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| <p>This walk has been checked three times in the last year, however the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any problems encountered by readers.</p> | | | |

Newbury Racecourse to Woolhampton

Start: Newbury Racecourse station

Finish: Midgham station

Length: 17km (10.6 miles).

Time: 5 hours 30 minutes. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 9 hours.

Transport: Trains go from London Paddington to Newbury Racecourse, journey time just over an hour. Midgham (Woolhampton) is two stops up the line, so buy a day return to Newbury Racecourse. Allow sufficient time on leaving the Rowbarge pub (Woolhampton) as the swing bridge over the canal is often moved to let barges through. Additionally there is no footbridge across the railway at Midgham station, the level crossing barrier coming down at least 3 minutes before train arrival. Newbury Racecourse and Midgham stations have no train service on Sundays. However you can always choose the walk option of starting at Newbury and finishing at Thatcham.

OS Landranger Map: 174

OS Explorer Map: 158

Newbury Racecourse, map reference SU482669, is in **Berkshire**, 24km west of Reading.

Toughness: 2 out of 10

Walk Notes: This is a fairly easy walk with some gentle climbs en route. The

morning section of the walk crosses Greenham Common, a former World War II and NATO airfield. In 1953 it was made available to the United States Air Force by the Ministry of Defence as a Strategic Air Command base and in the early 1980s cruise missiles were deployed here. Subsequently the last cruise missiles were removed in 1991, and the facility was closed and put up for sale in 1993. The Greenham Common Trust purchased the land in 1997 and the majority of the land has been returned to something approaching its former natural state. (The cruise missile storage silos have been fenced off - the cost of demolishing them being prohibitive.) Sections of the walk after lunch at Brimpton can be muddy during winter

Walk options

a) Starting from Newbury: Starting from Newbury station only adds 500 metres to the walk and benefits from Newbury being served by a faster and more frequent train service.

b) Finishing at Thatcham: Finishing at Thatcham station adds 4.5km to the walk and benefits from Thatcham being served by a faster and more frequent train service.

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the train nearest to 9.50am from Paddington Station to Newbury Racecourse.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] Coming off the train cross over the footbridge in the direction of the racecourse and turn right to *follow the road curving to the left around the racecourse*. In 500 metres you reach a roundabout and veer left passing by a racecourse entrance on your left hand side. In 70 metres *turn left along New Road* **[2]**. Continue up New Road, your direction 140 degrees.

In 700 metres where the road curves to the left along Lamtarra Way, continue straight up a car wide tarmac track with houses on your left and a wooded area on your right, your direction 150 degrees. In 320 metres you pass by the entrance to St. Mary's Greenham Church on your left where the track curves to the right. After 300 metres *at a T-junction with the main road turn right*. In 200 metres immediately before a mini-roundabout, *turn left* to cross the main road (passing by a car park on your left) to go straight on through a wooden gate leading *into Greenham Common*.

Greenham Common is open access so you are free to wander across it at your will thus you do not have to keep to any footpath. The following directions *towards the south-east corner* **[3]** are merely a suggested route.

Follow a car wide shingle track, bordered by a wood on your right, your direction 130 degrees. After 350 metres you pass by a small pond on your left hand side as the path veers to the right in a southerly direction towards the (fenced off) former cruise missile storage silos.

In 300 metres at the fencing, turn left to follow the path along the southern side of Greenham Common with the fencing (and cruise missile storage silos beyond) on your right, your direction east, towards Crookham Common.

In 1.5km just past an industrial estate building (behind the fencing on your right), you pass by what remains of the

old control tower 600 metres off to your left (north). In a further 900 metres at the end of the fencing on your right hand side, (marked by a 1 metre square 4 metre high concrete post), continue along the main track in an easterly direction.

After 400 metres (where the track forks), fork right and after a further 500 metres ignore a track on your left (heading north) to fork right along a minor track keeping to the southern section of the Common towards the south east corner. In 300 metres you exit Greenham Common through a wooden gate **[3]** and *turn right down a lane*, your direction south. (There is also another gate further south out onto the lane, next to a red bricked house: Loxley)

After 250 metres (at the bottom of the lane) *at a T-junction* with the main road, cross over and *turn left* to go along a grass verge. *In 50 metres turn right down a lane*, your direction south. *After 120 metres go over a footbridge* on the right hand side of a ford *and in 40 metres turn left* through a wooden gate to follow a footpath along a meandering stream on your left-hand side. (You may choose to cut bends in the stream by following the field edge along the way.)

