

EWELME PARK CIRCULAR WALK

4 miles (6½ km) - allow 2 hours (see map on final page)

Introduction

Within the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, this walk provides stunning views of countryside that was once a royal Tudor deer park. It travels through a rolling landscape of woodland and arable farmland and includes a quiet stretch of The Ridgeway north of the village of Nuffield.



Ridgeway Circular Route

The walk is waymarked with 'Ridgeway Circular Route' waymarks.

Terrain and conditions

- Tracks, cross-field paths through arable, field edge paths and woodland paths. Just one short length of tarmac lane.
- Moderately strenuous with 3 sections steadily uphill. 163m (534 feet) ascent and descent.
- One small kissing gate encountered twice, no stiles
- Some paths can be muddy and slippery after rain.
- There may be seasonal vegetation on the route.

Preparation

- Wear appropriate clothing and strong, comfortable footwear.
- Carry water.
- Take a mobile phone if you have one but bear in mind that coverage can be patchy in rural areas.
- If you are walking alone it's sensible, as a simple precaution, to let someone know where you are and when you expect to return.

Getting there

The walk starts by the Crown Inn at Nuffield at map grid reference SU675877. To find it online, visit www.multimap.com and enter 'SU675877' in the box under 'find a map', and click 'find'.

By Bus: (Please note these details were correct in April 2010 but bus services can change with little notice so do check before travelling either by visiting Traveline or contacting Thames Travel)

- Service 139 operated by Thames Travel provides a regular daily service between Wallingford and Henley stopping at the Crown Inn. Contact office@thames-travel.co.uk for further details (no telephone provided).

By Car: The Crown Inn is on the south side of the A4130 Wallingford to Henley road about 4½ miles (7km) east of Wallingford. **Please only park in the pub car park if you will be using the pub before or after your walk.**

Facilities and refreshments

- **Refreshments:** The Crown Inn at Nuffield (NB closed in April 2010 but hopefully re-opening soon). No other refreshments along the walk.
- **Accommodation:**
 - 14 Bradley Road, Nuffield ☎01491 641359
 - May's Farm, Nuffield – ☎01491 641294
 - Fords Farm, Ewelme - ☎01491 839272 or www.fordsfarm.co.uk
 - Park Corner Farmhouse - ☎01491 641450
- **Toilets:** In the pub only

Things to remember

- If you bring your dog with you, keep it under close control and on a lead when near to livestock.
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home.
- Remember that the countryside is a working place; leave crops, buildings, machinery and livestock well alone. Leave gates and property as you find them and please keep to the line of the path.
- Park your car responsibly: do not obstruct gateways, narrow lanes and village facilities. Consider leaving valuables at home.
- Please enjoy your walk and spend your money in the local facilities - they need your support!

Walk directions

1. From the pub entrance, turn left (west) and walk past the pub along a gravel drive for a short distance to a Ridgeway signpost. Turn right down steps and cross the main road carefully. Go through the gate and follow The Ridgeway downhill through woodland, then across a field and through another belt of woodland.
2. Keep straight on following The Ridgeway across another field, through more woodland and then past paddocks to Ewelme Park House.
3. Once past Ewelme Park House turn left at a crossing of tracks, leaving The Ridgeway, onto a bridleway that descends gradually. Continue ahead along a section of fenced path and then through open fields.
4. Just before the bottom of the slope, turn left at a crossing of bridleways. Where the track bears left up the slope, continue ahead, initially between a hedge and small copse and then along a field headland.
5. At a junction of tracks turn left.
6. About 70m past a bungalow on the right, turn left leaving the tarmac lane and after 25m turn right onto a path through a woodland belt. Follow this as far as point 2 where you turn right to retrace your steps to the start.

Points of interest

The Ridgeway is one of only 15 National Trails in England and Wales. It's thought to be the oldest road in the country having been in existence since Neolithic (New Stone Age) times some 5,000 years ago and is surrounded by numerous prehistoric sites.

