



## WALK DESCRIPTIONS

The notes refer only to paths within the Hermitage parish boundary. Surrounding parishes have similar numbers.

**Restricted Byway 1. Fence Lane.** This is a very ancient drove route connecting the Ridgeway at Midsummer Wood with Bucklebury Common via Old Street. It probably pre-dates Grimsbury Castle which is an Iron Age hill fort. The high banks allowed a large number of animals to be driven by a few men with dogs. The woodland plants such as bluebells and wood anemones on the banks indicate that they were built through ancient woodland. The rich ground flora in Fence Wood show that this is Ancient Secondary Woodland. Look for the conical quarry pit on the east of the lane. Look out for buzzards and red kites.

**Restricted Byway 2.** This wide track is an ancient road that ran north across the open land to Bothampstead Green and south to Bucklebury Common. It is often very muddy. Look for quarries at a number of places beside the track. Wellhouse Farm at the southern end is late 18th century in origin but is on the site of an older settlement. Look for an ancient stub oak on the bank near Wellhouse Farm. **Footpath 3** runs across the field from a stile on Yattendon Road to a gate at Birch Cottage.

**Number 4 Not used**

**Footpath 5** runs north from Wellhouse Lane and enters the parish after about 350metres. The wide ditch to the north in the wood marks the boundary. This path is an ancient road leading from Bucklebury to the open grazing around Little Hungerford.

**Footpath 6** runs from Path 5 to Box Cottage formerly on the edge of the open land. Look for the oak lined banks.

**Byway 7** continues Path 2 to the south from Wellhouse Farm to Marlston Road. There are yet more quarry pits on either side.

**Byway 8** continues Path 9 to the north from Marlston Road to Wellhouse Lane. The house at the Marlston Road end was a shop in the early 20th century.

**Byway 9.** Yet another ancient track leading to Bucklebury Common, it passes Boar's Hole Farm which appears on the 1761 map. It was rebuilt as a 'model' Home Farm for the Palmer family when they bought the estate and built Marlston House (now Brockhurst School) in 1895. The original barn and the granary raised on staddle stones (stone mushrooms) were retained. Look for the sheds built in 'railway' style and the tall chimney in the distance. This was part of a steam driven pump which drew water from a 24m (80ft) deep well and fed it around the estate. The pump house also housed the laundry.

**Byway 10.** Runs NE from the southern end of Path 1 for 40m along the parish boundary. Look for snowdrops in season.

**Restricted Byway 11.** Is metalled from Yattendon Road at the M4 bridge to the mobile phone mast. Rooks Copse is Ancient Woodland and very species rich. Look for dog's mercury, bluebell, celandine, violets, moschatel, ramsons, wood anemone, wood sorrel and many more.

**Footpath 12.** Runs NE between stiles across the field from Path 2 to a beautiful little valley with wooded slopes. The low banks crossing the path are part of an ancient field system.

**Footpath 13** leaves the B4009 near the school and runs to the parish boundary near an old sand pit. This pit probably acts as a swallow hole where surface water enters the underground aquifers. It is valuable wetland.

**Footpath 14** comes from Oare. Look for the old coppice stools on the boundary bank showing that the bank is ancient. This was once common grazing and the artificial ponds provided water for animals. The large banks and ditches are part of ancient enclosures.

**Footpath 15** runs through woods to join Paths 11 & 12.

**Footpath 16** runs from Yattendon Road alongside the old railway (closed in 1964) to Marlston Road. It is well surfaced and passable in most weather. Note the large ash and sycamore stools on the embankment – the result of regular cutting in the steam era. At least 17 species of trees and shrubs can be seen along this path.

**Footpath 17** rises up a steep slope from the B4009. In 1761 the whole of this area was open Common land. There are many species of birds and deer are often seen.

**Footpath 18** leaves the Yattendon Road and runs along the boundary of Chalk Pit Piece to a field with hollows and humps from old brick earth or sand quarries. These continue in Furze Hill Wood. Some are very deep and contain ponds. The highest point to the south is the site of the windmill moved to Compton in 1760. In 1761 all this area was open scrubland. There are stiles.

**Footpath 19.** Links Path 2 to the Yattendon Road and runs through conifer plantations which smell wonderful in warm weather! Yet more quarry pits in the woods.

**Footpath 20** leads from Doctor's Lane diagonally across the field to Spring Copse. There are three stiles. Look for bluebells in spring and some very ancient coppice stools. The old pit probably supplied sand to make bricks at Kiln Farm. The wet area near the top of the hill is caused by the springs that named the wood.

**Footpath 21.** Joins Paths 7 and 8.

**Number 22 Not used**

**Byway 23.** Doctor's Lane, named because it led to the doctor's surgery. It has the same name on the 1877 map and so Hermitage had a resident doctor earlier than most villages. Note the pressure marks, glazing and colour variations in the brick wall and the small sarsen stone which could be a boundary mark. Hermitage House is dated 1715. Note the sand pit at the parish boundary.

**Footpath 24** rises up a steep slope from the B4009 onto the old Common where it joins Path 14 near a pond. The soils are sand and so the pond must be clay lined.

**Footpath 25.** This path is shared with Frilsham as Frilsham 13. The Parish Boundary runs along the centre of the path indicating great age. Probably pre 9th century. Note how deeply it is sunk. There are deep quarries in the wood. Excellent views to the east.

**Public Open Space Path** runs from the Forest Edge Estate along the old railway through the very species rich Butterfly Meadow and Furze Hill Wood to Path 18. There are other paths through the Public Open Space but the map scale does not allow them to be shown.