

Visitor Information

The Water Walk is an almost flat route following the Thames Path National Trail to the flooded Spade Oak gravel pits. The gravel pits are now a haven for wildlife, particularly birds, with good access to the waterside on permissive routes. Keep clear of the water’s edge. No swimming.

The longer Water and Woods walk rises nearly 300 feet (100m) to give extensive views back across the Thames valley. The mixed woodlands clothing the hill top conceal a large mediaeval enclosure, adding archaeology to their wildlife interest.

Refreshments are available at:
The Firefly, Nr. Station, Bourne End.
Spade Oak Hotel, Well End.
Queen’s Head, Little Marlow
King’s Head, Little Marlow
Emmett’s Farm Shop, Wilton Farm, Little Marlow.

Call Marlow Tourist Information Centre for visitor information
tel: 01628 483597

How to get to the start

The walk starts at Bourne End Station

By Train: First Great Western Link run hourly trains from Maidenhead to Bourne End. From London Paddington the journey time is about 50 minutes. From Oxford, via Reading, it takes about 1hr 10minutes.
www.nationalrail.co.uk for times or call 08457 48 49 50.

By bus: Bus service 317 links Bourne End with High Wycombe and Maidenhead. Service 400 links Bourne End with High Wycombe.
For times call Traveline 0870 608 2 608.

By cycle: There is cycle parking at Bourne End rail station.

Parking: There are ‘pay and display’ car parks in Bourne End. There is also parking at Bucks County Council’s picnic site at Spade Oak. Please note the height barrier set at 2.0m.

This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It mainly follows rights of way - most of which are waymarked as follows:

- Footpaths (walkers only)
- Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)
- Byways (open to all traffic)
- Restricted Byways (horseriders, cyclists, walkers and non-mechanically propelled vehicles)

In woodland the route is also marked by the Chiltern Society with painted arrows on some trees.

Please be considerate in the countryside:

- Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- Please keep dogs under close control.

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns:

- Visit **www.chilternsaonb.org** or call 01844 355504 for other Chilterns Country walks from rail stations.
- Visit **www.chilternsociety.org.uk** or call 01494 771250 for information on the Chiltern Society’s walk programme, to obtain Chiltern Society footpath maps or to join the Society.

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chiltern countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body charged with protecting the AONB. **www.chilternsaonb.org**

If you or a member of your community would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board 01844 355500.

This leaflet has been produced by
© Chilterns Conservation Board, 2009, with support of :



The Chilterns Society
We care for the Chilterns
www.chilternsociety.org.uk



Bucks County Council



First Great Western
www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

With thanks to Lafarge and Wilton Farm for use of their permissive paths.



Photographs: *The Countryside Agency/Anne-Katrin Purkiss*
The Chilterns Conservation Board

About the walk

Enjoy the traditional pleasures of river and rolling countryside which the railway opened up for 19th Century London society. From the river, busy with boats, the Water Walk also enjoys the abundant birdlife at the Spade Oak Lake.

Those following the full Woods and Water Walk are rewarded with panoramic views of the Thames Valley, well managed woodland and fascinating archaeology. And there’s ample opportunity for refreshment at the middle or end of your journey.

An accompanying children’s quiz sheet can be downloaded from **www.chilternsaonb.org**

Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy!!

Set yourself challenges, but start gently and work up*. Spend at least 15 minutes walking briskly enough to raise your heartbeat, get warm and breathe harder.

From the station to Spade Oak Wharf is about 20minutes brisk walk. The Water Walk is a 3 mile loop, with a half-way stop at Little Marlow where there are 2 pubs. When this gets easy, head for the woods!

The Water Walk is worth about 600 calories for most people, the Woods and Water about 1200.

*Consult your GP if you have not exercised recently or have a known medical condition.



Features of Interest:

The Thames Path National Trail is a 185 mile walking route formally opened in 1995. For further information visit www.nationaltrail.co.uk

The Upper Thames Sailing Club was founded in 1884 at a time of rapidly growing leisure interest in the Thames. In 1925 the club was gifted the splendid figurehead from HMS Vengeance.

