

In the Far South – Walbury Hill and Combe

8.5k (5 miles). Steep sections both up and down. Short sections on quiet lanes. The walk starts from the car park below Walbury Hill at SU38022 61570 hood.prop.yield. OS Explorer Map 158. Refreshments in nearby villages.

Take the stony track that leads up and over Walbury Hill to the west, along the Wayfarer's Walk.

1. Walbury Hill, at 297m, is the highest point in Southeastern England. There are superb views in all directions. Ringed by the ditch and bank fortifications of an Iron Age hillfort, the 82-acre enclosure at the summit is the largest of any hillfort in Berkshire.

Descending through the fort's entrance ramparts, cross the road and follow the track over Gallows Down.

2. On Gallows Down, Inkpen Long Barrow and Combe Gibbet are further reminders of the past. Inkpen Long Barrow, constructed as an earthen mound 65m in length with flanking ditches, is a funerary monument dating from the Early and Middle Neolithic periods (3400-2400 BCE). It is one of the oldest man-made features visible in the present landscape. On its mound is 4m-high Combe Gibbet, a replacement for the original structure from which the bodies of an adulterous couple, George Broomham and Dorothy Newman, were hung after they were found guilty of the murder of George's wife and son. Hanged in Winchester in 1676,

their bodies were moved to the gibbet for public display.

Continue on the Wayfarer's Walk to a footpath, left off the main track (Test Way). Follow this path into the field and look out for a footpath sign at which to turn left. With your back to the sign, walk down over the field to the sign on the far side.

3. The Test Way follows much of the course of the River Test from Inkpen Hill to Southampton Water, at this point offering beautiful views across the rolling Hampshire Downs.



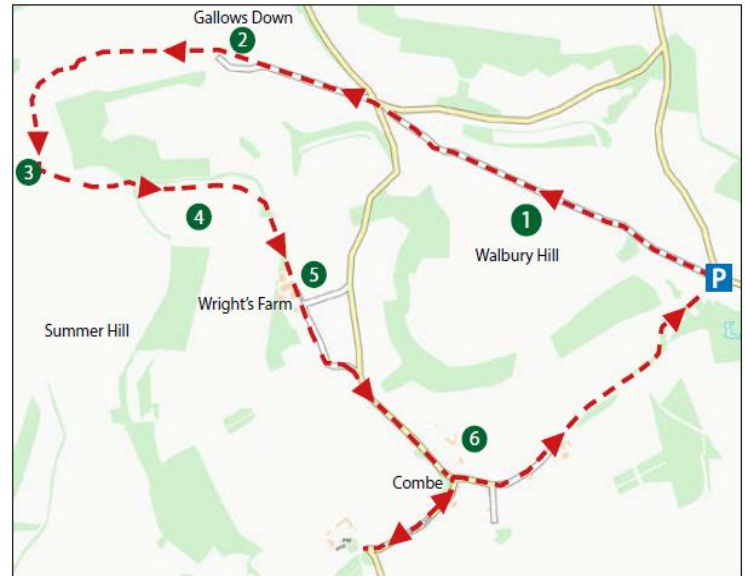
© Geograph – Edmund Shaw

Pass through a gateway and into an open field.

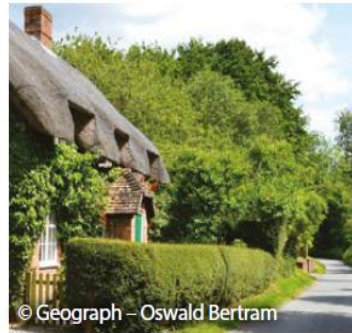
4. Excellent views up to Walbury Hill allow full appreciation of its impressive shape. It is easy to imagine from here how imposing the exposed chalk ramparts of the fort would have looked glaring out over the surrounding land.

Follow the left side of the field down-hill to a farm track. Turn right, keeping straight ahead past the farm buildings, until you join the lane. Turn right to reach the village of Combe.

5. Wright's Farmhouse is Grade 2 listed and dates from C14 with C19 fronting.



6. Historically part of Hampshire, Combe was transferred to Berkshire in 1895. Situated, as its name suggests in a hollow or valley, its collection of cottages and farms forms one of the most hidden and inaccessible villages in West Berkshire.



© Geograph – Oswald Bertram

To reach Combe Church, follow the lane as it bears to the right at the junction.

7. There has been a church dedicated to St. Swithun on this site since Saxon times. Built of local flint, it dates from the 13th century and is Grade 1 listed. The porch was added in 1652.



© Geograph – Pam Brophy

The font base is 14th century with a Saxon bowl. There are three bells, the oldest of which is pre-reformation c. 1430.

Return to the junction and turn right, following the signs to Lower Farm. Pass the farm, keeping to the track as it rises steadily towards Walbury Hill. Take the bridleway signposted uphill to the left on a sharp right-hand bend and make for the brow of the hill and the car park.

Margery Slatter



© Geograph – Oliver Dixon

On Gallows Down: Place, Protest and Belonging (Chelsea Green Publishing Co) is a prize-winning memoir by local author Nicola Chester who lives nearby. Shortlisted for the Wainwright Prize, it has received many accolades.

"A powerful personal and political journey through place that charts the profound influence we have on nature, and that nature has on us."

– Rob Cowen, author of *Common Ground* and *The Heeding*

