Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Skirmett, Combe Wood and Turville

Distance: 5½ km=3½ miles — easy walking

Region: Chilterns — Date written: 22-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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Village, woodland, views, hills, pubs

In Brief

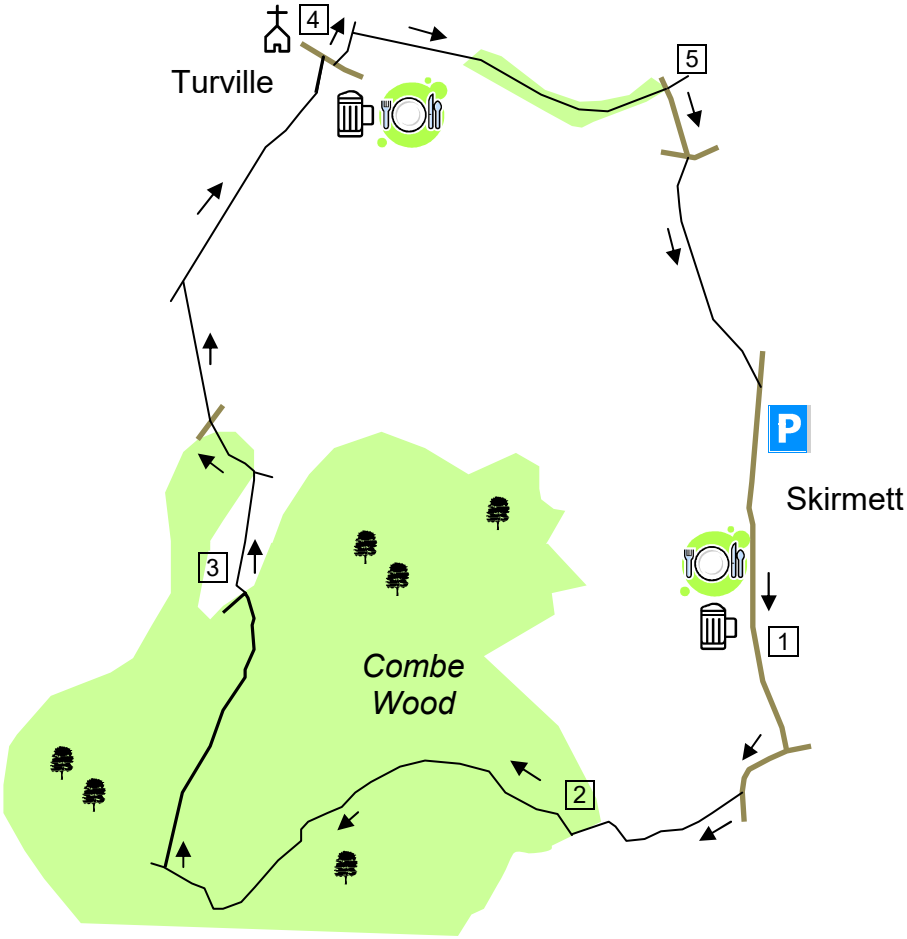
No walk in the Chilterns would be complete without a stroll through some spectacular woodland with colour in all seasons of the year. This walk not only provides this but also takes you through two of the most delightful villages of the Chilterns, with a choice of places for refreshment.

There are no nettles to speak of on this walk but in the wetter months there will always be some muddy patches in the woods, making boots preferable. If you have a dog, he will also love this walk.

The walk begins in **Skirmett**, Bucks, w3w:bandwagon.solves.care, postcode **RG9 6TG**. There's plenty of roadside parking. Another possible start is Turville. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

1 **See map overleaf.** Starting in the village of Skirmett, walk **south** along the road. (As a guide, there are a line of modern houses on your **left**, an inn, the *King's Cow*, and an open field on your **right**.) After the inn, continue all the way to a road junction and turn **right** with the main road. Turn **left**, following the road, and, in 20m, go **right** on a narrow rather hidden footpath (unmarked in 2017). (The path is 10m before the driveway of a house.) The path takes you through a wooden gate by a yellow arrow, then uphill under trees and between meadows. The path winds a bit, runs straight, zigzags right-left and finally leads you into Combe Wood. There are now the typical white arrows on trees to assist you, although the clear path means for the most part they are not needed.



2 You will be following the route through this great wood for 1½ km, gradually gaining height, beneath a canopy of mature beech trees, soon curving right. This is a good place to spot deer and other wildlife. After 1 km, shortly after you pass to the left of a small *private land* sign in the ground, your path suddenly bends right, as indicated by a *no footpath* sign on a tree and a right-pointing arrow on the tree next to it. *(Don't miss this turn!)* Follow the main path, avoiding all side branches. After another 500m heading downhill, you see a grassy meadow ahead. **Leave** the path here by going straight ahead through a wooden swing-gate and into the meadow, as directed by waymarkers.

3 The path veers right and runs the length of the meadow, giving you an excellent view of the Cobstone Windmill above Turville. You meet another path coming down from the right. Turn **left** here through a wooden swing-gate, continuing downhill through trees and passing a pumping station on your left. Follow the path through a small wooden gate on the right of a large wooden gate (both bypassable) and onto a tarmac lane. Cross the lane to a metal kissing-gate opposite, leading into a sheep meadow. This path crosses the meadow diagonally right 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.

Turville (meaning "dry field") goes back at least to the year 796 when Offa ruled the kingdom of Mercia. The first known flintstone church here dates from the

1100s but the present church, including the tower you see today, was the result of a rebuild in 1340. Inside, you may notice windows on the south wall and a marble monument on the north aisle, all devoted to the Perry family. William Perry was great-grandfather to the poet Shelley ("ode to the west wind" etc.). He was so influential in the village that he was able to order the building of a new north aisle to accommodate a grander pew for his family. In the church-yard, note the rare wooden tombs made from planks between upright posts.

4 After possible refreshment in Turville, cross the road and take a gravel track between houses which is signposted as a footpath. Very soon, go through a large black metal gate and then turn **immediately right** through an adjacent wooden swing-gate thus **leaving** the path that leads up towards the windmill.

The windmill on the hill is actually in the neighbouring village of Ibstone and its correct name is the "Cobstone Windmill". It is a smock mill which replaced an earlier mill and it ground cereal until 1873. For a while it was a home to Hayley Mills and Roy Boulting. It appeared in the film "Chitty Chitty Bang Bang" (for which it was restored) and countless others.

Cross the flowery meadow, very gently upwards. At the far side, your path goes through a swing-gate into a scrubby wood beside a fence on your left, then under taller trees. Finally it comes down to a tarmac lane.

5 Ignoring the wooden gate opposite, turn **right** on the lane, down to a T-junction. Cross straight over the road, through a small wooden gate [Aug 2026: broken and lying flat], down two wooden steps, into a meadow and follow a faint path leading across the grass. At the other side, go through a wooden gate to cross another meadow. Go through a wooden gate, up a bank and along the right-hand side of a somewhat rougher meadow, through a small wooden gate to the road in Skirmett. Turn **right** through the village, making use of the grass verge, soon leading back to the centre of the village where the walk began.

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", pka the *"Frog" inn. This is a recent renovation and replaced other pubs that previously filled the role. The "King's Cow" 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 closed from 3-6 but is open all Sunday till 8.*

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 inn carefully on the roadside.

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