



Mapledurham from Peppard Common *Woods and Watermill*

Distance: 17 km=10½ miles

easy walking

Region: Chilterns

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Refreshments: Chazey Heath, Gallowstree Common, Peppard Common

Map: Explorer 171 (Chiltern Hills West) *but the maps below should suffice*

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Woodland, hills, views, historic house and watermill, gastropubs

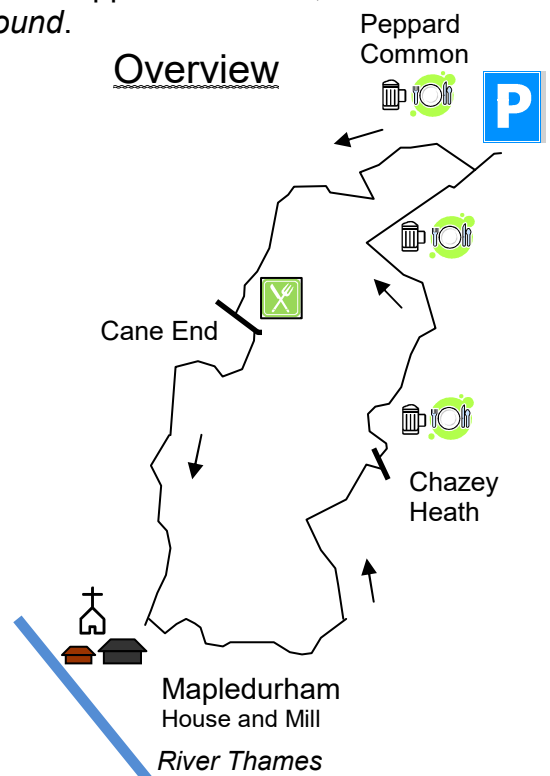
In Brief

This is a wonderful walk in typical Chiltern beechwoods and green meadows with a magnificent half-way objective in the Elizabethan Mapledurham House, Church and Watermill, with the opportunity for an optional visit (with entry charge). Although the village and riverside are a delight, the House and Watermill are only open on Sundays and certain other days between April and October from 2pm, in case you want to visit (*check at www.mapledurham.co.uk*). The return legs take you by three really first-class village pubs, each full of character and with a tantalising trilemma for where to eat and drink (*booking may be essential - phone numbers below*). The one at Peppard Common, the starting point, is Antony Worrall Thompson's *Greyhound*.



