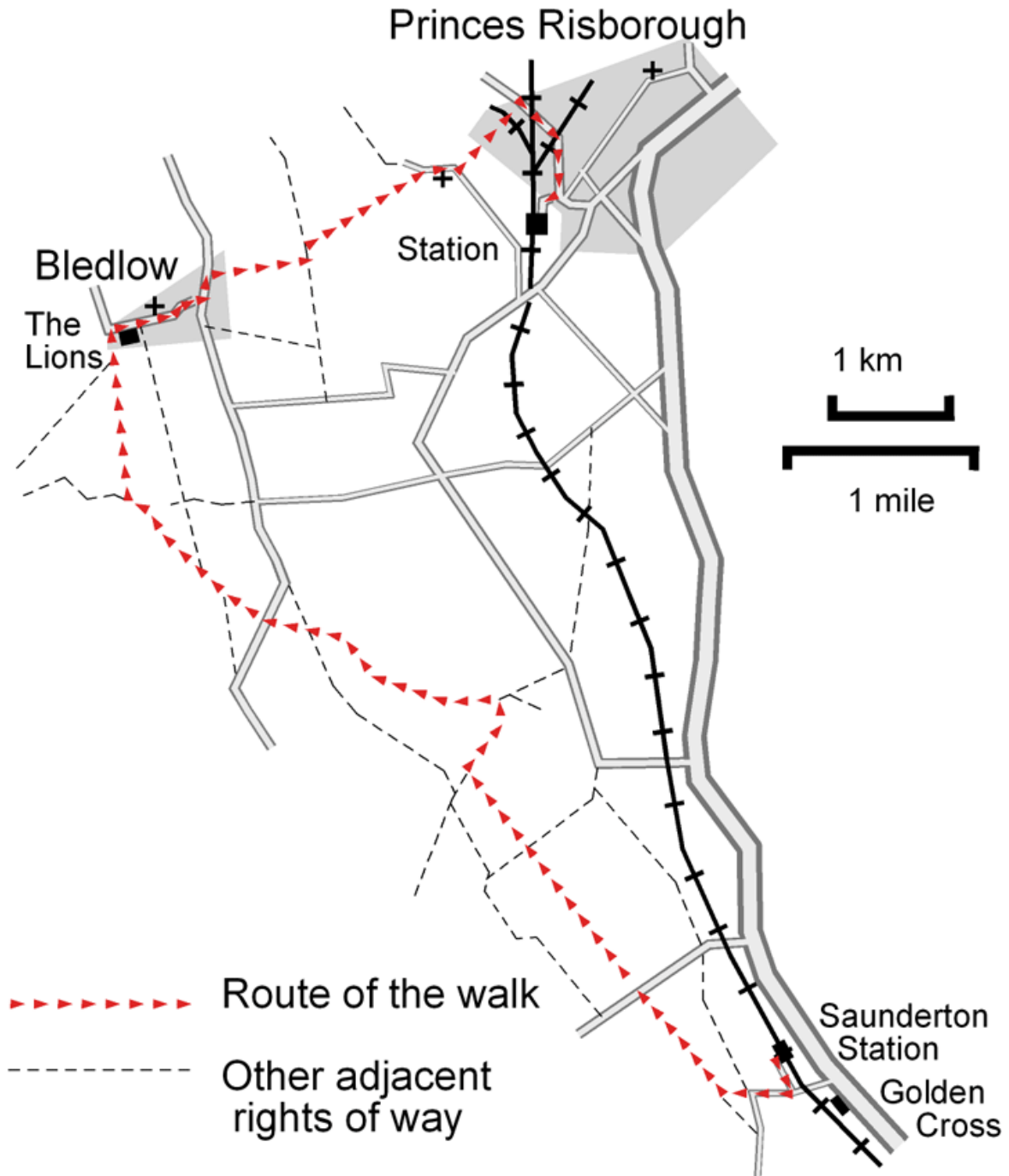


SAUNDERTON TO PRINCES RISBOROUGH

A short walk with varied Chilterns scenery, with generally easy route finding.
The path over Lodge Hill has been described as one of the finest in Buckinghamshire.

Checked 2009



Map based on out-of-copyright Ordnance Survey material

Distance

6 miles (10 km).

Two climbs of about 50 metres (160 feet)

Travel

Saunderton and Princes Risborough stations are both on the Chiltern Line from Marylebone and High Wycombe to Bicester, Banbury and the Midlands.

Princes Risborough is linked to Aylesbury by bus and train.

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

The Golden Cross is on the main road near Saunderton station, but not on the route.

The Lions of Bledlow is nicely situated at a good strategic point on the walk, but can be very busy at weekends.

The opening times of the pleasant station buffet at Princes Risborough suit commuters rather than walkers. The off licence near the bottom of Station Approach sells crisps etc, but otherwise for refreshments in Risborough you would need to go to the centre, half a mile away.

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

This walk starts on the Ordnance Survey Explorer sheet 172 *Chiltern Hill East* but after a short distance almost entirely on a road goes on to sheet 171 *Chiltern Hills West*. From Lodge Hill it is on sheet 181 *Chiltern Hills North*.

Route

Starting from Saunderton station, go down the hill to a road junction.

Turn right. The road is not heavily used, but it is narrow with poor visibility, so please take care.

Follow the road uphill, to a sharp left bend.

At the road bend, enter the field ahead and continue in the same direction to the far right corner.

Turn right, and continue along the top of fields to a road.

Cross the road with care (poor visibility) and take the footpath ahead for a mile (1.5 km) for two fields towards Lodge Hill. (The official route is on the left of the hedge for the whole way, but from a hedge gap half way along the first field the path/track on the other side is used more.)

At a T-junction with a bridleway, turn right, and go nearly half a mile (0.7 km), with the hill on your left, to a T-junction with the Ridgeway.

