



Brightwalton, Chaddleworth, Leckhampstead, Peasemore: *Four Downland Villages*

Distance: 13 km=8 miles

easy walking

Region: Berkshire

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Refreshments: Peasemore, Leckhampstead

Map: Explorer 158 (Newbury)

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Meadows, woodland, nature reserves, views, historic villages

In Brief

This walk is a round trip through four typical Downland villages of West Berkshire. Although they are certainly picturesque, these are working villages, full of busy households with children, gardens, small farms and horse pastures. The main land use is arable, but all the field paths are straight and wide (although, late in the season, they tend to get temporarily ploughed up, so you have to follow the marker arrows). There are several surprises to charm your way, together with churches and two good pubs, especially *The Fox* at Peasemore which serves food out of hours (for enquiries, ring 01635 248480).

The walk begins in **Brightwalton**, near Newbury, Berkshire, **postcode RG20 7BN**. Park discreetly in the residential road that runs beside the church (Ash Close, although the name is not displayed anywhere). Another possible start is at **Chaddleworth**, if you are happy to reach the pubs a little earlier. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

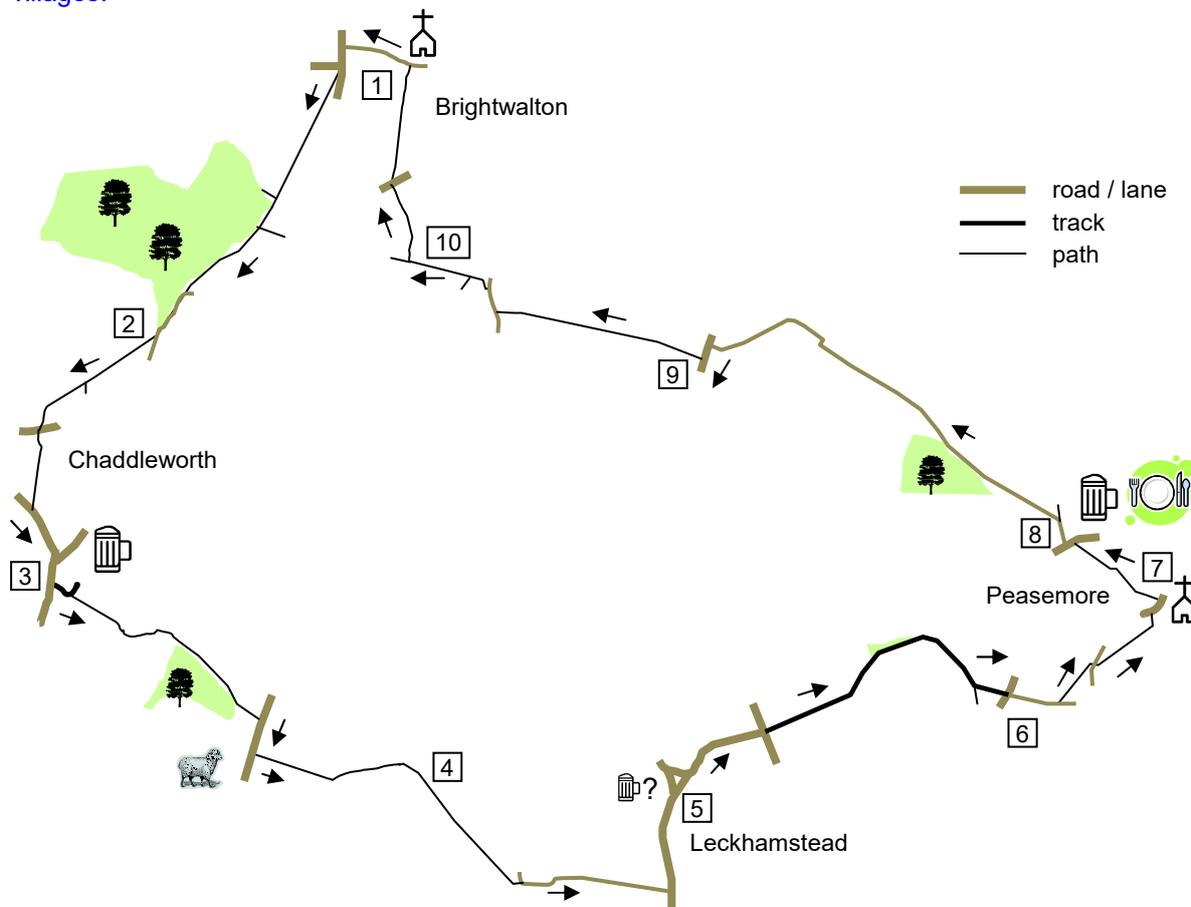
The Walk

Brightwalton to Chaddleworth 2½ km=1½ miles

Brightwalton's radiant name actually comes from "Beorhtwaldington", meaning "the farmstead of Beorhtwald's people". After the Norman conquest, the village was "given" to Battle Abbey and the monks not only did the brewing and baking but also looked after the village gallows and kept sheep and pigs with the help of a local swineherd. In 1293 there was big trouble when the swineherd, Richard Young, let them perish by neglect in favour of his own pigs. The Young family continued into Tudor times and several of them became rectors of the church. A Civil War skirmish occurred when Royalist soldiers were stationed here and in 1887 at the Marquis of Granby pub (now defunct) several bodies were dug up,

two of them headless. The little old Norman church fell down and was replaced in 1861 by the one you see now, designed by the architect George E. Street.

