the war, raising a regiment of Buckinghamshire militia against the Royalists. He died on 24th June 1643 at Thame, after being mortally wounded at the Battle of Chalgrove Field in Oxfordshire. A copy of the list of those who, along with John Hampden, refused to pay the ship money used to be framed on a wall inside the church, but it has not been seen there for some time.**

**The church is oriented North-South, rather the normal East-West.**

From the bus stop opposite Great Kimble church, go downhill 80 yards to a tarmac track on the left, signposted "North Bucks Way".

**There are earthworks in the field on the opposite side of the main road. Some are clearly abandoned dwellings. It has been suggested that superimposed on these are remnants of Civil War fortifications, but the evidence appears inconclusive.**

Follow the track for a quarter of a mile (0.4 km), as it climbs steadily to a kissing gate on the left (opposite a field gate on the right).

**If parts of this track seem unnaturally straight, it is because it did not evolve naturally, but was laid down by order of the magistrates in the 1808, shortly after the Inclosure Award for the parish. There are traces of older routes to your left and ahead.**

**You may see a herd of deer behind the high fence to your right.**

Go through the kissing gate and follow the path as it slants upwards over rough grassland.

**Following the implementation of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 this is designated Access Land, and you can roam (on foot) where you will. Our route, however, keeps to the long-established public footpath.**

**This area of rough grassland is a marvellous spot for wild flowers and butterflies in late spring and early summer.**

**At any time of year the views behind and to the left are superb.**

After 160 yards, do not follow the main path uphill, but continue ahead level, past a clump of large trees and then under a large beech tree, to join the Ridgeway path at a signpost (note the acorn sign, the standard symbol for National Trails) by a fence corner.

Bear left and follow the Ridgeway path alongside the fence bordering the head of “Happy Valley”, climbing to a kissing gate.

Beyond the gate go slightly right across a field.

Pass through a further gate at the other side of the field, turning slightly right, and continue with woodland on the right and a field on the left.

**The large house, initially hidden by trees, which soon becomes visible to the left, is Chequers, the official country residence of the Prime Minister. The house is essentially a Tudor manor house built (or possibly rebuilt) in 1565, and altered and enlarged at various times since.**

**It passed through various hands over the years, eventually coming into the ownership of Sir Arthur Lee (later Lord Lee of Fareham). He presented it to the nation in 1917, with many conditions for its preservation.**

**In moving the second reading of the Chequers Estate Bill in the House of Lords, Lord Curzon said: “Standing in one of the most romantic sites in the Home Counties, amid typical English scenery... itself an example of the most characteristic period of English architecture... this is a unique possession for which the nation will be grateful and for which its future occupants will be more grateful still”.**

**One of the peers did suggest, though, that if a Prime Minister was doing his job properly he wouldn't have time for weekends in the country.**

**Since then the house has played host to many world leaders attending conferences or on state visits.**

After 600 yards, at an old gateway, the path continues just inside the edge of the wood and curves slightly right.

In 80 yards, at the end of the wood, turn sharp left and follow the fence downhill to go through two gates and cross the Chequers drive (it's difficult to avoid a feeling of being under security surveillance at this point!).

Go ahead through another gate and follow the fence to a road at Buckmoorend.

Carefully cross the road, and take the track ahead (still following the Ridgeway signs) up through a belt of trees to the edge of the main wood.

At the edge of the wood, leave the Ridgeway (which continues uphill straight ahead) and turn right onto the signposted South Bucks Way.

Follow the track gradually uphill (ignoring a path branching right after a few yards) 400 yards through young trees (mostly ash), then 200 yards level through mature beechwood, then 150 yards with young conifers on your left.

After the area of young conifers, you come to a mature tree on your left, with a waymark post and blue arrow pointing left.

Take the narrow path that forks left, to emerge at the junction of several paths at the end of a road (tarmac under a considerable amount of mud).

Continue to follow the South Bucks Way, the right-hand of two footpaths leading round wooden barriers into the wood at the end of the road, Little Hampden Common.

**You may feel disconcerted that this doesn't look like a common.**

**It was certainly more open in former years. In 1928 there was an outcry when the owners tried to enclose it because of "thoughtless abuse of the privilege of access". It seems members of the public were driving cars across the common and lighting fires.**

Continue through the woodland, and where a bridleway joins from the right go ahead, to emerge at the end of a road by the Rising Sun. (If the bridleway is muddy, there is an unofficial footpath to the left of it.)

(If you use the pub, please observe the prominent notice about footwear.)

Walk along the road for 350 yards to a small triangular green (with a seat).

Turn right here, leaving the South Bucks Way, onto a tarmac/gravel track.

