

Main walk last checked	Marlow ending checked		
25 November 2023	24 September 2022		
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Henley via Hambleden Circular

The River Thames and Remenham Hill

Length:	Main walk	14.9km (9.2 miles)
	a) Via shortcut to Hambleden	13.1km (8.1 miles)
	b) Henley to Marlow	16.1km (10 miles)
	c) Extension to Marsh Lock	Adds 2.6km (1.6 miles)

Maps: OS Explorer Map 171, OS Landranger Map: 175

Toughness: 3 out of 10

Features

This pleasant outing from Henley is divided into four parts of almost equal distance. Firstly a section along the Thames - the wilder, less manicured left bank of the river, passing the picturesque Temple Island. It is on this stretch in the first week of July that the Henley Regatta takes place (a time to avoid this walk, if you don't like crowds and noise). Next is a crossing of a ridge covered in fine beech woods (with good leaf colour in early November), followed by an approach along the valley to the picturesque village of Hambleden (often used in filming).

After lunch you contour along the side of the valley, with fine views, before crossing the Thames over the weir at Hambleden Mill and walking across the watermeadows to Aston, where there is a possible late lunch stop. Finally there is an easy walk over the lower part of Remenham Hill - mainly arable fields, though with small patches of woodland - to Henley for tea.

This is a great walk on which to see red kites, a once nearly-extinct bird of prey that was reintroduced to the Chilterns, who circle overhead with their haunting cries throughout the walk.

Walk Options

a) Shortcut to Hambleden: This shortcut takes a more direct route from the top of the ridge to Hambleden village, reducing the walk by **1.8km (1.1 miles)**. Directions for this are given in paragraph 29 on page 4.

b) Henley to Marlow: This alternative ending follows a route over wooded hills from Hambleden to Marlow (the same route as is taken by the Marlow Circular walk, also on this site). It is 8.4km

(5.2 miles) from Hambleden to Marlow, making a total walk of **16.1 km (10 miles)**. This option diverges from the main walk in paragraph 41 on page 5.

c) Extension to Marsh Lock: If you want an extra stroll after tea, it is a very pleasant walk of 1.3km (0.8 miles) down the riverbank (tarmac path all the way) from Henley to Marsh Lock, where there is an impressive weir. Afterwards, unless you want to carry on along the Thames Path to Shiplake, the suggestion is that you reverse your route back to Henley. This adds **2.6km (1.6 miles)** to the walk.

Transport

There are twice hourly connections from **London Paddington** to Henley, changing at Twyford; though later in the evening the trains revert to hourly. Journey time is about one hour. Buy a day return to Henley-on-Thames (*ie not "in-Arden"*). Take **the train nearest to 10am** from Paddington to get to lunch in Hambleden in time.

If you are doing **option b)** a day return to Henley will usually be accepted from Marlow. There is, indeed, in theory a **Thames Branches Day Rover**, which is the same price as a day return to Henley and allows you unlimited travel on both the Marlow and Henley branches, as well as to Windsor and Reading: but only the ticket office at Paddington seems to know about this. Otherwise, if you get a recalcitrant ticket inspector, anyone with a Henley return would only need to pay for a single from Marlow to Maidenhead, where the two train routes converge.

It is also possible to end the walk after **9.9km (6.2 miles)** by taking a **number 800 or 850 bus** back to Henley from just before Hambleden Lock - see paragraph 52 on page 5. There are two buses an hour until 8pm Monday to Friday and 6pm Saturdays. Later in the evening and on Sundays (to 7pm only) there is one bus an hour.

Lunch and tea

The **Stag and Huntsman** Hambleden (01491 571227), 7.7km (4.8 miles) into the walk, is a cosy, atmospheric old pub, with reasonably large garden. It serves food from 12-3pm and 6-9pm on weekdays and all day on Saturday and Sunday. It is open all afternoon daily for drinks.

Hambleden Village Stores: Located 7.6km (4.7 miles) into the walk, this superior village shop has few outside tables and serves tea, coffee, homemade cakes and delicatessen items (sometimes even soup), making it a possible light lunch or early tea stop. It is open to 5pm Monday to Saturday and 4pm Sunday. **Hambleden church** also sometimes sells tea and cakes on summer Sundays.

