


# Chilterns Country

## Walks on commons between Ewelme and Ibstone

Discover some Chiltern commons in these circular walks while enjoying a mixture of wide open views and historic routes through the countryside

Circular walks between 8 and 18 miles from Ewelme, Cookley Green or Christmas Common



an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

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:

 'yellow arrow' Footpaths (walkers only)

 'blue arrow' Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)

 'red arrow' Byways (open to all traffic)

 'purple arrow' Restricted Byway (horseriders, cyclists, walkers and non-mechanically propelled vehicles).

Please be considerate in the countryside

- Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them
- Keep dogs on leads near livestock



There are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns:

- Visit [www.chilternsaonb.org](http://www.chilternsaonb.org) or call 01844 355500 for other Chilterns Country walks.
- Visit [www.chilternsociety.org.uk](http://www.chilternsociety.org.uk) or call 01494 771250 for information on the Chiltern Society's walk programme, to obtain Chiltern Society footpath maps or to join the Society.

Learn more about Chilterns commons at [www.chilternsaonb.org/commons](http://www.chilternsaonb.org/commons)

This leaflet has been produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board as part of the Chilterns Commons Project. The Project benefits from funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund and help from volunteers.





Photographs kindly provided by © Clive Ormonde and Phil Gibbs

## How to get to the start

These circular routes are described for walking in a clockwise direction. The full route starts and finishes at the car park by the recreation ground in Ewelme. For shorter walks, free parking is also available on the edge of the green at Cookley Green, in the National Trust car park at Watlington Hill in Christmas Common and on the edge of Maidensgrove Common.

To plan a journey by public transport from anywhere in the country to the starting point, call 0871 200 2233 or visit [www.traveline.info](http://www.traveline.info)

**By train:**  
The nearest station is Henley-on-Thames. Call National Rail Enquiries 0845 600 5165 or visit [www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk](http://www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk)



Eyebright



Blue Fleabane



## Visitor information

The following points of interest can be found on the walks.

See map for locations.

## Points of interest

**A Ewelme**

The almshouses in Ewelme were built by the Duke and Duchess of Suffolk in 1455, originally for 13 poor men from across the country. The watercress beds in the village provided income for the Duke's four estates. They still provide homes for elderly people today. The watercress beds in the village provided income for the Duke's four estates. They still provide homes for elderly people today. The watercress beds in the village provided income for the Duke's four estates. They still provide homes for elderly people today.

**B The Ridgeway**

Thought to be Britain's oldest road, this National Trail follows the Icknield Way, an ancient chalk ridge route which has been used for over 5,000 years by traders, for droving livestock and by invaders. Starting in Avebury, the path travels on the high ground to Ivinghoe Beacon. In the Dark Ages, it was a main route for the Saxons and Vikings who fought many battles along it. In medieval times it was used by drovers bringing livestock from Wales and the West Country to Hertfordshire and surrounding areas.

## Points of interest

**C Christmas Common**

There is no longer any common land in Christmas Common. The name Christmas Common is thought to have come about because of the abundance of holly trees in the area. Today, Christmas trees are grown commercially here maintaining the connection.

**D Watlington Hill**

The Brett family, previously of Watlington Park, made a succession of gifts to the National Trust during the 20th century, including Watlington Hill. The Hill is a mosaic of chalk grassland habitat, scrub and woodland which supports a diversity of plants, insects and animals. It is a good place to see red kites and butterflies, with a large population of silver-spotted skipper flying here from late July to early September. It's also a super spot for picnics!

## Points of interest

**E Ibstone Common**

High in the Chilterns, a millennium standing stone demonstrates that this common is still at the heart of its community. In summer, the common is carpeted with wildflowers and delicate grasses. Pause and listen to the grasshoppers and skylarks, and watch the aerial acrobatics of red kites.

