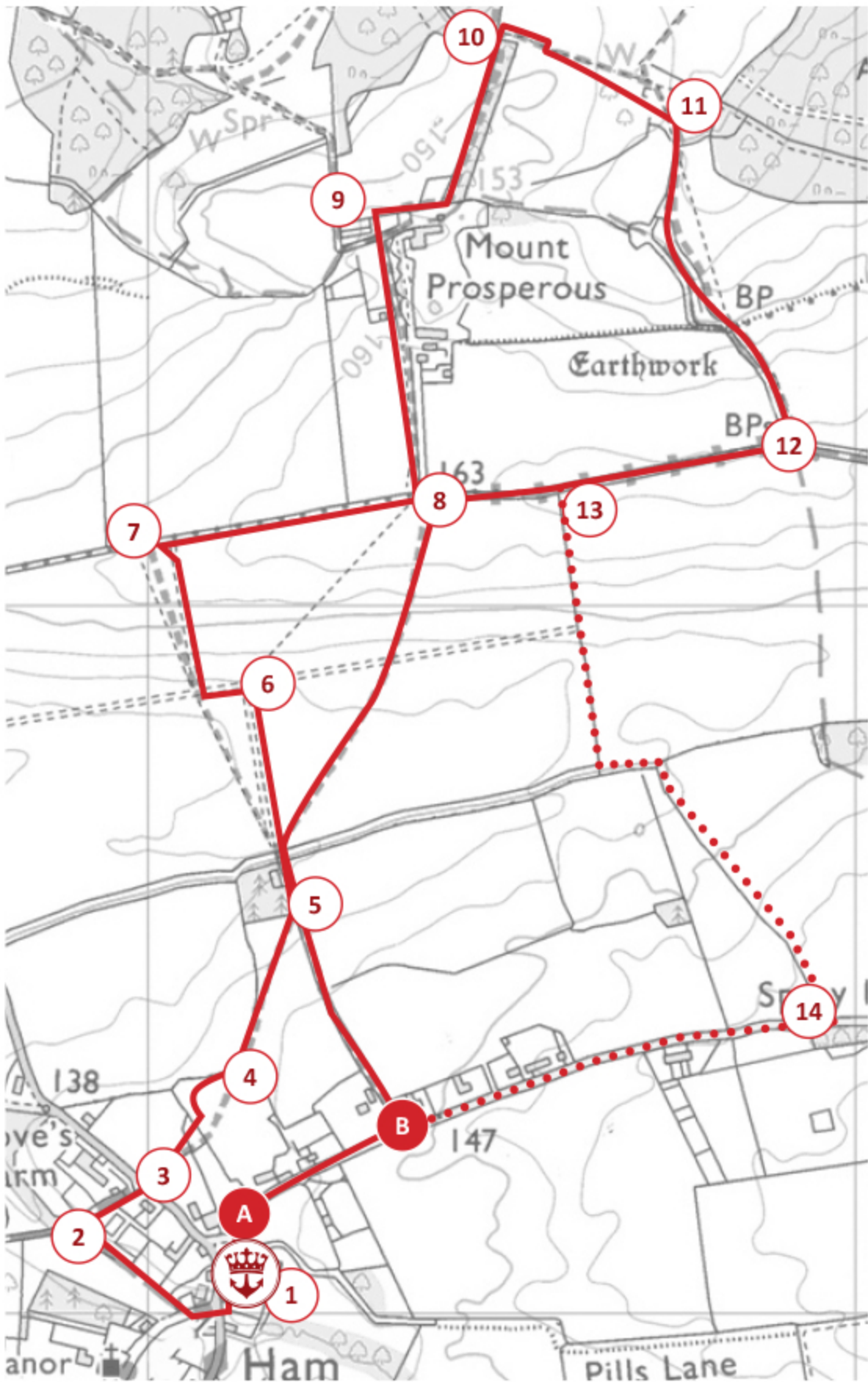


WALK 6

PROSPEROUS FARM LOOP

3.5 miles/5.6 km : 1¾hours
a few inclines: 4 stiles



To avoid stiles see alternative directions for steps 1-4 at foot

- 1 From the Crown & Anchor pub car park turn left onto the road heading towards Buttermere. Immediately on the left is the 16th century Rose Cottage with its later well-winding gear outside it. Twenty metres further on turn right along Church Lane. Thirty metres further on there is a public bridleway sign to the right. Turn right through the gate marked Humphrey's gate, unless you decide to view the church, after which visit return to the gate.
 - 2 Cross to the gate on the far side of the field and turn right onto the track known as Field Lane. After about 70m you reach the tarred road into Ham. Take care crossing the road to the stile immediately opposite.
 - 3 Cross the stile and continue slightly right on a less distinct path (to the right of the farm track that runs diagonally across the field) 100m to another stile. Cross the stile and enter the beautiful wooded grounds of the 17th century Old Rectory. The rectory was sold by the church in 1933 and is a private residence. Follow the path skirting to the left of the pond ahead of you and stay on the path to the left, until it meets another stile.
 - 4 Cross the stile and the farm track ahead of you. Keeping the hedgerow on your left follow an indistinct path along the edge of the field and slightly downhill towards a pinewood and stile in the corner of the field at the right hand side of the wood.
 - 5 Cross the stile and join a track, continuing to your left for about 300m across the valley floor. The fields to your right and left usually contain organic crops belonging to Doves Farm, often of ancient varieties of wheat. The beautiful song of skylarks can often be heard here and on the hillside ahead, with mixed grass strips especially left to encourage wildlife.
 - 6 At the base of the hill the track turns left for about 50 m before rising quite steeply for a further 200m to the top of the hill from where there are wonderful views back across the valley towards the escarpment and Ham Hill. You might be lucky enough to see red kites or buzzard flying overhead
 - 7 Approaching the hedgerow at the top of the hill, follow the path to the left for about 40m to a gap in the hedge, joining the tarred lane to Prosperous Farm. Turn right along the lane. To the left, visible through gaps in the hedgerow in the valley below, can be seen the buildings of Doves Farm Mill, where organic and gluten free flour and related products are produced. Continue along the lane for about 400m until you reach on your left the metal gates to Prosperous Farm and to your right a gap in the hedgerow and footpath sign.
 - 8 Turn left through the pedestrian kissing gate at the entrance to Prosperous and follow the driveway down the handsome avenue of beech trees to the T-junction at the end of the road with Prosperous House on your right.

Prosperous Farm was the home for over 30 years of the famous agricultural inventor, Jethro Tull, once described as "the greatest individual improver that agriculture has ever known". Here he perfected his towed seed drill which revolutionised the previous age-old, laborious and imperfect practice of broadcasting sowing by hand that then had to be harrowed in.
