

Chilterns Country

Chinnor Circular Walk



Circular Walk
5.5 miles (9km) or 2 miles (3.5km)

Start and Finish
The Village Centre, Chinnor, Oxfordshire



Visitor Information

This walk benefits from easy access by bus.

The walk is through one of the most interesting areas of the Chilterns with a rich mix of industrial heritage, secluded gardens, panoramic views and sites of interest for their geology and their natural history.

The walk holds special interest for steam railway enthusiasts and fans of film and television!

The walks are mainly on un-surfaced tracks which can get muddy in wet weather. Stout footwear is recommended.

Several shortcuts are available enabling a variety of lengths of shorter, flatter walks suitable for new walkers and those developing their fitness and stamina.

Refreshments are available in Chinnor and also at: The Lions of Bledlow, tel: 01844 343 345.

For details on places to stay, visitor attractions and other walks, contact: South Oxfordshire District Council on 0845 6066881 or visit www.visitsouthoxfordshire.co.uk

How to get to the start




The walk starts at The Village Centre in Chinnor High Street. There is a tearoom, serving full lunches, toilets and parking at the Centre,

By public transport: The nearest railway station is at Princes Risborough, about 4 miles away by road. There are buses from Princes Risborough and from High Wycombe to Chinnor, although there is no Sunday Service. Buses stop by The Village Centre. Call Traveline for details on 0870 608 2 608 or visit www.traveline.org.uk

By cycle: There are cycle racks outside The Village Centre.

Parking: There is parking at The Village Centre or on street parking. Please park considerately.

This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It mainly follows rights of way - most of which are waymarked as follows:

-  Footpaths (walkers only)
-  Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)
-  Byways (open to all traffic)

In woodland the route is also marked by the Chiltern Society with painted arrows on some trees.


Please be considerate in the countryside:

- Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- Please keep dogs under close control.

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns area including other Chilterns Country walks with public transport connections, call 01844 355500 or visit www.chilternsaonb.org or buy Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps 171, 181 & 172 and make your own walk.

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chiltern countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body charged with protecting the AONB. www.chilternsaonb.org

If you or a member of your community would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board 01844 355500.

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Photographs: The Chilterns Conservation Board

About the walk

The Chilterns is defined by its geology, particularly its chalk. Nowhere is the geological richness of the Chilterns more in evidence than on this walk. Richness in terms of the mixture of flower rich grassland, high forest and agricultural land, and in terms of the commercial value of the underlying chalk as a natural resource.



The first part of the walk follows the bottom of the scarp slope, shadowing the resurrected Watlington Branch railway to the film-set village of Bledlow. The Lions at Bledlow provides the perfect opportunity to take on refreshments and gather yourself for the climb up onto the scarp at Chinnor Hill. The climb up through beech woodland is punctuated by flower rich old chalk pits and holloways; remnants of earlier commerce. The top rewards with extensive views over Oxfordshire and north Buckinghamshire and follows a trackway bordered with a scattering of pits and small quarries from the quarrying of flint.

A steep descent to the ancient Icknield Way, now part of the Ridgeway National Trail, provides the opportunity to divert and fully appreciate the commercial importance of chalk and its surprisingly valuable legacy.

Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy!!

Walking out from the village centre on a variety of routes of increasing length, staying low to begin with and working up to the steeper slopes, is an effective, rewarding and pleasurable way to get fit.

Set yourself challenges, but start gently and work up*. Spend at least two sessions of 15 minutes each walking briskly enough to raise your heartbeat, get warm and breathe harder.

*Consult your GP if you have not exercised recently or have a known medical condition.

Walking is also a great way to lose weight; each 15 minute session of brisk walking will burn about 100 calories. The complete walk is worth over 1000 calories and it's fun too!

Features of Interest: see numbers on map

① Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway

The Icknield Line opened in 1872, running between Watlington and Princes Risborough. In 1883 it was taken over by Great Western Railway, who added several Halts to the line. It was closed to passengers in 1957 but goods and parcels services continued until 1961. Thereafter the line was used solely to supply fuel to Chinnor cement works until the last delivery in December 1989.

Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway took over the line and ran their first passenger service on 20th August 1994. Timetables and further information can be found on www.cprra.co.uk



② Bledlow

The quiet village of Bledlow will seem familiar to fans of the Midsomer Murders TV serial. The church doubles as Badgers Drift Church, and the Lions At Bledlow PH is possibly better known nationally as The Queens Arms!



Bledlow Church

Lord Carrington's wonderfully tranquil Lyde water garden is open to the public daily from 8 till 8 and is just past the church. The garden is fed by springs arising from the chalk which formed pools once used as watercress beds.

