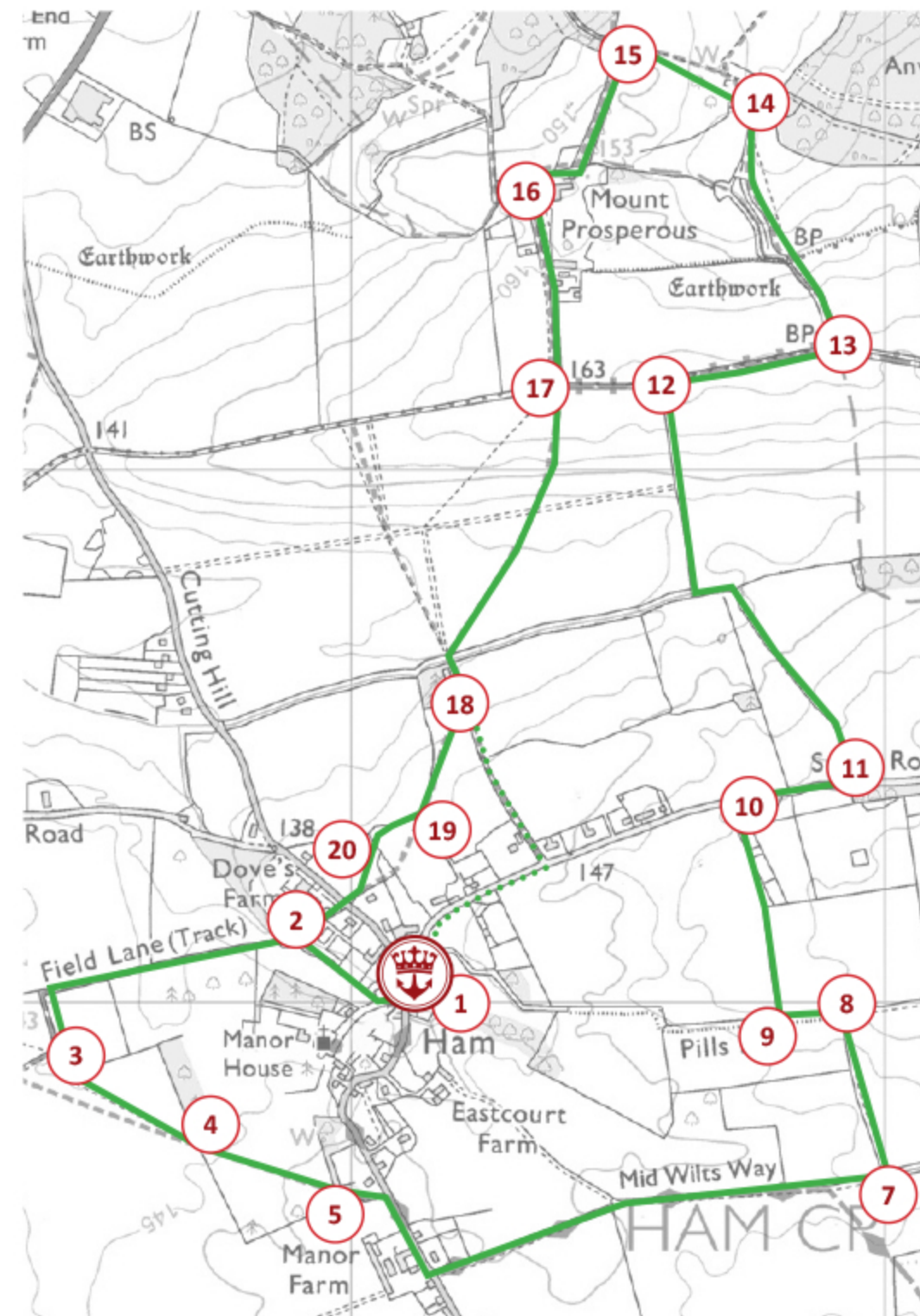


FOUR FARMS LOOP: MANOR, WANSDYKE, PROSPEROUS & DOVES FARMS

5.0 miles/ 8 km : 1½ - 2 hours some inclines,
no stiles (unless return via Old Rectory)