The **Flower Pot Hotel** (01491 574721), 3.6km (2.2 miles) further on, and so 11.3km (7 miles) into the walk, has now reopened as a thoroughly modernised pub, but still with the same very pleasant garden. Food is served 12-3pm and 6-9pm Tuesday to Saturday, though with a bar menu available all afternoon, and from 12-5pm on Sundays. The pub is open all afternoon and evening for drinks (to 7.30pm on Sunday). Closed Monday, apart from bank holidays, when Sunday hours apply.

Picnic: The early riverside part of the walk is a fine picnic spot, as is the churchyard in Hambleden and the far (south) side of Hambleden Weir (paragraph 57 on page 6).

The Chocolate Cafe Thames Side, Henley-on-Thames (01491 411412). Situated on the waterfront by the bridge in Henley, this café has a particularly fine selection of chocolate cakes. It is open until 5.30pm Monday to Thursday and 6pm Friday to Sunday.

The nearby **Angel on the Bridge**, next to the bridge in Henley, is one of many pleasant pubs in the town.

If finishing in Marlow, there are many tea stops in the town's high street. The best is **Burgers**, a traditional patisserie and tea room which is open until 5pm Monday to Saturday: but a later option is offered by **Starbucks** or one of the town's many pubs - eg the **George & Dragon**, which serves Costa hot drinks. The **Marlow Donkey** pub just before the station is also very pleasant.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Along the River Thames from Henley (4.1 km/2.5 miles)

1. Coming out of Henley Station turn right down the station approach road.
2. In 70 metres turn right at a T-junction, immediately in front of the Imperial Hotel.
3. In 130 metres, at the riverfront, follow the road around to the left, with the River Thames to your right.
4. In 230 metres pass the town bridge on your right. Beyond it, continue straight on along the riverside with the Red Lion Hotel on your left-hand side.
5. In 150 metres bend left with the road, away from the river.
6. In 230 metres turn right at a T-junction.
7. In 130 metres ignore a private road forking right (which in any case is a dead end) and keep to the main road.
8. In another 80 metres, at the second of two mini roundabouts, fork right, following the A4155 (where the left fork is signposted A4074 to Oxford).
9. Carry straight on along this road passing Henley Rugby Football Club on your left in 100 metres.
10. 80 metres further on, just before a sign saying 'Marlow 8 miles' on the left-hand side, turn right through a metal fieldgate down a track. In 30 metres carry on down a broad grassy strip, with a field to your left.
11. In 280 metres more, in the far right-hand corner of the strip, pass through a kissing gate part hidden by a tree and turn left along the river bank.
12. In 250 metres cross a wooden bridge and continue straight on up a broad open space.
13. In another 500 metres the open space comes to an end and your way seems blocked by trees. Your onward route is over a metal and wood footbridge to the right-hand edge of the trees.
14. Beyond the bridge, you pass under a flint archway and over another footbridge into a field.
15. You now continue along this path for another 1.6km (1 mile) until it comes again to the A4155 main road

(paragraph 22 overleaf). But in more detail:

In 130 metres cross another footbridge over a side canal, with a fine view left to a red brick mansion (**Fawley Court**). 15 metres after the bridge pass through a wooden kissing gate to enter **Temple Island Meadows**, an area of rougher vegetation.

16. In 170 metres pass through a gap in a fence and continue on along the right-hand edge of the field.
17. In 330 metres pass through a wooden kissing gate and over a footbridge into the next field. On the right-hand side there is **Temple Island** with its neo-classical folly.

The building on **Temple Island** was built in 1771 by James Wyatt as a fishing lodge for Fawley Court, the Christopher Wren designed mansion further down the river. It was the first example in England of the so-called Etruscan style. Today the island is owned by the Henley Regatta, and is rented out for corporate entertaining.

