

# Jubilee Walks in the Hilltop Villages

# St Leonards and Grim's Ditch

**1** Start from the White Lion. Leave the car park by the stile next to a gate opposite the entrance. With views of Buckland Common ahead walk down the field and over a stile. Cross Bottom Road to another stile opposite, into the field known as Nethercott's Triangle.

**2** Turn left after the next stile and follow the road with Buckland Common on the right. Pass a white house, previously the Boot and Slipper, and where the road bends right, take the footpath to the left over the stile.

**3** As you cross this field, The Folly, notice the long rear gardens of the Little Twye Cottages (see Walk No.1 Cholesbury Hillfort and Buckland Common). Cross the driveway to Buckland Wood Farm and a stile opposite brings you into Kiln Field. Keep straight ahead with the hedge on the right.

**4** Go over the stile in the corner and turn right to follow the hedge to a further stile. The footpath ahead is confined between a hedge and post-and-rail fence. Along this stretch alpacas can often be seen in the adjacent fields. Pigs and domestic fowl may also be encountered and temporary gates should be left as found. At the end of this stretch a high stile provides entry into Drayton Wood.

**5** Follow the path as it bears round to the left for 25 metres before turning right along a path joining from the left. Continue along this path for 50 metres to a wooden signpost. Take the left hand path which winds through trees for some distance. Eventually you reach a further signpost, in sight of a stile which lets you out of the wood. The path beyond is bordered both sides by post-and-rail fencing as it continues gently downhill between paddocks. Drayton Wood House to the right was built by the Rothschilds as a pair of game-keepers' cottages. At the next stile, Shire Lane marks the parish, county and diocesan boundaries and those of both the UK and EU parliamentary constituencies!

**6** For the best view of Grim's Ditch cross Shire Lane and via the stile go into Parson's Nose Wood opposite. Walk through the wood and head diagonally across the field beyond towards the far corner of the hedge to the left. On reaching the corner follow the hedge-line up to the outcrop of trees.

**7** Turn right immediately on entering the wood, ignoring arrows indicating that the route of The Chiltern Way (CW) continues straight on. Follow the path into the wood. The banks to the left are the remains of Grim's Ditch (see overleaf). The path soon bears left over these banks meeting another footpath at a T-junction. Turn sharp left here and notice the ditch from which this earthwork in part derives its name. Look out for signs of badgers. Emerge into the corner of a field with views across to cottages in the hamlet of Hastoe. This is also one of the highest points in the Chilterns at over 230 metres. Go diagonally to the left and through the gap into another field. Keeping the hedge on the left, follow the path to a stile and out once more onto Shire Lane. Turn left to walk down the road a short distance to Longcroft cottages.

**8** Turn right onto the metalled bridleway. This track is the original line of Grim's Ditch, no longer visible. It also marks the parish boundary. After passing several houses on the left built for the pig farm workers the track descends into a dip, where on the left is the former site of Walls Pig Farm. To the right are Pavis and Northhill Woods, where the Ridgeway marks the edge of the Chiltern escarpment.



**9** Beyond the top of the rise, where a footpath crosses, take the path left through a small gate and head for the wood, keeping the field fence to the left. Enter Buckland Wood through a kissing gate and follow the path, slightly downhill, until another path crosses diagonally. Take the path which curves round to the right. A short distance further on the path climbs gently as it meanders through mature beech trees. Keep straight on, ignoring paths which cross or bear off to the left. This is where chair bodgers worked (see overleaf). Note the now long disused track. Where the path runs close to the edge of the wood there are views of Buckland Common. After a gentle descent Bottom Road is reached through a kissing gate.

