

Main walk last checked	Short walk last checked	Stonor shortcut last checked	
24 October 2020	24 October 2020	24 October 2020	
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Henley via Stonor Circular

Hidden valleys of the southern Chilterns

Length:	Main walk	22.2km (13.8 miles)
	Via Stonor short cut	19.1km (11.9 miles)
	Short walk	14.4km (8.9 miles)

Toughness: 6 out of 10

Maps: OS Explorer 171, OS Landranger 175

Features

Henley is normally thought of as a riverside town but, as this walk demonstrates, it is also on the southern edge of the Chiltern Hills, a charming area of hidden valleys, mixed woodland and farmland, and largely gentle slopes (although the main walk does have one substantial steep hill after lunch). The walk takes you up one side and down the other of the long valley leading up to Stonor, with plenty of charming views and fine beech woods en route. This is also a wonderful walk in which to see red kites, a bird of prey that has been successfully re-introduced here, and which can often be seen wheeling slowly overhead.

*Unfortunately the Crown, the best situated lunch pub for this walk, has been **closed** since 2020, and looks unlikely to reopen. That leaves the Rainbow, 3.1 miles into the walk, as the only option for mid walk refreshment. Henley itself has plenty of tea and pub options.*

Walk options

- **Stonor short cut:** You can trim **3.1km (1.9 miles)** off the main walk by using this short cut at paragraph 30 of the walk directions on page 3, making the total walk **19.1km (11.9 miles)**. It gives you a fine view of Stonor Park house, which is not otherwise seen on this walk, and has a good picnic spot.

- **Short walk:** A short walk up country lanes from the Rainbow Inn in Middle Assendon allows you to shorten the route to **14.4km (8.9 miles)**. This short walk still takes in several of the best sections from the the main walk, and makes an excellent winter walk.

Transport

There are twice hourly connections from **London Paddington** to Henley-on-Thames, changing at Twyford; though later in the evening the trains revert to hourly. Journey time is about one hour. If aiming for lunch in the Rainbow, get the train nearest to **10am**. Otherwise, with the lunch pub in Pishill now closed, it does not really matter what time you start the walk.

Lunch and tea

Rainbow Inn Middle Assendon (01491 574879). This quiet rural pub with a small garden, 5km (3.1 miles) into the walk, serves pleasant home-cooked food from 12-2.15pm daily and every evening except Monday from 7pm: it is closed 3pm to 6pm (7pm on Sundays). This is the lunch stop on the short walk, and now the only one for the main walk too since the closure of the Crown Inn (*see below*). It is a husband and wife-run pub and so appreciates an advance call from groups. In winter, note that after lunch on the short walk, there is still 9.2km (5.7 miles) to go, so it is wise to leave the pub no later than 1.45pm.

*The **Crown Inn** in Pishill, 10.9km (6.8 miles) into the main walk, has unfortunately been closed since 2020 and looks set to be converted to other uses.*

The Chocolate Cafe Henley-on-Thames (01491 411412). There are many tea options in Henley, but this café, situated on the waterfront by the bridge has a particularly fine selection of chocolate cakes. It is open till 5pm daily, but sometimes later on summer weekends. This is the suggested tea stop on all the walks. The **Angel Inn** more or less across the road is a pleasant pub stop.

Picnic: A fine spot is at the top of the hill on the Stonor short cut (paragraph 34 on page 4), where you have a view of Stonor Park house.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Henley to Middle Assendon (5.2km/3.2 miles)

1. Coming out of Henley Station turn right down the station approach road.
2. In 50 metres turn right at a T-junction, immediately in front of the Imperial Hotel.
3. In 120 metres, at the riverfront, follow the road around to the left, with the River Thames to your right.
4. In 100 metres ignore a road to your left (Friday Street) and keep on along the riverside.
5. In another 100 metres you pass the town bridge. Continue straight on along the riverside passing with the Red Lion Hotel on your left-hand side.
6. In 150 metres bend left with the road, away from the river.
7. In 200 metres turn right at a T-junction.
8. In 100 metres ignore a private road forking right (which in any case is a dead end) and keep to the main road.
9. In another 80 metres, at the second of two mini roundabouts, fork left, signposted A4130 towards Wallingford, Nettlebed and Stonor Park, keeping to the right-hand side of this road.
10. In 300 metres, 40 metres after the houses end to the right, turn right on a footpath signposted Oxfordshire Way.
11. In 250 metres this path leads up into some woods. Keep to the main path, as it bends left in another 70 metres.
12. In another 200 metres pass through a metal kissing gate and continue straight on uphill across an open field on a faint grassy path.
13. Keep straight on through scattered trees. In 600 metres pass to the left of a rusted fieldgate (there is sometimes temporary livestock fencing here), and carry on along a faint grassy track.
14. In 400 metres more pass through a kissing gate to the left of a fieldgate, and onto a tarmac driveway. Keep on up this, passing in 15 metres through a white fieldgate with 'Henley Park Private' on it.
15. In 150 metres the driveway becomes a gravel track and in another 900 metres it comes to a T-junction with a tarmac road. Cross over this road and pass through a kissing gate to the left of a fieldgate, signposted 'Oxfordshire Way'. Follow the footpath it veers

left across an open field, between wooden fences.

