

Wansdyke Path directions, Marlborough to Smallgrain Plantation

Maps: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

Marlborough to Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road (5.8 miles, or 9.3 km)

[Updated on 21/4//23]

You have a choice at the start: **Either** walk to the end of Granham Close, at the west end of George Lane in Marlborough. Go through a gap by a gate onto a track, and after 40 metres go through a metal kissing gate on your left. **Or**, take the gravel path next to Granham Close and after 140m look up to your left and you will see the kissing gate. Walk up to it.

Go up the path beyond it. This soon becomes a sunken green path between embankments. At the top, ignore another metal kissing gate on your left leading to the Pewsey road, and turn right on the grass away from the road. Cross a hollow (which used to be the old road) between two earthworks, and continue along the top of Granham Hill. You join the White Horse Trail (WHT) as you cross over a sunken track just before going through a small wood. Continue to the stile at the end of the field beyond. Cross this stile and go through a strip of trees to another one. Go half left up the next field to reach a log stile in its corner. Step over this and continue in the same direction with a hedge on your left. Where this juts out slightly in front of you, turn right onto an unploughed strip. This brings you to Manton Drove, a tarmac road.

Turn left along the road for approx. 100m, then go right along a path between hedges, signposted Public Footpath, which comes out into a field. Turn sharp left here around the end of the hedge/copse, then after 40m go half right across a field, which might be partially ploughed, planted or grassed over, keeping a copse of trees and bushes to your right. At the field edge, turn left, and after 30m look for a stile on the right hidden in the hedge down a slope. This takes you into a pasture field which slopes down to the Clatford to Pewsey road below. Turn left and follow the hedge along the crest of the valley, going over a stile, and then go left through a small gate, then immediately right into a belt of trees. Continue in the same direction through Short Oak Copse until you meet the Wansdyke (the earthwork rather than the path!). Turn right and follow the Wansdyke down to the Clatford to Pewsey road.

Take the path on the opposite side indicated by a W.C.C footpath signpost diagonally right up into West Woods. This soon joins a track coming up from the road by a low, waymarked post; turn left along it, and after 40m or so, at a

second low, waymarked post, leave the WHT and turn right onto a wide woodland track. This forks left by a third waymarked post, and approximately 100m after this, take the broad, well surfaced track to the left signposted “Easy-access trail”.

At this point we rejoin the Wansdyke, which is on your left. It can be extremely muddy along this section, with the easiest route being along the broad, earthen track a few metres into the trees. Eventually cross over the Wansdyke on a cross track and continue in the same direction with the Wansdyke now on your right. Almost a mile (1.6 km) after rejoining the Wansdyke you reach a broad track on the perimeter of the West Woods, and rejoin the WHT. Turn right along this, soon going downhill. At the bottom of the hill, go left along the WHT for 10m, then turn right to ascend the trench beside the Wansdyke, which is now back on your left. You will need to walk on the bank to the right of the trench in various places to avoid fallen trees. At the end of the woods, go over the stile, and forward onto a slightly raised spinney. Once through the spinney, turn right, with a hedge on your right, and walk down to the bottom of the hollow and up the other side. Cross the stile at the top and turn sharp left along the edge of Shaw Copse.

[The route from here to the T junction of paths does not correspond to the OS map.] In the corner of the field, go through a large gap next to a redundant stile and follow the tractor track half right away from Shaw Copse. When the path arrives at a hollow which cuts across it, turn right and follow the path through a hedge and across a scrubby area to come out on the edge of a large field. Turn right. Ignore an obvious gap into a field on the right, in which is the site of the medieval village of Shaw, but there are now no visible remains of this. At the far corner, there is a T junction of paths; go right along a path with fence to left and strip of woodland to right. [Regrettably, this path often becomes impassable due to vegetation in the early summer, before Wiltshire Council has had a chance to clear it; to continue your walk in this situation the only option is to make your way into the field next to the path, and exit from it when you reach the metal gate]. Go through a metal gate at the end of this, with four Sarsen stones just beyond, and follow the fence line on your right down to the Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road.

Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road to A361 (5.4 miles, or 8.65 km)

[Updated on 25/4/23]

Go through the large metal gate into the field to the west of the Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road and proceed uphill, keeping the fence on your right. When the fence stops, continue in the same direction, still uphill but not as steeply. Aim for a stile beside a gate in the fence on the other side of the field, which is about 50m to the left of a circular enclosure of trees and bushes. Continue down the deeply rutted track in front of you. After about 40m turn left onto a level track. At this point you are reunited with the Wansdyke, which will be on your right for several miles.

At the end of this track, there is a choice of routes and two gates: one takes you onto the top of the Wansdyke (which is discouraged to prevent further erosion), and the other into a field, closely followed by a second field, which is preferred. At the end of this, the routes converge and you plunge down onto a track. Turn right down the track for 10m or so, then go through the gap in the fence or farm gate on your left. Climb back up onto the top of the Wansdyke and continue along it. When you come level with an information board about the Pewsey Downs Nature Reserve over to your left, you join both the White Horse Trail and the Mid Wilts Way, whose waymarks will accompany you virtually to the end of the Path. At this point, continue along the top of the Wansdyke or, if this is too overgrown to use, take the track parallel to it instead,

After approx. 120m, continue ahead at a three-way junction of tracks, then some 10m further on pass through a gate on your right and continue beside the Wansdyke. After a mile (1.6 km) walking along the Wansdyke – there are superb views to enjoy on both sides - arrive at a gate on the right in the corner of a field. Go through this. The official route continues next to the Wansdyke, but if this is too overgrown to use go down the grassy track beyond for 20m to join a stony track parallel to the Wansdyke. Turn left on this to arrive at a T junction after 100m or so. Go left again towards a gate leading to Manor Farm, then almost immediately right through another gate to return to the Wansdyke.

Descend and continue, to arrive at two barns after just over 1 mile (1.6 km), going through two gates in the process. As you pass the first barn, go over a stile, then turn right over the track leading to it, then left past the second barn to rejoin the Wansdyke after a field gate. Continue along the Wansdyke, crossing several farm tracks along the way, at all of which you have to negotiate a stile or bridle gate on each side of the track. After a further 1.2 miles (1.9 km) and a final metal gate, arrive at the A361 via the driveway of a house, at Shepherd's Shore.

A361 to Smallgrain Plantation (1.95 miles, or 3.1 km)

[Updated on 25/4/23]

Cross the A361 to the left of a line of trees opposite. Go through a bridle gate and walk beside the Wansdyke for the length of two fields. Go through another bridle gate onto a byway. Turn right for a few paces, then go left on a path through a small copse across tree roots. Follow the path on the other side as it winds left, then right and left again, in harmony with the Wansdyke. Soon two communications masts on Morgan's Hill come into view. When you reach the field containing these masts, continue to follow the Wansdyke, with the masts to right, exiting the field which hosts them via a gate nestling between the ramparts of the Wansdyke.

Ignore a gate to your left giving access to the North Wilts Golf Club and walk beside the Wansdyke on an often muddy path, gradually descending. Pass through a gate onto a track, which is an old Roman road, and turn left along it, with the golf club always on your left, descending again after a while. Approx. 350m after joining the track, turn left up some steps with a wooden handrail into the Smallgrain Picnic Area car park, where the Wansdyke Path comes to an end.