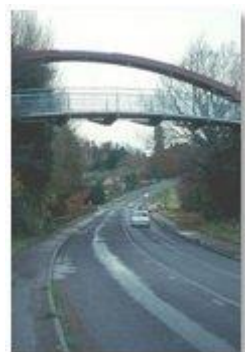


Favourite walks

Circular 6 mile walk, mainly through Bowood Estate

This walk just about allows you to stay within the boundaries of Calne Without but stretches your legs and includes some lovely countryside, especially on the path through Bowood. It is just over 6 miles (nearly 7 if you start from the Lansdowne Arms).

- 1a Start at the Black Dog Inn/Gurkha Baynjan Restaurant on the A4 (now a fine Nepalese restaurant but still with a public bar), where there is ample car parking and an opportunity for a pre-walk coffee or a post-walk pint, or, for locals, start from your own home.
- 1b It is also possible, and perhaps more appropriate given the amount of Lansdowne land covered, to start from the Lansdowne Arms in Derry Hill but that does make the walk three-quarters of a mile longer. If starting from the Lansdowne Arms, head east down Church St until, just after Christ Church, you head down Old Road on your right and follow that until reaching the Black Dog Inn/Gurkha Baynjan Restaurant and then follow the instructions from 2.
- 2 Head east downhill towards Calne on the footpath alongside the A4 for just over half a mile/ 1km. This is the unpleasant part of the walk as the lorries and cars rush past but it is downhill and doesn't last too long. This is Black Dog Hill, which glories in numerous explanations for its name; I prefer the tale that it was named after a frighteningly large black dog that helped herd (or, on one version, terrorised) the pigs brought from Ireland which overnighted by the River Marden before continuing their journey to London, or were deemed too weak to complete the journey and were thus slaughtered and supplied to the bacon and pie workers of Calne. More prosaic explanations include the undoubted existence of a previous Black Dog pub by the river.
3. Just before the bottom of the hill and before crossing the river, you will see the striking wooden arch bridge that carries the North Wiltshire Rivers Cycle Route from Calne to Chippenham. Black Dog Bridge was designed by Mark Lovell Design Engineers and was



erected in 2000 as part of the millennium celebrations. As you go under the bridge, you will see a driveway to your right, marked as a private road but it is a public footpath. Cross the A4 with great care and walk uphill on that drive/footpath to finely worked wrought iron gates. Pass through the gates and turn left at what was once Black Dog Halt, a former railway station on the Chippenham and Calne line originally created in 1863 as a private stop for Lord Lansdowne of Bowood House, it became a public request stop after the formation of British Rail.

4. The walk now follows the cycle route for just short of a mile/1.2km. You can see the river to your left from time to time and maybe pick blackberries or sloes at the right time of year. Just before descending the steepest part of the path and crossing the cattle grid, a sign on your right offers a courtesy route to Wenhill Lane. Take that path. If you find yourself at the cattle grid, you have gone too far and need to retrace your steps.
5. The path curves round the outskirts of Calne by a wood and (scarcely visible) stream to your left. You then come to a gate giving access to Wenhill Lane. Although there is scarcely any traffic on the Lane, take care for the 400 yards or so before taking a waymarked path to the left just before a cottage.
6. The path is now well marked as you are on Bowood land and the clear and distinctive blue markers leave little room for doubt about the direction to take. But, for clarity, after passing the cottage, you come to a path to the left on the edge of the field and a slightly wonky plank bridge and stile. Very shortly thereafter take a left and over another stile before following the path right around the edge of Pinhills Farm. The Farm has been part of the Bowood estate since 1816 – it is close to the site of the Former Pinhills House, captured and largely demolished by Royalist forces in the Civil War.
7. Having passed Pinhills Farm, take a left turn down a drive and follow that to a main junction where you must turn sharp right at a 'Halt' sign and continue for a mile/1.6km of easy walking. Look out for hares in the fields in Spring and deer (of a few different types) at almost any time of year. As you near a bridge over a pond/lake but *before* the bridge, there is a kissing gate on the right, again clearly marked by a blue sign. Go through that gate and follow the linear pond/lake until reaching a bridge to a large white metal gate. Turn left over the bridge and through the gate and you begin to follow the path that runs parallel with the west bank of Bowood Lake. The Lake is part of the magnificent Bowood Estate and Gardens, landscaped by Lancelot 'Capability' Brown. Access to the full glory of the gardens requires payment for a day or season pass but you can get a great flavour of the estate on the footpaths through. The lake hides Mannings Hill hamlet, which stood in the way of Capability Brown's grand design so the residents were moved to Sandy Lane or Derry Hill.
8. Bowood House, the home of the Marquis of Lansdowne, is now fully visible before you. It was once one of the grandest homes in England but a large part of it was demolished in 1955/6. One of its grander rooms (from Robert Adam designs) was saved and transported to London, where it is now the Committee Room of Lloyds of London. The house and grounds are well worth a visit on another day. Continue to follow the well-marked path as it swings left uphill away from the lake and go through another metal gate with a pond to your left. The path then swings left uphill to cross the main drive into Bowood House.
9. Ignoring the drive (unless you have an invitation to tea), follow the blue sign which points almost straight on to a kissing gate and cross a portion of a field before coming to a hard left turn. After 600 yards or so, including another kissing gate, pass through yet another kissing gate which affords your last kissing opportunity and which exits onto a drive running parallel to the golf course. Take that drive to the right. About 50 yards after passing a golf tee, the drive swings right but you need to take the footpath straight ahead. That path swings right before a left turn downhill into the trees and beneath some pylons. Turn left again when you see a tarmacked drive – the footpath runs parallel to that drive and along the edge of the short 3rd hole of the golf course before emerging at the top of the rise next to the drive into Bowood.

10a If you started from the Black Dog/Gurkha Baynjan, look out for an open area to your right which leads to white gates and a road. There is an information board there explaining that you are at Studley Lodge. Go through those gates and turn hard right down Old Road. Follow that to the A4 and the Black Dog Inn faces you.

10b If you started from the Lansdowne Arms, carry on along the path that borders the golf course until reaching the famous 'Golden Gates' on your right. Walk through them and you are back at the pub.