Starting in the Avebury World Heritage Site it travels for 87 miles (139km) in a north-easterly direction along a chalk ridge, bisected at roughly the mid-point by the River Thames and finishes in an Iron Age fort on top of Ivinghoe Beacon. Throughout its length it is within fine countryside: to the west of the Thames there's the open, rolling and remote downland of the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB), and to the east it's in the more wooded and intimate landscape of the Chilterns AONB.

Historic Park: Much of this walk is through Ewelme Park thought to have been established in the late 14th century and surviving for over 250 years, almost 100 of which as a Royal Deer Park. By Tudor times it was over 2 miles wide from east to west and almost a mile deep covering 895 acres (362 hectares) of land. The Ridgeway cuts through the centre of it.

Local enthusiast, Clive Buckley, has researched the fascinating history of the park and summarises its history thus: 'Created on land originally owned by Geoffrey Chaucer's son, Thomas, and forfeited to the Crown for treason in the reign of Henry VII, for a time it was looked after by one of Anne Boleyn's alleged adulterers. Henry VIII gave it to his sister, Mary Tudor, and her husband the Duke of Suffolk. It then came back to the Crown and passed to Elizabeth I. Her favourite, the Earl of Essex, was a visitor before his execution. It subsequently passed to James I then Charles I, before being sold off and dis-parked.' For far more detail visit Clive's website [Ewelme Park](#).

Boundaries and old roads: The walk follows what is believed to be the western boundary of the park between points 4 and 5 - along here, just beyond the copse of trees, a bank/ditch/bank is clearly visible. From point 5 the track follows what was the old coaching road from Oxford to London and that, together with the path from 6 back to 2 through the woodland belt, is probably part of the southern boundary of the Park. The high bank to the left (north) along here may be what remains of a park pale and bank feature.

Ewelme Park House: This is a 20th century Arts and Crafts house built on the site of the original Park Lodge. After the Lodge became a much more substantial residence, the farmhouse-type building now immediately to the north of it probably became used for the day-to-day running of the park by the parkers. The parkers usually worked from a lodge in the central part of the park with a view over the main *laund* (a compartmented area typically of grassland with pollard trees) from which the deer could be watched.

Wildlife: You'll almost certainly see several red kites during the walk, particularly between points 3 and 4. These spectacular russet-red birds of prey with forked tails were re-introduced to the Chilterns from 1989 and have been a great conservation

success story with over 300 pairs now breeding in the area. For more information see [red kites in the Chilterns](#).

In early May the woodland at the start of the walk is full of bluebells and woodruff with its clusters of white flowers and whorls of leaves. The path between points 6 and 2 is lined with numerous species of trees and shrubs indicating the hedges are of a great age. Look out for beech, cherry, oak, field maple, old hazel coppice, whitebeam and hawthorn.

Views along the route



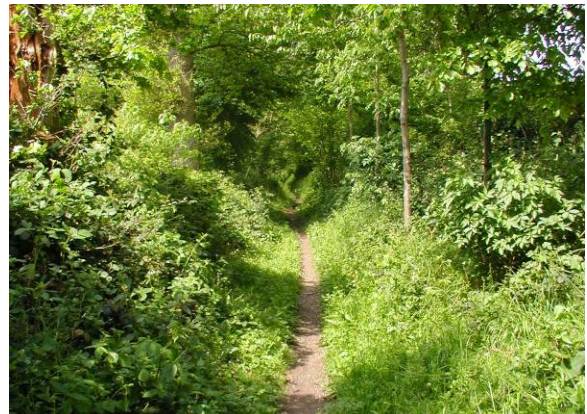
Woodland close to start of walk



View west beyond point 3



Looking north soon after point 4



Approaching point 2 from point 6



Woodruff



Red kite (photo ©Gerry Whitlow)

This walk has been supported by



EWELME PARK CIRCULAR WALK MAP

