

10 Leisure Walks of Discovery

A Boot Up

THE CHILTERNS

Robert Wood

The Chiltern Hills remain a beautiful, unspoilt corner of England. Beech woodland and chalk downs provide a haven for wildlife while on the downs in summer are to be found abundant orchids. In the southern Chilterns the red kite is everywhere. Four nature reserves feature in these 10 walks.

As walking country goes the Chilterns are hard to beat. To the west there is a walk beside the Thames before it joins a section of the Shakespeare Way (Stratford left, the Globe right), while another walk drops in on a fine Elizabethan mansion before arriving in Henley's own Happy Valley where there is not a boat to be seen. More centrally, around the Wycombes, is Disraeli country and there is a visit to his house. The Hellfire Club was hereabouts too: just what did go on there? Further east a monument to a canal-builder suddenly rears up and there is a roller-coaster ramble to the north-west of Chesham, the first town in the Chilterns to be designated a Walkers are Welcome town. Add in three villages that film-makers have taken a shine to (*Vicar of Dibley*, *Nanny McPhee*, *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang*) and, yes, the Chilterns are hard to beat.

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. The 10 walks included are centred on:

- Britwell Salome and Swyncombe Downs
- Nettlebed and Russell's Water • Greys Court and Friar Park • Turville and Ibstone • Hambleden and the River Thames • Whiteleaf Hill and Chequers • Bradenham and West Wycombe • Hedgerley and Bulstrode Park • Chartridge and Redding Wick • The Bridgewater Monument and Aldbury Nowers •

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

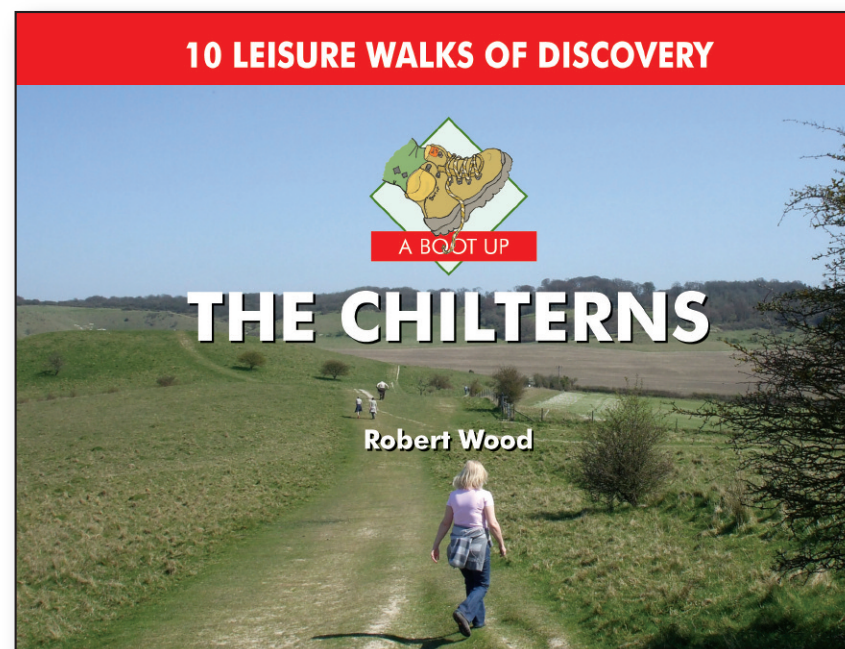
In previous lives Robert Wood was a researcher; an academic and a business psychologist. Now he concentrates on writing walking books. *Walks into History: Hampshire* appeared in 2009. Apart from his technical books, which include a book on emotional intelligence, he has produced a memoir; *Mackem Mayhem*, and three novels - *Pushing Envelopes*, *Chekyll and Ide* and *Ten a Penny*. His previous books for Halsgrove are *A Boot Up the Berkshire Downs* and *A Boot Up the North Hampshire Downs*.

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Greys Court



Hedgerley House with daub and wattle



Bridgewater Monument



White's Wood offers a pleasant stroll

1 Brinwell Salmons and Swyncombe Downs

6 Go up the road past the old rectory to reach a crossroads. Ahead of you is the track that is going to take you around the side of Swyncombe Downs. To the left are these same fine views across Oxfordshire.

7 Go down and then up to enter a wooded section. Carry on through the woods before the track starts to descend. On the left there is an obvious track, in fact an earthwork thought to have been an ancient boundary. If you wanted to detour onto the Downs you could follow the earthwork. As you round the bottom of the Downs there is the middle distance is Brinwell House, monument and all. Continue along the track until you reach North End Farm.

8 Go right along the farm drive to reach a road. Cross the road and carry on until a signpost comes up.

9 Over in the distance vehicles can be seen rising. They are on the M40. The track you want lies in woodland apart from briefly emerging at an intersection of fields.

10 Once the road is visible at Cooper's Farm you can – by turning left along farm tracks that run parallel to the road – avoid some of the road walking (it isn't far but the road is busy). Then turn right off the track when you spot a gorgeous white house opposite and walk up the road to the car.

11 View east towards the end of the track.

2 Nettlebed and Russell's Water

A handsome reminder of the industrial and pre-industrial past, a flagship nature reserve, a stunning park, echoes of the film *Enduring Love* and another location with filmic resonance, all combined with some of the best scenery the Chilterns can offer.

The walk starts in Nettlebed, not far from Henley. As the route winds through Warburg Nature Reserve it enters a dry valley bottom before rising to join the Oxfordshire Way. Some exquisite scenery follows with the inevitable red kites as company.

The route then turns west to arrive at the village of Russell's Water, home of a large duck pond where a rather famous film was shot. A descent followed by a level section followed by an ascent concludes the ramble.

Length: 10 miles
Difficulty: Undulating, demands the walker, except up the other side, a little road walking.
Park and Start: Nettlebed, by the green (OX 70 0AA7)
Approach: From Nettlebed or Henley
Map: OS Explorer 171
Webpages: www.nettlebed.org.uk/Info, www.basildon.org.uk/JohnofInternet2
www.stone.com/home
www.pastorandwalkers.co.uk/CPH4034

Example of a double-page spread.



Moored for the day