



Frilsham and the *Pot Kiln*

Distance: 4½ km=3 miles

easy walking

Region: Berkshire

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Refreshments: the *Pot Kiln*

Map: Explorer 158 (Newbury) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Legendary rural gastro-inn, towering forests, meadows, views, hilly tracks

In Brief



Here is the baby sister walk of that monumental *Bradfield, Bucklebury, Stanford Dingley* walk, designed to distil the distance down to a scenic three miles and concentrating on that gem of a country inn, the *Pot Kiln*. Visitors new to this part of West Berkshire may well lengthen or shorten the route, or even spend the entire afternoon at the *Pot Kiln*.



There is some luxuriant undergrowth near the start of this walk and some high bracken, after which the paths are clear. So you may prefer to have your legs covered. Boots are not necessary, but always an advantage.

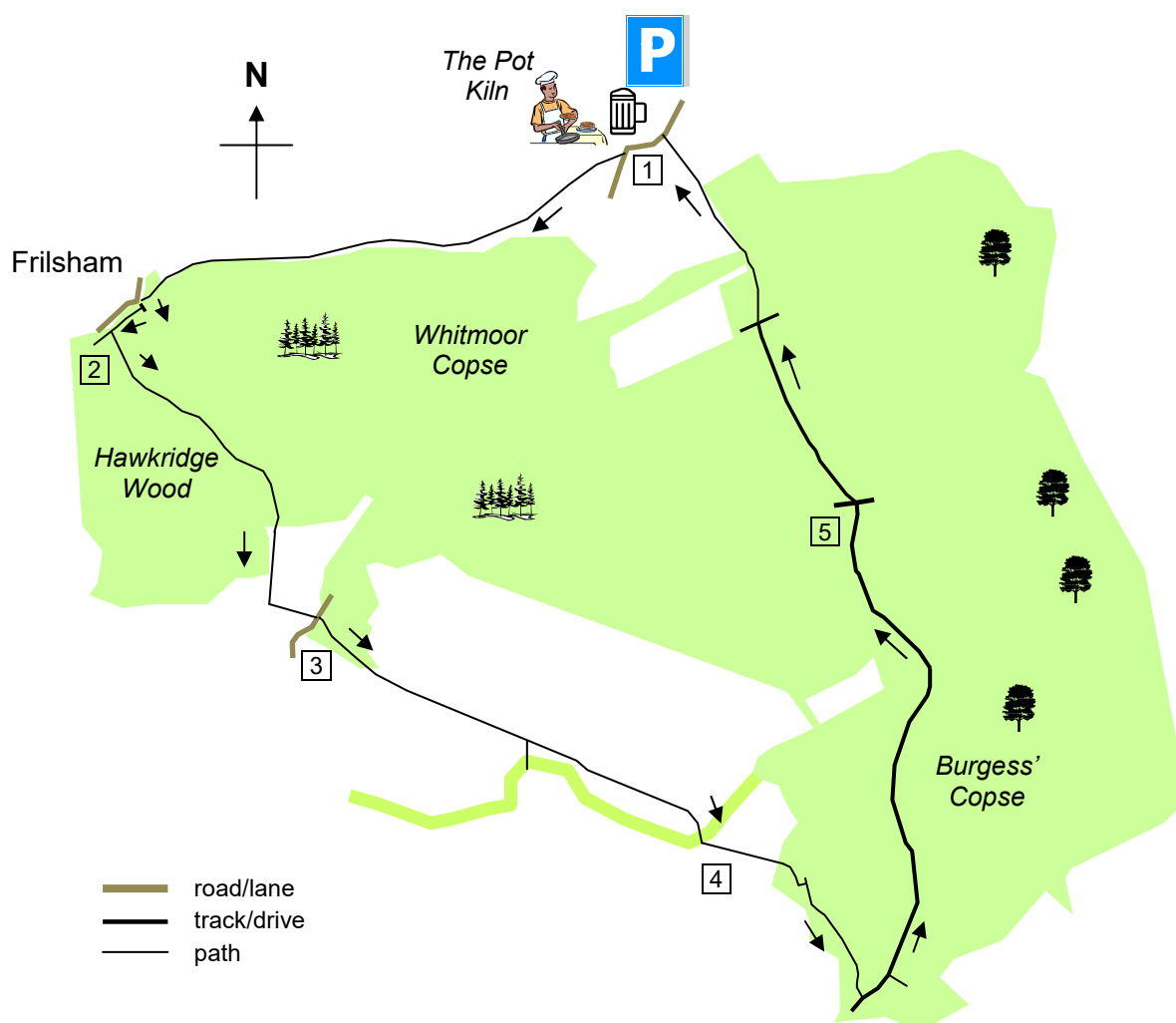


With **no stiles**, this walk is fine for your dog and, since everyone in rural West Berkshire has a dog or a horse, he is welcome (discreetly) in the pub.



The walk begins at the car park beside the **Pot Kiln** pub in Chapel Lane, Frilsham, Thatcham, West Berkshire, www.w3w.co/quack.skillet.bank, postcode **RG18 0XX**. Avoid the pub's own parking area: the spaces on the side are public. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Facing the entrance to the *Pot Kiln*, go **left** through a small metal gate by yellow arrows onto a path, leading over the grass. It runs beside a fence of the pub garden and continues ahead just to the **left** of a grassy bank. Proceed along the meadow under wires and, where it opens out with houses visible ahead, keep to the **left**-hand side, close to the woods of Whitmoor Copse. You pass a redundant stile with yellow arrows on your left. When you are near a large house, keep **left** through a small wooden gate onto an enclosed path. Just before you meet a tarmac lane, turn **left** beside a large metal gate at a bridleway sign but immediately turn **right** onto a signed footpath, parallel to the lane in Frilsham.

