

Chilterns Country

The Ashridge Estate covers 6 square miles of woodlands, commons, downland and farmland in Hertfordshire and Buckinghamshire. Most of this land is open access to the public and is owned and managed by the National Trust. The area supports an amazing diversity of birdlife including goldcrest and the lesser-spotted woodpecker. Wild fallow deer are a common sight and muntjac deer, badgers and the rarely found dormouse are also resident. The main focal point of the Estate is the granite Monument erected in 1832 to the 3rd Duke of Bridgewater, the Canal Duke.

The Ashridge Drovers Walk

The Ashridge Drovers Walk follows typically Chiltern sunken lanes that criss-cross the area. This network of ancient green lanes would have been used over hundreds of years to move livestock from the villages of Aldbury, Ivinghoe and Pitstone to their common lands. This movement of livestock was called droving.

The paths used for droving had to be wide enough to accommodate cattle at least two abreast. You will notice on several paths that ancient hedgebanks and ditches with steep sides often enclose the paths. These sunken tracks are known as hollow-ways and many of the routes on this walk are informally known by descriptive names, such as 'Back Hollow'.

Much of this walk is through common land. Common land is unusual, insofar as the 'commoners' have rights to grazing and other activities, such as cutting turf, although they are not the owners of that land. There are very few commoners left today. The three villages surrounding the Ashridge Estate, Pitstone, Ivinghoe and Aldbury, have their respective commons within the Estate.

These three commons would have been clear of woodland as recently as one hundred years ago. The commons within Ashridge were then used to graze cattle, sheep and pigs from the adjacent villages. Fuel for heating homes was also collected from the commons along with bedding for animals and heather and birch for making brooms.

Most commons were heavily grazed and, over the centuries, lost their woodland cover except for a few large trees. There has been very little grazing in the last hundred years and, as a result, many commons have been re-colonised by woodland. What you see today is a mixture of open grassland, ancient trees and relatively new woodlands.

This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). It follows rights of way most of which are waymarked as follows:

-  Footpath (walkers only)
-  Bridleway (horse riders, cyclists and walkers)
-  Byway open to all traffic
-  Restricted Byway (horseriders, cyclists, walkers and non-mechanically propelled vehicles)



Please be considerate in the countryside – keep to footpaths, especially through crops, and leave farm gates as you find them.

Refreshments are available on the walk route in the village of Aldbury or at the Visitor Centre at the Bridgewater Monument, tel. 01442 851227

Refreshments and B&B in the historic village of Aldbury:

The Valiant Trooper: friendly pub, traditional English cooking. Food served all day every day, specials on blackboard. Tel. 01442 851203

The Greyhound Inn: Small, family-run country hotel and top local restaurant. Tel. 01442 851228 www.greyhoundaldbury.co.uk



For further walks and rides in the area visit www.chilternsaonb.org/activities.asp


The Chilterns
CONSERVATION BOARD
www.chilternsaonb.org
Tel: 01844 355504


Countryside
Management
Service

01727 848168
www.hertslink.org/cms


National
Trust


The Chiltern
Society
We care for the Chilterns
www.chilternsociety.org.uk

The Ashridge Drovers Walk

Short Walk: 6.5 km (4 m) rolling wooded countryside, farmland and golf course, allow 2 hours

Long Walk: 10 km (6 m) rolling wooded countryside, steep chalk grassland, allow 3 hours

Start/Finish: Tring Railway Station, Aldbury


The Chilterns
AREA OF OUTSTANDING NATURAL BEAUTY

How to get to Tring Station

Tring railway station is on the London, Euston to Birmingham line. The Grand Union Canal towpath links Hemel Hempstead and Berkhamsted with Tring Station for walkers and cyclists. Cyclists can use the towpath but should obtain a cycle permit from British Waterways on 01908 302500. There are buses to Tring Station Monday to Saturday from Berkhamsted and Hemel Hempstead to (no. 30) and from Tring and Aldbury (no. 387). In addition, the Chilterns Rambler bus (327) operates on Sundays and Bank Holidays from April to September. For bus and train information call Traveline 0871 200 22 33 www.traveline.info If you need to come by car, please park in Tring railway station Long Stay car park, there is no parking in Aldbury. Tring Station is 2.5 km east of Tring and signposted from the A4251. Parking is £5 except on Sundays when it is free.

Notes on the walk going anticlockwise



From Tring Station turn right. Follow Station Road, after the junction take a track left over a cattle grid and continue straight on at a junction of bridleways. Turn right onto a footpath leading into Aldbury.



Follow the path, past farm buildings on your right and a pond on your left, continuing straight on to the road. Turn left towards Aldbury, past the church and straight across the crossroads, with the village pond on your left on to Toms Hill Road. After 30 metres take the bridleway on the left signposted 'Bridgewater Monument 1/2', it is quite a steep climb. At the top, skirt around the green until the Bridgewater Monument is on your left, take the Ashridge Boundary Trail on the right.



