Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Princes Risborough, Great Hampden
Whiteleaf Cross, Parslow's Hillock

Distance: 12½ km=8 miles — easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Chilterns — Date written: 15-aug-2010

Author: Phegophilos — Date revised: 29-dec-2015

Refreshments: — Last update: 2-oct-2026
Great Hampden, Parslow's Hillock, P.Risborough

Map: Explorer 181 (Chiltern Hills North)

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

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Hills, woodland, villages, views

In Brief

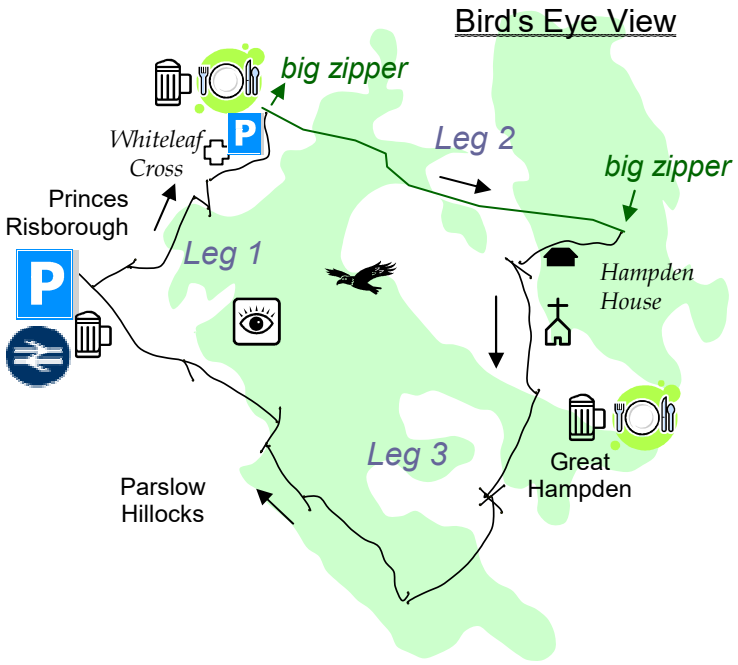
This walk takes you onto the high Ridgeway in the Chiltern Hills, across nature reserves and back through dense forests.

This walk offers some good refreshment stops along the way. For the *Plough at Cadsden*, ring 01844-343302.

The going is easy, apart from one modest climb, so good walking shoes are adequate unless the weather has been wet when boots are necessary. There are no unavoidable nettles. Dogs are welcome.

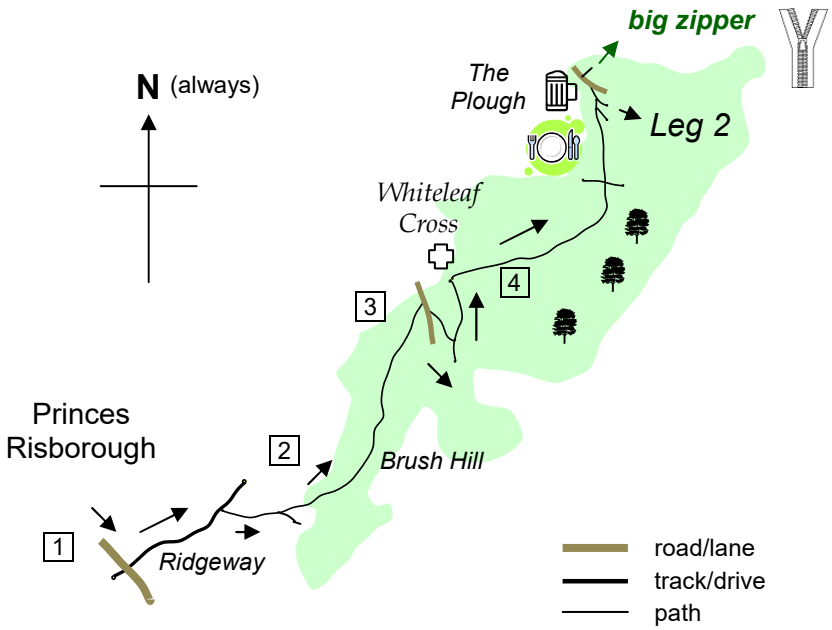
This walk can be combined with its sister walk *Coombe Hill, Dunsmore, Ellesborough* to make a 19½ km=12½ mile big zipper walk.

