



Aston Village: The *Flowerpot* (pub walk)

Distance: 10 km=6¼ miles

easy walking

or 8 km=5 miles (omitting the weir)

Region: Berkshire, Chilterns

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Refreshments: Henley, Aston Village

Map: Explorer 171 (Chiltern Hills West) *but the map in this guide should suffice*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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River, long weir, country town, villages, woodland, views, iconic pub

In Brief

This *Flowerpot* is a fantastically popular pub because of its secret location in a tiny hamlet near Henley-on-Thames. Just far enough to make an exciting excursion, just near enough not to waste drinking or feeding time. As a Brakspear pub it serves a good brew and the food is *sometimes* excellent. The garden is a real charmer and in the summer you will probably find a barbecue in progress. The pub is open all day at weekends. To enquire, ring 01491-574721. If you prefer refreshment at roughly the half-way mark, there is a vast choice in Henley, such as the *Angel* pub just over the bridge.



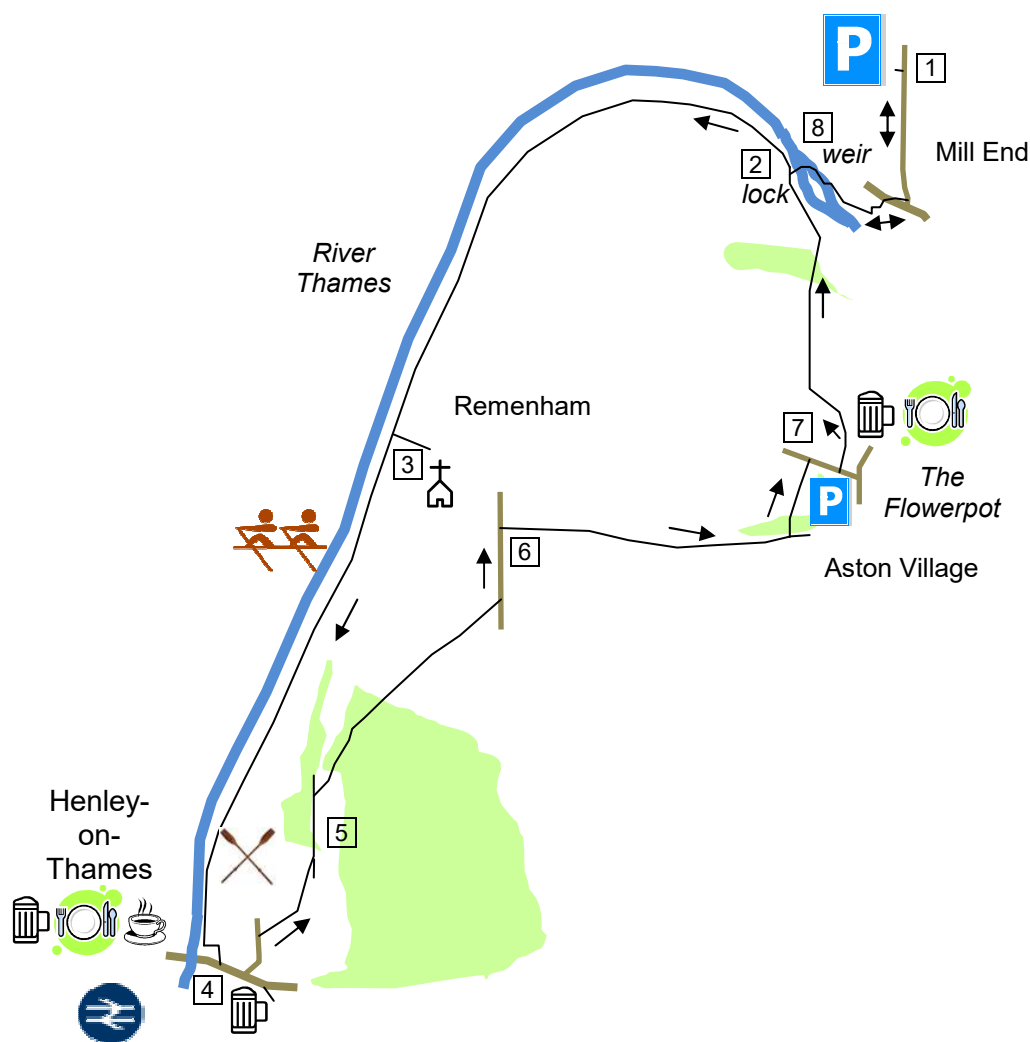
There are no nettles on this walk (apart from a short fringe just before Aston which you can swish aside). Boots are definitely optional as all the paths are excellent. Your dog can certainly come along too as many do!



