

Hamstead Marshall lies in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Its landscape of mixed farming, woodland, river and canal supports a diverse range of flora and fauna.

The woods contain many broad-leaf species including mature oaks, hazel coppices and some fine stands of conifer. Hamstead Park has some good specimens of ornamental trees, including Wellingtonia.

Birds of prey include red kite, buzzard, kestrel, sparrowhawk and the occasional harrier over the riverside water meadow. Owls are often sighted and, in the higher fields, skylark, lapwing and wintering golden plover. Migratory birds include swallow, martin, swift, cuckoo, nightingale and warbler in spring and summer, and brambling, fieldfare and redwing in winter. You may also see kingfisher or dabchick from the riverbank.

In spring the woods and lanes display snowdrops, primroses, violets and wood anemones, followed by bluebells, riverside yellow flags and kingcups. Butterflies and moths abound, and the amphibian population includes frogs, toads and newts. The water vole is present at both canal and river. Grass snakes are a fairly common sight.

Game is plentiful with pheasant, partridge and hare in the fields. Roe deer (pictured) and muntjac are a familiar sight, along with fallow deer in the larger woods. Bats are common at dusk, and flourishing populations exist of other mammals, including badger and fox, with the occasional sighting of mink and polecat.



photo Jonathan Pointer

PLEASE BE AWARE THAT

Some fields may contain livestock
Some walk areas may be muddy
Most walks include stiles
Care needs to be taken when walking on village roads with no pavements
Sensible walking footwear is advisable

COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Leave gates as you find them
Take your litter home
Do not uproot wild plants
Keep dogs under close control and poop-scoop if they foul paths



Hamstead Park

If you would like to comment or enquire about this leaflet please do so to admin@hamsteadmarshall.net

This leaflet is one of two produced in connection with the Hamstead Marshall Parish PLAN. The Parish Plan Steering Group gratefully acknowledges financial assistance received from the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The publishers have endeavoured to supply accurate information, but they cannot accept liability for any misadventure arising from the walks.

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Walking in Hamstead Marshall

Holtwood Walk and Old Mansion Walk



Hamstead Park

Two circular walks of 3 - 4 miles each, which can be enjoyed separately or linked to make a figure-of-8 walk of nearly 7 miles over farmland, woodland, country lanes, and Hamstead Park

HAMSTEAD MARSHALL

lies on the unclassified road which begins as Pound Street in Newbury and runs westward to Kintbury, first passing Enborne Church and the Craven Arms. Within the village this is known as the Kintbury Road.

The village can also be reached by a turning southwards from the A4 crossroads about two miles west of Newbury.

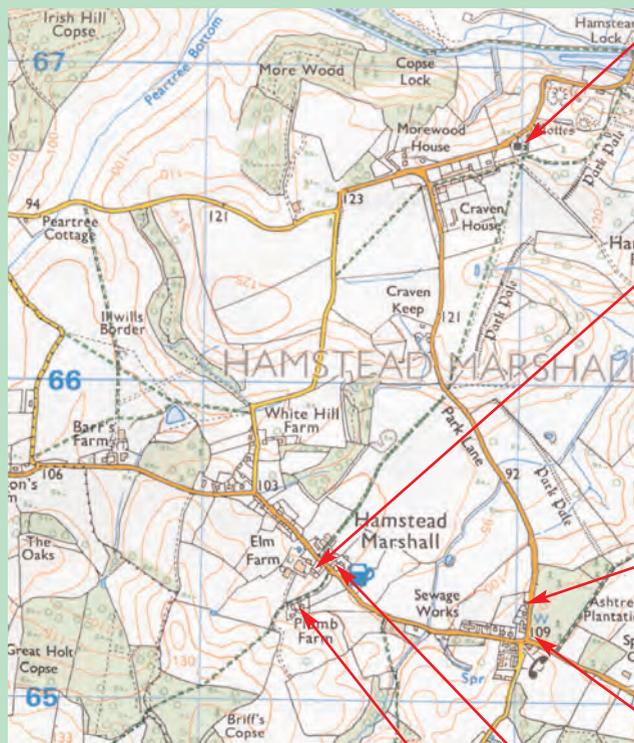
NEWBURY BUSES ROUTE 13 (Newbury to Hungerford) passes through Hamstead Marshall on the Kintbury Road about 6 times daily (each way) Mondays to Saturdays, stopping at Ash Tree Corner, the White Hart and Chapel Corner. The timetable can be seen on <www.reading-buses.co.uk/prev/tt_newbury_nov2006/013MF22.html>.

