

MWW website directions – stage 9, A361 Shepherd's Shore to Knap Hill

Maps: OS Landranger 173, OS Explorer 157

Distance: 5 ½ miles (8.8 km)

West to east

The Mid Wilts Way 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 R onto grass. Cross a stile and begin/continue a lengthy perambulation along the top of the Wansdyke. In the course of doing so, cross several farm tracks, at each of which you drop down from the Wansdyke and negotiate a stile or metal kissing gate on each side of the track. After 1.2 miles (1.9 km) arrive at a barn, pass to the L of it, then go R and L over the extremely muddy track leading to it to resume the path along the Wansdyke. After 2.4 miles (3.8 km), after a moderate ascent, arrive at a stony track leading to Manor Farm (per notice on gate on R). Continue along another stony track parallel to the Wansdyke for 100m, then branch R along a grassy track for 20m to arrive at a gate festooned with waymarks. On the other side of the gate, turn L and continue your progress along the Wansdyke. There are superb views on both sides along this stretch.

Finally, 3 ½ miles (5.6 km) after crossing the A361, leave the Wansdyke at a junction of tracks. Take the right hand track going uphill (the official route is along the fenced grass verge on the L, but this is seldom used), and after approx. 100m turn R through a gate into the Pewsey Downs Nature Reserve. Turn L through a gate at the end of the first field. Pass through two more fields, with Milk Hill, the highest point in Wiltshire at 295m (968ft) to your L. Go L in a tight semi-circle round the stunted trees and bushes on the shoulder of Milk Hill, then follow the contour on the other side to a gate. The Alton Barnes White Horse is 200m or so beyond this gate, but is not visible until the last moment due to folds in the hills.

Continue past the White Horse along the contour path. Ignore the fork to the R approximately 130m from Adams Grave at the top of Walkers Hill, and instead continue on the main path beside a low earthwork, with the whale-like shape of Knap Hill directly in front of you. After around 150m, veer L towards a metal kissing gate, with the car parking area at Knap Hill in your line of sight. Follow the well-beaten path through two more metal kissing gates to arrive at a final metal gate onto the Lockeridge to Alton Barnes road. The car parking area is on the other side.

East to west

Cross the Alton Barnes to Lockeridge road from the car parking area at Knap Hill. Go through a metal gate, then a metal kissing gate immediately to the L. Follow the well beaten track through two more metal kissing gates. Turn half R, with Adams Grave and Walkers Hill to your L, to join an obvious path beside a low earthwork. The White Horse Trail comes in from the L just beyond Walkers Hill. Continue on this path along the contour line for 700m to arrive at the top of the Alton Barnes White Horse.

Go through the wooden gate beyond and follow the contour of the hillside. There are tremendous views of the Pewsey Vale to the L on this section, and to the R is Milk Hill, the highest point in Wiltshire at 295m (968ft). Go R in a tight semi-circle round the stunted trees and bushes on the shoulder of Milk Hill to pass through a gate beyond. (You can also follow the more earth-exposed path beneath this but this is a longer way round). Maintain direction along the ridge to turn R through a third gate. Shortly after this, arrive at a wide track, where the Wansdyke Path comes in from the R but the Pewsey Downs Nature Reserve is left behind. Turn L down this (the official route is along the fenced grass verge on the R, but this is seldom used). Do NOT take the broad stony track to the R after approx. 100m, but instead go over the stile at the top of a bank just after this on the R to access the iron-age fortification known as the Wansdyke. This will be your companion for several miles.

After a mile (1.6 km) walking along the top of the Wansdyke enjoying the superb views on both sides, arrive at a gate on the R in the corner of a field. Go through this and down the grassy track beyond to join a stony track parallel to the Wansdyke. Go L down this to arrive at a T junction after 100m or so. Turn L towards a gate leading to Manor Farm, then almost immediately R through another gate to

return to the top of the Wansdyke. Descend and continue, to arrive at a barn after just over 1 mile (1.6 km). Here go through another gate, then R and L over the drive leading to it to rejoin the Wansdyke after another gate. Continue along the top of the Wansdyke, crossing several farm tracks along the way, at all of which you drop down from the Wansdyke and negotiate a stile or metal kissing gate on each side of the track. After 1.2 miles (1.9 km) and a final stile, arrive at the A361 via the driveway of a house, Shepherd's Shore.