

Chillerton and Gatcombe Parish Walks



The villages of Chillerton and Gatcombe lie nestled in valleys surrounded by the Downs, in the heart of the Isle Of Wight Countryside. This area is blessed with a large number of footpaths and bridleways and, therefore, a wonderful location for interesting walking routes.

The directions for a series of circular walks have been drawn up by local residents and these are either available in the form of leaflets or may be downloaded from the Parish Website.

Parish Website: www.chillertonandgatcombe.org

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1. Consideration of Seasonal Changes

Whilst the majority of the routes described are served by clear footpaths and bridleways, there are areas where the way is not so distinct. Growth of grass and other vegetation, over and alongside some of the routes, from springtime and onwards throughout the summer and early autumn can not only make some paths harder to follow but also make them harder to walk through. This problem may be particularly evident on Chillerton Down which is open access land.

It is advisable to undertake any of the Chillerton and Gatcombe walks with sturdy foot ware and long trousers.

2. Access Points

Each walk recommends a particular 'Access Point' but, in many cases, a route may be accessed at another point. Such points are highlighted.

It can be interesting to attempt any walk in the reverse direction. For the Chillerton and Gatcombe Walks, the only route covered in this way is the 'Western Two Ridge Walk' which is covered from both a clockwise and anti-clockwise direction. The different challenges are outlined in each case.

3. Walks Grades:

1. **Easy:** Mainly flat walking, on paths with good surfaces. Few steps or stiles, if any.
2. **Fairly Easy:** Gentle, rolling landscape, walking on paths with good to average surfaces. Some walking on gentle inclines, some stiles or steps to be expected en route.
3. **Moderate:** Varying landscape with some more challenging slopes. Stiles and steps to be expected en route, suitable for keen walkers and anyone who is reasonably active.
4. **Fairly Strenuous:** A challenging walk, suitable for fit walkers with some experience. Steep gradients, stiles and steps and uneven surfaces to be expected.
5. **Strenuous:** A very challenging walk suitable only for fit, experienced walkers.

4.

Accessibility Levels

- Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind.
- Suitable for a person with sufficient mobility to climb a flight of stairs.
- Suitable for a person with restricted walking ability and for those that may need to use a wheelchair some of the time.
- Suitable for a person who depends on the use of a wheelchair.
- Suitable for medium sized mobility scooters.

5.

Walks descriptions

Chillerton Circular Walk:

Higher level walking for great views, via Berry Hill, Chillerton Down and Dukem Down.

By visiting the less frequented north side of Chillerton Down you are rewarded with distant views over the Solent to Portsmouth and the New Forest and the maritime origins of Newport and Cowes are laid out clearly below you. When you add the southern and western vistas of Chale Bay and the cliffs at Sandown you are reminded that Chillerton really is at the centre of the island.

Difficulty: Fairly strenuous with steep ascents and descents.

Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind.

Terrain: Open farmland, woodland footpaths & some road walking

Chillerton Down History Walk:

This walk aims to throw light on some of the ancient and more recent history of Chillerton Downs. It is envisaged the walker will stop at points, signified on the map, to take in the historical information given as a reference and note relevant features of the landscape.

Difficulty: A Fairly Strenuous, challenging walk, suitable for fit walkers with some experience. Steep gradients, stiles and steps and uneven surfaces to be expected.

Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind.

Terrain: There is some very uneven terrain with a steep descent which needs to be negotiated carefully, especially when wet. Walking poles could prove useful.

Chillerton Down is open access land, owned by the National Trust, and free for rambling anywhere. Pathways are, therefore, hard to find in many places.

Chillerton Inner Ring:

This circular route is an amalgamation of two routes, much used by local residents and dog walkers, on either side of Chillerton Main Road. The paths and Bridleways involved are the nearest off-road walking areas to Chillerton Village. However, if completing either half of the route on its own, the return to the starting point involves a walk back along the main road.

Difficulty: Generally fairly easy, including moderate climbs and descents. Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile

Terrain: Paths and tracks clearly defined although some may be overgrown for a while in Spring time. Some muddy sections in Winter.

Chillerton and Gatcombe Circle:

An interesting, short, circular walk between the two villages that passes the lovely old church of St Olave's in Gatcombe, which is well worth a visit. There are also several old cottages to see and, maybe, a red squirrel or two. In Spring there is a carpet of Wild Garlic in the wooded area descending to St Olave's. There is also some farmland on the return leg.

Difficulty: Generally a fairly easy walk with two gentle hills. Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile

Terrain: Woodland footpaths, some quiet roads and farmland. Some paths can be very muddy after heavy rain.



