



Ashampstead Common

FOLLOW THE COUNTRYSIDE CODE

Be safe – plan ahead and follow any signs.

Leave gates and property as you find them.

Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.

**Keep dogs under close control.
Consider other people.**

Know your rights and responsibilities.

For the full Countryside Code and information on where to go and what to do, visit

www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk

For more local information see 'Ashampstead. A Berkshire Parish' 2010

Walking is recommended by the Government as a safe and health promoting form of exercise. However, it should be carried out with care and forethought. Always wear appropriate footwear and take care when walking in the town or countryside.

There are no regular public transport services to Ashampstead.

No responsibility is accepted by the authors of this leaflet for the state or condition from time to time of the paths comprising these walks.

Acknowledgements

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West Berkshire
Countryside Society



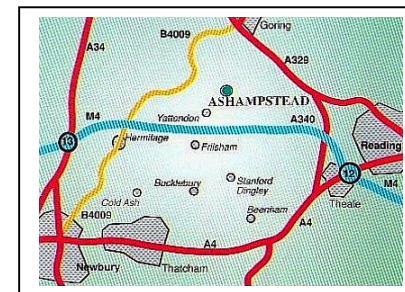
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ASHAMPSTEAD

Footpaths, Bridleways and Byways



Ashampstead church



Ashampstead Parish lies in the North Wessex Downs
Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty

ASHAMPSTEAD PARISH COUNCIL

Further copies of this leaflet may be downloaded from
www.westberkscountryside.org.uk and www.westberks.gov.uk

ASHAMPSTEAD – FOOTPATHS BRIDLEWAYS AND BYWAYS

This leaflet gives descriptions of the footpaths, bridleways, byways and restricted byways in the parish of Ashampstead, West Berkshire.

Ashampstead lies some eight and a half miles (14km) northeast of Newbury, and like so much of West Berkshire is in the North Wessex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. The parish lies on the dip slope of the Berkshire Downs.

The parish is without a post office, shop, pub or school. There are 47 paths of various classifications and many links to other parish networks. The paths offer walks and rides through differing terrains such as ancient woods and coppices, across fields and along ancient drove roads.

Paths with red titles have obstacles such as stiles or steep hills which make them unsuitable for disabled people.

Those with black titles have no obstacles but may have uneven and muddy surfaces.

Those with blue titles have no obstacles and reasonably sound surfaces. It would be wise to check its condition before use.

Local people provided the route information, but Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps 158 (Newbury and Hungerford) and 159 (Reading) will provide the bigger picture.

THE HISTORY OF ASHAMPSTEAD

The parish seems to have been settled relatively late. Mesolithic and Neolithic stone implements have been found but there are no traces of Iron Age, Roman or Saxon occupation. This may be due to the lack of surface water since there are no streams or reliable springs in the parish.

The manors of Ashampstead and Hartridge seem to have been established not long before the Norman Conquest in 1066. Ashampstead is not specifically named as a manor in Domesday Book (1086) but the un-located manor of *Ashden* is the right size. However, some of the roads and track ways through the parish are much older, particularly the Bradfield to Aldworth road which is almost certainly prehistoric. Ashampstead and Burnt Hill Commons were made into a deer park in the 13th century and there was a well established pottery industry on Ashampstead Common in the 12th-13th centuries. During World War 2 the Commons were used as convoy camps and there are numerous remains of huts etc. Today most of the parish is owned by Yattendon Estates. This is a very modern mixed agriculture and farming enterprise producing cereals and other crops, milk, timber and firewood. They are one of the largest Christmas tree producers in the country. Pheasant shooting is also an important part of their business.

NATURAL HISTORY

The underlying geology is chalk but this is overlain in many places by acid clays and sands. The pits in many woods provided chalk to sweeten these acid soils. The woods are generally old hazel coppices with oak standards but there are many conifer plantations. There are several Ancient Woods. The woods are home to fallow, roe and muntjak deer and an increasing population of badgers. Red kites and buzzards are regularly seen.

