

Stokenchurch to Radnage and back

With **Andrew Clark**

A very scenic walk that takes in rolling chalk hills, sweeping views and beech woodland. There's an option to visit the ancient Radnage church and Yoesden Bank, a wonderful example of traditional Chiltern landscape.

START: The Kings Hotel, Oxford Road, Stokenchurch HP14 3TA. Grid ref SU 760962. Park in the free public car park at the hotel

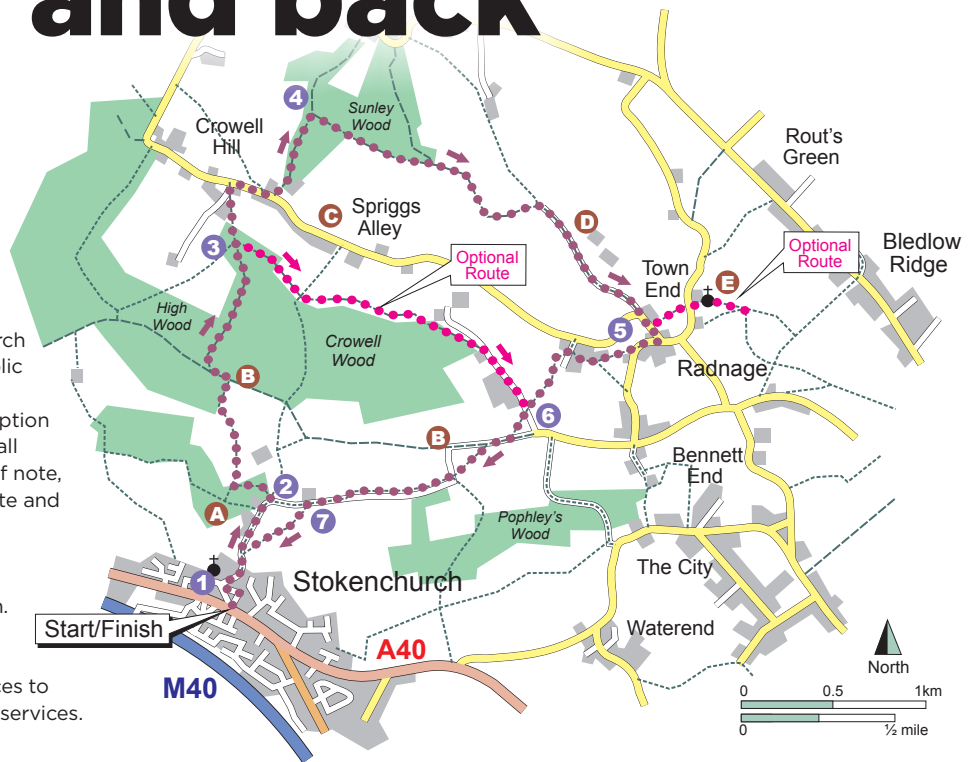
DISTANCE: 7 miles/11.3km, with a shorter 4 mile option

TERRAIN: Easy walking on good paths, with a small number of gates and stiles. There are four climbs of note, with a total ascent of 800ft/245m on the main route and 520ft/160m on the optional shorter route

MAPS: OS Explorer 171, Chiltern Society 14 & 7 (for the church)

REFRESHMENTS: Pubs and cafés in Stokenchurch. The walk passes close to The Sir Charles Napier, Spriggs Alley, Radnage OX39 4BX

LOCAL TRANSPORT: There are regular bus services to Stokenchurch. Please check www.traveline.info for services.



Map: Glyn Kuhn
Photos: Colin Drake

Route

Leave by the rear right-hand corner of the car park, walk along the paved path of Kings Row and turn left into Church Street.

1. Immediately before The Royal Oak pub, turn right into Park Lane and follow it for 460m past the entrance to Mallards Court to a junction. Fork right and follow the lane for a further 100m to the entrance to Hallbottom Farm.
2. Go through it, walk down the driveway to the gate to the farm and turn left over the stile. Walk down between the fences and over the next stile into a field. Stay in the same direction up the hill, over the next stile and along to the left of the hedgerow to go over another stile into a wood. Follow the path downhill to a major track at the bottom (Colliers Lane). Turn left along the track for 150m and take the path on the right uphill. Cross over two forestry tracks and carry on up to the top. Continue ahead, following the path as it descends to a fork near the bottom, and fork left down to a crossing track.
**The optional shorter route starts here.*
3. To continue the main walk, cross the track, keep straight ahead uphill, staying on the main path past the entrance to Crowhill Farm to reach a lane (Spriggs Holly Lane). Turn right along it for 250m, turn left along the bridleway opposite Kestrel Cottage and follow it along and down to a major junction at the bottom.
4. Turn right and stay on the bridleway for nearly 2km to join a surfaced lane by the entrance to Daws Hill Vineyard. Continue directly ahead along the lane to a road (Town End Road). Turn left along it for 120m to the driveway on the left leading to Church Stile, a house sometimes referred to as Kirk Stile. **The optional route to visit Radnage church and Yoesden Bank starts here.*
5. To continue the main walk, continue ahead along the road and take the first right up Horseshoe Road. The route now follows The Chiltern Way back to Stokenchurch. Just after the left-hand bend,