Gatcombe Circular Walk including Snowdrop Lane:

The first part of this circular route is along a flatish road, starting from the medieval church of St Olave's. It passes through the small hamlet of Gatcombe before continuing along a sunken lane. There is a gentle slope from Snowdrop Lane onto the chalk track of Bridleway G10 with views of Gatcombe and the hills behind. The final part of the route involves a descent down Rectory Lane back to Gatcombe Road and St Olave's Church.

Difficulty: A fairly easy walk with gentle hills. The first part of this walk may be walked from St Olave's Church to Garstons, and back, by those with restricted walking ability or for those who may need to use a wheelchair.

The full, circular walk has been undertaken successfully with a sturdy buggy.

Terrain: Quiet roads and wide farmland tracks.

South Eastern Chillerton:

An exploration of less well visited countryside to the South and South East of Chillerton. It is an undulating walk with some shortish but fairly steep climbs and descents.

Difficulty: This route is graded as a moderate challenge. It requires a degree of fitness and may be unsuitable for unsteady walkers or those with breathing problems.

Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind.

Terrain: Farmland, sunken lanes, quiet roads.

Some muddy sections in winter and some indistinct paths across fields.

In springtime, prior to cutting, the paths may be overgrown with high grass and nettles.

Spring time Sensory Trail through Tolt Copse:

The directions for this short, circular walk include accompanying notes and worksheets created to encourage children to use their senses to experience what there is to see, hear, touch and smell in this area.

Western Two Ridges Walk - Clockwise:

This circular route gives the opportunity of walking up high for much of the time to overlook the land below. This walk is notable for the spectacular views of Chillerton Village from high vantage points. There are also views of Culver Down and Portsmouth.

Difficulty: The First half of walk includes about half an hour of uphill walking

On entering Tolt copse there is a very narrow path which can be extremely slippery in wet weather.

Walking on Chillerton Down can be hard on the legs with paths not only hard to see but also tilting down in the same direction as the slope. (See **Terrain**, below)

Following a descent around the mast and a short climb to the return leg, the route is much flatter until a very steep descent at the end. Walking poles would certainly aid confidence over more challenging sections.

Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind or who suffer from vertigo.

Terrain: Very narrow track through Tolt Copse

Chillerton Down is open access land, owned by the National Trust, and free for rambling anywhere.

Therefore, pathways are hard to find in many places. On this particular walk, the ridge is recommended and walking is easier there. When on the ridge, however, the gates on the Down necessitate a brief decent in two places before climbing back up to the ridge again.

One very quiet road to cross over.



Western Two Ridges Walk – Anti-Clockwise:

This circular route gives the opportunity of walking up high for much of the time to overlook the land below.

The second half of the walk is notable for the spectacular views of Chillerton Village from high vantage points. There are also views of Culver Down and Portsmouth.

Difficulty: A Fairly Strenuous and demanding walk where strong shoes or boots are a must.

The beginning of the walk involves a steep climb and, therefore, requires a degree of fitness. There are also other short, steep slopes and a woodland path which can be very slippery when wet.

Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Walking poles would certainly aid confidence over the more challenging sections.

Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind or who suffer from vertigo.

Terrain: The start of this walk involves an immediate, steep ascent to 160 metres above sea level. Once at the top of the climb the walking becomes relatively flat along Newbarn Down until another climb around Chillerton Mast to the return leg of the route on Chillerton Down. After that, there is an impression of a gradual descent towards the end of the route, with some short steep sections. On entering Tolt copse there is a very narrow path which can be extremely slippery in wet weather.



Wildlife Walk:

This is a circular walk on bridleways, footpaths and rural lanes in the centre of the Island, through a mix of arable, downland and woodland, with plenty of stunning views from high points, opportunities to spot birds, animals and wildflowers.

Difficulty: Generally fairly easy with one steep hill climb and descent.

Walkers need to be reasonably agile and mobile. Not suitable for walkers with mobility impairment of any kind.

Terrain: Some muddy sections in winter. Paths and tracks clearly defined.

Billingham Extension:

This short section, which briefly ventures outside the Parish, may be accessed from the first part of the Chillerton Circular Walk.

6. Acknowledgements

The list of people, below, either created routes or followed and recommended changes to the initial directions. Some were also involved in proof reading.

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Further Contact

Of course, it is likely that any walker will experience more than has been outlined by those who have developed these walks. Also, there will, no doubt, be points others wish to raise about the directions .

Any feedback, or suggestions of other routes, will be most welcome so please address comments or suggestions to the Parish Clerk, Maxine Yule: clerk@chillertonandgatcombe.org