

How to get to the start

The 12 and 18 mile circular walks start and finish by the River Thames at Court Garden in Marlow. The 10 mile circular walk starts and finishes at the Church of St Lawrence on West Wycombe Hill. To plan a journey by public transport from anywhere in the country to the starting point, call 0871 200 2233 or visit www.traveline.info



Southern marsh orchid

By train: The station is served by First Great Western. Call National Rail Enquiries 0845 600 5165 or visit www.firstgreatwestern.co.uk

By bus: Marlow is well served by local buses including bus 155 from Maidenhead, bus 800/850 between High Wycombe and Henley/Reading and bus 911 to Booker. Check with Traveline or the Marlow Tourist Information Office.

Buses run along West Wycombe High Street to High Wycombe, Stokenchurch/Thame, Oxford, Great Missenden and places in between. Check with Traveline.





There are also buses from Lane End to High Wycombe or Stokenchurch.

By car: There are car parks in Marlow and West Wycombe.

The Thames at Marlow



This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It mainly follows rights of way most of which are waymarked as follows:

-  'yellow arrow' Footpaths (walkers only)
-  'blue arrow' Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)
-  'red arrow' Byways (open to all traffic)
-  'purple arrow' Restricted Byway (horseriders, cyclists, walkers and non-mechanically propelled vehicles).

Please be considerate in the countryside

- Keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them
- Keep dogs on leads near livestock



Mausoleum,
West Wycombe

There are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns:

- Visit www.chilternsaonb.org or call 01844 355500 for other Chilterns Country walks.
- Visit www.chilternsociety.org.uk or call 01494 771250 for information on the Chiltern Society's walk programme, to obtain Chiltern Society footpath maps or to join the Society.

Learn more about Chilterns commons at www.chilternsaonb.org/commons

This leaflet has been produced by the Chilterns Conservation Board as part of the Chilterns Commons Project. The Project benefits from funding by the Heritage Lottery Fund and help from volunteers.

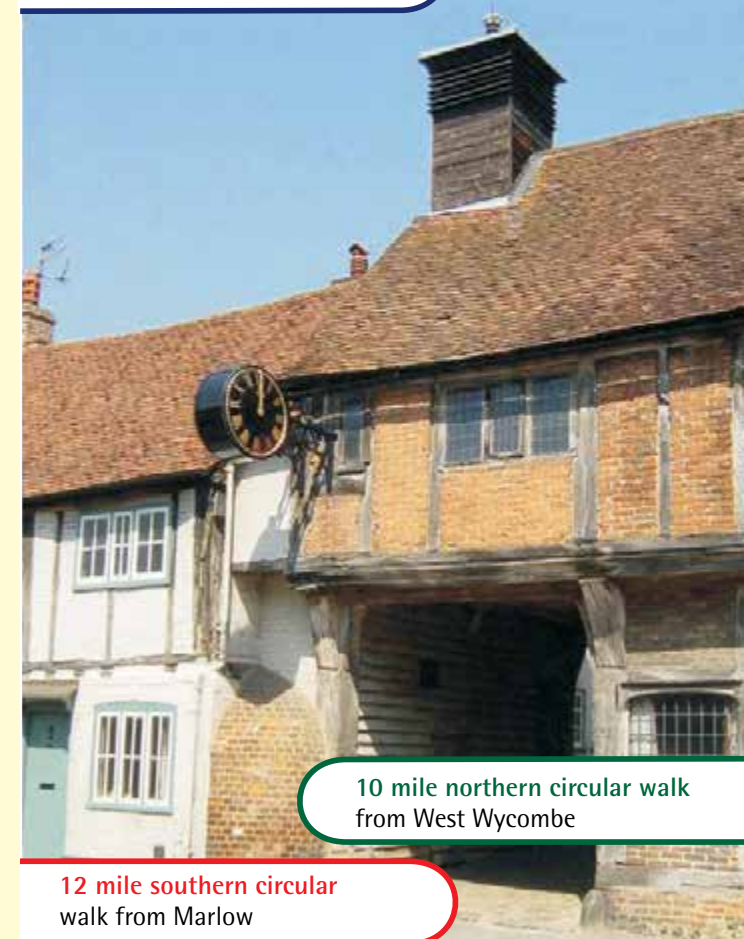


Chilterns Country

Walks on commons between Marlow and West Wycombe

Discover both wooded and grassy commons while enjoying extensive and varied views