The walk begin at **Princes Risborough**, Bucks, postcode **HP27 0JN**. Park off New Road, w3w:expectant.gravy.compound. The railway station is about one mile from the walk. For full details, see the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Princes Risborough to Cadsden 2½ km=1½ miles



1 Walk up New Road, later St. Anthony's Road. Just after the wide section with its grass strip and parallel side-road ends, turn **left** onto the Upper Icknield Way opposite a dark-brown fingerpost for the Ridgeway. *You will find more information on these two great routes under another walk in this series: Bledlow.* In about 400m, near the end of playing fields on the left, at a 3-way fingerpost turn **right**, thus staying on the Ridgeway but leaving the Icknield Way. Go up the right-hand side of the field but, on meeting a post with a white acorn, fork **left** on an unsigned path, thus temporarily leaving the Ridgeway.

2 The path leads up via a kissing gate through woodland. Keep to the main path uphill, ignoring all turnings off. *This is Brush Hill, a Nature Reserve assisted by the Heritage Lottery Fund, dedicated to preserving many wildflower species, bats and other mammals and butterflies.* Go up steps to a T-junction and turn **left** on a more level path through the Reserve. This pleasant path goes round the head of a wooded valley, past a bench and eventually out to a road, Peters Lane, which is in fact just below the Whiteleaf Cross.

3 Cross the road and turn **right** on a footpath opposite. This path takes you steeply up to the top of the hill. Bear left at the top to meet a fine wide sandstone path. Turn **left**, back on the Ridgeway. Go through a wooden gate onto Whiteleaf Hill. A little further, there is a viewing platform looking down on the Whiteleaf Cross.

Whiteleaf Hill is another Nature Reserve and also a Neolithic barrow from which burial artefacts from 6000 years ago have been unearthed. One particular tomb, excavated here by Sir William Lindsay Scott in the 1930s, indicates a man ceremonially buried about 5500 years ago with much pottery and other treasure and subsequently reverently preserved. Studies of the remains revealed much about his life and diet. The cremated remains of a bronze-age child and Roman coins were also found. Whiteleaf Hill was the site of a mill about 300 years ago, unsurprisingly because mills were very common on streams and hilltops.

No one is sure when the Whiteleaf Cross was first cut but it is at least 250 years old. Even its shape is a mystery and it may have been modified by restorers as it was traditionally "scoured". In WW1 the site was used for trench warfare training and in WW2 the cross was disguised with brushwood.

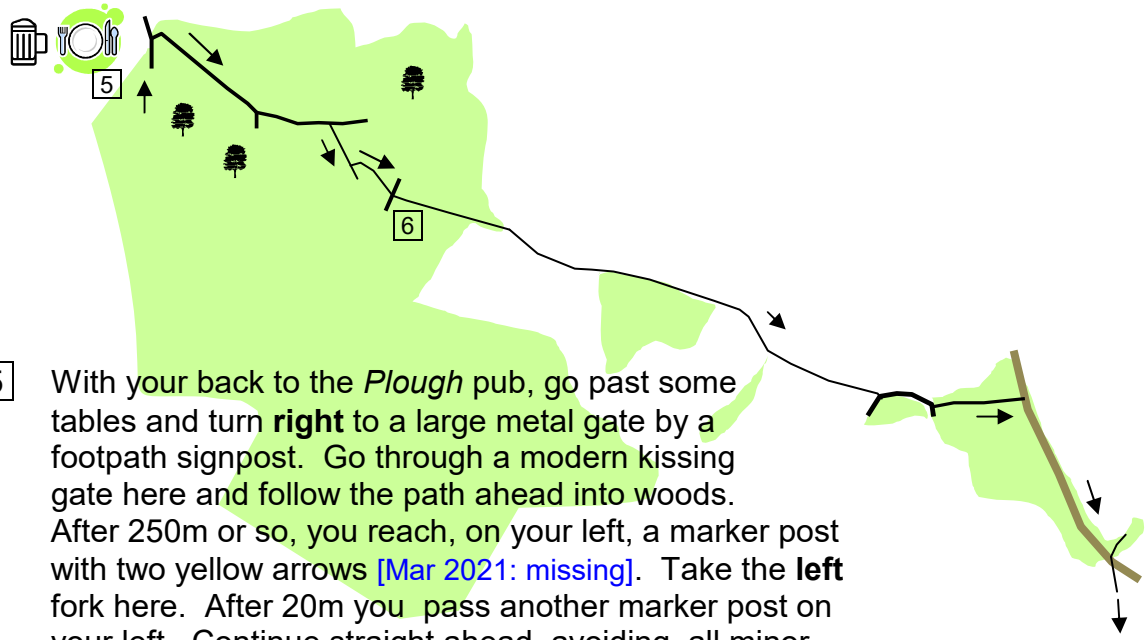
After admiring the view of Princes Risborough and beyond across the Vale of Aylesbury, turn **right** at the Ridgeway fingerpost, through a modern kissing gate.

