

Wansdyke Path directions, Smallgrain Plantation to Marlborough

Map: OS Explorer 157, OS Landranger 173

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

[Updated on 25/4/23]

The Smallgrain Picnic Area car park, which is by the Plantation of the same name, is approximately 700m north-west of the North Wilts Golf Club car park and club house on the Blacklands road between Devizes and Calne.

Take the steps at the back of the car park up and then down onto a track, which is an old Roman road. Turn right along this, with the golf course always on your right, going uphill initially. After 350m, as the track bends left, go through a gate in front of you, where there is an information board describing what Morgan's Hill has to offer. Continue uphill on an often muddy path, with the Wansdyke to your left. Ignore a gate to your right giving access to the North Wilts Golf Club, and continue walking along the Wansdyke. Go through a gate nestling between the two ramparts of the Wansdyke into the field containing two communications masts on the top of Morgan's Hill. Keeping these on the left, follow the Wansdyke to a metal bridle gate on a path downhill just beyond a fence corner.

Continue on the path beyond the gate as it winds right, then left and right again in harmony with the Wansdyke. Enter a small copse via another bridle gate and follow a path across tree roots onto a byway. Turn right for a few paces, then go through another bridle gate on your left. Walk beside the Wansdyke for the length of two fields to arrive at the A361.

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

[Updated on 25/4/23]

The Wansdyke crosses the A361 at Shepherd's Shore, where there is also a shot blasting and powder coating business. Go up the driveway of the house on the eastern side of the road, but almost at once branch right onto a path. Go through a bridle gate and begin/continue a lengthy perambulation along the Wansdyke. In the course of doing so, cross several farm tracks, at each of which you

negotiate a stile or metal bridle gate on each side of the track. After 1.2 miles (1.9 km) arrive at two barns; pass to the left of the first one, then go right and left over the (often extremely muddy) track leading to it and over a stile to resume the path along the Wansdyke beside the second one.

Just over a mile (1.6 km) from the barn, having passed through two more bridle gates en route and after a moderate ascent, arrive at a stony track leading to Manor Farm (per notice on gate on right). The official route continues beside the Wansdyke and is accessed via a bridle gate opposite, but is often too overgrown to follow. If this is the case, turn left and almost immediately right along another stony track parallel to the Wansdyke for 100m, then branch right through a field gate along a track for 20m to arrive at another gate. Turn left on the other side and continue your progress along the Wansdyke. There are superb views on both sides along this stretch, which lasts for approx. one mile (1.6 km)

Finally, leave the Wansdyke by going through a gate and turning left onto a track. Immediately arrive at a junction of tracks. Cross a stile onto the Wansdyke or, if the path is too overgrown, take the right-hand track going uphill. Opposite a gate on your right with an information board next to it about the Pewsey Downs Nature Reserve, continue on or join the Wansdyke by crossing a stile. (At this point you leave both the White Horse Trail and Mid Wilts Way). You will soon arrive at an obvious and quite steep break in the Wansdyke. Pass through gap in the fence or a farm gate to your left onto a track, then turn right up it for 10m or so to arrive back at the Wansdyke.

Here there is a choice of two routes: you can either walk along the top of the Wansdyke, now on your left (which is discouraged to prevent further erosion), or along the sides of two fields beside it, which is preferred. The gates out of the second one take you into a track with a fence on your right, at which point the two routes converge. Proceed down the track, then turn half right away from the Wansdyke onto another deeply rutted track. Cross the stile on the other side of the track which it joins after 40m or so. Continue in the same direction on a grassy track in the field beyond, aiming for a large beech tree which appears to be in its centre. Go downhill, first gradually and then more steeply, to discover that the tree is at a fence corner on your left. At the end of this fence you will arrive at the Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road.

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

[Updated on 21/4/23]

Enter the field to the east of the road through the gate provided and follow the fence on your left to the top of the field past four Sarsen stones in the top corner. Go through the small metal gate beyond these onto a path with fence to right and strip of woodland to left. [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 line of trees coming in from the right]. Where a line of trees comes in from the right, fork left into a field and walk along its left-hand edge, ignoring a gap into the field on your left. This contains the site of the medieval village of Shaw, but there are now no visible remains of this.

[The route from here to the redundant stile does not correspond to the OS map.] After 400m, turn left out of the field on an obvious path and follow this round to the right through a scrubby area and a hedge. Soon after the hedge, turn left onto a tractor track and follow this round to the right to a large gap in the field corner next to a redundant stile. Go through this and walk along the edge of the field with Shaw Copse on your right, then turn right over the stile at the end into a long field. Go down to the bottom of the hollow and up the other side, with the hedge to your left. At the top turn left through a spinney and enter West Woods by a stile.

Follow the path to the left of the Wansdyke, which gradually becomes a trench (you will have to walk on the bank to the left of the trench in various places to avoid fallen trees), to exit onto the White Horse Trail (WHT). Turn left for 10 yards, then right onto a broad track on the perimeter of the West Woods, going steadily uphill at first. After almost ½ mile (0.8 km), where the track bends to the right, branch left off it, leaving the WHT, with the Wansdyke on your left. It can be extremely muddy along this section. Eventually cross 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 arrive at a T junction of tracks and a sign confirming that you have just been walking on the “Easy-access trail”. Turn right here. The path soon bends right by a low, waymarked post. Take the first obvious track to the left about 100m after this, where there is a second low, waymarked post, then after 40m or so turn half right off this, as indicated by a third waymarked post, to arrive at the Clatford to Pewsey road by a W.C.C. footpath signpost.

Cross this and follow the Wansdyke, on your right, uphill to the end of Short Oak Copse. Turn left within Short Oak Copse, maintain direction in a belt of trees beyond, then go left through a small gate into a pasture field which slopes down to the Pewsey to Clatford road. Turn right along the crest of the valley with a hedge on your right, going over one stile, then right over another and uphill through the hedge into a large field, which may be partially-ploughed or planted. Turn left along the edge of the field, with the hedge on your left. As the ground starts to go gently downhill, take a track half right, keeping a small copse of trees and bushes to your left, to the end of the tall hedge on your right. Then turn right and immediately left to enter a path between hedges.

This comes out on a tarmac road, Manton Drove. Go left down this for approx. 100m, then turn right onto an unploughed strip between two fields. On reaching the far edge, go left and step over the logged stile in the fence into the next field. Go diagonally left across this aiming for a stile half way down the other side. Cross this, pass through a strip of woodland, and go over a second stile. This takes you into a long field at the top of Granham Hill. After passing through a small beech wood, the WHT veers left downhill alongside a sunken track, but we continue along the top of the hill. Cross a hollow (which used to be the old road) between two earthworks and continue to a metal kissing gate onto the Pewsey road. Do not cross this but turn left downhill on a green, sunken path between embankments to a metal kissing gate onto a track. Go right along this track and into Granham Close. Walk along this to arrive in Marlborough at the western end of George Lane.