18 mile circular walk
from Marlow



10 mile northern circular walk
from West Wycombe

12 mile southern circular
walk from Marlow



Visitor information

Take a break with a picnic on the commons and/or refreshments at a pub or café along the route.

Marlow is a historic market town offering cafés and pubs, shops, public toilets, a tourist information office and numerous other amenities.

West Wycombe is a historic village, also with cafés and pubs, a village store and old-fashioned sweet shop. There are also pubs, a café and shops in Lane End.

For details of places to stay, visitor attractions and other walks, contact the Tourist Information Office in Marlow (tel 01628 483597) or see www.visitchilterns.co.uk

Points of interest

The following points of interest can be found on the walks. See map for locations.

A Marlow retains a historic character with the River Thames as its central focus. The impressive Marlow Suspension Bridge, built in 1829-31, provides an interesting contrast to the nearby church of All Saints, rebuilt in 1832-5. The finest of Marlow's Georgian houses, Marlow Place (c 1720) in Station Road, has a commanding façade and Borromini motif. Mary Shelley worked on the story of Frankenstein in Albion House in West Street. Higginson Park has 23 acres of lawns and flowers and provides access to open countryside and the River Thames. The Thames Path National Trail runs along the river bank through Marlow.

B Marlow Common, once more open, is now young birch and oak woodland. It is dotted with former clay pits, reminders of its past use for brick and tile making. In the 19th century high quality ceramic tiles were made here. The hollows are now home to some unusual plants, mosses and fungi. The wood bank separating the common from Pullingshill Wood indicates the ancient boundary between Great Marlow and Medmenham parishes. During the First World War troops billeted nearby at Bovingdon Green were taught how to dig and maintain trenches on the common before they went to the Western Front.

Points of interest

C Moorend Common is a mosaic of wildlife habitats, criss-crossed by paths. It is designated as a Site of Special Scientific Interest. Due to the mixture of soils and wet areas over 200 plant species have been recorded including a huge variety of orchids. These, in turn, attract a range of butterflies including rare species such as the Purple Emperor which is found in the oak-birch woodland. The open areas, which used to be more extensive, include areas of acid and marshy grassland, heather and bracken, and are dotted with veteran trees.

D Lane End village is 650 feet (200m) above sea level, set in rolling hills of farmland and beech woods. In addition to working the land to provide wheat and barley to the breweries in Marlow and Henley, the inhabitants traditionally manufactured chairs, bricks and tiles, or worked in a local iron foundry. Ditchfield common and Handleton common are both in the middle of the village.

E Wycombe Air Park, also known as Booker Airfield, is an operational general aviation aerodrome. It has a CAA Ordinary Licence that allows flights for the public transport of passengers or for flying instruction. It has over 90,000 movements per annum, many of which are training circuits over the local area.

F Wheeler End Common is a large open area with scrub and woodland to the south. Scattered groups of historic buildings surround the open common. The local pub on the common, the Brickmakers Arms (now closed), relates to the occupations of so many local men involved with the brick making industry. The hamlet gets its name from the Wheeler family who lived here. They were once the main brewers of High Wycombe. The unusual wooden war memorial commemorating the local men killed during the First World War is located at the edge of the common, towards the M40 bridge.



Wheeler End Common

G West Wycombe Hill is a common steeped in history. A hill fort sits at the top of the hill and you can still see the old banks and deep ditches that were the fort's defences. The Church of St Lawrence was built within the ramparts and the Dashwood Mausoleum just outside them. The tower of the church, which is capped with a golden ball, rises behind the Mausoleum and together they form one of the most famous landmarks in Britain. The Hellfire Caves were dug by hand in the mid-1700s to relieve local unemployment and provide building materials for the new toll road to High Wycombe. West Wycombe Hill is now owned and managed by the National Trust.