This ends at Warren Cottage (where a grassy track continues ahead). Turn left here onto a field edge path (with a hedge screening an old farmyard on your left).

Follow various bends in the field edge for half a mile (0.8 km) as it gradually descends into the valley.

**The view to the left as you descend is of an attractive and typical Chilterns dry valley. These were probably formed in the Ice Age when rivers were more abundant and the chalk subsoil was frozen and impermeable.**

At the field corner, go through a gap in the hedge and continue in the same direction with the hedge now on your right, making for the right-hand end of a coniferous plantation in the valley.

After passing the plantation, the path emerges at a road junction.

Turn left (towards Great Missenden) using, for safety, the broad verge on the right-hand side of the road.

Opposite the side road to Little Hampden, turn right into the corner of a wood and go half left through the wood. (There are two paths, which may be indistinct in places; both lead to the same stile behind a large fallen tree.)

The stile leads onto a grassy vista with views of Hampden House to the right and the curious "pepper box" lodges to the left.

**The vista is known as the Queen's View and is said to have been created by John Hampden's grandfather to improve the view from the house for Queen Elizabeth I when she stayed there.**

**The pair of pepper boxes were added later; each consisted until recently of one room, one box containing the kitchen/living room, the other the bedroom.**

At the far side of the open space, a further stile leads into the corner of the next wood.

Follow the path ahead along the edge of the wood to the field corner.

Turn right at cross paths, still close to the edge of the wood and climbing gradually until the main path bears left just before an old pit.

Here continue ahead along the edge of the wood to the wood corner.

Cross the field ahead to emerge on a road just to the right of a monument.

**The monument was erected in 1863 in honour of John Hampden and his refusal to pay the ship money levied "without authority of the law". The wording on the monument is difficult to read, but it is repeated on a notice.**

Turn left up the road, passing Honor Lodge and converted farm buildings on your right.

At the end of the buildings turn right, over a stile.

Go over a gravel drive to another stile, and turn left.

Continue along the left-hand edge of two small and two large fields, till the path goes more steeply downhill towards a road.

50 yards before the road, go through a gap in the hedge into the wood on your left, and continue in the wood down to the road.

Cross the road and follow the path up to the top of the wood ahead and then continue to the right of the hedge ahead, to the next hedge corner.

Turn right and cross the field to a road (from which, if you do not want to go to the pub, a path takes you straight ahead and along an avenue of old trees to Great Hampden church).

To go to the pub, turn left, and go 150 yards along the road to a bend.

Take the footpath to the right, along the left-hand edge of three fields, to another road.

Turn left, and go along the road 300 yards to the pub.

At the crossroads after the pub, our route turns right, but there are some unusual memorials just to the left. The bus stop is also just to the left, but buses are too infrequent to be likely to be of use.

Having turned right, continue along the tarmac/gravel track to take a path just past the garage of house number 22 on the right.

Follow this path alongside a wood then across a field to a tarmac farm track.

Cross the farm track and pass through a kissing gate into a field, and continue ahead through more kissing gates into the churchyard.

**The church contains an impressive monument to John Hampden and a memorial to his wife with a poem he wrote himself.**

***The church is open only for services, or by appointment, but the porch is open and has some fine old timbers – and a sloping ridge-line.***

On coming out of the churchyard on to the tarmac drive you can see parts of Hampden House over the hedge on the other side of the drive.

**Hampdens owned the estate from before the Conquest to the twentieth century.**

**The house was substantially rebuilt in the first half of the 18th century and is one of the earliest examples of the Gothic revival. The stable block is from the same period.**

***Not open to the public.***

Turn left along the drive, passing the converted stable block on your left, go through a gate and continue along an avenue of trees and through another gate (with a view of the house over your right shoulder), and follow the track in the field ahead, ignoring a diagonal cross-field path to the left.

Where the track turns right through a gateway, continue ahead 50 yards, where there is a choice between a field-edge bridleway and a path along the band of trees on the right, reached through a gap in the fence. The latter is recommended, as it follows a well preserved section of Grim's Ditch.

**It is thought that these extensive linear earthworks date from the Iron Age, and were probably built to mark territorial boundaries, rather than for military purposes.**

At the end of the field on your left continue ahead 300 yards to a path crossing.

Turn left. (Grim's Ditch does the same 30 yards further on, impressively deep here.)

The path soon leaves the wood and follows the right hand field edge.

At the far corner of the field, re-enter the wood, follow the path ahead, gradually getting closer to Grim's Ditch on your right, and where the path crosses the ditch (just before a curiously carved tree

stump on your left), continue for a short distance on the bank beside the ditch, to emerge at a road junction.

