

Chiltern Railway Walk

London Marylebone to Birmingham Moor Street



The text in this book is merely an indication of what might be possible ... or what might have been possible at the time of researching or later revision.

Each reader must assess whether each part of the route qualifies as suitable or safe for public access. The author does not warrant any point of legality or safety in any part of the description of the route.

Thanks are due to many people who have helped me with route-finding and with intelligence local to a number of areas traversed by the route. Their contributions enrich the route and the stories along it. Clearly, any mistakes and misinterpretations remain with the author.

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Front cover photograph:
Denham Village, just to the south of Denham station

Chiltern Railway Walk

London Marylebone to Birmingham Moor Street

Start	Marylebone station — NW1 6JJ
Finish	Birmingham Moor Street station — B4 7UL
Distance	240.8km
Duration	51 hours 24 minutes
Ascent	2247m

Introduction

The route

The Chiltern Line, which travels north-west from London Marylebone station to Birmingham via High Wycombe, Banbury and Leamington Spa, traverses a wide variety of landscapes from urban to rural, and uses streets, roads, parks, towpaths, woodland, farmland and unimproved land.

Marylebone was the last of the major London termini to be built, being opened in 1899 by the Great Central Railway, which had a line from Manchester, via Sheffield, Nottingham, Leicester and Rugby. Long-distance services ceased in 1966, leaving just commuter lines to Aylesbury and High Wycombe (with a skeletal service on to Banbury). It was expected (some would say encouraged) that these services would wither and die — there was even a plan to turn the railway into a road for lorries and buses —but the commuter traffic held on, especially from areas which were not served by the Underground.

More recently, Chiltern Railways expanded services to provided regular links with Oxford, Birmingham, Stratford-upon-Avon, Stourbridge and Kidderminster (the last two in conjunction with West Midlands Railways) as well as the commuter services as described above. Direct links west of Birmingham Moor Street, other than a few weekday peak-period journeys, were ceded to West Midlands Railway in 2023.

Much of the Great Central Railway line from Sheffield to London is lost: a heritage line between Loughborough and Leicester is the main remnant, apart from the lines into London used by Chiltern services today. The reason for the sparse Underground links is that the station was built many years after the Underground. The Jubilee Line tracks run beneath the station, between Baker Street and St John's Wood stations, but there is no stop at Marylebone.

The sections

There are thirty-three stations in total on the main Chiltern Line between London Marylebone and Birmingham Moor Street.

However, in two instances (between Haddenham and Thame Parkway and Bicester North, and between Banbury and Leamington Spa) the inter-station distances are such that these two walks have each had an intermediary staging-post created (at Kingswood and Kington respectively). These staging-posts really chose themselves as being the only viable break with public transport access in each case — Kington even has a bed-and-breakfast option.

There are therefore thirty-four sections to the narrative of the route in this document. These sections are listed in the following table, with distances and page references.

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
1	London Marylebone	14.3	Wembley Stadium	17
2	Wembley Stadium	3.6	Sudbury and Harrow Road	31
3	Sudbury and Harrow Road	1.6	Sudbury Hill Harrow	33
4	Sudbury Hill Harrow	2.4	Northolt Park	35
5	Northolt Park	3.3	South Ruislip	39
6	South Ruislip	5.3	West Ruislip	41
7	West Ruislip	8.6	Denham	45
8	Denham	1.6	Denham Golf Club	55
9	Denham Golf Club	4.6	Gerrards Cross	57
10	Gerrards Cross	5.3	Seer Green and Jordans	59
11	Seer Green and Jordans	4.8	Beaconsfield	63
12	Beaconsfield	10.0	High Wycombe	65
13	High Wycombe	8.8	Saunderton	69
14	Saunderton	7.1	Princes Risborough	75

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
15	Princes Risborough	12.7	Haddenham and Thame Parkway	79
16	Haddenham and Thame Parkway	15.7	<i>Kingswood</i>	83
17	<i>Kingswood</i>	16.8	Bicester North	89
18	Bicester North	20.3	Kings Sutton	95
19	Kings Sutton	6.1	Banbury	101
20	Banbury	20.6	<i>Kineton</i>	103
21	<i>Kineton</i>	19.7	Leamington Spa	107
22	Leamington Spa	4.1	Warwick	113
23	Warwick	3.2	Warwick Parkway	115
24	Warwick Parkway	5.1	Hatton	117
25	Hatton	7.7	Lapworth	119
26	Lapworth	5.9	Dorridge	121
27	Dorridge	4.0	Widney Manor	123
28	Widney Manor	4.1	Solihull	125
29	Solihull	3.1	Olton	127
30	Olton	2.1	Acocks Green	129
31	Acocks Green	1.6	Tyseley	131
32	Tyseley	2.9	Small Heath	133
33	Small Heath	2.0	Bordesley	135
34	Bordesley	2.2	Birmingham Moor Street	137

The sectors

It may be useful to some readers to split the route into major sectors for multi-day walking or landscape focus. The route falls easily into four such sectors, though the third is twice the length of each of the others.

- **London**
London Marylebone to Denham
39.0km; 294m ascent — *see* page 15
- **Chiltern Hills**
Denham to Princes Risborough
42.2km; 610m ascent — *see* page 53
- **Greater Oxfordshire**
Princes Risborough to Leamington Spa
111.8km; 984m ascent — *see* page 77

- **West Midlands**

Leamington Spa to Birmingham Moor Street
47.7km; 321m ascent — *see* page 111

Planning your days

Getting to and from the routes

First of all, I intended to reach the start of each day's walk as early in the day as possible. I did this by catching (generally) the first bus of the day from my nearest stop in the outermost fringe of London. This demonstrated the great difference between Sunday walking and the rest of the week: the first Sunday bus (at about 0740, as opposed to 0610 on other days) meant that the day's walk might not be started before 1000, and sometimes even later. I aim to finish the day's walk by 1400 if at all possible, because that's when the heat is switched off by the sun in winter (earlier if you are to the north of high ground).

In the route guides, useful bus stops and stations are noted, with link routes described if they are not adjacent to the route itself. You will need both the TfL journey planner (<https://tfl.gov.uk/>) and the National Public Transport Information site (which has superseded and consolidated the various regional Traveline offerings and is at <https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>) to plan your days. Once you know the routes you will need to research, <https://bustimes.org/> comes into its own, providing information about every bus and every stop — to give you shorter options and emergency exits.

You may note that I have tried to ensure that linear walks are chosen to be walking northwards or westwards as much as possible. This minimises staring into the sun, particularly in the morning when it is low in the sky. On circular walks, of course, the direction is all but immaterial, for you will be pointing south at some point in the circuit.

Finding the way

Map

Of course, the first step in finding the route is to read and to follow the detailed route-notes in the guide! But a map is still a very helpful aid, especially to find context, exit routes and alternatives, and the very best published maps for walkers are the Ordnance Survey Explorer series at a scale of 1:25000.

Assuming that you have access to a computer and printer, though, there is a far better option open to you than buying large fold-out paper maps which go out of date with every by-pass, brownfield

conversion, or cliff collapse. A subscription to the Ordnance Survey's online map service (for full details of their offerings is one of the best investments any walker in Great Britain can make. For less than £40 per year (at 2026 prices), this will give unlimited online access to Ordnance Survey cartography stretching from Shetland to Scilly: you will note that they have a range of subscription plans available. See

<https://www.ordnancesurvey.co.uk/osmaps/>)

for details of the subscription service.

With this subscription, you may import GPX routes and create your own routes: these may be stored in the cloud, accessible only to you with your account or, if you so desire, made available to other users of the app. Also, you may export basic GPX data for any route to a file, and the software is able to calculate optimal directions for road trips too. You may then print maps and route-plans, using your own decisions as to paper size (A4 or A3), scale, and orientation, without limit) for your personal use. The map quality is second to none, just as one would expect from the Ordnance Survey.

The A-Z atlases and maps (and similar publications) are also useful for street names, etc., and show some of the paths, particularly in the built-up areas, but the limitations of scale are greater with a mapset which prioritises roads and streets, so the precision is diluted, often to the point of impracticality. Needless to say, Google Maps (and other online services) can show the route of an imported GPX file on top of their base maps. However, the quality of the map, and of the resultant print, will suffer badly in comparison with the Ordnance Survey app's offering of crisp, clear, high-quality mapping.

Never rely solely on a map on your smartphone: the drain on the battery as the phone polls for your location is significant, and the consequences of losing navigability because of battery drainage, while perhaps not quite as life-threatening as it was for the idiots who tried to navigate across the Lakeland Fells with a phone, are still serious. Also, when all is said and done, the places where you are need navigational assistance are precisely those with extremely limited signal quality.

To return to the Lake District for an example, I pulled out my phone at Hardknott Roman camp (but only to check for a text), and there was only a very weak signal ... from Manx Telecom. To cap it all, I had a text from Manx Telecom two days later, asking for my views on having experienced their service in using my phone while abroad.

Compass

Within the narrative, the sixteen main compass directions are used for most instances of orientation where the bearing is close enough. However, sometimes more accuracy is required, and a numerical

compass bearing has to be given (clockwise from north). It should be stressed that a compass is a very useful piece of equipment, even on suburban streets, but it becomes essential when crossing areas of heath or woodland where there is a multitude of paths (or none at all).

Nowadays, many of our mobile phones have compass apps, and for those whose phones are missing the app ... well, a basic Silva or Suunto (or similar) compass will be fine for these walks. Just keep yourself clear of danger by using your phone (and its battery) sparingly.

Of course, if you can see the sun, you can gauge directions pretty easily: it is in the east at 6am, in the south-east at 9am, south at noon, south-west at 3pm and west at 6pm (an hour later during British Summer Time, of course).

Logistics

Start and finish

You should note the restrictions in Sunday travel (and also on Saturdays, in some cases), and this may inform your choice of the day of the week for a particular route. The National Rail status pages should warn you of present and planned disruptions to services, as will TfL within London.

Food and drink

It might seem, at first glance, unnecessary to carry provisions while walking in a well-populated area, but needing to hunt down victuals can be distracting and dispiriting. If a café or pub is not reached at the right time of day (or is found to be closed when you arrive), a period of gloom may set in; at the wrong point of the natural cycle of walking spirit, the need for a formal stop can disrupt the flow of the walk.

Each of these eventualities may lead to a mental off-switch being thrown, when you will be walking *through* an area without the experience of being *in* the area. Indeed, if you stick rigidly to the routes as given in the notes, there will often be long stretches along which you will not encounter a shop on the route itself. In areas of dearth, off-route facilities are indicated.

Of course, this applies more stringently in the rural areas, where you know that there could be long distances between refreshment facilities. You should always carry a small water bottle and some emergency nibbles; on some stretches, it can be handy to have a sandwich or similar in reserve. You are encouraged to make use of local facilities in the areas passed through, but you should also

make sure that you have a Plan B tucked away in your pocket or backpack — whether for yourself, or for someone you might meet who is in greater distress.

First aid

The above advice applies equally to the carrying of a simple first aid kit of sticking plaster, antiseptic cream, antiseptic wet wipes (for disposal other than by flushing), tissues and sunscreen, plus zipped polythene bags for the sterile collection and subsequent disposal of any contaminated material. The small barrel of brandy which is stereotypically to be found round the neck of a St Bernard is optional.

Directions

I try to keep out of the trap of “cross the stile, and make for invisible barn over the skyline”, a direction which I discovered (and revised) within a set of route-notes to a long-distance path more than forty years ago.

You will see that these directions are sufficient to follow the route if you have a capable map in your hand.

Times and distances

Each route is headed by details of the distance, ascent and duration. For the purposes of the calculation, standard walking pace is set at 5 kilometres per hour: individual readers may adjust expected timings according to their natural speed.

Distances are given in kilometres (after all, that’s how the grid squares are constructed on the map, and we should really have ditched the awkward multiples of 12, 3, 220, and 8 several generations ago); the duration is based on Naismith’s Rule at a flat-ground pace of 5 kilometres per hour, and accounting for slope. So, for example, if your natural walking speed works out at 4 kilometres per hour, you will need to adjust the duration by a factor of 1.25 (five divided by four) to obtain an approximate duration for your own needs, rounding up a little if you are slower than Naismith.

Do not assume, though, that you can manage a faster gait than is comfortable, especially in aiming to speed the route in towns and cities: that will just put you under the cosh on expectations, and will leave no time to stand and stare. Urban walking has its own accelerations and decelerations, very different from its rural counterpart — even waiting at traffic lights will change your overall speed.

Key access points to public transport within routes are given at the appropriate points in the narrative.

Background information

Throughout the text, I have attempted to give historical and other context to the areas through which you are passing. This may discuss a physical aspect of the route, such as the geology or architecture. Alternatively, it may point out something which might be interesting in social terms — a famous resident, perhaps, or a link with another route. These discursive pieces of information will be in [blue](#).

While each reader may have a favourite topic for such background information, it is hoped that there will be some interest for all in each of these inserts into the route-text.

Another form of insert alerts the reader to the various logistical matters which you will encounter — either for good (the presence of opportunities for refreshment or for the replenishment of supplies, and transport opportunities), or for the not so good (having to travel along a busy road or cross a busy railway, or the presence of other poor or dangerous walking conditions). In addition, this covers any points where an apparently obvious next step is the wrong answer. These logistical alerts will be in [red](#).

Respecting the route

Responsible walkers will always obey the Countryside Code when in the country, but respect for the route does not stop at the 30mph signs.

Whether you are on a street, a towpath, a footpath, or any other part of the route, you are only a guest passing through the community of others. The residents and other users have every right to expect that you do not abuse their environment while you borrow it for your transient use.

- Parking in residential roads, in front of gates or other points of field access, in passing places on single-track roads, and beside farm driveways at the start or end of your walk is dissuaded most strongly — use local car parks if you really must arrive by car (though using public transport is a far better option, especially in walking linear routes). After all, these routes are described as *railway* days out.
- Do not make excessive noise as you go along — play no music, and quiet conversation barely above a whisper is loud enough. Let the surroundings do the talking.
- Do not block the way for other users by walking in large groups or more than two abreast (this is, of course, the most civilised way to act wherever you walk, whether you are ambling along Oxford Street or moor-tramping in the Outer Hebrides).

- Be extremely careful not to leave litter anywhere. Always try to replenish your supplies at local shops, cafés, and so on: this helps to pay back the community for your use as you pass through.
- Finally, be sure to enjoy your passage through the areas borrowed by the routes — and show it by smiling to the locals you meet.

Conventions used in this guide

One convention will already have been noted — the consistent use of metric measurements. This is the logical choice to correspond with map scales, and avoids the need for mental arithmetic in scales of three or of 22. Most people can be happy to consider their natural walking pace at 6kph, 5kph, or 4kph: that translates to one kilometre per 10, 12, or 15 minutes respectively. Even an ambling 3kph comes out at a nice round 20 minutes per kilometre.

However, there are other conventions to give you, the reader, help in reading the text. Within the route sections of the guide (that is, excluding these preamble pages), black text is used to denote the detailed route descriptions, while coloured text is used for other types of information.

- Text in black is used for detailed route description.
- Text in maroon is used for logistical information, such as access to public transport or the whereabouts of cafés, restaurants, pubs or shops. It is also used to warn of dangers or “wrong-route” options
- Text in blue is used for historical and other background information, and for descriptive discussion text.
- Text in green is used to describe alternative routes.

Clearly, the boundaries of these four classes of information may become less than strict to a greater or lesser degree, and inevitably, there will be some leakage of text into what some readers may consider the ‘wrong’ colour.

Within the text I use the word *refuge* in two ways to describe specific aspects of the route.

- A *refuge path* is a path provided (usually as a permissive route by the landowner, and often by agreement with the local highway authority) along the edge of a field, etc. This typically separates the walker from a roadway which would be dangerous owing to the lack of a verge. Some refuge paths are also used as off-road equestrian refuges.
- In crossing a road where there is no pedestrian crossing (whether light-controlled or a plain zebra crossing), a

small island between the two directions of road travel is described as a *refuge*.

I use the word *triangle* to describe a refuge of that shape, usually as a means of separating the traffic at the approach to a junction or roundabout.

Maps of the route

The routes are mapped and are available to view on the *OS Maps Online* website and app (see the appropriate link at the end of this introduction) — subscribers have access to the 1:25000 and 1:50000 maps, the latter really only useful for broad planning. You should note that online access to the mapping will give you automatic updates to roads, paths and other features in the landscape as they appear.

To find a particular route, you should home in on the area of interest (making sure that the start of the route is covered by the displayed area).

- Select *Routes*, then *Discover routes*, and untick the *Premium routes* constraint (which restricts the search to some commercial providers).
- You should then be able to find the required route by scrolling through the list of routes alphabetically.
- Alternatively, you may find it easier to paste the URL from the introduction to the appropriate route as given in the appropriate section of this document.

Online resources — transport and logistics

There are some very useful resources from the major transport players, and from others. A few of the most notable resources are listed below.

- **Transport for London**
<https://tfl.gov.uk/>
Full details of all TfL services, including timetables, bus route maps, status reports, live arrival data, journey planning, and more. Third-party connections are included. The website also contains resources for walking routes in London.
- **National Public Transport Information**
<https://www.nationalpti.co.uk/>
Journey planning for public transport across the country. TfL is generally more detailed and more accurate within London, but NPTI is needed when you stray beyond the

TfL area. This website/app supersedes and consolidates the former regional Traveline offerings.

- **National Rail**

<http://www.nationalrail.co.uk/>

Journey planning for rail services. Note that the TfL journey planner includes rail services within London. There is coverage of some rail services beyond London (there are inexplicable gaps) — however, since fares, disruptions and many other details may be found on the National Rail website, it is to be preferred for travel beyond London.

- **Bustimes**

<http://www.bustimes.org/>

Timetables (and maps of bus stops) for just about every bus route in Britain and Ireland. The compact format is kinder to smartphone usage than the apps from some transport organisations, and of course it consolidates data from all such organisations.

- **Ordnance Survey**

<https://explore.osmaps.com/>

Access to Ordnance Survey maps online, for desktop, laptop, tablet and smartphone. Printing maps is possible. Walkers are urged to take out a subscription: the cost will be repaid countless times over.

- **Bikehike**

<http://www.bikehike.co.uk/mapview.php>

Using OpenStreetMap, footpaths and cycle paths are overlaid on the base map. Useful for viewing link paths to and from the route.

- **National Library of Scotland**

<http://maps.nls.uk/>

It may seem curious to reference a library in Edinburgh for information about the topography of London and elsewhere, but NLS carries an extensive collection of digitised historic maps covering the whole of Great Britain. These may be searched from an overlay on the modern map. Within the narrative text, if a reference is made to “old maps”, then NLS will be your source.



London

London Marylebone to Denham 39.0km; 295m ascent; 8hr 16min

Overview

The London sector begins at Marylebone and ends at Denham, which is the real change-point between the capital and the Chiltern

London Marylebone station



Hills, even if Denham station is not within the Oystercard zone (though the bus stop at the foot of Station Approach is). Indeed, rurality starts at Ruislip Gardens, between South Ruislip and West Ruislip, with the open land of Ickenham Marsh.

From Marylebone, there is a good mixture of streets and parks, including a walk along the River Brent on the approach to Wembley. The mix continues through west London to South Ruislip, where the balance tips towards the rural.

With the exception of a short stretch of High Road in Ickenham, the route is in the countryside all the way to Harefield, before a final walk along the road between Harefield and Denham leads to the end of this sector.

Public transport is plentiful as far as Ruislip Gardens. Thereafter there are bus stops at Ickenham, West Ruislip, Harefield and Denham, Underground services at Ruislip Gardens, Ickenham and West Ruislip, and trains at West Ruislip and Denham.

There are many shops, cafés and pubs between Marylebone and Ruislip Gardens, after which there are shops at West Ruislip, Harefield and Denham.

The sections within this sector are as follows.

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
1	London Marylebone	14.3	Wembley Stadium	17
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5	Northolt Park	3.3	South Ruislip	39
6	South Ruislip	5.3	West Ruislip	41
7	West Ruislip	8.6	Denham	45

London Marylebone to Wembley Stadium

14.3km; 95m ascent; 3hr 01min

Introduction

1 The walk starts at the main entrance to Marylebone station, beside the bus stop and near the station's famous *porte-cochère*.

This is the London terminus for Chiltern railways services; the Bakerloo Line serves Marylebone. Baker Street station is served by other Underground lines, and is only a short step away. There are many bus services in the vicinity.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195392> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn left out of the station, and walk along the left-hand footway of Melcombe Street, passing Dorset Square (which housed Thomas Lord's first cricket ground) on your left. At the far end of the square, take in the view of the Bauhaus-style luxury flats diagonally across the junction (some of them have more than ten rooms), then turn left onto Gloucester Place, and follow the left-hand footway to the junction with Park Road and Rossmore Road.

Cross over the end of Rossmore Road, and continue along the left-hand footway of Park Road. There are more blocks of flats on the left; on the right, the central campus of the London Business School is followed by an entrance (with its accompanying lodge) into The Regent's Park (yes, the definite article is part of the park's name, though very few people seem to use it nowadays), and then by the London Central Mosque. Cross over the Regent's Canal (which does not need the capitalisation of the definite article).

Immediately after crossing the bridge, you will see a plaque on a pillar, announcing the site of Thomas Lord's second cricket ground. Mr Lord did seem to enjoy moving outwards from Marylebone (without changing the club's

*Access to the Regent's Canal
towpath on Park Road*



name): the current ground, in its third incarnation, is uphill beyond the roundabout.

The Chiltern Line passes beneath the east side of the current Lord's Cricket Ground, but this walking route does not pass the ground, which lies a little to the north of here, beyond the Danubius Hotel.

Turn left through the gate next to the pillar, and descend the steps to reach the canal towpath.

The Regent's Canal was dug between 1812 and 1816: the canal system which linked London and the Midlands needed access to the docks on the Thames, and the route from Paddington to Limehouse completed that missing link, avoiding the tidal river. Subsequently, the Hertford Union Canal was dug to provide a more convenient link to the River Lee Navigation.

Turn right along the towpath and pass beneath three bridges. The first bridge carries the Metropolitan Line, the second the Chiltern Line (this is your first crossing of the line, but by no means the last), and the third a modern footway for the housing estate on the left.

Beyond a gate, the canal and towpath become busy with barges used as floating homes and their residential paraphernalia, including a riot of vegetation: this is the Lisson Grove basin. Residents of the basin have had gates erected at each end of their patch, blocking the towpath at night.

If the gate is locked (as it may well be if you have made a nice early start from Marylebone), cross to the other side of the canal using the footbridge, and follow the footpath above canal level to its end at Lisson Grove.

A navigationally simpler start, though it misses the fine sights of the mosque and the canal basin, is to leave Marylebone station by

turning right to pass beneath the *porte-cochère*, then turning right onto Harewood Avenue, left onto Hayes Place, and right onto Lisson Grove as far as its junction with Frampton Street.

The alternative routes combine here — to continue ahead, take Frampton Street to the junction with Edgware Road, where turn right to rejoin the main route at Maida Avenue.

3 Take the canal towpath as it passes beneath Lisson Grove, to its end at the portal to a canal tunnel, where a set of steps rises to road level at Aberdeen Place.



The pale blue structure which crosses the canal to reach the ground just to the left of the staircase is part of the national electricity supply grid. High-voltage power lines are buried under the towpath across this part of London, and pumped canal water is used as a coolant.

Go straight ahead onto Aberdeen Place.

The blue plaque commemorating Guy Gibson VC, who led the Dambusters' raid on the Ruhr in 1943, and who died the following year, just after his 26th birthday, is on the right.

Make your way along the left-hand footway of Aberdeen Place (you are actually above the canal at this point) to reach and cross Edgware Road, today the A5 and previously Watling Street, the Roman road from Dover to London and on to Wroxeter (which were called Dubris, Londinium and Viriconium in the time of the Roman occupation).

Here, the alternative routes avoiding the towpath gates at Lisson Grove Basin, meet the main route.