Footpath 31 (*Sound in very dry weather*) is the short-cut to Yattendon. It runs along the edges of fields and ancient woods and enters Yattendon near the church.

Footpath 32 is now outside the parish.

Bridleway 33 links the two Aldworth roads through the ancient Coleridge Copse. Look for the bank and ditch near the west end. This is the *park pale* of the de la Beche deer park licensed in 1335. It caused the awkward double bend in the B4009 by forcing the road to go outside the park.



The park pale outlined by bluebells

Bridleway 34 south Runs up White Hill. Parts near the sharp corner can be very muddy. **The northern stretch** is one of the old routes up onto Basildon Common which was enclosed in the 18th century and is now covered by Upper Basildon. There is a steep hill on this route. The small deep pit up hill from the corner is a lime kiln in which chalk from the nearby quarry was burned to make lime.

Bridleway 35 runs past Black Wood and links to the Streatley path network. Note the artificial pond in the corner of the wood. It provided water for animals grazing in the neighbouring field.

Bridleway 36 runs diagonally across Burnt Hill Common and is usually sound and dry. The ground flora was destroyed by 19th century brick making and by a World War 2 convoy camp.

Bridleway 37 runs beside *Rivers Great Ground* which was an open area in the 13th century deer park where deer grazed and could be hunted.

Bridleway 38 runs on the eastern side of the field. The area at the north is gardened by Walnut Tree Cottage under licence and this does not affect the Rights of Way.

Bridleway 39 has many very muddy patches where water seeps out of the gravel soil to the north. The bank and ditch on the south is the *park pale* of the 13th century deer park. The eastern end was replanted after massive storm damage in 1990. Look for primroses, marjoram, mullein, barren strawberries

Bridleway 40 has a short steep hill and surfaces are often muddy and uneven.

Footpath 41 joins Paths 5 and 38 down the steep valley side. Look for the remains of Turners Pond to the north. This was dug to water the deer in the deer park. A keepers lodge overlooked it from north of the road.

Restricted Byway 42. The road to the forge. **Bridleway 43** some very muddy places in wet weather. Look for bluebells north of the road and coppiced holly south of the road.

Footpath 44 look for bluebells.

Footpath 45 crosses the original Parish Boundary at the west end. The east end is currently (2013) a Christmas tree plantation and the path can be difficult to find.

Footpath 46 Only the north is in the parish where it is a hard surfaced gravel and concrete track. It is unsurfaced through woods to the south ending near a gamekeeper's headquarters. The house looks ancient but was built in the 1930s.

Footpath 47 joins the Ashampstead and Yattendon path networks. Many stiles.

A Permitted Path joins Paths 24 and 30.

Other Access Paths exist on Ashampstead Common.

Footpath 16 runs through Longcroft Shaw and is unsurfaced but generally firm and dry because the chalk is close to the surface. Look for the terraces caused by medieval ploughing. The shallow oblong pits are backfilled sawpits where trees were sawn into planks and beams. Look for sweet woodruff, bluebells

Footpath 17 runs through the southern part of the wood. Again note the terraces.

Footpath 18 joins Noak's Hill to Ashampstead Green. There are good views eastward over the valley to Hartridge.

Byway 19. This wide gravel track is often very muddy. It is an important part of the N – S route.

Footpath 20 continues 19 to the north through woods and across a dry valley to the Aldworth Road. Look for chalkland plants on the unploughed slope up to the road.

Footpath 21 is called Holly Lane from the abundant Holly along the banks. The shallow pits are backfilled sawpits.

Bridleway 22 east is the concrete road to Casey Field Farm Shop. **22 central** is often rutted and muddy. **22 west** is a firm metalled track. The whole route is Dog Lane.

Footpath 23 crosses Church Close to the church which was built in the 12th century for the Benedictine Abbey of Lyre in France. It has early wall paintings.

Byway 24 is 'The Chalk Path'. It is shown on the earliest maps.

