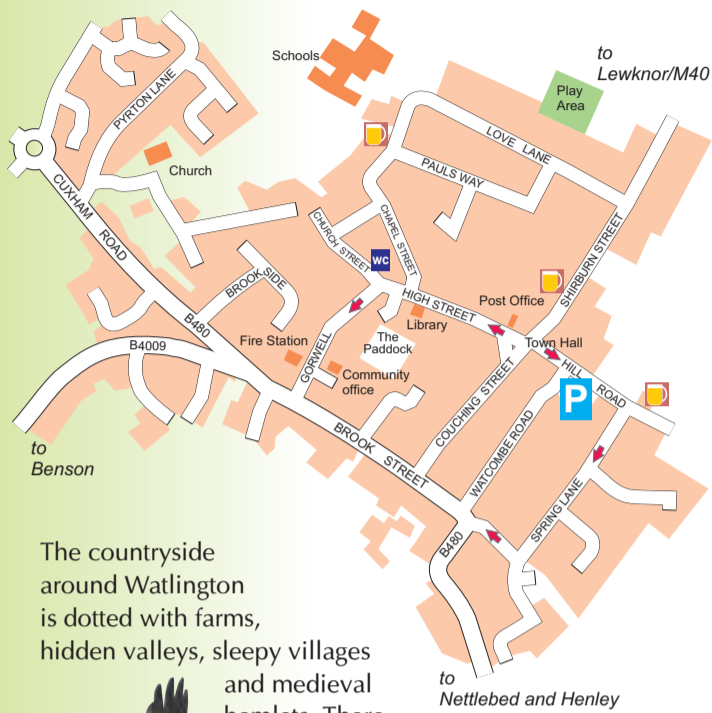


Watlington.. a really attractive market town

Lying at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, Watlington is an attractive rural market town. It is first recorded as a Saxon settlement in the 8th century and has many historic buildings. The town is skirted by the Icknield Way (part of The Ridgeway National Trail) making it a popular stop-off for walkers, naturalists, cyclists and horse riders. There are several pubs in the town and a number of shops offering a range of speciality foods and goods.



The countryside around Watlington is dotted with farms, hidden valleys, sleepy villages and medieval hamlets. There is a wonderful network of rights of way offering many possibilities for walking. You can either stick to the flatter routes in the Vale or climb up into the Chiltern Hills for magnificent views of surrounding countryside - the perfect place to watch red kites soaring overhead.



This Walk.. Watlington Hill

There are a number of stiles on this route. It is very steep in parts but you will be well rewarded with magnificent views over the countryside.

This circular walk starts at the car park in Watlington and takes you south from the town across farmland before turning to take in a section of the Icknield Way. This ancient trackway forms part of the Ridgeway National Trail and can be followed as far as the neolithic stone circles of Avebury to the south-west, or to Ivinghoe Beacon, site of an early hill-top fort, to the north-east.

Leaving the Icknield Way, you at first skirt Watlington Hill, with its White Mark, before climbing (either gently or more energetically) to the top.

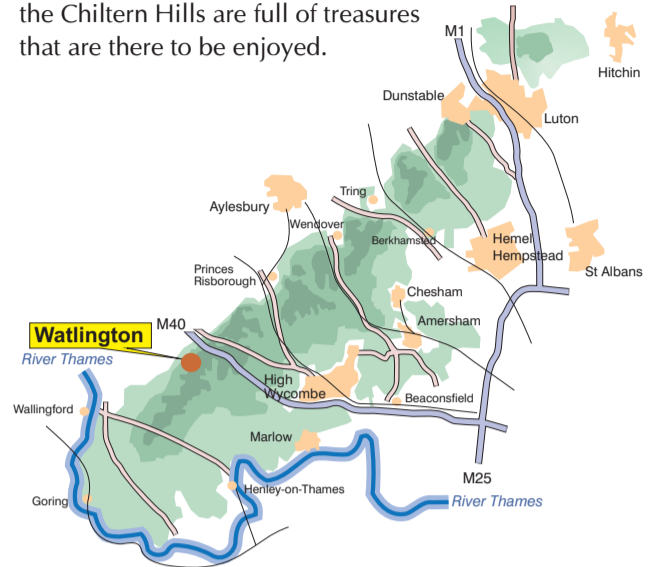
The White Mark is the shape of an obelisk cut into the chalk hillside, believed to have been created on the orders of Edward Horne of Greenfield in 1764. Seen from beyond Watlington it is said to create a spire on top of the tower of the Norman church of St Leonard.

Watlington Hill is a nationally important wildlife site home to a large assemblage of wild flowers, butterflies, birds, mosses, lichens and fungi – many of them rare or scarce. The short chalk grassland turf was originally created by sheep grazing but is now maintained by rabbits. Ant-hills, some of which are quite ancient, add additional interest, and areas of woodland and scrub complete the scene. The whole area is protected as a 'Site of Special Scientific Interest' and owned by the National Trust.