The Regatta has been held in the first week of July since 1839. Though it does include five days of rowing competitions, its more serious side is as a part of the summer "season", a social whirl for the well-to-do which also includes Ascot and Wimbledon. Non-rowing fans/socialites may prefer to avoid this walk during Regatta week, though only the first section as far as Temple Island is really affected by it.

18. In 100 metres, when you come level with the island, cross a footbridge over a ditch and in 100 metres another.
19. In the next field, the path starts to gently diverge from the river bank, heading for the middle of the tree boundary another 200 metres further on.
20. When you get to the trees, cross two wooden footbridges, separated by 30 metres of wooden planking, to emerge into another field. Continue in the same direction across this.
21. In 200 metres exit this field over another wooden bridge with a car-wide crossing to its left. Keep straight on across the next field.

22. In 250 metres pass through a kissing gate and turn right onto the busy A4155, following the tarmac footpath alongside it (*almost overgrown with grass*).

Over the ridge to Hambleden (3.6km/2.2 miles)

23. In 150 metres there is a house on the left and a wooden fence on the right (beyond which is **Henley Business School**).
24. In another 100 metres the road starts to bend right (as marked by a road sign on your left). 60 metres after this, **cross the road with great care** (there is a **blind bend** ahead, but crossing earlier is not advisable due to the lack of a footpath on the other side).
25. On the far side of the road, pass between two logs blocking off a track, and **immediately turn right** through a gap into a small field with young trees in it.
26. In 30 metres go through a gap in the fence to cross a track and a stile into a larger field. Keep straight ahead across this, aiming for a stile to the right of a fieldgate 60 metres ahead.
27. Cross the stile and keep straight on uphill, with a hedge to your right.
28. In 500 metres, where the hedge ends, enter a wood (partly recently replanted) via a wooden gate and continue on the path uphill. In 5 metres ignore a footpath off to the right. In another 5 metres cross over a wide path and take a path 5 metres to the right, which slants half right uphill through an area of replanted trees.
29. In 170 metres, near the top of the hill, you come to a three-way junction, marked by a footpath post.
- At this point, you can take option **a) Shortcut to Hambleden**. To do this, *turn right* at this junction, and the path leads in 700 metres to the village. Otherwise, by the main walk route it is another **2.5km (1.5 miles)** to the village from here.
30. **To continue on the main walk, turn left** at the three-way junction.
31. In 60 metres turn right at a T-junction. You are now on a car-wide path that almost immediately curves left.
32. Continue on this path for 1km. It first gently descends, and then later climbs slightly, before descending again. To the right through the trees there are glimpses of Hambleden village in winter.
33. After 1km, a track joins from the left. Keep straight on along this.
34. In 200 metres the track turns sharp right and comes to a junction of tracks. Continue straight on between hedges towards the white house ahead.
35. In 250 metres, just before the house, pass through a wooden gate to the right of a fieldgate. In 40 metres more you come to a road, where you turn right. **Take care on this road:** though quiet, it is a bit busier than first appears. There is an intermittent grass verge to the left.
36. In 300 metres turn left through a kissing gate into a field, a signposted

Hambleden - not to be confused with Hambledon in Hampshire where cricket was invented - was the home of WH Smith, founder of the newsagents and stationery chain, who is buried in the churchyard. His widow became Vicountess Hambleden and the family still own the manor house.

Smith became First Lord of the Admiralty after ten years as an MP, and as such was the assumed target of the song *Ruler of the Queen's Navy* in Gilbert and Sullivan's comic operetta *HMS Pinafore*, in which an obedient MP rises to that post without any nautical experience. Gilbert denied this, probably to avoid libel suits, but Smith was still known as Pinafore Smith in his lifetime, even being referred to by this nickname by the prime minister who had appointed him, Benjamin Disraeli. Towards the end of his life he became Warden of the Cinque Ports and after six months in that role died in Walmer Castle, the warden's official home.

Hambleden parish church has several interesting memorials, including one to the family of Sir Cope D'Oyley, who died in 1633, on which those of his children who died before their parents are shown carrying skulls. To the left of this tomb is an oak chest used by the Earl of Cardigan when he led the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade in 1854.

footpath, and then immediately turn half right, heading for a brick bridge to the left of a red brick house.

