

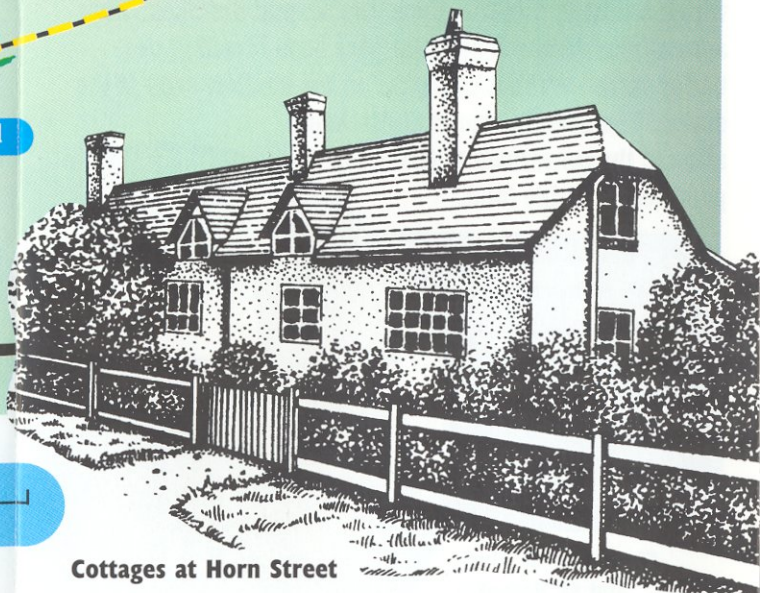
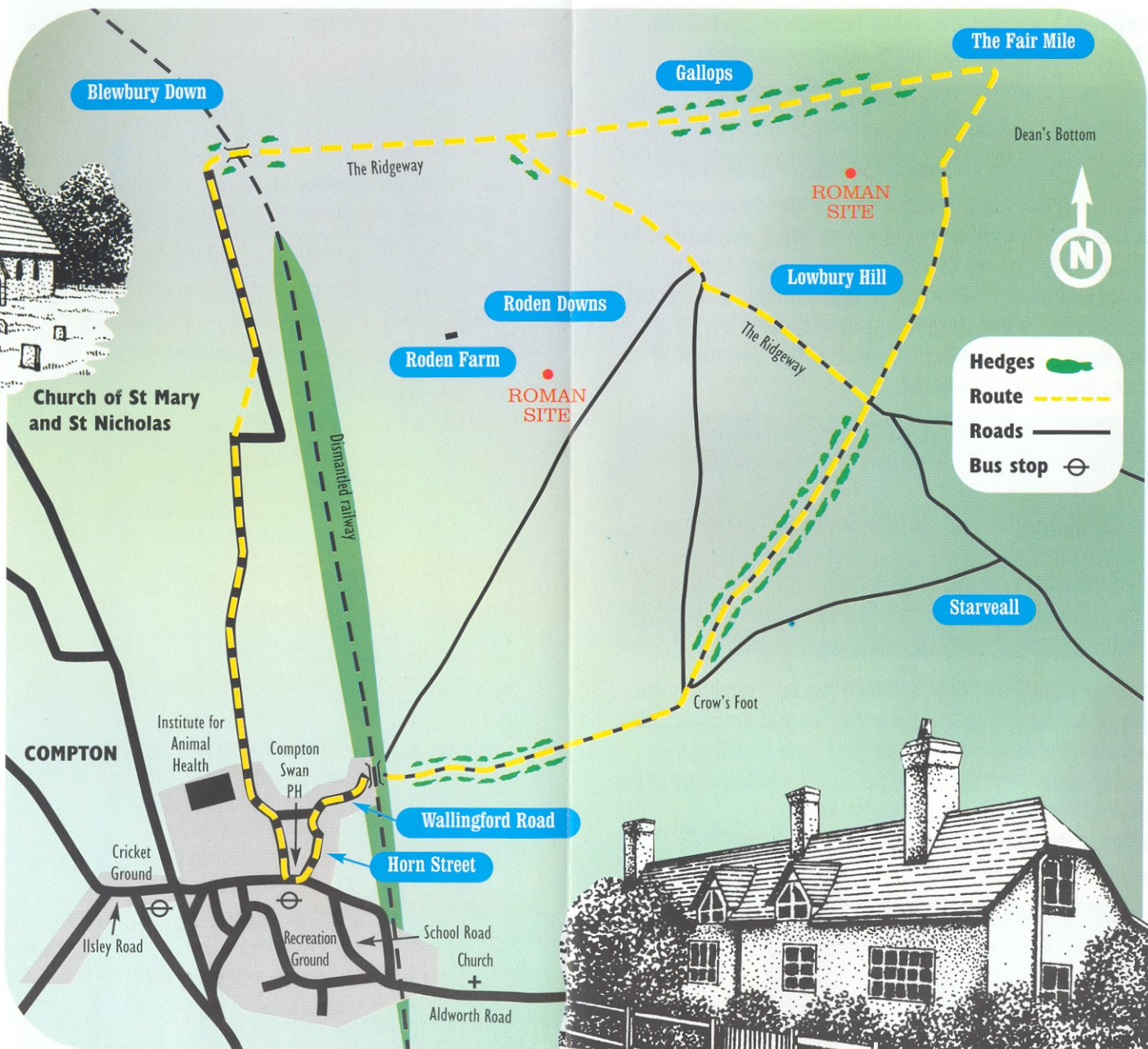
Walking in
West Berkshire