16. In 150 metres pass through a gate to the left of a fieldgate and continue onwards in the same direction along a wooden fence.
17. In 120 metres pass through a gap to walk along on a path between fences.
18. In 40 metres pass through a tall kissing gate to emerge onto a downhill path between fences, with a newly planted woodland to the right and later left. (*Good to see woodland being planted, but there is currently a fine view from this hillside of the valley ahead, which will soon be lost...*)
19. In 350 metres pass through another high kissing gate to carry on downhill on a tree-lined path.
20. In 250 metres you come to a junction with a tarmac lane. Turn left here, into the hamlet of **Middle Assendon**.
21. In 35 metres take the road to the right, merging in 50 metres with a larger road, the B480. On the left-hand side there is the **Rainbow Inn**.
22. Passing the Rainbow, continue walking up the B480. In 150 metres there are two roads off to the left.
 - **To continue with main walk**, ignore these two roads to the left, and carry on along the B480 and refer to paragraph 23.
 - For the **Short Walk** (the **14.4km/8.9 mile** version of the walk) take the **second** road to the left, signposted to Bix Bottom and follow it gently uphill, turning sharp right with it in 500 metres. Another 450 metres of minor curves brings you to a road **T-junction**, where you go **right**. In 300 metres you pass two houses on your right and in another 350 metres you come to Valley End Farm, advertised by a yellow sign to the left of the road. Ignore the concrete track into the farmyard immediately before this sign, but in another 50 metres, where the hedge to the left ends and just before a red brick farm building, **turn left** up a signposted public footpath. *Continue with paragraph 67 on page 5.*

Middle Assendon to Stonor **(3.3km/2.1 miles)**

23. In another 200 metres take a signposted footpath off to the right,

which slants diagonally up across an arable field, heading towards an opening in the trees.

24. In 200 metres more, at the top of the field, take the signposted footpath immediately to the left into the woods, following a yellow arrow on a post.
25. In 500 metres pass through a kissing gate into a field. Keep to the right of the hedge to follow a field edge uphill.
26. In 50 metres turn left with the field edge. In 70 metres the path becomes a track with hedgerow to your left and a field to your right.
27. Continue along this track for 1.3km until you come to a farm complex and the track curves right to a double metal fieldgate. Pass through a kissing gate to the right of the fieldgates and in 10 metres turn left to pass through another kissing gate, also to the right of double metal fieldgates, into the farmyard.
28. In 100 metres, on the far side of the farmyard, follow the track around to the right, keeping the woods to your left-hand side, and ignoring the track off to the left at the start of the woods.
29. In 130 metres, where the track curves sharply round the right, turn left downhill on a path with a rusting chain-link fence to your right.
30. In 500 metres you come to a road.
 - At this point to follow the **Stonor short cut**, turn left on the road and continue with paragraph 31.
 - **For the main walk via Pishill**, turn right along the road into the village of **Stonor** and continue with paragraph 38 overleaf.

Stonor to Lodge Farm **(1.4km/0.9 miles)**

*This is the **Stonor short cut**, which reduces the main walk by **3.1km (1.9 miles)**.*

31. Having turned left on the road, in 20 metres turn right up a signposted footpath.
32. In 60 metres cross a stile into a field, and continue uphill, passing just to the left of a mini-pylon pole after 60 metres.
33. In a further 130 metres pass through a kissing gate into the next field.
34. Continue uphill, heading to right of a fenced-in clump of trees, 70 metres

ahead. After the clump of trees, carry on uphill in the same direction.

*If you turn around on this next section, there is a view of **Stonor Park** house. This field also makes a nice **picnic spot**.*

Stonor Park has been the home of the Stonor family for 850 years and the house dates back to the 12th century, though it also has plenty of Tudor and even Georgian features. It was one of the places where the 16th century Catholic martyr (and now a saint) Edmund Campion stayed and preached. The house and its gardens and cafe are open on selected days from Easter to October - see www.stonor.com.

