



Turville Heath

Distance: 9½ km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: Chilterns

Date written: 13-oct-2017

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Refreshments: Turville

Map: Explorer 171 (Chiltern Hills West) *but this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Views! village, woodland, hills, high trails, fine houses, hidden church

In Brief

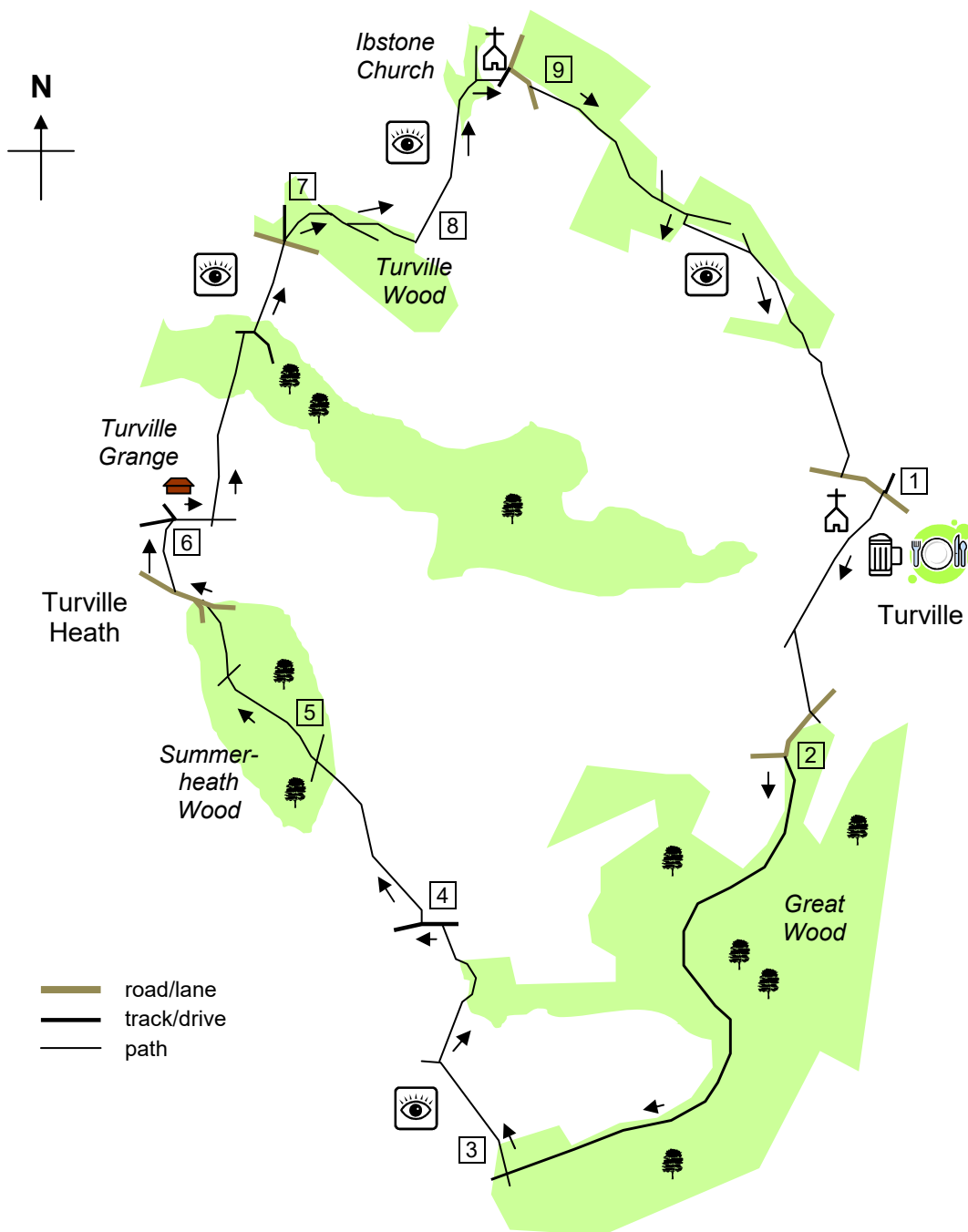
This is a cherished walk in the high meadows above the captivating village of Turville, with sustained views in all directions across the Turville Valley. The route alternates between woodland and green pastures and holds several surprises, including near the end a medieval church hidden on the edge of the woods. The lush mottled green of the unspoilt undulating countryside will hold you spellbound.



There some nettles along one or two of the paths which are difficult to avoid in bare legs. The terrain is mainly good forest tracks and grass, so in the drier months, trainers or walking shoes are fine. There are some rather rough-and-ready stiles along the route, but generally they leave a gap for your dog, by accident rather than intention.

