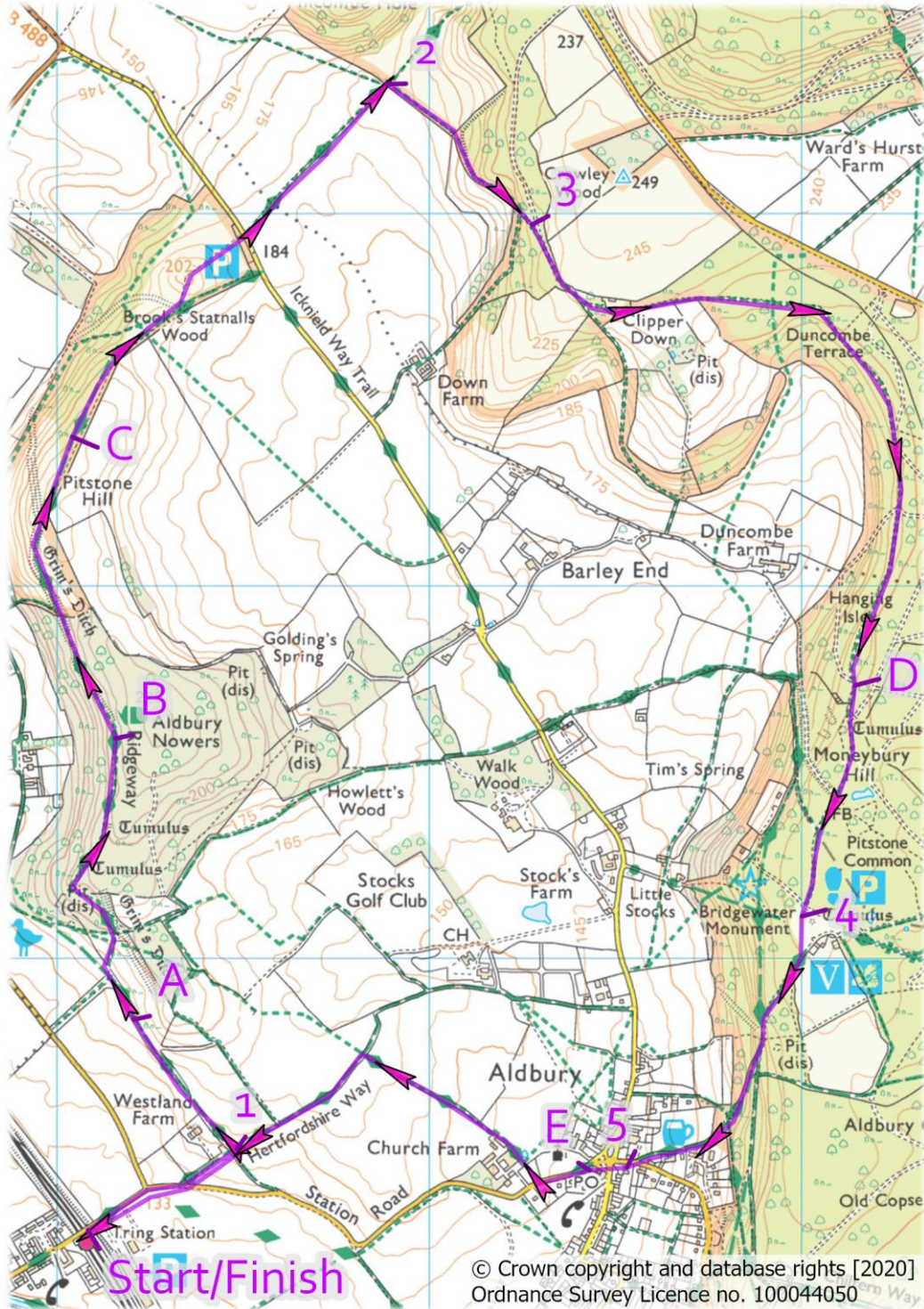


Pitstone Hill, Ashridge and Aldbury Walk
By Colin Drake and Andrew Clark, Chiltern Society

Summary

This walk initially follows the ancient Ridgeway with stunning views from the top of Pitstone Hill before returning through the beautiful woodland of the National Trust's Ashridge Estate.



Length:	6 miles
Terrain:	A moderate stile free walk on good surfaces which can be slippery at times. There are a number of kissing gates. There is one steady and one steeper climb
Start & finish:	Tring Railway Station, Station Road, Tring HP23 5QR Grid ref: SP 950122 An alternative start point is the National Trust Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre car park. Nearest postcode: HP4 1LT. Grid ref: SP 971130
Food & drink:	Brownlow Café at the Ashridge Visitor Centre and The Greyhound and The Valiant Trooper pubs in Aldbury
Maps:	OS Explorer 181, Chiltern Society 19
Parking:	Tring Railway Station or the Ashridge Estate Visitor Centre
Local transport:	Buses 387 / 389 / 397 run between Tring and Tring Station on Mondays to Saturdays. The station is served by train services from London Euston.

