Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Three Chiltern Villages, Three Great Pubs
Skirmett, Turville, Fingest

Distance: 6½ km=4 miles — easy walking with two hills

Region: Chilterns — Date written: 3-sep-2012

Author: Phegophilos — Last update: 18-may-2026

Refreshments: Turville, Fingest, Skirmett

Map: Explorer 171 (Chiltern Hills West) *hopefully not needed*

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Villages, woodland, hills, views, pubs

In Brief

This is a glorious round of three of the most picturesque Chiltern villages, each with one of the best pubs in the whole area – a feast of fine views, green meadows, fine ales and tasty food! It is great at any time of the year.

There is just a tiny patch of nettles after Turville, probably not enough to worry bare legs. Any sensible outdoor footwear should be fine. Your dog can come too as he is welcome in all the pubs.

The walk begins in Skirmett, Bucks, w3w:bandwagon.solves.care, postcode **RG9 6TG**. There's plenty of roadside parking. Other possible starts are the other two villages, although they tend to be more congested. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

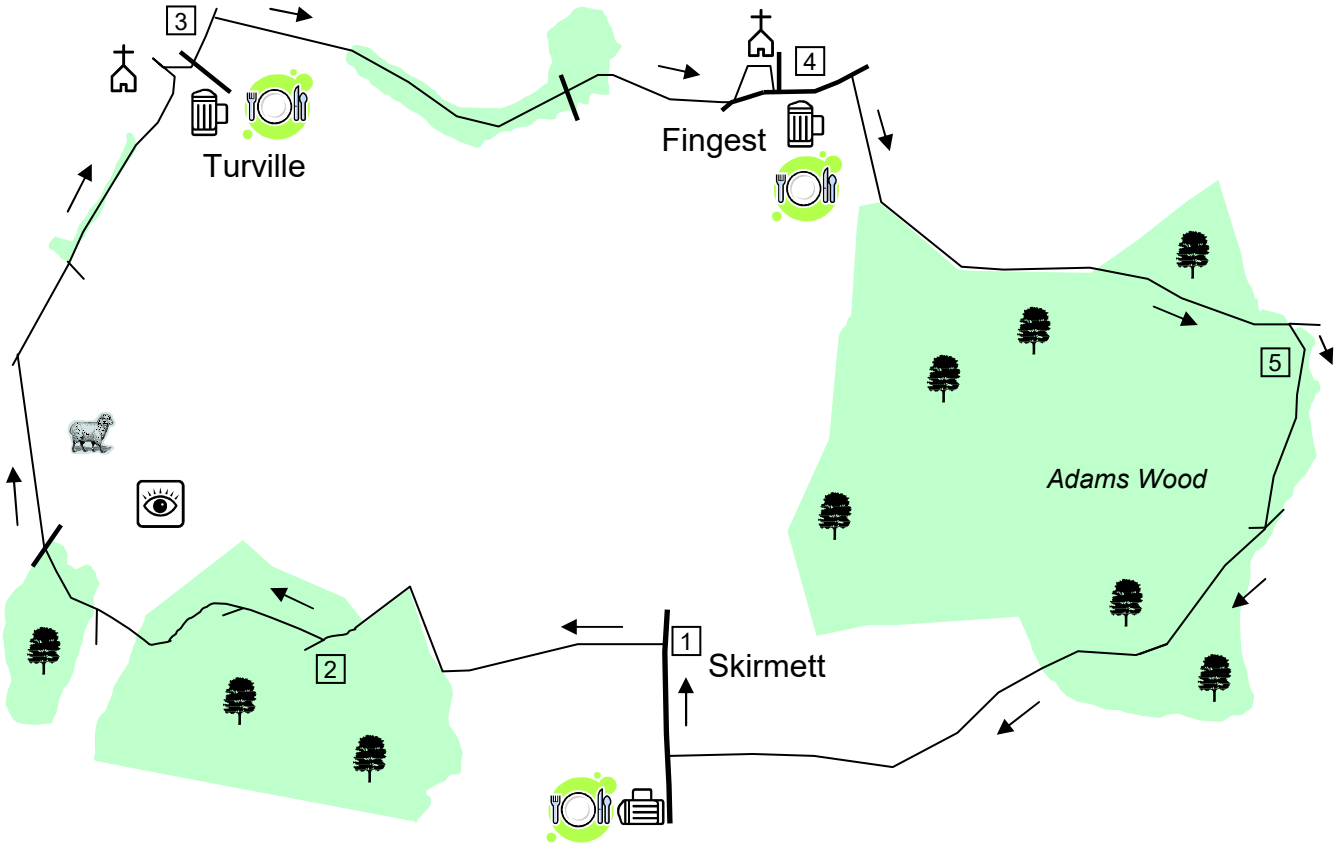
The Walk

1 **See map overleaf.** Start by walking **north** along the road in Skirmett. (As a guide, the *King's Cow* inn is on the **left** and a row of three modern houses, with others, should be on your **right**.) 50m after a converted chapel (with the big arch window), turn **left** on a shingle drive in an avenue of trees marked as a footpath. Keep straight ahead for 150m, avoiding a private yard on the left, and continue onwards through a small (bypassable) wooden gate. A narrow path takes you into an upward-sloping meadow, following the left-hand edge and then running between fences. The path turns right at the top, where you have a good view of Turville windmill, and at the next corner turns **left** along a line of beeches.

2 Near the top, your main path forks **right** as it levels out and runs through fine mixed woodland. Soon, at a post with a yellow arrow, your path forks **right** downhill. You pass through a wooden swing-gate into a grassy meadow with great views of Turville. Go straight down the grass and

through another wooden swing-gate, back into woodland. Continue down-hill, passing a pumping station on your left. At the bottom, your path zigzags through a small wooden gate (bypassable to the left) onto a lane. Cross straight over the lane to a metal kissing-gate and a signposted path which runs diagonally **right** across a sheep pasture. On reaching the edge, turn **right** on a narrow path, heading straight towards the windmill. At the end of the field, ignore paths left and right and go straight ahead through a gate onto a path which seems quite dark because of its dense covering of maples. At the end, continue on a residential road, followed by a row of cottages (the last being *Sleepy Cottage*), leading to the green in Turville. The church is immediately on your left.