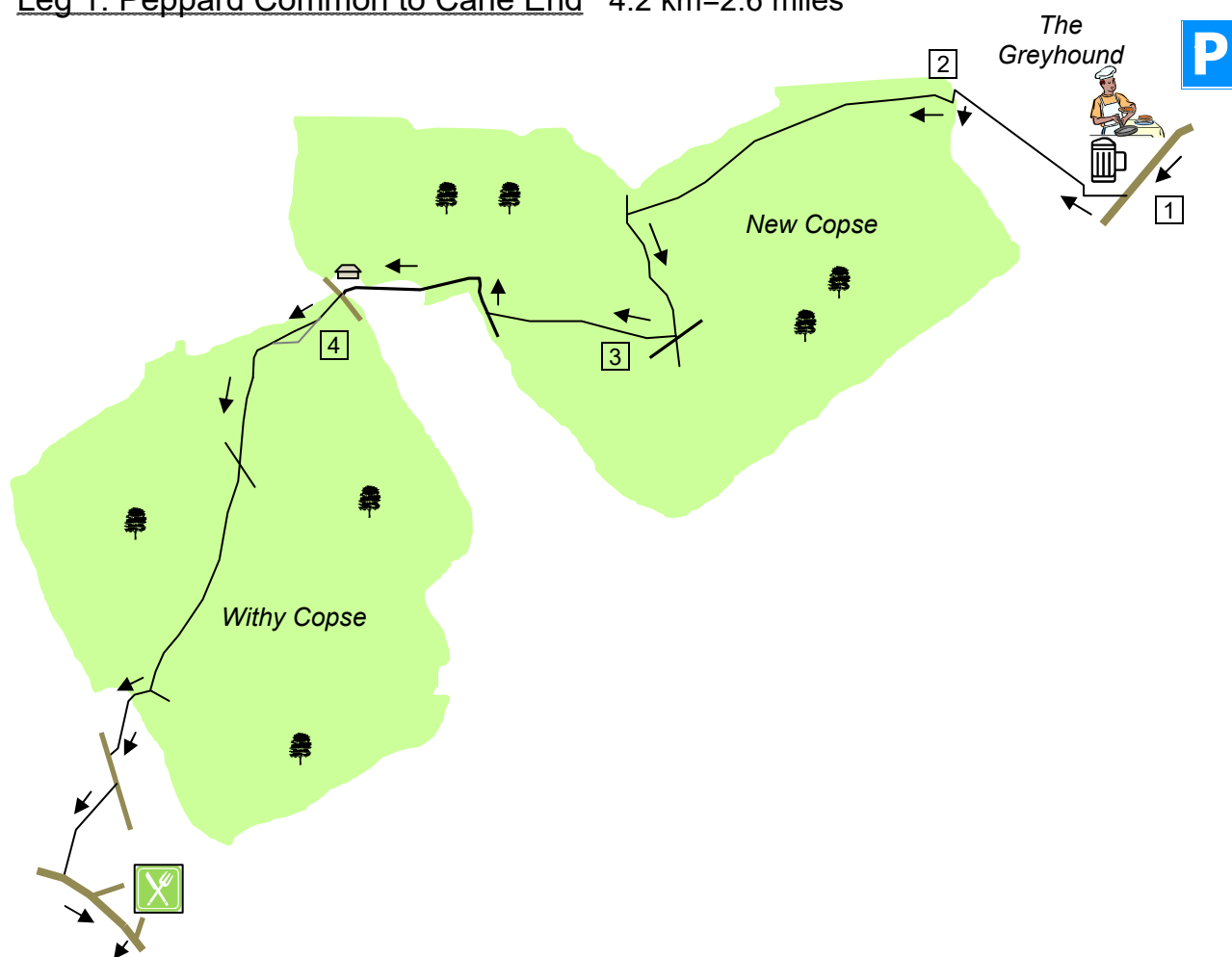
There are two sections with nettles which, although brief, could spoil your walk if your legs are not covered. The paths are generally dry and easy but you may find some wet patches in the woods, so boots are preferable except after dry weather. Your dog can certainly come on this adventure.

The walk begins at **Peppard Common**, near Henley-on-Thames, south Oxfordshire, **post-code RG9 5JA**. Park off Gallowstree Road, near the *Greyhound* pub/restaurant, either in Shiplake Bottom or in Chiltern Road, where there is loads of roadside parking. There is also a parking area at the crossroads with Stoke Row Road. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Peppard Common to Cane End 4.2 km=2.6 miles



- 1 Walk south west along Gallowstree Road passing the *Greyhound* gastro-pub on your right as you go ([more details later](#)). Note the village pump on the left of the road. After the delightful *Old Well Cottage* and a modern studio-style house, *Beechwood*, go **right** through a modern kissing-gate onto a footpath along the right-hand side of a large meadow. The path veers a fraction right across the grass, cutting the right-hand corner. Another kissing-gate takes you into the next meadow where you are joined by another path from the left. Follow the path, close to the right-hand edge, to the distant corner and there go through a kissing-gate into the woods of New Copse.
- 2 **Care: do not stray!** Turn immediately **left** in the wood and, in 10m, turn **right**. This is your path through the wood and, as confirmation, you will shortly pass a yellow marker post. This is a typical Chiltern wood, with tall beeches that open up the space like a cathedral, a recurrent delight during the whole walk. At a fork you can take either path as they immediately join up again. Soon you have a wire fence on your right and, after a total of 800m, you reach a T-junction, indicated by white arrows on a tree. Turn **left** on another path which is more twisty, narrower and a little more muddy than the previous path. After 300m you come out into a clearing with two distinct crossing paths. The first, rather narrow, path crosses immediately at right-angles whilst the second, somewhat wider, forester's path crosses diagonally a

couple of metres further on. Take the **first** path, making a definite **right** turn.