The Chilterns.. an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

The Chiltern Hills stretch from the River Thames in south Oxfordshire through Buckinghamshire and Bedfordshire to Hitchin in Hertfordshire. The area contains some of the finest countryside in the UK, recognised by its designation as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). From quiet valleys with medieval villages to dramatic viewpoints on the hilltops, leafy green woodlands to flower-covered meadows, the Chiltern Hills are full of treasures that are there to be enjoyed.



For more information visit www.chilternsaonb.org or call 01844 355500.



This Walk.. try this and our other Walks

This leaflet describes and illustrates one of 4 walks produced by Watlington Parish Council with the support of the Hidden Britain Project, funded through the Rural Enterprise Scheme, administered by Defra.

These walks start from the car park in Watlington

Walk 1 Watlington

A 2 mile walk through this historic market town

Walk 2 Cookley Green and Swyncombe

7 miles - discover hidden valleys and medieval hamlets

Walk 3 Watlington Hill

4-5 miles - a hilly walk with magnificent views

Walk 4 Lewknor and Pyrton

6 miles - a level walk through open countryside

Refreshments: There are a number of pubs and cafes in Watlington and a pub at Christmas Common for you to enjoy food or drink.

Parking: There is free parking available in the Hill Road car park, Watlington, where you start your walk.

Toilets: There are public toilets in Church Street (at the bottom of High Street).

Accommodation: Visit www.watlington.org

Watlington.. how to get there



By car: Leave M40 at Junction 6; in Watlington take the first turning on your left into Hill Road. The free car park is on your right.

By bus: X39 hourly from Oxford. The Oxford Tube travels between Oxford and London every 10 minutes and stops at Junction 6 (Lewknor).

Countryside Code:

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

For further information on Watlington visit www.watlington.org

Other Watlington Walk leaflets can be obtained from the Community Office, Library and the Paper Shop. Photography by © Robert Barber and the Chilterns Conservation Board



Watlington to Watlington Hill



Watlington
Oxfordshire Chilterns Country



Watlington to Watlington Hill

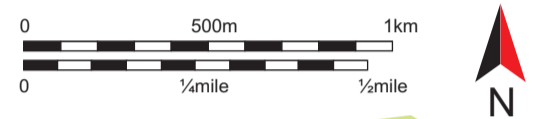
4-5 miles - with magnificent views from Watlington Hill

The climb to the top of Watlington Hill is moderately energetic but the wide views are worth the climb. The descent down the White Mark is steep, slippery when wet and should be made with caution! There are several stiles, two of which may be avoided by taking the road instead of the permissive path at the Icknield Way.

- 1 From the car park, walk towards the Town Hall and down the High St. towards the Cross.
- 2 Immediately after the Granary on the left, turn left along Davenport Place, sign-posted as a public footpath. Cross a road and turn right; almost immediately, at the end of a high wall, turn left into a narrow footpath. There is a footpath sign on the adjacent telegraph pole.
- 3 Go on through a kissing gate, bear right across the field to another, then fork left along a path with a ditch on the left.
- 4 Turn left along a farm track and as the track turns right through a gate bear left along a path with a wire fence on the right.
- 5 Pass a track from the left as the path rises gently and then turns right at a hedge. Turn left over a stile just before a concrete road.
- 6 Follow the line of a hedge on the right to cross a stile onto a metalled junction. This is the Icknield Way, part of the Ridgeway National Trail and also of Swan's Way.

- 7 Cross the road and go left over a stile along a permissive path (which avoids walking on the road). After a second stile return to the Icknield Way, cross a busy road and continue along the track.
- 8 Go through a gate on the right with information signs indicating a permissive path. (Note the line of the path is indicated by arrows on the gate posts and that the field here may contain livestock). Cross the field and go through a field gate, immediately turning left through another gate to join a footpath going uphill between hedges.
- 9 After a kissing gate ignore a path to the left continuing ahead and rising gently along the side of Watlington Hill. Ignore a minor path to the right and shortly there is open ground rising sharply to the left. A short but energetic climb, ●●●● followed by a left turn, leads directly to the top of the hill, but the less able should continue along the path to arrive at the National Trust car park.
- 10 At the car park cross to the left and take a footpath through woodland to a kissing gate which leads onto open hillside. Continue to the top of the hill from which there are extensive views of Watlington and the surrounding countryside. (You may attend a sunrise service here on Easter Day).

- 11 To continue the shorter walk there is a sharp descent from the hillside, bearing right downhill past the White Mark and going right at the bottom through a kissing gate to join the grass path leading to a metalled road returning to the start.
- 12 To extend the walk, return to the car park and leave by the entrance. Turn right and walk along the road to a junction at Christmas Common. You can turn right here and make a short detour to the Fox & Hounds public house which serves good food.
- 13 At the junction, return to Watlington by taking the Stokenchurch road and very shortly go left across a stile, marked Oxfordshire Way. With a hedge on the left take a stile to the left (the Oxfordshire Way continues and bears right) and descend through a wood. Emerge into open ground with wide views of the area. Continue downhill, following waymarked arrows and bear left to emerge onto a road (at the junction with the Icknield Way). Turn downhill and return to the start.



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