37. In 220 metres pass through a kissing gate to the right of the bridge and turn left on a road.
38. In another 30 metres ignore a signposted footpath to the left. 100 metres after this, veer left into the churchyard through a gate in the wall.
39. Keep straight ahead towards the church, curving left to its entrance in 80 metres, then taking the path leading away from it between a row of yew trees to leave the churchyard by its main gate.
40. The **Hambleton Village Stores**, a possible light lunch stop, is 50 metres ahead to the right here, but your onward route is to turn left.
41. In 50 metres ignore a road to the left signposted to Pheasants Hill and Frieth. In 30 metres more, you come to the **Stag and Huntsman** on your right, the recommended lunch pub.
 - For option **b) Henley to Marlow**, continue with paragraph 76 on page 7. It is **8.2km (5.1 miles)** to Marlow from this point, versus 7.2km (4.4 miles) to Henley via the main walk route.
 - **For the main walk route**, continue with the next section.

Hambleton to Aston **(3.6km/2.2 miles)**

42. Turn right out of the Stag & Huntsman (or keep on past it if not stopping for lunch). In 40 metres ignore a footpath signposted to the right into the pub's car park and continue up the road.
43. In 100 metres more, at a three-armed signpost, turn right down a track, with the garden fence (*of Hambleton Manor: see panel page 4*) to your left and a field to your right.
44. In 150 metres ignore a footpath signposted uphill into a field to the left.
45. In another 350 metres, at a track T-junction, turn left uphill, following a footpath sign. **Hambleton Manor** is visible to the left on this climb.
46. In 100 metres, just before a fieldgate, turn right through a wooden footpath gate onto a path between two fields with a fence left and a hedge right.
47. In 250 metres pass through a kissing gate into a wooded area and carry on uphill. In 20 metres turn right and pass through a metal kissing gate into a field.
48. Turn left uphill between fences. To your right there is a fine view of the Thames Valley and much of the route you have followed to this point. Look back at the top of the hill for a view of Hambleton village.
49. In 150 metres exit the field through a kissing gate and keep to the left-hand edge of the next field.
50. In 130 metres exit this field over a wooden stile hidden in its far left-hand corner and turn right downhill on a tarmac road.
51. In 600 metres, at a T-junction, turn left following the sign to Henley and Marlow.
52. In 350 metres you come to the main road, the A4155, and the hamlet of **Mill End**. Cross this very busy road with care
 - On the far side of the main road is the **bus stop** for those wishing to end the walk here by taking a bus back to Henley. See **Transport** on page 2 for more details
53. Otherwise, to continue the walk, turn right on the far side of the main road. Ignore the entrance to Hambleton Marina 30 metres beyond the bus stop, but in another 10 metres turn left down a signposted footpath between houses.
54. Walk down the tarmac driveway beyond and in 40 metres, just before a white metal fieldgate, turn right towards the automatic barrier. Pass to the right of this and along a path between wooden fences.
55. In 60 metres, you come to **Hambleton Weir**. Follow the metal walkway all the way across the River Thames (look back halfway across for a fine view of **Hambleton Mill**).
56. When the walkway ends, go down a concrete path for 30 metres and across **Hambleton Lock**. On the far side of the lock, there is a three-armed signpost indicating the Thames Path.
 - If you want **an easier, though only 300 metre shorter**, route back to Henley, you can turn right here and follow the riverbank back

to Henley's road bridge, picking up the route in paragraph 72 opposite.

57. To continue on the main walk, turn left at the three-armed footpath sign. In 30 metres merge with a tarmac track, passing through a gate to the left of a metal fieldgate, if the fieldgate is not open, which it usually is. (The river bank here is a very pleasant **picnic** spot and there is bench further up).
58. In 170 metres curve right with the tarmac track, away from the river.
59. In another 700 metres you come to a wooden kissing gate to the right of a metal fieldgate. Pass through this and carry on up the tarmac track for another 40 metres, until you get to a road, with a row of houses opposite. This is the hamlet of **Aston**.
 - To visit the **Flower Pot Hotel**, a possible late lunch stop, turn left here for 40 metres.