- 3 Follow this narrow but good path through stunningly beautiful mixed woodland. You reach a T-junction just before a field visible ahead. Turn **right** here on a wide path. In 100m, turn **left**, as indicated by a curved arrow on a tree, going through some old gate posts. Take the main path ahead, with the field still on your left, following the usual white arrows. [The high bank on your right can be used to avoid a little mud here.](#) Soon you are running close to the field on your left. You come out of the woods beside a house, *Kates Cottage*, on your right, with some open views and reach a tarmac lane, Reades Lane.
- 4 Cross straight over the lane and go straight ahead through a gate into Withy Copse. In about 100m, take the **right** fork, ignoring a white arrow that indicates a left fork. [\(The official footpath needlessly descends into a marsh and veers right again to re-join you.\)](#) About 200m from the lane, obey a white arrow on a tree indicating a **left** turn. Follow this path into the deep centre of the wood, with the occasional white arrow to confirm that you are on the right track. When you meet a green, rather muddy, diagonally crossing path, go straight over. (There are *two* white arrows on trees here: the right-hand, less faded, arrow points your way.) Your path is now clear and grassy and you soon pass a 2-way signpost indicating that you are heading for Cane End. You have a pine forest on your right with tall beeches left. Soon you see new houses ahead and on your right is a low wooden fence with uprights spaced at intervals.
- 5 Keep **right** next to the fence, heading for the houses on a rather unclear path. [\(It was slightly re-routed after the new construction.\)](#) Go through a small metal gate, across a small paddock, through a second metal gate and through a third in the far corner of the meadow. Turn **left** on a lane, Park Lane, and, in only 60m, go **right** through a gate. Keep to the left-hand side of this rather rough meadow. *The beautiful thatched/timbered house over on your right is Lavender Cottage.* Keep to the left in the meadow and go over a stile on the left to join a drive leading out to a road, the busy A4074 Reading Road. Turn **left** on the road. [\(There is only 70m here with no footway and it is best to wait for a lull in the traffic.\)](#) Cross over a side road and continue on a grassy verge past the old *Fox Inn* which is now the *Nakhon Thai* restaurant, and not bad for all that.



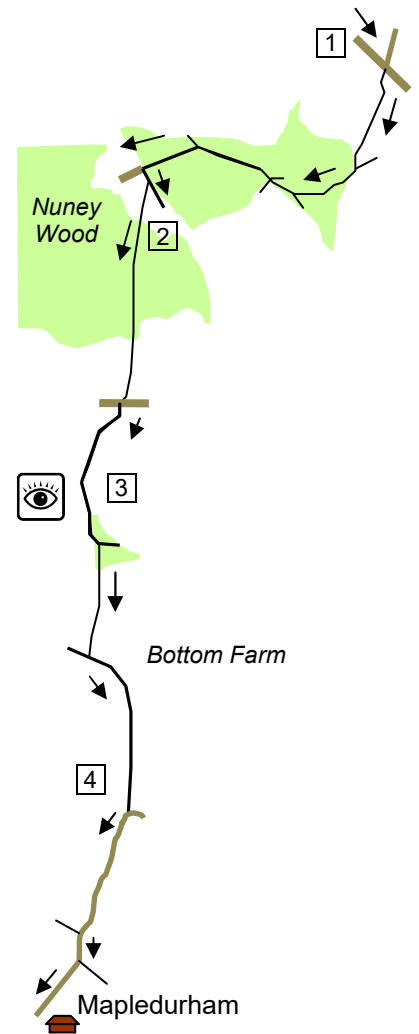
Leg 2: Cane End to Mapledurham 4 km=2.5 miles

- 1 **See map overleaf.** Opposite another side road, turn **right** to cross the main road to a fingerpost and a footpath with a small metal gate. Immediately fork **left** through another metal gate into a large horse pasture. Cross it to go through two more metal gates and along the right-hand side of a field. Ignore a stile in the hedgerow soon on your right. You pass an oak grove on your left and soon come out into another field. Turn **right** along the edge of the field on a bridleway. This wide path quickly enters woodland and brings you facing a large metal field gate. Turn **right** here on a narrower path that runs beside the field on your left. On entering Nuney Wood, keep straight ahead avoiding side paths. Keep to the main path as it curves **left** by a tree with white arrows, avoiding a footpath on the right. You reach a junction of tracks and a residential drive by a bungalow. Turn **left** here, past a wooden bench, on a wide track.