35. In another 300 metres pass through a kissing gate into a wood, and continue along a well-defined path, with a white arrow on a tree confirming your route in 100 metres or so.
 36. In another 300 metres emerge from the wood, and carry on across a field, aiming to the right of houses that can just be seen on its far side.
 37. In 300 metres, in the far corner of the field, turn left down a path that soon becomes a track. *Continue with paragraph 60 on page 5.*
- Stonor to Pishill**
(2.4km/1.5 miles)
- This is the **main walk** route.*
38. In 400 metres you pass the entrance to **Stonor Park** on your right (see *panel*).
 39. In another 200 metres ignore a road off to the right to Turville Heath and North End and carry straight in the direction of Pishill.
 40. In 350 metres fork right onto a tarmac track, signposted 'Byway to Christmas Common'. (*though you can if you wish stay on the road for a further 1km to get to the lunchtime pub slightly more quickly*).
 41. Keep on this track, which climbs steadily uphill. In 700 metres as the gradient levels off, go left at a two-armed footpath sign, following a footpath downhill that is fenced off from the left-hand edge of a field.
 42. In 200 metres carry on along a path under a tunnel of shrubs. In another 80 metres there is a pine wood to your right.
 43. In 150 metres pass through a gate, and turn left onto a track. In 40 metres, at a T-junction with a road, go right.
 44. 250 metres along this road was the **Crown Inn**, but at the time of writing (*January 2024*), this is closed and looks unlikely to reopen. Instead, to continue the walk, after 50 metres on the road turn left up a tarmac lane, signposted "Oxfordshire Way" and "To the Church".
- Pishill to Lodge Farm**
(2.1km/1.3 miles)
45. In another 170 metres you pass the church on your right and the view opens out to the left.
 46. In 100 metres, ignore a driveway to The Old Vicarage right and continue straight on up what is now a track.
 47. In another 70 metres, where the track curves right, fork left off it. **Ignore a car-wide path going uphill to the right**, parallel to the track you have just left, but instead go through a fieldgate, and keep on down the left-hand side of the field beyond.
 48. In 100 metres pass through a decaying fieldgate and continue downhill.
 49. In 250 metres you come to the bottom of a dip and carry on up the other side.
 50. In another 100 metres you enter a wood. Here cross a track and go straight on uphill on a narrower path which climbs steeply uphill through the wood.
 51. In 300 metres, at the top of the hill, there is a field on your right, and you follow the white arrows on a clear path along the edge of the wood.
 52. In 120 metres ignore a path merging from the left marked PS9, and keep straight on along the path marked OW PS17.
 53. 100 metres beyond this, where the path forks, follow OS PS17 to the left.
 54. In 200 metres you come to a road. Cross straight over and carry straight on uphill on the Oxfordshire Way following a white arrow on a tree, ignoring a forest track slanting uphill to the left
 55. In 150 metres, near the top of the hill, keep on up a narrow path that meanders between holly bushes with the wood edge close by to the right.

- 56. In 100 metres more ignore a path into a field right (PS18) and keep straight on (PS17) to emerge into a field in 30 metres.
- 57. Carry on slightly to the right across the field, heading slightly to the right of a telegraph pole, which itself is to the right of a house roof.
- 58. In 150 metres, on the far side of the field, turn left along the field edge, curving right with it in 60 metres.
- 59. 50 metres further on, exit the field down a path that soon becomes a track, between hedges left and a house garden right.

Lodge Farm to Valley End Farm (1.8km/1.1 miles)

- 60. In 50 metres, at a T-junction with another track, turn right.
 - 61. In 20 metres more turn left down a gravel path. In another 20 metres ignore a path through a kissing gate to the right to keep ahead on the Oxfordshire Way.
 - 62. Keep straight on, ignoring ways off. In 600 metres, where the path forks, go right (that is to say, straight on down into the wood), following SW26 OW, (ignoring SW33, which forks left along a field edge).
 - 63. This path goes steadily downhill for 700 metres until it meets a road at the bottom of the valley. Go left on this road.
 - 64. In 100 metres you pass the ruins of **church of St James** on your right (*you can pass through a gap in the hedge for a closer look: though the ruins look ancient, the church was in fact only abandoned in 1875. It dated back to Norman times*).
 - 65. Stay on the road, ignoring a signposted footpath up a track to the right in 50 metres.
 - 66. In another 250 metres you come to **Valley End Farm**. Turn right into the farmyard, following the signposted footpath.
- ### **Valley End Farm to Bix (2.2km/1.4 miles)**
- 67. Keep on through the farmyard to pass through a gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate 60 metres further on.
 - 68. Beyond the fieldgate merge with a gravel track from the left and keep on up it along a field edge.
 - 69. In 180 metres, roughly a third of the way along the field, **turn left through a kissing gate** onto a path that climbs steeply uphill to a line of trees.
 - 70. In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, turn round for a fine view back over the valley.
 - 71. Pass through the kissing gate at the top of the hill and in 20 metres curve right with the path along the wood edge, gently uphill.
 - 72. In 250 metres this path merges with a track coming up from the field to the left.
 - 73. Keep straight on along the track as it curves left and then right, climbing more steeply uphill.
 - 74. In 200 metres, at the top of the hill, continue in the same direction through a wood, following white arrows on the trees.
 - 75. The path gradually converges with the wood edge, still signposted by white arrows on the tree trunks, with a field visible to the right.
 - 76. In another 400 metres, at the end of the wood, follow the path straight out across the field, heading just to the left of the right-hand end of the houses ahead.
 - 77. In 300 metres, on the far side of the field, walk down a broad green passageway between wooden fences for 50 metres to a kissing gate. Pass through this and cross the busy A4130, veering slightly left towards a lay-by on its far side.
 - 78. From the lay-by take the path, signposted 'Chiltern Way Extension', between garden fences. In 70 metres cross a stile and carry on up the left-hand edge of a field.
 - 79. In 120 metres a wood starts to the left. In another 80 metres, and 15 metres before a stile ahead, **go left into the woods** over a stile. After the stile **veer very slightly right** (*but not too far right!!*), with no clear path.
 - 80. In 100 metres **cross a stile that is hidden by trees** to leave the wood. Go straight ahead across a stile in the wire fence ahead, and then half right across the field to a stile at the left end of a tile-roofed house.
 - 81. In 100 metres cross this stile and turn left onto a lane.
 - 82. In 150 metres you come to a T-junction and turn right.