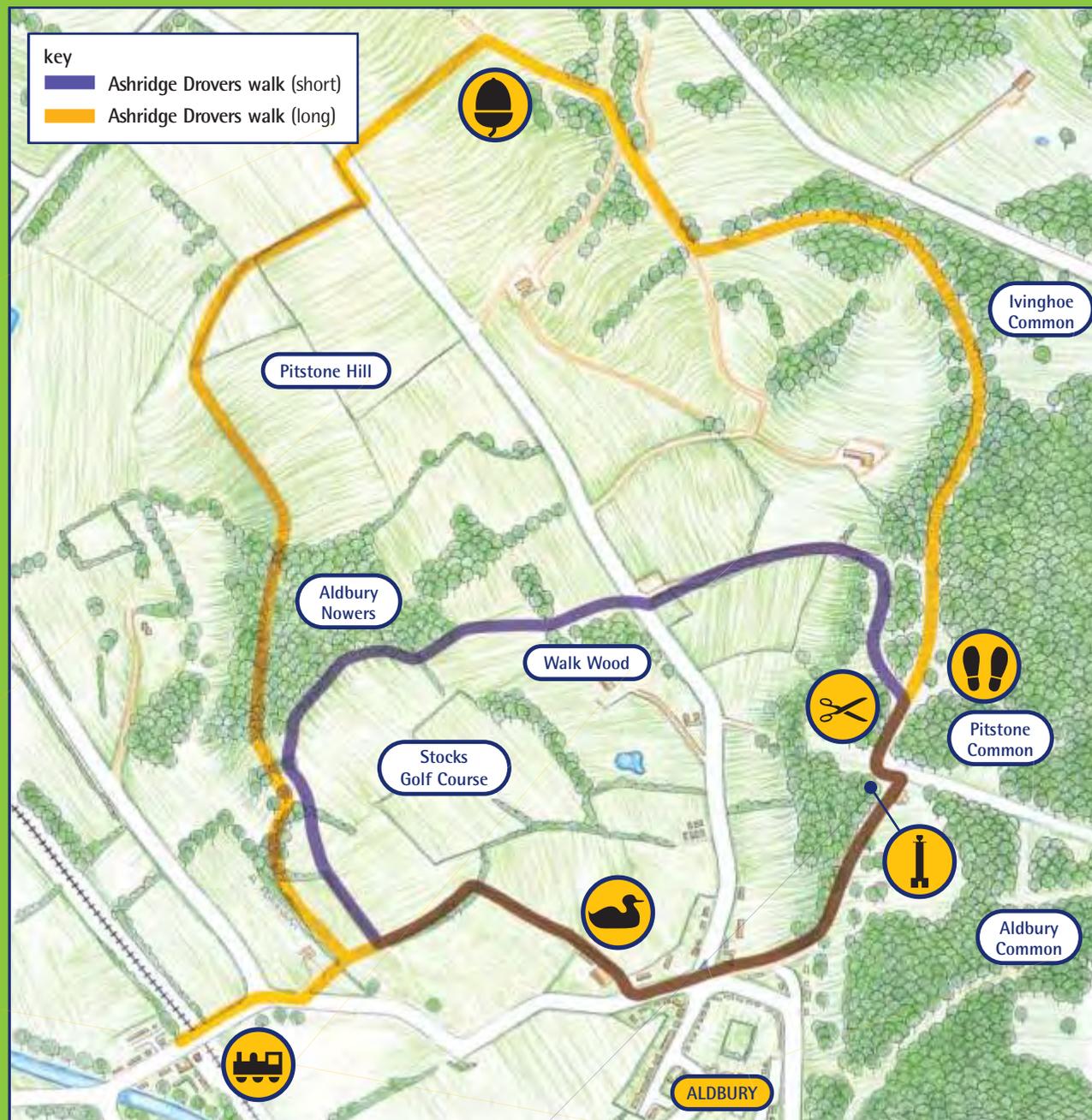
For the shorter walk, turn left onto a footpath and descend out of the woods into farmland. After crossing Stocks Road, follow a bridlepath through Walk Wood onto Stocks Golf Course. The path goes around the outside edge of the golf course and meets up with the bridleway you first took from Tring Station.



For the longer walk, continue to follow waymarks for the Ashridge Boundary Trail. After 1.5 miles, the waymarked path forks left from the stony track, following the woodland edge and across open downland to meet the Ridgeway. Turn left on to the Ridgeway.



Follow the Ridgeway National Trail's distinctive black fingerposts, bearing an acorn, over Pitstone Hill and through Aldbury Nowers back to Station Road. The Ridgeway National Trail follows much of what is thought to be Britain's oldest road. Starting in Wiltshire, it travels for 137 km passing through the Chilterns to finish at Ivinghoe Beacon.



scale: 1 kilometre



Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy

