

Hambleden

With **Andrew Clark**

This is a walk of contrasts. It climbs out of the historic village of Hambleden, continues through woodland and then offers magnificent views. It returns alongside the Hamble Brook, which recently saw the completion of a restoration project. The walker can choose between two options - both equally enjoyable.

DISTANCE: Long option 6.8 miles/11km.

Short option 5 miles/8km

START: Hambleden village car park (charges apply). Entrance behind The Stag & Huntsman pub, RG9 6RP. Grid ref: SU 784865

TERRAIN: A mixture of paths, tracks, lanes and roads. Please note that there could be fallen trees and slippery roots in the woods from Waypoint 3.

Total ascent: long option 660ft/200m,

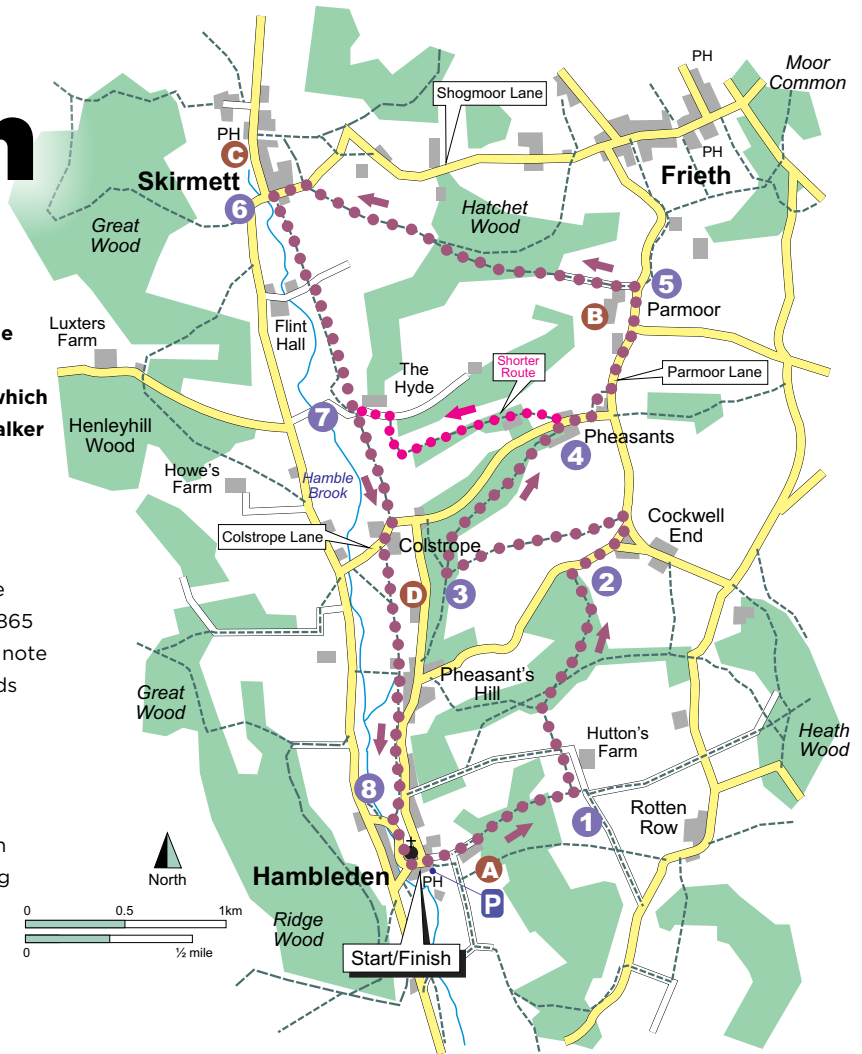
short option 600ft/185m

MAPS: OS Explorer 171 and Chiltern Society 11

REFRESHMENTS: None on the walk although The Frog pub in Skirmett is currently being renovated. In Hambleden: The Stag & Huntsman, the Village Store and teas in the churchyard on Sundays in summer

PARKING: See above

LOCAL TRANSPORT: For local bus services please check www.traveline.info



The route

Turn right out of the car park. Climb up the surfaced lane and, where that ends, continue steeply uphill to the top. Go through the gate, pass the farm buildings on the right, continue for 100m to a tree-lined driveway on the left.