take the path on the right by Elbow Knapp, go over a stile and up into a field. Keep directly ahead and climb up to the left of the hedgerow. At the top, cross a stile and walk along the surfaced access road past the buildings. At the bend, keep straight ahead and go through two gates onto a path. Turn left and follow it through a gate into a field. Keep to its left-hand edge for 100m and bear diagonally right down to a lane.

6. Turn left for a few metres, then right through the hedgerow. Cross a driveway and a stile into the next field, and cut across the corner to a track (Colliers Lane). Turn right along it for 50m, bear left across the field, then climb up to some steps and on to a track. Cross straight over and go up the steps into a field. Continue along its left-hand edge for 530m and go through a gap on the left onto a wide track. Turn right along the track for 200m and bear right into a field just before a field gate.
7. Cut across the corner of the field, go through a gate in the hedgerow and onwards through a field and gate to a lane. Turn left along it to The Royal Oak, left again along Church Street and right along Kings Row to return to the car park.

***Optional shorter route** – Turn right along the wide track for 1.5km to join a surfaced lane (Grange Farm Road). Continue ahead past the farm buildings to where The Chiltern Way crosses at Waypoint 6. Turn right to rejoin the main route.

***Optional route to visit Radnage church and Yoesden Bank** – Walk down the entrance drive to Church Stile and go through the gate directly ahead into a field, following The Chiltern Way. Walk down the middle of the field and up through a gate into a lane. The church is directly ahead and the path to Yoesden Bank is accessed via the rear of the churchyard.

Continued overleaf



St Mary's Church, Radnage



Hallbottom Farm



Walkers near Andridge Farm



View from The Chiltern Way

Points of Interest

Stokenchurch: During the Civil War the village's sympathy lay with the Parliamentarians. A local landowner, Col. Adrian Scrope, played a major part in the war and was a signatory to the death warrant of King Charles I. On the restoration of the monarchy Scrope was tried, hung, drawn and quartered at Charing Cross in 1660.

Although once part of the parish of Aston Rowant in Oxfordshire, Stokenchurch was transferred to Buckinghamshire in 1896. It's sited on a number of major routes, including a Roman road and the stagecoach service between London and Oxford. The Kings Hotel was built as a coaching inn in the 17th century, and local legend has it that King Charles II and his mistress Nell Gwynn stayed there.

Radnage can trace its history back to the 12th century, although it's been suggested that it was part of the Royal Hunting Forest of Bernwood. It's unusual in that it doesn't have a centre, but comprises a number of separate areas - The City, Town End, Green End and Bennett End. The name Radnage is old English for 'red oak'.

The Chiltern Way is a 134 mile circular trail around the Chilterns AONB, designed by the Chiltern Society. It highlights the best features of this historic landscape: pretty, old villages, downland with extensive views and the characteristic Chiltern patchwork of woods and fields. Suitable for walkers of all abilities, the route is well signposted and is regularly checked by our volunteers. Since it opened in 2000, three extensions have been created exploring new areas and adding a further 90 miles to its length.

A. Mallards Court was once the medieval manor of Mallards. It's thought to be named after Robert Malet who owned land locally in the late 13th century. The manor was later renamed Stokenchurch Manor.

B. Colliers Lane is an ancient route over the Chilterns and was an important short cut between Lewknor and West Wycombe. In the Middle Ages it was used by sheep drovers and charcoal burners (colliers).

C. Spriggs Alley is a small hamlet set 750ft up in the Chiltern Hills. It gets its name from the many ancient holly trees. In 1923 a workman repairing a driveway made a remarkable discovery, a 1st century Roman bowl. This dazzling work of art, called the Radnage bowl, now resides in the British Museum. Just off the route on Sprigs Holly Lane is The Sir Charles Napier pub.

D. Daws Hill Vineyard was planted in 2004 and grows the traditional champagne varieties, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier.

E. The Grade I listed church of **St Mary the Virgin** was built by the Knights Templar in the late 12th or early 13th century, with later additions. Some interesting features include the medieval and post-medieval wall paintings, the 'Saxon' font dug up in a field by a local farmer and a tombstone to the man who reputedly killed the last wild bear in England. **Yoesden Bank** is a beautiful nature reserve owned by Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust. It has an impressive variety of butterflies including adonis, chalkhill and small blue, as well as common spotted and fragrant orchids.

Photographs of Stokenchurch and Radnage can be found on our PhotoGroup's website: www.chilternphoto.org.uk