The walk begins in the village of **Turville**, Buckinghamshire, postcode **RG9 6QU**. The village is about 10 km=6 miles north of Henley-on-Thames. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



Turville appears in the Anglo-Saxon Chronicle of 796 as “Thyrefeld” (meaning “dry field”). Its brick and flint cottages make it a perfect site for film and TV, including “The Vicar of Dibley”. 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, being a Brakspear establishment, it serves good ales. It is open late on Sunday and serves food at “normal” meal times, extending to 4pm on Sundays. The windmill on the hill is actually in Ibstone and its correct name is the “Cobstone Windmill”. It appeared in the film “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang”.



- 1 Starting at the little green near the church in Turville, with your back to the windmill, take a narrow tarmac lane past some cottages, by an old *School* road sign. The lane widens as you pass houses and a junior school. At the far end, continue ahead on a signed footpath, also marked as part of the *Chiltern Way*. Follow this straight shady path under a dense covering of maples for nearly 200m where you come out into a field. Ignore a footpath

immediately on your left, and one or two on your right, and continue straight on for nearly 150m. Now, at a marker post, take a path diagonally **left** across the sheep pasture. At the other side, the path takes you through a wooden swing-gate to a road. Ignore a little wooden gate opposite and turn **right** on the road. Stay on the road for 150m to where it bends right. Leave the road here by keeping **left** past a heavy steel barrier on a wide track.

- 2 You will be following this meandering track through the Great Wood for the best part of 2 km. At first there are beech woods on your left and a stand of pines on your right. After nearly 1 km, the terrain is more open and soon you are aware of a meadow on your right. The track gradually narrows to a woodland path which runs straight, slightly uphill, with pines on your left. Finally, you come to a junction of paths just before you can see your path running between open meadows ahead. Leave the path by turning abruptly **right** uphill at this junction. (There is a *very faint* white arrow on a tree on your right.) This path takes you steeply up through beeches. *Note that you are on part of the Shakespeare's Way, a 146-mile path between Stratford-upon-Avon and the Globe Theatre in Southwark.*
- 3 Go over a stile into a pasture. *Note the Nature Conservancy signpost from Turville Country Estate, one of several you will see along the route. (The author met a group of docile young pedigree beef cattle and felt no need to skirt this large field to avoid them.)* Walk along the left-hand edge of the pasture for nearly 300m, till you come to an electricity post by a stile on your left. Do not go over the stile but veer **right** diagonally across the pasture, keeping the electricity posts away to your left. Head for the far corner where you will find a stile. Follow the narrow path down through a wood of low hollies and tall beeches. Your path continues up the grass verge of the right-hand edge of a private garden. (*Yes! this is the footpath.*) After 20m you re-enter the woods and soon come over a stile. Cross a meadow, heading for the **rightmost** of several redbrick houses you can see ahead. Cross a stile in the hedge onto a narrow tarmac drive.
- 4 Turn **left** on the drive, passing a house with a "dog" weathervane. Immediately after it, go **right** through a small metal gate into a large field with distant views. Immediately veer **left** away from the hedge. (*The footpath across the field is unclear and, if the field is densely cropped you can simply go left and right in the corner.*) Go diagonally **left** across the field, heading for the large wood and soon a three-way fingerpost visible ahead. Turn **right** at the fingerpost on a path along the edge. In the far corner, go through two small metal gates into a large green curvaceous meadow. The large house diagonally right is *Turville Court*, but your route is diagonally **left** to a wooden swing-gate into Summerheath Wood, taking in as you go the great views across the valley.
- 5 Follow the main path, quickly crossing a diagonal path at a marker post, through the centre of the wood. Near the far side, keep to the left of some white arrows on trees to go through a gap in a fence. Continue through more woodland, now more scrubby after forestry pruning, keeping straight on at a 4-way marker post. The path finally leads out to a quiet road in Turville Heath. *Turville Heath was the location of the Manor, now Turville Park, home of Lord Sainsbury.* Turn **left** on the road, passing a side road and *Turville Cottage*. After *The Smithy*, turn **right** at a signpost on a footpath through the woods of Turville Heath. Follow a grassy path past an old



bench and under apple trees (with free windfalls in autumn) to come out to a driveway in front of a large mansion, *Turville Grange*.

Turville Grange was built in the mid/late 1700s, much altered and extended in later centuries. It is the home of Lee Radziwiłł (née Bouvier), sister of Jackie Onassis (and hence sister-in-law of John F. Kennedy). When she lived here with her second husband, the Polish prince Stanisław Albrecht Radziwiłł, she engaged the Italian designer Lorenzo Mongiardino to revamp the interior and the house appears in photographs by Cecil Beaton and Horst P. Horst.

