

Warburg summer walk

A stile-free walk

with Maggie Templeman

A circular walk encompassing some of the best that the Chilterns has to offer: far-reaching views, a traditional country pub, extensive common land, farmland, ancient beech woods, a pretty hamlet and an imposing manor house.

START: Warburg Nature Reserve, Grid ref SU 720 879

Take the B480 between Henley-on-Thames and Watlington. Just outside Middle Assendon take the turning towards Bix Bottom. Turn right at the T junction and follow this narrow bumpy lane for c1.5 miles to Warburg Nature Reserve and its car park

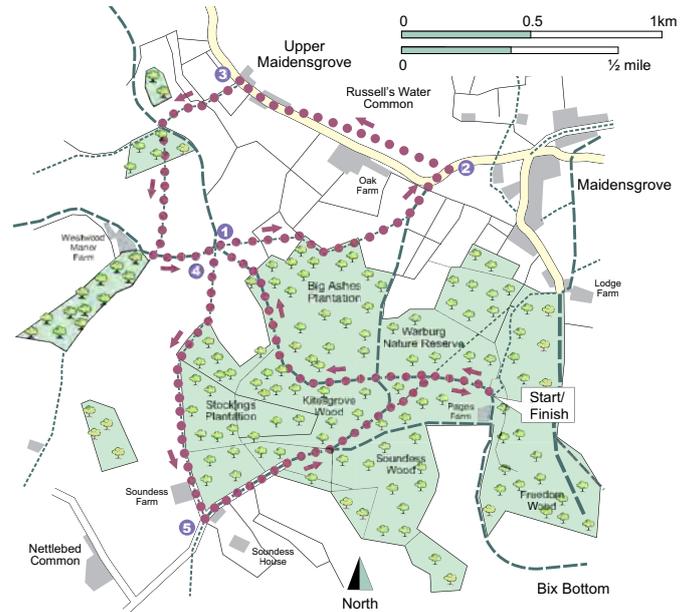
DISTANCE: 4.2 miles, with c180m of ascent

TERRAIN: An undulating walk with one steep and one moderate ascent, and one steep descent

MAPS: OS Explorer 171, Chiltern Society 2 and 9

REFRESHMENTS: The Five Horseshoes Pub, Maidensgrove

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: None to the start. Bus 139 stops at Nettlebed, from where there is c1/2 mile walk to point 5 on the map



Route

Exit the car park, turning right along the restricted byway that runs along the bottom of the Nature Reserve. Continue for c1 mile, ignoring all side turnings.

- At a junction of four other paths, turn immediately right onto the Chiltern Way and enter a large sloping field via a wooden kissing gate. Climb steeply uphill, following the clearly visible path line (diagonally to the right) to a second wooden kissing gate and enter a small copse. There is a memorial bench on the left. Continue up the steps in the copse, through another kissing gate to enter a field. Go straight up and at the top bear slightly to the right to reach another kissing gate at a wooded entrance to Warburg Nature Reserve. Follow the path through the wood and emerge into a large, sloping field. Stay in the same direction up the hill to reach a wide, stony track. Turn left up it to a lane and Maidensgrove Common.
- Cross over the lane onto the Common and walk ahead for 20 or 30m. Then turn left and stay parallel to the lane, rejoining it at the entrance to Maidensgrove village. Carry on past the Five Horseshoes pub.
- Just after Periwinkle Cottage, turn left through staggered wooden posts onto a narrow, downhill-sloping footpath towards Park Corner. Continue down a short flight of steps and at the end pass through a wooden kissing gate. Turn immediately right along the top of the hill and then left down a steep slope, with the field hedge to the right. At the bottom of the field go through a wooden kissing gate. Bear half left over the bridleway to go through another wooden kissing gate. Bear left to follow the white arrows uphill through a beech wood. Enter a large sloping field and continue

straight across towards the overhead cables, then bear right down to a wooden kissing gate. Go through this into a small field (often with horses), with Westwood Manor Farm to the right. Exit the field via another kissing gate and turn immediately left along a well-trodden byway.

- At the major 'five path' junction, turn right through a wooden kissing gate onto the Chiltern Way Extension. Bear half right uphill, under the cables, towards the top left-hand corner of the field. Go through a wooden kissing gate and follow the path at the edge of the beech wood. Go through another wooden kissing gate to enter a large arable field, turning immediately left along the field edge. Continue straight ahead for c1/3 mile. The path becomes a wide, stony track past some cottages on the right.
- At the T junction, with the gates to Soundness House ahead, turn left down a wide restricted byway and back into the Warburg Nature Reserve. Towards the bottom of the hill, bear half left (crossing a wide track) onto a narrow restricted byway and go slightly uphill through the wood. After c200m take the first waymarked footpath to the right, following this downhill to a T junction. Turn right along the byway to return to the car park on the left-hand side.

Points of Interest

A Warburg Nature Reserve: With flower-rich grasslands and majestic woodlands, this is one of the largest nature reserves owned by Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. It has a visitor centre, picnic area, bird hides and a wealth of fauna and flora, including 15 species of orchid. It's home to an incredible variety of habitats sheltering thousands of species, and

each season there's something interesting to experience. In spring the woodland is awash with spectacular bluebells and wood anemones. In May and June the reserve has a superb dawn chorus. When summer comes the wide, sunny rides and open glades of chalk grassland are full of summer flowers, including pyramidal orchids as well as swathes of aromatic wild marjoram and thyme. During the autumn there are glorious colours throughout the tree canopy, while down below grow the Chiltern gentians and an incredible 900 species of fungi. In winter, visitors can enjoy the magical frost along the valley bottom.

See www.bbowt.org.uk/reserves/warburg-nature-reserve or call 01491 542001.

- B Maidensgrove and Common:** Maidensgrove is in the modern parish of Pishill and Stonor. Its earlier names were Maiden's Grove and Minigrove. It's on the edge of the large area of common land known as Russell's Water and Maidensgrove Common which belongs to Stonor Park.
- C The Five Horseshoes:** A 16th century pub with breathtaking views over the valley.
- D Soundness House:** An imposing manor house, changed and developed over hundreds of years. It is reputed that Nell Gwynne, the mistress of Charles II, once stayed here.

Maggie Templeman is a life member of the Chiltern Society and ROWG Area Secretary for some of the most beautiful parishes in South Oxfordshire, including Stonor with Pishill, Swyncombe and Ewelme. She is involved with the South Chilterns Path Maintenance Volunteers (most frequently transporting gates and tools across muddy fields) and also leads walks for the Society. Maggie is accompanied almost everywhere by Fergal and Osboern, her flatcoat retriever and chocolate labrador.
Map: Glyn Kuhn