Cross, and pass to the left of a restaurant built above the tunnel portal, to walk the full length of the right-hand footway of Maida Avenue, with the canal beyond the railings on your right. When you reach Warwick Avenue, cross the road and turn right.

As you cross the canal, you will see on your left its junction with the Paddington arm of the Grand Union Canal, Little Venice. The tree-clad island in the middle of the junction is known as Browning's island: it is thought that the poet Robert Browning was the first to name the area around the canal junction "Little Venice". The bridge was built in 1900; the heraldry is that of the (then) Borough of Paddington, which had just been created. The Paddington borough was later subsumed into the City of Westminster borough.

4 Make your way along the left-hand footway of Warwick Avenue, your steps

Below — Little Venice and Browning's Island

Bottom — Warwick Avenue Bridge



taking you towards the needle-spire of the modern brick-built St Saviour's church. You will soon come to Warwick Avenue station.

Apart from the boxy ventilation shaft on the road's central reservation, Warwick Avenue station is all underground, and was one of the first Underground stations to be designed specifically for escalator access (rather than lifts).

Warwick Avenue is on the Bakerloo Line: there are several bus routes which pass the station.

Continue past the station entrance (noticing the green cab-drivers' shelter perched next to the ventilation shaft) and continue ahead with the church (which was rebuilt in 1975) on your right. At the end of Warwick Avenue, continue straight ahead onto Delaware Road.

This street has the familiar red-brick terraces on the right, but much of the left-hand side of the road is taken up by a long low building. It was built in 1909 as the Maida Vale Roller Skating Palace, but that enterprise folded after only a few weeks. In the 1930s, the BBC moved in, and it became the home of the BBC Symphony Orchestra. It has also housed the BBC Radiophonic Workshop and the *Peel Sessions* for Radio 1, curated by the late John Peel. The BBC no longer uses the building, whose future is therefore uncertain.

Turn right onto Elgin Avenue and cross to the left-hand footpath at a pedestrian crossing. A few metres farther on, turn left onto Morshead Road, using its right-hand footway. Cross Grantully Road to the corner of the Paddington Recreation Ground.

The castle after which Grantully Road is named normally takes the spelling *Grandtully* and the pronunciation *Grantly*.

A little farther along Morshead Road, a gate allows you to enter the recreation ground.

Maida Vale Studios



Paddington Recreation Ground is the earliest facility for public athletics in London: its cinder track was a training ground for Sir Roger Bannister (1929-2018) along with his running mates (Christophers Brasher and Chataway) in preparation for what became the world's first sub-four-minute mile, which Bannister achieved on 6 May 1954 in Oxford. Years later, Sir Bradley Wiggins learned to ride a bicycle in the park.

The path eases round to the left, to pass to the right of a two-storey pavilion with

toilets. Ahead on the right, there is a park café: pass to its left to exit past a little roundabout onto Carlton Vale.

Turn left, passing the Carlton Tavern, to the junction with Kilburn Park Road, where you will use two sets of pedestrian lights to cross the junction diagonally.

The Carlton Tavern is/was a prime example of the architecture of the 1920s. It was built in 1921 to replace an earlier pub which was bombed near the end of the Great War in 1918, and was almost unchanged in over ninety years. In 2015, a developer demolished the building without having obtained the necessary planning permission. Fortunately, all the pub's detail had been recorded, including casts of all the faience tiling, so the developer was ordered to rebuild the tavern brick by brick exactly as it had been. The new Carlton Tavern opened in 2021, one hundred years after its predecessor.

The graceful spire over to the right belongs to St Augustine's church. This Grade I Gothic Revival building (of 1880, with the tower of 1897) replaced a temporary "iron church" which had been erected near to the current Kilburn Park station — clearly, the more normal name of "tin tabernacle" was not considered good enough for the vicar and parishioners!

The 1880 church contains some of the finest ecclesiastical art of the period, and is a prime example of High Victorian Anglo-Catholic tradition. The church was designed by John Loughborough Pearson: in 1930, the reredos was designed by Sir Giles Gilbert Scott. The tin tabernacle still exists, but is no longer in ecclesiastical use.

The whole area around Carlton Vale is being redeveloped, with the 1960s blocks being replaced with more modern housing, and with other facilities being upgraded.

5 Continue ahead on the right-hand footway of Carlton Vale. Continue along Carlton Vale. At the crossing of Rupert Road, you will pass an Albanian cultural centre, and then the West Kilburn Baptist church, the latter's architecture being precisely typical of these chapels.



*The Carlton Tavern:
this photograph was taken
a matter of weeks before
the demolition in 2015*



Iron church, Kilburn

Continue on the right-hand footway, swinging right with the footway onto Salusbury Road, rising to cross the West Coast Main Line. Queen's Park station is on your left.

Queen's Park is served by the Bakerloo Line and by Overground services running between Euston and Watford Junction. There are also bus services. To the north of the station, there are shops and many opportunities for refreshment.

6 Continue north on Salusbury Road from the station to the next junction, where turn left to cross Salusbury Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, then turn right to cross Harvist Road in the same manner. Turn left to follow the right-hand footway of Harvist Road, crossing over the end of Dudley Road. At the corner of Kingswood Avenue stands a former gateway into Queen's Park, now bricked off. The arms of the City of London are prominent: this is one of the areas of leisure land beyond the City which is administered by the Corporation of the City of London.

In the later years of the nineteenth century, the City of London purchased tracts of land to be set aside for public recreation, and to be 'green lungs' for the citizens of ever-faster-expanding London. Hampstead Heath and Epping Forest are two of the largest such areas, but the list also includes West Ham Park and several areas of commons on the southern edge of the capital. Burnham Beeches, to the north of Slough, is also owned by the Corporation.

There is no charge levied on residents or businesses for the maintenance of these lands: essentially, the upkeep is met out of the interest on City funds.

In the case of Queen's Park, the Corporation rescued the area for public recreation after a plan by the Royal Agricultural Society to hold their annual Show in the park fell through for lack of funds.

Since you are unable to enter the park at its corner, continue along

Harvist Road to a gate on the right, where you will enter the park. Turn left inside the park to follow the circular path clockwise, passing toilets and a children's playground.

At a fork, keep to the left to reach the top of the park at its western extremity — the park here is less manicured than around the circular path. You will exit the park at the junction of Milman Road and Chevening Road.

From the fork, the right-hand option will take you to a café,

Sometime south-eastern entrance to Queen's Park



from which you may then take the path on its west side past a small golf facility to rejoin the route at the park gate).

Turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Chevening Road to reach the junction with Chamberlayne Road at the far end. Cross Chamberlayne Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing a few metres to your left and turn right along the left-hand footway. Kensal Rise station and bus terminus are on your left.

Kensal Rise station is on the Overground between Stratford and Willesden Junction. The station is not to be confused with Kensal Green (Bakerloo Line and Overground services to and from Euston) which lies about 700m (on foot) to the south-west. The area around the station is supplied with shops and cafés.

7 Continue along the left-hand footway of Chamberlayne Road in a northerly direction. Opposite, you will find a large red-brick school, which has been renamed as Manor School. Note that the architectural style extends to the caretaker's residence. Turn left onto Liddell Gardens (named after the Olympic athlete, I'd guess) and follow the left-hand footway.

Cross College Road to continue along Doyle Gardens, crossing to the right-hand footway at a suitable location. Beyond King Edward VII Park on the right, you will pass the sleek modern lines of the Capital City Academy, whose architecture is as much of its time as is the Manor School of its own time.

The Academy, with buildings designed by Lord Foster of Thames Bank (Norman Foster), grew out of Willesden High School on the site, previously the Willesden County Grammar School.

Educational architecture

*Below — detail of the
caretaker's residence,
Manor School*

*Bottom — west front,
Capital City Academy*



The school can count among its former pupils Gerry Anderson (of *Thunderbirds* fame), Ron Goodwin (composer of music for *633 Squadron* and other hits), the novelist Molly Parkin, several prominent footballers, and England cricketer Phil de Freitas.

At the end of Doyle Gardens, turn right onto Harlesden Road.

8 Make use of the pedestrian crossing to cross to the left-hand footway of Harlesden Road, then bear right to pass through the postage-stamp garden and reach the little oxbow roadway. This leads, past the bus stand, to the black railings of Roundwood Park's main gate. Just inside the park, you will come to a branching of paths at a stumpy memorial spire.

There is a toilet block which is situated a few metres along the right-hand path.

The left-hand option leads to the park café (commendable); a path leads to the top of the hill from the café.

Take the centre path straight ahead to the summit of the park, where the extensive panorama includes a fine view of Wembley Stadium, which is now being cluttered with a forest of dull high-rise blocks of flats, while the north of the park is bounded by burial grounds, including a Liberal Jewish cemetery.

Take your leave of the park by descending to the north-west gate onto Longstone Avenue, and turn right. Keep the cemetery on your right as the road bends to the left, then keep straight ahead along Ambleside Road to Oldfield Road, where turn left to follow its left-hand footway.

Continue past the first mini-roundabout, then cross over and bear right at the second, with a shop on your right and a triangular building on your left. Beyond the shop is Church Path, a broad footpath and cycleway.

If you overshoot the second roundabout and find yourself walking along Fawcett Road, with Clement Attlee House on your left (noting, as you pass, the shockingly disrespectful mis-spelling of the former Prime Minister's name on the house's nameplate

above the doorway), you may simply turn right onto Church Path from where you are: the main route is only a few metres ahead at the shop on Fortune Gate Road.

Take Church Path northbound, passing the end of Redfern Road to reach Leopold Road

Here, on the left, you will see a street sign up on the wall at first-floor level: it contains some postal history. Originally,

Wembley Stadium from the summit of Roundwood Park, before the Manhattanisation of the surroundings



the sign was for “Leopold Road NW”, with a later addition of the subdivision (“10”). Sir Rowland Hill (he of the Penny Post) subdivided London by compass directions for postal purposes, and this was refined by Anthony Trollope (yes, the novelist — he was employed by the Post Office and had a hand in designing the pillar box) soon afterwards, with NE and S zones disappearing, to be absorbed by neighbouring zones (and later to be available for use by Newcastle-upon-Tyne and Sheffield in the national postcode structure which emerged during the 1960s). The numbered subdivisions were introduced in 1917.

Turn right to follow the footpath which runs between a house on the left and bollards on the right. At Brownlow Road, turn left along its right-hand footway, then turn right onto Suffolk Road, again keeping to the right-hand footway, to reach busy Church Road.

There are bus stops over to the right at this point towards Acton and White City (running from right to left) and towards Brent Cross and Golders Green (running from left to right).

9 Cross Church Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and continue ahead along the right-hand footway of Hawkins Road, which is lined with modern houses and flats. At the end of this modernity, the road squeezes beneath a rail line to emerge as Taylors Lane.

Currently, the railway is used for freight only, but work is in hand to upgrade it to allow passenger services to run between Hounslow and Brent Cross West, which will link several main lines and stations between Kew Bridge in the south and Willesdan (but not the Junction) in the north.

Bend right onto Bridge Road, which bends left to run past a school on the left, and runs into Woodheyas Road. Continue along Woodheyas Road to its far end at the North Circular Road.

The houses along Woodheyas Road were built by the Great Central Railway Company (whose line ran into Marylebone) for their workers: those workers higher up the company’s pecking order could choose, if they so preferred, to live in slightly more upmarket company houses on the other side of the main line, behind what is now the London Underground’s Neasden sheds.

The North Circular Road was a child of the 1920s; by the 1960s it was planned to become part of “Ringway 2” (how Orwellian a name!). It has been improved

North Circular Road



in many places, and is a major traffic artery (the A406) between Chiswick and Silvertown. Its companion, the A205 South Circular Road, is still really no more than a string of suburban streets.

Turn right to face the full blast of the oncoming traffic on the North Circular Road, then take the footbridge across the snarling maelstrom to the other side.

10 Do not descend the steps to the main road, but spiral down to ground level at a small roundabout within the shopping centre of Brent Park. Pass the bus stand to reach a pedestrian crossing by the bus stop.

Buses here arrive from several locations including Paddington and Kingsbury to serve the shopping centre, and depart with satiated shoppers. The bus services provide the walker with a handy escape route to nearby areas. All facilities are, of course, available in the hypermarket off to your right.

Use the pedestrian crossing to reach the car park, and walk beneath the hypermarket's *porte-cochère*, past the mid-car-park line of trees. Turn left to cross the car park with the petrol station and car wash off to the left.

Take a short flight of steps onto Drury Way, turn right, and take the right-hand footway to the junction at the top of the rise.

Use the crossing to turn left onto Great Central Way, keeping to its right-hand footway to cross the railway line using a covered footbridge alongside, but separated from, the motor roadway.

Follow the right-hand footway down to reach railway level: on your left is the Chiltern main line which runs to High Wycombe, Banbury and Birmingham Moor Street (and, of course, may take you back to Marylebone).

Cross over the end of Hannah Close, and continue along Great Central Way (still on the right-hand footway, with the stadium looming up ahead of you), to reach a steel dandelion sculpture. Here, a path leads down to the right to pick up the Brent River Path.

Signposts for the Brent River Path are seen here, and also to the south of the A40, but there is no connected route from the river's startpoint at the confluence of the Dollis and Mutton Brooks in Finchley, though the route of the Capital Ring in the north, with some judicious choices of streets in the gaps (hello, Wembley Park station!) ought to make the complete course a possibility for the dedicated riparian walker.

The area which lies to the north of Great Central Way was covered by the buildings for the 1924 Empire Exhibition (next to the newly-built Wembley Stadium).

*Brent River Path entry
near Wembley Stadium*



There was a rail loop off the current line — its route is still partially visible today if one looks carefully at the alignment of roads and buildings, though the whole area is fast being bulldozed for the relentless high-rise developments which deprive the new stadium of its viewpoints — and an Exhibition station for visitors. It is instructive to look at the old maps of the area (most conveniently at <https://maps.nls.uk>) to get a feel for the disturbance caused locally by the Exhibition and the changes since then.



*Brent River Path
south of the railway*

11 Turn left when you reach the riverside, and follow the path beneath the road and then beneath the railway: it emerges into a green sliver of land. Keep the river running in your direction of travel close on your right round a left-hand bend, then take a footbridge across the river to the right. The path veers to the left at a park building and continues with house-backs on the right, passing a disused bowling green on the left. After coming back to the riverside, the path continues close to more house-backs until it meets a cross-path at a black square of play equipment. Here, turn right onto Vivian Avenue.

12 Vivian Avenue runs the full length of the Tokyngton estate, acting as the spine to the other streets' ribs. Follow the right-hand footway for most of its full length, almost 1km, until, after a slight bend to the right, you reach, on the left, the junction with Neeld Crescent.

Tokyngton has been documented as a local place-name since the twelfth century: it means "the farm of the sons of Toca". Toca (perhaps the same one, perhaps another one) may have given his name to the Turkey Brook (and later to Turkey Street and its eponymous Overground station) in Enfield as well. The historic name survives locally on street signs and the like, including the more modern mis-hit of "Oakington", but most of the residents appear to prefer to consider themselves living in "Stonebridge" or "Wembley". When it comes down to the wire, though, it's all HA9 and no more need be said.

Turn left onto Neeld Crescent, and take the right-hand footway to its end at the junction with Harrow Road, where turn right onto the right-hand footway of the busy thoroughfare.

There are variations in the domestic architecture on the estate, and the two red-brick blocks of flats at the Harrow Road end of Neeld

Crescent must form part of the overall plan for the area, appearing almost as portals to the estate (without being small gatehouse lodges).

After a short residential stretch, shops begin to cluster on each side of Harrow Road as it eases up the hill towards the centre of Wembley.

Some of the shops may be of interest to the walker, but others (carpets, motor spares, and chartered accountants, for example) are definitely for another time — indeed, some of them are *of* another time too.

At the major junction, bear right onto the right-hand footway of Wembley Hill Road. Immediately, the shops end abruptly on the right, and you will pass through a set of bollards onto White Horse Bridge. This leads directly to Wembley Stadium station (and also onwards to the stadium itself).

White Horse Bridge was built over the railway at the time of redevelopment of the stadium: it was opened in 2008. The name of the bridge is a reference to a Metropolitan Police horse which was deployed to control the huge crowds at the first FA Cup Final to be held at the stadium, in 1923. The bridge is a great improvement on what went before — it has replaced an inadequate concrete footbridge from one platform to the other, without access to the road.

As well as the trains to and from Marylebone, buses run north-east and south-west from the station environs.

On Harrow Road there are more bus services, and there is Wembley Central station (on the Bakerloo Line, and on the Lioness Line to and from Euston). Wembley Park station (on the Metropolitan Line), is

some distance away: if you need to reach that station, you must continue ahead through the vacuity of the shopping shrines, following the signs and maps (or take a bus from Wembley Hill Road). The approach to the Underground station is a stern flight of steps.

Since the adjacent photographs of the White Horse Bridge were taken, the striking view of the stadium (indeed, the view of the stadium from any angle at street level) has been greatly cheapened by insensitive infill building of residential and commercial premises: savour here the glory that is departed!

*Wembley Stadium from
White Horse Bridge*





Wembley Stadium is used for much more than football matches nowadays: other sports muscle in, and there are concerts and similar events.

It is worthwhile checking what is happening at the stadium before tangling with its crowds — see <https://www.wembleystadium.com/> for details of the venue's schedule.

Wembley Stadium and the underside of White Horse Bridge from the station



Wembley Stadium to Sudbury and Harrow Road

3.6km; 53m ascent; 48min

Introduction

1 The route ahead makes only a brief acquaintance with the nullity of the architecture surrounding the stadium. It visits a couple of parks which act as leaven for the suburban streets, most of which date from the early part of the twentieth century.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195386> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Cross the bridge towards the stadium, but veer left at the forest of lamp standards (artistic, but also useful for crowd management) to turn left onto South Way, keeping to the left-hand footway. Cross Wembley Hill Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and turn right to cross over the end of Mostyn Avenue. Beyond a bus stop, cross over the end of Linden Avenue, then take the path to the left of a patch of grass to turn left onto the left-hand footway of Dagmar Avenue. Go up the hill and down the other side to reach Park Lane.

On the western downslope of Dagmar Avenue, you have a good view of Harrow Hill ahead. At its northern (right-hand) end, the spire of St Mary's church is clearly visible, with its aircraft warning light on top.

Turn to the right; you will soon find a small gate on the left: this will give you access to King Edward VII Park.

*Harrow Hill
from Dagmar Avenue*



3 Immediately after you enter the park, the path turns to the left. Keep ahead, then bear right to keep a pavilion on your left; farther ahead, keep to the left of the cricket field (there are houses on your left at this point) to exit the park at a gate.

Turn right onto St John's Road, crossing to the left-hand footway. Ignore Castleton Avenue, which goes off to the right. Carry on along St John's Road, and straight ahead onto Llanover Road. You will have time to practise your Welsh pronunciation as you walk the full length of Llanover Road, including its little dog-leg (corgi-leg?) to left and right at the junction with Clarendon Gardens.

Turn left onto East Lane at the end of the road, either by bearing right to reach the road junction, or by taking the path on the left to steps up to the main road. Climb up with East Lane, using the left-hand footway, to cross the six tracks of the railway at North Wembley Station.

North Wembley is on the Bakerloo Line, and on the Lioness Line of the Overground to and from Euston. The West Coast Main Line trains pass the station without stopping.

4 Continue westwards along the left-hand footway of East Lane from the station entrance for 450m, until the sports fields of Vale Farm appear on your left. Cut diagonally across the grass to the left-hand corner of the pavilion buildings, then bear slightly left to aim for the far corner of a floodlit all-weather football pitch up to your right.

Here, bear right (with the pitch to your right and a cricket field behind the hedge on your left), and then curl round to the left with the hedge. At a path junction beside a small building, turn right to pass a car park on your right. At the end of the car park, turn left onto a path which has the wall of a football stadium (not part of the sports complex) on your right. This path leads out of Vale Farm onto Eton Avenue.

Turn right, and cross to the left-hand footway. Follow Eton Avenue to its end, at the junction with Watford Road and Harrow Road. Turn left to walk down Harrow Road as far as the Swan Inn, reaching the right-hand footway using the pedestrian crossing. Sudbury and Harrow Road station is ahead on the right, and Sudbury Town station on the Piccadilly Line is farther ahead.

This area of Sudbury is home to shops, the Swan Inn, and many cafés and restaurants of varied cuisines.

There are bus services on Harrow Road which allow for linkages to points in many parts of north-west London. Sudbury Town station (Piccadilly Line) is 450m to the south: the route to and from the station is well signposted. These alternative modes of transport could well be advantageous to the Chiltern Railway walker, since Sudbury and Harrow Road station has only a limited service, with no trains stopping at weekends.

Sudbury and Harrow Road to Sudbury Hill Harrow

1.6km; 14m ascent; 20min

Introduction

1 This short walk between the pair of Chiltern stations with *Sudbury* in the name starts with an old lane, follows the edge of a recreation ground, and concludes along a long street.

If you are setting out from the station (or have reached it from Sudbury Town station on the Piccadilly Line), go north from the railway bridge on the left-hand footway of Harrow Road, as far as the Swan Inn.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/196126> covers this section of the route.

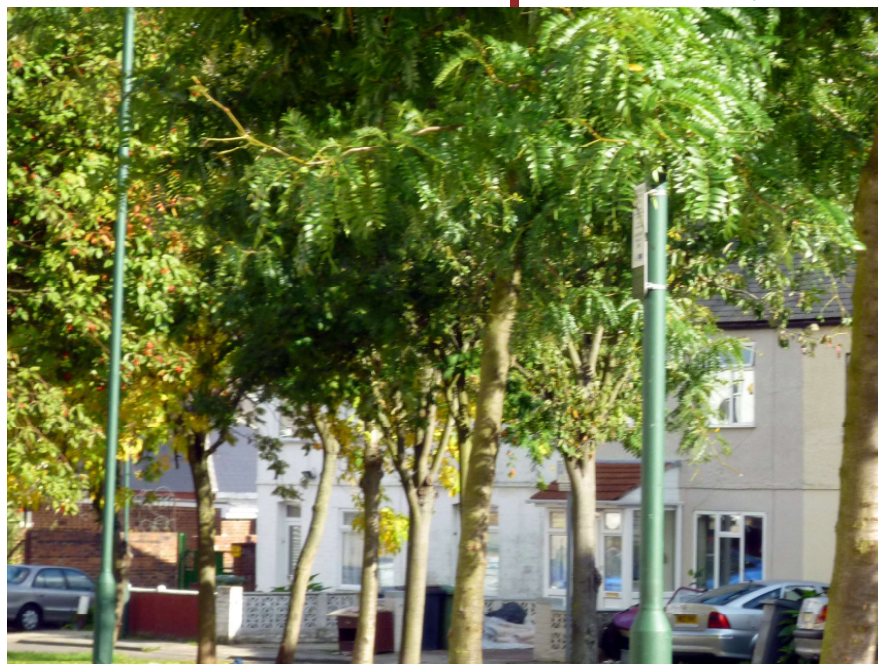
Route

2 Take a narrow pathway which leaves the road immediately to the left of the Swan: on that path, do not stray to the right onto Perkins Close, nor to the left onto Sudbury Crescent, but continue ahead to reach the railway footbridge.

This is an old path. It is shown on the Ordnance Survey map of 1868, running from the Swan Inn out into the fields past Horsenden Hill to link up with the road between Harrow and Perivale at the point where it crosses the Paddington branch of the Grand Union Canal.

Cross over the tracks using the footbridge, and descend the steps on the far side: you will be pointing towards the station. Walk ahead into Williams Way, then take the first right onto the right-hand footway of Fishers

Sudbury Crescent



Way. Where Fishers Way turns left, turn right onto a path which leads out to the Maybank Recreation Ground.

Note that some mapping has not caught up with the replacement of old flats with new: just keep to these instructions.