2 In 40m, at a white arrow (this time on an electricity pole) turn **right** on a footpath in the direction “Mapledurham 1½”, going through a small wooden gate. Your path runs between gardens and into more fine woodland on a nice straight course. After 300m, you have a meadow on your left and, after a large metal kissing-gate, your path runs between open meadows. Keep on down the right-hand side of a meadow with a rather nettly and weedy section before you finally reach a large metal gate and a road. Cross straight over the road, a fraction right, to a track. The track leads past the historic Whittles Farm and its house with its ancient barn. Suddenly an open meadow on your right gives you some fine views and perhaps a sight of red kites circling.



3 As the track wheels left, leave it to follow a marker on the right through a wooden swing-gate under a hawthorn. Go down the left-hand side of a meadow, catching sight of Mapledurham House for the first time. Keep going down, avoiding a redundant stile on your left and continuing past two more superfluous stiles as you go. At the bottom, at a T-junction, turn **left** on a track, passing a cottage of Bottom Farm. Follow the concrete drive out of the farm all the way to a tarmac lane and turn **right** on it, thus keeping your direction. A track meets you from the right, part of the Chiltern Way Extension, coming from Whitchurch (see *the other walk: Goring-on-Thames “Wildwood, Riverrun”*). Stay on the lane, ignoring a footpath on the left. On your right soon is an embarkation point for river cruises. At the start of the village, ignore a track that forks left (your return route). After some farm cottages and almshouses you finally reach the iron gates with the House and church on your left and the Watermill on your right.



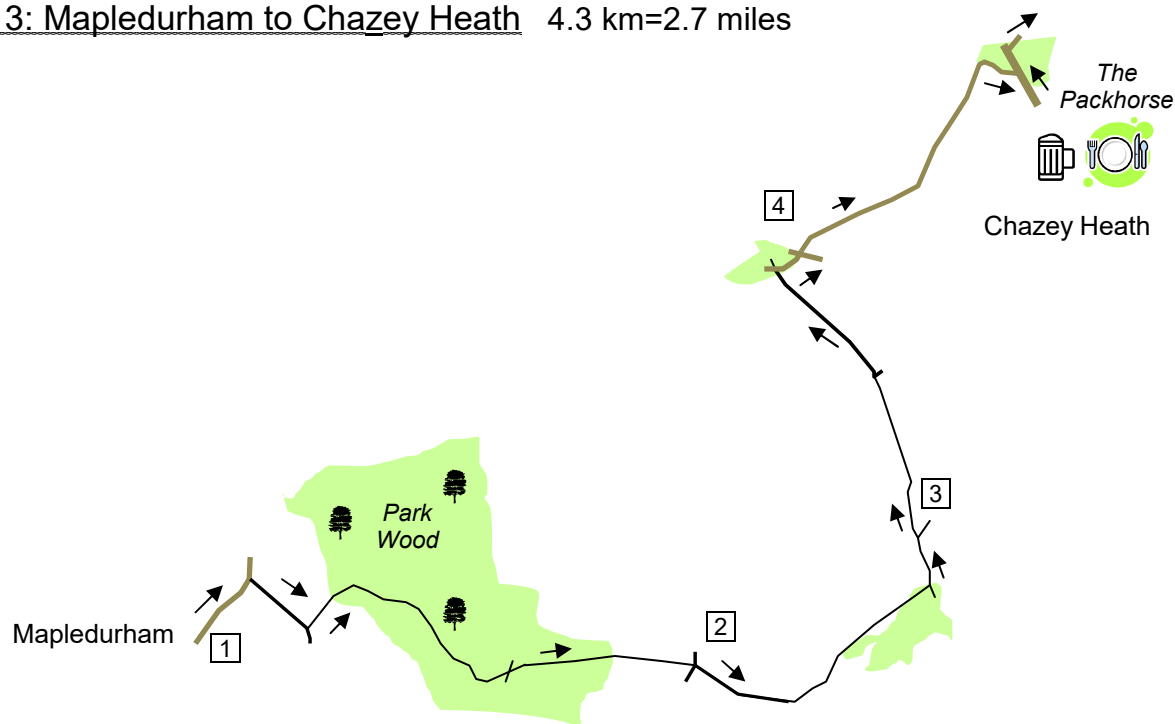
Mapledurham, named after its maple trees, goes back to before Norman times. In 1490, it was acquired by Richard Blount of Iver and his descendants still live here. Sir Walter Blount (or Blunt) gave his life as decoy for his liege lord Henry IV at the Battle of Shrewsbury in 1403. Another decoy, this time for Winston Churchill, played a part in the movie ‘The Eagle Has Landed’ which was filmed here, such is the appeal of this isolated unspoilt location. Mapledurham House is Elizabethan, built in the traditional E-shape. It is open to visitors Sat, Sun & Bank Hols from mid-April to late Sept, 2 to 5.30.

