

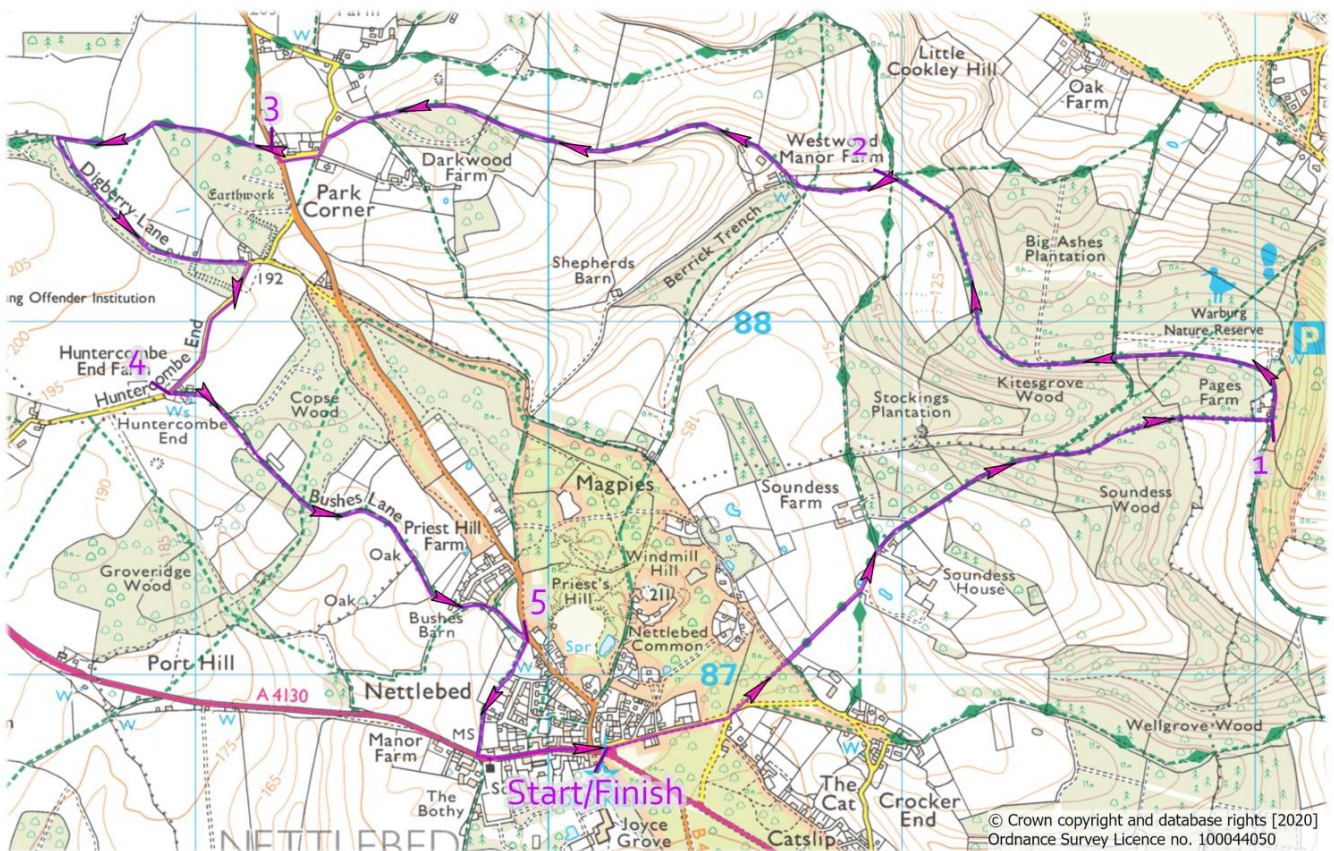
Nettlebed walk through Warburg Nature Reserve

By Alie Hagedoorn, Henley & Goring Ramblers and Henley Walkers are Welcome

Summary

Nettlebed is in the midst of the Chilterns and a beautiful place for walking. This walk has no stiles or kissing gates. It passes through Warburg Nature Reserve, best known for its dormouse population. There is a visitor centre with an exhibit and a picnic area.

- Length:** 6 miles
- Terrain:** Easy walking on good paths. The path from the Nature Reserve from the Visitor Centre through the wood can be muddy after rain. One easy gradual but long climb between the nature reserve and Park Corner. Stile free and no gates.
- Start & finish:** The Old Kiln, Nettlebed RG9 5BA. Grid Reference SU 701 868
- Food & drink:** The White Hart pub and the Field Kitchen café in Nettlebed. On route there are picnic tables at Warburg Nature Reserve
- Maps:** OS Explorer 171, Chiltern Society 2
- Parking:** Park around the Green, details as above. An alternative start point is the car park at Warburg Nature Reserve RG9 6BJ. Grid ref: SU 720 879
- Local transport:** Bus Service X38 runs between Oxford and Reading on Monday to Saturday.



Route

From The Old Kiln road, turn left along The Green and follow the narrow road to a junction. Bear left on a road signposted to Magpies. The road is tarmacked to start with, but turns into a dirt road later on. At the end of this road turn left and you have come to the Warburg visitor centre.

Waypoint 1 – From the centre, continue along the main path through the Nature Reserve for 1.5km to reach a 5 way junction.

Waypoint 2 – Carry straight on and follow this wide track for further 1.5km path all the way until you come to a lane. Turn left along the lane to the busy main road and then right for 50m to a wide track on the left.

Waypoint 3 – Take this track and follow it alongside the wood and open field to reach a lane. Turn left, turn right by Digberry Farm and walk along the lane to Huntercombe End Farm.

Waypoint 4 – Just before the right-hand bend, turn left on a wide track through the farm buildings and follow the path (Bushes Lane) all the way until you see some houses on the left. Ignore the stile to the left and continue until there is a junction. Turn right and follow the path until you get to the road.

Waypoint 5 -. Turn right to walk alongside the allotments, until you come to the main road. Turn left and follow the short stretch back to The Green.

Points of Interest

Nettlebed: Nobody is sure where the name originates but there a couple of good theories. One is that Roman soldiers rubbed nettles on their limbs to keep warm on marches and the other is that nettles were used in the production of sheets and table cloths. However, what Nettlebed was most famous for was the manufacture of bricks, tiles and pottery. There was a plentiful supply of quality clay which allowed this industry to thrive from medieval times to the 20th century. At the starting point is the Grade II listed bottle kiln used for making bricks. Probably built in the late 17th century, it would have been one of a number in the area. It was converted in 1927 to burn lime which ceased in 1938. It then fell into disrepair but was restored in 1975. By the bus shelter there are a pair of puddingstones and an information board.

Warburg Nature Reserve: With flower-rich grasslands and majestic woodlands, this is one of the largest nature reserves owned by Bucks, Berks and Oxon Wildlife Trust. It has a visitor centre, picnic area, bird hides and a wealth of fauna and flora, including 15 species of orchid. It's home to an incredible variety of habitats sheltering thousands of species. In spring the woodland is awash with spectacular bluebells and wood anemones. In May and June the reserve has a superb dawn chorus. When summer comes the wide, sunny rides and open glades of chalk grassland are full of summer flowers, including pyramidal orchids, as well as swathes of aromatic wild marjoram and thyme. During the autumn there are glorious colours throughout the tree canopy, while down below grow the Chiltern gentians and an incredible 900 species of fungi. In winter, visitors can enjoy the magical frost along the valley bottom.

Nettlebed Allotments: At the end of the walk, when you come past the allotments, you might be lucky to take some free surplus veggies from the vegetable cart supplied by all allotment holders.