H West Wycombe is a historic village with plenty of charm. Its streets are lined with cottages and inns of varying architectural styles, dating from the 16th century through to the 18th century. West Wycombe Park is one of the most theatrical and Italianate of all English country houses and has been home to the Dashwood family for over 300 years. Set in 45 acres of landscaped park, the house as we see it today is the creation of the 2nd Baronet, Sir Francis, in the 18th century. The mansion has featured in many screen productions including Cranford, Little Dorrit and Downton Abbey.

I Booker Common has, unusually, always been a wooded common. Today the common is a popular place to go for a walk with a dog, or unwind after a busy week. The common is also locally important for wildlife and has been designated a Local Wildlife Site.

J Newmer Common is on the north western side of Booker Common. Originally, the houses on the edge of the common would have been small hovels housing agricultural labourers

and the common was probably rough grazing land for livestock. Today, the grass is mown and the only grazing animals are rabbits and deer.

K Munces Wood is a mixture of woodland types with some areas almost exclusively old yew trees and other parts beech trees, more typically found in the Chilterns. The wood is on a quite considerable slope and is popular with local walkers.



St Lawrence's church
West Wycombe

Description of route:

The route follows paths over hills and fields, through woods and across commons. Some paths are steep and can be muddy in places. There are a number of stiles. Take care, wear suitable footwear and allow time to rest and enjoy the views.

Map: OS Explorer 172

1 With your back to the River Thames, leave Marlow's Court Garden Leisure Complex by turning left into Pound Lane. Follow the pavement for approx 900m.

2 Cross the road (A4155) and take the footpath. After just over 1km (and having entered Davenport Wood) ignore the path branching to the left. After 30m take the left-hand fork and continue to the road.

3 Turn right at the road and after approx 400m cross the T junction and enter Marlow Common. Continue through to the road (Frieth Road).

4 Turn left onto the road and after approx 300m take the footpath on the left. Follow the footpath downhill. Pass through a gate on your right and after approx 400m cross a stile and continue downhill until reaching a road.

5 Turn right and passing Holme Wood follow the road to the T junction and turn left re-joining Frieth Road and follow for approx 2km to Moor End (a hamlet)

6 Take the footpath on the right pass a house and follow across grassed area and enter woods. Take the right fork and continue through Moored Common. On leaving the common turn right and join the road for approx 100m. Cross the road and follow the footpath around the perimeter of Ditchfield Common, pass the church on the left and re-join the road, turn left and proceed to Lane End.

7 Turn right onto Marlow Road then almost immediately left into The Row. Walk across Handleton Common and, after approx 400m, turn left into Bullocks Farm Lane. Cross over the M40 and pass the 'Chequers' pub.

8 After approx 50m cross to the 5mph sign, bear half right and take the second downhill grassy track to the path crossing at valley bottom. Continue, walking straight up to Wheeler End Common. The former 'Brickmakers Arms' pub is visible almost straight ahead. Heading slightly right, cross the common towards prominent white house and, at gravel track, turn right onto a tarmac road.

9 Turn left to pass 'Denham Farm' and, just beyond the last building, cross a stile to the right and then a field to a kissing gate. Walk beside the hedge on the left, crossing two fields and a stile before descending to a 6-bar gate.

10 Turn left and walk up a broad path to the top of the hill. Just before the open field, bear left to pass 'Bullocks Farm' and reach a road beyond.

11 Turn left onto the road. After approx 10m take the footpath on the right. Head left for a few metres, then turn right downhill and through Jane's Wood. At the far side of the wood take the path downhill.

12 Turn right onto the road and follow for approx 50m. Turn left onto a short access road and cross the A40. Follow the bridleway uphill passing Great Cockshoos Wood on the right. Leave the woods and continue along the path to a T junction. Turn right and follow the bridleway downhill to the lane.