 - 9 Continue straight ahead for 20m across lawn towards a gate on a permissive path before turning sharp right before the gate. Walk behind a hedge following the path for some 200m past the back of Prosperous House as it then curves left through the edge of a wood. Go past a five bar gate off the track to the right and shortly afterwards reach a pedestrian gate and footpath signs on your right.
 - 10 Turn right through the pedestrian gate and after 50m go through another gate on your right into the adjoining field. (Note, this gate is in disrepair and may be difficult to open, in which case, continue ahead till after some 150m you reach another gate to cross into the adjoining field to step 11). Proceed across the field with the fence on your left, and a mini obelisk to your right heading slightly downhill towards another gate at the bottom of the field.
 - 11 Go through the gate turning sharp right and follow the path slightly uphill. After about 100m, and running at right angles to the path, marking the boundary between a field and line of trees, just visible are traces of the line of the Wansdyke mound and ditch. (Wansdyke link) Continue along the path until you meet the bridle way of Bitham Lane at the top of the rise, with a red pagoda nearby in the corner of the field to your right, and views of Prosperous House beyond in the distance.
 - 12 Turn right and follow the lane between hedgerows for about 200m until there is a gap in the left hand hedgerow and stake with a footpath marker to the left. You now have a choice of return either as in 13 or alternatively as described in 14 and 15 below. The latter is slightly longer.
 - 13 Continue straight ahead along Bitham lane between the hedgerows until reaching the Prosperous gates passed earlier [8]. Opposite the gates at a gap in the hedgerow and footpath marker sign turn left and follow the path (sometimes indistinct) heading downhill and back towards the pinewood passed earlier. As you descend there are magnificent panoramic views over the Vale of Pewsey with the downs escarpment, Coombe Gibbet and Walbury Hill to the left and Ham Hill and Rivar and Ashley downs to the right. Continue across the valley floor to point 5 where you can either cross the stile and retrace your steps, or better still follow the track for 400m with the hedgerow on your right until you meet the tarred Spray Road, where you turn right to head back to the Crown & Anchor pub.
- Alternative return route:**
- At 13 turn left and follow the field edge, with a line of electricity poles and hedgerow on your right, to the bottom of the hill, where the path turns left for about 50m before continuing right through a gap in the hedgerow, now slightly uphill for a further 500m till you reach the tarred Spray Road.
- 14 Turn right to head back to the village passing after about 100m Acorn Cottages on your left, built in 1945 for estate workers of Wandsdyke Farms, making your way back to the Crown & Anchor pub.

Alternative directions avoiding stiles (replacing steps 1-4)

- A From the pub car park turn right onto the road heading towards Inkpen, keeping the green on your left, follow Spray road for about 200m until just after the entrance to Vale House and a lane to the left and public footpath sign at the entrance to Field House.
- B Turn left and follow the lane with hedgerows and trees on your left some 300m first on the level and then dropping down to the bottom of the valley and re-joining the directions as for points 5 to 14.