When you reach the recreation ground, bear left to keep to its left-hand edge, passing a children's playground enclosure on your right. This will take you to a footbridge over the Piccadilly Line — do not cross the line, but bear right alongside the line, then turn half-right to reach Greenbank Avenue near a corner of a football field. Take the right-hand footway of Greenbank Avenue to the road junction with The Rise.

3 Continue ahead onto westbound Maybank Avenue, and then onto Rosebank Avenue, keeping to the right-hand footway, to reach the junction with Greenford Road. Sudbury Hill Harrow (Chiltern) station is on your right, Sudbury Hill Underground station (Piccadilly Line) on your left.

There are buses on Greenford Road. Bus and Underground alternatives could be advantageous to the Chiltern Railway walker, since Sudbury Hill Harrow station has a limited service, with no trains stopping at weekends.

There are shops and cafés on Greenford Road.

Sudbury Hill Harrow to Northolt Park

2.4km; 8m ascent; 28min

Introduction

1 After crossing some parkland and passing some sports facilities, the route to Northolt Park passes through two housing estates, one from the twenty-first century and the other from the twentieth.

There are bus services on Greenford Road, and Sudbury Hill station (Piccadilly Line) is only 150m away: these options may be advantageous to the Chiltern Railway walker, since Sudbury Hill Harrow has a limited train service, and none at weekends.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/1834872> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Walk southwards on the right-hand footway of Greenford Road (that is, turning right if exiting the station). Pass some shops to reach Sudbury Hill station on the Piccadilly Line.

This station is a very good example of the 'box atrium' style of Underground stations from the 1930s which were designed by

*Sudbury Hill
Underground station*



Charles Holden (1875-1960). Most of his buildings for London Underground may be seen in the 1930s extensions of the Piccadilly Line and the Northern Line.

Holden was born in Bolton, and his early work portfolios had commissions from William Hesketh Lever (who was later ennobled as Lord Leverhulme) for his company village of Port Sunlight on the Wirral. He has important works in Bristol, but his best-known work is in London.

Apart from the stations, 55 Broadway was designed by Holden as a headquarters block (built on top of St James's Park station) for London Transport, and Senate House (sometimes known as the *London Lubyanka*) for the federal headquarters and library of the University of London in Bloomsbury. Much of his brickwork station design is derived from the movement known as *de Stijl* which characterises much of the architecture of the early twentieth century in the Netherlands.

Continue along Greenford Road past the Underground station, then take the first road on the right, just before a row of shops takes the right-hand side of the road. This takes you through the pillared entrance to a sports club. Be sure to keep the metal fence on your left: the access between the fence and the shops is merely to the backs of the shops and nothing else.

Maps going back to 1920 show this area as a sports ground: the entrance pillars date from this time, though curiously, the house by the gateway does not appear on maps until the 1930s.

Continue along the access road to the sports club, which comes to parallel the railway on your right. Pass on your left a children's nursery, then bear left at a path roundabout to reach Bedser Drive at the southern end of a sports club.

This modern housing estate was built on land which was once part of the sports ground (the leeching of such facilities is all too common, as clubs and councils alike seek to prioritise profit over physical integrity), and the streets are all named after sportspeople (no foreigners, though — all are blindly and boringly chauvinistic examples). With a startling degree of illogic and of blatant gender discrimination, the street-names differ between males (surname only) and females (forename and surname).

3 Turn right onto Bedser Drive, and follow the left-hand footway to its end, where turn left to take the left-hand footway of Mary Peters Drive in its turn to its end at the junction with Wood End Close (we must assume that this person named Wood End was "Ms End", a female).

Cross the road ahead and turn right along the left-hand footway to the far end at the junction with Wood End Gardens. Cross the road ahead and turn left along the right-hand footway to cross over the end of Russell Road.

There is a convenience shop on the right just beyond the junction with Russell Road.

Continue ahead, now on the right-hand footway of Wood End Lane. Turn right onto Reading Road and follow the right-hand footway to the junction with Dorchester Road. Turn right to follow the right-hand footway directly to the westbound platform of Northolt Park station.

Trains for London (mainly stopping trains from High Wycombe or Gerrards Cross) leave from the far platform, over the bridge: the nearer platform is for South Ruislip, West Ruislip, Denham and beyond, connecting at Gerrards Cross or High Wycombe for destinations farther away.

The Chiltern Railway Walk route continues ahead across the footbridge.



A London-bound train at Northolt Park station



Northolt Park to South Ruislip

3.3km; 3m ascent; 39min

Introduction

1 The journey between Northolt Park and South Ruislip involves a park, a housing estate, and a broad road past commercial premises.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/196079> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the northern entrance to the station, go north on Stroud Gate (the main access road for the station), following it down to reach Northolt Road.

This is a major thoroughfare, and buses ply the road, linking this point with Northolt station (Central Line) and Heathrow Airport to the left, and with South Harrow station (Piccadilly Line) and Harrow-on-the-Hill station (Metropolitan Line and Chiltern services to Aylesbury via Amersham) to the right.

There is a large supermarket off to the left, but there is little to excite the walker among the shops across the road.

Cross the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing a few metres to your left. Turn right along the left-hand footway, past the row of shops with flats above, and continue as far as 438 Northolt Road. Beyond this house, and just before the entry to the service road ahead, squeeze down a narrow path to enter Alexandra Park. Turn left with the path, then bend right at the triangle of paths. At the next triangle of paths, bear left, with a play area on your right, to exit the park onto Alexandra Avenue.

Cross Alexandra Avenue using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing into the little semi-circle ahead. Bear to the right to take the road (Tregenna Avenue) which leads off ahead, to the right of the central block of flats on the semi-circle. Follow the right-hand footway all the way to the end of Tregenna Avenue, and turn right to reach Eastcote Lane, opposite a row of shops.

There is a convenience shop here.

3 Turn left onto the left-hand footway of Eastcote Lane all the way to a roundabout at the junction with Field End Road.

There is a row of shops here with a traditional breakfast café and a convenience shop.

4 Cross Field End Road and continue on the far side of the roundabout on Victoria Road, a retail park now on the left. When you reach a pedestrian crossing, cross to the right-hand footway. Continue past a sports facility and a library on your right to the junction with Long Drive.

There is a large supermarket on your left

Cross the junction “on the diagonal”, using two light-controlled pedestrian crossings. South Ruislip station is on your left.

Buses ply Victoria Road to Ruislip (ahead), and to Harrow and Mill Hill (back the way you have come). There is a pub off to your left towards the station.

South Ruislip to West Ruislip

5.3km; 23m ascent; 1hr 06min

Introduction

1 After a sequence of urban streets to Ruislip Gardens station, the route onwards to West Ruislip delivers some high-quality wild land — the first such land of the route so far — beside the Yeading Brook as it crosses Ickenham Marsh.

South Ruislip station was originally called Northolt Junction, and was where the Great Western Railway and the Great Central Railway (predecessor to the Chiltern Line) parted company to go their separate ways to their London termini, Paddington for the GWR and Marylebone for the GCR. The station was opened in 1908, but the current booking hall dates from 1960.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195903> covers this section of the route.

Route

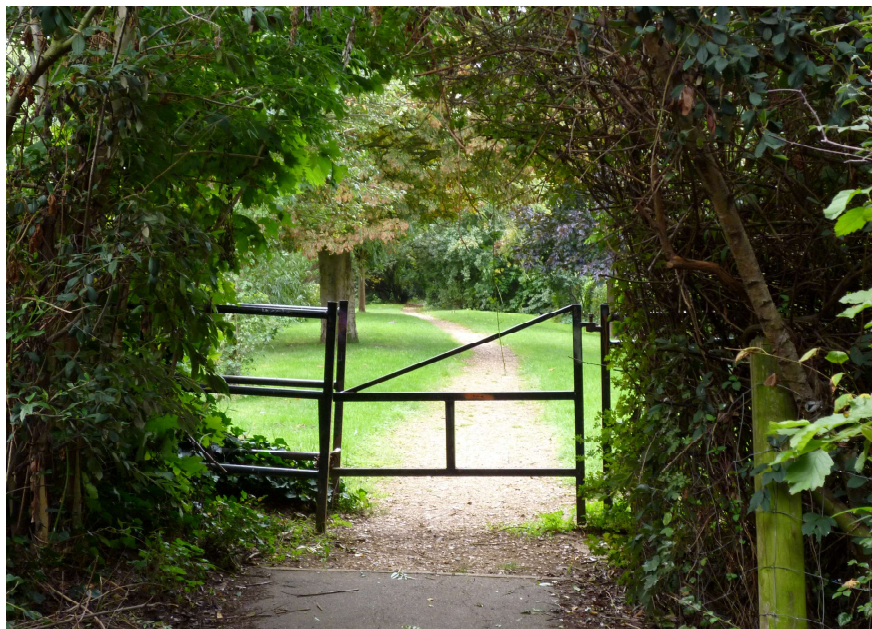
2 If you are beginning your day's walk at South Ruislip station, turn left on leaving the station to walk along Long Drive. Pass beneath the railway to reach the major junction ahead, where turn left onto Victoria Road.

There is a convenience shop on the parade.

Follow the left-hand footway of Victoria Road up the hill and down the far side to reach a bridge over the Yeading Brook.

On the left-hand side of Victoria Road, beyond the shopping parade, there is a small industrial area behind some flats, and there is a retail park which has recently been given a new lease of life. You will cross the access road to the park at a light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

After you have crossed the Yeading Brook, turn left onto a footpath (graced here with the name *Jim O'Neill Walk*) which runs the length of a narrow grassed area, with the brook on your left, and with house-backs on your right. Where the houses on the right end, bear slightly right to cross a makeshift bridge over Yeading Brook into an open field. Unless there is a game of cricket in progress, you should be able to cross directly to the exit from the field, having passed some fitness equipment on your right, onto West End Road.



The entrance to Ickenham Marsh at Ruislip Gardens

To the right, there are shops and cafés.

Buses run on West End Road between Ruislip (to your right) and Ealing (to your left).

Turn left along West End Road, passing beneath the Chiltern Line and the Central Line, to reach Ruislip Gardens station ahead on your left.

Only the Central Line trains stop at Ruislip Gardens; for connections onto the Chiltern Line, take the Underground to West Ruislip or South Ruislip.

Check the Chiltern timetable to choose the better connecting station for your onward journey.

3 Cross West End Road at the forecourt of Ruislip Gardens station using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right along the left-hand footway to cross Yeading Brook, then immediately turn left through a gate (do not continue along West End Road as far as Bedford Road).

This left turn takes you onto a path which is bordered by the brook on your left. Beyond the barrier, the path opens out into a narrow field — keep the brook on your left and house-backs on your right.

When you reach the end of the houses on the right, go ahead to a T-junction of paths (with a fainter path ahead). Turn left here to keep the brook close to you on the left. Across the brook is the substantial fence which defines the boundary of RAF Northolt.

Open land, Ickenham Marsh



The open land to the north is often windswept, and is a very welcome contrast to the more urban areas passed through. On the far side of the open land, the Central Line train sheds fill the horizon, but are hardly overbearing.

Keep to the path which parallels the brook, winding its way ahead for about 1km. Eventually, the path turns right, still with Yeading Brook on the left, but away from the military perimeter fence. You will soon come to the junction with the Hillingdon Trail, with an information board.

The Hillingdon Trail crosses the borough of that name, and it does a remarkable job in keeping to green areas throughout its 32km length from Cranford church, just on the south side of the M4 to the Grand Union Canal north of Harefield (not far from Rickmansworth station). Details may be found at

<https://pre.hillingdon.gov.uk/walking/hillingdon-trail>

4 Follow the right-hand option of the Hillingdon Trail (towards Harefield, if you must know), which runs into a lane, with an industrial yard on the right. Eventually, the lane comes out at the corner of Glebe Avenue (left) and Austin's Lane (ahead).

Ickenham station (Metropolitan Line, Uxbridge branch) is 700m to the left along Glebe Avenue

Continue ahead on Austin's Lane; cross the Metropolitan Line and descend to Ickenham High Road at a convenient pub. Here, turn right to follow the right-hand footway of the road to reach West Ruislip station, the end of this section.

There are shops here, and buses operate between here and Uxbridge and Heathrow (back the way you have come), and between here and Ruislip (ahead on the other side of the road).



The meeting with the Hillingdon Trail on Ickenham Marsh



West Ruislip station



West Ruislip to Denham

8.6km; 98m ascent; 1hr 51min

Introduction

1 The route to Denham, in its initial two-thirds, is rural in character, crossing farmland and woodland, making use of old tracks for part of the way. Beyond the Australian Military Cemetery in Harefield, streets will convey you to Denham.

West Ruislip is served by Chiltern Railways trains and by the Underground's Central Line; the buses which pass the station provide connections with Ruislip and Uxbridge (both of which are on the Uxbridge branch of the Metropolitan Line), and with Heathrow Central bus station.

West Ruislip is the western terminus of the Central Line, and of the longest single journey by Underground (at almost 55km from Epping) without changing trains.

During the years of Underground expansion in the 1930s, there were plans to extend the line to Denham, to tap into the commuter trade from that area. However, the Second World War intervened, and the project was shelved, probably before anyone realised that the Denham Viaduct would need to be widened (or duplicated).

West of Harvil Road bridge (which carries the road between Uxbridge and Harefield), a spur line ran off the line to the south as far as Uxbridge High Street station. In 1907, there was a plan to run a railway from Uxbridge to Denham, linking up with the branch line from West Drayton, and also providing an Uxbridge loop from Paddington. The branch from what is now the Chiltern Line was built, with a station at Uxbridge High Street (on the other side of the canal from the Swan and Bottle pub). Trains ran to and from Denham (with occasional trains serving Gerrards Cross): very few used the chord from the London direction. In the event, the cross-Uxbridge line failed to come to fruition. The line was not well-used, and passenger services ceased in 1939. The line was closed to freight traffic in 1964, and the tracks were taken up.

The centre of Uxbridge held firm against the rail link (only for the suggested line of the link to be carved up by redevelopment after the Second World War). We can speculate about the possibility of extending the Central Line to Uxbridge while the tracks were still in place, and later onwards to Heathrow terminals 5 and 4 via Cowley and West Drayton, using the tracks from the former Vine

Street station in Uxbridge, but these are now nothing more than pipedreams.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/9580340> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 At West Ruislip station, cross the road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right to descend the left-hand footway of Ickenham Road off the bridge. Take the first road on the left, the no-through-road Clack Lane.

There is a filling station on the right at this point, and a convenience shop on the other side of Ickenham Road as you descend.

This thoroughfare is listed as Clack Lane on the Ordnance Survey map, but also appears as Clacks Lane or Clack's Lane elsewhere. Clack Lane is an ancient highway, and is particularly rich in flora and fauna. During one transit while I undertook research for this part of the route, a wren in the hedgerow kept up an incessant barrage of scolding as I moved through its territory.

After 85m, the roadway ends: take the metalled path straight ahead. After a further 150m, Hill Lane goes off to the right, taking the metalled path (and the horses, and the cyclists) with it. Continue ahead on a crushed stone footpath for 400m, passing to the left of a building to stay within the enclosed lane.

*Clack Lane near
West Ruislip*



You are by this point following the northbound route of the Hillingdon Trail — indeed, the Trail has been diverted from West Ruislip (they say “temporarily”: hah! — the chances are that there will be no restitution of the original route) by this alternative route during the HS2 disruption. We may expect this “temporary” diversion to last until 2030: it should really be established, therefore, by the London Borough of Hillingdon to become the new official route of the Hillingdon Trail (it could even be given the nickname of HT2 — ho, ho!).

Where the path forks, take the right fork (away from the running-to-seed golf course and the HS2 works at the bridge over Breakspear Road South); after 80m, you will reach a footbridge on your left. Turn left to cross the River Pinn on path R144 (as named on the signpost), still on the Hillingdon Trail, and enter a long field with an electrical power cable overhead the length of the field. Cross beneath the cables, following a clear track which bends right.

There is an enclosed lane which runs parallel to your path, on your left — this is another section of the ancient highway which you have followed as Clack Lane. Go through the hedge and turn right along the lane.

Here, the diversity of the hedgerow is at its peak. Ash, blackthorn (sloe), hawthorn and wild rose are among the species which proliferate in this ancient boundary, and there is diverse birdlife too.

The lane comes out to the end of Tile Kiln Lane, with Old Clack Farm on your right.

There is an old postbox set into the garden wall in front of the farmhouse. At this point, you part company (for the present) with the Hillingdon Trail, which forges ahead towards Ruislip Lido.

3 A few metres beyond the farm gate, turn left and follow Tile Kiln Lane out through its bends (including a final right-hand bend at Woodbine Cottage) to Breakspear Road South. Turn right, and after 30m along this busy road, cross carefully and go through the hedge on the left by means of a stile, entering a field and following the path designated U39.

Keep a hedged pond to your left (passing a delicate metal gate), then steer through a gap in the right-hand hedge. Turn left round the hedge, then turn right to return to the same bearing (running west-north-west) you have followed from the road, the hedge once again on your right-hand side all the way up to the top (note that the Ordnance Survey map suggests that the path is on the other side of the hedge here, but don't worry, there are hectoring signs to keep you on the footpath).

Cross a stile at the fieldhead (it is high, with a nasty drop on the other side, then a climb out of the ditch, so beware), turning left to reach another stile (almost as ungainly as the first) and then right to skirt two sides of a small industrial area to your right (with another stile to climb).



*Top — Pinn bridge,
Clack Lane*

Above — Old Clack Farm



Descending on the path to Newyears Green Lane: Bayhurst Woods form the farthest horizon

Follow a faint path past a park bench which has seen better days. Cross a track (which has a better park bench), but do not veer right to go into the industrial yard. Keep on ahead, joining an overgrown lane. A little later, bear right to leave the lane, and head west to reach a stile which gives onto Newyears Green Lane. Take care, because this road is much busier than its narrow rural status warrants.

The land on your left and to the north of Newyears Green Lane was worked for minerals over many years, and then the western half became the main Hillingdon site for household waste management and recycling. The area between that site and your position on Newyears Green Lane has been cleared for the re-routing of utilities (primarily gas) as a result of HS2: its future is uncertain, and there may well be re-routing of the path.

Stile to be ignored between Bayhurst Woods and Harefield church



4 Cross Newyears Green Lane and enter a green lane (a proper one) which lies ahead and just to your left: it soon becomes path U35. Follow the lane into the woods, then take a path to the left. This path leads to the northbound Hillingdon Trail: bear left onto the Trail, and then round to the right.

Where the Hillingdon Trail turns right uphill, continue ahead. Follow the broad path the length of the woods until you reach a T-junction of paths; turn left to keep the edge of the woods on your right. Once again, you are back on the Hillingdon Trail.

5 Follow the Trail, descending to become a hedged lane, then rising to a path junction where the southern driveway to Breakspear House joins from the left. Ignore the driveway, but cross a stile to continue with the Trail.

When you reach the top of the slope, bear right along the ridge, then strike left, and then turn left again at a path junction (ignoring a stile and following the Hillingdon Trail), to descend past some lakes to reach the wall around Harefield church.

There is a mention of a priest here in the Domesday Book (1086), and the current building was erected in the late eighteenth century. There are fine monuments inside, particularly that of Alice, Dowager Countess of Derby, whose husband was the victim of a political murder in 1594.

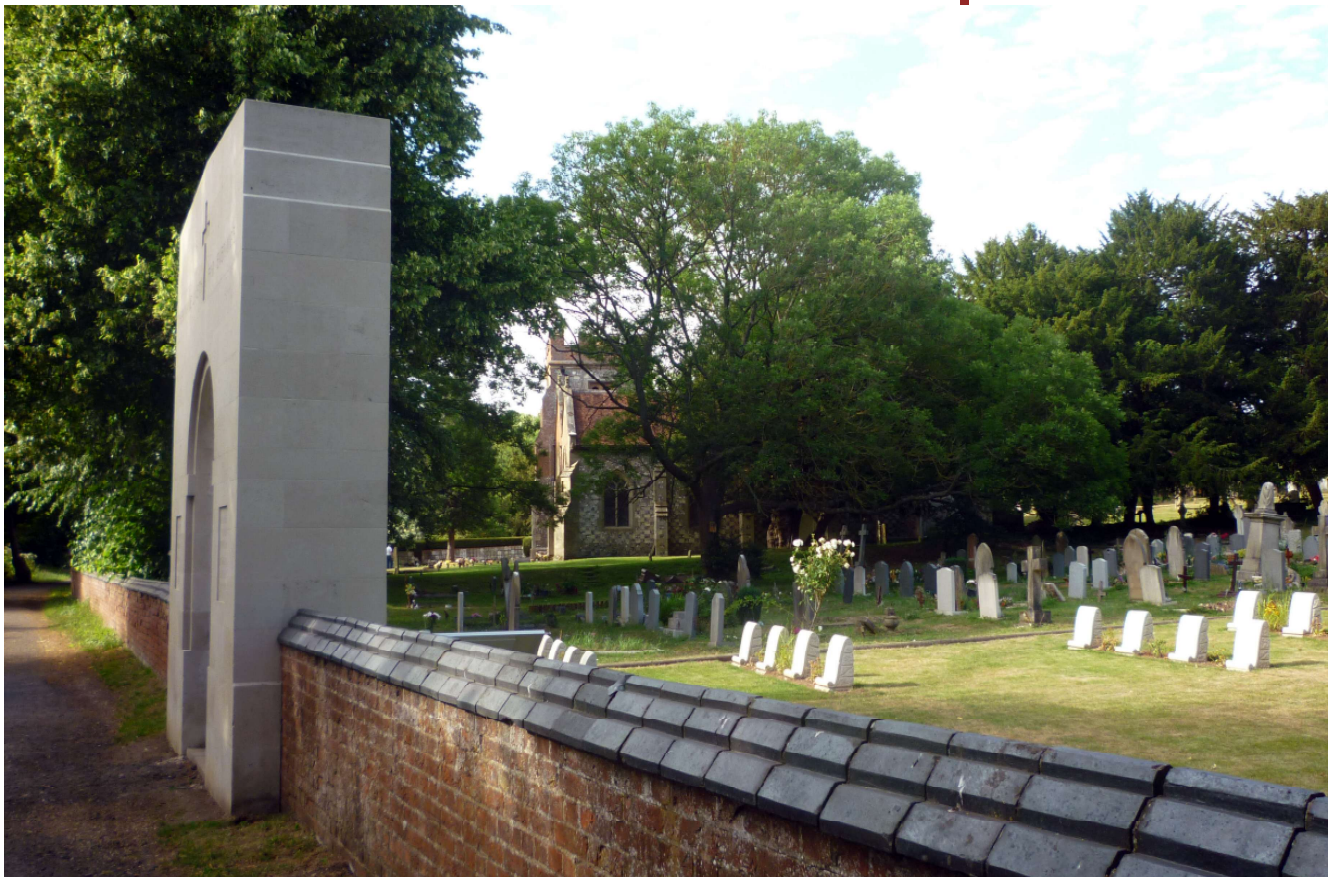
The church has been used for much location filming across the years, probably most notably in *The Ruling Class* (1972), which boasted a starry cast which included Peter O'Toole, Arthur Lowe, and William Mervyn.

Turn left at the church's access road. In just a few paces, you will reach an impressive stone gate, proclaiming the presence of the Australian Military Cemetery.

This part of the village churchyard contains in its rectangle the graves of over 100 soldiers and a nurse, all of whom had died at the Australian Military Hospital in Harefield during the Great War. On ANZAC Day (25 April) each year, a commemorative service is held in the church; this service is attended by London-based diplomats



Harefield church flying the Southern Cross from the tower on ANZAC Day



Australian Military Cemetery, Harefield

representing the three ANZAC nations of Australia, New Zealand, and Tonga.

After the service, the children from the primary school in Harefield lay their posies on the graves in a most poignant ceremony. The scroll design for the headstones is unique in Great War military cemeteries.

