

Walking in
West Berkshire

7



Inkpen

2

circular routes
for walking

Introduction

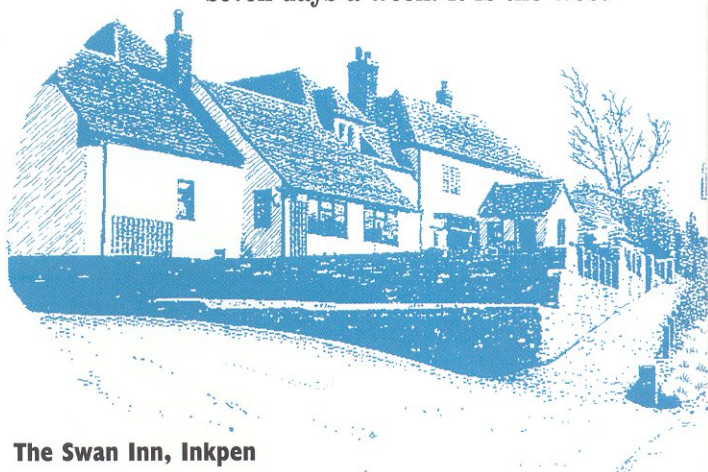
The Inkpen recreational walk is about two and a half miles (4 km) long and should take about one and a quarter hours to do, but can be extended to four miles (6.4 km) long and approximately two hours duration.

It passes through the gently undulating countryside to the west of Inkpen and includes a short climb up onto a chalk ridge along which runs Bitham Lane. From here fine views through the hedgerow south towards Ham Hill can be glimpsed.

The walk is waymarked with the Countryside Agency's standard arrow waymarks carrying the words 'recreational route'.

It is waymarked in both clockwise and anti-clockwise directions and each change of direction is clearly waymarked. Stout shoes or walking boots are recommended. Take care when walking on roads through the village.

The walk has been described from the car park at the Swan Inn, Inkpen. The Inn is a free house, offering a fine selection of beers and serves food seven days a week. It is the West



The Swan Inn, Inkpen



Berkshire CAMRA 'Pub of the Year' 2000. There is an organic farm shop attached.

The name Inkpen is derived from the Anglo-Saxon 'Ingas Pen'. A pen was a form of enclosure, and Inga was the person who owned it. The village was once a hive of industry. The names of houses and lanes give clues to their original uses; for example Puddle Wharf Cottage, Weavers Lane and Clayground Copse. However, Inkpen was best-known for its pottery, a craft which thrived until the early years of this century.

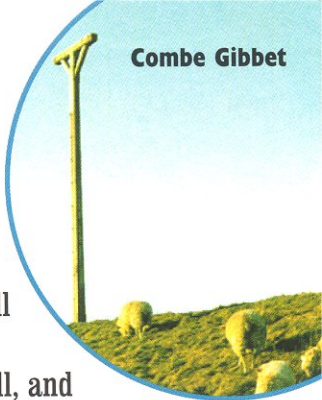
Heavy types of pot such as pitchers, bread crocks, flower and chimney pots were made from local

clay. Once there were three blacksmiths and four public houses, but only two of the pubs remain in business. The village church was founded by Roger De Ingpen, and an effigy to him stands to the right of the altar. Salisbury Cathedral has a similar carving and it is thought that they both date from around 1230 A.D.

Turn right from the Swan car park and walk down the road to Holm Dean House. Here turn left into Sands Drove. Follow this track until a green lane with high banks on each side is reached, then turn right.

This track is called Bitham Lane, and is thought to be part of a drove road to Salisbury. Dominating the skyline are Gallows Down and Walbury Hill, the summit of which forms an Iron Age hill fort, enclosing some 82 acres.

Just to the west of Walbury Hill, and standing on a large Neolithic long barrow is Combe Gibbet. The macabre intention is plain for all to see. The original gibbet was erected in 1676 for the execution of George Broomham and his mistress Dorothy Newman. They were tried and convicted for the murder of Broomham's wife and son. Many tales and legends surround the gibbet.



After about 1/2 mile (0.8 km) a track joins Bitham Lane from the right and here a choice can be made: for a short walk, turn right and follow the track down on to Sadlers Road. Follow the lane until you see a footpath signpost opposite the entrance driveway to Totterdown House, just before the 'T' junction with the Hungerford-Inkpen road. Turn right at the signpost. At this point the short walk rejoins the longer walk. Go to the last paragraph.

The longer walk carries on along the hedge-lined Bitham Lane for about 1/2 mile (0.8 km) until a footpath sign is reached. This point is the County boundary of Berkshire and Wiltshire. Turn right at the signpost and follow the path down to a gate and stile and into an old meadow. Continue in the same direction towards a fresh water spring and a sign-post indicating a junction of footpaths.

The path to the west runs to 'Prosperous', once the home of Jethro Tull. He was the author of 'Horse Hoeing Husbandry' and has been called the father of British Agriculture.

Cross over the stile and take the path that runs northwards to a wood. Enter the wood via another stile and follow the path, which can be wet in parts. Turn right at the edge of the wood, go through the gate and follow the waymarks across the fields (Anvilles Farm will be on the left) and up the hill to a stile. Cross over and bear left. The path then runs along the hedged field boundary, and through a paddock to a kissing gate. Walk past a stable block, through what was once the kitchen garden of Totterdown House, and along the driveway to the north of the house. Join the main drive bordered by rhododendron bushes and large oaks and proceed to Sadlers Road.

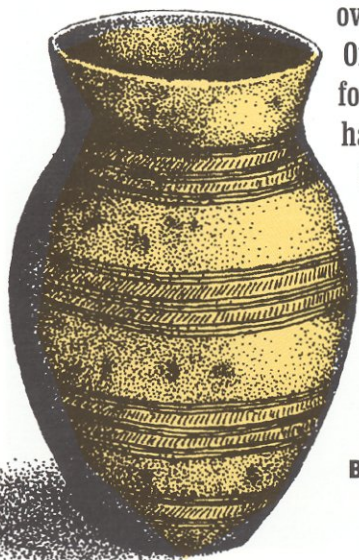
In a sand pit near here were found some notable examples of prehistoric pottery

over 4,000 years old.

Once piece is an unusual four-legged bowl. Another has proved to be the largest Bronze Age beaker yet found in the British Isles.

Both these finds can be seen in the Museum in Newbury.

Bronze age beaker



Cross the lane and take the path opposite. This runs through an avenue of beech trees and across a field. At the road junction turn right and follow the road through the village to the Swan Inn and the end of the walk.

Walbury Hill and Combe Gibbet are easily accessible from the village either by car or on foot. At 297m (975') Walbury Hill is the highest point in Berkshire, and also the highest chalk hill in England. On a clear day, the view from the summit can be stunning. The area has much to offer the walker and really is worthy of further exploration with the Ordnance Survey 'Explorer' map no. 158 scale 1:25,000.



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 farmland
- 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 service no. 113 from Newbury bus station or Hungerford runs to Inkpen Monday through to Saturday. Telephone (01635) 567500 for times.

Car Parking

The Swan Inn, Inkpen

Acknowledgements

West Berkshire Museum, Newbury
The Swan Inn, Inkpen

This leaflet was produced by West Berkshire Council.
For further information about this and other leaflets please contact West Berkshire Council, Countryside and Environment, Faraday Road, Newbury, Berks. RG14 2AF. (Tel. 01635 519808).