Otherwise, turn **right** onto the road.

Over Remenham Hill to Henley (3.6km/2.2 miles)

60. In 100 metres, just beyond the brow of the hill and just before a Kill Your Speed Sign on the left-hand side of the road, turn left over a stile to the left of double metal fieldgates onto a permissive footpath. Continue uphill along the left-hand edge of a field.
61. In 150 metres the path passes under trees and in another 120 metres you come to a T-junction marked by a two-armed footpath sign. Go right here on a path along the edge of a field, following a line of mini-pylons.
62. Keep straight on along this path, later a grassy track, for 1km, until you come to a road.
63. Turn left on the road. In 230 metres, just before a large oak tree, turn right through an opening in the hedge onto a signposted footpath. Go half left across a large field, your direction 230 degrees.
64. In 500 metres, at the far side of the field, go straight on into the woods at a point marked by a six-armed footpath post on a clear path.
65. In 350 metres exit the woods through a kissing gate and continue straight ahead towards the tallest of a row of trees ahead.
66. In 130 metres converge with a wooden fence to your right, and pass through a makeshift kissing gate to continue straight on down a path under trees just to the right of the field, along the top of a wooded slope.
67. In 200 metres cross a stile and descend onto a large lawn. 20 metres beyond the stile, you pass a public footpath sign. Immediately to the right on the ground is a plaque to Minty, a faithful dog.
68. Keep straight ahead, diagonally across the lawn, with the house the lawn belongs to soon visible above you to the left, heading for a somewhat hidden stile in the hedge to the right about 40 metres before the far corner of the lawn.
69. Once over the stile, continue ahead for 30 metres to join a track and continue onwards along it to the left-hand corner of the field.
70. In 100 metres exit the field through a wooden kissing gate 10 metres to the left of double metal gates. Cross over the road and through a gap in the hedge to continue along the left-hand edge of an open space, joining a tarmac track in 20 metres.
71. 50 metres after this, at a T-junction with a tarmac driveway, go left, passing through a gap to the left of double metal fieldgates.
72. In 80 metres you come to the main road. Turn right on it, across Henley Bridge and the River Thames.
73. On the far side, turn left along Thames Side. **The Chocolate Café** is 60 metres along on the right. After tea turn right following the road along the riverfront (or keep on past the tearoom if not stopping). In 50 metres ignore the road to the right (Friday Street), and keep on along the riverside.
74. In 120 metres more, at the Boats for Hire kiosk, bend right with the road away from the river.
 - If you want to **extend the walk down to Marsh Lock**, carry on along the riverbank to come to it in 1.3km (0.8 miles): return to this point and turn left for Henley station.
75. In 40 metres ignore Meadow Road to the left. In 90 metres, opposite the Imperial Hotel, turn left up the approach road to **Henley Station**.

Hambleden to Marlow **(8.2km/5.1 miles)**

These are the afternoon directions for option b) Henley to Marlow.

