



Pegsdon Hills and The Icknield Way

A country walk generally on the level but with some steep slopes with wide, open views along the ancient Icknield Way

Essential Facts

- Route distance: 14.0 km (8.8 miles)
- Approximate time: 4 hours
- Approx. total ascent: 157 metres
- Start point Grid Ref: TL 082 304
- GPS Ref: TL 08269 30407
- Recommended O.S. Map: Explorer 193
- Toughness Rating: The Chilterns 2

Please see the notes on Toughness Ratings at the end of this report

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CHALLENGE ?**

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THE ROUTE

The walk starts in Old Road, on the southern edge of Barton le Clay. Park at the junction with Washbrook Close, near the entrance to a playing field.

From start point at the entrance gate, **S**, cross the playing field on a footpath leading to a church. Turn right outside the church. Where the road turns right into a cemetery, continue ahead on a footpath beside a wood. Reach a gate and enter open access land. Follow a path beside a stream until you reach an area of chalk springs on the right. Bear left up a dry valley. Where the path ahead climbs up a spur of high ground, bear right up a secondary valley and climb to the top of the ridge. (The woods opposite are the site of Ravensburgh Castle.)

Leave the open access land through a kissing gate and turn right onto a track. On reaching a farm (white gates), follow 'Footpath' sign to skirt the farm. On reaching a road, turn right for 150 metres then turn left onto a bridleway. Reaching a wood on the right, turn left at **A** – now on the Icknield Way.

When a road joins the Icknield Way from the right, continue ahead – now on the road. As the road turns sharp left, leave the road and continue ahead onto a bridleway. Climb gently until a point where the path splits three ways at an information board. Continue straight ahead, to the right of the board, climbing steeply to the top of a ridge. This is Telegraph Hill. Looking left and down, you can see the deep cuttings of the Icknield Way. Turn left and follow a path down and over the cuttings. Reaching a track, turn right and continue to climb.

Just past a wood on the left, watch out for a gate on the left at **B**, with a sign saying 'Welcome to the Pegsdon Hills'. Through the gate, veer right towards a nearby gate at the head of a steep-sided valley. Pass through the gate and follow a well-defined path right. Follow it down a spur of high ground between two deep valleys. Continue downhill along the valley bottom towards a road. The path turns left just before reaching the road and continues beside the road until reaching a gate leaving the open access land. Cross the road and turn left. After 100 metres turn right on a road signed for Pegsdon and Shillington.

Continue along the road for 450 metres then turn left along a lane to Bury Farm and Green End Farm. Beyond the farm the lane turns into a track. Continue ahead until reaching a bridleway sign at the corner of a wood. Turn left. Passing a house on the right, continue onto a metalled road leading into Hexton.

Just before reaching 'The Raven' public house on the right, turn right at **C** onto a road signed for Higham Gobion. Just past a sports ground on the left, turn half left and cross a field diagonally. Cross a footbridge and then follow the path for 1.6 kilometres into Barton le Clay. 100 metres before reaching the houses, take the left-hand fork and keep left until you reach a footbridge and an enclosed path between houses.

On reaching a road, turn left. After 500 metres, reach a T-junction with Hexton Road. Cross over and turn right briefly before turning left into Church Road. Outside the church, turn right along a footpath and retrace your steps across the playing field to Old Road, **S**.



A Chalk Spring



Dry Valley



Barton Church

Refreshment

| | |
|--|--|
| The Raven Public House Hexton, Herts Tel: 01582 881209 Meals and bar snacks | The Coach and Horses Public House Bedford Road, Barton le Clay Tel: 01582 655355 Bar snacks available |
| The Wagon & Horses Public House Bedford Road, Barton le Clay Village pub with food | The Live and Let Live Public House Pegsdon Tel:01582 881739 Meals and bar snacks |

LOCAL INFO

Barton Hills National Nature Reserve is an example of chalk grassland typical of the northern Chilterns. The site also includes areas of Chilterns beech woodland and ash-maple woodland. The reserve has a large population of the rare pasque flower and several other rare plants are present in the downland, including greater pignut and fleawort. There is also a range of characteristic chalk grassland plants such as wild thyme, horseshoe vetch, marjoram and rockrose, and a good show of orchids in summer. Fragrant orchid and woolly thistle are present here too. Many butterflies can be found on the site including large numbers of chalkhill blue, green hairstreak, marbled white and small skipper.

The springs at the foot of the valley are a classic example of the water sources that have fed so-called spring-line villages for millennia. Rain falling on the chalk hills filters down through the permeable chalk but cannot continue through the impermeable clay beneath, and therefore emerges as a spring where the chalk meets the clay.