13 After crossing the lane, follow the footpath which crosses two roads. Then follow the path into a field and head uphill. Enter Butlers Hanging nature reserve and walk diagonally across to the left and enter the wood.

14 Walk uphill and turn right onto the footpath which crosses your path at the top of the hill. You will pass a 'National Trust West Wycombe Hill' sign. Continue on and cross the car park to St Lawrence churchyard. Walk through the churchyard and around to the front of the Mausoleum.

15 Take the path downhill. Ignore the first right hand (steep) turn to and follow the path to the right further downhill sign-posted 'Caves'. Follow the path to the lane (West Wycombe Hill Road) and turn right. Go past the school and turn left onto Chorley Road, then almost immediately turn right onto the A40.

16 After approx 100m turn left into Toweridge Lane. At the top of the hill, take the track on the left which crosses Towerage Common.

17 After approx 100m and before the house, turn right onto the footpath. After approx 450m leave the woods and follow the footpath to the left, cross a field and enter Sunters Wood. After approx 800m a path joins from the left. Then continue for approx 30m.

18 Take the path on the left (care should be taken to identify path). Head downhill, then uphill and join a track. Turn left onto the track and head downhill to Lane End Road.

19 Cross the road and enter the footpath into Booker Common. At the path crossing, turn right (parallel to the road) for approx 100m to the next path crossing. Turn left uphill taking the right hand fork. When you reach the houses, take the right hand path. The path leads to a road, passes the Booker Memorial Hall and leads into Limmer Lane. Follow the road to the T junction and turn right onto Clay Lane.

20 Approx 600m after crossing the M40 turn left onto a footpath next to the entrance to the waste disposal facility (High Heavens). Follow the path (parallel to the M40) for approx 1km until reaching a tree line (Hill Green) in front of you.

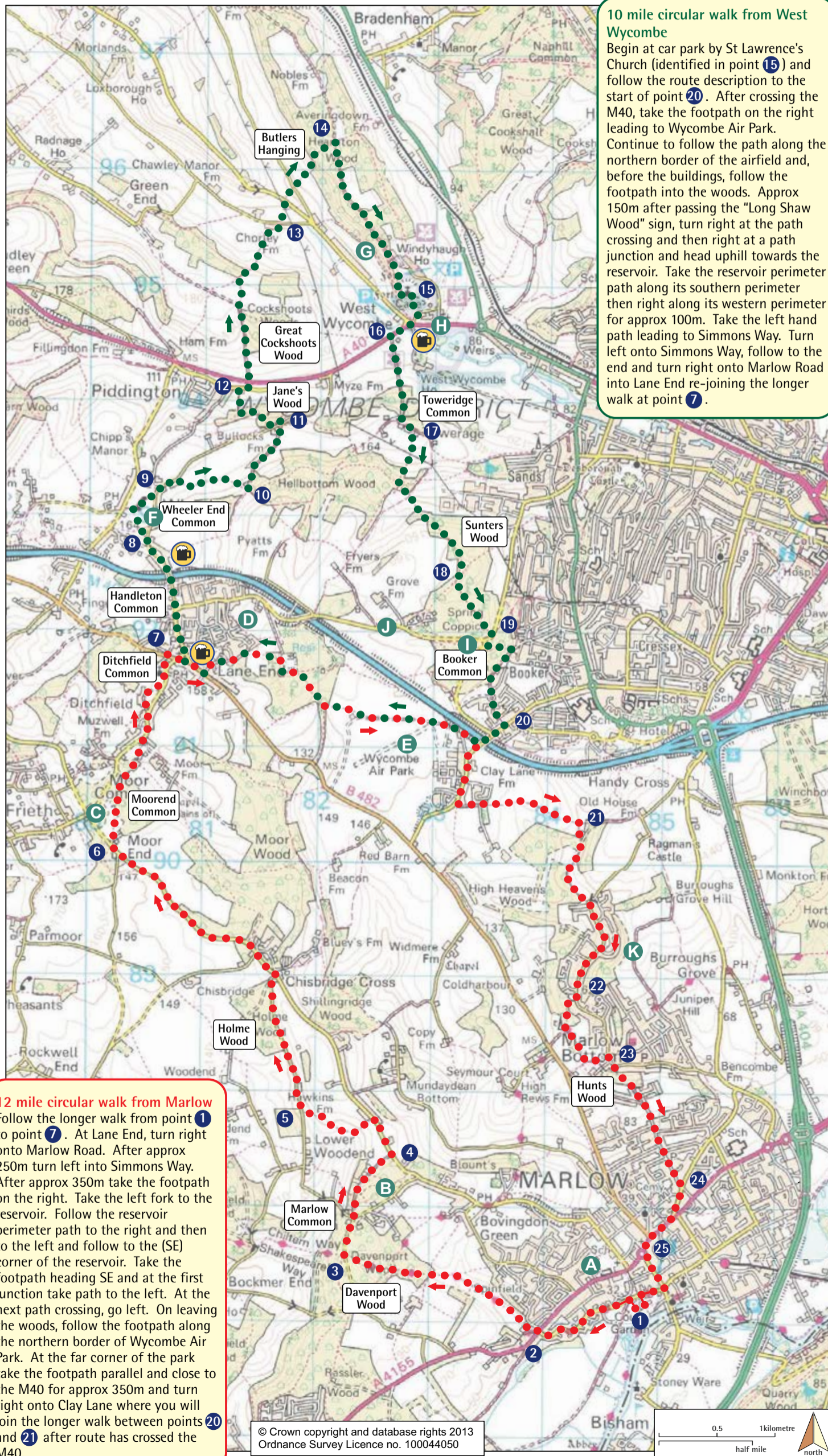
21 Turn right and follow the path into the woods in the corner of the field. The path leads to a residential road. Follow that road for approx 1km.

