



Walking in
West Berkshire

8



**Wash
Common**

2

mile circular routes
for walking



Introduction

The route is about two miles (3.4 km) long and should take approximately one and a half hours to complete. There is an opportunity to extend the walk to four miles (6.5 km) or two and half hours, by including the western loop.

The Wash Common and Enborne walk is waymarked with the Countryside Agency's standard arrow waymarks. Each waymark bears the words 'Recreational Route' and every change of direction has been clearly waymarked. Stout shoes or walking boots are recommended for this walk.

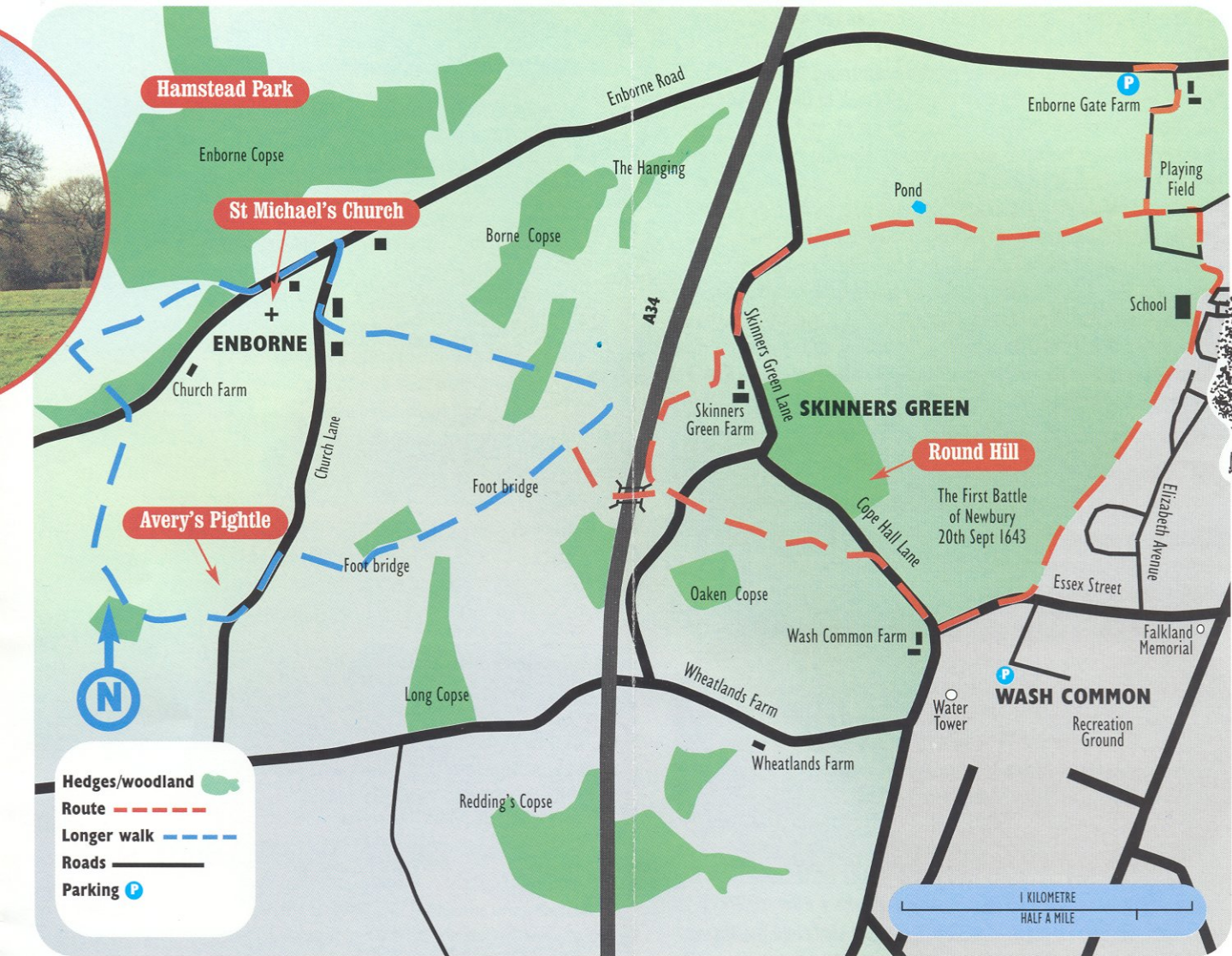
The route has been described from the Enborne Road, to the west of Enborne Gate Farm.



Walk along the highway verge towards Newbury and take the first footpath on your right at Enborne Gate Farm. Continue past the farm buildings and just beyond the farmhouse follow the path as it turns sharp right and then sharp left. At the end of the path (junction with Fifth Road), turn right through the kissing gate on to the field-edge path.

This path was once the main route into Newbury from the small hamlet of Skinners Green, and used to be hedged on both sides. If you look up towards Wash Common you will see a wooded spur running off the plateau. This is known locally as Round Hill, an important site in the First Battle of Newbury.

At the road junction turn left, follow the road and turn right along the footpath immediately before Skinners Green Farm. The path traverses a meadow and runs towards the A34 Newbury by-pass. This section of the by-pass was built along the course of the old railway line to Winchester. At the embankment the path turns sharp left to run parallel with the road, eventually emerging beside the bridge over the dual carriageway. Here a choice can be made. For the short walk, turn left (this route description continues after the section on St. Michael's Church).



