



Royal  
Geographical  
Society  
with IBG

## Chalk and water

A self guided walk in the Chiltern Hills



Explore a medieval village and a valley without a river  
See red kites soaring above and a carpet of bluebells below  
Follow the footsteps of prehistoric people  
Discover how chalk and water have influenced the landscape

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the stories of our landscapes  
discovered through walks



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This booklet is to be used alongside the audio commentary for this walk

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# Chalk and water

## A journey of discovery up and down the Chiltern Hills

### Introduction

This walk explores two adjacent but very different environments: the dry chalk escarpment of the Chiltern Hills and the rich clay Vale of Oxfordshire. Find out how chalk and water have had a major influence on this landscape in terms of the flora and fauna, as well as human settlements and the use of land.

Discover a natural world of beech woods and juniper scrub, dry valleys and freshwater springs, wildflowers and butterflies, yellow ants and red kites.



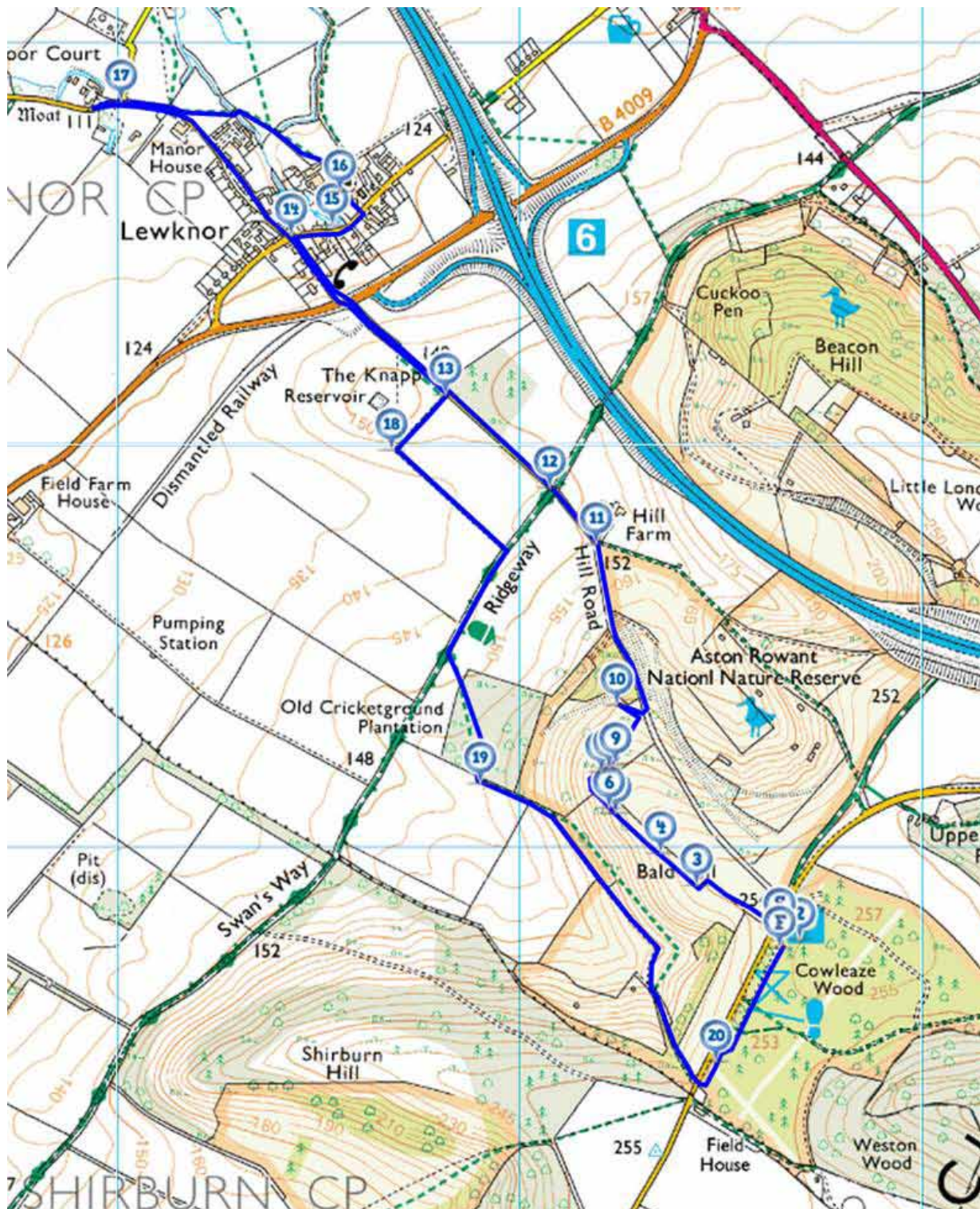
A native bluebell in Cowleaze Wood  
Mike Jackson © RGS-IBG Discovering Britain

Learn more about human activities in the area including a pre-historic settlement and a medieval castle, lords of the manor and peasant villagers, making a living from fields and woods, an ancient pathway and a modern motorway.

