

Leverton and the Hidden Farms

5 miles (8km) over rolling farmland above the Kennet Valley. This walk starts and finishes on the edge of Hungerford. Park respectfully on Charnham Park roadside SU339691 stays.cement.party or in town car parks. Trains to Hungerford. Buses to Eddington and Hungerford. There are sections of road walking mainly on quiet lanes. Pubs and cafes in Hungerford and Hungerford Newtown. OS Explorer Map 158.

Walk to A4 roundabout and cross River Kennet on the road bridge. Turn left along the riverbank towards Eddington Mill.

1. Eddington Mill derived its power from the **River Kennet**, one of England's most important chalk streams. Some 45 miles long, it is the largest tributary of the Thames and in summer months contributes up to half its flow. There has been a mill on this site since Doomsday but milling ceased in 1959. In 2016 a major weir failed, scouring the channel and blocking fish passage. A restoration project constructed a fish bypass channel and enhanced the river upstream.

Follow the path behind (south of) the houses, crossing a drive, and continue uphill along the hedgerow. At the crossroads turn left along Leverton Lane.



2. Leverton has a row of pretty, thatched cottages dating to 1800. The village has featured in television programmes, and houses the offices and buildings of the Chilton Estate which are passed on the left of the route. A replica of the village stocks can be seen just to the west of the crossroads. The original stocks are in the Ashmolean Museum.

Turn right at the crossroads to walk north up Old Hayward

Lane to New Hayward Farm, passing through the farm complex to reach a lane.

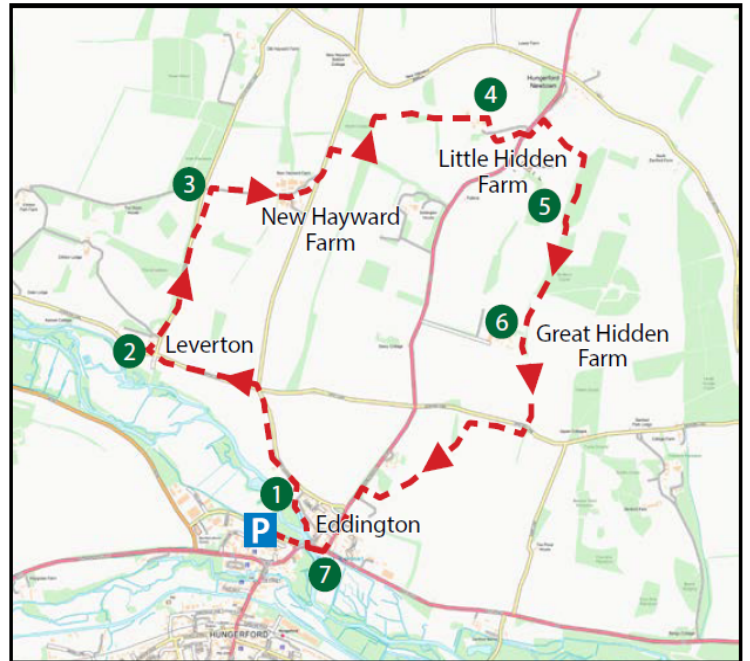
3. The name **Hayward**, (Old English hēgweard), refers to a manorial officer who protected corn and hay from cattle theft or damage and supervised the harvest. The lane extends beyond the entrance to New Hayward Farm to reach Old Hayward Farm.

At the lane, turn left and take the first footpath to the right to walk through meadows and copses to Little Hidden Farm.

4. Little Hidden Farm is a riding centre and working farm which aims to increase biodiversity and encourage wildlife. A wide range of plants, insects and other animals can be found here, including barn owls and Duke of Burgundy butterflies. The farmhouse and some buildings date from the 16th century.

Walk through the farm complex and down the main drive. Cross the road with extreme care to turn left inside the field hedgerow. Walk along the field margin to join the footpath by Little Hidden Farm Cottages. Turn right. On reaching the woodland, take the track to the right.

5. Dunkin's Lane, the track running alongside Dunkin's Wood, is one of about a dozen routes in a 10 mile stretch of this countryside running north/south between the downland ridge and the wet pastures in the river valley. These would have been drove ways, many probably in use up to the early 20th century, some now roads and lanes, along which livestock would have been driven to



reach suitable grazing at different times of the year.

At the farm, turn left at the cattle grid and then right to continue on the footpath.

6. Great Hidden Farm also dates from 16th century and was the manor house of an estate more important than Hungerford in early medieval times. It is possible that the 'Hidden' farms, along with Old Hayward Farm, are post-Dissolution homesteads established by private enclosure. The name 'Hidden' comes from the Saxon, meaning 'the landing place in the valley' – possibly near the confluence of the rivers Kennet and Dun.

At Denford Lane turn right and then left at the first footpath sign. The footpath runs through gates, across the paddock. It is also possible to walk around the paddock to regain the path and follow it to reach the road above Eddington. Turn left.

7. Though now regarded as part of Hungerford, Eddington

village has a rich history. The manor and mill were bequeathed in his will by King Alfred to his widow, Queen Ealhswith, together with Lambourn and Wantage. This was his personal property, not crown land. In 1876, two policemen were shot by poachers in Eddington. Their graves are in St Saviour's cemetery. The church was built in 1868; sold in the mid 1950's and converted into a private house.



Walk through Eddington to turn right across the Kennet and return to Hungerford.

Route contributed by **Peter Herman**; notes by **Margery Slatter**