6 Continue along a track, bending right to emerge onto Harvil Road at a bus stop.

From the bus stop you meet as you emerge onto Harvil Road, the 331 and U9 services run to Uxbridge, the former via Denham, the latter via Swakeleys. Across the road, the 331 serves Northwood and Ruislip.

Cross Harvil Road and turn left past the northbound bus stop to reach a mini-roundabout.

There is a small parade of shops here, including a good convenience store (which offers coffee and hot snacks) on the Moorhall Road flank. Ahead on Harvil Road, there is another bus stop for the U9 to Uxbridge, while on Moorhall Road, a matching pair of stops is served by the 331 route.

Cross Moorhall Road to the side with the shops. Take the left-hand footway downhill past the stop for buses on the 331 route towards Uxbridge.

The recreation ground on your right is the site of Moorhall Priory, which was established by the Knights Hospitallers (who owned Bayhurst Woods for centuries) during the thirteenth century. In 1953, the roof fell in, and the remains of the priory were demolished during the 1960s by the local authority. During the 2022 and 2026

*Widewater Lock in use,
seen from Moorhall Road*



summer droughts, the outline of the chapel was visible as a cropmark in the withered grass.

Beyond the recreation ground, the road rises to cross the Grand Union Canal at Widewater Lock.

Beyond the bridge, there is a pub on the left, which serves food and drink during normal hours, and a pair of bus stops, perversely called *Broadwater Lock*, on the 331 route to Uxbridge (from just beyond the pub car park) and to Northwood and Ruislip (from opposite the pub).

7 Follow the left-hand footway; the street-name changes to Moorfield Road at the Green Bridge over the River Colne, where you pass into Buckinghamshire.

Continue past the staggered crossing with Savay Lane on the left and Link Way on the right.

Note the divergence of Moorfield Road from the hedge — in earlier times, the road ran to Savay Lane, and then made a right-and-left dog-leg to continue.

Follow Moorfield Road almost to its end at the traffic lights, taking the service road on the left (which starts as Morten Gardens with its bungalows), crossing Denham Green Close and passing along the parade of shops. Beyond the shops, turn left to ascend Station Approach to Denham station.

Denham station lies outside the Oyster zone: you will need to buy a separate ticket to travel by train towards London.

There is a parade of shops at the bottom of Station Approach: the facilities include a traditional breakfast café, a convenience shop, a pharmacy, and a bakery takeaway.

There is a bus stop at the shopping parade from which you may use your Oystercard on the 331 bus (but not on the 724 or 725 towards Heathrow) to reach Uxbridge; for Northwood or Ruislip, the bus stop is on the other side of Moorfield Road, almost opposite Denham Green Close.

Denham may be beyond the Greater London boundary, but this stage from West Ruislip is almost entirely within London, and so belongs within the London section of the Chiltern Railway Walk. If you want to be pernickety about not trespassing across the London boundary, your turnback point is at the Green Bridge.



*River Colne
from Green Bridge*



Chiltern Hills

Denham to Princes Risborough 42.2km; 610m ascent; 9hr 33min

Overview

From Denham, the walk digs deep into the Chiltern countryside between stations, with the only extended urban section being between Loudwater and the north-western tip of High Wycombe, and even that is partly parkland. Over 90% of the ascent is concentrated between Beaconsfield and Saunderton as the name Wycombe tells all — a *combe* is a deep valley.

Apart from the railway stations, there are bus connections at Denham, Tatling End, Gerrards Cross, Seer Green, Beaconsfield, Loudwater, High Wycombe, Downley, Saunderton and Princes Risborough.

Gerrards Cross, Beaconsfield and High Wycombe offer all facilities, as does the centre of Princes Risborough (a little off-route). There are also shops at Denham, Tatling End, Loudwater and Downley, the last two of which also have pubs.

The sections within this sector are as follows.

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
8	Denham	1.6	Denham Golf Club	55
9	Denham Golf Club	4.6	Gerrards Cross	57
10	Gerrards Cross	5.3	Seer Green and Jordans	59
11	Seer Green and Jordans	4.8	Beaconsfield	63
12	Beaconsfield	10.0	High Wycombe	65
13	High Wycombe	8.8	Saunderton	69
14	Saunderton	7.1	Princes Risborough	75



Denham to Denham Golf Club

1.6km; 10m ascent; 20min

Introduction

1 This short inter-station walk begins at Denham station, on the London-bound platform. Essentially, the route is a fieldpath which parallels the railway after crossing a sportsfield.

There are buses and trains at Denham, and less frequent trains at Denham Golf Club station.

There are no facilities on this section after you leave the shops at Station Parade in Denham behind. It is likely that you will combine this section with the next to Gerrards Cross.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195299> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From Platform 2 of the station (the London-bound platform), descend the steps from the platform level, and turn right onto the Pyghtle path in the tunnel beneath the tracks. Exit the tunnel, and follow the path to the left, and then to the right. Do not take the path which borders the railway, straight ahead after the left turn. After about 180m, take a footpath on the right which makes its way through scrubland to reach the North Orbital Road (A412). Cross the road, and continue ahead onto a path which leads to a sports ground. Pass the playing area on your right, and continue out to reach Tilehouse Lane.

3 Turn right, and follow Tilehouse Lane to the railway. Do not pass beneath the railway, but take a path parallel to the line. After 550m, turn left to reach Slade Oak Lane. The station is over to your right.

*Denham Golf Club station
has Chinese hints in its
original GWR architecture*



The London-bound platform is accessed from the far side of the bridge. Note that Denham Golf Club station has restricted services on Sundays. There is no other public transport.

The station building has hints of chinoiserie: this was the standard architecture of the halts on the Great Western Railway. Such a halt would not normally have been staffed (no change there, then!), though for some of the intervening years, there has been a ticket office in the hut, which otherwise was just a store for the station's equipment.

The Great Western Railway and the Great Central Railway were joint operators on this part of the line.

Denham Golf Club to Gerrards Cross

4.6km; 48m ascent; 1hr 00min

Introduction

1 The route to Gerrards Cross drops to the valley of the River Misbourne, then rises to the A40 and follows it through Tatling End before entering Gerrards Cross across its common. The station is reached along Packhorse Road, the principal shopping street in Gerrards Cross.

In addition to the rail and bus connections at Gerrards Cross, there are bus stops at Tatling End and East Common.

There is a shop at Tatling End and a shop and a pub at East Common, before plunging into the full facilities of Gerrards Cross.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195417> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Walk southwards (away from the railway) on Side Road and cross Lower Road at the bottom. Bear half right ahead, crossing two branches of the River Misbourne. The road bends to the left then, in front of a gate, turns left. Rise on a track, and turn right.

At the end, turn left onto Broken Gate Lane, and climb to reach the A40 at its junction with the A413. Turn right and cross the busy junction with great care to pick up the right-hand footway of the A40 ahead.

3 Keep to the A40 on the right-hand footway; cross over Old Amersham Road, to reach the junction with Pinstone Way in Tatling End.

There is a convenience shop on the other side of the road.

Buses run from Tatling End to Uxbridge (from the right-hand footway), and to Gerrards Cross, High Wycombe, the Chalfonts, Amersham and Chesham (all of these from the left-hand footway).

*Higher Denham
marks the millennium*





*A path junction on
Gerrards Cross Common*

4 Continue ahead on the right-hand footway of the A40, passing the fire station on your right, and crossing the M25. At the Apple Tree pub (on your right), cross over the end of East Common (a road of that name).

The pub serves food and drink during normal hours. The bus services here are the same as those described at Tatling End above.

5 Take a path which bisects the angle between the A40 and East Common, and plunge into the woodland. Take the third cross-path on the right (you can check that you have the right path by the glimpse of the church to the left), and continue past some play equipment on the right (and a “sitooterie” to your left) to reach the junction with Packhorse Road at the corner of the common.

Continue ahead, with the bus turning circle on your left, past the shops, and over the railway. Turn left down Station Approach to reach Gerrards Cross station.

All facilities are available in Gerrards Cross. Direct buses between Uxbridge and High Wycombe do not serve the station (they stop on the A40 to the south), but buses between the Chalfonts and Uxbridge or Slough do.

Gerrards Cross to Seer Green and Jordans

5.3km; 62m ascent; 1hr 09min

Introduction

1 The route to Seer Green and Jordans station makes minimal contact with the built-up area of Gerrards Cross and grazes the edge of Jordans. Apart from these encounters, the route is entirely rural.

Gerrards Cross hardly existed beyond a small settlement on the A40 at the crossroads of the roads to Slough and Oxford. It was when the railway arrived in 1906 that development nearby was spurred, moving the town's centre of gravity northwards. The Great Western Railway and the Great Central Railway were joint operators on this part of the line.

There is a bus service on Longbottom Lane near the end of the section.

There is a small shop in Jordans, and (off-route) a pub.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195283> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the station exit at the footbridge, cross Station Approach and ascend to the left to reach the end of Orchehill Rise.

If you are at the top of Station Approach, you may reach Orchehill Rise by taking the lane on the left just to the north of Station Approach, thus avoiding the drop-and-climb.

Continue westwards along Orchehill Rise. When it reaches the overflow station car park, the path continues to the right of the car park, with a fence on the left. Look out for a squat bollard (with a surveyor's benchmark) on the right of the path, indicating the boundary of the railway land.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, the Great Central Railway was looking for a suitable extension into London, and the Great

*Stone marking the boundary
of GWR/GCR land*





*Gerrards Cross station,
seen from the west*

*Topiary at the turn-off
from Maltmans Lane*



Western Railway sought a better option for its trains between Paddington, Birmingham and Birkenhead than the underpowered line between Maidenhead and High Wycombe. The two companies agreed to collaborate on a line from Northolt Junction (near the east end of South Ruislip station) and Ashendon Junction (between Haddenham and Bicester). The companies would each build the railways they needed to connect with the line — the Great Central built tracks from Northolt Junction to Marylebone, and from Ashendon north to their line via Brackley and Amersham, by-passing Aylesbury, while the Great Western connected Northolt with Old Oak Common, and Ashendon with Aynho Junction south of Banbury. The only surviving connections are the modern-day Chiltern line between Marylebone and Banbury.

Continue past a footbridge which crosses the railway on your left to reach Bull Lane. Turn right, and follow Bull Lane. Bear left onto Maltmans Lane and follow it to reach Chantry Wood on the left.

3 Ignore paths which go off to the left at Chantry Wood, but take the right-hand bend in Maltmans Lane, passing Oak Manor on the left. Where the road takes another right-hand bend just before a school on the left, take a path on the left immediately before the road sign for the school.

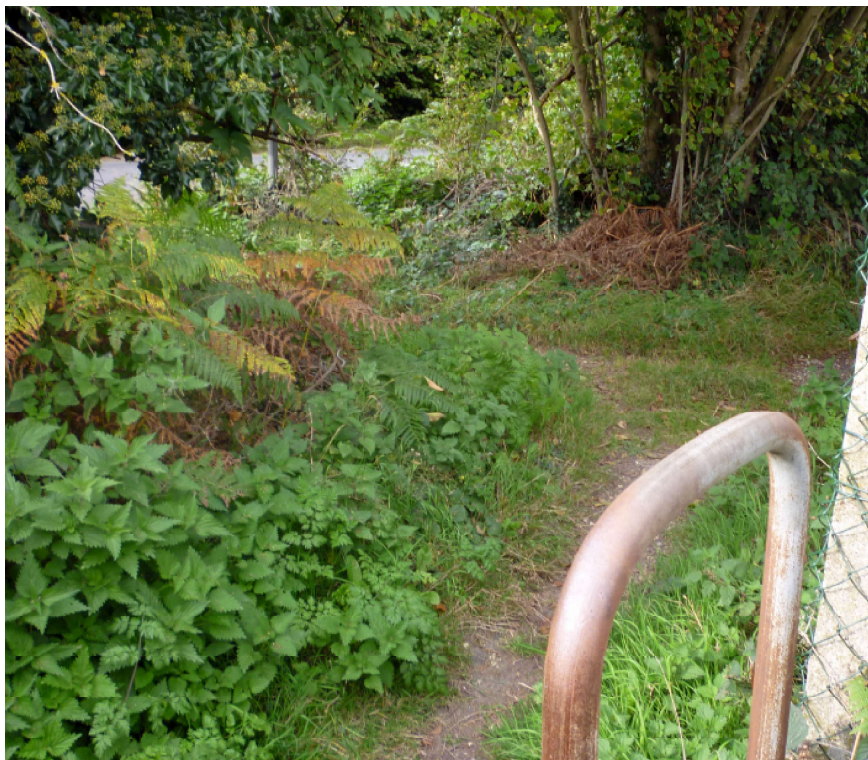
Follow this path, which is well hemmed in by fences (and is patrolled by warning notices), past Parkwood Farm to reach Layter's Green Lane.

4 Cross Layter's Green Lane and go through a gate opposite, and over to the left by a few metres. Follow the path, which takes mild dog-legs to the right and then to the left, through woodland to emerge at the south-eastern corner of an L-shaped field.

Bear left to cross the field diagonally (in a north-westerly direction) into its far left-hand corner, and continue ahead in the same direction, passing Welders House on the left to reach Welders Lane.

Along Welders Lane to the left is the historic Meeting House,

which has been described as “the Westminster Abbey of Quakerism”. The Meeting House was purpose-built in 1688 immediately after the Proclamation of Indulgence by King James II allowed Quakers and others to practise their brands of religion. It is the burial place of William Penn and members of his immediate family: despite his clear wish to be buried here, Pennsylvanians keep trying to move the bones across the Atlantic to their own state.



Cross Welders Lane, then take a refuge path to the left, behind the roadside hedge. The path soon turns right into a field: cross this field diagonally down a path which leads to Jordans Lane.

Arrival at Jordans Lane

Do not go out onto the road here, but turn right to follow a refuge path parallel to the road on your left. After 80m, turn left and cross Jordans Lane.

5 Make your way ahead on Seer Green Lane into the centre of Jordans village, soon reaching and passing the village green on the right.

There is a village shop along the road to the right at the far end of the green.

At the far end of the green (where the road goes off on the right towards the shop), turn left to follow a path into Crutches Wood. This path bends to the right, house-backs now on the left; at the bottom, it squeezes between houses to descend into Wilton Lane.

Turn left onto Wilton Lane (which is often muddy) to come out onto Longbottom Lane opposite the access road for Beaconsfield Golf Club and for Seer Green and Jordans railway station. Follow the access road, bearing right to reach the station.

The station opened in 1915, and was originally called Beaconsfield Golf Links Halt (even though it will take a lot more coastal erosion for the course to be at the seaside). Perhaps due to possible confusion with Denham Golf Club up the line, or perhaps by local residents' lobbying, the station was renamed as Seer Green in 1918. Since then, Jordans has been added to the station name, then taken off, then added again.

There is an hourly bus service (not Sundays) on Longbottom Lane to Beaconsfield and High Wycombe (westbound) and the



*Seer Green and Jordans
station, looking westbound*

Chalfonts, Gerrards Cross and Uxbridge (eastbound). Trains run approximately hourly: London-bound services leave from the platform at the station entrance.

Seer Green and Jordans to Beaconsfield

4.8km; 38m ascent; 1hr 00min

Introduction

1 The route from Seer Green and Jordans station to Beaconsfield is, as far as is possible, on woodland and farmland, before a short encounter with typical Beaconsfield suburbia leads to the station.

There is a bus service on Longbottom Lane near the start of the section, on Amersham Road, and on the south side of the railway at Beaconsfield.

Beaconsfield has full facilities, but apart from that, there is no opportunity for any refreshment or replenishment. All provisions should therefore be carried.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/196528> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the bottom of the footbridge next to the station building, walk away from the railway, bearing slightly left, to a gate in the fence ahead. This leads to a path through the woods which turns left immediately beyond the gate, then turns right to descend to Longbottom Lane.

*You will see the bus stops on each side of the road here: they are identified as *Railway Station*.*

Turn left along Longbottom Lane, passing the Beaconsfield-bound bus stop. Continue along the footway, crossing over to the right-hand side of the road when the path on the left-hand side gives out. Soon after this road crossing, you will come to the junction with Bottom Lane, marked as “unsuitable for heavy goods vehicles”.

3 Turn right onto Bottom Lane — there is no footway. Ascend the road for 200m until it bends to the right, then take a track which carries on straight ahead, rising towards Blue Close Wood. Ignore a path heading off on the right as you reach the woodland, but carry on through to the far end of the wood, where you will find a crossing path.

Turn left onto this path, heading back into the woodland. On exiting this part of the of wood, bear right across the field to enter another

patch of woodland. The path leads through the woodland to come out onto the busy A355, Amersham Road, almost opposite a lodge and driveway. Cross to the end of the driveway.

4 Do not take the driveway, but go through a kissing-gate just to the right, and follow the path to the far end of the first field. Here, the driveway swings north (towards The Grange) at a crossing of two public footpaths: continue westwards on a path with a hedge on your right.

Half-way along this hedge, the path bends slightly left (still with the hedge) and enters Brown's Wood. Continue on the same line through the wood to the far end, where there is a T-junction of footpaths. The north-eastern tip of Beaconsfield lies ahead, but there is no way to penetrate the curtain-wall of back gardens.

5 Turn left: the back gardens will soon be right up against the path on the right. Continue ahead: the path will become enclosed, and will finally spill out onto Ledborough Lane, in suburban Beaconsfield, at a pillar box.

Turn right on Ledborough Lane, crossing to the left-hand footway at a suitable location. After 270m, having passed a road sign on the right-hand footway warning of the school ahead, turn left on — if you find that you have reached Sandelswood Lane on the right, you have overshot.

The path comes out onto Grenfell Road: carry straight on ahead on St Michael's Green (street).

The next road on the right is Warwick Road. If time is short, and you are passing through Beaconsfield rather than ending your day here, you may consider taking Warwick Road directly to the shopping heart of Beaconsfield. Half-way along, you will pass the entrance to the famed Bekonscot Model Village.

At the end, turn right on Caledon Close. At the turning circle, continue ahead on an enclosed path. This leads to steps down to Station Approach, opposite the station building.

The coming of the railway in 1906 (in a joint venture between the Grand Central Railway and the Great Western Railway) spurred commercial and residential growth within walking distance of the station (New Beaconsfield). In this respect, it mirrored the growth in the original settlement (Old Beaconsfield, as it is now called if a distinction is necessary) on what is now the A40 to the south, such growth arising out of the coaching trade on the Oxford Road. Beaconsfield is approximately half-way between London and Oxford by this route.

There are hourly bus services at New Beaconsfield to and from High Wycombe, Chesham, the Chalfonts, Gerrards Cross, Uxbridge and Heathrow. These serve the bus stops in Maxwell Road. For these stops, ascend Station Approach, turn left over the bridge, past the two mini-roundabouts, and then turn left onto Maxwell Road.

Beaconsfield to High Wycombe

10.0km; 133m ascent; 2hr 12min

Introduction

1 This is the first inter-station route since Wembley Stadium to break the 10km barrier — because that first walk from Marylebone had break-off points every few hundred metres, this is really the first time that you will have serious need of scheduling.

The route passes through the north-western part of Beaconsfield and crosses countryside before descending to the valley of the River Wye at Loudwater. The remainder of the section follows streets and parkland to High Wycombe station.

There are bus stops at Loudwater, and also for town services on the south side of the River Wye. High Wycombe has a bus station with services on numerous routes.

On leaving Beaconsfield, you will encounter a pub at Forty Green. There is a pub and a large supermarket at Loudwater, and a pub on Kingsmead Road. The centre of High Wycombe has all facilities.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195312> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the bottom of Station Approach, walk up the road (with the railway on your left) to reach Penn Road. Turn right onto Penn Road, and cross the road at the refuge just before reaching the roundabout.

Cross over the end of Baring Road, then take Reynolds Road to the left (in other words, do not continue past the shops on Penn Road), crossing to follow its right-hand footway. After 150m, the road bends to the right: continue ahead on a path, passing to the right of a triangular patch of grass. The path soon eases left, and continues to a point where two paths go off to the right. Take the path which keeps to a north-westerly direction: it leads out onto Malkin Drive, which takes you out onto Woodside Avenue.

The course of this path, and its retention within the layout of the modern town, indicates that it was the ancient trod between Beaconsfield and Forty Green. This is borne out by consulting the map of the 1875-76 survey (which was published in 1883 and

is available at <https://maps.nls.uk/view/102340238>). Note that on the map there is no housing where New Beaconsfield stands today: the site of Davenies Farm is now occupied by a school (just beyond the top end of the shopping parade on the way to Old Beaconsfield).

Turn right onto Woodside Avenue, and take the enclosed path immediately on the left. You will see from the map that the direct line of the ancient path was compromised with the housebuilding, hence the dog-leg via Malkin Drive.

The path passes between houses, crossing Woodside Avenue (again), Eghams Wood Road, and Hogback Wood Road. It then passes through a wood and crosses a field to reach Forty Green Road. Turn left and follow Forty Green Road to its junction with Holtspur Lane at the end of Riding Lane (ahead).

Turn right and follow the road for 100m to a set of steps which has been cut into the embankment on the left-hand side of the road.

About 150m ahead, the Royal Standard of England pub offers food and drink every day from its opening time at noon until well into the evening, except on Mondays, when the food service ends at 1630.

3 Climb the steps and go through the kissing-gate. Follow the clear path through four fields (with stiles between them — it seems that the replacement of stiles with kissing-gates hereabouts is prioritised only if the shiny new gate may be seen from a car window) to reach the corner of a wood.

Bear left to pass through the wood, then drop and climb on a clear path, bearing right to follow a track out to Gatemoor Lane, with the farmhouse of Lude Farm on your right.

4 Turn right along the lane, and after passing the farm buildings on your left, take a footpath up to the left, across a field to the corner of a wood, Coppice Hoop.

From Forty Green, the route has followed the Berkshire extension (designated by the Chilterns Society and described on their waymarks as a “loop”, though it is in no way a circuit) of the Chiltern Way. Here, above Lude Farm, our route joins the core Chiltern Way southbound towards Loudwater. The word *lude* in Loudwater means “clear” (as does *llwyd* in modern Welsh — clearly the two words share the same progenitor); the farm has retained the old spelling.

Turn left to follow the core Chiltern Way (as signposted) to the south-west for two fields to enter Sniggs Wood.

5 The path leads on through the wood, and then skirts a golf course, passing two greens on your left before reaching a cross-track at a tee. Continue ahead, passing to the left of a small stand of trees (do not take the track which leads towards another green ahead on the right). Keep the trees on the right until the path crosses the course to reach the clubhouse.

Turn left to follow the access road to the golf course: it modulates into Rayners Avenue when it reaches housing. Follow Rayners Avenue to its junction with Robinson Road, which comes in from the right. Take the corner onto Robinson Road, and immediately turn left to cross the road onto a path which descends: this is Magpie Lane.

Follow Magpie Lane down, crossing the railway and finally reaching the bottom at a service road for houses on London Road. Turn left and follow London Road to the light-controlled pedestrian crossing just beyond the bottom of Rayners Avenue.

Buses run along London Road to High Wycombe, Beaconsfield, Slough and Uxbridge.

To the left, there is a chain pub attached to a budget hotel, and there is a large supermarket at the roundabout beyond.

6 Cross London Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, and continue ahead across the River Wye. Turn right to follow a riverside path across Frederick Place. This path comes out onto the eastern corner of King's Mead recreation ground. Turn left here, and keep to the left-hand edge of the recreation ground through turns to the right, left and right.

Follow the path (named The Fennels on some maps) with Back Stream on your left to the west end of the recreation ground, then continue ahead with a tarred playground off to your right. Bear left to cross Back Stream and continue out, passing a small car park on your right, to Kingsmead Road, where turn right.

On the other side of the road, at a bus stop which has an hourly service to the centre of High Wycombe, should that be of necessity, there is a large pub, serving drinks from noon until late evening, and food at lunchtime and in the evening (all day Saturday and only until 1630 on Sunday).

Take the first road on the right, Beech Road. Shortly after crossing Back Stream, turn left onto Mead Way. Follow Mead Way to Abbey Barn Road at a mini-roundabout. This area of the town is called Wycombe Marsh.

