



## **Walk 2 - WHITCHURCH HILL 'THE SQUARE'**

This is a little longer, say three and half to four miles and will take about one and half hours. It is known in my family as 'the square' and has a number of route variations, as indeed all the walks have.

Walk up the High Street, past the old post office and store, now an art gallery, and carry on up the hill. Be very careful at the defile, listen for traffic and walk in single file on the left hand side with children and dogs under firm control. As soon as you reach the bridle path to Goring cross over to the Thames Path sign and the 40mph sign on the other side of the road. An excellent high level footpath starts here, part of the National Gas Grid runs below your feet.

When you reach the entrance to Foxglove Manor cross over to the War Memorial, itself a victim of the 1990 storms and now renovated. Again take great care when you cross the road. Carry on up the slope to the kissing gate into the field above. *(There is an excellent footpath, a short cut to Whitchurch Hill, on your right)*. However your route is to go through the gate and to follow the field path round the perimeter of the previously devastated beech wood (now replanted and mature). Take care if you have a dog with you - there may be cattle and or sheep out of sight. Pass through the kissing gate leading to the lane that eventually skirts the farm buildings of Beech Farm. Follow the lane round the buildings, through a kissing gate and across the grass to reach the farm road and the gate opposite. Go through the gate (**do not walk down the farm road at this point**) and follow the left hand fence until it reaches the woods. On this occasion do not enter the woods but turn right and head towards a kissing gate on the right hand side of the field and through it to rejoin the farm road at Laundry Cottage (where the village laundry was dealt with).

Now go onto and follow the farm road until it meets the main road by the side of St John's Rooms (now called Goring Heath Parish Hall) and opposite St John's Church. Cross over to the Church (again take great care) and, turning right, follow the fence to the village green. Turn left onto the green and head straight across to the line of cottages (New Buildings) on the other side. As you reach the road you will see a sign saying 'Footpath' and also 'Chiltern Way Extension'. Cross over and down the access lane to the cottages, go through the kissing gate at the end and follow the edge of the nearby garden extension until the path heads across the field on an obvious path towards another kissing gate and a farm track. Turn right onto this track and as you follow the next part of the walk you could be in any age. You are now following the boundary perimeter of the Iron Age Fort/Encampment, just follow the path as it leads straight ahead to the distant copse of trees that sit on the western embankment of the fort. This is an excellent viewpoint from which to observe the river and the valley below and indeed across to Hampshire and Watership Down; an obvious place to retreat to in times of flood or attack.

As you enter the next field another footpath joins from the left (this is Hod's Lane which leads to Hod's Corner on the Whitchurch Hill to Hill Bottom Road and is thought to be a continuation of the Danish war route (Odin or Woden's Lane?). You turn right and follow the path by the side of the field and then as it turns left and right by the hedge and left again between two fields to head towards a lane hidden from view. Drop into the lane, known as Town Lane (probably Tun Lane - leading to a settlement), it has existed for centuries, serving the community for communication, cattle and courtship. Turn right into this lane and turn right again at its junction with Path Hill, swing gently down this road to the gate leading to the field footpath on your right. Do take care, there may be traffic in both directions. Cross into this field, using the new kissing gate and, as in Walk 1, follow the hedge to the kissing gate, through it and, after a few yards, turn left down the fenced path to Hardwick Road. Take care and turn right here and follow Hardwick Road back to the village and to the High Street.