PARKING

The village hall car park may be used by walkers when it is not needed for an event at the hall. Please ring 01488 657022 to check in advance. There are limited possibilities for roadside parking around Chapel Corner, Hamstead Mill, and on Milkhouse Road running from the railway crossing to the A4. There is also a small off-road parking area diagonally opposite the Craven Arms, from which it is a short walk into the village. The private car parks at the White Hart, Elm Farm and Plumbs's Farm are strictly for patrons only. *Please respect private property and entrances when parking. Always consider sightlines and road safety.*

PICNICS

There is no picnic area as such in the village, but there are bench seats in the village hall recreation field, at the top end of the Elm Farm bridle path and beside Hamstead Lock.



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ST MARY'S CHURCH RG20 OJD

Services most Sundays – see <www.hamsteadmarshall.net>. At other times the church is usually locked for security. For access contact a churchwarden on 01635 44868 or 01635 52436.

ORGANIC RESEARCH CENTRE, Elm Farm RG20 OHR

01488 658298 Not open to the public except for special events, but there is a farm trail open to the public seven days a week. Leaflets available from the start of the trail (bridle path almost opposite the farm car park) or from reception during working hours.
<www.organicresearchcentre.com>

VILLAGE HALL & RECREATION FIELD RG20 OHL

Hall bookings 01488 657022. Community market 10am-1pm on the second Saturday of each month. For other events see <www.hamsteadmarshall.net/whatson>. Adjoining field open to all for recreation.

VILLAGE INFORMATION POINT

at Ash Tree Corner bus shelter. Board with maps, local contacts, event announcements, bench, bus timetable and litter bin.

WHITE HART INN RG20 OHW 01488 658201

Open 7 days a week, lunchtime and evening. Real ales. Cam's Carvery. Accommodation.
<www.thewhitehart.biz>

DOGS TRUST, Plumb's Farm RG20 OHR

01488 658391 Open 12.00 until 16.00, closed Wednesdays. Other times by appointment only.
<www.dogstrust.org.uk>

Holtwood Walk: 3 miles

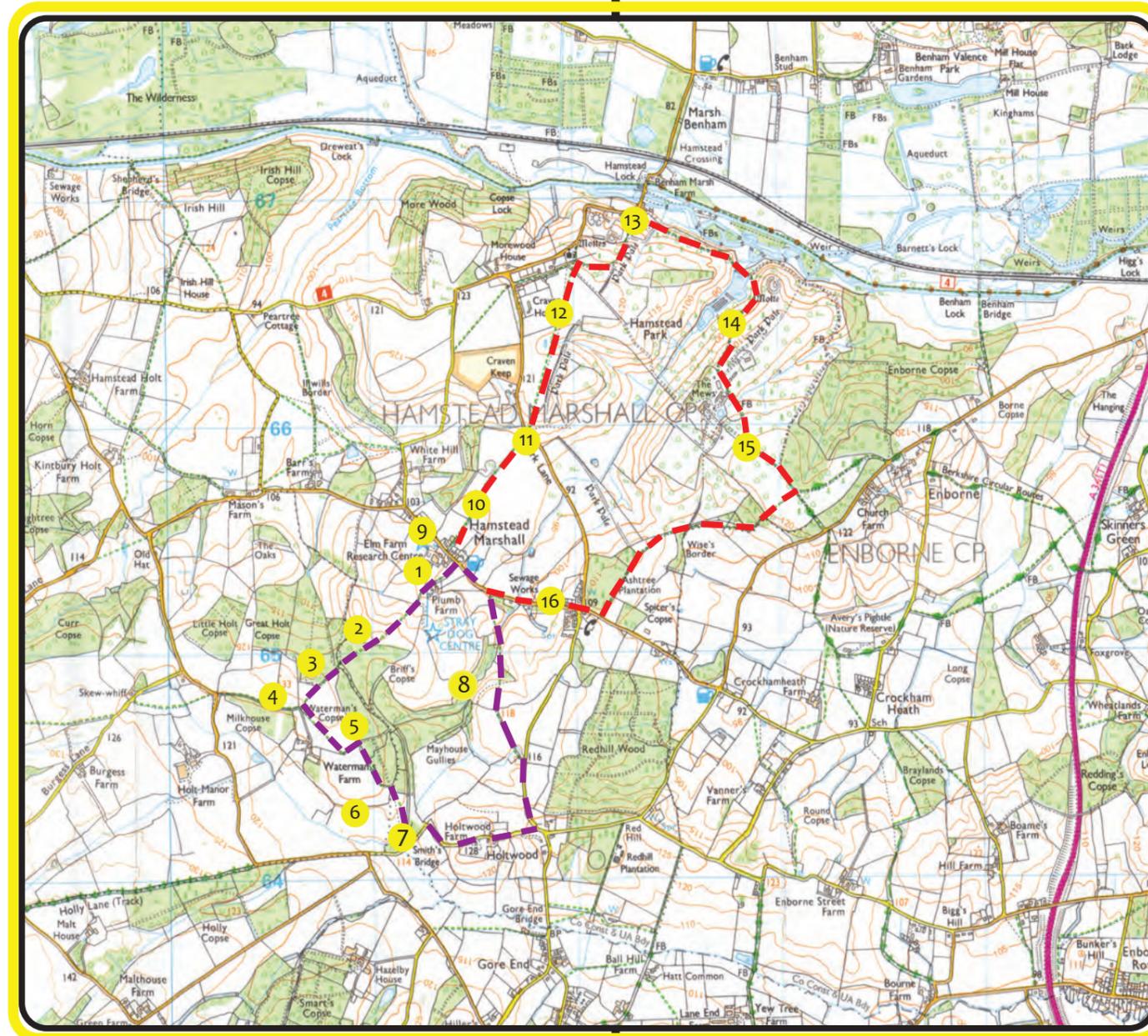
(points 1 to 8)