③ Chinnor Hill Nature Reserve

This mixed grassland and woodland reserve is managed by the Berks., Bucks. and Oxon Wildlife Trust and has been designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Chalk grassland supports large numbers of species in a small area; those of particular interest at Chinnor Hill include gentian, rock rose, juniper shrubs with their gin-flavouring

berries and several species of orchid. Some of the best plant areas are in the old chalk pits which can be seen from the path.

At the top of the reserve the chalk is covered with a layer of clay-with-flints. The ground alongside the path through the wood is pock-marked with pits left from flint digging.

For more information visit www.bbowl.org.uk.



Chiltern gentian

④ Chinnor, Chalk and Cement

Mr. W. Benton's Cement and Lime Works opened in Chinnor in 1908, but cement making on a truly industrial scale did not begin until 1919. Output of cement from Chinnor peaked at about 5600 tonnes per week in the 1990s. Up to 120 people were employed at any one time.

The cement works closed in 1999 and there are plans for the re-development of the site, using the flat areas for housing but also with opportunities for recreation and conservation in the water filled quarries.

The scale of chalk extraction for cement making can be seen from a short walk along the Ridgeway National Trail. The Ridgeway runs on a high causeway between the large quarries, giving views of the pits through the boundary fences. (Do not cross over or through the fences).



View from Oakley Hill Nature Reserve



Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway

Bodgers and Bobbins

Cement making was not the biggest industry in Chinnor; at the time of the 1851 census there were 256 lace makers in the village and 43 chair leg turners, or bodgers, working in the woods.

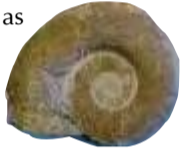
Die Another Day

The dramatic backdrop of the abandoned quarries is not without value: during April 2002 villagers had to get used to the sound of explosions and machine gun fire coming from the quarries. The cement works were used to film part of the opening hovercraft sequence in the Bond movie, Die Another Day.

But Chinnor's association with Bond movies can be traced back further: Adam Clayton, bassist and manager of the band U2, was born in Chinnor in 1960. Nick-named Sparky, he assisted Bono and the Edge writing the theme tune for 'GoldenEye' in 1995.

Geology

One of the chalk quarries has been protected as a geological Site of Special Scientific Interest as it has particularly good exposures of both the Lower Chalk and Middle Chalk geological layers. Both layers have given up important fossil ammonites.



The Circular Walk

Distance: 5.5 miles (9km) Allow 2.5 hours.
(includes spurs to Bledlow village and the Chalk Pits)
Short cut: 2 miles (3.5km)

Access Information:

The walk is mainly on un-made paths with soft surfaces. There several five stiles along the route, through Wainhill Farm, including one stile on the shorter route. Shorter flatter routes can be followed but the full route involves a long uphill walk and steep descent.

Route Description:

- From The Village Centre turn right along the High Street, then straight ahead along Keens Lane towards the post office. Turn left and follow the road over the track leading over the railway.
- Shortly after the railway turn left and follow the footpath that runs parallel to the railway line. Cross the road at Lower Hempton and take the footpath through the farmyard. Carry on until you meet a broad track where you turn left. At the next junction take the left fork across the field and you will see The Lions of Bledlow ahead of you.
- Short cut: When you get to the tarmac road at Lower Wainhill turn right following the track, then take the next right along a bridleway which leads to the Ridgeway. Turn right along the Ridgeway. After passing a house on your left turn right on the track back to Chinnor.
- From 'The Lions' follow the track past the pub car park and uphill to the Ridgeway. Turn right and continue to follow the Ridgeway until the hamlet of Hempton Wainhill where you turn left and follow the signs to 'Chinnor Reserve and Barrows'.
- At the top of the hill you leave the bridleway and pass through a kissing gate that takes you onto the viewpoint at Chinnor Hill. After that go through another kissing gate back onto the bridleway and carry on through the wood until you reach a small car park. Continue along tarmac



The Lions of Bledlow

road and turn right onto a footpath about 50m past the post box.

- The path descends steeply back to the Ridgeway. Turn left to follow the Ridgeway for views of the chalk pits, or carry straight on to retrace your steps to Chinnor.

To view the Chalk Pits

- Carefully cross the road. Look and Listen before crossing. Follow the Ridgeway for a further 100m or so. The chalk pits are visible through the hedges on each side of the National Trail.

(More extensive views of the pits can be gained from Oakley Hill Nature Reserve - turn left after a further 1km). For more information visit www.bbwt.org.uk

For information about the Ridgeway National Trail visit www.nationaltrail.co.uk



The Countryside Code

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people.

Respect Protect Enjoy