Buses run from this point on the route between High Wycombe and Bourne End.

7 Take Wrights Meadow Road ahead, and follow it until you reach another roundabout. At this roundabout, take a path just to the right of Chequers Avenue ahead. Turn left at the riverside to keep the River Wye on your right. Cross Milan Road (no, I don't believe that it goes there either), noting a metal sculpture on a roundabout to your left.

Beyond some fake-American housing on the left (in "Carolina Drive", no less), take a left fork in the path to reach Bowden Lane, with houses on the right which adhere more closely to vernacular architecture. Bowden Lane runs into Bassetsbury Lane, which

crosses Keep Hill Road. About 50m beyond the crossing, take a path to the left which parallels a concrete-laid access road. This path leads out onto The Rye.

8 Ahead, you will see the buildings of a lido: keep them close on your left as you cross the parkland. Just beyond the lido, take the path on your right, back to the River Wye. Do not cross the river, but turn left with the river on your right. Pass a children's playground; about 200m farther on, turn right to cross the river and reach the A40, here called Easton Street.

Cross Easton Street using the pedestrian crossing, turn right, and follow an alleyway up to the left, next to a brick-built house with the address of "1, London Road". The alleyway leads to Saffron Road, which leads you to up to Station Road. Turn left and follow the road to its end, then onto Birdcage Walk. At the end of this path, High Wycombe station marks the end of this section.

The railway came to Wycombe in 1854 with a terminal station designed by Isambard Kingdom Brunel; ten years later, a station was built on the through line. With the joint venture between the Grand Central Railway and the Great Western Railway bringing more through services in 1906, a new station building was built: it is the one we see today.

High Wycombe was built on the mills on the river Wye (which is probably, like the River Rom in Romford, a back-formation from a word for dwellings which became Wycombe). The mills were for making linen and other textiles, but the paper industry moved in. The local furniture industry (principally chairs) became established during the nineteenth century.

The town spread up the steep valleys in a slum clearance drive in 1932, creating the current shape of the town.

The commercial centre of the town is, naturally enough, in the main valley: a full range of facilities may be found there. The bus station, with many services within and beyond the town, is at the west end of the Eden shopping centre.

High Wycombe to Saunderton

8.8km; 222m ascent; 2hr 18min

Introduction

1 The route to Saunderton climbs out of the valley in the centre of High Wycombe to pass Hughenden Manor, and generally keeps to the high ground before descending to the valley at Bradenham. It takes to the high ground on the other side of the railway to descend once more to Saunderton station.

There are buses at Naphill and on the main road at Bradenham and near Saunderton station.

There is a pub at Downley, and there are shops and pubs in Naphill. There is the possibility of a tea-shop at Bradenham.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/196480> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the main station exit, cross Station Approach using the pedestrian crossing and turn right, with Brunel's engine shed, now occupied by Buckinghamshire New University, on your left. At the end of the shed, turn left to follow a path to the junction of Amersham Hill and Castle Street. Taking your timing from the traffic-light sequence, cross Amersham Hill using the refuge.

Turn right onto Amersham Hill, take the bridge over the railway, and turn left to follow the left-hand footway of Priory Avenue. At first, the road parallels the railway below on your left; the local museum is passed on your right. The street bends half-right, and the steep Priory Road is crossed, with a primary school (with the imposing name of Hamilton Academy, though not the one I attended in the town of that name, and which gave rise to Hamilton Academical FC) down to the left, as Priory Avenue descends to valley level.

At the bottom of the hill, turn left onto Benjamin Road, then turn right to cross over the end of Benjamin Road onto the right-hand footway of Temple End. Take the roundabout anticlockwise, crossing over the end of Hughenden Road using the triangle as a refuge. Continue onto the right-hand footway of Bellfield Road, then turn right onto Hughenden Boulevard, crossing over to the left-hand footway.

Over to the left, the pub and supermarket stand on the site of the Glenister Temple Works, a furniture factory which was demolished in 1990. The shiny new buildings ahead on the “boulevard”, a mix of retirement and student accommodation with ordinary housing, along with the road itself, take the place of other industrial sites which were built early in the twentieth century and which failed to last out the millennium.

Follow Hughenden Boulevard across Hughenden Avenue using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Cross to the right-hand footway using another light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue until the new-build peters out at Coates Lane (formerly Manor Road), which comes up from the right and turns to take what is now a continuation of Hughenden Boulevard.

3 Continue ahead on Coates Lane: do not swing left with the road, but take a path ahead on the right of the road into Hughenden Park. The path sets off roughly north-north-west; after 200m, keep to the same direction as the path rises, ignoring a path which bears off on the right on a northerly bearing. Pass Middle Lodge on your left, and continue ahead to reach Hughenden Manor.

If you do find yourself on the lower path, with a small stream on your right, just carry on until you reach the access road, turn left, and take the road up to the manor.

There has been a manor of Hughenden since the eleventh century. The current building (erected near the end of the eighteenth century) was purchased by Isaac D’Israeli in 1847, and it became the country residence of his son, Benjamin Disraeli, who became Prime Minister for the first time in 1868. The manor was given over to the National Trust in 1947. The manor is listed at Grade I; the stable block and formal garden at Grade II.

4 The path emerges at the top of the access road, opposite the entrance to the walled garden. Turn left. Do not go through the gated entrance, but follow the road (signposted to the Estate Office) to the right of the gate. At the end of the road, take the path half-right ahead into the woodland. About 90m into the wood, take a path on the left which ascends, then bends, first to the right and then to the left, to exit the wood.

The path ascends westwards (ignore a path off to the right) and enters woodland. After about 300m, two paths come in, one on each side; 20m ahead, turn right and, 90m on, bear marginally left (taking a line roughly north-west) to follow a footpath across a field with a bridleway parallel on the left, to a lane at the corner of Downley Common. Continue ahead, with houses on the right, to reach the corner of a road: a letterbox on the right will confirm where you are.

5 Continue ahead, ignoring an exit which sweeps to the right. Opposite the last house on the right (a blocky detached house which comes after a string of semi-detached houses), take a grassy path on the left.

Near the end of this lane, you will pass a pub on the right. It is open from noon into the evening, and serves lunches and dinners (no dinner service on Sundays): the menu contains sandwiches and pub classics, with some extras.

The path takes you through the woodland to the west side of the common: turn right to follow a path on the edge of the woodland. After about 450m, an enclosed lane leads to Cookshall Farm: continue ahead.

The path begins to diverge from the edge of the woodland, and after 600m, reaches a crossing path (one of many: this one is at [SU 8440 9690](#)) on Naphill Common.

For Naphill village, with its frequent bus services running between Aylesbury and High Wycombe and a pub (closed Mondays), you will need to turn right to the edge of the common, and right to reach Downley Road, then left on Downley Road to Main Road, where pub and bus stops are off to the right. Such a diversion is really only useful if you intend to break the journey here and catch a bus.

6 From the path junction, turn left to take a footpath west (again with a bridleway in parallel on your left). After about 1km, the bridleway and footpath merge and bear left to take up the line of another bridleway which joins from the right. Follow this track as it passes two farms on the left, then passes a cricket ground on the right, to reach a road. Turn right, then turn left onto Bradenham Wood Road to reach Wycombe Road at a tea-room.

The tea-room is open between 1000 and 1600, but may be closed on Mondays. Note that it is still marked as a pub on some maps.

7 Turn right onto the main road, and after only 40m, turn left onto a path which passes beneath the railway and crosses the short end of a long field before turning right, thus keeping a hedge on the left for a little over 100m. Here, through the hedge, two paths diverge. Take the right-hand of the two paths and cross the field ahead to enter Allnutt's Wood. About 430m into the wood, the path reaches its summit, where bear right onto a crossing path. After 140m, leave the wood and continue ahead to come out onto Slough Lane.

If you miss the crossing path and end up at Slough Bottom Farm (on your left), just turn right and follow Slough Lane for 240m to return to the route.

If you are not breaking your journey at Saunderton (Princes Risborough station is less than 7km ahead), you may take the footpath ahead to meet up with the main route towards Princes Risborough at the top of Slough Hill.

8 For Saunderton station, turn right to follow Slough Lane northwards, over its summit and round its goose-neck bend. Descend to reach the station access road just before the road passes beneath the railway.

For the half-hourly (not Sundays) bus service between Aylesbury and High Wycombe, and for a pub (open between 1200 and 2300; food service for fairly standard pub fare until 2100 but only until 1800 on Sundays), continue beneath the railway to reach Wycombe Road, where turn right.

The imposing building on the far side of Wycombe Road (just beyond the Wycombe-bound bus stop) was built in the middle of the twentieth century as a residence for pharmaceutical scientists: it has now been turned into flats.

Saunderton to Princes Risborough

7.1km; 97m ascent; 1hr 34min

Introduction

1 The route keeps to the west of the railway, then crosses the Birmingham-bound track, turning left to walk in the gap between the tracks (don't worry, there is a field-width between the tracks) before re-crossing the line to reach Saunderton (nowhere near the station of that name). A few streets later, you will arrive at Princes Risborough station.

Buses are available near the start and end of the section.

There are no shops *en route*. There is a pub a short distance from the end of the section, and the commercial centre of Princes Risborough is away to the north, but apart from those facilities, you are left with the glories of the vending machine at Princes Risborough station. It follows that provisions should be carried.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/195221> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 The route to Princes Risborough keeps to the relatively high ground to the west of the railway before descending to cross the railway and continue at valley level to Princes Risborough.

The station was opened in 1901. Today, it is unstaffed with minimal facilities. The centre of Saunderton is almost as far away as Princes Risborough near the end of this section, but Saunderton Estate is centred near the station — which probably explains the siting and naming of the station.

Buses on the X30 service between High Wycombe and Aylesbury stop (though not on Sundays) at the pub on Wycombe Road near its junction with Slough Lane.

Exit the station and descend Station Approach to Slough Lane. Turn right and ascend the lane for 300m to reach its goose-neck bend. From the outside of the bend, continue to ascend westwards on a path which leads to the top of Slough Hill.

Here, the path which comes in from the left is the short-cut from Slough Lane which may be taken by walkers who are not breaking their journey at Saunderton.

Turn half-right at the top to follow the path in a north-westerly direction. At first, there is woodland to the left, but the left-hand boundary becomes a hedge on the way to Haw Lane, which is reached by a stile and a descent to road level.

3 Cross Haw Lane and take the path up the bank almost opposite but a little to the left. Do not follow the refuge path parallel to the road, but bear right to return to the north-westerly direction, the hedge now on your right.

Continue ahead for 1.5km, passing beneath power lines and over a crossing path. Turn right to enter access land and contour Lodge Hill (up to your left) to a T-junction of paths on the east side of Lodge Hill.

The path which you meet at the T-junction is The Ridgeway Path, a national trail which runs for 140km between Avebury and Ivinghoe Beacon. Full details of the route may be found at

https://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/en_GB/trails/the-ridgeway/

That route forms part of the Greater Ridgeway route from Lyme Regis to the Norfolk coast: the other paths which make up the long route are the Wessex Ridgeway (from Lyme Regis to Avebury), the Icknield Way Trail (from Ivinghoe Beacon to Knettishall Heath), and the Peddar's Way (from Knettishall Heath to Holme-next-the-Sea).

4 Turn right onto the Ridgeway Path (I choose to drop the capitalised definite article from the trail's name: local signage just has the one word "Ridgeway"). After 240m, the path turns left and then right to reach Lee Road.

Cross Lee Road and take the track half-left opposite. When the way ahead is barred by a wooden gateway, take the path ahead on the right. This bends right and then bends left, where a high wooden fence ensures that walkers are shielded from the residents' precious vista.

At the end of the fence, continue ahead between hedges and pass through a kissing-gate. Beyond the gate, bear left and then bear right. After a slight bend to the left, the path makes its way across a golf course, still with hedges on each side. A right-hand bend leads to a kissing-gate, out onto the railway.

Take care in crossing the busy railway: look out for trains coming from your right. If you are in a group, only cross in ones or twos, and make sure that the walkers go through the barrier on the far side of the track before the next batch crosses the line.

Once across the railway, continue ahead through the lineside scrub to go through another kissing-gate. Turn left along a footpath (which is actually the Chiltern Way) where the Ridgeway Path continues straight ahead, the path rising slightly as it crosses the field, drifting away from the left-hand edge. The path leads onto a driveway for the buildings on the right: follow the driveway as it bends right then left, and makes its way out onto Upper Icknield Way.

5 Cross Upper Icknield Way and take a path through the hedge ahead. Cross the field: you will see the southbound track of the railway over to your right. Going through the neck of the field, keep to the left-hand side, trending left to reach and cross the northbound track.

The single track of the nineteenth-century Wycombe Railway was not good enough for the expresses which would run on the joint railway of the Great Central Railway and the Great Western Railway, so a new line was laid for southbound traffic by means of a cutting and a short tunnel, thus doubling the track and taking out a steep gradient.

Once across the railway, continue along the path. The Chiltern Way departs to the left towards the church at the centre of Saunderton, so far from the station of that name that the station could have been named by Ryanair. Keep on ahead to reach Bledlow Road. Turn right along Bledlow Road without benefit of footway as far as the railway bridge, turn right to cross the bridge to the junction of Picts Lane and Shootacre Lane.

6 Turn left onto Picts Lane, and follow it all the way to Station Road. Turn left onto Station Road, and descend to Station Approach. The station is on your left.

Refreshments are not available at Princes Risborough station, other than the lottery of a vending machine.

The commercial centre of Princes Risborough, where all facilities may be found, lies about 700m away at the far end of Station Road (and beyond via Wycombe Road) from its junction with Picts Lane.

About 150m along this route from the end of Picts Lane, there is a pub on the right-hand side of Station Road. The only days on which there is a lunchtime service are Fridays, Saturdays and Sundays.

The nearest bus stop to the end of the section (for the frequent services to High Wycombe and Aylesbury) is on Wycombe Road: take Station Road towards the town centre and turn right onto Poppy Road. At the far end of Poppy Road (taking the left bend out onto Wycombe Road), the stop for Wycombe-bound buses is directly across the road; to reach the stop for services to Aylesbury, turn left along Wycombe Road.

Risborough was a Saxon settlement; after the Norman Conquest, the manor was given to the Giffard family. King Edward II gave the manor to his son (the Black Prince): during this period, the settlement became known as Princes Risborough. King Charles I sold the manor to the City of London to settle some debts. More recently, there has been an influx of relatively light industry in and around the town, and many more houses, principally for commuters, have been built.

The Chinnor and Princes Risborough Railway runs heritage trains between the two towns on what was the line to Watlington: after

the line closed to passenger traffic in 1957, it was used to transport cement until 1989, when the heritage line became a possibility.

Greater Oxfordshire

Princes Risborough to Leamington Spa

111.8km; 984m ascent; 23hr 54min

Overview

Like the previous two sectors, this sector is divided into seven sections. However, there is a striking difference — just look at the distances involved. This part is three times as long as the London sector, and not quite three times as long as the Chiltern sector. It is by a long chalk the hardest of the parts. It takes you over the main watershed of the country, and it involves two non-station stops at Kingswood (bus stop, not Sundays) and Kineton (buses and overnight accommodation), because the distances between Haddenham and Bicester, and between Banbury and Leamington Spa, are about 33km and 40km respectively. Neither station at the beginning and end of this part is actually in Oxfordshire, but in each case, the next station along the line is.

The walks in this section require careful scheduling and planning (including knowing where and when to call for a taxi) and organising daily rations. It may not be Dartmoor or Knoydart, but neither is it a walk through Harrow's suburbs.

Buses are available at Haddenham, Kingswood, Ambrosden, Bicester, Banbury, Kineton and Bishop's Tachbrook.

Bicester, Banbury and Leamington Spa offer all facilities. There are shops and/or pubs in Haddenham (a café at the station and the rest off-route in the centre of Haddenham to the east), Ambrosden, Fritwell, Souldern, Aynho, Kings Sutton, Ratley, Kineton and Bishop's Tachbrook.

The sections within this sector are as follows

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
15	Princes Risborough	12.7	Haddenham and Thame Parkway	79
16	Haddenham and Thame Parkway	15.7	Kingswood	83
17	Kingswood	16.8	Bicester North	89

	Start of section	km	End of section	Page
18	Bicester North	20.3	Kings Sutton	95
19	Kings Sutton	6.1	Banbury	101
20	Banbury	20.6	<i>Kineton</i>	103
21	<i>Kineton</i>	19.7	Leamington Spa	107

Princes Risborough to Haddenham and Thame Parkway

12.7km; 53m ascent; 2hr 38min

Introduction

1 The walk between Princes Risborough and Haddenham is through farmland at valley level, ending with a walk through Haddenham.

There is no public transport connection on this section until you reach the centre of Haddenham, where buses run between Aylesbury and Oxford.

The only access to shops and a pub on the route is in Haddenham. There is a café at Haddenham and Thame Parkway station.

It follows that, on this section, provisions must be carried, and possibly sourced in Princes Risborough — an alternative route via the shops is given below.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4650979> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit Princes Risborough station, turning left onto Station Approach. Bend right to reach Station Road, where turn right and immediately turn left onto Manor Park Avenue. Follow the left-hand footway of Manor Park Avenue for 300m to the junction with Stratton Road, where through traffic turns left.

Continue ahead past the fake gateway to continue along Manor Park Avenue — this may be trumpeted as a private road, but it is a public footpath. Continue ahead, no doubt under close surveillance, for 450m to reach the junction with Church Street, and continue ahead to reach the junction with Church Lane.

An alternative route from the station to this point, which is a useful route if you need to garner supplies for the day, is to follow Station Road past Manor Farm Avenue, turning left at the junction with Picts Lane and continuing along Wycombe Road and later along Bell Street Street through the town centre, turning left onto High

Street, and bearing left at the market clocktower to reach, on your right, Church Lane. This route will take you past cafés and small supermarkets, plus a market if you happen to be in the town on a Thursday morning.

3 Turn left onto Church Lane, a public footpath, keeping the church on your left. After 200m, a path comes in from the left. Keep going ahead, now on a path. When house-backs take the right-hand side of the path, ignore the narrow alley between houses, but take the path to the right where there is a broad walkway between the houses, keeping the birch trees on your right.

Make your way onto Brooke Road ahead, and follow the right-hand footway to its end at Longwick Road, which cross using the pedestrian crossing. Turn left along the right-hand footway and turn right onto Wellington Avenue, following the left-hand footway. Opposite a park, take the next road on the left, Westmead. Without fanfare, you have slipped into Monks Risborough.

4 Follow the left-hand footway of Westmead round its broad curve on its left-hand footway as far as 77 Westmead. Take the path on the left and cross the railway. Continue in the same direction, crossing a path which leads (on the left) to Alscot Farm. Beyond, in a little triangular field, bear left, and exit onto a large field. Head straight across this field and the next two, keeping a north-westerly direction, to reach Lower Icknield Way.

5 Turn right onto Lower Icknield Way, then after 100m, turn left. Follow the almost-straight road for 700m to reach a kissing-gate on the left, just after the road crosses a small stream, metal barriers at the sides of the road denoting the site.

Go through the kissing-gate and cross the field ahead. In the next field, continue ahead, bearing slightly right to come out onto Bar Lane.

6 Turn right along Bar Lane; after about 250m, you will come to a pair of houses on the right. Here, turn left onto a path which crosses a stile into a field. Keep to the right-hand edge of this field, and then cross the next field, making for a house ahead. Turn right at the house to reach a road, crossing a stile to do so.

7 Turn left onto the road, and take a left-hand bend. At a gateway, bear right onto a footpath, and follow it out to reach an open field. Cross the field, then bear slightly left to cut the corner of the next field. Continue in the same direction to cross the next field on the diagonal, then take the right-hand edge of the next field to reach and cross Green Lane.

8 Take the path running north of west (not the one running south of west) across the field to reach the access road to Pasture Farm. Cross the road and continue for 60m, then pass through the hedge into the south-eastern corner of a field. Cross the field in a west-north-westerly direction to reach a gap, where bear slightly

right to cross the next field. Follow the right-hand edge of the following two fields to reach an outbuilding of Black Barn Farm, which is off to the left.

9 Continue in the same direction on a fieldpath for 650m, where a path crosses at an angle, its line ahead to the left making for a road.

If the ground is excessively muddy, taking that path would be an option, turning right along the road to meet the main route again at Aston Sandford, at waypoint **10** below.

Continue ahead for a further 650m to reach a lane through a kissing-gate. Ignore the gate which takes a path off to the left, but continue along the lane. Turn left with the lane at Aston Sandford church, and follow the lane out to a T-junction.

This is the point where the escape-the-mud alternative comes in from the left.

10 Turn right along the road to reach another T-junction, this time with Stanbridge Road, at Stan Bridge itself. Turn right and cross the bridge, then look out for a gap in the hedge on the left which reveals a kissing-gate.

Go through the gate, and turn right to keep the hedge on your left. Cross into the next field and, after 80m, bear half-left, following the path out through a kissing-gate onto Aston Road. Cross the road and continue ahead along the left-hand footway of Cricketers Way, continuing along the left-hand footway of Maslin Elms where Cricketers Way bends to the right. At the point where Maslin Elms bends to the right, continue ahead along a tarmac path. Bear left at a Y-junction of paths and follow the path westwards to emerge onto Churchway.

11 Cross Churchway to follow the right-hand footway of Crabtree Road to the junction with Stockwell, the latter signposted as being unsuitable for motor vehicles. Follow this narrow lane for 400m past house-backs to emerge onto Fort End at the end of High Street.

Here, there is a café (open until 1600 Wednesdays to Saturdays, and until 1400 on Sundays) on the left, a bakery (open until 1400 —but 1300 on Saturdays— and closed Sundays) across the main road ahead, and a pub (round to the left on the main road). There is a small supermarket and a breakfast/lunch café about 150m distant along Banks Road to your right.

The bus stop which you meet as you reach the main road has services to Oxford (via Haddenham and Thame Parkway station, which might be useful if you want to skip 1km of walking along the road); round to the left, on the other side of the road, buses leave for Aylesbury.

If you are not breaking your journey at the station, cross the road and take Fern Lane opposite, to the right of the bakery.

Turn left and follow Tacks Lane, which soon becomes Thame Road for 1km to the railway bridge, crossing to its right-hand footway at a suitable location.

Turn right down the ramp at the bus stop just before the bridge. If you have a valid rail ticket to London, continue down the ramp to Platform 2, otherwise cross the railway by the footbridge to the ticket office, self-service ticket machine, and Platform 1.

There is a coffee bar in the station building (Platform 1) which is open until 1400 (closed Sundays). There are toilets in the station building.

Haddenham and Thame Parkway to Kingswood

15.7km; 179m ascent; 3hr 25 min

Introduction

1 The route to Kingswood Crossroads (it is not a station, but is the only viable break-point between the stations at Haddenham and Bicester) is very rural, with few facilities. For this reason, it is essential to carry all provisions, and to cater for a possible emergency exit, probably by taxi.

Note — there are no buses on Sundays, nor on Bank Holidays, from Kingswood.

The railway arrived at Haddenham in 1906; the site of the station was about 800m up the line towards London from that of the present station. The original station closed in 1963 and the current station opened in 1987.

There is a café in the station building on Platform 1 (served by trains from London), but there is merely a vending machine on Platform 2. There is a pub at Cheersley (probably too close to the start of the section to be of much use), and another one at the end of the section at Kingswood.

Buses on the service linking Aylesbury with Oxford stop at the station.

Haddenham is of Anglo-Saxon origin and has a place in the Domesday Book of 1086. More recently, it was the birthplace of composer Doreen Carwithen, whose overture *ODTAA (One Damned Thing After Another)* might have some echoes in the walker's following of the line of the Chiltern Railway, particularly in the urban sections.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13556382> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit the station, and turn left onto Thame Road. Follow the road for 1km to the point where it makes a right-and-left

double bend, with a pub on the right and Fern Lane going off to the left.

