

# Princes Risborough

A circular 6 miles walk off the Ridgeway National Trail through the mature beechwoods and chalk grasslands of the Chiltern Hills above Princes Risborough.

## Circular Walk

### Directions

- From the car park on Peters Lane, follow the waymarked Ridgeway path north towards Whiteleaf Hill.
- Staying on the Ridgeway, turn right at the three mature beech trees and follow the path downhill, turning sharp right at The Plough public house. Follow the track into the wood.
- Climbing to the top of the hill, cross the bridleway and follow the sunken footpath out into open fields. Continue to the path's junction with a farm track and follow this track in south-westerly direction to the top of the hill.
- Where the track meets woodland, turn left into Knighton's Hill Wood and follow the path alongside Grim's Ditch to Redland End. Carefully cross the road to Redland End, go straight across and after approximately 200m turn right into Hillock Wood.
- Continue down Windsor Hill, taking particular care as the slope is steep at this point. At the bottom of the slope follow the headland path to Brimmers Road. Continue along the road for approximately 300m then turn left onto the bridleway. Take the cross field path towards Pyrtle Spring and then turn right following the path to the Ridgeway. Follow the Ridgeway steeply uphill and back towards Whiteleaf car park.



### Features of Interest

- 1 The Ridgeway runs 85 miles from Ivinghoe Beacon in the north east to Avebury in the south west, having been designated a National Trail in 1972.
- 2 Just below the brow of Whiteleaf Hill is the Whiteleaf Cross, a chalk mark cut into the scarp face. The exact date is not known but is likely to be of ancient origin. Adjacent to the path is a Neolithic long barrow dating back to 2000 B.C. Spectacular views over Aylesbury Vale.
- 3 The woodland here is dominated by beech trees. The shaded environment favours wild flowers such as wood anemone, nettle leaved bell flower and enchanter's nightshade.
- 4 The route follows a steep sided valley cut into the scarp face. Such valleys are thought to have been formed during the last Ice Age either by semi-frozen sludge containing ice and stones moving downhill from the glaciers, or by the action of rivers which resulted from a higher water table. At the end of the Ice Age, as the glaciers melted and the water table dropped, the valleys were left dry.
- 5 In the summer months, wild flowers including bladder campion, sheep's bit scabious and tufted vetch line the verge of the track.
- 6 Much of the woodland in this area belongs to the Hampden Estate. In 1641, John Hampden refused to pay the full amount of ship tax on his land, an act of defiance which helped spark the Civil War. A leader of the parliamentary forces, he died from wounds received at the battle of Chalgrove near Thame.



- 7 The walk continues along the course of a Grim's Ditch. This is a generic term for a number of earthworks on the chalklands of southern England. It is believed they are Celtic in origin and were used to mark territorial boundaries. The linear nature of this particular ditch implies open country at the time of origin as clear sighting lines would have been necessary during construction.
- 8 Hillock Wood provides a suitable habitat for a number of woodland birds. The blackcap, the chiffchaff (both summer visitors that have been known to 'stay on') and the goldcrest, our smallest resident bird, may all be spotted by the quiet walker.
- 9 The route passes through the 14 mile long 'Black Hedge'. One of the oldest boundary hedges in the country, it was recorded in a Saxon Charter of A.D. 903.
- 10 The Pyrtle Spring is one of the many springs which emerge from the base of the Chilterns where the chalk meets the impervious gault clay and Lower Greensand of the Vale.
- 11 The Ridgeway here follows the line of the ancient Icknield Way, a broad track traversing the relatively dry and well-drained scarp face of the Chiltern Hills. The trackway, which runs between East Anglia and Dorset, was later partly metalled by the Romans who adopted it for their own use.