1. Turn left along the driveway and, at the end, go over a wide crossing track and continue ahead on an unsurfaced track. Follow it round to the right into the wood. Walk for 150m and take the track on the left. Cross over the surfaced track and continue for 750m to a lane (Rockwell Hill End).
 2. Turn right up and along the lane, ignore the first turning to the right and continue to the sharp left-hand bend. Follow it round to the left towards Frieth for 70m, then turn left on a wide track to the left of the hedgerow. At the end of the hedgerow, keep straight ahead into the wood, descend and bear right to a crossing path in Pheasants Hill Common. Please be wary of fallen trees during the next section.
 3. Turn right, go gently uphill and along for 500m to meet a major track rising up from the left. Turn right and continue to climb to reach a lane by Beeches Farm. ***The optional shorter route starts here.**
 4. Turn right along the lane for 150m and, just before the pond, go through a gate on the left into the field. Cross to the right-hand corner, go through the gate and turn right to a lane (Parmoor Lane). Turn left, walk along the lane past the entrances of St Katharine's Parmoor and turn immediately left into a smaller lane.
 5. Continue ahead as the lane becomes an unsurfaced bridleway. Stay on this track for 1.5km as it descends to a lane on the edge of Skirmett. Turn left downhill to a path on the left just before the road junction.
 6. Go through a gate to join The Chiltern Way, which the route follows all the way back to Hambleden. Walk directly ahead through two fields and, at the end of the second, go through the gate on the right. Proceed between the fencing to the edge of a field, go over the crossing track and continue along the left-hand edge of the next field. Follow the path through a number of fields and gates to reach a lane.
 7. Cross the lane to the path opposite and proceed for 600m to the next lane (Colstrove Lane). Continue ahead and, just after the right-hand bend, turn left through the gate into the field (still on The Chiltern Way). Follow the path for a further 600m to the next lane. Keep ahead through more fields and gates as the church in Hambleden eventually comes into sight.
 8. In the last field before the church, bear right across it to leave through the gate and turn left along the lane. Take the path through the grounds of St Mary the Virgin Church and the gate into the village. Turn left past The Stag & Huntsman to return to the car park.
- * Optional shorter route from Waypoint 4:** Turn right along the lane for 30m and turn left into the field. Bear left downhill following the fence on the right. Go through the gate to a wide track and turn left downhill. At the bottom of the field, follow the path round to the right and down to a rough lane. Turn left down past the houses to the crossing path just before Hyde Cottage. Turn left to follow the main route at Waypoint 7.

Continued overleaf



Path leading from Hambleden village



St Katharine's Parmoor



Path leaving Skirmett



St Mary the Virgin, Hambleden

Points of interest

Hambleden is a picture postcard village of lovely old buildings. It's been used as the set for many famous films and TV shows including *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*, *Nanny McPhee*, *101 Dalmatians*, *Sleepy Hollow*, *Band of Brothers*, *Poirot*, *Rosemary & Thyme* and *Midsomer Murders*. The village and surrounding area are steeped in history.

The Domesday Book shows Hambleden as having a population of 50 villagers, 9 smallholders and 9 slaves. St Mary the Virgin Church dates from the 14th century. Hambleden has its own saint, Thomas de Cantilupe who was born and baptised in the village and was canonised in 1320.

A. Hambleden Manor House is Grade II listed and was said to have been built in 1603 for Emanuel Scrope, later Earl of Sunderland. It was once the home of Lord Cardigan who led the ill-fated Charge of the Light Brigade. The house was a refuge for Charles I, who stayed there one night in 1646 when he was fleeing Oxford. In the early 20th century it became the home of the WH Smith family, famous for the chain of newsagents.

B. St Katharine's Parmoor has a long and interesting history. The house was probably a farmhouse which has, over the years, been enlarged and extended. It was once owned by the Knights Templar and later the D'Oyley family – wealthy local landowners. Many famous people have visited Parmoor House, as it was then known, including Lord Baden Powell, Albert Einstein, Haile Sellassee and Jawaharlal Nehru with his daughter Indira. During WWII it became the home of the exiled King Zog of Albania. In 1947 the house and land were sold to the Community of St Katharine of Alexandria, a

high Anglican religious order. In 1995 the estate passed to Lady Ryder, better known as Sue Ryder. Today, the house is a retreat and conference centre. The Lady Ryder Memorial Garden is a one acre walled garden open to visitors on Tuesdays and Wednesdays except when there are events.

C. Skirmett dates back to the Danes who first settled there in the 9th century. The name probably comes from two words 'shire' and 'meeting place'. There are a number of Grade II listed buildings in the village including The Old Forge, The Old Post Office, Crooked Chimney Farmhouse and the old red telephone box. The local pub is called The Frog and was once known as The King's Arms. At the time of writing, it's due to reopen.

D. The Hamble Brook Restoration Project: This chalk stream flows down through the Hambleden Valley. It's also known as a winterbourne, because it only flows periodically. Over the years the Brook has suffered the ill effects of channel straightening and agricultural pollution. In partnership with the Chiltern Society, the Chilterns Chalk Streams Project joined forces with three local landowners to restore 1,100 metres of the stream and two important ponds. Thanks to multiple funding sources, including the Green Recovery Challenge Fund and the Environment Agency, the Brook is looking its best for more than 140 years, and even has a new wetland, encompassing over 2,500 square metres of new wildlife habitat.