4 You pass through fine beeches and steep slopes of Giles Wood with, down on the right, a beautiful area of woodland known as The Hangings. About 600m after leaving Whiteleaf Hill, you come to a 4-way signpost by a fence on your left. Go straight ahead here, still on the Ridgeway, using the left-hand of two parallel paths. The path leads down over tree roots to a metal gate. Go through a swing-gate beside it to *The Plough.*

The "Plough at Cadsden" is one of the oldest inns in the Chilterns, dating back to the 1500s. It provides home-cooked food from a menu of popular standards, plus daily "specials" on the chalkboard. If you arrive on the first Sunday in August the Cherry Pie Festival may be in swing, with a variety of entertainments. The "Plough" entered the news headlines in 2015 when PM David Cameron invited the Chinese president in for a pint. It is now being replicated in various parts of China. The "Plough" is open all day at the weekends. For enquiries, ring 01844-343302.

Zip point. If you are doing the 19½ km=12½ mile **Big Zipper** walk, switch now to the other walk "Coombe Hill, Dunsmore, Ellesborough", beginning at **Leg 3**.

Leg 2: Across Ninn Wood 2½ km=1½ miles

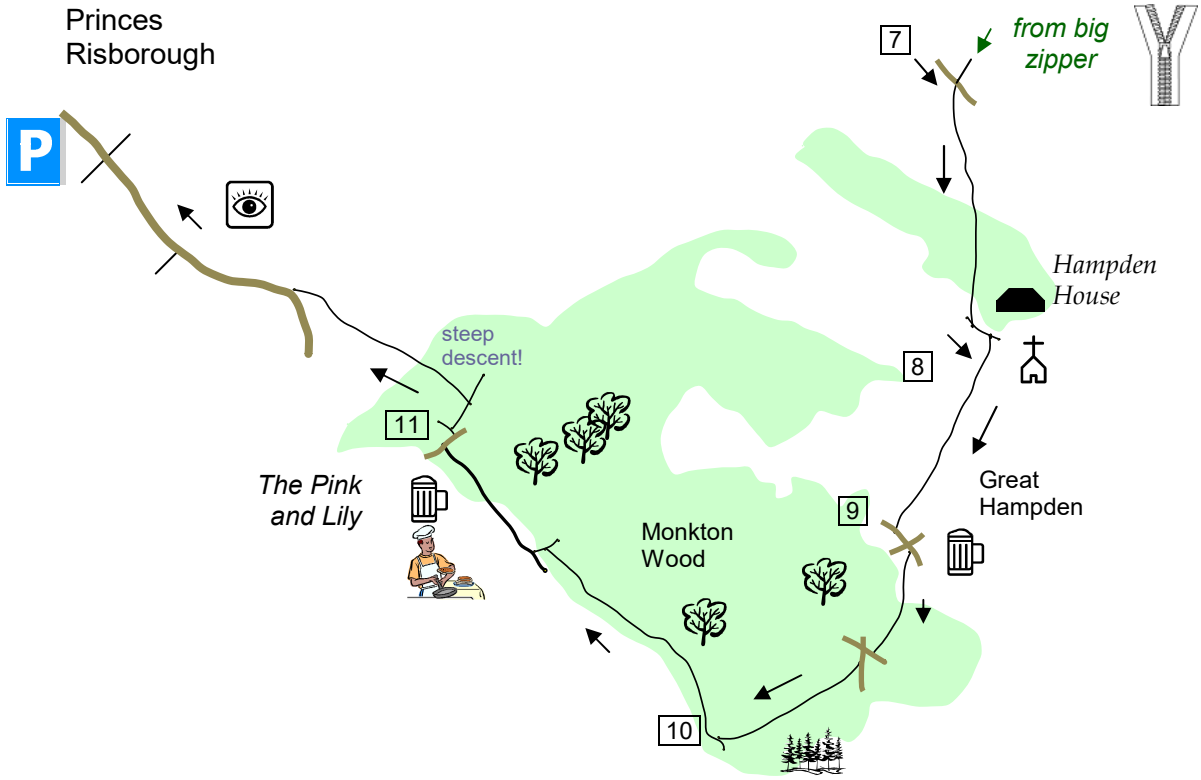


5 With your back to the *Plough* pub, go past some tables and turn **right** to a large metal gate by a footpath signpost. Go through a modern kissing gate here and follow the path ahead into woods. After 250m or so, you reach, on your left, a marker post with two yellow arrows [Mar 2021: missing]. Take the **left** fork here. After 20m you pass another marker post on your left. Continue straight ahead, avoiding all minor paths on the right. After nearly 200m, at a junction, fork **right**, steeply uphill, passing a marker post. *Don't miss this turn!* In only 100m, look for a marker post on your left. Turn **left** here, steeply uphill, on the *Purple Route*. *Don't miss this turn.* Follow this narrow knobbly path as it levels out under beeches, on a beautiful route. Keep straight ahead following the occasional yellow arrow if necessary. You reach a modern kissing gate out to a bridleway.

6 Cross straight over the bridleway and carry straight on up a narrow path ahead. It leads up into a field with a sudden change of atmosphere. Keep ahead along the right-hand side. At the end of the field, cross straight over a farm track past a marker post [Jun 2021: missing]. Continue with the woodland of Cross Coppice on your right. After this field ends, continue along the edge of the next field which curves left. After 300m, look for a gap in the hedge on your **right**. Go through the gap, passing a marker post and immediately turn **left** on a tarmac drive. The drive runs through the woodland of Little Boys Heath and reaches an (open) wooden gate and a road. Turn **right** on the road (care! especially with a dog: there's a curve and a narrow grass verge). In 350m you will see footpath signposts on both sides. Turn **right** across a patch of gravel onto a signed footpath.

The big zipper walk, coming from Coobe Hill, joins here.

Leg 3: Great Hampden to P.Risborough 7½ km=5 miles



