

Over the border! Ladle Hill and Sydmonton

Approx 4.3 miles (7km). A mixture of tracks and paths with short road sections with a steady climb at the start.
Park in the informal lay-by on left when approaching from Old Burghclere to Sydmonton/Kingsclere.
OS Explorer 44 might be useful.

1. In front of you are the imposing entrance gates to **Sydmonton Court**, a Grade II listed Tudor mansion with later additions, belonging to Lord (Andrew) Lloyd-Webber.

Cross the road and follow a wide track leading southwards for about 1 mile which rises up towards the ridgeline. A lovely stroll along a wooded holloway. Avoid any mud by passing through the trees on the field boundary.

2. Look for roe deer and hares in the fields here and admire the view westwards towards **Beacon Hill**, an ancient Iron Age hill fort 261m high and once the site of the most famous beacon in Hampshire.

Go ahead uphill for a short distance to another path (Wayfarer's Walk) and turn sharp left at FP sign and flint cairn.

Continue rising up to the top of the hill.



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3. Ladle Hill is an 'unfinished' hillfort on the site of an earlier Bronze Age settlement. It shows features which would not be seen in a completed work – marking-out trenches, partly dug sections of ditch and untidy spoil heaps – and encloses seven acres of open access land with glorious views over the vale to the north and west.

The well-defined track bears right and continues on a slight decline eastward.

4. Near the gate is a dew pond. These ponds are regular features on chalk downs. They are man-made, being excavated and then lined with clay, so rainwater is captured to provide drinking water for livestock.



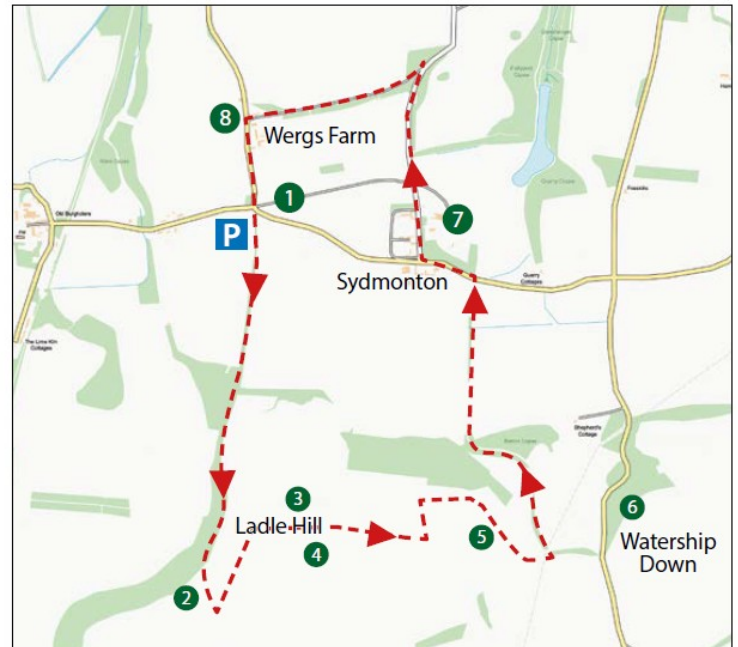
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On reaching a tree line, turn left and, after a few hundred metres, look out for FP sign going right which takes you into a grass field (often sheep grazing here – so dogs on lead). Follow the path as it skirts the righthand field edge passing by another dew pond and a copse of mature trees and then descends towards a large pylon in the corner of the field.

5. This path is part of the **Wayfarer's Walk**, a 70-mile, long-distance walking route from Walbury Hill above Inkpen to the coast at Emsworth Harbour.

The path emerges onto a metalled track – turn left – but after a short distance turn left again down a gently shelving holloway with a wooded bank on left. **Do not continue eastwards along the track (Wayfarer's Walk)**

6. **Watership Down** rises up to your right, made famous by Richard Adams' book of the



same name. Richard Adams, born in Wash Common, lived in the nearby town of Whitchurch and frequently used to walk with his children on the top of Watership Down. He told them stories about the rabbits who lived there. Look out for rabbits!

Descend through woodland passing through a gate/stile and continue northwards to the Kingsclere road at Sydmonton. Cross and turn left to face oncoming traffic. **Take great care as vehicles travel at considerable speed!**

After about 500m turn right through a gate heading north on a metalled drive passing the walled gardens and courtyards of the Sydmonton Estate. Security cameras watching you here, so behave!

7. On the right you can also just see the **church of St Mary** (Grade II* 1849-53, possibly by T H Wyatt) replacing a medieval building. The church is now adapted as a private music studio.

Cross a cattle grid and continue towards woodland. Don't forget to look right as you do so back towards the manor house. Turn sharp left to follow a well-defined track with a field rising to the right. There are sometimes hares here!



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8. Wergs Farmhouse dates from C18 and is Grade II listed. The name derives from the Old English word *withigas*, meaning willows.

Turn left to return to the starting point.

Nick Freeman and Margery Slatter