

Temporary Internet Leaflet

(Please note that all our leaflets are currently undergoing redesign for Internet use)

PRINCES RISBOROUGH/GREAT AND LITTLE HAMPDEN

A six mile circular walk off the Ridgeway National Trail through the mature beechwoods and chalk grasslands of the Chiltern Hills above Princes Risborough

The route is described in a clockwise direction starting from the County Council car park at Whiteleaf Hill. For those wishing to begin their walk from Princes Risborough town centre, the route is best joined between sections 13 and 14 on the Upper Icknield Way. Walkers should note that this route contains some steep sections.

The walk can be shortened by using the numerous public paths crossing the area.

The route is waymarked at every gate, stile or major change in direction - yellow arrows for footpaths, blue arrows for bridleways.

1. From the car park following the waymarked Ridgeway path north towards Whiteleaf Hill. The Ridgeway was designated a National Trail by the Countryside Commission in 1972. It runs for 85 miles from Ivinghoe Beacon in the north-east to Avebury in the south-west.
2. Whiteleaf Hill gives extensive views across the Vale of Aylesbury. Just below the brow of the hill is the Whiteleaf Cross, a chalk mark cut into the scarp face. The exact date is not known but it is likely to be of ancient origin. The whole hill has prehistoric significance; adjacent to the path is a Neolithic long barrow dating back to 2000 BC.
3. At the three mature beech trees turn right following the path down the hill through Giles Wood.

As you enter this wood, alongside the path you can see the remnants of what is believed to be 'Beech Bundle planting' an early method of mass timber production, which dates back to the middle ages. The woodland is dominated by beech trees. The shaded environment created by the trees favours wild flowers such as wood anemone, nettle leaved bell flower and enchanter's nightshade.

Continue down the hill towards Lower Cadsden.

4. At the lane turn right following the track into the wood. The route at this point follows a steep sided valley cut into the scarp face of the Chilterns. Such valleys are thought to have been excavated around about the time of the last Ice Age either by semi-frozen sludge containing ice and stones which moved downhill from the glaciers or by the action of rivers which resulted from a higher water table. At the end of the Ice Age as the glaciers melted and the water table dropped, the valleys were left dry.

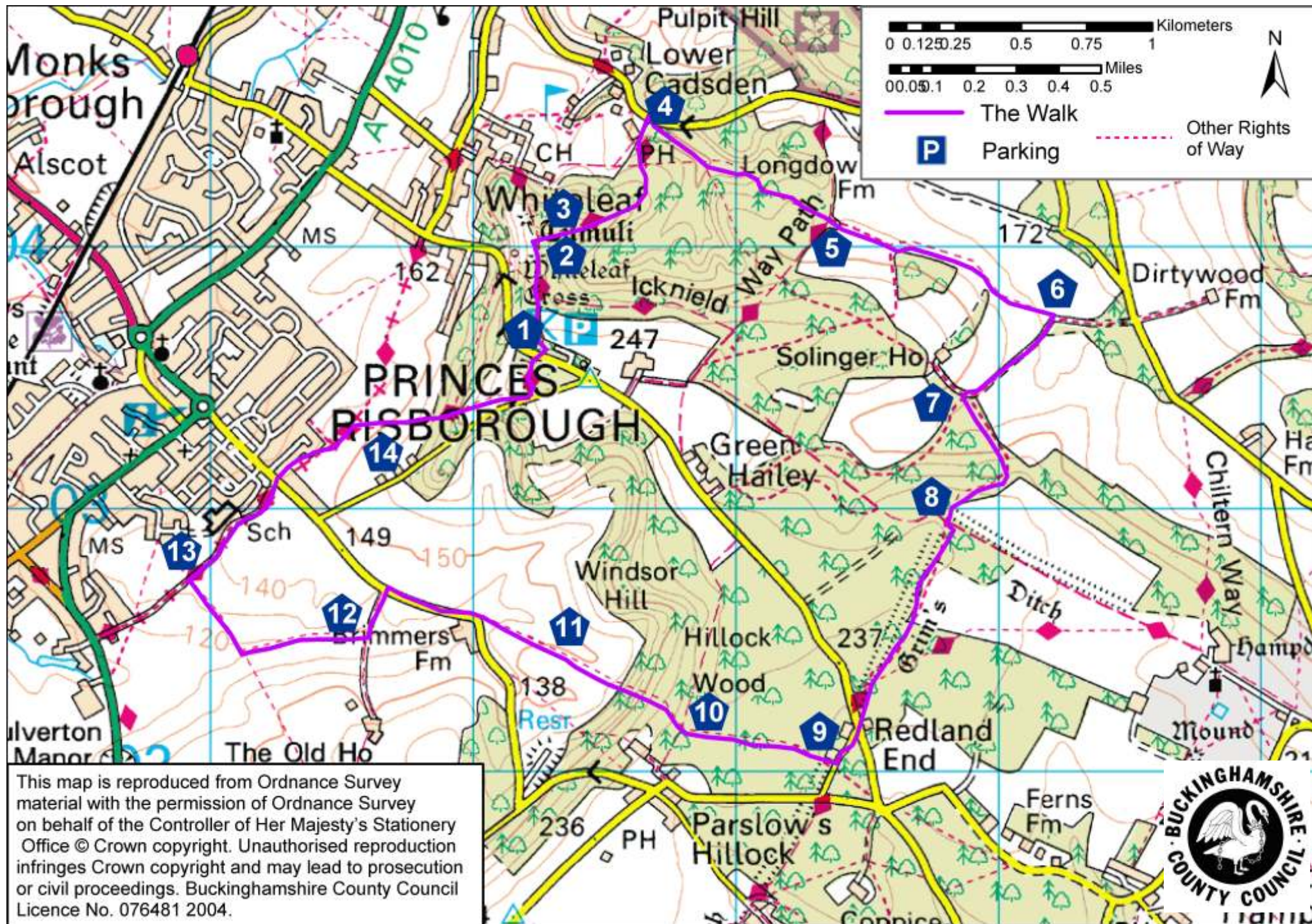
Climbing to the top of the hill, cross the bridleway and follow the sunken footpath out into open fields.