- 1 With Brightwalton Church on your right, go along the road to a T-junction where there is a war memorial. Turn **left** on the road, signposted *Chaddleworth*. In 70m, cross over a side road on your right and immediately fork **right** at a signpost on a footpath that goes diagonally across the field. Your path heads for the left-hand corner of a wood in the distance. When you reach it, in 600m, keep ahead at a fingerpost with Spray Wood on your right. At a marker post, ignore a footpath on your left, staying on this good wide grassy strip. Eventually you reach a tarmac lane at a bend: keep straight ahead on the lane, still with the wood on your right. In 150m, fork **right** on a signed footpath running between fields. *The paths across fields on this walk are all straight and wide and pleasant to walk on like this one; the paths are straighter than the roads and obviously have been used a lot by the people of these villages.*



- 2 You can now see the houses of Chaddleworth in the distance. At the other side of the field, keep to the **right** of a marker post, with a fence on your right, passing a yard with horses and chickens. Your path takes you through a wooden gate into a sheep pasture and immediately left through another similar gate. *The large house visible on your right is Chaddleworth House.* You arrive through a metal gate, near a pink thatched cottage, at a lane in Chaddleworth. *As a diversion, by turning right and right at a T-junction, you reach the church of St Andrew, built in the late 1100s and containing several monuments to the historic families of the locality.* Cross straight over the lane onto a footpath beside the village hall and keep ahead on a wide grassy path between fields. Finally, go down steps with railings to a road in Chaddleworth. Turn **left** on the road, passing some of the attractive cottages of the village to reach a road junction. Your route is **right** at the

junction. However, on your left is the *Ibex* pub, with its car park. If you began here, the walk is finished.



The 'Ibex' re-opened in 2017. It was closed in May 2013 after it became the subject of gossip when, a few years earlier, the landlady openly admitted having stolen money from the local post office to pay the owners, Greene King. The brewery allowed her to keep the tenancy provided she paid back the money but, unsurprisingly for a tight-knit community, the clientele just stayed away. The pub now has a new tenant and is thriving again.

Chaddleworth to Leckhampstead 3½ km= 2¼ miles

- 3 Having turned right at the junction in Chaddleworth, continue another 100m or so and turn **left** opposite the thatched *Corner Cottage* onto Nodmore. Where this tarmac road bends left, leave it by continuing ahead on a stony track. Where the track shortly hairpins, keep ahead on a grassy track. This pleasant level track curves left past a conservation area. Eventually you emerge through a double metal gate onto a lane. Turn **right** on the lane, passing a sheep meadow on your right. In 130m, turn **left** at a signpost on a path straight across a crop field. Where the field on your left ends, fork **left**, as indicated by a yellow arrow on a post, on a grassy path between hedges.
- 4 You come out into a crop field: turn **right** along the edge. In the next field, take a nice straight path across the centre. [On your right you have great views towards Newbury, with Wickham Heath and Snelsmore Common \(see those walks in this series\).](#) At the other side, you meet a track. Veer **left** on the track, by a farm, and keep ahead where you meet a tarmac lane at a bend, passing a bench seat. On your left soon is the very fine *Leckhampstead Manor*. At a junction with a major road, your route is **left** into the village. [First, however, you may wish to go right to visit the church of St James, a most unusual early Victorian church with its striking coloured brick interior.](#) Pass the superior bungalows of Leckhampstead until, on your right, you reach the village hall.



Leckhampstead to Peasemore 2½ km=1½ miles

- 5 Continue past the Village hall towards the small green, with its clock memorial. Just before the green, ignore a footpath on your right but turn **right** on the road, signposted *Newbury Wantage*, quickly joining a road coming from the left. Follow the road, ignoring a side road called *Egypt Hill*, all the way down to meet a major road at the bottom, the B4494. Cross straight over the road to a track opposite. You are now walking on one of the favourite rides of the Downland Villages, pleasantly smooth, paved in parts, probably a very old highway. It leads to an area known as Hill Green, a nature reserve with open areas. Stay on the winding track through trees and thickets until it comes out into a green meadow. Keep straight on along the left-hand side to emerge on a shingle drive to a road junction.
- 6 Go straight over the junction and take a narrow lane ahead. In 200m, at a small footpath sign, turn **left** and take a path diagonally across a crop field. *Don't miss this turning!* At the far side, cross over another tarmac lane and take the path through the trees slightly to your left. [\[2018: the official footpath is diagonally across the field but it may be ploughed over.\]](#) Turn **left** and follow the wide grassy path towards the church. [The sight of the church of St. Barnabas, Peasemore is a scene suitable for a watercolour.](#) Stay on the track



