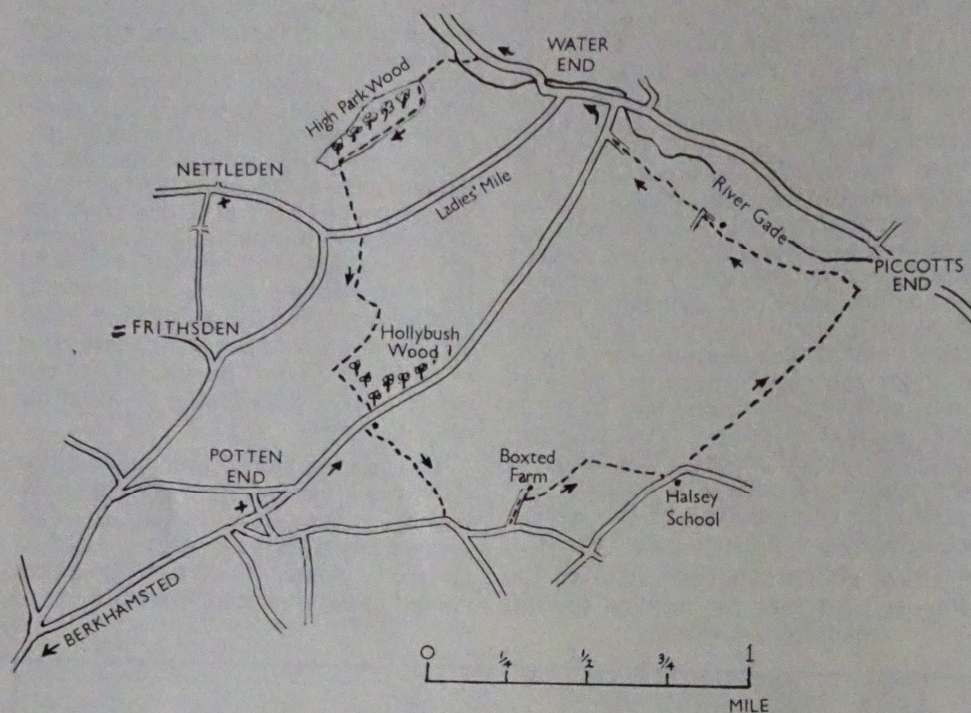


BERKHAMSTED'S BEST WALKS—10

POTTEN END AND THE LADIES' MILE

by Townsman



Unlike previous routes, all of which started at Berkhamsted, this month's tour begins and ends at Potten End. All very well for the people of Potten End, you may say; what about walkers who do not live in that delectable village?

Well, there are many ways of reaching Potten End—by road, lane or path; on foot, horseback, or by bike, car or bus. Energetic people will not mind footing it all the way, extending a walk of about six miles to one of over ten miles. Motorists are not likely to find traffic wardens at Potten End. People dependent upon public transport will find the B. & B. bus service handy on weekdays but non-existent on Sundays.

Like well-known speakers at public meetings, Potten End needs no introduction. Not content with Berkhamsted Common on their doorsteps, the villagers have a very spacious green with an out-size pond. A once-famous landmark, Potten End water tower, still stands on the Common but is now veiled by tall trees. More easily seen is the ancient earthwork known as Grim's Dyke, said to have been made by the devil, a theory to which some golfers still subscribe.

The gem of the village is its church. It is little more than a century old and

quite unlike most of the Victorian churches I know. Holy Trinity is light and bright, and, I think, quite beautiful.

Our route has many good features: some of the views over the Gade valley are superb. Perhaps the best part of the walk is from Water End to Ladies' Mile; High Park Wood is a high spot in every sense, with several good, clean paths, all worth exploring.

Ladies' or (Lady's) Mile is the name of the valley road from Nettledden to Water End. This was the way the owners of Ashridge used when they did not wish to travel via Berkhamsted. Their carriages clattered along the Golden Valley, over Nettledden bridge, and then to Water End, Piccotts End and Hemel Hempstead. Why was it called Ladies' Mile? I do not know. Do you?

THE ROUTE

At Potten End, take the Water End road. Nearly a third of a mile beyond the village school, look for the 'Public footpath to Hemel Hempstead' signpost on the right. Go over the stile and keep straight on, hedge on your left, to another road, in which turn left and again left at a junction. Where the road narrows turn left down the drive towards Boxted Farm for a very short

distance, then turn right, over a stile and keep straight on, first with wire fence on your left and then, beyond an iron fieldgate, on your right. At the end of the large field turn right at a stile and with the hedge on your left go towards Halsey School. (Note the curious old oak tree just before you reach the road.)

Turn left in the road for a very short distance and then along the signposted path which runs left of the back garden of a row of houses. Keep straight on downhill all the way, with good views en route.

In the valley, look for a 'Public footpath' signpost, between trees and an iron fence, just below a large barn. Follow this path to an iron swing-gate, then veer half left over the next meadow to a stepless stile, beside which the sawn-off base of a tree provided a low step at the time of my last visit. Go straight ahead, barbed wire fence on your right, passing a large house, to a little lane. To the right, on the opposite side of the lane, you will see the start of the continuing path, which first runs beside a tall corrugated iron fence, beyond which are two stiles, the second equipped with rubber tubing to prevent contact with barbed wire. Go over these stiles and keep straight on, hedge on your right, continuing along a little lane to the Potten End—Water End road, in which turn right to the main road.

Turn left along the main road, continue over Water End bridge, and about a quarter of a mile farther on turn left between two low walls and take the path signposted 'Great Gaddesden 1 mile'. Carry on over the footbridge crossing the Gade, and straight on to the far right corner of the field, where there are two stiles. Take the left one—the other goes to Great Gaddesden—and with the hedge on your right go uphill for a few yards to High Park Wood.

On entering the wood over a stile, turn immediately left along the edge of the wood. After a short distance the path veers right and continues through the trees, about 20 yards from the edge of the wood. At the far end of the wood is a stile, from which you turn left, downhill, to Ladies' Mile.

(As an alternative to our path through High Park Wood you could go through the right-hand side of the wood. Early on there are good glimpses of Great Gaddesden Church, and at the other end, of Nettledden and the Golden Valley.)

From Ladies' Mile take the signposted 'Public footpath to Potten End'. There is a wire fence to your right. Just after passing the *second* large water trough, turn left (hedge on your left) then go along the top of the same field, hedge still on your left. Soon you pass a wood, left, and shortly after going over a stile look for another stile on your left. (Two large electricity posts stand sentry near the stile). Go over the stile and straight ahead, uphill, to the Potten End road.