Here, as well as the pub, there is a local bakery which is open between 0630 and 1400 (between 0700 and 1300 on Saturdays; closed on Sundays).

Beyond the double bend, there is a small parade of shops on the left, containing a breakfast/lunch café (open mornings, closed Sundays) and a convenience shop which is open between 0630 and 2200 (Sunday opening at 0730). If you decide to visit the parade of shops, you will need to return to the Fern Lane junction to continue, since there is no viable short-cut!

You now join the Outer Aylesbury Ring path, a walk of 86km which, as the name suggests, encircles Aylesbury. You will follow this route as far as Ashendon. Full details of the Outer Aylesbury Ring may be found at

<https://www.aylesbury-ramblers.org.uk/outer-aylesbury-ring>

3 Take Fern Lane to its end with the bakery on your left, and continue ahead on a path which eventually leads through to Townsend. Turn left, and take the right-hand side of the triangle. Ahead, Townsend becomes Rudd's Lane; follow it to Rosemary Lane, where turn left.

Follow the lane as far as 19 Rosemary Lane on the right (the number is on the gate beyond the house; there is a low stone building with a tiled roof ahead). Turn left in front of the stone building, a tile-topped wall on your right. Continue ahead to a stile; cross it, and make your way, with a hedge on your right, out to Aylesbury Road.

4 Cross the road, and carry on ahead with the hedge still on your right. Pass through a copse and cross Dad Brook. Follow the path across the field on the diagonal to its concave corner ahead, then turn left along the right-hand edge of the field, keeping the hedge on your right. Exit to the right onto a track, with Honey Barn Farm on your right.

5 Turn left along the track to a field. Cross to the far left-hand corner of the field, and keep to the same direction, diagonally across the field to a gap in the far-side hedge. In the next field, follow the hedge on your left until it bends away left, where continue in the same direction, drifting away from the hedge to reach a gap in the hedge at the end of the field.

Cross the River Thame, and bear half-right on a path which leads out, through a right-and-left double bend, to Church Lane. Follow Church Lane past the church (no surprise there!); where Shupp's Lane bears off to the right, continue ahead, with fields on your left. Opposite the driveway to Hazeldene and the Old Orchard, the lane is flanked by houses on each side; the lane then bends to the right before opening out onto the green at Cheersley.

The pub on the right is closed on Mondays, but otherwise opens at noon; in midweek, it closes between 1500 and 1800. The food offering has a short, but bright and eclectic, menu.

6 Continue to reach the main junction at the north end of the green, and push ahead onto Winchendon Road. Follow the road for 850m, until it bends to the right. Pass between the chevron signs to join a path.

Ignore the path which goes off to the left after 70m, but bear right through a gap and turn left. Cut back left again to follow the right-hand side of a field. Keep to the right-hand side of the next field, at the end of which, pass through a gap to reach the southern tip of Chearsley Furze.

7 Turn left and cross the field, with the wood on your right. Pass through a gap and bear half-right. Cross a stream, and continue to the corner of the field ahead. Turn left to pass through a gap, then immediately turn right to reach the southern corner of a field.

Turn half-left and aim across the field to a gap in the hedge ahead, about 100m from its left-hand end. In the next field, keep the field boundary on your right until it bends away to the right, then keep to the same direction into the far corner of the field. Exit the field and turn right onto the driveway for Pollicott Manor.

8 Follow the driveway out to a road, where turn left to follow the road. Pass Upper Pollicott Farm and continue along the road to reach its junction with Wotton Lane, at the southern edge of Ashendon.

9 Turn left on Wotton Road; after 400m, where a footpath crosses the road at a driveway on the right to Hill Farm, the road becomes Brick Hill. Follow it for a further 1.2km to reach the old station building on the right, just where the road takes a left-hand bend.

The station was on the main Great Central Railway line; just south of here, the line joined the Great Western Railway line (now the Chiltern main line) at a flyover junction, the remains of which may be seen between the stations at Haddenham and Bicester. The station opened in 1906 and closed in 1953.

At the bend in the road, take the track ahead for 120m to follow the line of a short spur of the Brill Tramway; this spur gave the Tramway a link with the Grand Central station.

The Brill Tramway, originally horse-drawn but later converted for steam haulage as a standard railway, was built in 1871 at the behest of the Third Duke of Buckingham (who answered to the resplendent name of Richard Plantagenet Campbell Temple-Nugent-Brydges-Chandos-Grenville) to provide a link between Wotton House and the national network. It was originally intended to reach Oxford, but enthusiasm ran out, and in the

end it extended from Quainton Road station (on the line between Aylesbury and Leicester; now a heritage railway station) and Brill. The Tramway closed in 1935.

A branch to Kingswood (actually just west of Yeat Farm) was also laid in 1871; it was never upgraded and closed in 1915. The line of the Kingswood branch may be traced and inferred using today's field boundaries.

10 Turn left and follow the tramway's route through Navigation Spinney. After about 500m, the tramway took a left curve through a field on the left; continue round a gentle right-hand curve, crossing a brook to reach Church Farm in Wotton Underwood.

Keep the farm buildings on the left through a left-hand bend, and continue ahead to reach the main gate of the church.

There are two convenient park benches beside the gate, which walkers may decide are useful as a stopping-place for rest and refreshment.

About 160m after passing the church gate, turn right onto a footpath which soon turns half-left. Follow the path, with a boundary on your left. Soon, you will see on your left the impressive Wotton House, ancestral home of the Dukes of Buckingham.

Wotton House was built in the early years of the eighteenth century, and was rebuilt after a fire in 1820 to a design by Sir John Soane. The dukedom became extinct on the death of the Third Duke in 1889, and by 1957 the house was derelict. It has since been restored with many of the Soane features. The South Pavilion has passed through several owners, including Sir John Gielgud (who died there) and Sir Tony Blair.

Continue ahead, bearing right and left to keep the boundary fence on the left. Where the boundary turns left, continue ahead over two fields to reach Katherine Cottage on your left.

11 Press ahead past the cottage and go through the farmyard at Middle Farm. Turn right at a T-junction (which is signposted to Chandos Place — you will recall Chandos as one of the five barrels of the Duke of Buckingham's surname) and swing left onto a north-easterly bearing. Follow this path to a wood, with Yeat Farm off to the right.

Turn left through the wood to reach the driveway to Yeat Farm with a building on your left.

The driveway is, in fact, built on the bed of the Kingswood branch of the Brill Tramway, which served a brick and tile works over to the west.

12 Turn right off the driveway, taking an approximately north-easterly line across two fields to reach Little Yeat Farm. Here, do not take the path to the right which fringes the

pond, but take up a north-north-easterly direction along the main access to the farm.

After 320m, leave the access road by taking a half-left turn. Cross the field on the diagonal to come out onto the A41 opposite a pub. Cross the road to the pub.

The pub opens at 1100 (at the weekend, at 0900 for breakfast). Food is served throughout, except between 1500 and 1700 on Mondays to Thursdays. The food is upmarket pub fare with extensions into gastropubbery.

Turn left along the road's right-hand footway to reach Kingswood Crossroads.

There is an hourly bus service to Bicester from the bus stop on the left as you approach the crossroads. The corresponding stop on the main road beyond the crossroads is for the hourly buses to Aylesbury. There is a stop on the road to the right at the crossroads which has less regular services to Aylesbury. Check details with <https://bustimes.org/> — search for "17 Aylesbury" for the services along the main road, and for "16 Aylesbury" for those on the side-road.

NB — There is no service on either route on Sundays, nor on Bank Holidays.



Kingswood to Bicester North

16.8km; 50m ascent; 3hr 26min

Introduction

1 The route to Bicester is very rural, with relatively few facilities. A close study of the bus timetable (see above) will reap benefits. Come prepared with daily rations and all useful information.

After leaving Kingswood, there is a solitary bus service at Ambrosden.

There is a part-time pub at Ludgershall, and a convenience shop at the entrance to the military camp at Ambrosden. Bicester has all facilities.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13043113> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Walk westwards on the A41 past a restaurant (it is Italianate in character, so perhaps it should be “past a pasta restaurant”) for 240m.

Opposite Pump Cottage, turn left onto a footpath, then after 90m, slip through a gap and carry on, the hedge now on your left. At the end of the field, go through the gap and turn half-right to cross the next field on the diagonal. At the corner of the field, pass through the gap on the right, then pass through the gap on the left. Continue westwards, keeping to the left of the power lines, to reach a junction of lanes at Tetchwick.

3 Cross over the main lane, then immediately turn half-left. Make for a gap on the west side of the field, between two trees, and pass into the next field. Bear slightly left to drift away from the hedge on your left, to reach a gap and cross a stream, Tetchwick Brook.

Bear half-left, and cross the field to a gap just to the right of its far left-hand corner. In the next field, the path stays in a roughly south-westerly direction — there are two trees at the far end of the field, and you should aim just to the right of the left-hand tree.

Pass through a gap (just to the right of the point where the hedge-line bends through 45°) and continue to a gap in the hedge ahead on your right. In the next field, take the right-hand of two paths, heading in

a west-south-westerly direction, to the right of Ludgershall Mound, probably a mill mound.

4 Pass through the gap, and cross the field, then in the next field, make for a gap near the far left-hand corner, to emerge onto Duck Lane. Turn right, and follow Duck Lane to its junction with Salters Lane, with the railings on the right indicating a bridge over a stream. Turn right onto Salters Lane, then turn left to pass a pub on your right.

The pub is closed on Mondays and Tuesdays, opening at noon on other days. It serves lunches from Thursdays to Sundays, and evening meals from Thursdays to Saturdays.

Continue along Salters Lane until you reach Solters Close — an interesting spelling variant — on the left. Just past the entrance to Solters Close, go through a gap in the hedge on your right to reach and pass through a kissing-gate.

Bear left and cross the field, making for the corner to the right of a short zigzag in the hedge opposite. Follow the path between houses to come out onto Ludgershall's High Street.

5 Turn right along High Street for 130m; just beyond the last house on the left, turn left (as signposted) to enter a field. Bear left to keep close to the hedge on your left. Pass through a gap, and keep to the left-hand edge of the next field to pass through another gap. In the next field, keep the hedge close on your left for 60m, until a path emerges from the hedge. Turn right to follow the crossing path across the field to a gap just to the right of a pond. Pass through the gap and make for the far left-hand corner of the next field, where a path leads out to a road at a railway bridge.

6 Turn left and cross the railway (the Chiltern main line) by the road bridge. Swing right and half-left with the road; just beyond the road's next right-hand bend, take a stile on the left to enter a field. Take a path across the field, a little to the south of west, aiming for a gap half-way along the opposite side of the field. Beyond the gap, turn half-right to cross the field to a gap in its short edge ahead, and come out onto a road.

Cross the road and go through the hedge into a field. Turn left, and make for an exit about 50m to the right of the roadside hedge in the hedge ahead. Take the enclosed path ahead to reach a road called Lower End in Piddington.

7 Turn right along the road, and follow it for a little over 500m out of the village. Just beyond a wooden bench on the right, take a path to the left and follow it for 120m. Pass through the hedge on your right, then turn half-left to make for a gap in the hedge opposite, about 50m to the left of a tree in the corner.

Cross the next field to another gap, a little closer to the right-hand corner than the gap through which you entered the field. Bear half-right to clip the corner of the next field to a gap. Pass through

the gap and turn left to follow the left-hand edge of the field, and pass through a gap ahead.

Turn right and pass beneath the high-voltage power lines, making for a gap about 90m to the left of the corner ahead. Go through the gap and bear left to cross the next field on the diagonal to its far left-hand corner. Bear right through the gap to reach the end of an access track on the left.

8 Do not turn to the left along the track, but press ahead across the field. In the next field, turn half-left to pass a house on the left, and reach a road.

Turn right along the road, then turn right onto Thame Road through the centre of Blackthorn, past the junction with Station Road. Bear left with Thame Road at its junction with Lower Road. Follow the right-hand footway of Thame Road out to the main road.

9 Follow the footway round to the right and then left to the kerb. Cross the road and go through a gate. Follow the bridleway ahead across the field, then follow the right-hand edge of three fields to come out onto a lane. Turn right along the lane and follow it out to Ploughley Road. Turn right and follow Ploughley Road to its junction with Blackthorn Road in the centre of Ambrosden.

There is an hourly bus service (not Sundays) to Bicester from the bus stop outside the garage on the left-hand side of the road as you approach Blackthorn Road.

10 Continue north along Ploughley Road. Pass a school, using its light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross to the left-hand footway. Continue with military housing on each side. Pass a bus stop (with the same service as at the garage) at Willow Road, and continue ahead to reach a low building on the left, signposted (among other destinations) to an education centre (for the military).

Set inside this little complex is a convenience shop, which is open daily (to civilians too) between 0700 and 2000.

Use the refuge to cross to the right-hand footway, and press on along Ploughley Road for another 850m to reach the A41, the former Roman road called Akeman Street, now called Aylesbury Road.

11 Cross Aylesbury Road (there is a refuge just to the right), and turn left to follow the right-hand footway for about 200m. Just before you reach a house on the right, turn right along a track. After about 250m, turn left and follow a path across two fields and into the environs of a farm.

To your left, there is the site of the deserted mediæval village of Wretchwick.

The name *Wretchwick* may be derived from a word meaning *exile*, from which came our word *wretch*, attached to the standard locational element *-wick*.

Keep to the left of the farm buildings to a stile; exit onto Wretchwick Way. Cross the road to reach metal barriers opposite.

12 Go through the barriers to reach a made path. Pass Jubilee Lake on your right, and continue roughly north-west.

This path through the housing estate known as Langford Village may be seen clearly on maps as far back as 1885 (at least), and is probably much more ancient, since it leads to the site of a priory in Bicester. The modern housing estate has only moved it a few metres to conform with the current street topography.

Cross the spine of a street called Ravenscroft (it has many ribs leading off it elsewhere along its length). When you reach the grounds of a school, turn left and then turn right to keep the school grounds adjacent on your right.

Cross Peregrine Way on the diagonal and continue along the path. When you reach the end of the houses, bear left, then bear right, cross a stream, and reach Mallards Way.

Cross Mallards Way and continue along the path ahead: there will be houses on your right. Follow the path on a straight line, passing some allotment gardens on the left, to reach the railway, where turn left to come out onto London Road at a level crossing.

The crossing has the name (none too surprisingly) of Bicester Crossing. Bicester Village (both the station of that name and the retail mayhem beyond) may be reached to your left at the station sign beyond the crossing.

13 Turn right onto London Road and cross the railway. Follow London Road on its right-hand footway past the station entrance and on through a residential area to reach a mini-roundabout at the junction with Launton Road. Cross over Launton Road, continue ahead to reach Market Square and carry on ahead onto the pedestrianised Sheep Street.

The southern end of Sheep Street hosts a weekly market between 0800 and 1600 on Fridays. All the usual facilities are available on Sheep Street.

At the northern end of the pedestrianised area, continue along Sheep Street's right-hand footway and continue onto North Street (marked with a *No through road* sign). when you reach the bollards preventing vehicular traffic from reaching the mini-roundabout on the left, pass through and take Buckingham Road ahead, the right-hand of the two roads off the north of the roundabout.

The modest mini-roundabout is actually the crossing-point of two Roman roads: Akeman Street, which ran between Londinium and Corinium (Cirencester), and a road (apparently nameless) which ran between Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) and a junction with Watling Street, possibly at Lactodorum (Towcester), but more probably at Old Stratford on the western edge of Milton Keynes, where Watling Street crosses the River Ouse.

Hint: Buckingham Road is *not* the road ahead on which a pedestrian crossing may be seen from the roundabout.

Follow the right-hand footway of Buckingham Road to Station Approach, on the right just before the railway bridge. Cross over Station Approach and turn right up its left-hand footway to reach Bicester North station.

Station facilities, including ticket office, coffee shop and toilets, are on Platform 1; London-bound trains depart from Platform 2.



Bicester North to Kings Sutton

20.6km; 291m ascent; 4hr 34min

Introduction

1 The route to Kings Sutton is rural, passing through a few villages, though the M40 is never far away. This is another walk which needs careful planning, with the need to carry a full day's rations and a knowledge of local taxi companies' contact numbers. This walk breaks another barrier — the first to top 20km.

Bicester lies at the crossing-point of two Roman roads: Akeman Street, which ran between Londinium and Corinium (Cirencester), and a road (apparently nameless) which ran between Calleva Atrebatum (Silchester) and a junction with Watling Street, possibly at Lactodorum (Towcester), but more probably at Old Stratford on the western edge of Milton Keynes, where Watling Street crosses the River Ouse.

The station opened in 1910, when the link between Ashendon Junction and Aynho Junction was completed.

There are no points of access to public transport on this section.

There is a shop at Fritwell, a pub at Souldern, and both of these facilities in Kings Sutton.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4651702> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Descend the station approach road and turn right to pass beneath the railway. At the light-controlled pedestrian crossing, turn left to cross the road. Continue ahead on a shared cycleway/footpath (you have been warned!) which runs parallel to the railway with the tracks on your left.

Cross Banbury Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and continue parallel to the railway for about 1.2km to reach a road with a roundabout off to the right. Cross the road (but only when you can see whether there is traffic turning left to go under the railway), then turn left to pass beneath the railway to the junction with Howes Lane.

3 Turn right immediately onto Howes Lane (signposted to Witney), then immediately take a path on the right, just beyond

the large road sign. The path leads past Aldershot Farm on your right.

Do not turn into the farmyard, but continue ahead with a hedge on the right to the end of the field. Pass through the gap and take the path directly across the next field. Crowmarsh Farm is off to the right.

4 Bear left (to the west-south-west) on a track, following it through its bends to reach a road. Turn left along the road and cross the M40. Take a track on the right which doubles back towards the motorway, then bears left to run parallel with it. After 150m, you will reach the Trow Pool Water Tower, an iconic point of passage for northbound travellers on the M40.

The tower was built in 1909 to serve Bucknell Manor and village. It provided water until the 1950s, when standard mains water was installed. It is a Grade II listed structure.

5 Turn left just beyond the tower to follow the line of the path from Crowmarsh Farm which was diverted when the motorway was built. Cross the stream at Trow Pool, then cross the Gagle Brook. Turn right on a path which makes for the large modern incinerator ahead. Keep the incinerator on your left and continue with the Gagle Brook on your right to reach the railway.

This is the Chiltern main line railway, and trains pass at high speed. Take great care, only crossing one or two at a time, and always watching for trains and listening for the singing of the rails as a train approaches. Make sure that there is not a train coming from the opposite direction after a train passes.

6 Cross the busy railway at the level crossing, and continue ahead to bear left on your return to the side of the motorway. At the end of the second field, a path goes off to the left — ignore it. At the end of the next field, pass through the gap and advance to take a left-hand bend, thus keeping the hedge on your right as you walk away from the motorway.

Keep the hedge on your left for about 750m, and take a stile on the right to reach St Mary's Walk. Turn left along St Mary's Walk to reach Station Road in Ardley (there is no station).

7 Turn right along Station Road, crossing to the left-hand footway at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Pass the former pub on your right. Just before you reach the road signs for the junction, take a path to the left (it has its own more modest signpost).

The path passes to the right of a house, with a hedge on your right, before opening out onto a field. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field, and make your way round the trees at the end of the hedge. Go through a gap and turn half-left.

Take the path ahead to a gap in the hedge ahead, and cross the next field to a gap through which you may reach Orchard Road. Follow Orchard Road to its end and take an enclosed path ahead between

houses. The path comes out to a triangle at the west end of Fewcott. Cross the triangle to the *Give way* sign at the end of Water Lane.

8 Take a track ahead, just to the right of the street-sign. Continue into a field, and follow its right-hand edge. Press ahead through a belt of trees, and continue to reach a gap in the hedge on the right which lets you out onto Fritwell Road.

Turn left and follow the road for 1.1km. Take a signposted path on your left, and at the other side of the field, cross the driveway to Lodge Farm. Continue ahead with a hedge on your right to reach Southfield Lane. Follow the lane out to East Street in Fritwell. Turn right on East Street to reach the village post office.

The post office is set within a butcher's shop which doubles as a convenience shop. The shop opens at 0900, but closes at 1230 on Fridays and Saturdays. It is closed on Sundays.

9 Cross the road at the post office and continue along East Street's left-hand footway for 70m. After passing 66 East Street (Lamorna Villa), turn left onto an enclosed path, which leads to the church. Turn to the right, and then to the left, to keep the church on your left. Continue in a north-westerly direction to reach North Street. Turn left to reach a signposted path on the right.

Turn right along the path, following it out to a field. Continue ahead to keep a belt of trees on your right. Continue in the same direction to reach the trees bordering the M40, where turn left to reach a road. Turn right onto the road to cross the motorway.

10 After you cross the motorway, take the first turning on your left, signposted as a bridleway. This is Foxhill Lane, and leads past Foxhill Barn on your right. Continue along the lane, ignoring a right turn towards farm buildings.

Pass Gibbs Field House on your left; beyond the house, the lane turns to the left as you enter Souldern. Just where allotment gardens are to be seen on the left, turn right, and take the next turning on the left, Fox Lane. Follow this lane out to reach Souldern High Street at the Fox Inn.

The pub is open between 1200 and 1500, then from 1700 until 2300 on Tuesdays to Fridays. On Saturdays, it is open between 1200 and 2300, and between 1200 and 1700 on Sundays. It is closed on Mondays. Food service is available at lunchtime (not Mondays) and in the evening (neither Sundays nor Mondays): the menu is not extensive but pushes beyond "pub favourites".

11 Turn right along High Street. Where the road bends to the right, turn left along Church Lane. Pass the church on your right, and just beyond the sewage works on the left, turn left then right to follow the left-hand edge of a field. The path then goes through The Firs woodland, crossing a stream.

The stream marks the county boundary: you are crossing from Oxfordshire into Northamptonshire.

Continue ahead, rising out of the wood and across a field to reach a belt of trees which extends to your right., Ash Grove.

12 Pass the trees, and continue across the left-hand side of a long field. The path then passes house-backs on the left to come out onto Croughton Road. Turn left along the road, and follow the left-hand footway all the way to The Square in the centre of Aynho. Cross the road at the refuge, and turn left to reach the archway of the hotel.

The bar (whose entrance is beyond the archway) is open between 1100 and 2300 on Thursdays to Mondays, but is closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Upmarket food is available for lunches and evening meals. The hotel offers bed and breakfast.

13 Make your way through the arch, then turn right and then left to reach Butts Close, which follow out to Charlton Road at the edge of the village.

If for any reason you cannot proceed through the arch and out onto Butts Lane, simply continue past the bar, and follow the street (Hollow Way, then Blacksmiths Lane) until it comes out onto the main Banbury Road, and turn right onto Charlton Road, reclaiming the route at the end of Butts Lane.

Turn right onto Charlton Road for 20m, then immediately turn left over a slab-stile in the drystone wall. Keep to the right-hand side of the field, then push through the gap. Cross the next field to go through a gap ahead.

Turn right to the corner of the field, then turn left to follow the field's right-hand edge. Go through a gap, and continue ahead to reach Walton Grounds where a hedge on the right meets a driveway.

14 Keep heading in a roughly north-westerly direction on a driveway, crossing a stream, to reach Scott Park Farm. Where the driveway swings to the left, take a path to the left of the buildings.

This path leads into a field. Follow the left-hand side of the field ahead, and in the next field, take the left-hand of two paths, heading marginally west of north, passing to the right of a belt of trees. Hold the direction across this field and the two following, ending in the far right-hand corner of the third field.

Pass through the gap, and keep to the right-hand side of the next field, ignoring two paths on the right which diverge from a gap. At the end of the field, bear left with a sewage works in the left. Do not move into the long field on your right, but press on to the end of the boundary of the sewage works in the corner of a broad field.

15 Cross the field on the diagonal to come out onto Mill Lane at its junction with Holland Rise. Cross the junction and follow Mill Lane, the houses behind a wall on your right. Continue along Mill Lane to The Square, with the White Horse Inn on your right, in the middle of Kings Sutton.

