

MYSTERY OF GRIM'S DITCH

Grim's Ditch is Buckinghamshire's longest and largest heritage asset and, in places, is designated as a Scheduled Monument. It runs as a series of banks and ditches across the county, and stretches beyond its borders into neighbouring counties. While the exact origins and purpose of the Ditch are uncertain, it is believed to have been constructed during the Iron Age.

The mysteries of Grim's Ditch are being unearthed as part of Chalk, Cherries and Chairs - an ambitious Landscape Partnership scheme that aims to connect local people to the wildlife and cultural heritage of the Central Chilterns. Research and surveys have been undertaken to uncover new features of the Ditch and other information to help our understanding of this ancient series of earthworks. This walk follows sections of Grim's Ditch, but also takes in other points of interest in the landscape that have shaped both the historic and natural environments here. Discover more about Grim's Ditch at www.chilterns.org.uk/grimsditch

Distance: 11 km = 4 hours

Refreshments: The Hampden Arms, HP16 9RQ
Open from 12 noon daily; visit thehampdenarms.co.uk

Level of difficulty: Moderate walking on public footpaths mostly through woodland. Some sections involve slight inclines and there are muddy tracks in places. In dry weather, the paths can be navigated by suitable off-road buggies.

OVERVIEW

The walk starts and finishes at the free Whiteleaf Cross car park on Peters Lane, Monks Risborough. It crosses through the Chilterns woodland and open countryside to reach and follow the line of Grim's Ditch.

By road, the car park is located at Peters Lane, Green Hailey, Princes Risborough HP27 0RP.
what3words: *illogical.darkens.dragon*
Buses run along Aylesbury Road at the bottom of Peters Lane.

GRIM'S DITCH WALK

START HERE

- 1** The first section of the walk leads you around the open field you can see from the car park. From the car park head west through the grey barrier into the wood. Bear right, keeping the boundary of the open field on your right at all times. The path will branch at times, but always take the right path even if less well-trodden, such as where it crosses through the WW1 practice trench. **Look out for:** *WW1 Practice Trenches*

END

- 9** From here, follow the path back to the car park, turning right at the timber yard, and keeping the open field to your left as you finish your walk.

- 8** Cross the main road and go through the gate into the woodland. Here, the path starts on the line of Grim's Ditch. As the path leaves the monument, keep the bank and ditch to your left and walk straight ahead, leaving the woodland and following the path as it borders the woodland to your left and open grassland to your right. Follow this path until it meets the stile with no purpose and large sweet chestnut tree again. **Look out for:** *The Ditch itself*

- 7** At the main road, cross both roads, heading towards the footpath diagonally opposite marked by a post in the hedgerow; here you will pick up the path. Follow this path through the larch trees until you reach a road, following it to the right. **Look out for:** *The Ditch itself*

Turn to page 3 to find out more about the **points of interest** highlighted on this walk. Discover more about Grim's Ditch at www.chilterns.org.uk/grimsditch

- 2** When you reach an open area with log piles, go left along a path which is bordered by a concrete fence to the right and woodland to the left. Keep straight along this path as it enters the woodland, crossing any tracks or paths, and at times heading slightly uphill, until you reach a stile with no purpose and a very large Sweet Chestnut Tree.

- 3** At the crossroads, continue straight ahead, keeping the visible earthworks of Grim's Ditch to your left. As you enter a more open area, the path will curve south. Do not follow this path past the Private Property sign, but look for a gate on your left which leads towards Hampden House. Follow this path through the estate until you reach the church. **Look out for:** *St Mary Magdalene Church, Hampden House, and the Ditch*

- 6** When you reach the end of the woodland, follow the footpath sign to the right. Almost immediately the paths fork. Take the right path into the woodland. This path is marked, but can be hard to follow in places, so keep straight ahead following the waymarkers. When you reach a T-junction, turn right and then immediately left, passing a dew pond before you re-enter the woodland. Again, the path can be hard to see, but keep straight until you reach a road which you follow to the right. **Look out for:** *Saxon boundary*

- 4** Take the path through the graveyard to a gate at the back that leads to a footpath heading south away from the church. Follow this path south as it passes through open fields, woodland and farmland until reaching the village of Great Hampden. **Look out for:** *Dane's Camp*

- 5** When you reach the houses follow the access road straight ahead until you reach the main road. The Hampden Arms is to your left if you wish to stop for refreshments; otherwise, cross the road and turn right at the bus stop following the boundary of the cricket pitch towards the corner where you will see a footpath sign leading into the woodland. Follow this path and, where it forks, take the right path towards the road. At the road junction, cross both roads and follow the footpath sign uphill.

