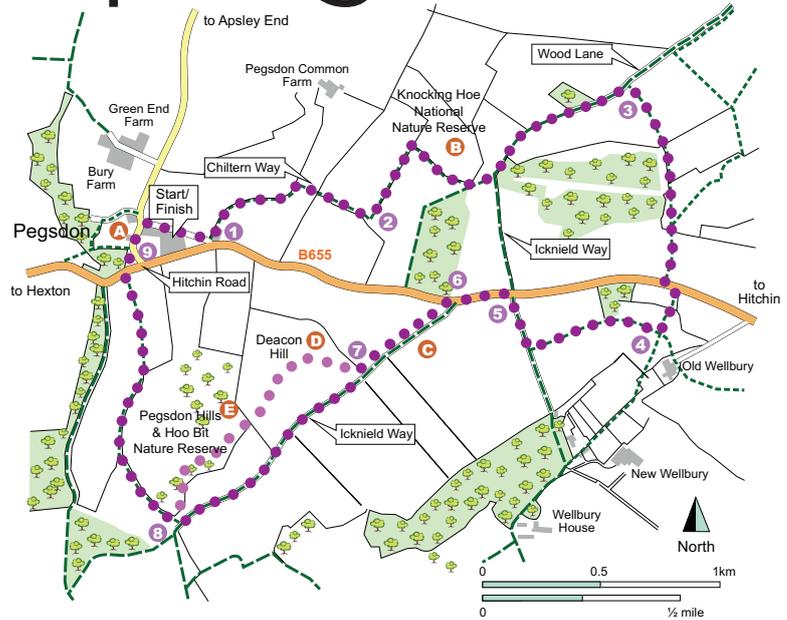


Pegsdon spring walk

With **Andrew Clark**

- START:** The Live and Let Live pub, Pegsdon, Beds SG5 3JX
Grid ref TL120 303
We have the landlord's permission to park at the pub
- DISTANCE:** 5 miles
- TERRAIN:** A moderate walk, with c600ft of ascent over its length. No stiles. There is a more strenuous option which adds an extra 160ft of ascent
- MAPS:** OS Explorer 193 and Chiltern Society 26
- REFRESHMENTS:** None on the walk, pub at start and finish!



Route

From the pub entrance in Pegsdon Way, turn right up to the road junction.

1. Turn left on the Chiltern Way Extension towards Pegsdon Common Farm. Just after the lane bends to the left, turn right uphill on a path between fields. Go through the hedgerow and then up the steps ahead. Follow the path to the right of a wood and a field to the top of the hill.
2. Here, turn left on a wide grassy strip between fields and continue on this undulating path. At the end of the field turn right uphill on a wide path. At the top go past, but not through, the entrance to Knocking Hoe Nature Reserve and then straight on past a farm gate to a crossing bridleway. Turn left along it for just over 100 yards, then bear left and follow the bridleway for about half a mile.
3. Turn right on The Chiltern Way Extension and stay in the same direction along the left hand edge of a field, past a wood on the right and then straight uphill to a wooden gate. Go through it and ahead to a gate and a road. Go left along the path by the side of the road and after a few steps cross it, taking extreme care. Take the wide grassy track ahead for just over 200 yards.
4. At a junction of tracks turn directly right towards the middle of a copse. Go through the middle of it and then straight across a field to a lane. Turn right and walk along to the main road.
5. Turn left along the path at the road edge and continue to a small parking area.
6. Ahead is the ancient Icknield Way Trail. Do not go along it, but look for a wooden kissing gate to the right. Go through it into a field and then follow its left hand edge as it runs parallel to the Trail. At the end of the field, stop and study the Natural England information board.

Here there are two options. For the more strenuous option go to description after point 9.

7. From the information board go left through a gate and then right up the often muddy Icknield Way. Climb steadily for about 3/4 mile and then go right through a wooden kissing gate and into Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve.
8. Walk straight ahead past the information board on a wide path that runs to the left of a small wood. Ignore the wooden gate on the right and continue to the next one. Go through it and turn right. The path then descends by the edge of a dry valley. Stay in the same direction through two further gates and then all the way down to the last gate by the main road. Taking care, cross over to a lane. Turn right, and at the junction turn left.
9. Walk along the lane and then turn right on Pegsdon Way to finish the walk.

For the more strenuous route:

Go past the information board and into the next field. Turn right to climb to the trig point at the top of Deacon Hill. Follow the ridge around to the left and, without losing much height, continue to a wooden kissing gate at the entrance to Pegsdon Hills Nature Reserve. Go through it and follow the track as it contours round the hill. The path drops down to the head of a dry valley and then climbs steeply to a wooden kissing gate just after the top. Go through it, then bear half left to the information board by the gate at point 8 (above).

History and Points of Interest

The walk goes through a number of important wildlife sites and has stunning views. Part of it is featured in the book *Wild Flowers and Where to Find Them in The Chilterns* by Gay

Beattie. The Wildlife Trust has reminded us that there is livestock on their Reserve at Pegsdon all year round; signs are posted round the site giving instructions to protect animals and aid conservation management.

- A **Pegsdon:** A small hamlet, which is part of Shillingdon parish. At the time of Domesday it belonged to Ramsay Abbey and was worth ten hides.
- B **Knocking Hoe:** A National Nature Reserve which contains large populations of rare plants. These include such chalk downland varieties as rock rose, dwarf thistle, clustered bellflower, lady's tresses and hoary plantain. There are also large populations of pasqueflower, fleawort, burnt-tip orchid, and the very rare spotted catsear and moon carrot.
- C **The Icknield Way:** One of Britain's most important ancient tracks, said to be the oldest road in Britain. It pre-dates the Romans and may have extended from Norfolk all the way down to the Devon coast.
- D **Deacon Hill:** A Site of Special Scientific Interest and a fine example of chalk downland. On the slopes there are medieval cultivation terraces, known as strip lynchets.
- E **Pegsdon Hills and Hoo Bit Nature Reserves:** Part of the Deacon Hill SSSI, they belong to the Bedfordshire, Cambridgeshire and Northamptonshire Wildlife Trust. They are one of the jewels of the Chilterns AONB and have some of the most stunning views in the area. Look out for birds such as buzzard, fieldfare, grey partridge, lapwing, meadow pipit, redwing, skylark, turtle dove, wheatear and yellowhammer. You may also see brown argus, dark green fritillary, green hairstreak and small heath butterflies, and glow-worms, as well as plants like autumn gentian, fragrant orchid, milkwort, rock rose, common spotted orchid, cowslip, eyebright, harebell and wild thyme.