

# Wendover Woods & Cobblers' Pits walk

With **David Harris**

**This very varied walk takes in lovely woods, a hillfort, beautiful views over Aylesbury Vale and the peaceful Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal. In June you can experience one of the best displays of orchids anywhere in the Chilterns.**

**START:** Wendover Library car park, High Street, Wendover HP22 6DU. Grid ref SP 868 077. (Pay & Display: Mon-Sat 7.30am-6.30pm, 3 to 4 hrs £1. Alternatively there is free roadside parking in the Tring Road area)

**DISTANCE:** 6.8 miles with 620ft of ascent

**TERRAIN:** A moderate walk on good paths with one short, very steep climb. Care needed when descending on wet chalk and slippery tree roots. Dogs may need lifting over a couple of stiles

**MAPS:** OS Explorer 181, Chiltern Society 18

**REFRESHMENTS:** The Café in the Woods in Wendover Woods (10% discount for CS members with membership card). Cafés and pubs in Wendover

**PUBLIC TRANSPORT:** Buses - 50, Aylesbury to RAF Halton (all week); 55, Aylesbury to Chesham (Mon to Fri). Trains - Wendover Station for links to London Marylebone and Aylesbury.

## Route

**From the car park entrance, turn right down the High St to the mini roundabout by the Clock Tower. Turn right along Tring Rd for over 400m to a pedestrian crossing just after Manor Rd on the left.**

1. Turn right up Colet Rd, first left into Barlow Rd and then straight ahead along Beechwood Lane.
2. At the end of the lane bear right uphill on a wide track for 40m to a major crossing track. Cross it and climb the very steep path into Wendover Woods. At the top of the hill the path meets a major track, the Hill Fort Trail.
3. Turn left along the track for 80m past a wooden barrier and continue forward for a few metres more to the information board on the right. Why not take the opportunity to visit Boddington Hill Fort?
4. After exploring the fort, leave the information board behind and take the main track directly ahead. Stay in the same direction for nearly 1km to reach the Visitor Centre, where refreshments and toilets are available.
5. Walk between the café and the toilet block, turn left immediately after the toilet block and follow the path to a car park. Turn right in the car park, follow the Hilltop Trail for 150m to a fork and then bear left to a set of stones which mark the highest point in the Chilterns. Return to the car park and turn right along the tarmac road for 600m. Where this road dips down to the left, take a path leading off right, past a wooden barrier, into woodland and follow it for 200m to an intersection.
6. Take the right-hand path up to a stile and into a field. Cross the field



7. Taking great care, cross the road to the pavement on the other side and walk uphill to the road to Wendover Woods. (An option in June is to visit Aston Clinton Ragpits to see the orchids). Turn right through a kissing gate and follow the path as it winds downhill through woodland and Cobblers' Pits to the Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal.
8. Go through a gate, turn left and follow the canal towpath for 1.6km to Halton village. Cross the road and take the towpath on the opposite bank. Continue along the canal for c.2.5km, passing 'the wides' to the canal head. Take the slope up to the road (Wharf Rd). Turn left to return to cars parked in Tring Rd or, to return to the library, turn right and walk along the pavement to a T-junction and the Aylesbury Rd. Turn left to the Clock Tower roundabout and turn right up the High St to return to the car park.

## Points of Interest

**Wendover** is a market town that lies on the ancient Icknield Way and nestles at the foot of the Chiltern Hills. Its name comes from the Celtic term meaning 'white waters', which refers to the chalky deposits in the local streams. The parish church of St Mary's dates back to the 13th century, although there are records of an earlier building. During the Civil War, Oliver Cromwell's troops were camped in the town and some of their graffiti can still be seen at the church. One local legend says that Cromwell himself stayed overnight at the Red Lion Inn and addressed his troops from one of the upstairs windows. The walk passes the Clock Tower which was used as a 'lock-up', and the row of cottages along Tring Rd that once belonged to Henry VIII.

**A Boddington Hill Fort:** The walk passes through Wendover Woods, where a Chiltern Society conservation volunteer group has worked with the Forestry Commission for over five years to help manage the Woods for recreation, preserve ancient monuments and encourage biodiversity. At the top of the climb out of Wendover is the ancient Boddington Iron Age hillfort, which volunteers have rescued from being at 'high risk' to 'low risk and stable' by clearing undergrowth and small trees to create an open woodland area.

**B Wendover Woods** cover 325 hectares and are a mixture of coniferous and broad-leaved trees. Owned by the Forestry Commission, the site is very popular for many outdoor activities. It once belonged to Alfred de Rothschild and was heavily felled during the WWI to support the war effort. In 1919 it

was sold to the Air Ministry, who replanted it with conifers. It was then passed to the Forestry Commission who planted beech, spruce, larch and pine.

**C Haddington Hill** is the highest point in the Chilterns at 276m. It's marked by a set of stones and a plaque.

**D Aston Clinton Ragpits** is an old chalkpit managed by Berks, Bucks & Oxon Wildlife Trust. This hidden reserve boasts 10 species of orchid and over 25 different types of butterfly.

**E Cobblers' Pits** is a small mixed wood of yew and box. The Chiltern Society recently took over the management of this disused quarry from Bucks County Council.

**F The Wendover Arm:** The 6.7 mile long Wendover Arm of the Grand Union Canal was constructed in 1799 to carry water from the springs and streams in the Wendover area to feed the Tring summit locks. It had problems from the start with leakage. The middle section became dry, so the water was piped. The Arm is currently being restored by the Wendover Arm Trust.

**G RAF Halton:** The walk along the canal passes RAF Halton. The Halton Estate was owned by the Rothschild family and at the outbreak of WWI they offered land to Lord Kitchener for military training. After Alfred de Rothschild's death in 1918 the Estate was purchased by the War Office for £112,000. It's now the RAF's centre for recruit training and airmen's development training.

**H The Wides** is a broad part of the canal formerly used to turn full-length boats round. It's now a haven for wildlife.