Mapledurham Watermill is the only working mill on the Thames and it still grinds flour. The main structure is from the 1400s. In the 1920s a turbine was installed at the side of the millhouse and in 2011 it was replaced by a modern Archimedes screw. It generates electricity for the locality and the grid. The mill can be visited as part of the house tour but you can enter the grounds and the shop for £1.



St Margaret’s Church was built in the late 1200s but the squat little building was entirely remodelled by that Gothic revivalist William Butterfield in the 1860s. Coats of arms, showing almost the entire history of the house are on view inside.

Leg 3: Mapledurham to Chazey Heath 4.3 km=2.7 miles



- 1 After your visit, retrace your steps to the fork at the start of the village and turn sharp **right** on a bridleway marked “Gravel Hill 1½”, re-joining the Chiltern Way (CW). Follow the concrete drive with another view of the House and its tall chimneys on your right. Just before the track bends right, go **left** through a wooden swing-gate, up across the grass and through another swing-gate into Park Wood. Your path runs uphill, contours and runs uphill again. You pass a curious statue of a god with an amphora atop a pillar, no doubt a now hidden folly. Your path runs level and rises again on a clear path through bracken. At a diagonal crossing path, go straight over, through tall mixed woodland. You come out into a crop field: continue ahead on a path across the centre, to emerge through a swing-gate at a junction of concrete drives.
- 2 Take the central drive, straight ahead, still in the direction of the CW and a yellow arrow. Continue on this drive as it wheels **left** past a farm on your right. After some tumbledown sheds, keep **left** by a fence post with a waymarker and follow a long straight path between brambly hedgerows which in late summer are jam-packed with blackberries. At a T-junction, turn **left** on a shingle path. Cross immediately over a crossing track belonging to Mapledurham Golf Club, and shortly straight over another onto a grassy path. You come to a major fork in the path just before a marker post bearing several arrows. Take the **left** fork, thus leaving the CW.
- 3 Keep dead straight along the right-hand side of a crop field beside a line of ash trees on your right. After the last tree, at a corner, as the field widens out to your right, your path continues straight across the centre. At the other side, your path goes through a small gap in the corner of the hedgerow and comes out into a rather scruffy field. Here it veers left heading for a black-and-white house, going diagonally across a crop field. At the other side, go through a line of bushes to meet a track coming from the house. Turn **left** on the track which becomes concrete, passing a cottage. At a T-junction, avoid the footpath into the woods ahead and turn **right** on a road. In 80m, at

a crossroads, go straight over onto a minor lane signposted *Tinkers Green only*.