**F Turville Heath**

One of the more remote commons in the Chilterns, Turville Heath is 2km to the west of Turville village. The common is bisected by an impressive lime avenue, first planted in 1740 as a landscape feature to impress visitors to Turville Park. The avenue was planted with small-leaved lime (*Tilia cordata*), believed to originate from native stock from the Wyke Valley. Some of these trees still remain and are now fine veterans. Over the years, gaps were filled when trees were lost, most notably after a great gale in the 1880s.

## Points of interest

**G Watlington Chalk Pits**

Now a common and Local Nature Reserve, this area was once a chalk quarry used by the local community. Chalk was an important natural resource and was used in many ways. It was mixed with clay when making bricks, it was burned and converted into lime which was used in mortar, cement, for whitewash and household cleaning. Lime was also spread on clay fields, like the flat fields in the Vale. Spreading lime changes the pH of the soil increasing productivity and crop yields.

**H Maidensgrove Common**

This large grassy common is popular with kite flyers and picnickers. It was ploughed during the Second World War for arable crops and is now managed for hay.

## Points of interest

**I Cookley Green**

Historically, village greens and commons were both 'waste of the manor'. Following the 1965 Commons Registration Act, some village greens were registered as commons (including Cookley Green), and some commons were registered as village greens. Traditionally, village greens were used for sport and exercise, such as archery practice and ball games. The resources local people depended upon came from the commons.

**J Swyncombe**

Swyncombe is the hamlet around the 11th century chapel of St Botolph's and a manor house that has been occupied continuously since the 13th century. Every February the churchyard is full of snowdrops and the church holds fundraising snowdrop teas. Cookley Green was where the farm workers and servants at Swyncombe lived.

**K Cow Common**

Unusually for the Chilterns, cows still graze on Cow Common in Ewelme. The common occupies a shallow valley south-east of the village Ewelme and the chalk stream rises here in wet winters. There are great views of Swyncombe Downs from here.



Ewelme - Cow Common





**Description of route:**  
The route follows paths and bridleways through commons and woods and across fields. Some paths are steep and can be muddy in places. There are a few stiles. Take care when walking along some short stretches on country lanes. Wear suitable footwear and allow time to rest and enjoy the varied views.

Map: OS Explorer 171

- 1 Starting at the car park by Cow Common in Ewelme, cross the road to the grass triangle and bear left into Parsons Lane, signposted to Britwell Salome.
- 2 After approx 300m turn right on the footpath, signposted Chiltern Way.
- 3 When you get to the lane, turn left. This quiet lane is popular with cyclists.
- 4 After approx 400m turn left, still on the Chiltern Way. Turn right at the end of the first field, continuing on the Chiltern Way until you reach the edge of a wood.
- 5 At the wood, turn left on the Restricted Byway, leaving the Chiltern Way. Continue on the track in the same direction. It becomes a gravel track which joins the Ridgeway. Cross a lane and continue straight ahead.

- 6 For a shorter walk to Cookley Green, turn right onto the bridleway when you reach the tarmac at Ridge Farm. This is the Shakespeare's Way. At the end of the tarmac, follow the track uphill, marked with white arrows (W22).
- 6a At the tarmac track by Woods Farm, turn left. After 125m go across the lane onto another tarmac track to Coates Farm, signposted Cookley Green ¾. At Cookley Green, take the first road on the right and follow directions from point 21

**For a shorter walk starting at Cookley Green**  
Starting at the bend by point 21 in Cookley Green, walk along the lane in front of the row of houses. The lane becomes a track through woods to Coates Farm (where it becomes tarmac), walk straight across the road towards Woods Farm. At point 6a turn right into "Bridlepath" (W22). Turn right onto the Ridgeway at point 6

- 6 For a longer walk, continue straight ahead along the Ridgeway, crossing two roads.

