

# North Wessex Downs National Landscape



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## Walks in Hampshire Watership Down Short Circular

Follow a section of the Watership Down Trail past iconic locations from Richard Adams' classic novel, with sweeping views and an optional detour to the Iron Age Ladle Hill Fort.

### Useful Information

- 6.0 miles / 9.7 km circular
- Start point: Ladle Hill layby
- What3Words: [novelists.dream.curtains](https://what3words.com/novelists.dream.curtains)
- Grid Ref: 492 566
- OS Explorer Map: 144 | Basingstoke, Alton & Whitchurch
- Hilly in parts, mostly rough ground
- Parking at Ladle Hill layby (free), on the road from Cole Henley to Ecchinswell
- Refreshments: Cafes, pubs, and supermarkets in Kingsclere (3.0 miles)
- Public Toilets: Swan Street Public Toilets, 12 Anchor Road, Kingsclere, RG20 5NE (3.0 miles)

### Route Directions

- 1) Once parked, cross the road and take the footpath (opposite a metal gate and farm track), which climbs slowly uphill. Pass through a gate (you will see Watership Down trail disks on the gate), onto Watership Down and head up towards The Gallops. On Reaching the top of the hill you will see a trig marker on your right [w3w:[fork.unite.octagonal](https://what3words.com/fork.unite.octagonal)] and horse jumps (The Gallops) on your left. Panoramic views of the surrounding area.  
**[1.5. Optional Detour to Honeycomb Warren]**, which is marked by a commemorative plaque to Richard Adams, author of the classic 'Watership Down'. Continue for approximately 0.5 km along The Gallops footpath, until you reach the tree and plaque at w3w:[hatch.clasping.rates](https://what3words.com/hatch.clasping.rates). Then retrace your steps.]
- 2) Ignoring other footpath markers along The Gallops, keep the fence close on your right and walk along to the end of this fence. Turn right through the gate and keep the hedgerow on your left. [w3w:[impresses.highbrow.plenty](https://what3words.com/impresses.highbrow.plenty)].
- 3) Follow the stony grass bridleway which turns into a single farm track. After approximately 0.75 km you will cross straight over a well-established farm track. A finger post will mark your way and continue along the path/bridleway between hedgerows for approximately 2 km. Pass under a pylon-line, the 'iron trees' described in Watership Down.
- 4) Approximately 150 meters before you reach a main road, turn right. Keeping the barbed wire fence on your left, follow a footpath with the Watership Down trail disks markers. An ancient woodland known as Caesar's Belt can be seen to your left. [w3w:[bristle.streaking.scraped](https://what3words.com/bristle.streaking.scraped)].

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- 5) Follow this path. There is a 'dogs on lead' sign to a post on the right post at one point as when you reach an open field, continue along the edge of this field. As the field drops down, at the bottom of the hill [w3w:[merge.flute.holidays](#)] turn right and walk up a grassy strip of land. Pass a rusty, disused milking shed on your left. The path then heads downhill, under some pylons, and when you reach a single track road turn right as you will re-join the main Watership Down trail [w3w:[gliding.confined.pursue](#)].
- 6) Continue along the road, passing a large farm building on your right. The road bends to the right, and you will pass Hillside and Hare Warren Cottages, as well as a Farm on your left. A short distance beyond the farm on the left is a small layby and a fingerpost pointing up a hill.
- 7) At the layby, turn left. Walk up a hill, round a metal gate, and follow the wide stone and grass path, keeping the fence on your right. Keep right as the path bends/forks a little way ahead (if you overshoot this path and arrive at the ruined livestock shelter, retrace your steps to the fork). Continue on the slow incline upwards to the top of the hill across open downland, taking in the big skies and open vistas, and listen out for the skylarks. As you approach the ridge, the Wayfarers Trail goes off to the left at OS 484 567 [w3w:[prospers.frizz.chipper](#)].

**[7.5. Optional Detour to Ladle Hill Fort.]** To visit Ladle Hill Iron Age Hill Fort and tumulus follow the Wayfarers Trail to your left; soon, where the field on your right ends, you'll reach a dewpond; turn through the adjacent gate into the fort (w3w:[broached.smarter.probing](#)). Retrace your steps to re-join the main path.]

- 8) Continue on a short distance before turning right through a gate. Continue ahead, passing another dewpond on your right. At OS 488 566 [w3w:[daffodils.strapping.legs](#)], you reach a wide track. Turn left and continue a short distance on this track before arriving back at your start point, Ladle Hill Parking

## Points of Interest

- **Honeycomb Warren:** A huge beech tree once stood at the NE corner of the wood, the roots of which formed the location of the rabbits' Honeycomb Warren in the novel. Unfortunately, it was destroyed by a storm in 2004, but a new tree has been planted there, protected by a wooden fence with "Hazel", "Bigwig", and "Fiver", roughly carved into its boards. A plaque commends Richard Adams, for his love of the Down and all its inhabitants.
- **Caesar's Belt:** From chapter 30 of Watership Down, "Where [the Roman road] crosses the downs, the line is marked by Caesar's Belt, a strip of woodland as straight as the road, narrow indeed but more than three miles long. In this hot noon-day the trees of the Belt were looped and netted with darkest shadow. The sun lay outside, the shadows inside the trees. All was still, save for the grasshoppers and the falling finch song of the yellow-hammer on the thorn."

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- **Ladle Hill Fort:** A scheduled monument which includes an unfinished hillfort, a saucer barrow, a disc barrow and sections of two linear earthworks. The site was abandoned during construction which allows the researcher to see very clearly how other sites were laid out. There are wonderful views from the hillfort on a clear day. From the northern side, on the edge of the escarpment, there are great views of Beacon Hill (one of the best-known hill forts in England and the site of one of the beacons that formed a network across Hampshire). Above the trees to the west, you can see the central tower of Highclere Castle (of Downton Abbey fame). To the east you can see the sweep of Watership Down and the transmitter mast at Hannington. Below you just to the north is the Sydmonton Estate (owned by Andrew Lloyd Webber).

## **Watership Down Short Circular: Map**

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