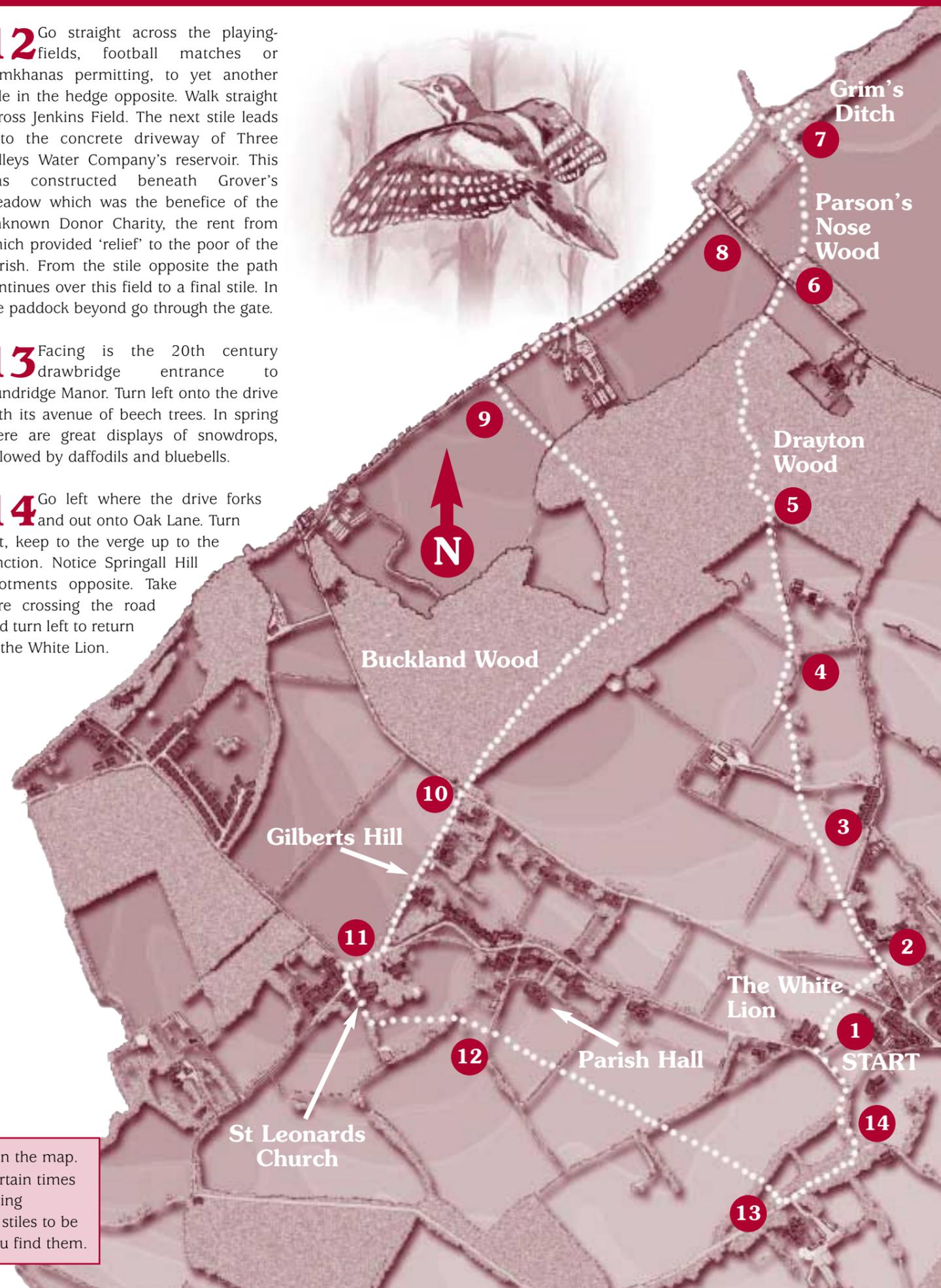
**10** Cross Bottom Road and climb Gilberts Hill (see overleaf). Gilberts Hill Field on the right once formed part of St Leonards Common (see overleaf). At the T-junction cross over the road by The Hermitage and turn right along Jenkins Lane. The houses ahead used to be St Leonards School and School-house. The school closed in 1973 leaving Hawridge and Cholesbury C of E School the only school in the four villages (see Walk No. 2 Hawridge Common and Heath End).

**11** Follow the path round to the left to arrive at the gateway to St Leonards Church and its graveyard which contains a number of interesting headstones worth a visit (see overleaf). Continue on down the driveway between the church and house which leads to a narrow footpath ending at a stile. Cross Vicarage Field beyond diagonally, looking out for the stile in the far hedge. Cross over into the field known as Little Meadow. The next stile brings you into the playing-fields of St Leonards Parish Hall (see overleaf).

**12** Go straight across the playing-fields, football matches or gymkhanas permitting, to yet another stile in the hedge opposite. Walk straight across Jenkins Field. The next stile leads onto the concrete driveway of Three Valleys Water Company's reservoir. This was constructed beneath Grover's Meadow which was the benefice of the Unknown Donor Charity, the rent from which provided 'relief' to the poor of the parish. From the stile opposite the path continues over this field to a final stile. In the paddock beyond go through the gate.

**13** Facing is the 20th century drawbridge entrance to Dundry Manor. Turn left onto the drive with its avenue of beech trees. In spring there are great displays of snowdrops, followed by daffodils and bluebells.

**14** Go left where the drive forks and out onto Oak Lane. Turn left, keep to the verge up to the junction. Notice Springall Hill allotments opposite. Take care crossing the road and turn left to return to the White Lion.



**Note:** Numbered sections refer to numbers on the map. Parts of this walk may be muddy at certain times of the year. This walk is across undulating countryside but there are a number of stiles to be negotiated. Please leave all gates as you find them.