- 7 At the second road, turn right leaving the Ridgeway, walk 10m up the road and take the footpath on the left through a kissing gate. Follow the footpath on the right to the top of the hill, go through a kissing gate and turn right joining the Oxfordshire Way.
- 8 Turn right onto the road for approx 175m, turning left on the footpath by the T junction to Northend. (The Fox and Hounds is 100m further along the road on the right.)
- 9 For a shorter walk to Pishill, walk straight ahead down the track when the road bears to the left. Follow the track to point 16 where you turn right onto the footpath.
- 9 To continue walking to Ibstone, follow the footpath on your left, bear left between two garden hedges, pass a house and turn right at the wood onto footpath PY3. Follow the white arrows. At the boundary bank, turn right onto SH4 and follow the arrows to the left, down the hill through the wood. Stay on SH4, eventually passing a stone urn on your left, until you reach a tarmac drive.
- 10 Bear right for 30m, turn left through a kissing gate joining the Chiltern Way. Follow the Chiltern Way as it crosses fields and goes up the hill into a wood, bearing right onto the flinty track.
- 11 At the top of the hill, turn right, leaving the Chiltern Way to come out onto Ibstone Common. (To reach the Fox Country Inn, turn left and then take the footpath on the right to come out on the lane opposite the pub.) Bear right, follow the edge of the common, cross the track and continue on a bridleway to a tarmac lane.
- 12 Turn right and walk to the end of the lane. Continue on the bridleway downhill, following the white arrows.
- 13 Turn right off the bridleway onto a footpath. Go through a kissing gate, down to a stile, across a field to another kissing gate. Go through the strip of wood, across the lane, through another kissing gate and across a field up the hill to a stile into a wood. Cross a tarmac lane and continue on the bridleway to the top of the hill where you come out onto Turville Heath.
- 14 Follow the bridleway straight ahead. Turn right at the road junction and walk along to the wooden bus shelter. (Pause here to admire the lime avenue.) Go across the road to follow the footpath past 'Saviours'. Go through gates and across two fields.
- 15 Turn right onto the track, follow it to the end, cross a field down the hill to a barn. Cross the track and go straight ahead on footpath PS7 up the hill.
- 16 For a shorter walk to Christmas Common, turn right and following the track (Hollandridge Lane, PS27), which is initially tarmac, back to the village.

- To continue to Cookley Green and Ewelme, go straight across the track and continue on the footpath which becomes narrow. Turn left at the end, turn right onto the road for approx 50m and turn left onto the footpath signposted Oxfordshire Way. (The Crown Inn is approx 200m further along the road on the right.)
- 17 Follow the Oxfordshire Way (PS17) passed the church, across two fields and up the hill in a wood. Fork right onto a footpath (PS19) leaving the Oxfordshire Way. Follow the track past houses. Turn right at the pond onto Maidensgrove Common. Walk across the common to the white house.
- 18 Turn right onto the lane. After 125m you pass the Five Horseshoes. After another 110m, take the footpath on the left, signposted Park Corner 1¼ (SW19). There is a steep descent, including 28 steps, in this section.
- 19 At the bottom of the hill, go through a kissing gate and turn right onto the bridleway (SW14). Continue straight on along the valley bottom, and fork left when the bridleway joins the Chiltern Way (SW30). Continue up to Cookley Green.
- 20 Turn left and walk 20m before crossing the road and following the path across Cookley Green.
- 21 Walk along the lane for approx 300m before taking the footpath on the left into a wood, continuing on the Chiltern Way. At the end of the wood, go through a kissing gate and straight ahead down the field to another (metal) kissing gate and on to a tarmac drive.
- 22 Walk straight across the drive and follow the path to the churchyard gate. Go through the churchyard to a gate, turn left and left again to join the Ridgeway.
- 23 After approx 450m continue on the track along the valley bottom when the Ridgeway goes off to the left.
- 24 After approx 600m leave the track and follow the bridleway to the left. At the access track, turn right and follow the track straight ahead, crossing another bridleway, pass the farm buildings and then walk straight on, bearing right at a fork in the track until you come to a lane.



right at a fork in the track until you come to a lane.

25 Turn left and walk along the lane for approx 125m before taking the footpath on the right, signposted Ewelme ½. You are now on Cow Common. Cross the common to return to the car park.

Hollandridge Lane

