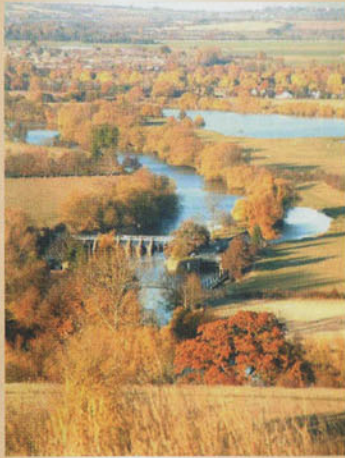


Walk B. (Continued)

5. Cross the road outside the church and pass through the gate or the squeeze stile into the field to start the climb to Wittenham Clumps. The path goes straight up the hill through another gate to a group of trees on the skyline. This is Round Hill and the first of the Wittenham Clumps.

The climb is quite steep but rewarding as the view from the top of the surrounding countryside is magnificent. The river and Day's Lock (as pictured below), the Berkshire Downs to the South, the Chilterns to the East and to the West, in dramatic contrast, Didcot Power Station. There is a lookout point with a metal plaque indicating the features that can be seen.



6. Due to past damage, passage through the trees is restricted so walk around them to the far side. Keeping the trees on your right will allow good views back down to Dorchester and the Abbey.

7. At the far side, the further hill is Castle Hill, the second of the Wittenham Clumps. Walk down the hill making for the small gate straight ahead. Pass through the gate, cross the path and on through another gate. This brings you onto the outer fortification of this Iron-age fort. Follow the path down into the ditch and climb the steps onto the hill and thence up to the trees. Again there is no path through the trees so follow a path round the hill, this time keeping the trees on your left.

At the South-east corner of the hill you will see a stone with a bronze plaque mounted on it commemorating the nearby 'Poem Tree' on which in 1844 a twenty line poem was carved by Joseph Tubb.

8. Take the path down the hill away from the trees towards the edge of the woods. Pass through two small gates and follow the path by the side of the field and then left into the wood. At the 'T' junction turn left and follow a straight path to the further edge of the wood and pass through a gate out onto a meadow at the opposite side of which can be seen Little Wittenham Church and the gate by which you entered the Clumps. Take the same route back to the river and continue Walk A from step 3 back to Dorchester.



Walk C. Day's Lock via the Thames Path to Long Wittenham (7 miles).



9. From the footbridge walk upstream to Day's Lock, cross the river via the lock gate and the weir and continue upstream along the Thames Path.

This is a very pleasant riverside walk in all seasons with an abundance of bird life and waterside vegetation to be seen. You can also admire the splendid houses backing onto the river on the opposite bank.

10. After about two miles you will reach Clifton Meadow. There is a Northmoor Trust information board to the left of the path and a gate ahead of you. Turn left away from the river and cross the wooden footbridge over some boggy ground. Continue with the fence on the right for a couple of hundred yards to a gate, through the gate and along a green lane between two hedgerows. At New Barn Farm the lane becomes a farm road and continues to Long Wittenham past a Recreation Ground on the right.

11. At the road junction, turn sharp left towards Little Wittenham. After about half a mile, the road bears right and a footpath is signed to the left. Cross the stile to the left of the gate and follow the path towards some farm buildings. Turn right in front of the largest barn and cross two stiles into a field. Keeping to the right cross a couple of fields and stiles making for the right-hand end of a redbrick wall. Crossing another stile in the corner of the field, brings you into the grounds of Little Wittenham Manor.

12. Follow the way markers through the grounds, keeping the tennis court on your right, and make for a white gate in the far wall. Pass through the gate, turn left and a short walk will bring you to Little Wittenham Church (see Walk B, step 4). A further 100 yards will bring you back to the footbridge and the return route to Dorchester (Walk A, step 3)



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wanders towards
the Wittenhams



Hidden Britain
South East



Wanders towards the Wittenhams

The walks described here take us from Dorchester across the river towards the Wittenhams and the countryside around. The first walk (A) as far as the Thames at Day's Lock is common to all three walks.

Walk A. Day's Lock and the mouth of the River Thames (2.5 miles).

1. Our walk starts at the car park by Dorchester Bridge. Walk down Bridge End away from the main road to the start of the village green at the junction with Watling Lane. Turn right and immediately left into Wittenham Lane. Follow the lane right to its end passing a small thatched cottage on the right and onto the footpath running straight ahead along the edge of the field. Keeping the field boundary on your left continue to the kissing gate in the corner of the field. Beyond the gate and running away to the right are the Dyke Hills, a double rampart of earthworks that once protected a late Iron Age settlement. They have been destroyed in places but a look at the map will show how easy it was to divert water from the Thames to flow between the ramparts to the Thame and so surround the settlement with water.

2. Do not go through the gate, but turn right and keeping the Dyke Hills on your left follow the path until the end of the earthworks where it turns left and continues between two hedgerows to a gate. Pass through the gate and walk diagonally to your left across the field to the bridge in the corner.

This bridge, a few yards downstream from Day's Lock, is where the Annual International Pooh Sticks Championships are held. This event takes place in March in aid of the Royal National Lifeboat Institution and local charities and has been running for more than 25 years.

The current lock was built in 1788 and rebuilt in 1871. It replaced an earlier single-gated flash lock through which barges had to be dragged against the current by horses.

If you have the time, two further walks from this point are described below; but even if you attempt neither, it is worthwhile visiting Little Wittenham Church (see Walk B).

To continue this walk

3. Take the footpath under the bridge and follow the river bank until you reach the confluence of the River Thame and the Thames. Be careful along the middle section as the path is often eroded and pitted with rabbit holes. At the Thame, cross the river by the footbridge, turn left away from the Thames and follow the path through the water meadow to reach the road close to Dorchester Bridge. Cross the bridge to return to our start point.

Walk B. Day's Lock to Wittenham Clumps (4.5 miles).

4. Cross the river by the footbridge below the lock, passing the lock-keeper's cottage on the left. The road brings you to Little Wittenham Church.

This is a very pretty church but not terribly ancient as it was almost completely rebuilt in 1863. The original building was built for the monks of Abingdon Abbey who held a monastic grange next door. The 14th century tower is original and under the tower are monuments to the Dunch family who held the manor until 1719, including a fine marble monument to Sir William Dunch (died 1611) and his wife Mary, the aunt of Oliver Cromwell.