Old Mansion Walk: 3.75 miles

(points 9 to 16)



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Take the driveway opposite the White Hart up past Plumb's Farm (the Dogs' Trust). Pass the kennel on the left, after which there is a footpath crossroads. Take the route straight ahead, over a stile and uphill (1) across a field towards woodland. Here you are at one of the highest points of the village (400ft), and you have a good overall view of the houses distributed along the Kintbury Road. The distinctive triangle of Morewood's roof can be seen further north.



Cross the stile into Briffs Copse (2) and follow the path which eventually takes you to the corner of a field (3). This is Waterman's Farm land. The footpath signs direct you across this field in a dog-leg (4) (5), then across another (6), eventually to meet Watery Lane at Smiths Bridge (7), which marks the border with Hampshire.



Turn left into Watery Lane and pass Foxlee and Enborne Valley farms on the right. The lane rises and then drops to the riding stables at Holtwood Farm (perhaps one of the oldest houses in the village) on the left, and its redeveloped barns to the right. Another slight rise meets Holtwood Lane.



Turn left into Holtwood Lane, and continue a few hundred yards until the footpath sign takes you off to the left, crossing the corner of one field, and then the width of another. At this point there is a stile whose approach is sometimes overgrown with brambles.



Having negotiated this you are back on Elm Farm land, crossing three fields, as you descend to the Mayhouse Gully. Winding through the damp woodland here, cross the stream (8), and the path emerges into another field, at the far fence at which the footpath forks.



Take the right-hand option leading onto a short trackway. This takes you to the Kintbury Road, and the White Hart is about 100 yards to the left.

Take the footpath which forks to the right, over pasture aiming for the stile at the far side. Descend, skirting a copse to the right. Bear right and after a couple of field crossings, the path brings you to the corner of Ash Tree plantation, beside which the path runs to the left as a more obvious track. After a few hundred yards it joins the Kintbury Road just east of Ash Tree Corner (16), from which it is a half-mile walk (to the right) back to Elm Farm.



Take the bridleway opposite Elm Farm (9) across the field (10), passing over a dip created by clay extraction for brickmaking. To the left is Woodcote Copse. The bridleway rises to meet Park Lane, which you cross, continuing on another footpath uphill to a stile (11). Follow the footpath signs which take you across the middle of the Plain, once grassland used for village cricket and golf, but now cultivated. The path through crops should be clearly marked. As you cross the Plain note the ditch and bank on the right, remains of the pale which enclosed the medieval deer park; it is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Ahead you can see the gate-piers of the first Craven mansion, built in the 1660s and burned down in 1718. The gate-piers and what is left of the old mansion walling also have protected status.



The path reaches St Mary's churchyard (12), at which point footpaths run left into Craven Hill, and also to the right. Take the latter, skirting the garden of North Lodge, and descend through an avenue to Hamstead Mill (13).



Turn right onto the tarmac drive and walk towards the big house in the centre of the park, successor to the burnt mansion. The Craven Fishery lies on the left, shrouded by greenery in summer but plainly visible in winter. The path passes a lake (14) and climbs a hill. To the left is the earthwork of a Norman castle (not open to the public). At the top the footpath leaves the tarmac to skirt the house grounds on grass, eventually joining another driveway leading out from the back of the house. Continue along this to a junction marked by a white stone memorial dedicated to the US troops who camped here just before D-Day (15).