Literature

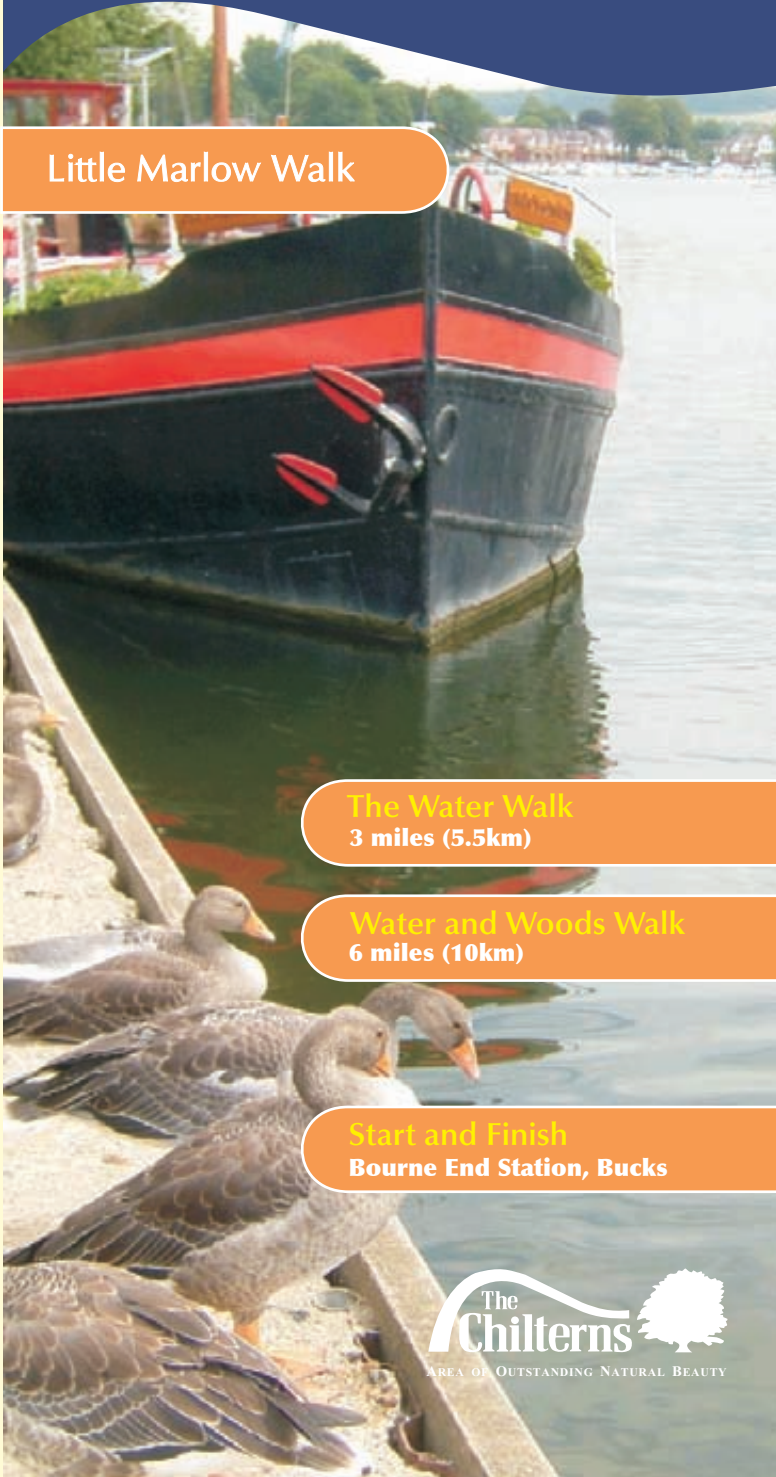
The 19th Century pre-occupation with the river was reflected in the literature of the time; Jerome K. Jerome’s ‘Three Men in a Boat’, and Kenneth Grahame’s ‘Wind in the Willows’ being notable examples from local authors. The ‘three men’ passed through with barely a comment, but Toad and Ratty frequented this stretch, with Quarry Wood, a little upstream, the inspiration for the Wildwood.

The Wharf

There is evidence that the Thames was a trade route since as early as 1600BC. Now replaced by road and rail, the wharf at Spade Oak was once busy loading tons of locally made paper, along with malt barley, timber and other local produce for shipment. Today an assortment of recreational craft can generally be seen.