For the longer walk, turn right and go over the bridge. Climb the stile at the far end and walk along the right hand side of the hedge for a short distance. Turn left and walk over the wooden footbridge. Continue straight on across the field to the next wooden footbridge. Continue across the next field and thence along a path bordered by a small copse on the right, over a further footbridge and straight on to finally emerge at Church Lane. Turn left and walk down the lane.

To your right is a small nature reserve, known as Avery's Pigtle and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxon Wildlife

Trust. 'Pigtle' is a medieval word for a small, enclosed meadow. Avery's Pigtle is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is an old flower-rich meadow.

Take the next footpath on your right. This path runs along the edge of a field for a short distance and then enters a tiny copse. Follow the waymarks through the copse, climb over the stile to your right and once in the field, turn left, following the path to the next stile. The path then goes up a fairly steep hill to Enborne Road.

St Michael's Church



If you are lucky you might catch a glimpse of muntjac deer or fallow deer!

Cross the road and enter Hamstead Park.

Hamstead Park was named by King Richard III who used to stay in the lodge and hunt game in the 700 acre park. In 1620 the First Earl of Craven was granted ownership of the estate and it remained in the hands of the Craven family until the death of the Seventh Earl in 1983.

Walk up the path, which runs through an avenue of lime and beech trees. At the junction with the tarmac drive turn right. Follow this drive to the large white gates on the Enborne Road.

Opposite is the pretty church of St. Michael's and All Angels. The age of the church is uncertain although it probably dates from Saxon or Early Norman times. The font, which depicts the Annunciation, is of Norman origin. On the chapel wall is a 14th Century fresco possibly painted by an Italian monk from the nearby Sandleford Priory. The bell tower contains one of the oldest bells in England: it was cast in 1260. The bell tower has a hooked cross or 'recercele'.



Hamstead Park

From the park gates, turn left along Enborne Road keeping to the right hand verge. At the next road junction turn left down Church Lane towards Crockham Heath.

Walk down the lane and take the next path on your left - this is a narrow, hedged path immediately before the second house on the left (don't miss it!).

Follow the footpath down into the valley. After crossing a small bridge and a field, the path runs through a thorn copse.

On emerging at the other side follow the path diagonally uphill to the hedge and walk along the hedge line to the next waymark. At the waymark, turn right across the field and cross the stile at the end of the bridge over the A34. Turn left and walk over the bridge.

At this point you rejoin the shorter walk.

Both walks: Continue along the track to emerge at the road. Cross the road and walk up the hill to Wash Common.

Lying to the south-west of Newbury, Wash Common and Skinners Green were the scene of one of the bloodiest battles fought during the English Civil War (1642-1646). On 20th September 1643 the Royalist Army under the command of King Charles met head on with the Parliamentarian forces of the Earl of Essex. The battle started at first light with a savage artillery duel followed quickly by cavalry charges led by Prince Rupert (the King's nephew) and Sir John Byron. All day the battle raged with neither side giving or taking quarter. Some lanes (including Cope Hall Lane) were so choked with the dead that it was impossible to advance or retreat. In the late afternoon regiments of the London Trained Bands gained a foothold on the plateau of the Wash, and slowly pushed the Royalists back but neither side was in a position to deal a decisive blow.

At the end of the path turn right on to Cope Hall Lane then left along Essex Street.

Towards evening the artillery of both sides were firing at point-blank range. The guns of the Parliamentarian force were on a line

with Wash Common Farm, and the Royalist cannon were 200 yards to the east on Wash Common, roughly where the plantation and water tower now stand. Sporadic fighting continued into the night. Eventually both sides disengaged and took stock of their situation. Over 6000 men from both armies had been killed, and many others wounded. Amongst the dead was the King's secretary Lucius Carey, Lord Falkland. A memorial to him stands at the junction of Essex Street and Andover Road. Ammunition, food and water were in very short supply. Essex, knowing his line of march to London was blocked was committed to another day's fighting. The King however, informed of the plight of his artillery (they had fired over 80 barrels of powder and didn't have enough for another day of action) decided to retreat to the Royalist stronghold at Oxford. At dawn, after a brief artillery barrage on the now vacant Royalist positions, Essex found his way to London open.

Opposite Wash Common Post Office turn left on to the footpath.

Running along the right hand side of the path is a very unusual feature. It is a deep escarpment that was used very effectively by the Royalist Infantry during the battle.

At the end of the path walk past the John Rankin Infant and Junior Schools, bear left at the playing fields and turn right into Oaken Grove. Turn left at Fifth Road. To get back to Enborne Road, turn right down the footpath at the end and continue along until you meet the road at Enborne Gate Farm.

The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as found
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public rights of way across farm land
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise

Public Transport

Newbury Buses (01635 567500): N1, N2, N11 Elizabeth Avenue
Stagecoach -Hampshire Bus (01256 464501) service 20 from the
bus station to The Gun public house at Wash Common.

Car Parking

There is limited space available at two pull-ins alongside the
Enborne Road. Parking is also available at Wash Common
Recreation Ground on Stuart Road.

This leaflet was produced by West Berkshire Council.

West Berkshire Council is grateful for the assistance provided by Enborne Parish
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For further information about this and other leaflets please
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