In 1.3km go through a wooden kissing gate and continue along the edge of the stream. *In 70 metres* at a footpath junction *turn left over a footbridge to take a footpath forking right* across a field aiming for a car wide crossing (directly below a mini pylon cable run) over a ditch stream, your direction 60 degrees. (Alternatively depending on the time of year, it may be easier to follow the right hand field edge round to reach the crossing.)

In 180 metres go over the car wide crossing. Follow the right hand edge of the field for 40 metres, and where it swings round to your right, head up across the field in the direction of a double pylon pole (with a grey transformer box mounted on it) 280

metres distant, your direction 60 degrees.

After 160 metres go across a 3 plank footbridge (with a left-hand rail) to veer left up across a field aiming for a footbridge (30 metres to the left of the double pylon pole with transformer box) leading into a wood, your direction 50 degrees. In 130 metres cross the footbridge to go up into the wood passing by a brick utility building on your right hand side. In 60 metres *turn left up a car wide track through the wood*. After 100 metres the track curves to the left to emerge from the wood to go up across a field, your direction 30 degrees.

After 400 metres fork left along a footpath (running parallel to the track) through a wooded area. In 100 metres you pass by a red brick house on your left to continue along a shingle driveway, your direction north.

In 100 metres *at a T-junction with the main road*, cross over and after 5 metres *turn right* to go along a permissive path (which can become overgrown in summer – in which case use the road) running parallel to the main road on your right, your direction east. In 100 metres you reach the lunchtime stop **The Travellers Friend**.

Coming out of the pub turn left to go along the right hand side of the road (taking care of fast approaching traffic). In 250 metres ignore a right hand turning. In a further 100 metres *turn right along an initially tarmac car wide track* (sign-posted Little Park Farm and with a footpath signpost), your initial direction 170 degrees, which you follow for 1km down to Park Gulley Bridge. (Passing through a metal kissing gate along the way.)

60 metres past Park Gulley Bridge turn left along a car wide grass track with a stream on your left and a fence and field beyond on your right, your initial direction 120 degrees.

After 300 metres (immediately after

fieldgate entrances on either side, and immediately before a plank bridge over a ditch stream), *turn left* along a narrow footpath with field fencing on your left and the ditch stream and wood on your right, your direction east. In 150 metres follow the footpath round to your right into the wood. After 80 metres you emerge from the wood to go up the left side of a field (with the church spire of St. Paul's, Ashford Hill visible in the distance), your direction 160 degrees, crossing a wooden footbridge after 70 metres and passing under some HV cables after a further 250 metres. In a further 90 metres follow the field edge round to the left to exit the field in another 170 metres to *turn right up a lane*.

In 140 metres fork left along a shingle car wide track, your direction 170 degrees. After 50 metres you pass by a small terrace of houses as the shingle track narrows onto a potentially muddy earth track down through a wooded area. In 400 metres the narrow earth track leads out to a shingle car wide track to continue down to go over a stream after 120 metres. (Where the track then goes up and round to the right.)

After 250 metres (immediately past the double wooden fieldgate entrance to Holly Cottage on your left) ignore a footpath off to your right to continue down the shingle lane. In 130 metres, *where the shingle lane swings round to the right* (towards the main road), *continue straight ahead* down a car wide shingle track towards a metal fieldgate, your direction 30 degrees.

After 80 metres cross over a stream and go through a wooden gate to the left of the metal fieldgate.

(If going to the later pub stop, continue along the car wide track for 30 metres to turn right through a wooden gate to go across field to cross a stile after 100 metres to reach **The Ship Inn**.)

Veer left, through a wooden gate to go along the left side of a field, your direction 20 degrees. After 170 metres

go over a stile to continue ahead along the right side of the next field in a northerly direction. In 110 metres cross a plank footbridge and veer left up across a small field aiming for its upper right hand corner, your direction north. In 120 metres go over a plank bridge to cross a stile to go along the right edge of a fenced off field with a wood on your right. In 270 metres at the corner of the field the footpath joins a car wide track through a wooded area, your direction 350 degrees, to then cross a stream after 30 metres.