7 Bypass a large metal gate and go a fraction left across the centre of a large field on a well-defined path. *Note that you have been walking on part of the Chiltern Way, a 200 km=125 mile circular walk.* At the other side, by a rustic log bench, take a path uphill into woodland dominated by tall conifers, including redwoods. Exit the wood through a small wooden gate into a meadow and keep ahead, passing close to *Hampden House* on your left.

Hampden House, seat of the Hampden family, dates from before the Norman Conquest, but the present house is Elizabethan, with a 14th-century wing. Famous guests included Edward III, the Black Prince (who received a bloody nose there in a quarrel) and Queen Elizabeth I. The most famous, notorious, heroic, not to say celebrated, member of the family was John Hampden (1595-1643), bitter opponent of Charles I's tax-raising ploys, leader of a demonstration against them and almost winning his case, later imprisoned, exiled and killed in

the Civil War. The house fell into disrepair in the 1900s, hence the rendered brickwork, and has been frequently used by Hammer films for horror movies.

At the other side, go through a wooden gate and turn **left** on a track, through a gate, past the restored façade of *Turret House* and onwards to Hampden Church. Turn **right** at the church, rounding the churchyard on a tarmac path.

Great Hampden church of St Mary Magdalene is remote from its home village, although the Hampdens were always widely scattered. In fact its isolation makes it an attractive site for film makers. The grave of John Hampden is sited somewhere here and his first wife Elizabeth is marked by a slab on the south wall. In the chancel are brasses of an earlier John Hampden and his wife, also called Elizabeth, and their family.

8 Continue over the grass to a gate in the fence and along the right-hand side of a meadow, then straight ahead on a path between a field on your right and a pond. *As you go, a glance back at the church makes for a pleasant sight.* Next come a swing-gate, a metal gate and a belt of trees. Cross a tarmac drive and follow a path across the centre of a field. There is woodland on the right and a meadow on the left as you near the first houses of Great Hampden. The path runs between hedges to a lane where it continues straight on, soon reaching the centre of the village. Here, if you arrive of a summer weekend, a cricket match may be in progress. *The Hampden Arms, on the left, is noted for its above-average menu. It is open all day at weekends.*

9 Cross the road to Memorial Road opposite. Almost immediately, turn **right** alongside the cricket green. At the other side, go into the woods by an unneeded stile. Keep to this fine woodland path, predominantly of beech, and after 300m of pleasant walking, arrive at a gate out to a road. Turn **right** for 30m to a cross roads. Here, go ahead and then **left** in the corner onto a signposted bridleway into the woods. Go between the posts and turn **left** on the other side of the fence. You are in the beautiful Monkton Wood. (A parallel footpath separates you from horse riders on the other side has been fenced off, but there are gaps enabling you to switch sides.) Follow the bridleway, avoiding all turnings off, crossing a stony track, until just before you reach the end of the wood at the edge of a meadow.

