Introduction

The three circular walks (brown, green, and white) follow public rights of way (footpaths and bridleways) and sections of the brown and white routes use "Permitted Paths". These are paths designated by the landowner for the public to use, where no public rights of way exist.

Each walk is marked with a different colour waymarking disc: brown, green, and white. These are displayed on posts, stiles, and gates.

The walks are waymarked and have been described from the Forestry Authority's car park at Sulham Wood. The walks can also be started from Pangbourne, Whitley, Little Heath and Bagnor Bridge.

The Sulham Valley is unspoilt, but it is close to the built-up areas of Tidmarsh, Pangbourne, Purley and Whitley. The valley is unusual because two streams - the Pang and the Sulham Brook - run through it, side-by-side. There are woods on the lower ground among traditionally farmed small fields, which create a patchwork rich in nature conservation interest. Public footpaths offer several pleasant walks through the area.

The Brown Route - 3.1 miles/5km

The Brown Route runs through the meadows by the River Pang. Waterproof shoes are recommended: allow about 1 hour to complete the walk.

Follow the Brown waymarks down through the wood to where the circular walk begins.

From the pedestrian gate, follow the path to the road, cross and take the waymarked path.

This path runs through some small fields which are grazed and cut for hay, a traditional use which allows grasses and wild flowers to flourish.

After crossing the River Pang turn right at the road.

Opposite is the Old Water Mill. This Mill was once the home of the author Lytton Strachey.

At the A340 junction turn right (past the Greyhound Public House).

A detour to the south leads to Tidmarsh Church. It has a Norman doorway but most of the structure dates from the 13th Century. As well as carved oak beams, other unusual features can be seen. The apse (arched recess) is of a unique design, being octagonal in shape with small stained-glass windows set in each face. In the apse, several wall paintings were discovered in the 19th Century. The restoration, lacking today's skills, picked out each of the figures in purple paint!

Walk through the village of Tidmarsh and at a field entrance turn right off the main road. Pass through the kissing gate.

Follow the waymarks to the River Pang, a typical chalk stream, fast clear and ideal for trout. At its water's edge varieties of rush and reeds grew alongside other plants such as Water Mint and Marsh Marigold.

After several waymarked turns, the path crosses the river (at this point the link path from Pangbourne joins the route). The path crosses the valley bottom with one sharp right turn halfway across the open meadows. Turn right at the road, and take the path on the left which goes up-hill into Sulham Wood. Turn right a few metres into the wood and follow the waymarks along the woodland edge and back to the car park.

The White Route - 3.1 miles/5km

The White Route stays mainly on the higher ground and crosses different kinds of woodland. Allow about 1 hour to complete the walk.

Start from the Forestry Authority's Sulham Wood car park.

This wood is dominated by evergreen trees such as Norway spruce, Douglas fir and Scots pine that bear seed in cones. They have been planted to produce timber for poles or pulping. Not many plants can survive the heavy shade they cast, though holly and yew may be seen.
The Green Route - 4. Sulham/Tudeley

The Green Route runs through meadows along the valley bottom, then on higher ground. There are steep sections, and you should allow about 28 hours for this walk.

From the car park, a track goes down through the Forestry Authority woods, then across a field (this coincides with the Brown route). The field backs on to houses, and the Green route turns left to run behind their gardens until a lane is reached.

Here Sulham Church lies opposite. It was rebuilt in 1838 by the Rev. John Wilder, Rector for 56 years. At that time people were starting to study and imitate the churches of the Middle Ages. The Wilders were the main land owners in the Sulham area for 300 years, and built cottages in Sulham for estate workers, as well as a dove-cote seen later on the walk.

The route turns right by the churchyard entrance then left a few metres beyond the road junction.

The path runs across low-lying fields with drainage ditches. Wet fields are unsuitable for cultivating with modern machinery, and these are grazed by animals as they have been for many years.

The path runs along the edge of More Copse, which is on the right. At this point the waymarked link-path from Bagnor Bridge comes in from the west. After two changes of direction, the route leaves the woodland to run between fields. At the junction of footpaths turn left to Noshide Lane. Turn right down the lane (a public bridleway) to Noshide Farm, then left after passing by the farm, and then up a slope towards the woods.

Behind the farm is the brick dove-cote mentioned earlier. Dovecotes were originally built to breed pigeons for the table. The wood is mainly of beech and is on a steep slope.

Skirting the playing field beyond, turn left along Little Heath Road. The route now follows Little Heath Road, along the edge of built-up Tilehurst. After about a kilometre just beyond Kiln Lane, the walk turns off to the left. This leads over the fields past the remains of Sulfer's Farm, and coincides with the White route to the end of the walk.

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 farmland
- Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges & walls
- Leave livestock, crops and machinery alone
- Take your litter home
- Help keep all water clean
- Protect wildlife, plants and trees
- Take special care on country roads
- Make no unnecessary noise

Public Transport

Bus Services: No. 105 runs from Reading to Pangbourne via Purley, No. 18 runs to Little Heath Road in Tilehurst. Nos. 101/102 runs from Reading to Theale. Travel Line on tel. (0870) 608 2808 for further details.

Rail Services: Pangbourne, Theale and Tilehurst stations are nearby. For information please the National Rail Enquiry Service on tel. (0845) 748 0150

Car Parking

Forestry Authority's Sulham Wood car park.

3 circular routes for walking

This leaflet was produced by West Berkshire Council.

For further information about this and other leaflets, please contact West Berkshire Council, Countryside and Environment, Parade Road, Newbury RG14 1AD. Tel: (01635) 588888