

A Ley Hill Circular

By Paul Cooke, Chiltern Society

Summary

This stile free walk to the east of Chesham explores the network of paths in beautiful rolling countryside. There are lovely views of the Chess valley and the walk passes Cowcroft Wood nature reserve where bluebells and wild orchids can be found during the early summer.

- Length:** 3.8 miles
Terrain: Easy walking on paths and lanes with two easy climbs. Stile free and up to 5 gates.
Start & finish: The Crown pub, Blackwell Hall Lane, Ley Hill, Chesham HP5 1UY
Food & drink: The Crown and Swan pubs in Ley Hill and The Hen & Chickens in Botley
Maps: OS Explorer 181 and Chiltern Society 17
Parking: Off road parking area in Ashridge Lane, Ley Hill GR SP990019. Nearest Postcode HP5 1UY
Local transport: Bus 73 runs between Chesham and Whelpley Hill on Mondays to Saturdays



Route

Looking out from the Crown, make your way carefully over the two roads in front and left to the main road (Bovingdon Road). Bear right across it to a path located through a gap in the hedgerow and walk along for 450m to a crossing path.

Waypoint 1 – Turn left downhill and stay on this path for nearly a kilometre to the first turning on the left.

Waypoint 2 – Turn left up a partly paved track that leads to Newhouse Farm and a cattery before coming out onto Jasons Hill Lane.

Waypoint 3 – Cross the road, turn left along it for 160m to a telegraph pole just after Spring Meadow Lodge and bear right along a path that runs parallel to the road. Turn right along the entrance track to Beechwood and take the footpath on the right-hand side. Follow the path around the back of the houses and along the right-hand side of the field to a path T-junction. A kissing gate is on the right.

Waypoint 4 - Turn left across the field and go through a gate in a gap in the trees into a much larger field. Keep straight on ahead for 100m to meet a right angled path to the left. Turn left down to it and go through a kissing gate into the next field. Keep straight ahead and follow the path down to the right-hand corner.

Waypoint 5 – Go through the kissing gate, turn right along the back of some houses onto Botley Lane that leads to the much busier Botley Road. Cross to the footpath opposite, turn right and follow it to reach the turning to Tylers Hill with the Hen and Chickens pub to the right.

Waypoint 6 – Turn left down Tylers Hill Road to the bottom of the hill, turn right into Bottom Lane and immediately left on a footpath leading up to the top of a hill. (Please note: this is a well-used path but is not the official right of way, which is shown in blue on the map). At the top, ignore the first gate on the left, follow the path as it veers round to the left, ignore the second gate on the left, and continue alongside the perimeter of another large field. All around there are fine views over the extensive fields. Return back along the route for a few metres, turn right through the gate, into a field and turn left past a disused stile into the adjoining field. Follow the path to the right, along the boundary of a large white house (in former times this was the Five Bells public house). Alongside the Five Bells a kissing gate exits back onto the top end of Tylers Hill Road. Turn right and you have St Georges Church on your left. Follow the lane up to the top of the hill.

Waypoint 7 – At the top of the hill and with the boundary walls of Cowcroft Grange in front of you, take the wide track to the left heading into Cowcroft Woods. Follow the track all the way through the serene woods until emerging on the far side where dwellings appear and the track expands to become Kiln Lane. Keep straight ahead and Kiln Lane emerges at the junction back at Ley Hill, with the Crown PH and the starting point on your right.

Points of Interest

Ley Hill has a long history of making tiles, pottery and bricks. The Swan pub was built in around 1520 and is thought to be one of the oldest in Buckinghamshire. In WWII it played host to airmen from the American air force base at Bovingdon and played host to a number of well-known people including James Stewart and Clark Gable.

A Jasons Hill was once the location of a gallows known as the Tyburn Tree. A last request for the condemned was a pint from The Swan pub.

B Tylers Hill gets its name from the tile-making industry. St George's Church was built in 1871 as a mission church from Christchurch in Waterside, Chesham.

C Cowcroft Wood & Nature Reserve are part of an ancient woodland. The clay soil has been worked for three centuries to supply material for the local tile and brickworks. On either side of the track there is evidence of such workings.