The pub is open between 1100 and 2300 (opening at 1200 at the weekend, and closing at 2000 on Sundays). There are weekday set meals and sandwiches at lunchtime, and a full meal menu.

There only remains 600m to walk in order to reach the station, where (you will want to note) there are no facilities.

Turn to the left at the pub (straight ahead if you are coming out of the establishment) and make for the church ahead. Pass to the right of the church, onto Red Lion Street (a one-way street). Turn left onto Church Avenue, and follow it through a right turn. Turn left onto an enclosed path, and follow it out to Wales Street. Turn left to follow Wales Street to the station.

Walkers returning towards London will be pleased that they do not need to negotiate the footbridge ... unless the timetable directs them to travel via Banbury.



Kings Sutton to Banbury

6.1km; 4m ascent; 1hr 13min

Introduction

1 Sandwiched between two 20km routes, the route to Banbury gives a chance to relax and, if on a multi-day walk, to attend to the adminstrivia of walking — replacing pieces of kit, perhaps visiting a launderette (there is one on the Hardwick estate in Banbury, with frequent bus links to and from the town centre, seven days a week), or just not doing much in the knowledge of two strenuous days to come.

Kings Sutton station was opened in 1872, and was downgraded to a halt in 1964. The only exit is from Platform 2 (which serves trains to London and Oxford): if you are arriving from London or Oxford, or from places in between, you will need to cross the line by the footbridge. The station is unstaffed and has no facilities beyond a shelter.

There is no point of access to public transport in this section, except at the two ends. Banbury has a bus station.

There is neither shop nor pub between Kings Sutton and Banbury, and there is only a convenience shop at the former. Banbury offers all facilities.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4651799> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit the station and proceed along Wales Street. Between 52 and 50 Wales Street, turn left onto a path to enter a meadow. Pass to the left of a circular enclosure.

This is the Bog Spring — it is not bog water, but a spring which overflowed to make the area boggy. It is one of three sources of mineral water in Kings Sutton, the other two being St Rumbold's Well and one at Astrop. The water (of which one doctor advised consuming between four and six litres per day) stained mouth, teeth and clothing black. When Henry Jephson commercialised the spa business in Leamington in the early part of the nineteenth century, Kings Sutton's days as a spa resort were well and truly numbered. The Leamington waters were much more pleasant, and delivered fewer unwanted side-effects, than those on offer at Kings Sutton.

This part of Kings Sutton was traditionally known as Wales, probably because the local people were pushed out of the more desirable parts of the area following the settlement of Norman families after the Conquest.

The area around and to the north of the Bog Spring is often submerged after heavy rain, sometimes for weeks on end. There is an exit path on the right at the end of the field beyond the one with the spring, which leads to Banbury Lane. Alternatively, take Wales Street to the triangle at the post office and turn left onto Bulls Lane to reach Banbury Lane. Turn left onto Banbury Lane and follow it to the bridge over the River Cherwell to meet the main route.

At the end of the meadow, continue ahead through a gap, and cross the next field to pass through another gap. Make for a gap in the left-hand hedge and pass through it, then make for the far left corner, with the railway on your left. Walking parallel to the tracks, go through a short field and advance to a footbridge.

Cross the railway by the footbridge, and continue ahead in a north-westerly direction across a vast field to reach a road next to a bridge over the River Cherwell.

Here, the flood-free alternative joins the main route.

Cross the river by the bridge, and continue along the road to the Grand Union Canal at Twyford Wharf.

3 Take the path on the right to reach the canal towpath, and turn right. Follow the towpath, with the water on your left, past a swing bridge and then a drawbridge, to Grant's Lock. Continue on the towpath to pass beneath the M40.

4 From the motorway, continue along the towpath. Pass a copse on your right and, with the suburbs of Banbury bearing down on the far bank of the canal, reach a drawbridge.

5 Continue along the towpath for a little short of 1.2km. Leave the towpath on a link path to the right, with a view of a yellow-brick building behind a fence. Turn left along the road to pass between more modern red-brick buildings, and turn right onto Tramway Road.

Follow the right-hand footway of Tramway Road to its end, through traffic control barriers, to reach a gate into a car park. Pass into the car park and turn left to reach Banbury station.

The commercial centre of Banbury is ahead and to the left. If you are heading for the town centre before going to the station, do not leave the canal at the tramway estate, but continue along the towpath to Bridge Street, where the town centre is on your left, and the station is behind your right shoulder.

Banbury to Kineton

20.6km; 291m ascent; 4hr 34min

Introduction

1 The route from Banbury to Kineton, from where buses are available (though not on Sundays) to Banbury, Leamington Spa, and Stratford-upon-Avon. Kineton is the only viable break-point between the stations at Banbury and Leamington Spa.

Banbury station opened in 1850 and was completely rebuilt in 1958.

There is no point of access to public transport between Banbury and Kineton.

There are pubs at Hornton, Horley, Ratley and Edgehill. Shop, pub and even bed and breakfast may be found in Kineton.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13047053> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit the station onto Bridge Street, where turn left. Cross the canal, then cross Cherwell Street by its divided pedestrian crossing. Keep to the left-hand footway of Bridge Street, and keep close to the buildings on the left where a service road passes behind a bus stop.

Keep to the left of the Town Hall and walk up High Street. Just after Butcher's Row comes in from the right, and before the junction with George Street, turn right between shops onto Church Lane. After 60m, turn left towards the church, Pass to the right of the church, and make your way out onto Horse Fair. Cross the road by the light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Over to your left is the famed Banbury Cross.

Follow the right-hand edge of a car park, and squeeze through a gap in the far right corner (signposted to People's Park). Continue ahead to reach the park, and bear right to follow its right-hand edge. Turn left at the far end of the park onto Warwick Road.

Turn left and follow Warwick Road, using the refuge to cross the end of Bath Road, to reach the triple roundabout. Cross Orchard Way at the first, and pass a parade of shops with a view of the

second to your right to reach and cross Cromwell Road at the third (which is a mini-roundabout).

The shops include a convenience shop and fast-food outlets.

3 Continue along Warwick Road, crossing over Cromwell Road's second coming, and then over Ferndene Road. Just beyond 317 Warwick Road, turn left onto a path between the houses. This path doglegs to the right, and passes between house-backs to reach a park.

Continue straight over the park to reach Trinity Close, where turn left. Follow the road to Bretch Hill. Turn right, then immediately turn left and cross the grassy area on the diagonal to reach Stratford Road.

4 Cross Stratford Road and bear half-left to cross to the other side of the field. Do not exit the field, but rather turn half-right to follow the left-hand edge of the field into the corner.

Cross the next field almost to its far left-hand corner, exit left and turn right to reach Hermon Road, a track. Cross the track and veer left. Pass a pond on your right and continue on a path across two fields. Ahead, keep a hedge on your right for two fields, then bear half-left to the next field's far left-hand corner to reach and cross Hanwell Lane.

5 Cross the next field and, after 200m, turn left over a footbridge. Continue ahead, soon with a hedge on your left, to reach a road, Wroxton Lane. Turn right along the road, picking up the right-hand footway, to reach the centre of the village of Horley at the Red Lion Inn.

The opening times and facilities at the pub appear to be in serious doubt, without lunchtime opening: if you intend to stop here, it is worth checking in advance.

6 At the junction, do not follow the right-hand footway round to the right, but cross the road and continue along the right-hand footway past the pub. The road then bends to the left. About 250m after passing the pub, turn half-left (it is signposted) onto a broad track, known locally as Clump Lane. Follow the track for 650m and, just before a slight bend to the left, take a path which descends across a field to the right.

Cross a stream, and follow the path up to a gap in the hedge. Go through the gap and follow the right-hand edge of a field, then of the next field, to reach a gap on the right where a path goes off towards Savee Farm.

7 Pass the gap, and follow the right-hand edge of the field to its end. Continue ahead, passing a pond on your left, to pick up the corner of a hedge on your left. Follow the hedge to a gap, and pass through into the next field. Make for the middle of the far side, and go through to Page's Lane, and on to cross Eastgate in Hornton onto a small green.

There are two benches on the green, which walkers may find useful in taking rest or refreshment.

Cross the green (between the benches) to pick up Millers Lane. Follow Millers Lane out of the village to reach and cross Quarry Road. Follow Millers Lane ahead, now little more than a track, to reach Poplars Farm.

8 Pass the farm buildings on the left, and keep to a line west of northwards, Continue through a right-and-left double bend to cross Sor Brook, in the process passing from Oxfordshire into Warwickshire.

Continue ahead, trending gently to the left, then bend gently to the right. Cross beneath a power line with a sewage works over to your left, then turn right through a gap in the hedge to reach Featherbow Lane. Turn left onto the lane and descend to Ratley at the Rose and Crown Inn.

The pub is closed all day on Mondays and Tuesdays and on Friday evenings. Between Wednesday and Sunday, it opens at 1200. On Wednesdays and Thursdays, it closes at 1430 and re-opens at 1800; on Sundays, it closes at 1700. Lunches and evening meals are available during opening hours.

9 Follow the road round to the left past the church. Where the road bends to the right, take a path to the left, initially with a hedge-topped wall on your right.

This path is part of the Battlefields Trail, linking the Civil War battlefields of Cropredy and Edgehill, and also the Battle of Edgcote (Wars of the Roses).

Follow the path ahead for 400m, then pass through a gap to turn half-right and follow the right-hand edge of a field round to the left to meet a tree. Turn right at the tree, and follow the right-hand edge of two fields to reach a road. Turn right onto the road, then after 60m, turn left and follow a path just to the right of a driveway. The path comes out onto a road at Edgehill. Turn left towards the turreted Castle Inn

The pub is open from 1100; food is served from 1200, with an afternoon break during the week.

10 Just before you reach the castle, turn to the right down a footpath which bends to the left. When you come out of the woods, follow the right-hand side of three fields to reach houses at a road called West End in the village of Radway. Follow the road to its junction with Tysoe Road, where turn left, passing the church on your right.

Take the road's left-hand bend and, after a further 70m, go through a gate on the right and turn half-left to cross a field. Cross two more fields on the diagonal, then cross the next one directly towards the far side. Come out onto a road, passing through a kissing-gate. Cross the road and take the path opposite, which passes through

some trees and then crosses a field on the diagonal (taking a bearing a little south of westwards) to exit onto a road at a bend at Westcote Farm.

11 Cross the road and take a path between two buildings opposite. Keep ahead in the same direction across several fields until you come to a corner with an army depot (MOD Kineton) on your right. The Battle of Edgehill, of 1642, was fought in the middle of what is now the southern half of MOD Kineton.

Pass through a gap and turn left, so that you have a hedge on your left. Follow the hedge, the distance from the depot increasing, for 250m, then turn right for 250m. Turn left for 50m, then turn right for 60m, the hedge still on your left. Turn right to keep some trees on your right, and follow the path into the corner of the field. There is a railway track ahead, with The Oaks on its far side.

12 Do not cross the railway, but turn left to keep the hedge between you and the railway on your right. Follow the hedge for 1.35km, curving rightwards through 180° until you are facing east-north-east.

Pass through a gap in the hedge and turn left, with a hedge on your left. Keep the hedge on your left across three fields to come out onto Red Road, with Red House Farm over to your left.

13 Turn right onto Red Road and follow it past a mast to reach Little Kineton. Turn right onto Tysoe Road, then turn right onto Kineton Road. At the edge of the village, the road becomes Bridge Street. Follow Bridge Street over the River Dene and up to its junction with Warwick Road in Kineton.

To the right, you will find two bus stops. Buses run (but not on Sundays) to Banbury, Leamington Spa, and Stratford-upon-Avon.

Beyond the bus stops and to the right, you will find the commercial centre of Kineton — there is a pub on the corner which offers bed and breakfast, and there is a convenience shop on Banbury Street (turn right at the pub and keep to the left of the war memorial).

There is said to be a taxi business in Kineton, but information is hard to come by, so you might be better asking in the pub or one of the shops.

NB — Kineton is the only practicable break-point between the stations at Banbury and Leamington Spa.

Kineton to Leamington Spa

19.7km; 208m ascent; 4hr 16min

Introduction

1 The route to Leamington Spa — it might say 19.7km on the tin, but you are sure to break 20km for the third time — is rural as far as the M40, dipping into a few small villages on the way. North of the motorway, it is streets through Bishop's Tachbrook and on to the centre of Leamington Spa.

There is no public transport after leaving Kineton until you reach Bishop's Tachbrook — there are bus stops from there to the end of the section.

There is a shop in Bishop's Tachbrook, with a pub at the northern end of the village. There are shops in Whitnash, and Leamington Spa offers all facilities. However, all provisions must be carried, with extras for emergencies.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13916855> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the junction of Bridge Street and Warwick Road, just west of the bus stops at the church, set off westwards along Warwick Road. Turn left onto Castle Road and follow it to its end. Take a path ahead which keeps to the right of King John's Castle and leads, at the end of the woodland, to the trackbed of an old railway.

King John's Castle was constructed in the early years of the thirteenth century: it was a timber motte and bailey.

The railway ran between Stratford-upon-Avon and Fenny Compton (on the line between Banbury and Leamington Spa stations) until 1963, when services ceased.

Keep ahead on the trackbed past the sewage works, but do not cross the River Dene. Turn right onto a path just before the bridge, and follow it, keeping the water on your left, until, after about 300m, you are facing south.

Turn right on a path across two fields to come out onto a road at Brookhampton.

3 Cross a stile on the other side of the road, and turn left along the field's left-hand edge. Continue ahead until the path turns right and goes through a gap. Beyond the gap, turn half-left to follow a path across a field on the diagonal to reach the driveway of a house (which is just to your right).

Turn left onto the driveway, and where it turns right, continue ahead on a path across a field. Bear right to cross the next field on the diagonal, then bear half-right to follow the path out onto the bend of a road, with Combrook off to the left.

4 Turn right onto the road and take its bend. After about 200m, you will come to a track on the right. Turn left here to take a path which soon turns right to make its way northwards through woodland. When you emerge from the wood at the other end, do not continue ahead to the far left-hand corner of the field, but turn half-right to cross the field to an exit at a bus stop.

There is a bus every two hours or so (but there is no service on Sundays) to Stratford-upon-Avon from this stop, and to Leamington Spa from the stop across the road. Timetables are posted at the stops, but it is better to be forewarned by having checked <https://bustimes.org/> and having searched for 77 Kineton. This stop is called *Compton Verney House*, and is between Kineton and Wellesbourne (tick *See all stops* to find the stop).

Cross the road and turn right along the verge, passing the stop for Leamington-bound buses, and turn left onto the access road for Compton Verney. Pass through the car park. Just beyond the visitor centre, turn left and right onto a path to the bridge. Continue over the bridge and up towards the house, reaching a driveway on the left.

5 Bear right into a field, and follow a path west of north to reach a track. Turn right onto the track, and follow it out to reach Lighthorne Road at a T-junction.

6 Turn left along Lighthorne Road and follow it out to reach the Fosse Way at Three Gates.

Cross the road, and find a path which bisects the corner on the right-hand side of Wellesbourne Road ahead (that is to say, between Wellesbourne Road and the Fosse Way towards Coventry) into a field. Cross the field on the diagonal, and cross the driveway.

7 Keep to the left of some trees, curving to the right to reach the right-hand side of a field. Follow a hedge on your right to the corner of the field. Pass into the next field, and cross it on the diagonal to the far corner ahead.

Go through the gap, and follow the hedge on your right across the next field and into the following one. Keep to the right of a triangle of trees ahead left, and follow the path into the corner ahead and then out to a road. Bear right on the road to reach Brook Lane in Moreton Morrell.

8 Turn left, cross the bridge, and pass the entry to Barnfields on your right. Walk past a red-brick house (with a gable facing the street) to reach a path on your right.

Turn right onto the path and follow it past house-backs. At the end of the houses, turn right, then left into a field. Follow the left-hand edge of the field to the corner, and move into the next field. Follow its left-hand edge, then turn left to reach a road at a corner.

Turn right on the road for 90m to reach Morrell Farm. Turn half-left, go through a gate, and cross a field on the diagonal to its far corner. Pass into the field on your left, and cross it on the diagonal to a gap just to the right of its far left-hand corner. Pass through the gap, and follow the left-hand edge of the field to a gap on the left in the field's stubby end.

Go through the gap into the next field, and turn half-right to reach a gap in the field's right-hand side at a footbridge. Cross the bridge and turn half-left to follow the path to the hedge ahead at a pair of trees. Bear left to follow the hedge to the end of the field.

Continue ahead to come out, after a little left-right-left zigzag to pass the village hall on your right, onto a road at Ashorne.

9 Turn right onto the road, and bear left at the triangle of grass. Follow the by-way to the north.

After about 200m, ignore a path which forks off to the right to maintain a bearing west of north. Follow the by-way for 650m to reach Ashorne Hill Farm on your right. Continue ahead for almost 1km to reach a road. Turn right along the road to reach the entrance to Oakley Wood crematorium.

10 Continue past the entrance for 80m and, just before the junction with Wasperton Lane on your left, turn right onto a path through woodland for 650m to reach Banbury Road at a T-junction. Take Oakley Wood Road ahead for 400m to cross the M40 beneath you.

11 Continue along Oakley Wood Road. After 650m, pass Underhill Way on your left. After a further 600m, continue ahead at a mini-roundabout; another 200m takes you to the junction with Church Hill in Bishop's Tachbrook.

There is a pub ahead on the left: it opens at noon daily and offers a decent range of food, majoring on "modern pub favourites" and including lighter options. On Sundays, there are limited alternatives to the inevitable roasts.

There is a bus service, approximately hourly (but no service on Sundays) to Leamington Spa from the stop outside the pub.

12 Follow the left-hand footway of the road (where it exists) for 880m, passing the red brick barn of The Grove on your right. Just beyond a postbox on your right, pass the access to Tachbrook Mallory House, and immediately take a path which goes

off half-right, with woodland on your left and a field on your right, and leads to Harbury Lane.

13 Cross Harbury Lane, and take the path almost opposite, a little over to your right. Follow the path along a green strip between houses, passing to the left of a children's playground. At the end of the houses on the left, continue ahead on a narrow enclosed path to reach Landor Road, where turn left.

Follow the left-hand footway of Landor Road for 550m, crossing the end of Ashford Road on the way. Turn left onto St Catherine's Crescent, and turn right onto an enclosed path. This brings you out onto Heathcote Road. Turn left to reach the junction with Tachbrook Road, then turn right to use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross Heathcote Road.

14 Follow the footway on the service road to the right of the main carriageway of Tachbrook Road until it gives out, then continue on the road's right-hand footway. Cross over the end of St Helen's Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. then turn left to cross Tachbrook Road, again using a light-controlled pedestrian crossing.

Follow the left-hand footway of Tachbrook Road all the way to Old Warwick Road.

For much of this stretch, you will be on a joint-use footway and cycleway — you have been warned! The right-hand footway should offer respite from two-wheeled speed merchants, though it is narrower and right on the roadside. It does, however, pass a few shops, some of which may be helpful if you simply cannot make it down the hill for replenishment in or near the station.

At Old Warwick Road, the station is reached by crossing the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and bearing left.

The station has a café. Off to the right along Old Warwick Road (past Wise Street and before the bus stop), there is a *delikatesy* which sells, among other Polish specialities, baked goods, meat products and crisps/confectionery, to which I respond, "*Dziękuję bardzo*".

The commercial centre of Leamington Spa lies to the north of the River Avon. Cross Old Warwick Road and pass beneath the railway on lower Avenue. Turn right onto Spencer Street and turn left to follow the left-hand footway over the River Avon. You will find all facilities on and around the Parade as you ascend the street,

The Great Western Railway built their first station on the site in 1852 on their new route between London and Birmingham via Oxford. The current Art Deco station was built between 1937 and 1939 using Government development funds. The branch between Leamington Spa and Rugby operated between 1851 and 1965.

West Midlands

Leamington Spa to Birmingham Moor Street

47.7km; 321m ascent; 9hr 44min

Overview

After the strenuous walking of the middle section, the route returns to short, relatively flat, inter-station walks. From Leamington Spa, the line becomes a commuter line for Birmingham, with West Midland Railways taking its share of the local traffic.

There are bus services at Leamington Spa, at Warwick, and at stations between Dorridge and Olton. On the canal towpath north of Olton, there are no bus services, but they are never far away.

All facilities are available in Leamington Spa, Warwick, Dorridge Solihull and Birmingham. There is a café at Warwick Parkway station, a shop and pub near Lapworth station, and there are facilities throughout between Solihull and Olton. As for the section between Olton and Birmingham, cafés and shops may not feature on the canalside walking, but there will be facilities nearby. Birmingham, of course, has all facilities.

The sections which make up this part are as follows.

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33	Small Heath	2.0	Bordesley	135
34	Bordesley	2.2	Birmingham Moor Street	137

Leamington Spa to Warwick

4.1km; 17m ascent; 50min

Introduction

1 The route to Warwick follows the valley of the River Avon and uses riverside and canalside paths where practicable.

The Great Western Railway built their first station on the site in 1852 on their new route between London and Birmingham via Oxford. The current Art Deco station was built between 1937 and 1939 using Government development funds. The branch between Leamington Spa and Rugby operated between 1851 and 1965.

There are no viable bus stops on this section.

Leamington Spa station has a café on each platform: these are beyond the ticketing gates. Off to the east along Old Warwick Road (past Wise Street and before the bus stop), there is a *delikatesy* which sells, among other Polish specialities, baked goods, meat products and crisps/confectionery, to which I respond, “*Dziękuję bardzo*”. There are shops and pubs near Warwick station.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652548> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 From the station, cross the car park and cross Old Warwick Road at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right for 30m and, just beyond a bus stop, turn left to join the towpath of the Grand Union Canal. Turn right onto the towpath, the water running on your left. Follow the towpath, with the road close by on your right, past a roundabout on your right to pass beneath Europa Way.

Beyond the bridge, there is a pub on the right which opens at 1000 (for a rather late breakfast). A short menu of typical modern pub food is available.

3 Continue along the towpath. Pass beneath a road at Myton, then cross over the railway on an aqueduct. Press ahead to cross the River Avon on an aqueduct.

Just beyond the Avon aqueduct, leave the towpath on a path to the right: it corkscrews down to pass beneath the canal on the riverbank. Follow the riverside path to pass beneath the railway.

4 Continue along the riverside path — it is often muddy, so do not wear your best trainers — through two bends, eventually with house-backs on the right. You will come to a footbridge on your left, and a boathouse ahead. Turn right before the boathouse, away from the footbridge.

Make your way away from the river on a metalled path: it is a joint-use footpath/cycleway — you have been warned! Keep to the main path ahead over several crossings, and pass sports pitches on the left. The path finally emerges onto Emscote Road.

Cross the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn left along the right-hand footway. Cross Wharf Street and Broad Street (together) using the refuge: the street-name changes here from Emscote Road to Coten End.

Walk along the right-hand footway of Coten End to pass a pub on the right.

The pub opens at 0900 for breakfast (except on Mondays, when it opens at 1200). Simple food is available.

Continue past more shops (including cafés and a convenience shop) to reach and cross Coventry Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn right to follow the left-hand footway to Station Road, where turn left and ascend to Warwick station.

Warwick to Warwick Parkway

3.2km; 33m ascent; 40min

Introduction

1 The route to Warwick Parkway makes its way through Warwick before picking up the canal at the Cape for the last stretch.

Warwick station was opened in 1852 by the Great Western Railway.

There are bus stops in Warwick town centre, but no viable bus stops between Warwick and Warwick Parkway station. Warwick Parkway is no longer served by timetabled buses (other than the occasional National Express coach).

After leaving Warwick town centre, which has all facilities, the only spot for refreshment is the café within Warwick Parkway station. There are toilets within the station building, which has no ticketing gates.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652820> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Start on the north side of the station at the end of the underpass which links the platforms. Turn left along a path which runs parallel to the railway.