The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 796 identifies Turville as Thyrefeld ("dry field"). With its lovely brick and flint cottages, it is inevitably a perfect site for film and TV. "The Vicar of Dibley" was filmed there. The parish church of St. Mary the Virgin dates from the 1100s. The "Bull and Butcher" pub has excellent home-cooked food served in the garden alongside and, it being a Brakspear establishment, good beer. It is open, 12-11, till 9 on Sundays.



3 After possible refreshment, cross the road directly opposite where you entered the village, through a small metal gate, on a signposted footpath leading towards the windmill.

The Windmill (properly called "Cobstone Windmill") was built in 1816 but an older mill stood there before. It milled cereals until 1873. In 1967 it was saved and renovated for the filming of "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang". It was then bought by Hayley Mills and her husband Roy Boulting and has been privately owned ever since, appearing in numerous films and TV shows.

Don't worry: you will not be climbing the hill ! Turn immediately **right** through a swing-gate and go across the flowery meadow, very gently upwards. At the far side, your path goes through a swing-gate into a

shrubby wood alongside a wire fence on your left, then under taller trees. Finally it comes down to a lane. Cross the lane going through a small (bypassable) wooden gate. When you reach the corner of a fence, veer **right** between fences, then along a flint wall and through a small wooden gate. You come out to a road in Fingest with St Bartholomew's church on your left, which you can visit by going through a wooden swing-gate. You can emerge at the other side onto a lane opposite the *Chequers* pub.

Looking at the unique church of St Bartholomew you feel transported to the South, maybe Italy, rather than England. The massive western Norman tower with twin gables dates from the early 1100s. Inside is some fine stained glass. Outside are the brick and flint walls, lined with ancient lime trees and of course the wonderful setting.

The name "Fingest" derives by gradual change from "Tinghurst" which tells us it is on a wooded hill, as we know, and that it was the seat of a Medieval council. The "Chequers" looks tiny from the road but has a massive garden. They have built a semi-permanent marquee to add to the service. The pub is a community pub run by Nick, Suzanne and Jamie Massey. The menu is limited but fresh, original and well-chosen. Beer is Brakspear.

4 After your second refreshment stop, continue along the main road with the *Chequers* on your right. Just after the end-of-30mph sign, turn **right** through a metal kissing-gate. Go up the right-hand side of the meadow. *Deer are often seen grazing here.* The edge veers left taking you through another metal kissing-gate. Near the top, the edge, veers left again with a wood on your right. You now have a wonderful view behind to the village and Hanger Wood. Go past a bench and over a stile, or through a pair of metal sheep-proof gates, into Fingest Wood and follow the woodland path, still uphill. You come out of the wood into a high meadow where your path goes diagonally left. Squeeze past a metal gate into another wood, Adams Wood.