Follow the Ridgeway to the left, steeply uphill, 150 yards to a T-junction at a waymark post, where you bear right, along the slope. (You pass a seat, but there is a better view further on – though without a seat.)

Follow the path through a kissing gate and continue along the top of the ridge.

The best view is probably from the waymark post 100 yards beyond the gate, near what look like the remains of primitive earthworks.

To your left the view is across a typical Chilterns dry valley to Bledlow Ridge. Stokenchurch is out of sight three miles (5 km) away beyond the woods on your left.

Visible in the distance between the wooded summit of Wain Hill ahead and the conifers obstructing your view half right is Brill. Waddesdon is concealed by the conifers. Just to the right of the conifers is Quanton Hill, with its mast on top. To the right of that are the hills at Pitchcott and Whitchurch. To the right of that, and nearer, is Aylesbury. Milton Keynes is on the same line, but probably out of sight.

On the brow of the Chilterns above Princes Risborough to your right is Whiteleaf Cross, though it may not be conspicuous – look to the left of a patch of woodland.

Follow the path downhill through woodland then along a field edge to a kissing gate on the left.

Cross two fields (ignoring a crossing bridleway) to a road.

Cross the road and continue with a hedge/fence on your left 300 yards, passing a stile, to a kissing gate 20 yards further on.

Go through the gate and continue in the same direction until the fence/hedge bears slightly right at a water trough in a dip, where you continue ahead uphill to a kissing gate on to a track. (Bledlow Great Wood on Wain Hill is to your left.)

Turn left for 40 yards along the track then turn right down another track for a little more than half a mile (0.9 km) to reach the Lions of Bledlow public house.

Turn right at the small green in front of the pub to walk through the centre of this delightful village.

The church of Holy Trinity, in its spacious graveyard, has a number of interesting features including an Aylesbury type Norman font and some fragments of wall paintings, but is unfortunately not usually open.

In a short distance on the right is Bledlow Manor, dating from the 17th century and early 18th century. It has been the family home of the Carringtons since 1800.

On the left is a gate leading into the Lyde Garden, which is not to be missed. It's an intriguing and tranquil water garden laid out, with great ingenuity, in a steep ravine. Freely open every day.

At the end of the village street, turn left, and in 150 yards take a signposted footpath along a drive on the right.

Ignore the drive branching to the right after 100 yards, go through a gateway with a broken stile beside it (the gate has a "Private" notice, but this is a public footpath), go past a house, through another gate and into a yard with an interesting collection of old agricultural machinery.

Go through a kissing gate into the field ahead.

A stretch of the Chilterns escarpment is ahead, dominated by Whiteleaf Cross. This distinctive landmark carved out of the chalk, with its pyramidal base, has been the subject of much debate. It was said by tradition to commemorate a victory by the Saxons over the Danes. It was first described by Francis Wise in 1742, and he claimed, too, that its origins go back to Saxon times. More cautious recent writers suggest the 17th century. There is a smaller chalk cross above Bledlow, but this is not visible from our route.

Continue straight ahead, with the hedge on the right, to another kissing gate, then along the side of the next field.

At the next gate, turn left for 70 yards along an enclosed track, then right to follow the left hand edge of a large field.

At the end of this field, carry straight on to cross a further field, then go through a hedge, over a small stream and through a gate.

Go over the next field, passing a tennis court and a barn, to a gate, and emerge into a lane at the hamlet of Horsenden.

Note the old granary on the right, raised on staddle stones to keep the rats out.

The church is only the chancel of the previous medieval building, and was restored in 1855. It is not generally open.

A former Rector is said to have invented aspirin, curing his parishioners' aches and pains with extract of willow bark.

The nearby manor house was built in 1810 on the site of the former house owned by Sir John Denham, the 17th century poet. There are still the remnants of a moat and fishponds in the grounds: the stream which fed them flows under the lane a little way past the church.

Go along the lane ahead, with the church to the right, for 200 yards.

Just past Gate Cottage, take a gravel track on the left.

Cross a stile in 50 yards, and another at the further end of the farmyard.

Continue ahead in the same direction and along a road with the new ERCOL centre on the right, even newer commercial/industrial buildings on the left, and a railway bridge ahead.

The site was originally the Forest Products Research Laboratory, opened in 1927. (Note the fine trees.) The small old building on the right is the former entomology centre.

The bridge served both the line from Princes Risborough to Thame and Oxford and that to Chinnor and Watlington.

The line to Thame was closed to passengers in 1963, but survived for occasional trains to the oil depot in Thame until the 1990s. Much of the route has now been adopted as the Phoenix Trail, for walkers, cyclists and horse-riders.

The line to Watlington was closed to passenger traffic in 1957, but remained open for freight until 1989 to serve the Chinnor cement works. Four miles of the line have been restored, and steam hauled trains are operated from Chinnor on most weekends from Easter onwards.

Go under the bridge, to reach a main road (Summerleys Road) and turn right.

At a railway bridge (the main Chiltern line to Banbury), cross to the footway on the other side of the road, then go under the next bridge (the branch line to Aylesbury).

300 yards further on, turn right to Princes Risborough Station.

Although considerably built up, Princes Risborough retains its unspoilt town centre. To reach it, go past Station Approach and walk down the next road on the left - Manor Park Avenue. This becomes a private road, but a public footpath goes along it. At the end it leads into Church Street.

Here is the stately parish church of St Mary's (usually open 10.00 to 12.00 and 2.00 to 4.00), and just beyond, the 17th century redbrick manor house (National Trust, but only open Wednesday afternoons by appointment).

Church Street leads to the equally attractive Market Square and High Street. The small Market House, with arches below and the Town Council chamber above, was built in 1824.