

WALKS IN THE VALE OF PEWSEY



CIRCULAR WALK

HAM HILL

3.5 miles / 6 km
1-2 hours
(excluding Combe Gibbett)

A walk full of interest and history, with some steep hills and a stile.

Starting and ending at the Crown & Anchor pub, next to the village green in the pretty village of Ham.

Not suitable for buggies or wheelchairs.



THE VALE OF PEWSEY WILTSHIRE

Imagine quintessential England. Rolling countryside, thatched cottages, country lanes, white horses on chalk hills. Welcome to the Vale of Pewsey, one of the most beautiful and unspoilt places in the UK.

Readily accessible by road and rail, the Vale is located in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty.



Traversed by the Great West Way, Ridgeway, and Kennet & Avon Canal, served by a network of ancient footpaths, tracks, and bridleways, the Vale of Pewsey is ideal for walking, riding or cycling, with welcoming places to stay, friendly and atmospheric places to eat, drink and shop, and local events to enjoy throughout the year.

For more information go to www.visitpewseyvale.co.uk

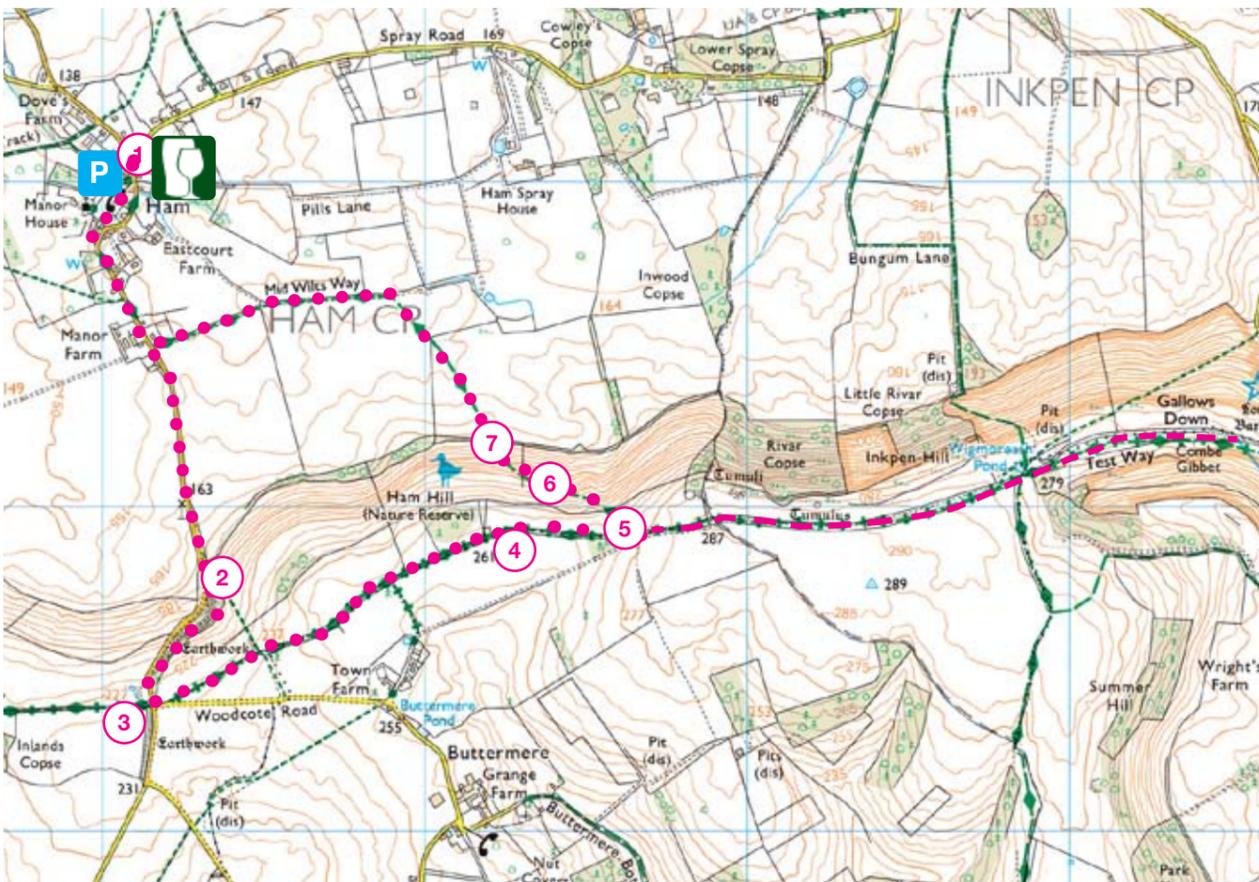


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Rose Cottage



All Saints Church

DIRECTIONS



- From the Crown & Anchor pub car park turn left on to 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 there is an option to turn right along Church Lane to view the 12th century All Saints' Church 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. Retrace your steps to the main road and continue towards Buttermere. The road goes uphill and passes, on your right, the white-washed, thatched Forge Cottage, which was once the blacksmith's forge. At the top of the short hill there is an easy walk along the road for half a mile (800m) until the road starts to rise again with trees either side.
- Just past this, on the left is a metal kissing gate which takes you into Ham Hill Nature Reserve. Run by the Wiltshire Wildlife Trust, this reserve is noted for its orchids in early summer and its butterflies. Enter the reserve through the metal gate and keep to the right of the holloway, going up a slope and then up some steps, until you reach the crest of the reserve. The Holloway was originally a Celtic earthwork but was hollowed out over the centuries by farm traffic and the weather. It was a winch at the top to help horse-drawn carts negotiate it. To the right are views over the Vale of Pewsey. Continue along the crest to the far end of the reserve where there is a stile over the fence. Cross this and continue along the path through the wood, until you emerge on the Buttermere Road at the top of Ham Hill.
