

10 Leisure Walks of Discovery

A Boot Up

THE BERKSHIRE DOWNS

Robert Wood

The Berkshire Downs are a line of downland hills, part of the North Wessex Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. They have attracted human habitation since prehistoric times. Geologically they are continuous with the Marlborough Downs to the west and the Chilterns to the east. They lie east-west, with their scarp slope facing north into the Vale of White Horse and their dip slope bounded by the course of the River Kennet. In the east they are divided from the Chilterns by the River Thames.

These walks cover more or less the length of the Berkshire Downs, from Ashdown House in the west to the National Trust properties - Lardon Chase, Lough Down and the Holies - in the east. The Ridgeway, the spine of the Downs, is never far away. Some walks stray into Oxfordshire but that is understandable; until 1974 an area like Moulsoford lay in Berkshire. Historical and literary associations are everywhere, from a battle fought by King Alfred (then a prince), possible complicity by a Catholic grandee in the Gunpowder Plot, two monuments to soldiers one very grand, the ubiquitous John Betjeman, a once-famous sheep fair, through to *Wind in the Willows*, *Three Men in a Boat*, *Worzel Gummidge* and Thomas Hardy's last novel *Jude the Obscure*.

The ten circular walks, ranging from 3 to 8 miles, suit the needs of families, groups of friends or individuals looking for a gentle stroll or a longer walk, and reflect the many varied facets of the area - its people, its history, and its working landscape and will help first time visitors to experience some of the great scenery the area has to offer. Many of the walks feature a pub along the route.

Halsgrove's new-format guidebook, containing maps, photographs and useful information will ensure a great walking experience. Packed with colour, the book is an ideal reminder of a visit to the area.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

In previous lives Robert Wood was a researcher, an academic and a business psychologist. Now he concentrates on writing walking books. *Walks into History: Hampshire* appeared in 2009. Apart from his technical books, which include a book on emotional intelligence, he has produced a memoir, *Mackem Mayhem*, and three novels - *Pushing Envelopes*, *Chekyll and Ide* and *Ten a Penny*. Following on from this volume will be further volumes in the Boot Up series.

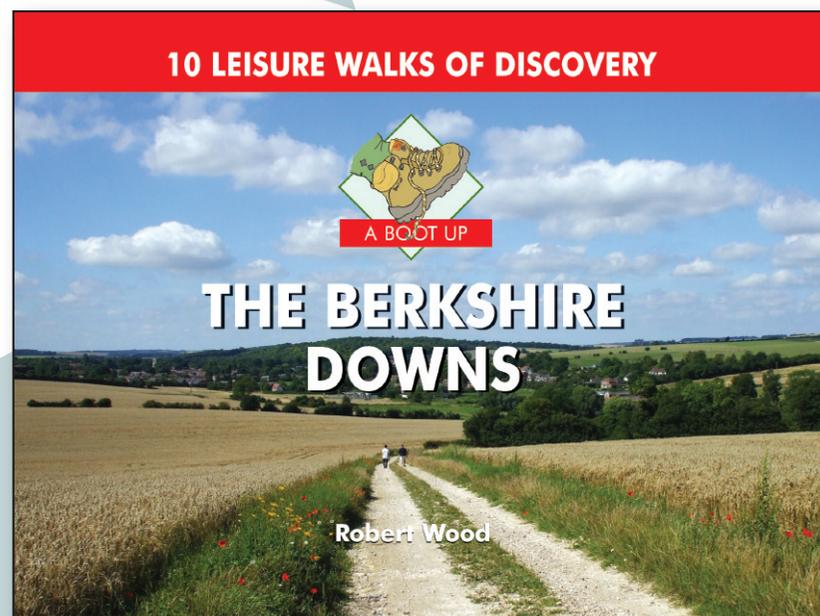
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Helen Deakin -
DDI 01823 653772
helend@halsgrove.com

Halsgrove Publishing
Halsgrove House,
Ryelands Industrial Estate,
Bagley Road, Wellington,
Somerset TA21 9PZ
Tel: 01823 653777
Fax: 01823 216796
www.halsgrove.com
e-mail: sales@halsgrove.com

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A BOOT UP THE BERKSHIRE DOWNS



1776 milestone.



Cottages in Westbrook Street, Blewbury.



Starveall Farm from Kingstanding Hill.



Right: South Fawley Manor.

1 Ashdown House

A megalithic chambered tomb built about 3400 BC. Weyland's Smiffy is associated with Weyland the Norse and Saxon god of blacksmithing. According to legend, a traveller whose horse had lost a shoe could leave the animal and a silver coin there overnight and next morning the horse would be re-shod. Just like that!

Ridgeway signpost

2 Lambourn Woodlands

A 4-mile scunter full of interest

This walk is as good a way of spending a couple of hours as any. A medieval village, Second World War trigogues, a Roman road, a 17th century mansion, a habitat of rare butterflies, they are all here. Enjoy.

Level: 100 ft up
Length: 4 miles
Terrain: Variable, but the steepest, low sun and low dunes but nothing too steep.
Pack and start: On the eastern side of Lambourn village on the A4130. The coach at the junction of Newbury Road and Hill Lane (S4 330 67).
Maps: OS Explorer 158
Website: www.berkshires.com/village/lambourn-woodlands
www.berkshires.com/crashalls

2 Lambourn Woodlands

10 At the next junction take the byway to the left and proceed up a slight incline towards a gap in a stand of trees off in the distance.

11 Once through the gap continue along a pleasant avenue flanked by hawthorn bushes. When a beam comes up on the left the Ridgeway is very close.

12 Once at the Ridgeway turn left unless a visit to Weyland's Smiffy beckons. This atmospheric feature is a little way down on the right. Otherwise, and in any case, the car is but a short distance to the west.

13

Example of a double-page spread.



Looking down on Churn Farm and the bed of the disused railway.