Compton

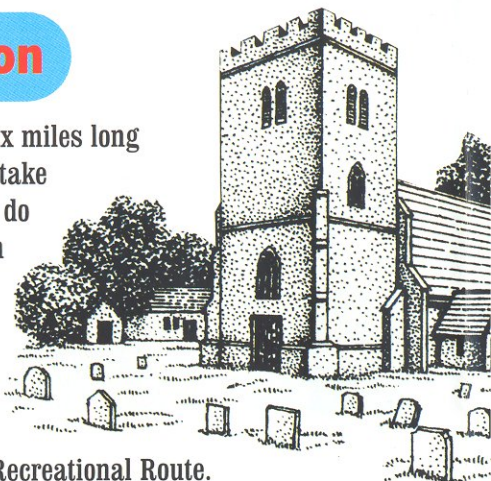
6

mile circular route
for walking and horse riding



Introduction

The route is about six miles long (9.6km) and should take about three hours to do on foot. The Compton recreational route is marked with the Countryside Agency's standard arrow waymarks, carrying the words Recreational Route.



The route has been described in an anti-clockwise direction from the Compton Swan, and may be used by walkers and horseriders in its entirety.

The village of Compton lies on the Berkshire Downs, and its origins stretch back to the Domesday Book. The remains of an Iron Age hill-fort lie about a mile south of the village: called Perborough Castle, it was one of a series of hill-forts close to The Ridgeway (now a National Trail). Compton was fully recorded in the Domesday Book, and at the time had two manors. Both fell into the hands of supporters of William the Conqueror.

Over time, the manor (house and farms) came into the possession of the Lloyd family and land and farms were later sold to sitting tenants. In the nineteenth century the railway was built from the market town of Newbury to the Great Western Railway depot at Didcot. Compton Station became an important centre for the passage of sheep going to and from East Ilsley sheep fair, which used to be the largest in England. Pens were erected in the station sidings to hold animals in transit. Following the decline of the wool industry in the 1960s, the railway closed. Today's village is an interesting blend of old and new. The picturesque cottages are huddled round the centre of the village close to the Compton Swan. The newer dwellings on the outskirts of the village are only a short

walk from the Church of St. Mary and St. Nicholas. The tower is 13th century and the font is of 12th century origin. During the Reformation much of the church was destroyed, and what we see today is the result of years of re-building and constant restoration. The bell-tower contains six bells: these were cast in 1775 by Pack and Chapman of London.

Start by going up Horn Street and turn right into Wallingford Road. Follow the road until the old railway-bridge is reached (on the right-hand side). Pass under the bridge and turn right onto a bridleway. This bridleway, which runs between two hedges, climbs gently uphill towards the next large track junction. This junction is called Crows Foot and a look at the map will show how it got its name. Turn left here, and after a short distance turn right and then left on to the track that makes the central 'claw'.

This track is one of many that run up to The Ridgeway from villages and hamlets that lie on either side, and reaches The Ridgeway at another convergence of tracks where there is a choice of two routes.