- Turn left on to the Buttermere Road, then almost immediately branch off to your left along the signed by-way. You are now on one of the ancient drove roads of Britain. In former times it was called the Inkpen Ridgeway and ran all the way to Upavon. This stretch now forms part of the Mid Wilts. There are magnificent panoramic views over the plain to the north all along the escarpment which rises to a height of nearly 300m.

- Continue east along the by-way for approximately ¼ mile (1000m). Ahead of you 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 Ham Spray House, once the home of prominent members of the Bloomsbury Group - Lytton Strachey, Dora Carrington and Ralph and Frances Partridge. If you look north-east towards the near fields in the valley below, to the right of Ham Spray House - although there are now no remains visible to the naked eye - there was once a Roman villa situated there beside the eastern end of Wansdyke, the 50-mile defensive earthwork arcing across Wiltshire.
- Continue another ¼ mile (350m) and as the track begins to climb between brambles you will see a marked metal footpath gate in the hedgerow on your left.
This is a cut off point where you can continue along the ridgeway for about 1.5 miles to Combe Gibbett and then return back to this point and continue on the walk. Combe Gibbett was originally erected in 1676 and was used only once to hang the dead bodies of two criminals - the gibbet has been replaced many times since.
- Go through the gate. The public footpath is sometimes indistinct here, but look half left and you will see another metal gate at about 150m on the near side. Go through this gate and then follow the path round the curve of the hill to another lone metal gate in the middle of the field. There the footpath becomes more distinct again as it runs diagonally downwards, cut into the flank of the hill which is a mass of cowslips in the spring.
- At the bottom of the hill at the line of trees, go through the gate and turn left onto the track. Go along this for about 150m and when you reach the hedgerow, you will see a clearly visible path branching off diagonally to the right across a field. Go along this path and when you reach the farm track, turn left and continue along it for about 500m until you meet the road. Turn right at the road and head back downhill until you reach the Crown and Anchor pub.