Chilterns Country



Little Marlow Walk

The Water Walk
3 miles (5.5km)

Water and Woods Walk
6 miles (10km)

Start and Finish
Bourne End Station, Bucks



Little Marlow church of St. John the Baptist dates back to 1190, with later additions through the centuries.

Woodland

Bloom Wood is an attractive mixed deciduous woodland. Beech dominates much of the slopes along with stands of ash, and some oak and cherry.



At the top of the hill the geology changes and there is an area of regenerating woodland on acid soils. This area was clear-felled in 1970 in an abortive attempt to win gravel for road making. The layer of river gravels is obvious underfoot but proved too thin to be commercially viable.

Look out for the ditches and banks of a mediaeval enclosure just off the path.

Gravel is one of the major natural resources of this part of the Chilterns and has been quarried for centuries along with clay, chalk and flint. Lafarge continue to actively quarry the thicker gravel deposits near the river. Once exhausted, the gravel pits naturally flood and with careful management can quickly become valuable sites for wildlife. Spade Oak Lake is an excellent example and now attracts bird lovers all year round to view the abundant and varied waterfowl. Permissive walks are provided through the nature reserve.



The Water Walk

Distance:
3 miles (5.5km) Allow 1.5 hours.

Access Information:
Access to the Thames Path from the station is via a flight of steps. Level access is via Station Road, The Parade and Wharf Lane.

The route on the Thames Path is flat, mainly on short grass with accessible gates.

Access to the gravel pit over the western rail crossing is by a short but steep incline greater than 1:12. There are no stiles on this route.

Route Description:

- From the station walk to the far end of the car park, through the fence and follow the path alongside the railway, down the steps to the Thames Path.
- Follow the river past the marina, the Upper Thames Sailing club and Spade Oak Wharf. At the end of the large field turn right after the kissing gate and follow the hedge.

- Cross the railway - **Look and listen carefully** and follow the path through to Little Marlow. (N.B. there is a parallel waterside permissive path which you may use giving better lake views).
- Pick up the footpath to the right opposite some terraced cottages. Follow it over two footbridges and carefully cross the quarry access road - **Look and listen carefully**.
- Shortly afterwards, look for the permissive path on your right and follow it, bearing left at the first junction, down to the lake.
- Follow the path round to the eastern side of the lake and look out for the footbridge on your left, which takes you across a small field towards the Spade Oak Pub.
- A little way past the pub the footpath on your left will take you back towards the river. Alternatively, follow the lane back to Spade Oak Wharf and the Thames Path towards Bourne End. Both routes cross the railway - **take care**.



Woods and Water Walk

Distance:
6 miles (10km) Allow 3 hours.

Access Information:

This walk is an extension on to the valley slopes. The walk rises approximately 300 feet (100m) from the river on unsurfaced tracks.

There are no stiles on this route.



Route Description:

- Follow the Water Walk to Little Marlow and carry on to the Marlow Road (A4155).
- Carefully cross the road and follow the footpath through Wilton Farm (past Emmett's Farm Shop) and up the farm track.
- When you reach the kissing gate in the hedge, EITHER follow the permissive access to the right of the hedge and along the boundary of Bloom Wood for the Short Cut Option,
- OR follow the waymarked route to the left of the hedge and into the wood, making sure to bear left where the footpath leaves the track in the valley.
- Where the path meets the Chiltern Way, turn left for approximately 50m to view the mediaeval enclosure. Re-trace your steps to the junction, cross two tracks and follow the Chiltern Way signs.
- Where the Chiltern Way and public footpath diverge follow the public footpath across a track and it quickly becomes a wide sweeping ride. This emerges on the southern edge of the wood facing the river.
- Follow the waymarked path down into Fern Lane and along it to the Marlow Road.
- Carefully cross the road and follow the pavement / cycleway to Well End.
- Turn right into Coldmoorholme Lane and follow it to the Spade Oak pub. Look out for the footpath just past the pub on your left, follow this across the railway and back to the river.



The Countryside Code

- Be safe - plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people.

Respect Protect Enjoy

Crown copyright. Chilterns Conservation Board Licence no. 100044050 (2009)