The walk begins at the **Mill End car park**, grid ref SU 784 855, approximate postcode **RG9 3BG**. This is 400m=450 yds on the **left** up the Skirmett road from the junction at Mill End near Henley-on-Thames. You can also start in **Aston Village**, next to the pub, postcode **RG9 3DG**, but missing an exhilarating double trip across the weir. Because the *Flowerpot* is so popular you can't use the pub's car parks since you're not staying. There are some spaces on the road outside the pub but they may be all used up if you come late. So arrive before it opens, turn **left** alongside the pub and park close to the wall on the left. At a pinch, there's space at the end of Ferry Lane (a little off your route). You can also start in **Henley**, arriving by **train**, only 500m from the walk. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk




If you are beginning this walk in **Aston Village**, go straight to section [7](#). If **Henley**, cross the Thames bridge and go straight to section [4](#).


- [1](#) Beginning at the Mill End car park, turn **right** on the road, Skirmett Road. Walk 400m to a junction with the main A4155 road. Turn **right** on a tarmac footway just before the junction. Where the path merges with the main road, go another 10m, cross the road carefully and turn **left** on a narrow signposted footpath between two houses. After 20m along a tarmac drive, veer **right** and keep to the right of a barrier on a narrow footpath between fences. Your path now takes you on an exhilarating trip across the wide weir that spans the river, zigzagging over the sluice and following a short fenced path to Hambleden Lock. Cross the river using the swing bridge in front of you (you may need to wait a minute for the gates to close) and turn **right** on a path close to the riverside.
- [2](#) Keep ahead beside the river, going through either of two gates, following the tow path and keeping clear of cyclists. You have a pleasant 3½ km (2¼ miles) to Henley-on-Thames. In the summer, especially before the Regatta in June, you will see single and double scullers, coxless fours and rowing eights exercising on the river. *The splendid large white house soon on the other side is Greenlands College; it was once owned by William Henry Smith the*

newsagent (yes, that's the same W.H.) and it now houses Henley Business School. Soon the path becomes tarmac and Henley comes into view. You go over a small grid as you pass Temple Island. *Temple Island is the starting point for the Henley Royal Regatta; the temple, on the south tip, is a "folly", built in 1771 after a design by the architect James Wyatt, as a fishing lodge for Fawley Court (see the "Bix and the Assendons" walk in this series).* 400m after you pass the temple, just after a large house on your left, *Remenham Manor*, you will notice a small metal gate leading to a wooden swing-gate with a footpath sign. As a short there-and-back excursion, it is worth going **left** here to see the village of Remenham with its church and small group of houses.

The name "Remenham" probably means "home of the people of Remi" (a Saxon tribe) but its history goes back long before the Romans (their coins, pottery, bricks and tiles were discovered all over the parish). The church of St Nicholas dates from 1076 but it was restored twice in the 1800s.

The annual Henley Royal Regatta actually happens in Remenham, on the river, by Temple Island and on the lawns, hosted by the venerable Remenham Club, founded in 1909 for the purpose of "social intercourse and mutual and moral improvement".

-  3 Your passage along the Thames takes you through some metal gates (usually open), past the lawns of several rowing clubs, over bridges across little creeks. *The large white house with the panoramic conservatory is Remenham Court.* Finally, the tarmac path bends left and right between houses and reaches a main road, White Hill, with Henley bridge on your right. Your route is now **left** on the road but first it is impossible to resist the short trip over the bridge into the town (and into Oxfordshire) with its many shops, restaurants, river views and inns. *(For a brief description of Henley, see another walk in this series - one of the great walks in the Chilterns - "Henley-on-Thames, Stoke Row, Shiplake".)*

-  4 Having turned left on the road, staying on the Berkshire side, immediately ignore a tarmac drive on your left and continue 100m to just before the *Little Angel*, a worthy Brakspear pub/restaurant. Turn **left** here on Remenham Lane, also marked as part of the *Chiltern Way* (CW) long-distance footpath. In 50m the lane bends left. Nearly 100m further, past the cricket club and just after the last house on your left, turn **right** through a wooden swing-gate into a large manicured parkland. Keep right along the short side and as the track curves left, keep straight ahead to go over a stile (or through a gap next to the gate). Continue diagonally left, heading well to the left of a large ivy-clad mansion, *Matson House* (aka *Wilminster Park*). Go up a slope, over a (bypassable) stile and into woods.

- 5 A fairly level path leads you through woodland, gradually nearing a meadow on your right. A pair of metal hurdles finally lead you into the meadow. Now veer **right** gently up the slope of the meadow. As you come over the crest, a stile comes into view at the edge of the woods. Go over it into the darkness of Remenham Wood. This excellent winding path takes you out, after 300m, into a crop field. Ignoring a permissive crossing path, go straight over on a path across the centre of the field, with widening views left of the Thames valley. At the far side, go through a gap and turn **left** on a quiet tarmac lane.