5 Only 50m into the wood, on your right is a yellow arrow. Turn **right** here between posts and follow the wide woodland path. Just after a bench, a path joins you from the left. Keep straight ahead downhill. (The path that curves away to your right is an alternative which rejoins your route.) Your path descends more steeply and comes out between meadows with Skirmett ahead in the valley. You soon reach a large metal gate and coloured arrows. Go **right** here through the swing-gate, in the direction of a yellow arrow, and straight across the centre of a meadow. Your course is now through a swing-gate, over a grassy horse exercise path and straight ahead across the centre of a beautiful grassy meadow. Finally, go through a wooden gate and along a track to the road in Skirmett where the walk began. The *King's Cow* is on your left.

*The name "Skirmett" comes from the Norse meaning "Shire meeting place". At one time, it had a church, a school, a forge and a bakery, now all closed and converted to attractive homes. The only community centre, apart from the lively village hall, is the "King's Cow" inn. This is a the third incarnation of an inn here and the opening days and times are **very restrictive** (check their website). The inn is a free house and rather classy eatery with a cosy little bar and a fine*

restaurant. Best of all is the garden looking out onto a meadow with quite lovely round wooden tables where a group can sit. Beer includes the local Rebellion brew. The inn is open only ***Wed eve, Thur, Fri and Sat****, closed afternoons 4-6.*

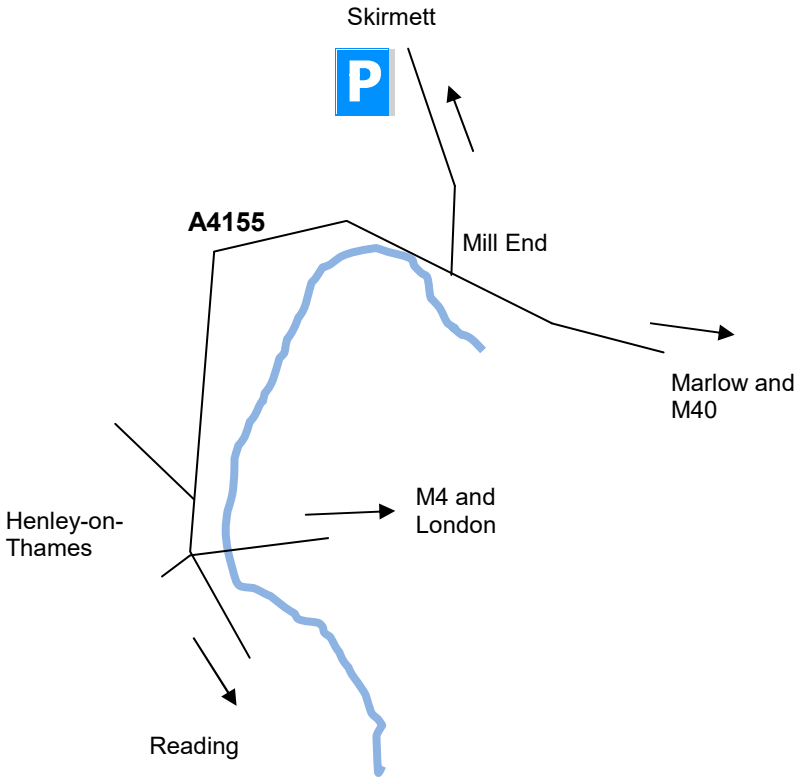
Getting there

By car: To get to Skirmett from the London area, either (1) take the M4, turn off at a sign for Henley; after Henley, turn **right** and fork right on the A4155 or (2) take the M4, turn off at a sign for Henley but avoid the town by taking the A404, signposted *Marlow*; turn **left** to go through Marlow on the A4155.

From the M40, turn off at Exit 4 as for *Marlow* and do as above.

From Reading, go through Henley and do as above.

Skirmett is reached by turning **north** off the A4155 at **Mill End**, signposted *Hambleden, Skirmett, Fingest*. The village is about 3½ miles=5½ km up the road. Park somewhere after the *King's Cow* carefully on the roadside.



fancy ***more*** *free walks?* www.fancyfreewalks.org