Be prepared for beautiful sights, spectacular views and some surprising stories.



## Route overview



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## Practical information

<b>Location</b>	Near Stokenchurch, Oxfordshire
<b>Getting there</b>	<b>The route is accessible by car only</b> Take Junction 5 off the M40. Turn left along AS40 (opposite direction to Stokenchurch). In less than 1 mile turn left (signposted Christmas Common 3 miles plus Brown signs to Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve). Cross over the motorway. After about 1½ miles the car park is on left.
<b>Start point</b>	Cowleaze Wood
<b>Postcode</b>	HP14 3YL
<b>Finish point</b>	Cowleaze Wood
<b>Distance</b>	4½ miles for the full route
<b>Need a shorter route?</b>	A shorter version of the route is 2½ miles. Follow Stops 1 to 12 then go ahead to Stop 18. Please use the route maps to help.
<b>Level</b>	Moderate - a rural walk with a steep descent and ascent
<b>Conditions</b>	The route can be muddy after wet weather. Take appropriate footwear.

<b>Suitable for</b>	<p><b>Families</b> - wildflowers, butterflies, birds and anthills to interest children</p> <p><b>Dogs</b> - must be kept on a lead on roads and grazing land</p>
<b>Refreshments</b>	On the route the only place is Ye Olde Leathern Bottel pub in Lewknor village (Stop 14). You might want to buy / prepare your own refreshments before starting the walk.
<b>Facilities</b>	There are no public toilets en-route apart from at Ye Olde Leathern Bottel pub in Lewknor village (Stop 14)
<b>Other info</b>	As an outdoor walk the sights on the route change throughout the year. To see bluebells at their best try the walk in April or May. In the summer months you can see the most wildflowers and butterflies.
<b>Family friendly activities</b>	<p><b>Aston Rowant National Nature Reserve</b> has created a seasonal Nature Discovery Trail to help you spot local plants and wildlife. It starts from the Cowleaze Wood car park - simply follow the leaf-shaped signposts. You can find out more by contacting the reserve office (Tel: 01844 351833)</p> <p><b>St Margaret's Church</b> in Lewknor village (Stop 16) is worth visiting to see the long pendulum and find out more about the village's history</p>
<b>Tourist information</b>	Nearest is: Princes Risborough Tourist Information Centre, Tower Court, Horns Lane, Buckinghamshire HP27 0AJ (Tel: 01844 274795)



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## Detail of the beginning and end of the route



### Stopping points

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1.</b> Cowleaze Wood information board          | <b>8.</b> Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale |
| <b>2.</b> Cowleaze Wood                            | <b>9.</b> Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale |
| <b>3.</b> Two benches at the top of the escarpment | <b>10.</b> Solitary juniper tree                 |
| <b>4.</b> Single bench overlooking valley view     | <b>11.</b> Hill Farm                             |
| <b>5.</b> Fred Denton's bench                      | <b>19.</b> Gate at exit of wood                  |
| <b>6.</b> Fred Denton's bench                      | <b>20.</b> Cowleaze Wood                         |
| <b>7.</b> Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale   | <b>21.</b> Cowleaze Wood car park                |



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## Detail of the middle section of the route



### Stopping points

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>11.</b> Hill Farm                   | <b>15.</b> Lewknor allotments                          |
| <b>12.</b> Ridgeway signpost           | <b>16.</b> St Margaret's Church                        |
| <b>13.</b> The Knapp                   | <b>17.</b> Junction of Weston Road and Nethercote Lane |
| <b>14.</b> Ye Olde Leathern Bottel pub | <b>18.</b> Corner of field near the Knapp              |

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## Directions

These directions are for use with the Chilterns walk audio commentary. Listen to each track then read the directions below to get to the next stop.

### 1. Welcome to the Chilterns

#### Cowleaze Wood information board

##### Directions 1

Before you set off on the walk, do take time to look at the information board provided by Natural England about the nature reserve. When you are ready, wander into the beech woods behind the car park. Listen to Track 2.

### 2. Fragrant woods

#### Cowleaze Wood

##### Directions 2

From the woods, return to the information sign and cross the road with care. Go through the gate and follow the footpath, keeping the fence on your left. Go past an outdoor seating area. After about 100 metres, look for a gate in the fence on the left hand side. Go through the gate and stop by the two benches. Listen to Track 3.

### 3. A chalky landscape

#### Two benches at the top of the escarpment

##### Directions 3

From the benches, follow the path to the right. Keeping the fence on your right hand side, continue for about 100 metres and stop by another bench. Listen to Track 4.

### 4. Five hundred million ants

#### Single bench overlooking valley view

##### Directions 4

Continue along the footpath as it descends gradually. Stop at the next bench, dedicated to Fred Denton. Listen here to Track 5.

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## 5. Wildflowers and butterflies

### Fred Denton's bench

#### Directions 5

Remain at Fred Denton's bench to listen to Track 6.