- 6 In 250m, just before a small wood, turn **right** over a stile (avoidable by a squeeze), still on the CW. Follow the wide track straight ahead with good views. In 400m or so, your path descends into a wood or tree plantation

and you are now on a good path, keeping just clear of the nettles and other undergrowth. The wood becomes denser with fine specimens of tall trees and the first house of the hamlet of Aston will be visible. 15m before a wooden swing-gate, look to your left for a waymarker indicating a permissive path. Turn **left** here, going down through woodland and then beside an open field on your left. You come down to a tarmac lane via a stile (or through a gap on the left-hand side of some large metal gates).



Turn **right** on the lane, Remenham Lane, almost immediately passing a sign announcing Aston Village. In 100m or so, you reach the *Flowerpot Inn*, via the garden entrance, for a well-deserved break.

- 7 After your break (or if starting here) go (back) along Remenden Lane with the pub on your right and in 30m turn **right** on a concrete drive, going through a wooden swing-gate beside a large metal gate. Follow this excellent tarmac drive across open country, with the river ahead betraying its presence from the slowly moving barges. *A large number of red kites roost in the trees here.* At a 3-way fingerpost beside the river follow the drive as it curves **left** beside the river, soon with a bench seat from which to admire the Thames riverscape. After a large (open) metal gate beside a wooden swing-gate, fork **right** down to Hambleden Lock.

If you did *not* park in the Mill End car park, wrap round to section [2](#). (Even then, don't miss the chance to walk to the middle of the weir for a spectacular view of the river!)

- 8 The last part is the reverse of the outward section. Turn **right** over the lock using the path over the nearer pair of gates. Follow the path through bushes and over the weir. At the end, keep ahead on the tarmac and take a narrow path between houses to the main road. Cross it, turn **right** and **left** at the junction, using the tarmac footway, onto the Skirmett Road. In 400m, you are back at the car park where the walk began.



For last-minute refreshments, the historic village of Hambleden is just up the Skirmett Road. It has a car park and a good pub, the "Stag & Huntsman".

Getting there

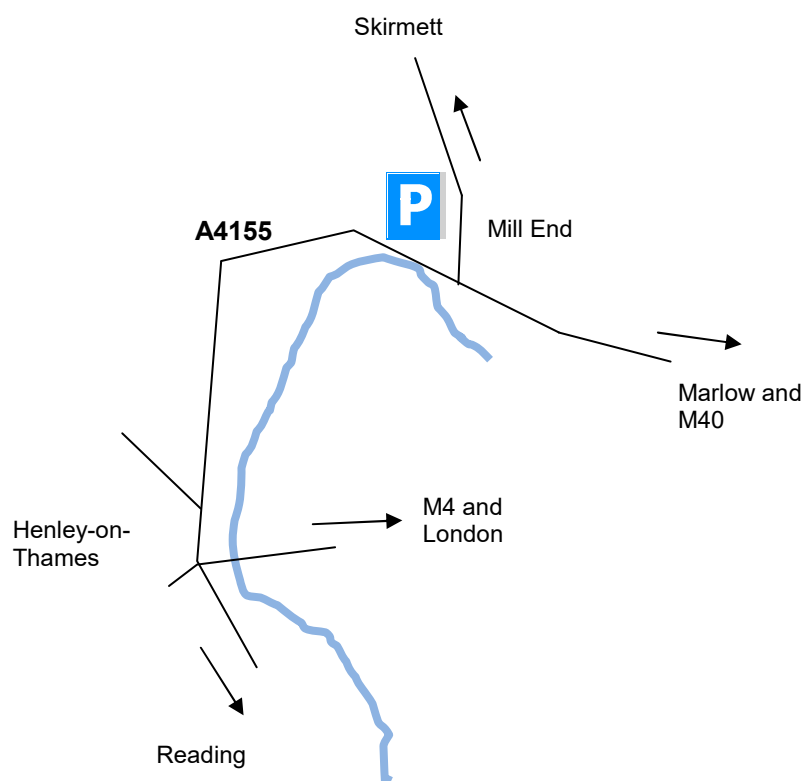
By car: to reach the Mill End car park from the London area, either (1) take the M4, turn off at a sign for Henley; after Henley, turn **right** and fork right on the A4155 or (2) take the M4, turn off at a sign for Henley but avoid the town by taking the A404, signposted *Marlow*; turn **left** to go through Marlow on the A4155.

From the M40, turn off at Exit 4 as for *Marlow*, and do as above.

From Reading, go through Henley and do as above.

The Mill End car park can be reached by turning **north** at Mill End, signposted *Hambleden, Skirmett, Fingest*, 400m (450 yds) on the left.

For a start at **Aston Village**: If coming from the east (e.g. from the M4) on the **A4130**, this is about 1 mile (1½ km) before Henley-on-Thames. Just after a turning on the left for Cockpole Green etc. and a bend in the road, turn **right** signposted **Aston**. Follow the narrow lane to the pub.



By train: regular service to Henley station. Check the timetables.

By bus/train: bus 850 from Marlow stops at Mill End near the start of the walk. Check the timetables.

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