From Bix through Lambridge Wood (2.1km/1.3 miles)

83. In 400 metres you pass through a small hamlet for about 100 metres.
84. Once you leave the hamlet, in 150 metres you come to a road and track crossroads, where the road to the right curves uphill into the trees. Here keep more or less straight on up a tarmac drive signposted as a bridleway.
85. In 20 metres you pass a "Lambridge Wood Strictly Private" sign, but this is a right of way. In another 60 metres the drive starts to curve left. **20 metres after this point veer right off the drive** following a yellow arrow on a post.
86. This path is indistinct for the first 20 metres or so, but a white arrow on a tree to the right confirms your way in 10 metres. In another 30 metres the path becomes clearer, between low brambles and - later - bracken and holly bushes.
87. Keep straight on along this clear path through the woods. In 400 metres you pass a footpath post marking a crosspaths and keep straight on, gently downhill. In 80 metres more another footpath post confirms your way.
88. In another 100 metres ignore a path to the left marked by a footpath post and instead go straight ahead, crossing a not very car-wide path and then **in 20 metres forking right** at a footpath post with a "no cycling" symbol on it (the most downhill of all two options).
89. In 130 metres you come to the valley bottom and keep on along it on a car-wide path. In 70 metres this starts to climb a hill.
90. In 120 metres the path levels off at the top of the hill. In 450 metres more cross a stile and emerge onto a golf course.

To Henley and the station (3.1km/1.9 miles)

91. Veer very slightly right across the golf course (watching out for flying golf balls), heading to the left of a line of trees 60 metres ahead. When you get to the trees, keep along their left-hand side.

92. In 100 metres pass two golf course tees and keep straight on to the left of a row of much larger trees, following a yellow arrow and soon picking up a gravel track.
93. In 250 metres veer slightly right onto a sandy brown golf course path for 30 metres and then fork left off it again to follow a track to the left of another line of trees.
94. 120 metres after this, as the track curves right, keep straight through a kissing gate and carry on down a tarmac driveway between fences.
95. In 120 metres you pass between white pillars with black gates and carry on down a road.
96. In 400 metres, where the road turns sharp right in front of a wooden fence topped with razor wire (the former home of Beatle George Harrison), go left down a signposted footpath with the wooden fence to your right.
97. In 200 metres this path turns left, to come to a suburban road 40 metres later. Turn right along this road.
98. In 180 metres go right uphill along Hop Gardens.
99. In 400 metres, 10 metres before you come to the main road, go left down a small, quiet back road.
100. In 300 metres cross a road and carry on for another 60 metres to the marketplace of **Henley**. Go straight on across this and on down Hart Street towards the church.
101. In 300 metres, just beyond the church, turn right along Thames Side, Henley's riverfront road, passing the **Angel Inn** on your left. **The Chocolate Cafe** is 60 metres further along on the right.
102. After tea turn right out of the tea room (or keep on past it if you are not stopping there) following the road along the riverfront.
103. In 50 metres ignore the road to the right (Friday Street), and keep along the riverside.
104. In 100 metres more at the Boats for Hire kiosk, bend right with the road away from the river. In 30 metres ignore Meadow Road to the left.
105. In 90 metres, opposite the Imperial Hotel, turn left up the approach road to **Henley station**.