At the junction continue in the same direction on the road ahead (signposted Lacey Green) to the next junction. After houses, Grim's Ditch is again visible on your right.

Go straight ahead on a bridleway through more woods (under the electricity wires to your right you may find a path that is less muddy than the bridleway. Grim's Ditch continues just beyond the electricity wires).

The bridleway passes under the wires and continues in the same direction to emerge to the right of a house, on the line of the Ditch, which disappears across the corner of the garden.

Pass the house to a lane.

**A detour of 600 yards up the lane (Lily Bottom Lane) to the right will take you to the Pink and Lily public house. It is named from Mr Pink, the butler at Hampden House and Miss Lillie, a chambermaid, who set up home together, and established the pub, around 1800. It was a haunt of Rupert Brooke, who used to call in at the pub on his walks in the Chilterns. A not very good verse he dashed off on one of his visits is framed on the wall.**

Turn left and then, after a few yards, turn right alongside a building, where the Ditch, an enclosed muddy track, leads uphill.

After 130 yards, as the slope eases, cross a stile on the right.

(Going ahead here along the Ditch is often too muddy to be enjoyable, but in dry conditions you could map read your way along it to rejoin the route at Lacey Green.)

Walk half left across a field to a stile in the hedge, a little to the left of a prominent tree.

Make for the far right-hand corner of the next field, keeping to the right of a pylon.

Continue ahead over a stile by a gateway and ahead between fences. (The windmill is ahead, very slightly to the right, mostly hidden by a large tree.)

After 200 yards cross a stile and bear slightly right across a dip to a stile in a hedge beside a tree and in line with the windmill.

Cross the next field to a hedge corner, then continue with a hedge on your right.

After three more stiles, with the windmill to your right, emerge on to the road at Lacey Green.

The windmill access road and the Whip public house are immediately to the right.

**The windmill is the oldest surviving smock mill (that is, where only the cap turns into the wind, rather than the entire mill) in the country, reputedly dating to 1650. It originally came from Chesham, but was moved to its present site in 1821. After being derelict for many years it was restored to working order by volunteers from the Chiltern Society. *Open Sunday and bank holiday Monday afternoons, May to September.***

The bus shelter on the left is for the service to High Wycombe.

The stop across the road is for buses to Princes Risborough and Aylesbury.

To continue to Saunderton turn left and continue along the road 350 yards to a tarmac track on the right, opposite Goodacres Lane on the left.

Go down the track, ignoring a crossing path in 300 yards, and continue 400 yards further (going off the bottom of the *Chiltern Hills North* map) to a fork, with farm buildings visible ahead.

Take the right fork up a rutted track for 400 yards (climbing steadily) to a kissing gate, with a fine view.

**Dominating the skyline in front of you is the wooded summit of Wain Hill, above Bledlow. Partly visible behind it is Thame and a little further to the right, 10 miles (16 km) away, is Long Crendon, with its church at the right-hand (eastern) end of the village. Behind that, breaking the skyline, is the hilltop village of Brill. To the right of that is Ashendon on a low hill, then on the next hill breaking the skyline to the right of that, with a steep wooded slope, is Waddesdon Manor. Almost in line with that is Dinton. Further to the right, eight miles (12 km) away, is Stone, also with its church clearly visible. Most of Aylesbury is hidden by the slope to your right.**

Turn left along the field edge for 100 yards, to a metal stile.

Continue 100 yards to a stile and gate leading to a gap through a narrow strip of woodland.

Continue ahead 400 yards along another strip of woodland (the official right of way is inside the wood) with the valley below to your right, to a stile.

Continue in the same direction over the stile, leaving the wood and going along the left-hand edge of a field 250 yards, to a stile.

Follow the left-hand hedge of the next field 400 yards as it curves right and then left, gently downhill, to a gap in the field corner.

Continue 250 yards following the hedge on your left as it also curves right and then left, and continue downhill after the end of the hedge to a fence corner.

Turn right along the fence 30 yards. Do not go through the gap which leads on to a road (Smalldean Lane), but continue along the field edge with the hedge on your left and the road down below you for 350 yards, slightly uphill at first and then down to a gap by a gate and a footpath sign, to join Smalldean Lane. (This section is on National Trust land, and we believe is a permissive path.)

Follow the road to the right, downhill or level all the way, nearly half a mile (0.7 km) to the A 4010 (with the Golden Cross pub on the left). Bus stops are to the left, but the service is too infrequent to be helpful

Cross with care and take Slough Lane ahead for 100 yards, under the railway.

Turn right uphill 150 yards to the station (and over the footbridge for trains towards High Wycombe and London).