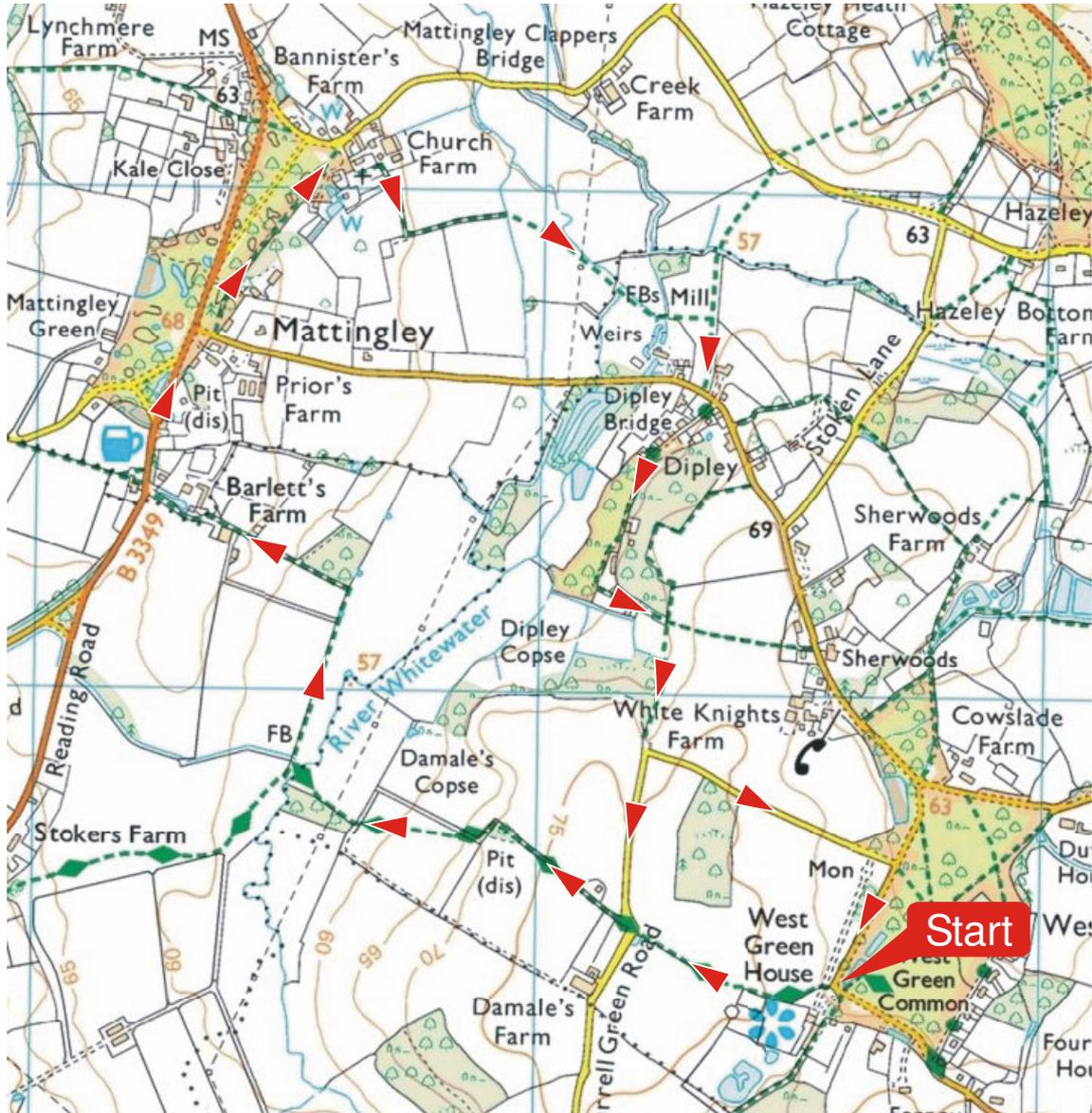


Whitewater Walk

The walk was devised by David Dye, a former committee member from Dipley, published in the Hartley Row Journal 1996, No 1.

Why not explore the Whitewater valley? Starting from West Green House, go over the new stile just to the right of the house. Following the footpath, skirt the house and, bearing right, follow a line of oak trees across the field to the Borough Court Road. At the iron gate look to the left. This small pond was once an important watering place for animals on route from Wales to the London markets.



Straight across the road the footpath now follows a farm track past a modern bungalow. This track is the remains of the old Drove Road along which cattle were herded on their way from Reading to Odiham Fair. Dating back at least to mediaeval times and probably therefore older than any other parish roads except for the Green Lane and the London to Exeter road. At the end of the track the footpath turns left behind some sheds. From here you can see right across the river valley to Mattingley, still standing, a line of 1940s Pill Boxes. Just before one Pill Box there is a post with a yellow waymark indicating the path which bears right across the field. On reaching the far side continue over a stile into the next field and keeping the hedge on your left, follow the edge of the field until you come to a new bridge over the River Whitewater. Look out for trout as you cross. The Whitewater is a typical Hampshire river originating from springs in the chalk downs, the clear water making it ideal for trout.

Coming off the bridge do not go straight on along the river but turn right then right again to follow the hedge at the back of the water meadow (yellow waymark on the oak tree). Here you may come across cattle grazing. About half way along the meadow you will pass a farm gate with no public access and a few yards further on another gate on to a very pleasant grassy track, shaded in summer but bright with celandines and blackthorn in April which leads up to Bartlett's Farm, and keeping the farmhouse to the right follow the track ahead to the Reading Road. Turn right and The Leather Bottle is now ready to welcome you with good food and drink.

Continue to follow the road towards Mattingley for a very short distance. On the right you will see a green with a barn at the rear. Cut across this green (with Prior's Farm to the right) and cross the Dipley Road. The footpath starts in front of the first house. This is a pleasant walk through woodland, carpeted in spring with celandines and periwinkles, which passes in front of a white cottage to the 14th century Mattingley Church on your right. Enter the churchyard and to the left of the church you will see a gate in the hedge at the bottom left hand corner. Through this, turn to the right following the farm track (often very muddy) and turning left after about 100 yards through double farm gates. Cross the stream, through another farm gate, then turn half right down to the river. Do not attempt to cross here but turn right along the river bank. Carry on through a gate and over an old bridge until you come to the rear of Dipley Mill. Here the footpath turns left over a white railed bridge and out into a meadow. Straight ahead across the meadow turn right along the hedge to the gate in the far left hand corner by the Dipley Road. Crossing the road, follow the sign to Dipley Common, where most of the original mill workers' houses have now been replaced. Stay on the unmade road round a bend to the left where on the left you will see a white cottage, originally three mill workers' cottages. The footpath is straight ahead, a little narrow and sometimes overgrown, with a bluebell wood to the left.

At the top turn right following the path towards the copse to Gypsy Corner on the Borough Court Road. Here you can turn right, picking up the footpath on the left at the iron gate and returning back across the field to West Green House, or alternatively turn left up the hill, then right at the junction with Thackhams Lane to return to the starting point.

Editor's Note

This is a lovely, varied walk which can also be started at the car park outside Mattingley Church or (with their agreement) from the car park of the Leather Bottle if one prefers to finish with a pub lunch.