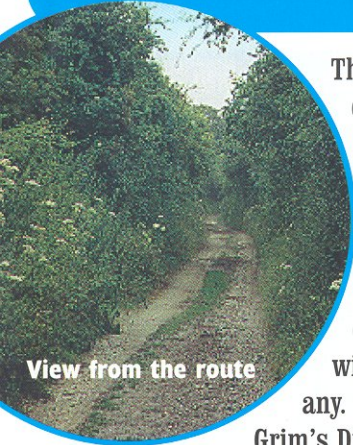
Turn left on to the Ridgeway for the shorter route, or go straight across for the route around Lowbury Hill.

Lowbury Hill, once called Lowborough Hill, commands one of the finest views from The Ridgeway.

The remains of a Roman temple were

discovered on the summit along with a previously unknown Roman military outpost. From Lowbury Hill, 12 other entrenchments occupied by Roman forces were visible. To the east of Lowbury the land falls away sharply, forming a deep valley known as Dean's Bottom.

On the other side of Lowbury Hill the route meets another major track junction. Turn left here. The track on the right is called The Fair Mile. This was set out in Aston Tirrold's enclosure award of 1743, when it was 132 feet wide. It runs from the A417 to this junction.



View from the route

The left-hand track, which connects the Fair Mile with The Ridgeway National Trail, runs alongside some training gallops, and it also crosses a gallop at one point. Keep to the right of way and treat racehorses with respect should you meet any. Below The Ridgeway runs Grim's Ditch. This earthwork is

thought to have been dug as a boundary between the North Berkshire Downs and the Vale of the White Horse. Its date is uncertain: some parts are prehistoric while others are more recent. The two routes converge where the track re-joins The Ridgeway. The Ridgeway National Trail is steeped in history and tradition. It starts at Overton Hill, near Avebury (Wiltshire) and runs 85 miles to Ivinghoe Beacon in Buckinghamshire. The age of the Ridgeway is uncertain. Some say the trail is England's oldest road, possibly dating to the Bronze Age some 3,000 years ago. In the Middle Ages, the track was used by drovers to bring cattle and sheep from the West Country and Wales to the London market. To accommodate the flocks and herds, the hedges had to be at least 30 feet apart.

Following the introduction of turnpikes in the 18th century, the drovers continued to use the track to avoid tolls, until the advent of railways. The Ridgeway then ceased to be a drove road and became a local track used mainly by farmers and racehorse trainers. Modern machinery and vehicles are damaging the surface in

places and care must be taken to preserve the surface, for the pleasure and enjoyment of future generations.

After one mile the track meets the Ridgeway. Continue west along The Ridgeway.

On the left and slightly below can be seen Roden Down. It is known that land around Roden Down was farmed in the Iron Age. Traces of this still stand in the form of dykes and ditches. After the Roman invasion of AD43 the land around Roden became a cemetery. Over the years, fragments of pottery, human bones and a multitude of coins have been discovered.

The Ridgeway crosses over a disused railway line and at the next junction the route turns left down a bridleway. This bridleway initially runs down a horse trainer's track before turning right to cross an arable field. The bridleway then runs alongside the track and ends at the metalled road at the northern edge of the village.

To your right is the Compton Institute for Animal Health, which conducts investigations into animal diseases. Other agricultural research stations have been breeding new barley variations that can grow on the shallow soils of the downs. The use of these varieties has allowed the conversion of the sheep pastures to arable land.

Follow the road down and turn right into Cheap Street: this will take you to the end of the route.

Church of St Mary and St Nicholas



The Country Code

- Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
- Guard against all risk of fire
- Leave all gates as found
- Keep your dogs under close control
- Keep to public rights of way across farm land
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help to keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise

Public Transport

Buses to Compton village:

Alfa Travel service: 130 (East Ilsley to Newbury) and 134 (Newbury to West Ilsley).

Services 130 (Newbury to Compton) and 804 (Upper Basildon to Compton) when schools are open.

Tel:(01635) 248423.

Car Parking

Compton Village



This leaflet was produced by West Berkshire Council with financial support from Vodafone.

For further information about this and other leaflets, please contact West Berkshire Council, Countryside and Environment, Faraday Road, Newbury RG14 2AF. Tel: (01635) 519808.