Key

- The route
- Footpaths
- Roads
- Woodland
- Buildings
- Directions
- Points of Interest

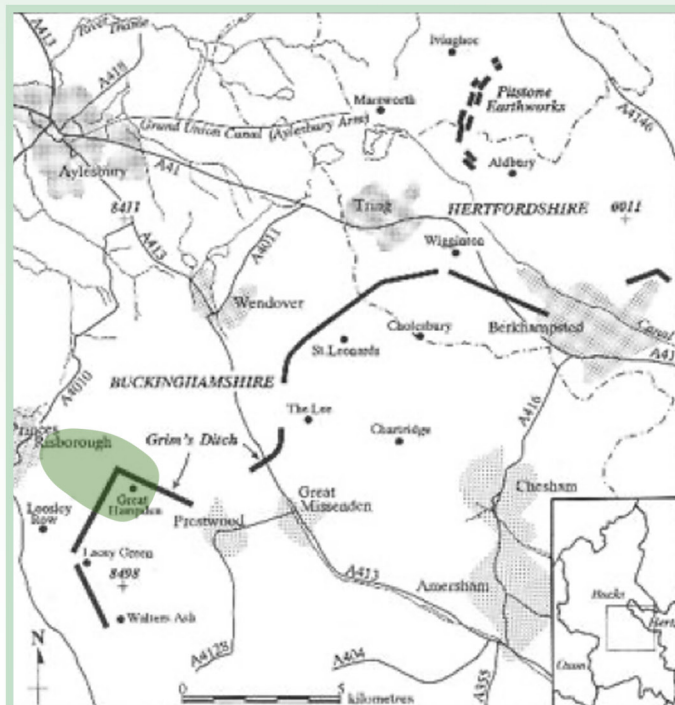


WHAT TO LOOK OUT FOR ON YOUR WALK



WW1 PRACTICE TRENCHES

The earthworks you see as you first enter the woodland are the eroded remains of First World War practice trenches. There are a number of similar remains surviving within woodland across Buckinghamshire, and were excavated by the newly formed troops in advance of their deployment to the Front. It provided training, exercise and team-building opportunities.

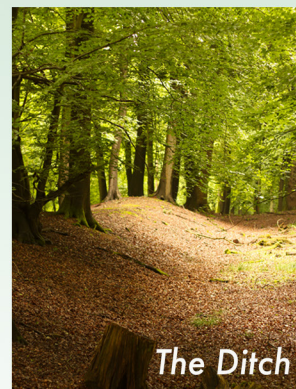


This walk only focuses on a small stretch of the monument, but other sections can also be visited. This map shows where the Ditch can be found.



GRIM'S DITCH

The impressive ditch and bank of Grim's Ditch can first be seen from point 2, where it heads both eastwards and southwards. Whether this is the turning point of the Ditch, or where two sections of the Ditch intersected is uncertain, but it is thought that, when first constructed, it would have been white due to the chalk geology here - making it a very visible marker in the landscape.



HAMPDEN HOUSE AND ST MARY MAGDALENE CHURCH

The majority of Hampden House dates to the Elizabethan period, but the earliest part of the house dates to the 14th century. The façade you can see is an 18th-century addition, known as 'Strawberry Hill' style.



The church of St Mary Magdalene dates mostly between the 14th and 16th centuries, but there is evidence of earlier construction, such as the plain 13th-century doorway and the lower part of the south-west tower.



DANE'S CAMP NORMAN CASTLE

The mound you can see within the woodland is the motte from the 11th-century castle of Dane's Camp. A motte is a style of castle introduced by the Normans and comprises a large conical mound of earth or rubble, which would have had a palisade or tower on top. An enclosure, known as a 'bailey' usually adjoins the motte. The remains are a Scheduled Monument.



SAXON BOUNDARY

The southern boundary of Monkton Wood is possibly the route of a Late Saxon estate boundary. The northern boundary follows Peters Lane.



NOTABLE WILDLIFE

Depending on the time of year, you might see any number of interesting animals and plants on your walk. Listen out for birds like marsh tit, bullfinch and tawny owl. Keep an eye open for frogs and toads, or their tadpoles in ponds. Look for butterflies such as white admiral or purple emperor. Pass through areas of ancient woodland and look for plants including sanicle, wood sorrel, wood barley, bluebell, wild strawberry and wood millet.



Yellow stagshorn fungi
Calocera viscosa



Beech gall midge,
Mikiola fagi,
on beech leaf



Sweet chestnut tree
Castanea sativa