

Goring and countryside to the east

With **Margaret Weller**

This stile-free walk is not just outstanding during the winter, but all year round. Goring is situated on the east side of a beautiful stretch of the Thames. The walk goes from the village centre out into the wooded areas due east of the town.

START: Wheel Orchard car park, off Station Road, Goring, Oxon RG8 9HB. Grid ref SU 599 806. (Pay & display Mon-Sat 8am-6pm. First hour free, up to 2 hrs 70p, up to 5 hrs £1.80)

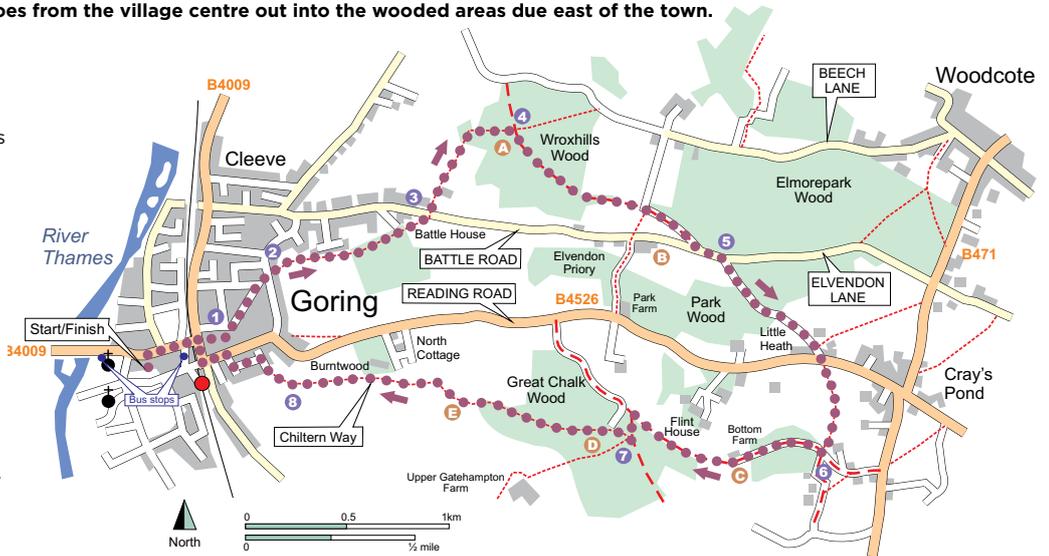
DISTANCE: 5.5 miles with 630ft of ascent

TERRAIN: A moderate walk with three climbs

MAPS: OS Explorer 171 and Chiltern Society 16

REFRESHMENTS: None on the walk. There are plenty of pubs and cafés in Goring

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: Trains – direct lines to Oxford and beyond, Reading and London Paddington. Buses – nos. 132/133/142 run between Goring and Reading, and nos. 134/135 run between Goring and Wallingford. There are no services on Sundays and Bank Holidays. Riverboat – during the summer, Salter's runs a service between Wallingford and Reading.



Map: Glyn Kuhn

Route

Leave the car park past the side of the public toilets and walk along the designated footpath towards the High Street. Turn right onto the High Street, head up the hill and over the railway bridge. Cross Wallingford Road and go down the lane opposite, marked with a public footpath signposted to Cleeve, for 120m.

1. Where the lane bends slightly to the right, turn left along a fenced tarmac footpath to another road. Go straight ahead passing modern houses and, when the road ends, stay in the same direction along a tarmac path for 50m.
2. Turn right through a fence gap on a path marked The Chiltern Way Extension. Cross a track and follow the path between fences to a kissing gate. Go through and continue for 200m until another kissing gate is reached. Pass through the gate and follow the main footpath for 650m, ignoring all paths left and right, to reach a lane.
3. Turn right, cross the road and almost immediately turn left up a footpath signposted to Beech Lane and Woodcote. Follow the path for 670m to meet a junction of tracks. On the way the path passes between high hedges and trees, then bears right uphill through Wroxhills Wood.
4. At the junction turn right along the wide bridleway and continue walking through woods for 520m to emerge with a field on the right and wooded glade on the left. Continue for a further 270m to reach a wide hardcore track. Bear right downhill and pass a metal gate to reach a road.

5. Turn left along it and, after 130m, turn right onto a bridleway. Walk uphill through Old Elvendon Wood for 720m until reaching a road. Cross it, go through the kissing gate opposite and head across the field to a gap in the hedge. The path continues with a hedge on the left and a wire fence on the right for 150m. It bears right and left then descends to a junction of tracks.
6. Turn right onto the hardcore bridleway and follow it as it gently descends past Bottom House Farm. As the bridleway narrows through woodland, continue for a further 560m to emerge at a path junction. Turn left onto a track that climbs through a wooded area to the junction with the Chiltern Way.
7. Turn right along the Chiltern Way and follow it back to Goring. After 50m ignore a track on the left, after a further 90m go over a crossing track and shortly after that ignore a track on the right. At a grassy area bear right and continue walking downhill to a kissing gate at the edge of the wood. Pass through this gate into a field and walk 50m to the next kissing gate on the right-hand side of the field. Go through that gate and walk up a steep hill, keeping the hedge to the right. Follow the hedge for 860m through this field and the next. At the corner, walk through the gap to playing fields.
8. Head diagonally across the fields to pass through a kissing gate in the hedgerow, which leads into a housing area. Follow the road as it bears left and right until it reaches the Reading Road. Turn left and head to a T-junction. Turn right over the road; then left over the railway bridge. Return on the original path through Goring to the car park.

Points of Interest

At the time of the Domesday Book Goring was known as Garinges. Its history goes back much further, as there is evidence that prehistoric man travelled the Ridgeway and crossed the Thames at this point. Indeed Goring stands on one of the oldest crossroads in the country; the meeting place of the Icknield Way, the Ridgeway and the Thames. The crossing of the river between Goring and Streatley was particularly shallow at this point. The Romans built a causeway here, which was later replaced by a ferry. St Thomas's Church was built c1100, probably by Robert d'Oilly, a Norman baron and staunch supporter of William the Conqueror. In the late 12th century the Augustinian Priory of Goring was founded and the nuns were given the rights to Streatley ferry and mill. The Priory survived until the early part of the 16th century, when it was destroyed as part of Henry VIII's dissolution of the monasteries.

A Wroxhills Wood and Plantation: The route passes between the Plantation and the Wood, which is designated as a Local Wildlife Site. It

contains larch, hazel, ash and wild cherry, and is noted for its bluebells. The Plantation has many oak trees.

B Elvendon Priory is part of the 304 hectare Elvendon Estate. The buildings incorporate the remains of a medieval house that was extensively rebuilt in the 1920s. Although called a priory, it was probably used a retreat by the nuns of Goring Priory. Local legend says there is a tunnel running from Elvendon to Goring church.

C Bottom House Farm: A Grade II listed former gamekeepers' cottage. The bridleway is Shay Lane, an old road between Cray's Pond and Goring. Another local legend has it that Dick Turpin used the lane for his exploits.

D Great Chalk Wood: A privately-owned wood, partly managed for nature conservation. Mainly beech, with some very tall conifers.

E Combe Field and Hartslock Nature Reserve: The route cuts across the corner of Combe Field North, which is part of the Reserve. It is noted for its lowland chalk grassland.

These notes were compiled with the assistance of the Goring & Streatley Local History Society. For further information go to www.goring-on-thames.co.uk.