5. Follow the path around the edge of the first field, then to the north of Cross coppice.

The coppice is predominantly planted with larch and pine. The larch has a distinctive silhouette which makes it easy to identify in the winter months. Other deciduous species including oak, hazel and maple may be seen around the edges of the coppice.

6. Continue to the path's junction with the farm track. Follow the track in a south-easterly direction to the top of the hill. In the summer months wild flowers line the verge of the track including bladder campion, sheep's bit scabious and tufted vetch.

7. At the track's junction with the wood, cross the stile and turn left into Knightons Hill Wood.



This map is reproduced from Ordnance Survey material with the permission of Ordnance Survey on behalf of the Controller of Her Majesty's Stationery Office © Crown copyright. Unauthorised reproduction infringes Crown copyright and may lead to prosecution or civil proceedings. Buckinghamshire County Council Licence No. 076481 2004.



Much of the woodland in this area belonged to the Hampden family estate. In 1641 the most famous member of the family, John Hampden, refused to pay ship tax on some of the land, an act of defiance which helped spark the Civil War. A leader of the parliamentary forces, he died from wounds received at the battle of Chalgrove near Thame.

8. The walk continues along the course of Grims Ditch. The date of this earthwork is uncertain, being either Iron Age or Saxon in origin. It is most likely a territorial boundary and can be traced across the Chilterns from Berkhamsted to Bradenham. The section of the ditch in Great Hampden parish is thought to have particular significance as it incorporates a sharp angled turn. The linear nature of the ditch implies open country at the time of origin as clear sighting lines would have been necessary during construction.

9. At the end of the ditch carefully cross the road into Redland End, after approximately 200m turn right into Hillock Wood. Hillock Wood provides a suitable habitat for a number of woodland birds. The blackcap, recognisable by its distinctive head colouration, the chiffchaff, a summer visitor to Britain and the goldcrest, one of our smallest native birds, may all be spotted by the quiet walker.

10. The route passes through the "Black Hedge", a boundary hedge of considerable size and antiquity. Hedges have long been used as a means of marking estate boundaries, in this instance, the estate of the Abbey of St Albans. The Black Hedge is one of the earliest boundary hedges to have been recorded in the country, being referred to in a Saxon Charter of AD 903.

Continue down Windsor Hill, taking particular care as the slope is steep at this point.

11. At the bottom of the slope follow the headland path to Brimmers Road. Continue up the road for approximately 300 m then turn left onto

the bridleway.

12. Take the crossfield path to Pyrtle Spring, one of the many springs which emerge from the base of the Chilterns where the chalk meets the impervious Gault clay and Lower Greensand of the Vale.

At the spring turn right and follow the path north back to the Ridgeway.

13. The Ridgeway follows the line of the Icknield Way, a broad trackway passing along the relatively dry and well-drained scarp face of the Chiltern Hills. The Icknield Way has been used since Neolithic times as a link between East Anglia and Dorset. The trackway was later metalled in parts by the Romans who adopted it for their own use.

14. Follow the Ridgeway back up the hill to Whiteleaf car park.

There is a Buckinghamshire County Council car park and picnic site at Whiteleaf Hill. Please do not leave any valuable in your car.

Many of the paths can be muddy at any time of the year so waterproof footwear is recommended.

This leaflet can be used in conjunction with the Ordnance Survey 1:50,000 Land Ranger Sheet 165 (Aylesbury and Leighton Buzzard) and the 1:25,000 Pathfinder 1118 (Chesham and Wendover).

There are Public Houses at Lower Cadsden and at Parslows Hillock.

Princes Risborough is well served with regular bus services from Aylesbury and High Wycombe and regular trains from London, High Wycombe and Aylesbury. Details of bus services can be obtained on 0345 382000. Details of trains can be obtained on 0990 165165.

Ridgeway Information: Contact The Ridgeway Officer, Countryside Section, Library Headquarters, Holton, Oxford, OX33 1QQ Tel: 01865.810224