Byway 25 is another ancient track. Note how deeply it is cut into the hill slopes. 'Stubbles' at the east end means land cleared from woodland.

Footpath 26 is a cross-field path to Ashampstead Common. Look for bluebells in the coppices. The path runs through Home Copse which supplied the

farm with sticks, poles and firewood. Childs Court Farm was built about 1680 when the fields were enclosed. The barns have now been converted to Business Units.

Bridleway 27 runs through Lay Fields wood. There is an interesting very flower rich meadow at the western end. Look for false oxlip, primroses, cowslips, bedstraws and many others.

Footpath 28 is another cross-field path. It runs along the edge of Doctor's Copse which is dense with bluebells in Spring. Look for the huge ash coppice stool which is probably 800 years old.



Bridleway 29 Starts at the entrance to Childs Court Farm and runs along the edge of Home Copse and then down the side of a very species rich hedge. This hedge once lined an ancient road and contains barberry, cherry plums, feral apples and many more.

Byway 30 north end to Path 31. A very ancient track linking the Pang Valley near Bradfield to the Ridgeway near Aldworth. At Burnt Hill it provided the Parish Boundary – a sign of great age. Note how deeply it cuts into the landscape near Ashampstead.

Byway 30 between Path 31 – 29 is often very muddy and deeply rutted.

Byway 30 from Path 29 southwards is sound.

WALK DESCRIPTIONS

Bridleway 1. The east end is the original Yattendon Road and probably dates from at least the 9th century. Look for the massive lynchet on the south side. The path follows the original parish boundary bank and ditch. The pond at the west end is a flooded quarry dug for brick making materials.

Footpath 2. The hard concrete road under the leaf mould is a remnant of the World War 2 convoy camp.

Restricted Byway 3 western end is another concrete camp road as far as Sloe Pightle. **The eastern end** is un-surfaced and often soft and muddy. It offers good views to the north.

Footpath 4. Runs through a Christmas tree plantation and is often overgrown at the southern end.

Byway 5. This well surfaced gravel road continues the line of the old Yattendon Road from Bridleway 1. Look for red campion and crosswort.

Bridleway 6. This is the main W-E track. It is very often muddy. Look for the large chalk quarry at the western end and for chalk loving plants at the eastern end, barren strawberries, marjoram etc.

Bridleway 7. This is an important N-S route linking the Pang Valley at Bradfield to the Ridgeway at Aldworth. It is often extremely muddy. Look for bluebells, greater stitchwort and foxgloves.

Bridleway 8. The road from Bradfield originally continued up this shallow valley to Childs Court Farm and Yattendon Lane was a side turning. Once again the southern end can be very muddy. Look for wellingtonias, cedars, bluebells and wood sorrel.

Bridleway 9. An important linking path to the Basildon Parish network. Look for a small chalk pit and a World War 2 hut base. The deep ditch with an external bank was the *park pale* of the 13th century deer park.



Bridleway 10. This is *Sodom Lane* and leads to a Methodist chapel at Quick's Green. Its name derives from a local joke about the 'hell fire' preachers at the chapel. The north end follows the parish boundary.

