

River crossings and the Thames Path

Day's Lock to Shillingford and back to Dorchester via the Thames Path (5 miles)

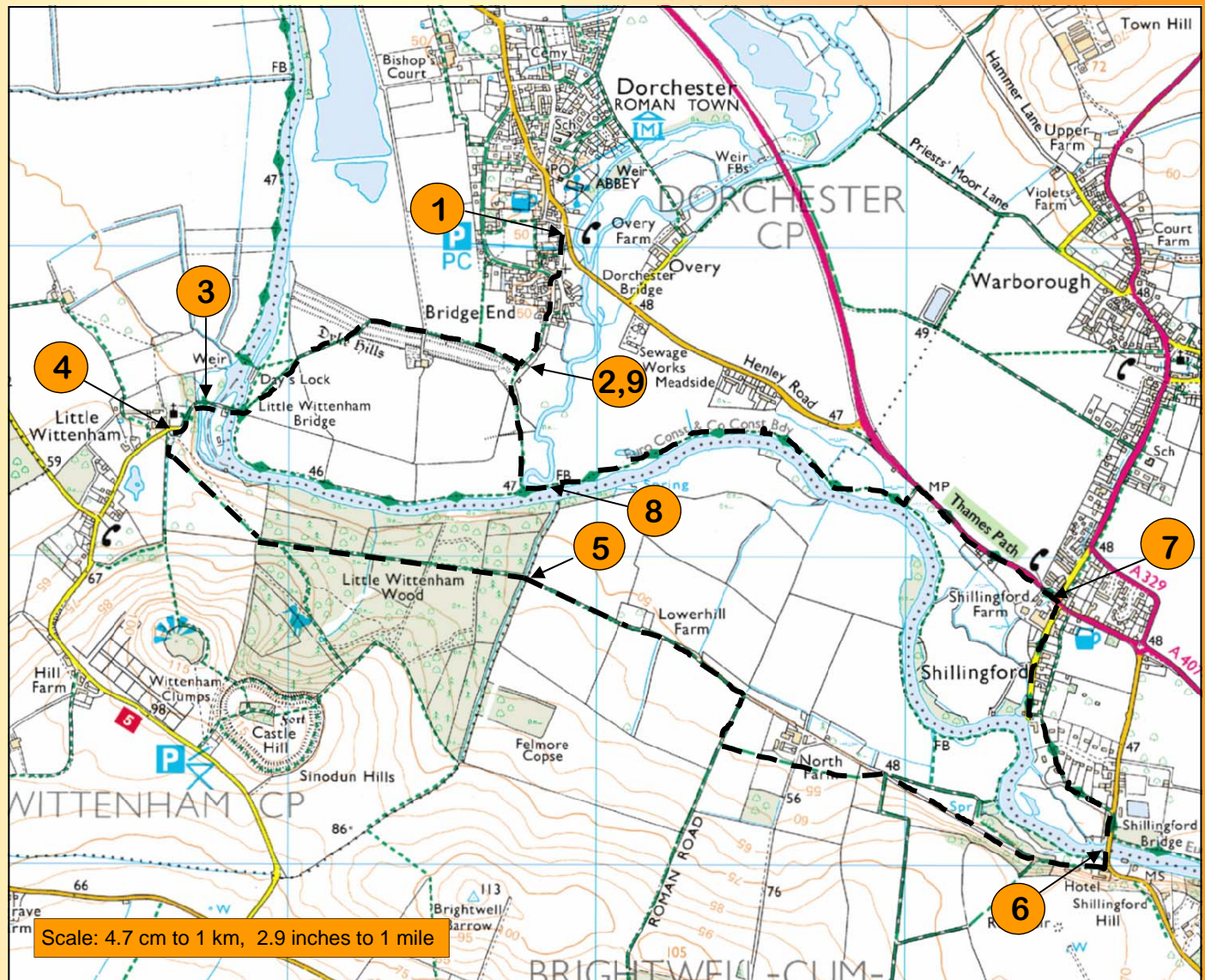
This easy 2-hour walk via Day's Lock across the Thames takes you past Little Wittenham church, through Little Wittenham woods to Shillingford, and back to Dorchester via the Thames Path.

1. The walk starts from the car park by Dorchester Bridge. Walk down Bridge End away from the main road to the start of the village green at the junction with Watling Lane. Turn right by the letter box and immediately left into Wittenham Lane. At the end of the lane continue along the footpath running straight ahead along the edge of the field. Continue to the kissing gate in the corner of the field.



2. Do not go through the gate, but turn right, and keeping the Dyke Hills (a double rampart of earthworks that once protected a late Iron Age settlement) on your left, follow the path to the end of the earthworks. The path bears left between two hedgerows to a gate. Pass through the gate and walk diagonally across the field to the bridge you can see in the corner, a few yards downstream from Day's Lock.

This footbridge is where the Annual International Pooh Sticks Championships are held every March in aid of the RNLI and local charities. This event has been running for more than 25 years. The current lock was built in 1788 and rebuilt in 1871. It replaced an earlier single-gated flash lock through which



barges proceeding upstream had to be dragged against the current by a team of cart-horses.

3. Cross the river by the footbridge below the lock, passing the lock-keeper's cottage on the left. The road takes you to Little Wittenham church.

This pretty church was almost completely rebuilt in 1863. The original building was built for the monks of Abingdon Abbey who held a grange next door. The 14th century tower is original; inside are monuments to the Dunch family who held the manor until 1719, including a fine marble monument to Sir William Dunch (died

1611) and his wife Mary, aunt of Oliver Cromwell.



4. Cross the road outside the church and pass through the gate into the field. You will see the Wittenham Clumps in front of you. Turn half left along the bottom of the field and aim slightly uphill diagonally across

the field to the gate which takes you onto the bridleyway through Little Wittenham wood.

5. Emerging from the wood continue straight along the track until you reach a barrier. At this point there is a diversion (clearly marked) to the right. Follow the track until you reach a blue sign on a post indicating a left turn which takes you between two fields. Passing North Farm on your left you will emerge onto the farm road. Turn right and continue until you reach the Shillingford Bridge Hotel, a good place to have a rest, enjoy the river view and have a drink.



6. Cross the bridge and immediately turn left to join the Thames Path. A short way down the lane the Thames Path bears right from the driveway of a house called High Trees. Go through the iron kissing gate and along the path until you reach a post with a Thames Path disc indicating a left turn through a barrier. This route takes you down to the river at Shillingford Wharf. On the wall to your left you will see the marks indicating the unbelievably high flood levels in the past. Turn right up Wharf Road to The Kingfisher pub at the junction with the A4074.



7. Cross this busy road with care and turn left onto the pavement. Pass the bus stop and continue along the road for about 300 metres until you reach the road sign for Dorchester. Cross the road and go through the kissing gate opposite (sign marked Thames Path). Bear right across the field to the river and follow the path along the bank to the footbridge which crosses the Thame at its confluence with the Thames.

8. Cross the bridge and turn sharp right across the field keeping the Thame on your right. Pass through a kissing gate and, with the Dyke Hills on your left and a WWII pill box on your right, you meet another kissing gate (point 2).

9. Go through the kissing gate and walk straight ahead to Wittenham Lane. Go down the lane to the junction with Watling Lane, turn right and then immediately left, taking you back to the car park at Dorchester.

This leaflet was compiled by members of the Dorchester Walking Group and the Dorchester Abbey Museum Committee in memory of Brian Oliver, a dedicated member of both groups, who designed and prepared the first two walk guides

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Text: Gail Thomas. Production: John Metcalfe
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Walks in and around Dorchester, No. 3