- 1 From the pub car park turn left onto the road heading towards Buttermere. Twenty metres past Rose Cottage turn right along Church Lane: after 30m turn right through Humphrey's gate, or view the church first.
- 2 Cross to the gate on the far side of the field and turn left down the track known as Field Lane. Continue along the track for 400m and follow the track when it turns sharp left between hedgerows. Emerge from the hedgerows, with fine views of the downs ahead.
- 3 Don't follow the main track right but continue straight on along the fence line beside the field for 30m before turning slightly left towards a kissing gate across the large arable field that extends to the foot of the downs.
- 4 Continue straight ahead to another kissing gate: as you cross the field there are fine views of Ham Manor to the left and the escarpment to the right.
- 5 Follow the path through the garden of Manor Farmhouse and after 50m turn right onto the road for about 100m until just past the last house on the left, Elston Farm House, where opposite the entrance to Manor Farm there is a farm track and public footpath sign.
- 6 Take the farm track. Ahead of you on the top of the escarpment is Rivar Copse, known locally as the Bull's Tail, which conceals a Celtic bowl barrow. After about 500m ignore a path branching right across the fields towards the downs. After a further 100m on this permissive route the track turns sharp left.
- 7 Follow the track to the left. Looking right can just be seen the buildings of Ham Spray House, once the home of prominent members of the Bloomsbury Group.
- 8 After about 200m, when the track turns sharp right, leave the track, cross briefly straight ahead into a field, and turn sharp left leaving the field boundary on your left along a less distinct path. (Ignore the gravel track between fences). Follow the field boundary for about 100m until the path turns right at the edge of a wood.
- 9 Turn right: follow the path along the edge of the field until it meets Spray Road.
- 10 Turn right at the road passing Acorn Cottages on your right for about 200m until you reach a gap in the left hand hedgerow and an indistinct path up the bank.
- 11 Follow this path for about 500m alongside the edge of the field keeping the hedgerow on your left as it curves gently down to the bottom of the hill, where it crosses a ditch and turns sharp left for 50m before turning sharp right. Follow the field edge uphill keeping the boundary fence/ hedge and electricity poles on your left until, at the top of the hill, you reach the bridleway known as Bitham Lane.
- 12 Turn right along Bitham lane between the hedgerows until, after about 200m, at a gap in the left hand hedgerow you will see a red pagoda in the corner of the adjacent field and footpath marker sign.
- 13 Turn left following the path gently downhill, with views of Prosperous house to your left. After about 200m, and running at right angles to the path, marking the boundary between a field and line of trees, just visible are traces of the line of the Wansdyke mound and ditch. Continue along the path until you reach a gate at the bottom of the hill on your left.
- 14 Turn left through the gate and head diagonally uphill about 300m following an indistinct path and keeping the field boundary to your right and a mini obelisk a little way to your left to another gate at the top of the hill in the right hand fence. Turn left through the gate and after 50m reach another pedestrian gate and footpath markers.
- 15 Turn sharp left along the path as it curves through the edge of a wood some 200m before the path turns sharp right at the back of Prosperous House. Follow the path some 50m until it turns sharp left at a gap in the hedge.
- 16 Turn left crossing a short strip of lawn before joining the tarred driveway to Prosperous House, now on your left. This was the home for over 30 years of the famous agricultural inventor, Jethro Tull, once described as "the greatest individual improver that agriculture has ever known". He perfected his towed seed drill at Prosperous Farm which revolutionised the previous age-old, laborious and imperfect practice of broadcasting sowing by hand that then had to be harrowed in. Proceed straight ahead up the tarred driveway along a handsome avenue of beech trees, before reaching the gates at the end of the drive.
- 17 Proceed through the pedestrian kissing gate to the left at the entrance to Prosperous. Cross the tarred road straight ahead and at the gap in the hedgerow and footpath marker sign follow the path (sometimes indistinct) heading diagonally downhill and back towards a pinewood at the bottom of the valley (about 500m away across two fields). As you descend there are magnificent panoramic views over the Vale of Pewsey with the downs escarpment, Coombe Gibbet and Walbury Hill to the left and Ham Hill and Rivar and Ashley downs to the right. Continue across the valley floor to join a track. Turn left along the track about 50m leaving a deciduous broadleaf wood along the valley floor to your left and beside the pinewood on your right, until reaching to your right a path and stile to the right of the track. You now have a choice of return.
- 18 Either follow the track for 400m with the hedge on your right until you meet the tarred Spray Road, where you turn right to head back to the Crown & Anchor.

Alternative return route with 4 stiles

- 18 Or turn right, cross the stile and make your way uphill diagonally on an indistinct path towards a large oak tree in the righthand field boundary hedgerow. Continue with the hedgerow on your right crossing a farm track with a stile ahead of you.
- 19 Cross the stile into the wooded grounds of the Old Rectory. Follow the path to the right, skirting a pond, and then through overhanging shrubs and trees to a stile.
- 20 Cross the stile and follow the path diagonally across the field to another stile beside metal gates and the tarred road into Ham. Cross the tarred road and follow the lane opposite, Field Lane, some 70m back to point 2 and from there to the pub.