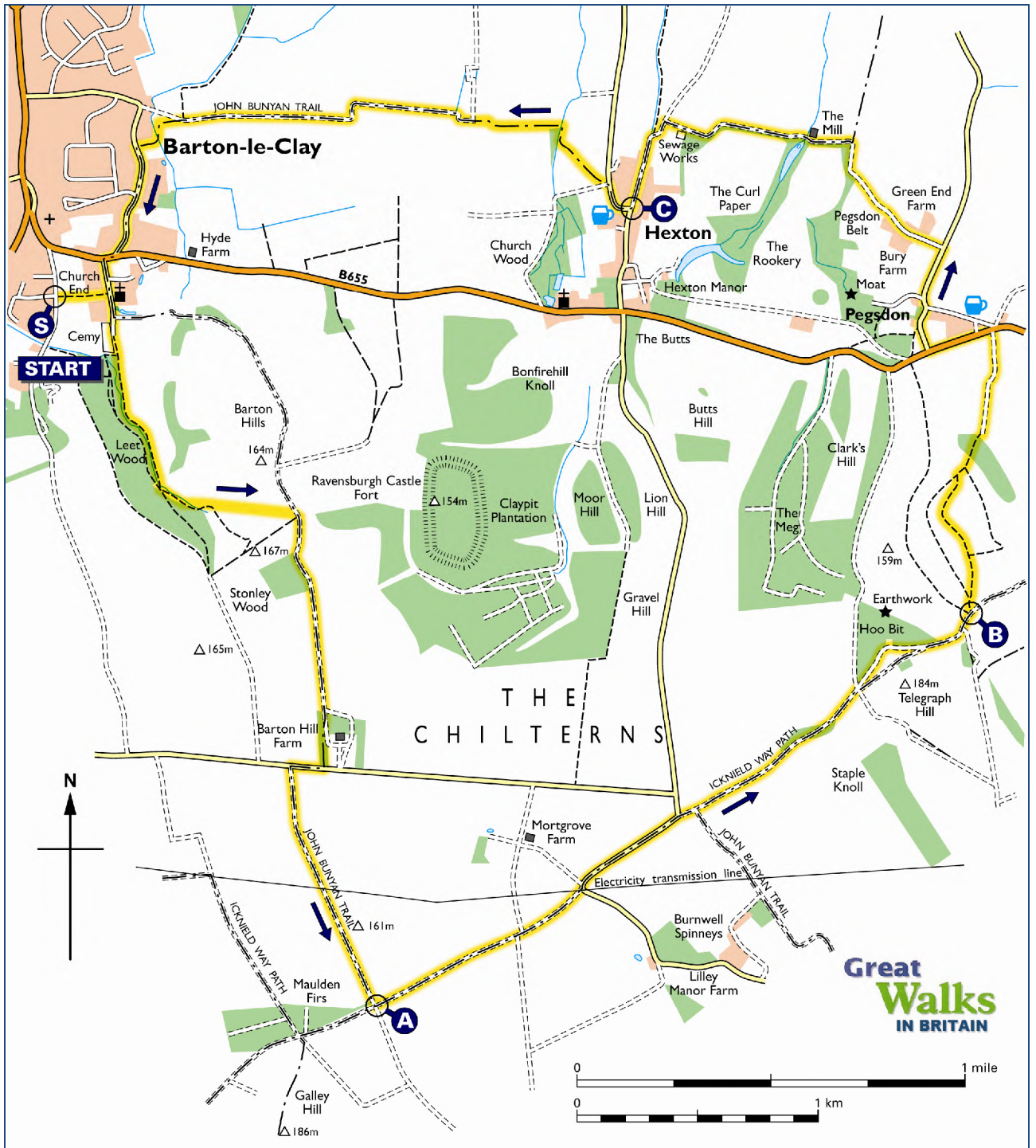
The Icknield Way is a major example of a surviving ancient British highway. It dates from at least the Late Iron Age (around 100 BC) and may have its origins as far back as the Neolithic period (4500 BC). As such, it is sometimes claimed to be the oldest road in Britain. It runs along the top of chalk spine of Southern England, from Wessex (where it is known as the Ridgeway) to Norfolk. Once a major artery for trade, it consisted of broad areas along which herds of domestic animals could pass, and minor changes to the route would be made regularly as parts became too worn or wet to use. In a few areas the Icknield Way passes up steep hills and alternative routes were not available. These areas became worn and deep gullies were created by the continued trampling of people, animals and carts. An impressive example exists at Telegraph Hill near Lilley Hoo, where a series of parallel gullies up to 10 metres deep have been created. The site is now a nature reserve and an important archaeological site.



