

Holtwood Walk: 3 miles

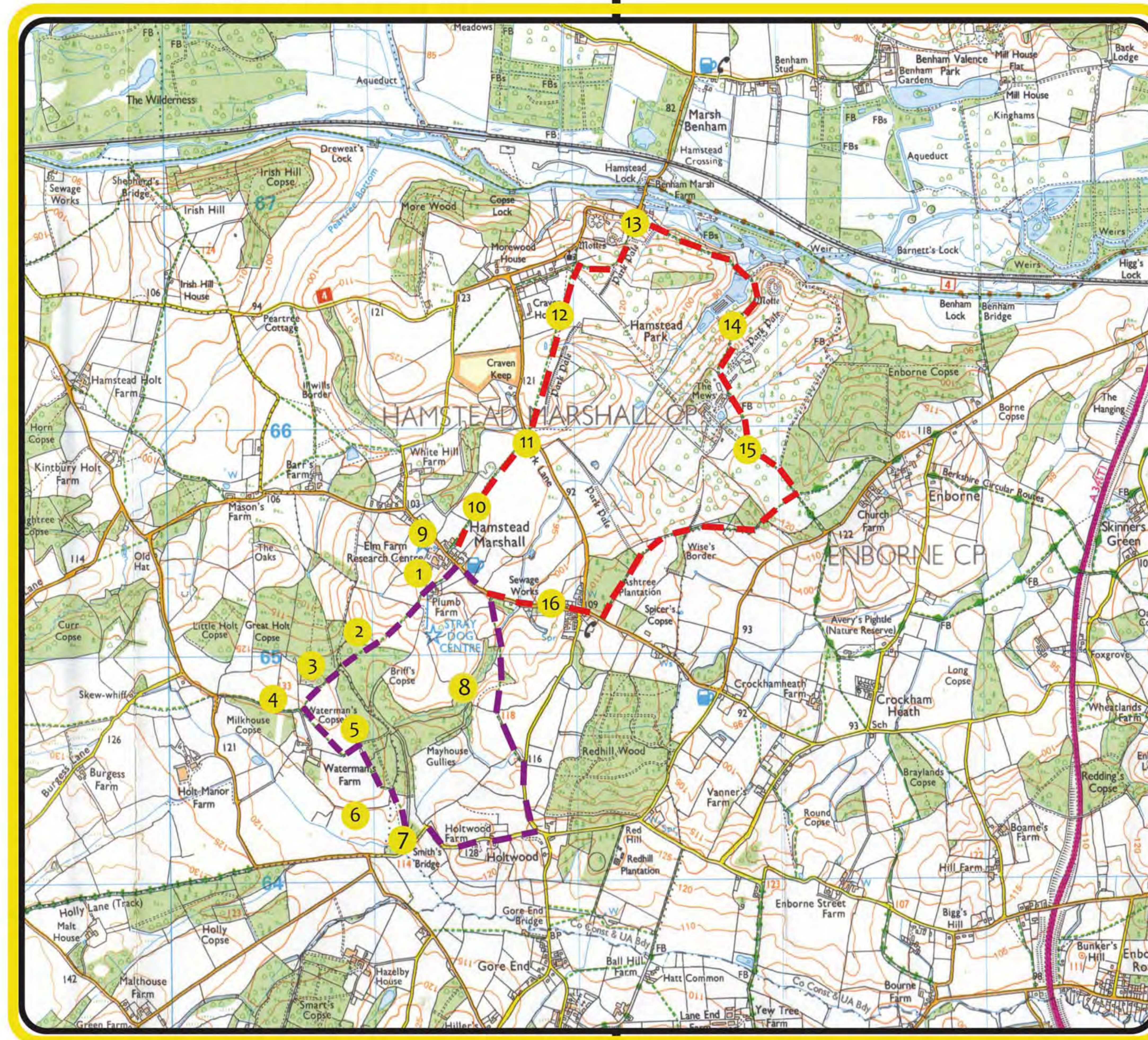
(points 1 to 8)

Old Mansion Walk: 3.75 miles

(points 9 to 16)



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Take the driveway opposite the White Hart up past Plumb's Farm (the Dogs' Trust). Pass the kennel on the left, after which there is a footpath crossroads. Take the route straight ahead, over a stile and uphill (1) across a field towards woodland. Here you are at one of the highest points of the village (400ft), and you have a good overall view of the houses distributed along the Kintbury Road. The distinctive triangle of Morewood's roof can be seen further north.



Cross the stile into Briffs Copse (2) and follow the path which eventually takes you to the corner of a field (3). This is Waterman's Farm land. The footpath signs direct you across this field in a dog-leg (4) (5), then across another (6), eventually to meet Watery Lane at Smiths Bridge (7), which marks the border with Hampshire.



Turn left into Watery Lane and pass Foxlee and Enborne Valley farms on the right. The lane rises and then drops to the riding stables at Holtwood Farm (perhaps one of the oldest houses in the village) on the left, and its redeveloped barns to the right. Another slight rise meets Holtwood Lane.



Turn left into Holtwood Lane, and continue a few hundred yards until the footpath sign takes you off to the left, crossing the corner of one field, and then the width of another. At this point there is a stile whose approach is sometimes overgrown with brambles.



Having negotiated this you are back on Elm Farm land, crossing three fields, as you descend to the Mayhouse Gully. Winding through the damp woodland here, cross the stream (8), and the path emerges into another field, at the far fence at which the footpath forks.



Take the right-hand option leading onto a short trackway. This takes you to the Kintbury Road, and the White Hart is about 100 yards to the left.

Take the footpath which forks to the right, over pasture aiming for the stile at the far side. Descend, skirting a copse to the right. Bear right and after a couple of field crossings, the path brings you to the corner of Ash Tree plantation, beside which the path runs to the left as a more obvious track. After a few hundred yards it joins the Kintbury Road just east of Ash Tree Corner (16), from which it is a half-mile walk (to the right) back to Elm Farm.



Take the bridleway opposite Elm Farm (9) across the field (10), passing over a dip created by clay extraction for brickmaking. To the left is Woodcote Copse. The bridleway rises to meet Park Lane, which you cross, continuing on another footpath uphill to a stile (11). Follow the footpath signs which take you across the middle of the Plain, once grassland used for village cricket and golf, but now cultivated. The path through crops should be clearly marked. As you cross the Plain note the ditch and bank on the right, remains of the pale which enclosed the medieval deer park; it is now a Scheduled Ancient Monument. Ahead you can see the gate-piers of the first Craven mansion, built in the 1660s and burned down in 1718. The gate-piers and what is left of the old mansion walling also have protected status.



The path reaches St Mary's churchyard (12), at which point footpaths run left into Craven Hill, and also to the right. Take the latter, skirting the garden of North Lodge, and descend through an avenue to Hamstead Mill (13).



Turn right onto the tarmac drive and walk towards the big house in the centre of the park, successor to the burnt mansion. The Craven Fishery lies on the left, shrouded by greenery in summer but plainly visible in winter. The path passes a lake (14) and climbs a hill. To the left is the earthwork of a Norman castle (not open to the public). At the top the footpath leaves the tarmac to skirt the house grounds on grass, eventually joining another driveway leading out from the back of the house. Continue along this to a junction marked by a white stone memorial dedicated to the US troops who camped here just before D-Day (15).