After 290m, turn left to pass beneath the railway into Priory Park. Follow the path ahead through the park to reach Cape Road. Bear left to follow the left-hand footway, then cross to the right-hand footway at the pedestrian crossing.

Turn right, then left to cross the road at the refuge. Continue ahead with the court building on your right to reach the church tower.

Following the destruction of the mediæval Coventry Cathedral during the Second World War, there were plans to relocate the diocese to Warwick, and this church would have been elevated to be the cathedral for the diocese. However, the determination to rebuild Coventry Cathedral as a cathedral of peace and reconciliation (the new one opening in 1962) put paid to Warwick's ecclesiastical aspirations.

Turn right along Old Square to reach Shire Hall, which looks out over Market Square.

This is the commercial centre of Warwick, with all facilities in Market Square and the surrounding streets over to your left.

3 Continue ahead onto Barrack Street to reach Theatre Street. Cross the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right along Theatre Street's left-hand footway. Bear left at the roundabout onto Saltisford.

Follow the left-hand footway the length of Saltisford and onwards onto Birmingham Road. Pass beneath the railway and continue ahead to reach the junction with Wedgnock Lane on the right.

Beyond the junction, use the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross Birmingham Road to its right-hand footway. Follow the road to and over a brick bridge, with the Grand Union Canal below.

4 Immediately after crossing the bridge, take a path on the right to canal level, turn right onto the towpath, and pass beneath the road. Follow the towpath past house-backs, and pass beneath the A46 to reach Hatton Bottom Lock.

Continue ahead to pass beneath Old Budbrooke Road. Leave the towpath on a path to the right, and ascend to road level. Cross the road, and turn right to cross the canal. Take the road on your left, then turn right on a path which crosses a footbridge to reach the station car park. Continue straight ahead to reach the footway at the far side of the car park, and turn left to reach Warwick Parkway station.

Warwick Parkway to Hatton

5.1km; 54m ascent; 1hr 06min

Introduction

1 The route to Hatton follows the Grand Union Canal up the flight of Hatton Locks.

Warwick Parkway station opened in 2000 to afford good road links to the railway from the vicinity, with adequate parking facilities.

There is no point of access to public transport between Warwick Parkway and Hatton.

Toilets and a café are situated within the station building at Warwick Parkway. There is a convenience shop at Ugly Bridge and a café at the top of the flight of locks.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652844> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Cross the car park from the station building and take a broad path over a stream to a road. Turn left onto the road, then turn right at the junction onto Old Budbrooke Road. Cross the canal, then turn left to cross the road and join a footpath which leads to canal level.

Turn right along the towpath, ascending with the flight of locks on your left, to reach and go under Ugly Bridge.

There are 21 locks in the flight of Hatton Locks: the difference in altitude from bottom to top is 45m. The locks were upgraded in the 1930s to try to counter the challenges of rail and, increasingly, road transport for goods.

There is a petrol station with a convenience shop on the main road on the right at Ugly Bridge. Access is beyond the bridge.

3 Continue along the towpath, still ascending with the water and locks on your left. Pass beneath a footbridge which carries a path linking Budbrooke Farm with the main road at Hatton Park.

Hatton Park is a modern housing estate on the site of two hospitals. In 1852, construction began on what was then called the Warwick County Lunatic Asylum. It went through several names and, when it closed in 1995, was simply Central Hospital. During the 1920s,

the King Edward VII hospital was built to treat patients with tuberculosis — this isolation from the towns nearby was standard practice.

The hospital site was for many years largely self-sufficient. There were three farms on the site, and a spring which provided clean water. A good proportion of the staff lived on the premises, so it became closer to being a village than one of the sterner institutions, and had a social calendar of its own.

Continue along the towpath, passing more of the locks, to reach Canal Road in Hatton.

4 Cross the canal by the bridge (the Canal and River Trust has an office on the left), and turn right along the towpath, the water now on the right. After about 300m, you will come to the Hatton Locks Café.

The café is housed in the former lock-keeper's cottage at the top of the flight. It is open daily between 0900 and 1600.

Continue your towpath journey for a further 550m to reach John's Bridge, which carries Dark Lane over the canal.

5 Continue along the towpath from John's Bridge to reach and pass beneath Station Road. Turn left to reach road level. On the opposite side of Station Road, take the road opposite, Station Approach. The road descends gracefully to platform level at Hatton station.

The entrance to the station is on Platform 1, which is used by southbound trains from Birmingham and Solihull. Over the footbridge, Platform 2 is for Birmingham-bound trains. Platform 3 is for trains to and from Stratford-on-Avon, so if you are travelling south towards Leamington Spa or London, your train may be on Platform 3.

Hatton to Lapworth

7.7km; 37m ascent; 1hr 35min

Introduction

1 The route to Lapworth follows the Grand Union Canal, with a diversion at Shrewley between the ends of a tunnel, until it reaches the Kingswood Bridge, then follows streets to the station.

Hatton station opened in 1854: today it is an unstaffed halt.

There is no point of access to public transport between Hatton and Lapworth stations.

There is a shop at Shrewley, a pub at Turner's Green, and a pub and shop just before the end of the section in Kingswood village.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652896> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn left out of Hatton station onto Station Approach, and ascend to Station Road. Cross Station Road to take a path opposite which leads down to the canal.

Turn left along the towpath, the water on your right. Follow the towpath to the eastern portal of Shrewley Tunnel. Turn left then right, following the track along which the draught-horses would have been led. Emerge onto a road at Shrewley.

Over to your left, there is a convenience shop which is open between 0800 and 1900 daily, except for Sundays when it closes at 1400.

3 Cross the road and continue on the draught-horse track to return to the canal at the tunnel's western portal. Follow the towpath to reach Castle Meadow Bridge.

4 Continue on the towpath beyond the bridge through two broad curves to reach a bridge at Rowington.

The bridge carries a track which was constructed with wood and brick so that children going to and from the village school could remain dryshod.

Continue ahead on the towpath round one broad bend and two smaller bends to reach a bridge which carries Finwood Road over the canal at Turner's Green.

There is a pub along Finwood Road to the right. It opens at noon and serves food throughout. Sunday closing is at 1900.

5 Continue along the towpath, the water still on your right. The canal comes close to the railway, then bears off to the right. Cross over a branch of the canal (which will join the Stratford-on-Avon Canal) on a bridge, and advance to reach a road at Kingswood Bridge. Leave the towpath and ascend to road level.

Just on the right, there is a pub which opens at 1200 daily. Food service (from a short menu of sandwiches and standard pub fare) is available at lunchtime and in the evening; at the weekend there is no afternoon closure of the kitchen.

To the left, there is a convenience shop ahead at the village green. It is open daily between 0700 and 1900, except on Sundays when it closes at 1400.

6 Turn left along the road to reach the village green, with its convenience shop on the left. Turn right onto Station Lane to reach the station on your left.

Lapworth to Dorridge

5.8km; 55m ascent; 1hr 15min

Introduction

1 By paths and lanes, via Packwood House, the route makes its way to Dorridge.

Lapworth station opened in 1854: today it is an unstaffed halt.

There is no point of access to public transport between Lapworth station and the bus stops at Dorridge station.

After leaving Lapworth station, the only source of refreshment before you reach Dorridge (with all its facilities) is a National Trust café at Packwood House, if the house is open. This café is available to visitors, whether or not they have entry tickets for the house and garden.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652963> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn left out of the station onto Station Lane, and follow the road up to meet Rising Lane. Turn left and cross the railway. Turn right to take the driveway to The Grove, passing a house on the right.

Just in front of the forecourt of The Grove, take a path on the right which bends left, skirting the property. At another driveway, take the path opposite, with a hedge on your left. Follow the path out onto Chessett's Wood Road.

3 Turn right on the road, and follow it for 200m. A few metres before you reach a house on the left with white semi-circular gateways (there are two of them, the other is farther along the road), turn left through a gate.

The gate gives access onto a long avenue of trees which leads to Packwood Lane at Packwood House.

Packwood House is a Tudor manor house in the care of the National Trust (<https://www.nationaltrust.org.uk/packwood-house>). The estate is famous for its garden, and particularly for its topiary, which includes a representation of the Sermon on the Mount.

There is a café at Packwood House.

4 Turn right onto Packwood Lane. About 80m after a road comes in from the left, turn left and pass through a kissing-gate on the left of the main gate. Turn right across the main gate and cross the field, aiming to the right of a tree in the middle of the far side.

Cross the next field to a stream (which is the boundary between Warwickshire and Solihull). Cross the stream and follow the path ahead through two fields to reach Vicarage Road over a stile. Take the left-hand side of the triangle opposite, and ease left onto Windmill Lane. Follow Windmill Lane to pass the gates of Packwood Towers on the left.

5 Continue along the lane, passing the junction with Mill Pool Lane, which comes in from the right. A little over 100m beyond the junction, turn right and pass through a kissing-gate onto a clear path.

Follow the path across a stream and ahead. Do not bend too far to the left towards Arden Road (unless you have had enough soft surfaces underfoot) but keep to the line of trees ahead to cross a path and continue across a field to reach Arden Drive.

Turn left and follow the right-hand footway of Arden Drive out to Arden Road, where turn right. Follow the right-hand footway of Arden Road round to the left to reach its end at Grange Road. Turn right onto the right-hand footway and pass beneath the railway. Turn right onto Station Approach and ascend to reach Dorridge station on your right.

There is a café in the station building on Station Approach, and there are toilets on Platform 1, Dorridge station has no ticketing gates.

All facilities are available in the area on and around Station Approach.

Dorridge to Widney Manor

4.0km; 29m ascent; 51min

Introduction

- 1** Suburban streets make up the bulk of the route to Widney Manor, with the endgame across the M42 on rural paths.

Dorridge station opened in 1852: today it is a key stop between London Marylebone and Birmingham Moor Street; it is also the southern terminus for West Midland Railway's urban services via Birmingham Snow Hill.

Buses are available in Dorridge and at Widney Manor station.

All facilities may be found in the vicinity of Dorridge station.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4652999> covers this section of the route.

Route

- 2** Turn left out of the station and descend Station Approach. Turn left, and cross to the right-hand footway using the pedestrian crossing just in front of the railway bridge. Pass beneath the railway, then pass a petrol station on your right. Bear right at the triangle to take up the right-hand footway of Manor Road. Pass a mini-roundabout on your left at the junction with Rodborough Road. Continue ahead along the right-hand footway of Manor Road all the way to the point where it begins to curve to the left.

- 3** Cross over the end of Woodstock Crescent and continue ahead on a straight path. After 450m, cross Mill Lane. After a further 150m, reach Four Ashes Road, where turn right to follow the right-hand footway. Cross over the railway, and after a further 380m, bear right at a postbox and pass the blocked-off end of Browns Lane. Follow the road to its junction with Widney Road.

- 4** Cross Widney Road and follow the right-hand footway of Browns Lane for 300m to the point where the footway leaves the kerbside to continue behind a hedge. Follow the roadway to find a stile on the left-hand side of the road. Cross the stile and take a path ahead, keeping a hedge on your left, to reach Smiths Lane over a plank bridge.

Turn left onto Smiths Lane. After a mere 30m on the road, turn right over a matching plank bridge to enter a field. Pass a tennis court on

your left, and continue ahead with a hedge on your right to reach and cross the M42.

5 Once over the motorway, carry on ahead, crossing the River Blythe and passing beneath high-voltage power lines. Follow the path ahead to reach Lovelace Avenue.

Turn left to reach and cross Widney Manor Road, picking up the left-hand footway of Widney Lane opposite.

If you are not ending the day's journey at Widney Manor, continue along Widney Lane.

Take the access road which bears off left to reach the east car park and southbound platform of Widney Manor station. The northbound platform is across the footbridge.

Widney Manor is a simple station with part-time staffing (mornings), and without such facilities as toilets or a café.

Widney Manor to Solihull

4.1km; 22m ascent; 38min

Introduction

1 The route to Solihull makes its way through modern suburbia and across Tudor Grange Park.

Widney Manor station is a commuter station for the growing population of the south-western part of Solihull.

There are stops for local bus services throughout this section. Solihull has a bus station adjacent to the railway station: buses serve the immediate area and nearby towns and cities.

There is a café in Tudor Grange Park, and all facilities in the centre of Solihull.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4653090> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit Widney Manor station directly from your arrival platform and descend to Widney Lane, where turn left along the left-hand footway. At the junction with Alderminster Road, turn right and cross over the end of Libbards Way. Follow the left-hand footway of Alderminster Road for 320m to reach the junction with Chipstone Close.

Turn left and follow Chipstone Close to its end. Continue ahead on a path to reach Malthouse Meadow (street), and follow it out to its end at Fielding Lane (formerly Hillfield Road). Turn right, and follow it to the junction with Alderminster Road and ease to the right to reach the drop-kerb.

Cross Alderminster Road and continue onto Fielding Lane ahead. This is a joint-use footpath and cycleway — you have been warned! Follow the path out to Charterhouse Drive, where cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway.

Follow Charterhouse Drive to its end, and turn right. Follow the right-hand footway of Monkspath Hall Road to reach and cross Whitefields Road at a roundabout.

3 Just beyond the roundabout, use the pedestrian crossing to reach the left-hand footway of Monkspath Hall Road. Follow the road to the next roundabout. Pass to the left of the roundabout, using the refuge to cross the access to a small car park. Follow the path ahead to enter Tudor Grange Park.

Follow the path ahead in the park, passing a skatepark on your left. Pass along an avenue of trees and cross a stream. Immediately beyond the stream, turn left along another avenue of trees which traces a 90° arc to the right. When this arc comes to an end at a T-junction of paths, turn left.

Follow the path in a straight line, passing the leisure centre building on your left. Turn right onto Blossomfield Road.

Central Solihull, with all facilities, is ahead along Blossomfield Road, then to the right via Prince's Way.

Cross to the left-hand footway at the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Just before the railway bridge, turn left along a path to reach a right turn through the underpass beneath Solihull station. The platforms are up to the right.

Solihull station is staffed full-time, and there are toilets and a café on the island platform. There are no ticketing gates.

Solihull to Olton

3.1km; 10m ascent; 38min

Introduction

1 The route to Olton is along suburban streets, including the main Warwick Road.

Solihull station was opened in 1852; the current station dates from the 1930s. It is an important station for local and long-distance services alike.

Buses are available on Warwick Road.

There is a convenience shop at a petrol station on Warwick Road, and a little farther on, there is a parade of shops, including a bakery café.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4653108> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Exit the station by turning right at the foot of the staircase from platform level. Turn left, and follow the road round to the junction with Streetsbrook Road. Use the light-controlled pedestrian crossing to cross Streetsbrook Road, and turn left along its right-hand footway.

Take Broad Oaks Road which bears off to the right, and follow it all the way to its exit onto Warwick Road.

3 Cross Warwick Road using the refuge and turn left along the right-hand footway. Follow Warwick Road to Dovehouse Parade, which has a row of shops.

These shops include a bakery, a convenience shop, and a café.

Continue along the right-hand footway of Warwick Road, passing beneath the railway, to reach Ulverley Green Road. Cross the road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and turn right onto the left-hand footway. Turn left onto Station Drive to reach Olton station.

Olton station has neither toilets nor a café.



Olton to Acocks Green

2.1km; 12m ascent; 26min

Introduction

1 The route to Acocks Green follows the Grand Union Canal for most of the way, with street links at both ends.

Olton station was opened in 1869; the current station dates from the 1930s. It is a commuter station.

Buses are plentiful in the vicinity of the route.

There is a canalside café near Olton, and a pub and café next to Acocks Green station. All facilities are available on the main road through Acocks Green, to the south of the railway.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4653123> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn right outside the station on Station Drive, then turn right onto Richmond Road. Follow Richmond Road, keeping to its right-hand footway, to the canal bridge. Cross the bridge, and take a path on the right, down to canal level.

There is a café at the bridge, which is open between Tuesday and Saturday.

Turn right along the towpath, and follow it with the water on your left, passing beneath Lincoln Road North and continuing ahead to reach the brick bridge at Woodcock Lane. Leave the towpath just before the bridge, and rise to street level. Turn left and cross the bridge.

3 Immediately after crossing the bridge, turn right onto a path which leads into a park. Follow paths round to the left until you are faced with house-backs in front of you. Turn right and follow the path to the end of the park, and turn left to exit the park onto The Avenue.

Turn right along The Avenue to its end; turn left on Sherbourne Road to reach Acocks Green station.

There is a café on the left (closed on Tuesdays) as you approach the station, offering breakfasts, sandwiches and cocktails.

Acocks Green station has neither toilets nor refreshments.



Acocks Green to Tyseley

1.6km; 13m ascent; 19min

Introduction

1 Suburban streets link the route between Acocks Green and Tyseley..

Acocks Green was purpose-built as a commuter station.

Bus services are plentiful in the vicinity of this section of the route.

There is a convenience shop and a café *en route* between Acocks Green and Tyseley.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4653170> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn left outside the station, crossing to the right-hand footway of Sherbourne Road at a suitable location. Follow the right-hand footway to a major junction, and bear round to the right. You are still on Sherbourne Road. Follow the right-hand footway to the end of the road. Turn right onto Flint Green Road, then turn left onto Arden Road. Follow the left-hand footway of Arden Road to its end at the junction with Stockfield Road.

3 Turn left onto Stockfield Road to reach Warwick Road at a major junction.

There is a convenience shop on the left at the junction of Stockfield Road and Warwick Road.

Turn right, and cross Stockfield Road using the divided light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Follow Warwick Road to the junction with Tyseley Hill Road, passing a furniture warehouse on the right.

There is a café attached to the furniture shop.

Turn right onto Tyseley Hill Road, and then turn right onto Wharfedale Road, keeping to the right-hand footway. Cross Wharfedale Road to reach the entrance to Tyseley station using the pedestrian crossing.

Tyseley station is only staffed during the weekday morning peak period and has no facilities.



Tyseley to Small Heath

2.9km; 3m ascent; 34min

Introduction

1 The Grand Union Canal is the focus of the route to Small Heath, with streets making the link at each end.

Tyseley station opened in 1906. It is the junction station where lines from Birmingham diverge, one line towards Leamington Spa and the other towards Stratford-on-Avon.

There are no viable bus stops between the stations at each end of this section.

There are two cafés near the start of this section.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/4653261> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn left if exiting Tyseley station to follow the left-hand footway of Wharfedale Road, then turn left onto Kings Road. Follow the left-hand footway of Kings Road for 800m, crossing to the right-hand footway at the James Road bus stops.

There is a café on the left-hand side of Kings Road just before the junction with Hay Hall Road.

Cross the canal on the pedestrian side-bridge, then turn right onto a path to descend to canal level. Follow the canal with the water on your left to reach and cross the aqueduct over the River Cole.

3 Continue along the towpath, passing beneath the railway and a road bridge. Follow the towpath round a right-hand bend. Pass beneath a road bridge, then leave the towpath, doubling back to climb a set of brick steps on the right to reach road level. Turn left along Golden Hillock Road, crossing to the right-hand footway using the pedestrian crossing. Continue along Golden Hillock Road to reach the entrance to Small Heath station on your right.

Small Heath station is only staffed during the weekday morning peak period and has no facilities.



Small Heath to Bordesley

2.0km; 12m ascent; 24min

Introduction

1 The route to Bordesley follows the Grand Union Canal, with short streetlinks at each end.

Small Heath station opened in 1863. It serves the areas of Small Heath and Sparkbrook, plus industrial sites in the vicinity.

There are no bus stops *en route* between Small Haeth and Bordesley.

There are no shops on the canal towpath in this section.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13938861> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Turn right if exiting Small Heath station, and cross Golden Hillock Road using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing. Turn left, and bear right onto Anderton Road. Cross to the left-hand footway and follow it to the canal bridge. Just before the bridge, take a path on the left down to canal level. Turn right along the towpath and follow it with the water on your left to Small Heath Bridge, a road bridge which links communities divided by the canal, the railway and the expressway.

3 Continue along the towpath. Pass beneath a railway, and then pass a lock. The canal bends to the right; pass beneath another railway (this one is the Chiltern main line). Take the left-hand bend as the canal widens into a pool, and pass beneath a dual carriageway (two bridges). Just before the next bridge, leave the towpath by taking a path on your right up to road level.

If you decide to ignore the trip to the station entrance, just carry on along the towpath.

Turn left onto Coventry Road, and advance along the left-hand footway to the entrance to Bordesley station, which will almost certainly be locked (see below).



Bordesley to Birmingham Moor Street

2.2km; 24m ascent; 28min

Introduction

1 The route to Birmingham Moor Street station starts with the Grand Union Canal and ends with the streets of Digbeth.

Bordesley station opened in 1855. Unless you arrive a little before 1400 on a Saturday, or when Birmingham City FC play at home, the station gate will be locked. The solo Saturday service to Birmingham is a “parliamentary service” which allows the station to remain active, in this case for the occasional stops to serve those attending the football matches. The football supporters have replaced the cattle (bound for market) as the main source of footfall at Bordesley station.

Bordesley station is scheduled for closure in 2029 in order to build new chords to connect Moor Street station to the Camp Hill line. The sole rationale for retaining the station will have disappeared when Birmingham City FC relocates to a new stadium near Adderley Park station.

This section of the route is mainly on the inner-city network of canals which gave rise to the statement that Birmingham has more canals than Venice.

There are many bus routes which serve Moor Street station.

There is a takeaway café on the other side of the road from Bordesley station entrance, and a café in Moor Street station. All the facilities of Birmingham are nearby.

The map at <https://explore.osmaps.com/route/13938869> covers this section of the route.

Route

2 Cross the road from the station entrance and turn right along the left-hand footway of Coventry Street. Cross the canal, then take a path on the left which leads down to canal level. Turn right onto the towpath.

Pass beneath Adderley Street, then cross a canal which branches off to the right, heading for Spaghetti Junction, the Black Country, and eventually Manchester. Pass beneath Great Barr Street, and then pass beneath a railway arch.

The railway arch has no railway, and never had. It was a branch line from Bordesley, and the plan was to link up with the line to Derby. However, when the engineers came close to the line into New Street station, they realised that they could not make the link. A bridge to nowhere.

Cross the River Rea on an aqueduct (the canal narrows here), and proceed to a canal junction.

To the right, the Digbeth Branch Canal runs round the north side of the city centre to Gas Street Basin. To the left, it leads to the former Bordesley Street Wharf.

Turn right, then corkscrew to the right over the canal you have been following, and follow the wharf branch. Before you reach the next bridge, take a path on your left to reach street level on Fazeley Street.

3 Cross the road and turn left along the right-hand footway of Fazeley Street, then take the first street on the right, Pickford Street, and follow the right-hand footway to its end at the junction with Bordesley Street. Turn right onto Bordesley Street, and follow the left-hand footway to its end at Park Street.

The junction with Park Street is directly above the railway line on its western approach to New Street station. The work to build the new Curzon Street station (the HS2 terminus) continues off to the right.

Turn left onto Park Street and follow the left-hand footway beneath the railway. Turn right to cross Park Street using the light-controlled pedestrian crossing and follow the right-hand footway of Moor Street with the railway arches on your right and the Bull Ring shopping centre on your left. Turn right to reach the station entrance.

Birmingham Moor Street station was opened by the Great Western Railway in 1909 as a terminal station for trains from the south. The tracks alongside the station were used for through traffic only until 1987, when passenger services through Snow Hill station were restored. Moor Street is now the second-busiest station in Birmingham, behind New Street, overtaking Snow Hill, the Great Western railway's original showpiece station.

Under current plans for a Midlands Rail Hub, with the stations at Curzon Street, Moor Street and New Street within easy walking distance of each other, Moor Street station is set to take pressure off New Street station by becoming a terminal station for services to Leeds, Nottingham, Leicester, Hereford, Cardiff and Bristol (as well as the current services to London), with New Street becoming primarily a through station for major interchanges. The closure of Bordesley station and the construction of the new chords there is part of this process.

There is a café in Moor Street station, and all facilities are available in the vicinity.