- 6 You might go left for a discreet look at the house (don't touch the old bell-pull!), but your route is immediately **right** through a large wooden gate, passing an old well head. Follow the track between a hedge and a wall and, at the end, go through a wooden gate into a large meadow. Turn immediately **left** and follow the left-hand edge of the meadow. After passing the corner of the Grange's lawn, keep straight on. *Note the sculpture of a raven taking wing in the private wood.* **On your right now you have some of the best views of the walk, although they will mostly stay with you till the end.** Keep straight ahead on a faint path down this fine large sloping sward of grass, heading for Idlecombe Wood. On reaching it, go over a stile and down the wood on a clear path, following white arrows on trees. Soon your path descends quite steeply and you need to be careful, even when you find steps cut into the slope. About 200m into the wood, the steps end at a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a level path but, in 20m, at a marker post, turn **left** down more steps. At the bottom, keep ahead over a stile into a sheep meadow, Continue down the left-hand side, beside a wire fence, with great views left and right along the Turville Valley. Finally, go over a nettly stile to a road.
- 7 Cross straight over the road, a fraction right, onto a private drive marked *Wormsley Estate*. *Wormsley Estate is also the location of Garsington Opera (see the walk "Aston Rowant and Christmas Common" in this series.)* Avoid the private drive ahead and, **before** the gates, fork **right** on a bridleway into Turville Wood, passing a white arrow on a tree. In 100m or so, you see more white arrows on a tree, indicating a fork. Take the **right** fork, which is really straight on. In another 70m, you meet a marker post at another fork, with blue and yellow arrows. Choose the **left** fork, the yellow arrow. **(The bridleway on the right is a more lowly route onto the road to Turville for horses who will not miss the wonders about to unfold on the higher route.)** In 100m, your path goes over a concrete farmer's track and exits the wood through a wooden swing-gate into a sheep pasture.
- 8 Go straight up the steepest part with a fence on your right. At the top of the first pasture, go through another swing-gate and continue uphill with a wire fence on your right. After gaining some terrific views of the surrounding countryside, you are on a high path with woodland on your right. 300m from that last swing-gate, look out for a stile on your right, opposite an old water trough. (Impossible to miss because the field path peters out.) Go **right** here over the stile into woods. The path goes quite steeply up. When you reach the top of the rise, your path suddenly turns left. **Leave** the footpath here by keeping straight on to find another surprise of this walk: the churchyard of Ibstone Old Church which is usually open and well worth a visit. *The church of St Nicholas Ibstone dates from the 1100s, with a chancel added in the 1200s. The little bell turret has a simple pyramid roof. The 2-light Tudor window is from the 1500s.* After possibly visiting the church, continue

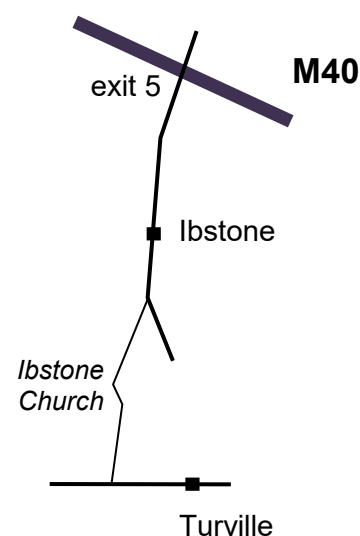
through the churchyard and out, down steps, onto a tarmac drive. Turn **left** to meet a tarmac lane at a bend and turn sharp **right** on the lane downhill.

- 9 In 100m, where the lane curves right, **leave** the lane by forking **left** on a wide path marked as a footpath. This nice easy level path, with great views down into the valley, makes a perfect end to the day's adventure. After nearly ½ km, a path joins you from the left, just as the corner of a field comes into view on your right. In another 180m, you meet another junction. **Don't miss this vital hidden junction!** The only waymarker here is a very faint white arrow on a tree. (If you reach a metal kissing gate with a wide meadow on the other side, you have gone too far.) **Leave** the main path, which carries on slightly uphill into the trees, and turn squarely **right** down to meet the corner of a field in the open. Turn **left**, staying close to the woodland on your left, with great views into the Turville Valley. In 200m, a path joins from the left. After taking you through a swing-gate, the path descends towards the village. Another swing-gate leads through an area of shrubs on a winding path, down shallow steps. You come out through a wooden gate onto the open hillside. Keep **right** and immediately go through two small wooden gates into a meadow. Take a path diagonally **left** straight across the lush grass. At the bottom, a swing-gate, steps and a narrow path by a flint-walled house lead to the road in Turville. Turn **left** to the little green where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: The most direct route to Turville is from the **M40** at Stokenchurch. Come off at **exit 5** and immediately turn onto the Ibstone Road (sign-posted **Ibstone**). Follow the road through that village. 2½ miles from the motorway, fork **right** for **St Nicholas Church**. (If you miss this turning, you can keep straight on for **Fingest** and turn right at a T-junction and keep right). After a narrow bendy road, in ¾ mile, at a T-junction, turn **left** into Turville. Park discreetly in the village. There is a small parking patch by a noticeboard near the church.

An alternative route to Turville is via Henley-on-Thames or Marlow, turning onto the Skirmett Road at **Mill End**. Follow the signs.



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