The Wagon & Horses

**PEGSDON HILLS AND THE ICKFIELD WAY
G.P.S. WAYPOINTS**

| WAYPOINT NAME | MAP REF | | CO-ORDINATES | | ELEVATION: Metres |
|------------------|------------|----|--------------|-------|----------------------|
| PEG S | S | TL | 08269 | 30407 | 75 |
| PEG A | A | TL | 09485 | 27451 | 153 |
| PEG B | B | TL | 12069 | 29090 | 177 |
| PEG C | C | TL | 10665 | 30748 | 75 |



| MAP LEGEND | | | | | |
|------------|----------------------|--|------------------------|--|-----------------------|
| | Great Walks route | | Church with tower | | Spot height - metres |
| | M6 Motorway | | Church with spire | | Information centre |
| | A23 Main road | | Other place of worship | | Parking |
| | B2116 Secondary road | | Cathedral / Abbey | | Public convenience |
| | Minor road | | Building | | Public house |
| | Other road | | Built up area | | Picnic site |
| | Track | | Woodland | | Camp site |
| | Footpath | | Sand, shingle or mud | | Major tourist feature |
| | Bridleway | | Water feature | | Other tourist feature |
| | National trail | | | | |
| | Railway | | | | |

Safety First

Safety should always be your first priority in planning and undertaking a walk, whether on your own or leading a group. Please read these Safety First and Walking Our Routes notes.

Lead a group of other walkers only if you have leadership and navigational experience adequate for the 'worst case' conditions which may be encountered on the particular walk, bearing in mind the terrain, possible weather and navigational demands.

Weigh up the capabilities of your party, in terms of fitness and walking speed. Adjust your time expectations accordingly.

Ensure all your party are adequately clothed for the weather and conditions. Footwear is particularly important. Clothing must protect against cold, wet or strong sun according to the time of year.

Emergencies are quite rare, but it is essential to think ahead about what to do if someone in your party sustains an injury. Will you have a First Aid kit? Is there a qualified First Aider in the party? How could help be summoned in a serious eventuality?

Refreshment, particularly water, can be vital. Dehydration in hot summer conditions can be rapid, and frequent intake of fluids is essential.

On tougher walks it is a good idea to tell someone where you are planning to go – and when you expect to be back. Remember - mobile phones often lose reception in mountainous or isolated areas.

All our walks use legitimate routes: Public Rights of Way, Public Footpaths, Bridleways, Permissive Paths, Access Land, Byways and Roads.

Road walking calls for particular care. When there is no defined footpath or verge wide enough for safe walking it is usually best to walk on the right – facing oncoming traffic. An exception may be a tight bend, where walkers would be more visible on the left.

Occasionally you may find a public footpath blocked or unuseable. It is perfectly in order to take the shortest available diversion without damaging crops, perhaps around a field margin.

It is courteous to close gates after passing through, sometimes even if the gate was open when you arrived – particularly if it is obvious livestock may escape.

Mutual respect for farm animals is to be encouraged! Don't frighten or annoy them, but equally don't put your party members in danger or discomfort. You certainly wouldn't be the first walkers to go round the outside of a field of frisky bullocks.

Dogs should always be kept on a lead anywhere near farm animals, and under close supervision elsewhere in the countryside.

Walking Our Routes

Our walks are designed to be negotiated using the route directions in conjunction with the map section provided. We suggest walkers also take the Ordnance Survey Explorer or Outdoor Leisure map recommended for each walk.

On mountain, moorland and open heathland walks it is **ESSENTIAL** to have navigational expertise and tools, including the recommended Ordnance Survey map(s).

Take care to observe any cautions in the route description; exposed paths, areas liable to flooding etc.

Consider conditions before setting off. Will heavy rain have made a water meadow impassable? Will frost or snow make a path slippery?

When navigating the route look for clues to confirm you are in the right place. Are map features where you would expect on the ground? Are features mentioned in the text where expected? If you suspect you may have taken a wrong turn, take action sooner rather than later. It is better to re-trace to a known point rather than carry on regardless with the possibility of becoming increasingly confused.

All our routes are carefully checked before publication, but features can change on the ground – sometimes surprisingly quickly. Footpaths may be re-routed, buildings can appear or change significantly and these days pub names seem to change frequently.

The approximate time given for each walk is based on an average walking speed of 2.5 miles per hour (4 km/hour), plus an allowance for ascent, descent and any difficult terrain.

Total ascent is the approximate total ascent over the whole walk.

GPS users can enter in the waypoints provided in each of our walk reports. It is important to read our guide **Introducing GPS for Walkers**, available as a PDF file from the Great Walks in Britain web site.

Remember that GPS is a great navigational tool, but only one of those available to the navigator. Never dispense with conventional map and compass – and the training and skills to use them, especially on mountain, moorland or open heathland walks.

TOUGHNESS RATINGS

All our **Chilterns** routes can be undertaken by reasonably fit walkers able to utilise our map segments, together with the route guidance notes. Always consider recent and forecast weather.

Each walk has been allocated a **Toughness Rating**:

1. Easier walks with modest ascent and generally on well defined paths. There may be stiles or narrow gateways to negotiate.
2. Routes which are more demanding. They may include more ascent and possibly paths which are looser or more difficult underfoot.
3. More strenuous walks with some steep sections, higher paths or places which may be wet and boggy.
4. The most demanding walks in this edition. There may be prolonged steep ascents. Conditions may be challenging underfoot.

Toughness Ratings are allocated in the context of the terrain in the edition area. For example a walk rated as demanding in the Chilterns may be equivalent to an easier or moderate route in the Brecon Beacons.