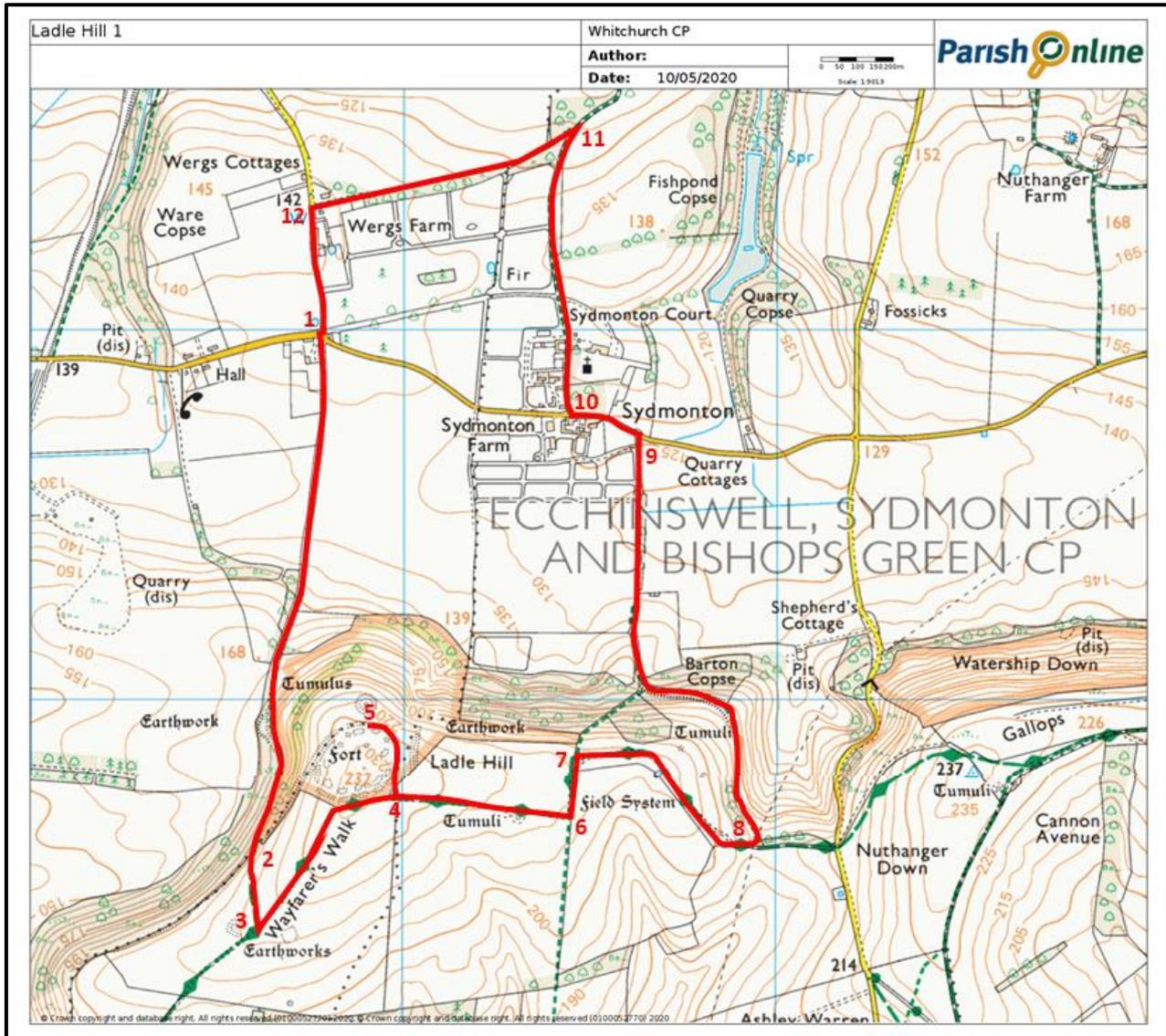




# Ladle Hill & the Sydmonton Estate

(4.3 miles - allow yourself 2 hours)



A circular walk from Old Burghclere up to Ladle Hill, with magnificent 360 degree views, including Beacon Hill and the Highclere Estate (to the west), and Watership Down and Hannington (to the east); then continuing down and through the Sydmonton Estate before returning to your start point.

To get to the start of the walk (1), drive north from Whitchurch on the Newbury Road and then on the A34 for just over 6 miles, exiting at Beacon Hill. At the top of the slip road, turn right over the A34, then left at the T-junction. After 400 yards, turn right (signposted for Old Burghclere).

Follow this road through Old Burghclere, heading east towards Kingsclere, before reaching your start point, which is by a junction with a road turning on the left, just before large ornamental gates at the entrance of the Sydmonton Estate. There is space to pull in and park on the left, just before the junction.

From the start point (1) cross over the road and head left (east) towards the 3-way signpost at the junction; just past it, turn right onto a wide track between trees, which is marked by a fingerpost.



The track heads up towards the top of Ladle Hill for about a mile. Please Note: The first part of the track can get rutted and muddy if there has been wet weather, but there is a drier, narrow path between the trees on the left-hand side in places – the track however becomes much drier as it starts to rise.

After 5 minutes, there is a good view across to the right to Beacon Hill and again, 10 minutes later, by a large beech tree. When you eventually walk clear of the trees (2), there is another great view towards Beacon Hill. Follow the path straight on until you reach a cairn (3) with footpath signs as you meet the Wayfarer's Walk.

Take the path up to the left, eventually walking alongside a wire fence on the left, which encloses the site of an Iron Age hillfort. Listen out for skylarks overhead, if you are lucky, you may spot one.

When you reach a gate on the left (4), next to a dew pond, go through the gate to explore the hillfort.

From the northern side, on the edge of the escarpment (5), there are great views of Beacon Hill and you can see the central tower of Highclere Castle (aka Downton Abbey) above the trees to the west. To the east you can see the sweep of Watership Down and the transmitter mast at Hannington. Below you to the north is the Sydmonton Estate.

**This is a great spot to stop for a break!**



Retrace your steps to the gate (4) and then continue left on the path (heading east).

When you come to the field boundary (6), meeting a fence and a line of trees, turn left and, after a few minutes, right (7) through a gate, to continue along the Wayfarer's Walk (ignoring a footpath sign in the near left hand corner of the field you have just entered).

Follow the top edge of this field, next to the fence, passing another dewpond, and then straight on keeping to a (just visible) path and heading towards some large trees. Just before you reach

the far end of this field, head down to the bottom corner on the left to the base of an electricity pylon, to join a sunken lane (8) and then turn left along it.

The lane takes you down through trees to reach a metal barred gate with a stile - cross over the stile and continue to follow the track as it bends to the right and continues down.

Pass around a wooden gate and follow the track as it continues, with trees and hedgerow bordering fields on either side as it now levels out. Pass around the left side of another wooden gate and eventually reach the Old Burghclere/Kingsclere road (9), going through the gate or crossing the stile on the left side.

Turn left to walk along the road for just 2 to 3 minutes, carefully watching and listening out for vehicles, until you reach some farm buildings on the left; opposite a finger post, turn right, passing between stone mushrooms and enter the Sydmonton Estate (10) through a gate:

Follow this path/road through the estate, passing through another pedestrian gate, which is on the left side of a wide gate and cattle grid across the road.

Shortly after this, there is a fork; turn left to take the track back to the left (11).

Follow this track to the end, where it meets a road at Wergs Manor (12). Turn left along this road and in 5 minutes you will be back at your starting point.