22 Turn right onto the sign-posted footpath. At the top of the hill (at Woodland House) take the left path following the perimeter of the school sports ground as it eventually heads downhill to re-join Marlow Bottom road and turn right.

23 After approx 60m turn right onto a footpath. Follow it uphill through Hunts Wood and through a small housing development, then downhill to join a residential road (Oak Tree Road).

24 At the end of the road turn right onto Wyckham Road and follow for approx 200m and turn right onto the A4155 and follow for approx 300m.

25 Turn left at the obelisk on a small roundabout into Marlow High Street. After approx 350m turn right into Pound Lane which leads back to the Court Garden Leisure Complex.



10 mile circular walk from West Wycombe
Begin at car park by St Lawrence's Church (identified in point 15) and follow the route description to the start of point 20. After crossing the M40, take the footpath on the right leading to Wycombe Air Park. Continue to follow the path along the northern border of the airfield and, before the buildings, follow the footpath into the woods. Approx 150m after passing the "Long Shaw Wood" sign, turn right at the path crossing and then right at a path junction and head uphill towards the reservoir. Take the reservoir perimeter path along its southern perimeter then right along its western perimeter for approx 100m. Take the left hand path leading to Simmons Way. Turn left onto Simmons Way, follow to the end and turn right onto Marlow Road into Lane End re-joining the longer walk at point 7.

12 mile circular walk from Marlow
Follow the longer walk from point 1 to point 7. At Lane End, turn right onto Marlow Road. After approx 250m turn left into Simmons Way. After approx 350m take the footpath on the right. Take the left fork to the reservoir. Follow the reservoir perimeter path to the right and then to the left and follow to the (SE) corner of the reservoir. Take the footpath heading SE and at the first junction take path to the left. At the next path crossing, go left. On leaving the woods, follow the footpath along the northern border of Wycombe Air Park. At the far corner of the park take the footpath parallel and close to the M40 for approx 350m and turn right onto Clay Lane where you will join the longer walk between points 20 and 21 after route has crossed the M40.