

## WALK 12

# HAM HILL LOOP

3.5 miles/ 6 km: 1 to 2 hours (excluding Coombe Gibbet):  
unsuitable for wheelchairs & Buggies

For a shorter walk drive to the top of Ham Hill, where you can park at owner's risk beside the Buttermere road: see point 4 below.

- 1 From the pub car park turn left onto the road heading towards Buttermere. Immediately on the left is the 16th century Rose Cottage, 20m further on there is an option to turn right along Church Lane to view the church. The road goes uphill and passes, on your right, the whitewashed, thatched Forge Cottage, which was once the blacksmith's forge. After a couple of bends and a short hill there is an easy walk along the road for 800m until the road starts to rise again with trees either side.
- 2 To the left is Ham Hill Nature Reserve, noted for its orchids in early summer and butterflies. Enter the reserve through the metal gate, keep to the right of the Holloway, up a slope and then up some steps, until you reach the crest of the reserve. The Holloway, originally a Celtic earthwork but hollowed out over the centuries by farm traffic and the weather, was once the main road up the hill with a winch at the top to help horse-drawn carts. To the right are views over the Vale of Pewsey. Continue along the crest to the far end of the reserve, cross the stile and continue through the wood to emerge on the Buttermere Road at the top of Ham Hill.

- 3 Turn left onto the Buttermere Road, then almost immediately left again along the signed by-way. (There is parking here for those who want a shorter walk along the ridgeway and back avoiding the climbs to and from the Crown & Anchor). You are now on one of the ancient drove roads of Britain, formerly the Inkpen Ridgeway running to Upavon, now part of the Mid Wilts Way, with magnificent panoramic views over the plain to the north from the escarpment which rises to nearly 300m.
- 4 Continue east along the by-way, passing the remains of a long barrow on your left, for approximately 400m, passing a track going off to the right at right angles to the by-way.
- 5 Stay on the by-way for approximately another 1km. Ahead on the horizon is Rivar Copse, known locally as the Bull's Tail, which conceals a Celtic bowl barrow. As the track begins to curve round to the right, look left and in the valley below is green-washed Ham Spray House, former home of prominent members of the Bloomsbury Group. To its right - although there are now no visible remains - stood a Roman villa situated at the eastern end of Wansdyke, the 50-mile earthwork that arcs across Wiltshire.

- 6 Continue another 350m and as the track begins to climb between brambles you will see a marked metal footpath gate in the hedgerow on your left. *You may wish to continue along the ridgeway for about 2km to Coombe Gibbet, originally erected in 1676 to hang two murderers: never used again, it has been replaced many times.*
- 7 Go through the gate. The path is sometimes indistinct, but look half left and you will see a metal gate 150m on the near horizon. When you reach it follow the path round the curve of the hill to another lone metal gate. There the footpath becomes clearer as it runs diagonally down the flank of the hill, a mass of cowslips in the spring.
- 8 Go through the gate in the trees at the foot and turn left onto the track. After about 150m you reach a hedgerow with a clearly visible path branching off diagonally across a field. Go along this path until you reach a farm track.

Here you have a choice of return routes.

*Quick and simple*

- 9 **Either** turn left and continue along the track for about 500m, then turn right at the road and head back downhill to the Crown & Anchor.

*Recommended for variety*

- 9 **Or** turn right along the farm track. After 100m it turns sharp left, then after a further 200m sharp right.
- 10 Leave the track at the sharp right turn, cross straight ahead into the field then turn immediately left with 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.
- 11 Turn right along the edge of the field until it curves slightly left alongside the boundary of Acorn Cottages to meet the tarred Spray Road.
- 12 Turn left and head gently downhill and Spray Road to the Crown & Anchor and a well-earned drink!