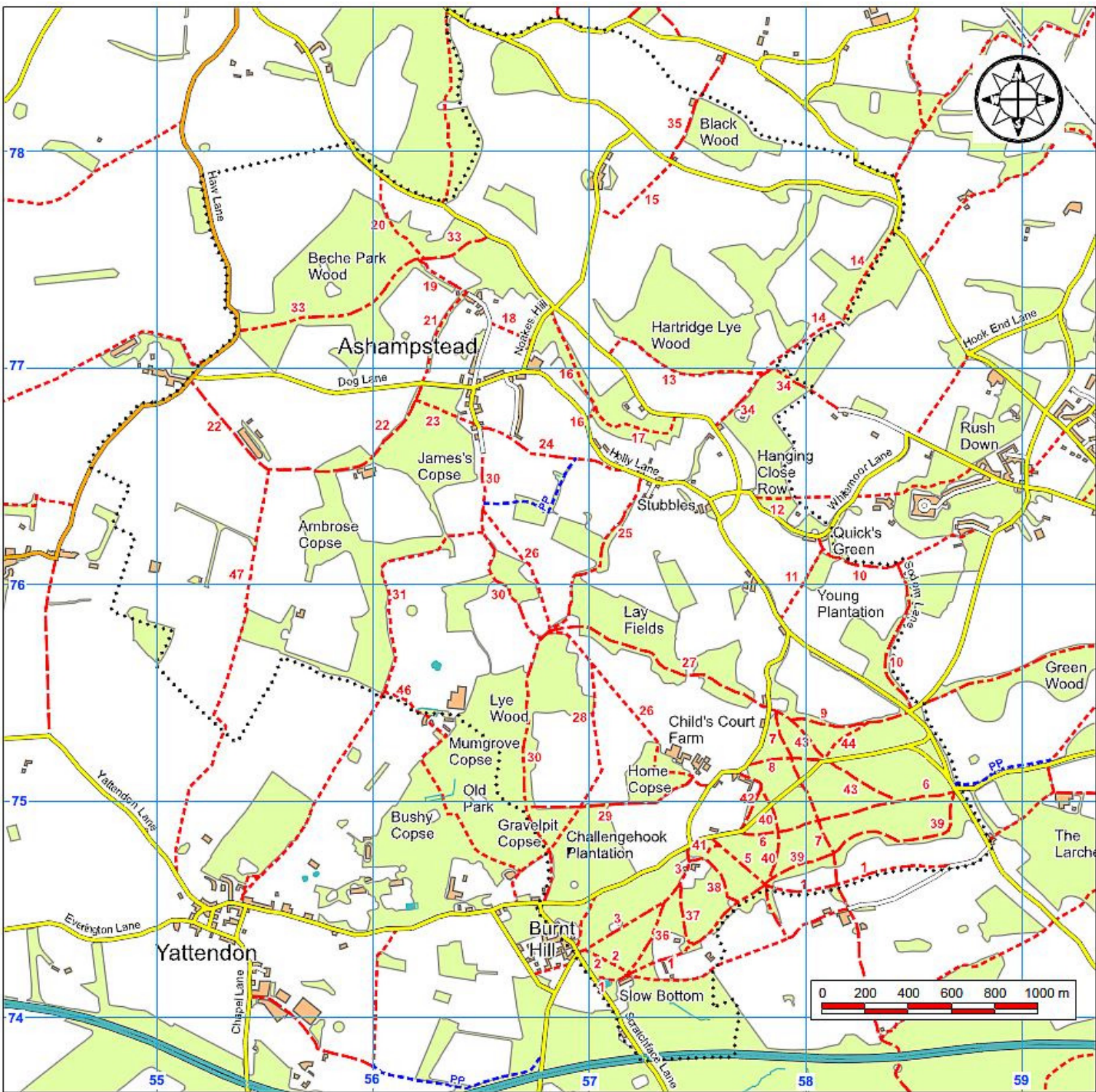
Footpath 11, Brian's Path. There are interesting views up the valley to the north. Look for whitebeam.

Footpath 12. Starts near the parish chalk pit and links to the Basildon path network. The pit is very deep, keep away from the edge.

Footpath 13 runs along just inside the southern edge of Hartridge Lye Wood. Parts of this need constant attention to cut back encroaching briars and bushes. Look for violets, primroses and the 'roast beef plant' (stinking iris).

Footpath 14. Continues the line up a beautiful valley and through Broom Wood. In the wood look for Grim's Dyke, a large earthwork of unknown date and purpose.

Footpath 15. Runs around the boundary of Hartridge Farmhouse. Good views to the west.



Ashampstead Common

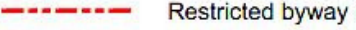


Leyfields Meadow at the west end of path 27. Cowslip, bluebells and false oxlips

Parish Boundary



Rights of way



Permitted path

