

HAM MANOR, MANOR FARM & WANDSDYKE FARM LOOP

1.9 miles 3.0 km: 45 minutes to an hour

generally level: no stiles



- 1 From the Crown & Anchor pub car park turn left onto the road heading towards Buttermere. Immediately on the left is the 16th century Rose Cottage with its later well-winding gear outside it. Twenty metres further on turn right along Church Lane. Thirty metres further on there is a public bridleway sign to the right. Turn right through the gate marked Humphrey's gate, unless you decide to view the church, after which visit return to the gate.

The 12th century All Saints' Church was built by Henry of Blois, grandson of William the Conqueror and powerful Bishop of Winchester, who owned the village. The tower of the church is reputed to have been built in 1349 as a thanksgiving for the village surviving the Black Death.

- 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 as it turns sharp left between hedgerows. Emerge from the hedgerows, with fine views of the downs ahead. The more dominant bridleway turns sharp right to the village of Shalbourne.

- 3 Don't turn right but continue straight on along the fence line beside the field for thirty metres, before turning slightly left towards a kissing gate across the large arable field that extends to the foot of the downs. This field, once part of Manor farm, is now part of Three Counties Estates (formerly Wandsdyke Farm).

- 4 Continue straight ahead to another kissing gate. Looking left as you cross this field there are views of Ham Manor, a fine old Queen Anne Manor House and to the right fine views of the escarpment.

- 5 The path now goes through the garden of Manor Farmhouse and after 50m joins the road. Turn right at the road for about 100m until just past the last house on the left hand side, Elston Farm House, where there is a farm track and public footpath sign to the left.

- 6 Turn left through the gate and follow the farm track. Ahead of you on the top of the escarpment is Rival 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 – Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington and Ralph and Frances Partridge.

- 8 After about 200m, when the track turns sharp right, leave the track, crossing briefly straight ahead into a field and turn sharp left leaving the field boundary on your left along a less distinct path. (Do not turn left on 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 and follow the path along the edge of the field until it curves slightly left alongside the boundary of Acorn Cottages, built in 1945 for estate workers of Wandsdyke Farms. Continue until the path meets Spray Road.

- 10 Turn left at the road and head gently downhill into the village until you reach the Crown & Anchor pub.