until after the church when you will reach a wooden marker post. Turn **left** here over a smooth lawn between box hedges, an unexpected delight, and turn **left** in front of the house onto a narrow lane which runs the length of a redbrick terrace, partly thatched, with the church on your right. *The entrance to this Victorian church, worth a visit, is from the road.*

Peasemore is probably named from the pea crop that was grown around the village pond. The village has become famous as the childhood home of ex-Prime Minister David Cameron whose family lived at the Old Rectory. His father was Sheriff of Berkshire in 1978-9.

- 7 Cross the road and take a grassy footpath opposite the church steeple, through a wooden swing-gate. Follow a path as it veers right between fences down to a V-stile and bear **right** on a grassy track. On reaching a main road, cross over to the *Fox at Peasemore*.



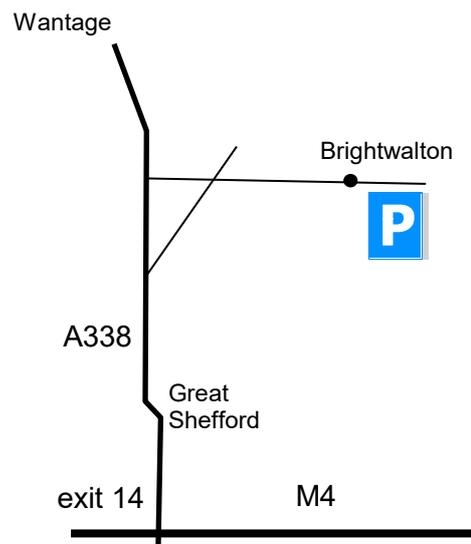
The "Fox at Peasemore" is the old "Fox and Hounds" under the sparkling new management of Phillip and Lauren, with friendliness as a watchword. The hours are friendly too, with the bar open all day Saturday and Sunday and food available when most pubs would have shut the kitchen. Brews available are Doombar, West Berks and one guest (typically Upham Punter or Ramsbury), plus a selection of rare bottled beers. Lauren also bakes bread.

Peasemore to Brightwalton 4½ km=2¾ miles

- 8 Turn **left** past the pub and take the first **right**, i.e. the lane immediately on the **left of** the pub, going past a cricket / football pitch. Veer **left** with the lane on Passmore Hill, avoiding the footpath on the right through gates. In about 500m, ignore a footpath forking left and stay on this quiet lane, soon descending. At a junction, avoid a side road on the right and continue on the lane as it zigzags, rises and descends eventually reaching a main road, the B4494 again.
- 9 Turn **left** on the main road for only 40m and turn **right** on a path uphill beside a field on your left. Soon your path goes up into the open towards the crest of a hill. *You will probably pass a flock of quail and their feeders.* Continue past a tennis court of *Pudding Lane House*. Turn **right** on the lane and, in 100m, turn **left** on the shingle drive of the last house, *Field Cottage*. Your footpath curves right, goes across the front of a charming thatch and turns **left** round the side of the cottage. It now leads you over a stile. Ignore the footpath immediately to your left and go straight ahead along the left-hand side of a meadow. Cross one more stile and continue across the centre of the next meadow. *The steeple of All Saints Church, your final destination, is visible to the right.*
- 10 About half way across the meadow, turn **right** on a faint path, heading for the church and small wooden gate with route markers, just visible on the far side. The gate leads onto a lovely lawn and ornamental tree garden of Malthouse Farm, a charming surprise. Keep ahead, a fraction left, going just to the left of a tall cypress hedge. Soon you are walking near a low wooden fence on your right, parallel to a drive. Exit by a small wooden gate down to a lane. Turn **right** and immediately **left** at a signpost diagonally across a field. At the other side, go over a stile, up the right-hand side of a horse pasture, over a V-stile and onwards beside houses to the residential road in Brightwalton where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Brightwalton is signposted from the A338 Hungerford-Wantage road. If coming on the **M4**, come off at exit **14**; follow the A338 north through Great Shefford and, about 2 mile outside that town, take a **right** fork (not signed in advance) signposted *Woolley Brightwalton*; the village is signed **right** at a crossing after nearly 1½ miles. If coming from Oxfordshire through Wantage, also on the A338, turn left just after the big memorial cross, signposted *Woolley*; follow the bendy lane, going over a crossing, into the village.



By bus/train: bus 107 from Newbury goes to all the villages, not Sunday. Check the timetables.

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