

The Lions of Bledlow



This walk celebrates two highways from different eras sharing the same name. The first is the Beckfield Way, which straddles a ridge along the county border and offers some spectacular views, whilst the second is the Beckfield Line, a branch railway now thriving after a period of inactivity. The latter's route is clearly visible from the former, as is the ever-present Whiteleaf Cross, a chalk monument which acts as a landmark throughout. The walk starts in

Distance: 5¼ miles

OS Explorer 181 Chiltern Hills North
GR 776021

A mix of road and fieldside walking with one steep hill at the beginning

Starting point: In the pub car park (with the owner's permission).

How to get there: Bledlow is ½ mile south of the B4009 halfway between Chinnor and Princes Risborough.

the tucked away village of Bledlow, whose picturesque qualities are born out by the fact that it is a popular TV location, having featured in a number of episodes of *Midsomer Murders*.

The Lions of Bledlow is unusual, and possibly unique, in having two lions in its sign rather than the more usual three. The building is something of a Tardis inside, with a warren of rooms. The low-beamed ceilings verge on the hazardous but there's room to stand on the quarry tiles around the three-quarter sided bar or next to the massive fireplace. Outside there's more seating in the garden or on the green, a perfect place to while away a summer's Sunday afternoon. Food ranges from filled baguettes to the more adventurous such as tuna steak in Cajun spices or Barbary duck.

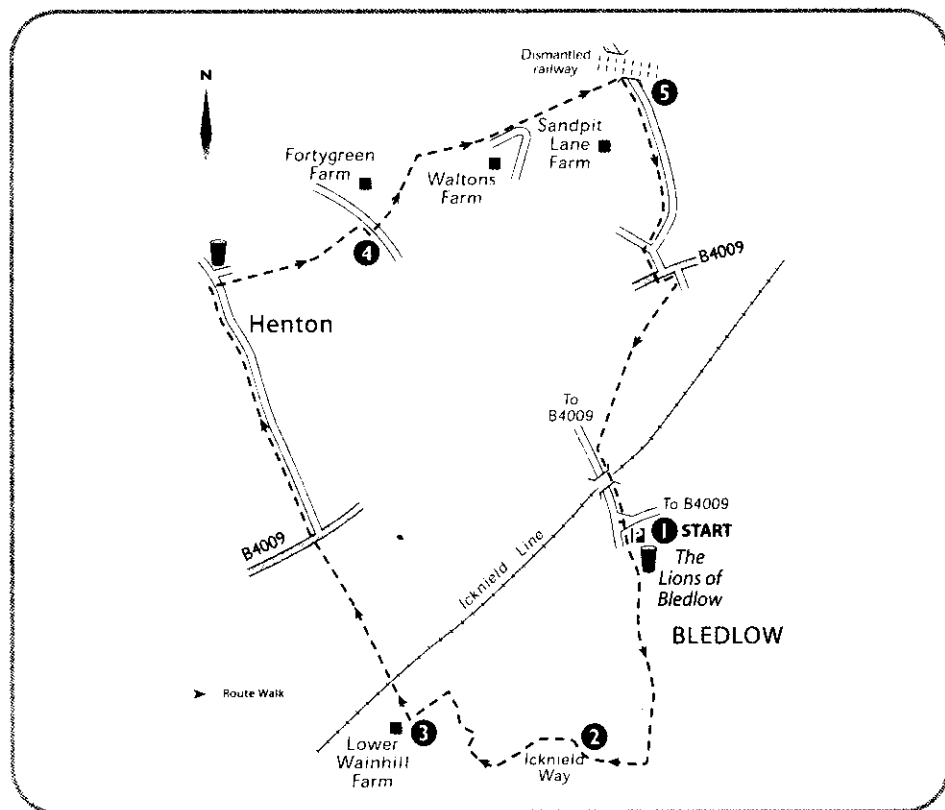
Opening times are 12 noon to 3 pm (with food until 2.30 pm) and 6 pm to 11 pm (food until 9.30 pm, 9 pm on Sundays).

Telephone: 01844 343345.

The Walk

1 Turn left out of the car park and up an unmade track. Ignore the sign tempting you to the right to Chinnor Reserve and stride on up the hill straight ahead. Through gaps in the trees on the left you can gain the first of many sightings of the Whiteleaf Cross in the hillside opposite. This pull uphill makes for a vigorous start to the walk, but it's soon over and worth it in the end. The Ickniel Way crosses over in front of the path at the top of the hill and here you turn right along a gloriously even and relatively flat path.

2 The route now falls gently off the ridge, offering the occasional snatched view to the right through trees. It is worth glancing upwards too, to see if you can catch a glimpse of one of the red kites recently reintroduced here. On meeting some housing and a profusion of signs turn right, signposted 'Swan's Way', but pause to catch the view from this vantage point first. After 50 yards take the path over a stile on your left where you swap one expansive view for another, this time towards Wainhill Spring and the Ickniel railway line. Pass along the left-hand side of the field

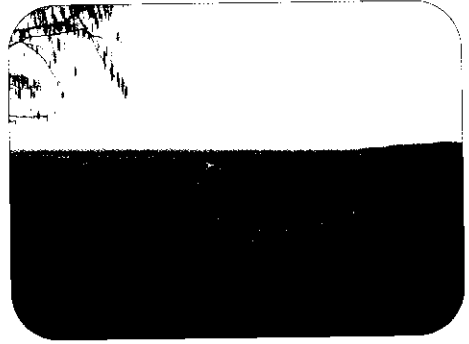


heading steadily downhill and pick up the path on your left through the hedge.

3 On emerging from a fenced-in section turn immediately right before Lower Wainhill Farm, aiming directly for the railway. Take special care crossing the tracks and continue straight ahead on the other side until you reach the road (Lower Icknield Way). Cross over and turn right and then left towards Henton, a village made up of a confusion of building styles, old and new. Continue along the road until it begins to peter out, taking the path leading to, and then to the right of, the pretty Peacock Hotel. When the buildings run out cut half-right across the next field before crossing the well-hidden plank bridge and stiles near the top left-hand corner. Cut half-right again over the next field, aiming for Fortygreen Farm via a metal gate.

4 On reaching the road turn right and then left, picking up a fresh path. Continue until you reach an intersection where you keep going straight ahead in an adjacent field via two stiles. In the last field before Waltons Farm head half-right towards a metal gate in the corner. Turn right after the stile and then over another onto a road. Where this bends go through the metal gate and take the right-hand path, passing through the farm machinery on the other side and over another plank bridge. Keep going through a metal gate and aim for the attractive yellow house. The house to the left of this used to be the station on this disused stretch of railway, now a cycle route.

5 Turn right along the road and continue until the crossroads where you cross straight over into Perry Lane. After



A marvellous view along the Icknield Way

50 yards there's a footpath on your right down the edge of an old brick cottage. Follow this along a stream, keeping straight ahead after a metal gate to another gate after which you turn left then right towards some trees, walking between two fields and rejoining the stream. Stay with the water across a paddock over further stiles until you eventually reach a road where you turn left. This takes you under the Icknield Line one last time, carried above you on a bridge, before returning you to the pub.

Place of Interest

The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway in Chinnor, just south-west of Bledlow, was formed ten years ago by enthusiasts to keep this typical country branch line open. Both diesel and steam trains are run but it's best to call ahead to the talking timetable first to check when and where. Telephone: 01844 353535.

Date walk completed:

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