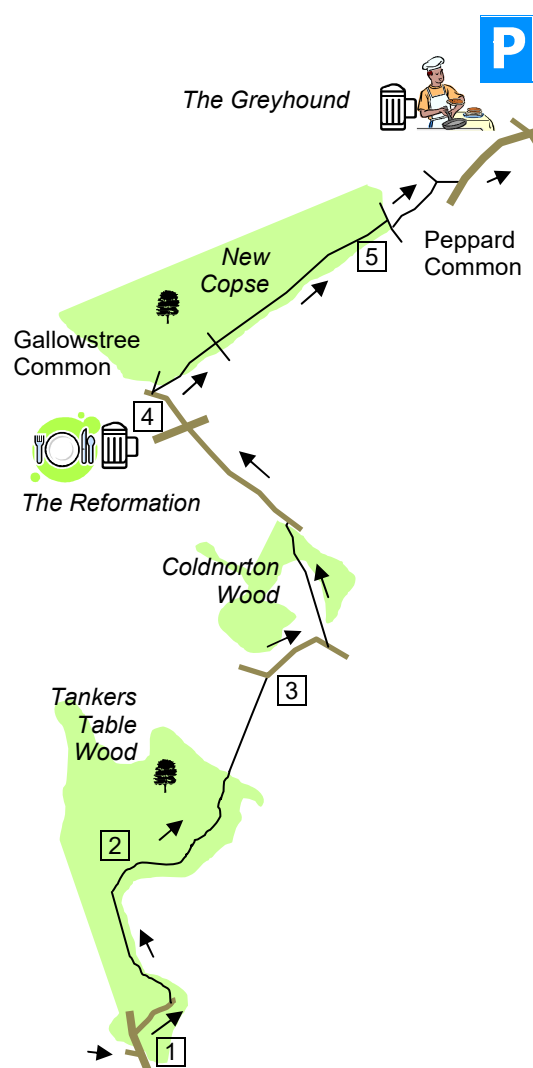
- 4 Follow this very quiet lane for ½ km, where you pass a thatched cottage. Ignore paths off here, both left and right. The lane bends sharp right by an outlying section of Green Dean Wood and reaches the main road, the A4074 Reading Road again. Your route is **left** on the main road, making use of the grassy bank on your left. However, for a refreshment break, the *Packhorse* is just to your right. *The Packhorse is a most picturesque inn, originally a large old redbrick cottage, with a large patio garden in the back away from the noise of the road and a nice dining area inside. They are very friendly to walkers. As well as a comforting menu, served all day and commended by users of this guide, good ales are on tap, typically Slater's Top Totty, Loddon Hoppit and the local White Horse Camarillo. Note that they also serve coffee. For enquiries or booking, ring: 0118-972-2140.*



Leg 4: Chazey Heath to Peppard Common 4.5 km=2.8 miles

- 1 Having turned **left** on the main road, using the grass verge, cross **right** carefully after 60m and take Mill Lane, another very quiet lane, downhill. In 150m, just before a meadow visible ahead, fork **left** onto a woodland path that runs along the valley with the meadow on your right. The path soon runs quite close to the main road but you will soon be free of the noise. After a total of 400m, the wire fence on your right suddenly ends at a corner. Turn **right** here, away from the road, quite steeply up through the trees of Tankers Table Wood.
- 2 As the path levels, veer right, passing a white arrow. Keep to the main path now through hollies, always keeping the distant field on your right in view. Opposite a gatepost on your right, the path veers left again and goes deeper into the woods. The path winds a bit and you just need to keep the same direction through a choice of paths. Very soon you will see an open meadow ahead, lined with young trees. Aim for the near **right**-hand corner. Here you will find a narrow path running just outside the wooden fence along the right-hand edge of the meadow. After a rather brambly stretch, you pass a barn and a high wooden fence of the *Old Nurseries* and finally come out to Wood Lane.

- 3 Turn **right** on the lane, really straight ahead, and follow it until it bends right. 40m after the bend, just before *Myrtle Cottage*, turn **left** and immediately fork **left** past a wooden barrier on a signed footpath. The path goes between wire fences and fields and meadows, then down into Coldnorton Wood. Finally you emerge by a large metal gate onto a tarmac lane. Turn



left on this very quiet lane. In 2014, there are various peace signs along the wall. The lane, Hazlemoor Lane, runs past houses to a crossroads with Horsepond Road. Your direction is straight over to a minor residential lane. But first you may like to make a very brief diversion to a very friendly pub, *The Reformation*, which is only 80m along the road to your left and probably a better prospect for a final sojourn than the wildly fashionable AWT pub at the end of the walk.



'The Reformation' in Gallowstree Common is far from common, in fact a one-off. A casual visit can, on certain days, be like dropping in at a party, either a children's party or one with music outside on the grass where they erect a marquee as a kind of extension to the pub and to keep the interior calm in case you want a quiet meal. The first thing you see are two brass cannon. It's a Brakspear pub, which speaks well for the beer. Food, although not researched by this author, must be pretty good because the first three entries on Trip-advisor (not a final judge admittedly) give it five stars. The menu is chalked up, always a good sign, and there is also a menu of bar snacks. The pub is well known for its one-liners on the roof beams and, if you look directly up, a little upside-down scene with trees and tractors. For enquiries or booking, ring: 0118-972-3126.