Route

This route follows The Ridgeway path to Waypoint 2. Leave the station, cross the road and turn right along the pavement. Cross over Northfield Road and stay in the same direction along the road edge for 100m to the entrance to Westland Farm. Turn left through the gate, walk up beside the concrete driveway and stay in this direction for 130m to a major path junction.

Waypoint 1 - Turn left along the wide track for 550m and bear right uphill past the entrance to Aldbury Nowers nature reserve. Ignore the first path on the left, walk forward a few metres and climb the steps to the left. Follow the path through the woods for almost a kilometre before passing through a gate on to the grassy hillside of Pitstone Hill. Keep straight ahead climbing round the side of the hill to the top and along of the ridge before descending to the car park below. Cross the road and through the gate opposite. Continue straight ahead, keeping to the left of the fence for 550m to a path junction.

Waypoint 2 - Turn right, follow the path uphill, through a gate and on to a path junction at the top.

Waypoint 3 - Turn right, go through a gate to the right of the kennels and stay on the wide track (Duncombe Terrace) for nearly two kilometres to arrive at a tall tower, the Bridgewater Monument and the visitor centre.

Waypoint 4 - Stay in same direction past them and take the wide path downhill. After around 200m fork right to continue to drop down to a road (Toms Hill Road).

Waypoint 5 - Turn right and go over the road junction into Station Road. Walk past the pond, the Post Office and village hall. Just after the church turn right on a path signposted to Pitstone Hill. Go through two gates and left through a third just before a large barn. Follow the path through two more gates to reach a T-junction. Turn left and stay on this path to reach a road. Turn right to return to the station and finish the walk.

Points of Interest

Tring station was opened by the London and Birmingham Railway in 1837 and was constructed by the railway engineer Robert Stephenson.

A The Ridgeway National Trail starts in the World Heritage Site of Avebury and crosses the chalk ridges of the North Wessex Downs and Chilterns AONBs – a total of 87 miles. The Chilterns section travels through woodlands, nature reserves and quiet valleys, also passing several magnificent

viewpoints along the Chilterns ridge. Some people argue that this is Britain's oldest routeway but this idea is generally out of favour today.

B Aldbury Nowers Nature Reserve: A SSSI managed by the Hertfordshire and Middlesex Wildlife Trust. In the warm south facing slopes there are many of the flower species typical of unimproved chalk grassland (milkwort, rock rose, clustered bellflower, lady's bedstraw) and possibly one of the rare butterfly species (Duke of Burgundy, Geen Hairstreak, Essex, Dingle and Grizzled Skippers).

C Pitstone Hill is managed by the National Trust and is a nesting site for skylarks and meadow pipits. Directly below is one of the quarries of the former Pitstone Cement Works which closed in the 1990s. This particular quarry is still active producing chalk for agricultural use. The footpath runs alongside a section of Grim's Ditch. Named after a Nordic god, it's part of a series of linear earthworks that run from Bradenham to Ivinghoe, and remains one of the great mysteries of Buckinghamshire. Following investigations archaeologists now generally agree that the earthwork probably dates from the early to mid-Iron Age, c700BC.

D Ashridge Estate – Much of the area along this section of the walk is part of the estate. It dates back over 700 years to when a monastery was founded which continued to flourish until Henry VIII dissolved the monasteries in 1539. He bequeathed the estate to the future Queen Elizabeth I who lived there before being arrested by her half-sister Mary and taken to the Tower of London. Later, the estate was bought by the Egerton family one of whose decedents became the first Duke of Bridgewater. The most famous member of the family was the 'Canal Duke', who commissioned the building of the Bridgewater Canal which opened in 1761, and is regarded as the first true canal in Britain. In 1853 the estate passed to Lord Brownlow, whose family held on to it until 1925 when it was split up, with much of the parkland and surrounding area passing to The National Trust. The parkland is a haven for wildlife and is famous for its herds of fallow deer. The Bridgewater monument was erected in 1832 in memory of the Duke of Bridgewater. It's 33m high, with 170 steps to the top and is open to the public.

E Albury was listed in the Domesday Book as Elderberie, meaning 'old burh', or old fortification. The village has been used on many occasions by film companies, notable productions include Midsomer Murders, Inspector Morse, The Dirty Dozen and Bridget Jones.