Frilsham's history is closely linked with St Frideswide (or Frithuswith), legendary patron saint of Oxford (≈650-727). Daughter of a King of Mercia, she fled into the forest to keep her vow of celibacy and established an oratory and well here. The name of the village may be based on her name. St Frideswide Church is in an ancient hamlet just outside the village and is worth visiting by car.

- 2 In 50m or so, you meet on your left an old-fashioned 3-way footpath sign. (As a guide, there's a small wooden gate on your right leading out to the lane.) Turn **left** here onto a narrow footpath through an exotic botanical area. The path may seem overgrown and you need to press on determinedly. You pass a pond on your right and soon you are in the wonderland of sky-tall trees known as Hawkridge Wood. You emerge from the forest, over a flat bridge, past a post with a yellow arrow, into an open area.

Your path veers a little to the **right** here to take a clear path through bracken. You come over a flat bridge, through a small wooden gate into an open pasture. (Until recently, the route was diagonally across the pasture to a stile in the far corner; this had changed at the time of writing.) Walk along the right-hand side of the pasture, heading to the **right** of the buildings of Hawkridge Farm where you'll find a modern wooden gate. Turn **left** along the side of the buildings, including the ancient barn, and come out through a large wooden gate onto a tarmac lane.

- 3 Cross directly over onto an unmarked path. (The signpost 15m to your right is now misplaced.) You pass a redundant kissing-gate, just before you come out into a grassy meadow. (Note that grass and crops can change when you do this walk.) Head straight across up a gentle wide slope. As the space opens out, keep to the **left** side. Just after the far corner, ignore two footpaths one on your right and one opposite, on your left. Continue straight ahead on a narrow path, leading out into a long thin meadow. Exit the meadow in the far **right**-hand corner, going past the remains of a gate, into a large crop field. Go forward 5m and turn **left** on a farm track which runs between the crop field on your right, and a grassy space, with wide views.

- 4 Your next route will be through the nearby thick woodland that is visible straight ahead. You can see an opening in the trees with a faint path (yours!) leading into it. Once in the woods, elbow **right**, as per the yellow arrow, and turn **right** at a T-junction. Your path runs through the wood, not far from the edge about 20m to your right. (2025: You need to step over branches of a fallen tree.) The path ends at a T-junction with a wide restricted byway. Turn **left** here uphill. Ignore a footpath on your right shortly and press on uphill through the striking mixed woodland of Burgess' Copse. Apart from the temporary gradient and undulating terrain, the paths from here are wide and easy. After a total of 800m you come to a wide signposted 4-way crossing.

- 5 Your route is straight across on a marginally narrower byway. The terrain is different, with rhododendrons and ornate conifers which squeeze the path. In 300m or so, cross straight over a shingle driveway. Your path now runs across a bracken heath and through a small metal gate into a pasture where you have the enticing view of the inn. Go down the right-hand side, over a bridge-with-rails, through a small wooden gate and along a fenced path. A small metal gate leads out to a tarmac lane. Turn **left**, immediately reaching the *Pot Kiln* where the walk began.



The Pot Kiln was an isolated local pub until it became famous with the Berkshire folk, zipped up its menu and took on the media. Public interest increased when it emerged that it was one of the Middletons' locals. When Prince William and Kate were snapped there one Valentines weekend, it became the star of a tabloid story. Apart from all this, this really is a perfect country pub, in a delightful setting, with an good selection of real ales (including the local Renegade) and a really ambitious menu, and well deserving of the accolade as one of the best rural inns. Mike and Katie Robinson who now run it made use of Mike's skill in cooking game and built their menu largely around seasonal local meats, such as wild venison and rabbit, served with vegetables from the garden. The Pot Kiln is open from 12 noon weekends but closed on Tuesday. Just in case you feel unable to struggle home, the Pot Kiln is also a hotel with three rooms in the pub and four superior rooms in the garden.



The Renegade Brewery used to be called the West Berkshire Brewery and was situated in a dilapidated building behind the Pot Kiln until in 2000 it had grown too big and moved mainly to Yattendon. It was later taken over by the Yattendon Group and renamed. You can visit the brewery which has a huge eating / drinking space which lacks any character: best drink at the pubs (the beer is first class).

Getting there

By car: if coming from the London / Reading area, the best way is via **Yattendon**.

Take the M4 and exit at Reading West. At the second (big) roundabout, turn **right** as for *Pangbourne*. In only 400 yds, turn **left** as for *Bradfield*, *Ashampstead*, **Yattendon**, *Compton*. Keep following signs for Yattendon. This twisty scenic road goes straight through Bradfield, under the M4, and reaches Yattendon after about 7 miles total. For Frilsham, go through to the end of the village till you see a left junction and a little sign for *Frilsham* and the *Pot Kiln*. On the way you pass on your left the huge Renegade Brewery (see note in the text). After crossing the M4, ignore a turning on the right marked *Frilsham* and continue, soon arriving at the *Pot Kiln*. Park immediately on the right.

Alternatively, you can continue to Pangbourne and turn **left** opposite the Cross Keys at a sign for *Upper Basildon*. Soon there are signs for Yattendon.

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