#### Follow 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

#### Further Information:

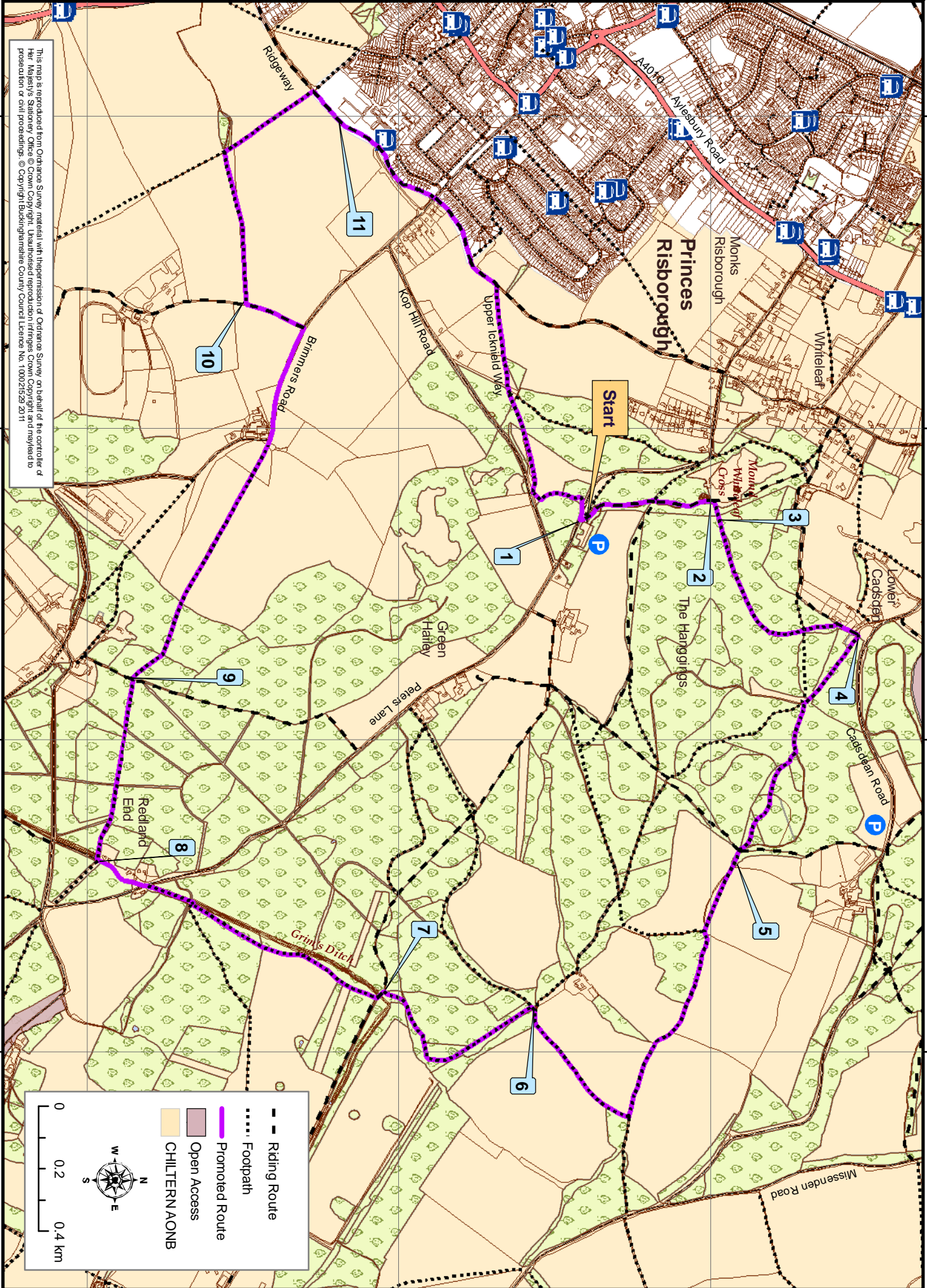
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# Princes Risborough Circular Route



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Riding Route

Footpath

Promoted Route

Open Access

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