10 Turn **right**, as directed by a yellow arrow on a marker post, thus staying just inside the wood. Keep to a path that runs along the edge of the wood for some distance. You pass Aimee and Naomi's tyre swing which they say you are welcome to use. In nearly 1km you see a house on the left. The footpath veers away a little to the right and you see a second house, *Iron Beech Cottage*. The path then goes through a wooden barrier. At a T-junction turn **left** on a stony track and, at the end of the track, turn **right** on Lily Bottom Lane. At the end of the lane, you reach a road at the tiny hamlet of Parslow's Hillock with the ex-pub *Pink and Lily* on the left. *2026: pub closed but description kept as it's interesting.*

This house was originally a family home built in the 1700s. In the 1800s, Mr Pink the butler at Hampden House and Miss Lillie a chambermaid became romantically involved and Miss Lillie fell pregnant. Forced to quit the service, they set themselves up by running this local hostelry. Miss Lillie gave birth to a son who became the first landlord, renaming it "The Pink & Lily". "The Pink", as it is affectionately known, serves beer, including Brakspear, but also has a comprehensive wine list and a menu designed to satisfy all tastes, from burgers to a rare treat: pepper, courgette & asparagus pithivier (=pie). For enquiries, ring 01494-489857.

11 Turn **right** on the major road and, in just 30m, turn sharp **left** on a cinder track. In 20m, turn **right** on a marked bridleway through a wooden gate, on the right of the gate posts of *Hampden Lodge*. In 120m, at a crossing path by a marker post with a yellow arrow, turn **left** on a narrow path. The path goes gently down at first, then ever more steeply, with a right-left hairpin, and descends via a long series of steps. After a long 300m, it emerges over a stile into a large field. Take a path across the centre of the field. *You have views extending over Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire with Kop Hill ahead and Windsor Hill just to the right, in the sweeping curve of the escarpment.* At the other side, go over a stile (or through a large metal gate on your left), across the centre of a pasture and over a stile (or through a metal gate) onto Brimmers Lane. Turn **right** on the lane, passing the flint Brimmers Farm. In 1 km, you pass the turn off for the Icknield Way where the walk began and soon you are back in New Road, Princes Risborough where the walk began.

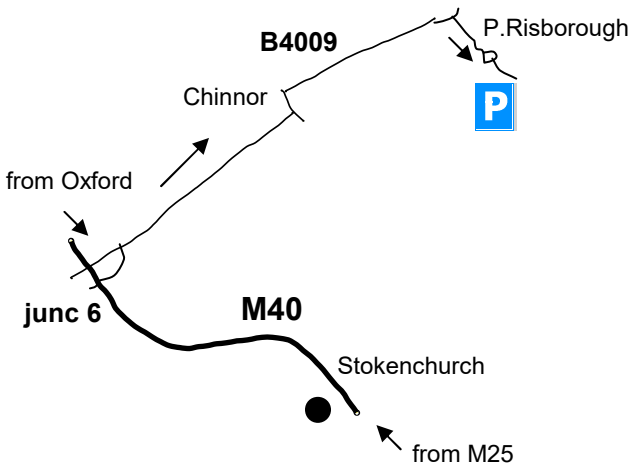
For final refreshments, some walkers travelling by train stopped at the Bird in Hand, 47 Station Rd, Princes Risborough HP27 9DE.

Getting there

By train: begin at Princes Risborough station, a 1 mile bus ride from the start. Or on foot: walk down the access road from the station, turn right into Station Road, second right into Poppy Road and briefly along Wycombe Road (A4010), all on pavements. Turn left into Upper Icknield Way and walk along the Icknield Way to New Road - where the walk begins.

At the end of the walk, carry on down New Road, turn left into Wycombe Road (A4010); where the A4010 curves left, carry straight on to Station Road.

By car: **Princes Risborough** is off the B4009 Chinnor Road. It can be reached via junction 6 of the M40, by following the signs. Ignore signs for the station. Turn **right** as directed for the town. Continue directly ahead over the large roundabout (next to the dome-shaped church) onto New Road and park anywhere. The town is also reachable from Aylesbury or High Wycombe.



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