

The Skylark Walk - Warfield and Jealott's Hill

A lovely easy walk along mainly wide paths and lanes, rich in hedgerows, through many skylark territories and passing through a country park with more skylarks, flowers and butterflies.

Start at Warfield Church where there is ample parking roadside opposite the church at RG42 6EE (There is a large locked church car park but please keep clear of the gates).

Alternatively, you can park at Frost Folly Country Park where there is a large free car park in Weller's Lane, nearest postcode RG42 6EN and start the walk from the penultimate paragraph of this guide.

Standing opposite the church, looking at it go left (east) and find the footpath through the gate on the right about 100 metres along the road. Cross the paddock almost diagonally, into the next field and then the one after that following the path in the same direction. **In the bottom corner the third field, turn left** following the obvious path through the gate and through the peaceful strip of woodland until you meet a lane.

Turn left at the lane and look for a footpath sign on the right-hand side after a site entrance. **Turn right** through the hedge and join the footpath. A little way along, the big trees in the fields on the right look good for Little Owl, usually seen low down on big branches. This stretch changes here and there and has rich hedgerows and views over meadows where mainly horses are grazing. Skylarks may be heard in spring in the fields all the way. At the end you meet Brock Hill. **Turn left along the roadside path.**

A short way along just as the buildings start on the left look for a footpath sign and turn left along the track. Here the path is marked to go through a gap in the fence and along concrete standing in front of some houses and exits shortly after through another gap. (You could go left of the first gap and follow the track to the same spot!) The path then goes to the right so **take this route through a metal gate.**

Now you are following another lovely hedgerow through open fields with more Skylarks and probably Meadow Pipits as well. This should be rich in birdlife and you may even find a Lesser Whitethroat as well as Whitethroats, Garden Warblers, Blackcaps, Chiffchaffs and all our common resident birds. Also, flowers will be in the hedgerow and butterflies and insects feeding.

At the end of the track **cross the main road carefully into a quiet lane.** The lane stretches about 500 metres with plenty of room to step off if vehicles come along. **At the end just after a small white cottage on the left, turn right and immediately left onto another lane.** Along here some of the ditches have yellow iris (flags) and Lesser Celandine in lovely displays with daffodils outside the houses in spring.

This lane soon turns sharply left where some new houses are being built on the right **but you carry on along the farm track straight ahead of you.** This track is more wooded than some so far and has many mature trees and woodland birds. At the end you will find a farm

shop that has a coffee stop so maybe worth a diversion? The track bends to the left and meets the A330. **Cross here but don't go straight on, turn immediately right along a path/bridleway that runs parallel with the road in front of the house there.**

Follow this path around the corner barely 500 metres with fields appearing on your left and you will see it split into two paths. **Take the right-hand path and carefully cross the main road A 3095 in front of you.** This is now a Byway and a very pleasant walk with more lovely hedgerows. After more than a kilometre you will reach a ford, on your right, over The Cut - a small river. **Turn left here without crossing the river** (but sneak a look at it from the bridge – you never know when a Kingfisher might appear or be sitting on a branch above the water or a Grey Wagtail feeding on the insects!)

So, turning left, this long, wide, straight bridleway again has lovely high hedgerows so birdsong, flowers and butterflies are going to be seen and heard. You may hear more skylarks in the area. You will continue past a metal gate and then a rather out of place mobile property site on the right and a turning left that looks like it could be the main route – don't be fooled – **carry on straight past the next gate with a prohibited traffic sign!** A patch of woodland will soon be on your right offering a chance to see some rooks in a small rookery and soon after that, on the left, properties start and **a gated bridleway appears on your left, join this it's known as Buckle Lane.** It starts as a rough track and then becomes a narrow tarmac lane. (Ignore the left turn into Tickleback Row). It should be quiet and pleasant to walk along. You will reach the A3095 at Moss End next to the Shepherd's House pub. It's not far from the end now if you want to stop! **Cross straight over the A3095 carefully and follow the lane opposite** (there is a roadside path for part of it). **At the T junction turn right and very soon, on the left,** you will see the entry to Frost Folly Country Park. (This is the alternative car parking place).

Enter the park. It will be worth exploring here for birds, especially skylarks, wildflowers and butterflies. The land was given to the community by generous local farmers. There are many paths around it and a lot of immature planting for the future. The park attracts many passage birds because it is high ground and I found Wheatears on the grass here in March, they may also be passing through in April. **Explore and leave the park at the far end, down the slope and behind the large wildlife pond.** The pond, plus a small adjacent pond, have sweet iris, marsh marigold and water mint, bull rushes, dragonflies and smooth newts and frogs.

The next path is a concrete track straight ahead and leads you towards Warfield along a nice avenue of trees. You will see Warfield church a short distance away on the right. Just about 100 metres/yards along the track a farm gate and path gate will be seen on the right. **Turn right here and this will lead you back to the church where you started.**