## 6. Magnificent birds

### Fred Denton's bench

#### Directions 6

Continue following the path as it goes downhill and around the hill to the right. Go through a gate and stop at the next bench. Listen to Track 7.

## 7. Farming the Vale

### Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale

#### Directions 7

Remain at the bench for Track 8.

## 8. Experimental farming

### Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale

#### Directions 8

Remain at the bench and listen to Track 9.

## 9. Heavenly stars and a family feud

### Bench overlooking the Oxfordshire Vale

#### Directions 9

Follow the path downhill. Just before the gate, turn left across the field for about 50 metres and stop by an isolated juniper tree. Listen to Track 10.

## 10. A herbal remedy

### Solitary juniper tree

#### Directions 10

Return to the gate, go through it and turn left down the track. Stop by the gates of a house called Hill Farm and listen to Track 11.

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## 11. The Stokenchurch Gap

### Hill Farm

#### Directions 11

Continue along the lane for a short distance and stop at a signpost showing a cross with the Ridgeway National Trail. Listen to Track 12.

## 12. An ancient road

### Ridgeway National Trail signpost

#### Directions 12

Do not turn onto the Ridgeway, but continue straight along the lane for about 350 metres. Stop by a footpath sign on the left hand side into a field which has a hill with a small square shaped top. Listen to Track 13.

## 13. One hundred households

### The Knapp

#### Directions 13

Continue along the lane until you reach the busy main road. Cross carefully and turn left. After a few metres you will find a path on your right that descends into Lewknor village. Follow the road to the junction with High Street. Stop at the Leathern Bottel pub which is opposite the junction. Listen to Track 14.

**For a shorter walk,** turn left and follow the path along a hedge with the Knapp to your right. Stop at the corner of the field and resume at Track 18.

## 14. Leofeca's slope

### Ye Olde Leathern Bottel, Lewknor

#### Directions 14

From the junction opposite the pub, turn right along High Street. Stop when you reach the allotments, which are on the left hand side immediately after a row of cottages. Listen to Track 15.

## 15. Poor man's bread

### Lewknor allotments

#### Directions 15

Walk a little further past the play area and turn left through the gate into the church grounds. Go through the lychgate and stop in the graveyard. Listen to Track 16.

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## **16. Ancient buildings**

### **St Margaret's Church, Lewknor**

#### **Directions 16**

Go through the gate in the back corner of the churchyard. Follow the path with a fence on the left hand side and go through two more wooden gates. At the next metal gate, go diagonally left across the field towards the end of the row of houses that you can see behind the trees. Cross the stream and go diagonally right across the field, over the stile and onto the road. Turn right and walk along Weston Road. Stop at the junction with Nethercote Lane and listen to Track 17.

## **17. Mind your manors**

### **Junction of Weston Road and Nethercote Lane**

#### **Directions 17**

Return along Weston Road the way you came and follow it back into Lewknor village. At the junction with High Street, go straight across and retrace your steps back over the main road and up the lane. Turn right into the field where the Knapp is and follow the marked path. Stop at the corner of the field and listen to Track 18.

## **18. Lumps of rock**

### **Corner of field near The Knapp**

#### **Directions 18**

Turn left along the path by the side of the field until you reach the Ridgeway path. Turn right and follow the Ridgeway for about 300 metres until you see a gate on the left hand side. Go through the gate, across the field and through the next gate into the wood. Follow the path through the wood and out of the gate at the far side. Stop in a place with a good view up the valley and listen to Track 19.

## **19. A dry valley**

### **Gate at exit of wood**

#### **Directions 19**

Walk up the valley following the power lines. When you reach the road, cross over carefully and turn left. After a short distance, stop on the footpath running parallel to the road. Listen to Track 20.

## **20. Coppicing and bodging**

### **Cowleaze Wood**

#### **Directions 20**

Continue through the wood back towards the car park. Listen to Track 21.

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## 20. The story of chalk and water

### Cowleaze Wood car park

#### Directions 21

You are now at the end of the walk, back at the car park where you started.

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## Credits

The RGS-IBG would like to thank the following people and organisations for their assistance in producing this Discovering Britain walk:

- **Mike Jackson** and **Gary Gray** for creating the walk and providing photographs
- **Gary Gray** for recording the audio commentary
- **Jenny Lunn** for editing the walk materials
- **Caroline Millar** for editing the audio commentary
- **Rory Walsh** and **Sam Carlsson** for assistance compiling the walk resources
- **Damien Dyer** of Air Frame Photography for kind permission to use his aerial image of Shirburn Castle [www.airframephotography.com](http://www.airframephotography.com)
- **Victoria County History** for kind permission to reproduce the map of the Lewknor Hundred [www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk](http://www.victoriacountyhistory.ac.uk)
- **The Chiltern Society PhotoGroup** for kind permission to use their images of the last Chiltern bodger [www.chilternphoto.org.uk](http://www.chilternphoto.org.uk)
- **Joanna Wells** and **her family** for testing the walk on a very wet bank holiday





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