76. Coming out of the Stag & Huntsman, turn right (or keeping on past it if not stopping), carry on up the road (ignoring any Private Road signs, as the route described is a public footpath).
77. This road soon starts to climb a hill. In 150 metres ignore a track to the right.
78. In another 100 metres the road narrows and in another 100 metres becomes a path and climbs steeply up into woods.
79. In 450 metres, at very the top of the hill, pass through a wooden gate to the left of a fieldgate to exit the wood and carry on along a gravel track with a black barn to your right.
80. In 180 metres ignore a tarmac driveway coming from a house to the left to keep straight on along a tarmac driveway with a newly planted orchard to your right.
81. In 500 metres, just past a house on your right, you come to a road. Cross over this and over a stile to the left of a double wooden fieldgate to continue straight ahead up a gravel track.
82. In 300 metres, where the track curves left with the field edge, **veer right off the track down a short bank** to follow a path straight on into the wood, marked by yellow arrow (*not any apparent track to the right into the adjacent field*).
83. In 10 metres pass through a gap in a wire fence – another yellow arrow here – and beyond it veer left onto an initially not very distinct path through the wood, ignoring any apparent path to the right.
84. You may see faint white arrows on trees marking the path, but in 170 metres clearly visible white arrows point ahead and left. Immediately beyond this **ignore** a faint track slanting back to the right, but **10 metres further on**, 50 metres before the forest edge ahead, **turn right on a track**, your direction 140 degrees.
85. Stay on this track as it descends the hill and curves left and then right, before straightening out.
86. In 350 metres you come to the bottom of a small valley, surrounded by pine trees, where you merge with a track from your left-hand side.
87. You now stay on this track along the valley bottom, ignoring ways off. (*This is **Homefield Wood**, a good place to see **silver-washed fritillary** butterflies in July*). In 1.1km you pass through a metal barrier and come to a road.
88. Turn right along the road, and then in 50 metres, turn left sharp left off it to follow a path that passes to the right of a fieldgate and down the right-hand edge of a field with a wooden fence to its left.
89. In 170 metres, after passing down into a dip and up its other side, turn right down a bank and along a path that under a line of shrubs, fenced off from a field to its right.
90. In 400 metres, pass through a gap in a wooden fence into a wood, and ignoring footpaths right and left follow the path straight up the hill ahead.
91. At the top of the hill, in 150 metres, veer slightly left, following white arrows on trees, towards a road and car park 80 metres ahead, ignoring any apparent paths to the right.
92. Go straight across the road, and along a footpath, following signs for the Chilterns Way.
93. In 60 metres you come to a post with three arrows on it. Here **ignore** a path that appears to cross the small ditch and bank ahead, and instead **turn right** as indicated by an arrow on a tree, your direction 140 degrees.
94. Keep following the white arrows on trees through the wood. The path curves to the right for about 80 metres and then straightens out for 100 metres before turning left across a faint ditch and bank, after which it straightens out on a bearing of 100 degrees.
95. In another 350 metres keep straight on at a footpath crossroads marked by a post with yellow arrows on it. In 30 metres more, by a footpath post, the path veers left.
96. In 70 metres more, at a T-junction marked by a footpath post, turn right onto a larger track, your direction now 130 degrees. Keep on gently downhill, ignoring ways off.

97. In 300 metres you come to the end of the wood (less obvious in summer than in winter). Go straight on, ignoring a large white arrow on a tree which points left just before the junction, and two footpaths to the right just after it.
98. You are now on a broad path between wire fences, with a field visible through the trees to your right.
99. In 250 metres ignore a path forking right to keep straight on along a fenced path, that descends into a dip and climbs out again.
100. In 200 metres ignore a path to the right. In 200 metres more the path enters a wood.
101. In 80 metres the path veers left to reach a road (Bovingden Heights) in another 60 metres. Turn right on this.
102. In 30 metres ignore a road to the right (Spinfield Mount) to carry straight on down the right-hand of two roads straight ahead (they are in fact two halves of the same road, Spinfield Lane).
103. In 300 metres the two halves of the road merge. 60 metres beyond this, where the pavement ends, go down a tarmac path that diverges right from the road.
104. In 30 metres this merges with a driveway to continue downhill. In 30 metres the driveway becomes a road.
105. In 200 metres it descends to the main road, the A4155, where you go left.
106. In 700 metres at a three-way junction with an obelisk in the centre, turn right down **Marlow's** high street. The high street has various cafes which are possible tea stops, but the recommended one, if you can get there in time, is **Burgers** patisserie in 300 metres, at the bottom end of the shopping street on the left, just before the church. 50 metres beyond Burgers on the left is the **George & Dragon Inn**, one of many pleasant pubs in Marlow.
107. The way to the station is to turn left just before Burgers into Station Road. In 70 metres ignore St Peter Street to the right, and in 200 metres more ignore Mill Road to the right, and Station Rise to the left.
108. 180 metres beyond this, you come to a five way road junction, with the **Marlow Donkey Pub** on your right:
- the way to the station is half right (Station Approach).
109. In 70 metres ignore a fork to the left into an industrial park, and keep straight on: in about 40 metres, you come to **Marlow station**.