- 4 Having gone straight over at the crossroads (or **left** if coming back from the *Reformation*), continue along The Hamlet, as the lane is called, past various bungalows. Just before the lane curves left past *Elsinore* (so-called because it's in *The Hamlet* – geddit?), turn **right** into woods and immediately take the **right** fork, a signed bridleway. Follow this path through the woods. After a marker post by some houses, keep straight on, staying in the woods. Apart from the occasional muddy patch, this is a pleasant way to finish the walk. As a guide, you are walking parallel to the distant road on your right and you should probably hear traffic. Finally, after 1 km in the woods, you emerge at a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a track.

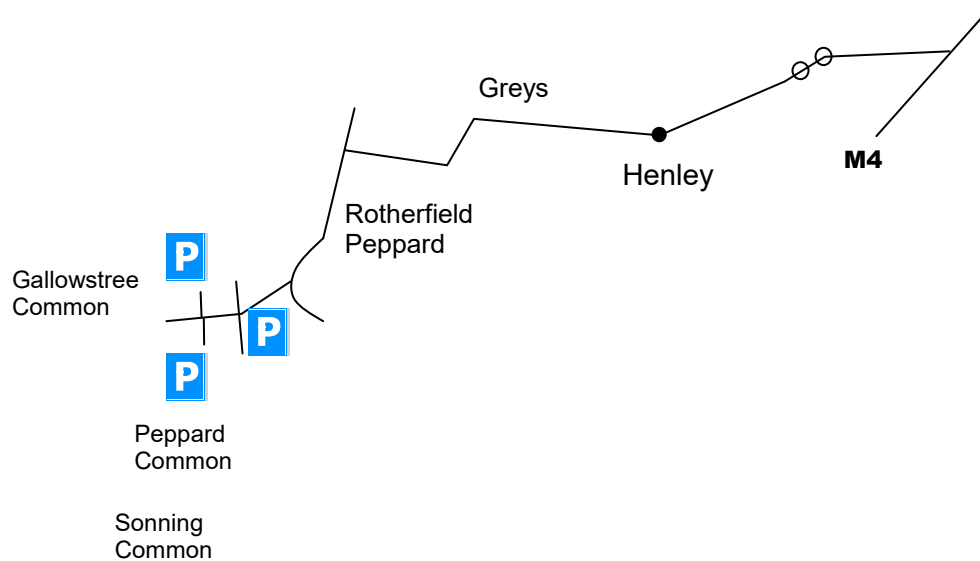
- 5 In only 10m, go **left** through a modern kissing-gate leading into a large open meadow, familiar from the outward journey. Once in the larger part of the meadow, keep straight on parallel to the road on a faint path, a minor liberty taken by all the dog walkers of the "Commons", heading for the big modern house on the other side. When you reach it, turn **right** by the house on a path leading to the road, go through a kissing-gate and turn **left** on the road, soon reaching the *Greyhound* and the place where the walk began.



*Antony Worrall Thompson's "free house and grill" has completely taken over this picturesque old oak-beamed timbered inn and barn. The small rustic patio and low (mind your head!) entrance conceal a restaurant with a friendly welcome, candle-lit atmosphere and really good grub. The prices are reasonable at starter + main for £12.50 (2014), but that doesn't include the lobster. You **can** treat the *Greyhound* as a pub (beers are typically *Rebellion*, *Ringwood* and *Black Sheep*) but the bar area is small. Booking is essential! For enquiries, ring: 0118-972-2227.*

Getting there

By car: Peppard Common is close to Reading/Caversham but can easily be reached from Henley-on-Thames and hence from the M4, the M40 or from Oxford. The route through Henley is as follows: From the bridge, go straight through the centre of the town uphill, signposted *Peppard*. Continue for nearly 3 miles on this pleasant twisty road, avoiding all minor turnoffs until you reach a T-junction with the B481. Turn **left** in the direction *Reading, Peppard, Sonning Common*. Go nearly 1 mile through Rotherfield Peppard until the road bends right and left in a broad curve. Fork **right** here on a minor road signposted *Gallowstree Cmn, Kidmore End, Cane End*. In 250m, cross the main Stoke Row Road and park in 170m in a side road, either left or right.



By bus/train: bus 2/2a runs from Reading station to Peppard Common, including Sunday. Check the timetables.

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