In 40 metres go to the left of a metal fieldgate to cross a lane (with a bridge off to your left) to continue along a footpath (with a stream on your left) through a wooded area, your direction 30 degrees. After 180 metres cross over a footbridge over a stream to emerge from the wooded area to go across a field, your direction 40 degrees.

In 250 metres go through a gate entrance to continue along a footpath (passing a stream on your right) along the left side of a small coppiced field. After 200 metres cross into the next field and veer right to initially go along its right hand side (with a stream down to your right) for 40 metres to then continue across it towards a footbridge on the far side, your direction 10 degrees. (Depending on the time of year, you may find it easier to follow the edge of the field round to the footbridge.) In 220 metres cross the footbridge and turn left for 15 metres and then right along a car wide track on the right hand side of a field, your direction north. In 35 metres ignore a footpath leading over a bridge on your right.

In 350 metres *go to the right of a metal fieldgate to come out to a road and then immediately turn left up a car wide track*, passing to the right of a metal fieldgate, your direction 330 degrees. In 220 metres you pass by a mini pylon pole (with a transformer box) on your left, the path now bordered by a fenced in wooded area on your right.

In 200 metres you reach the fencing of a cemetery to *enter a churchyard through a gap* after 70 metres. In 40 metres you pass by the main entrance to the church to then *exit the churchyard* after a further 60 metres *and turn left* down a car wide shingle track *to reach a main road* after 70 metres.

Turn right along a pavement along the main road passing The Three Horseshoes pub (a potential late lunch / early tea stop) on your right after 100 metres, to *follow the road round and up to the right* and *after 90 metres turn left* down Enborne Way.

After 50 metres you pass by a block of 4 garages on your left to go down across a parking area to *then go down a fenced in footpath leading to a field* after 40 metres *and turn left*.

After 30 metres turn left through a kissing gate to turn right down the right hand side of a field, your direction 40 degrees. *After 140 metres* go past a redundant kissing gate to *turn right down the main road*. *In 20 metres turn left down a shingle driveway* (entrance to which is marked Oak House), your direction 10 degrees. After 30 metres the track becomes earth and after a further 240 metres go to the left of a metal fieldgate into a field to continue straight ahead down a shingle car wide track (between fields), your direction 10 degrees.

After 750 metres at a footpath junction, fork left along a car wide track between fields, your direction north. *In 200 metres at a path T-junction, turn right* along a car wide track through a wooded area, your direction east. In 120 metres where the car wide track swings to the left, *fork right* (marked by a footpath post) along a narrow path, your initial direction 120 degrees, with the path winding round a lake on your left hand side.

After 900 metres at a path T-junction (with a stream ahead) go through a wooden gate to *turn right* along a

footpath. *In 120 metres go through a wooden gate and turn left onto a road immediately crossing a bridge to reach **The Rowbarge pub**, Woolhampton on your left after 150 metres.*

Coming out of the Rowbarge turn left to cross the swing bridge over the canal to reach Midgham station after 120 metres.

a) Starting from Newbury

From Newbury station *turn left along Station Road. In 150 metres at a T-junction with the A339 turn right. After 120 metres at a roundabout turn left along Queens Road and after 40 metres turn right along Greenham Road. In 200 metres fork left along Racecourse Road. After 500 metres the main road having curved round to the right and become New Road, you pass by a footpath (alongside a wall) on your left hand side. Rejoin the main walk directions from [2].*

b) Finishing at Thatcham

Coming out of the Rowbarge pub, do not cross the swing bridge but *turn left along the canal footpath. After 4.5km turn right to cross the road bridge leading into Thatcham.* Having crossed the bridge, Thatcham station is on your right.

Lunch and Tea places:

The Ship Inn *Ashford Hill, RG19 8BD (0118 9814504)* Food served - check times. Located 12 km from the start of the walk.

The Three Horseshoes *Brimpton Lane, Brimpton, RG7 4TL (0118 9712183)* Food served. Located 2.5 km from the end of the walk.

The Travellers Friend *Crookham Common, RG19 8EA (0118 9713156)* Food served noon – 2pm daily. Located 8.5 km from the start of the walk.

The Rowbarge *Station Road, Woolhampton, RG7 5SH (0118 9712213)* Food served noon – 10.30pm daily. This is the suggested tea stop.