

WALK 2.

TEST VALLEY FARM LOOP via West Down

Abbreviations: Turn right **TR**, turn left **TL**, straight on **SO**, footpath **FP**, bridleway **BW**.

Distance: about 2.8miles (4.5km). Time: about 1 hour. Difficulty: Easy

The walk starts at the **Abbot's Mitre Public House**.

1. Leave pub and **TR**. Walk along village street about 100 yards.
2. **TR** down gravel track. This is **Cart Lane** and is indicated by a finger post with a cart at the top of the finger! Walk up the track with houses on both sides. It soon becomes a path between trees. Walk up the hill. At the top the path widens to a broad grass path along the edge of a field on your left. Look back and to your left and admire the view. Continue along this path until you reach an obvious junction and the gates to Hunts (John Deere dealers) where you will see four deer statues on your left.
3. **TR** and walk along a permissive FP. You will see agricultural machinery on your left. Continue along a wide path and keep SO as the path becomes a grass track, until you reach a gate. Duck under a wooden bar on the right. You are now in **Drove Road**.
4. **TR** and walk down Drove Road until you see a gap in the hedge on the left marked by finger post saying **Permissive Bridleway**. NB. At this point there is a dog poo bag dispenser and a dog poo bag disposal bin.
5. **TL** and walk along this grassy track which runs parallel with **Little Drove Road**. Continue **SO**. There are several gaps in the hedge on your right. The one you should take is about two thirds of the way along this path where the ground on the right opens out and a high leylandii hedge starts. There is also a telegraph pole on the right of the gap. (Note: if you TR through a gap too early, just turn left and walk along the road until you see the fingerpost on the left. Ignore the fingerpost on the right.)
6. **TR** and go through the gap. Immediately on your left you will see a fingerpost pointing to the left.
7. **TL** and follow this narrow **FP**. Shortly you will see **Test Valley Farm** on your right and a hedge on your left. Walk along this path until you come to a junction of paths.
8. Ignore the paths going to your left and SO. **TR** You are now in **West Down Nature Reserve** (managed by Chilbolton Parish Council). Part of the reserve is a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). Walk through some trees until you come to a post and rail fence. Ignore the paths on your left and SO, and **TR** through the gap in the fence. Ignore a grass path to your right and walk diagonally left along an obvious **FP**. Shortly you will see an old, single bar gate to your left. Go round this. Cross the concrete road and go **SO** (don't turn left or right along the concrete road).
9. Ignore the path to your left which heads into woodland (Ivy Farm Wood). Veer to the right following an obvious **FP** which soon becomes a grass track. You will see a **Nature Trail** post on your right. Follow the obvious grass path across a field. Head for a gap in the trees which allows a fine view. Pass a metal bench to your left and head for a wooden gate dead ahead. (Ignore the paths to the right and to the left). Go through gate. You may find cattle grazing here. They are Red Devons, also known as Ruby Reds. They are pretty and docile. They are used for conservation grazing.

10. Go through the gate and go **SO** ignoring the paths to your right and left. Slightly to your left you will see the Mayfly Road Bridge and the Recycling Centre at the bottom of the slope. The path you should take bends to the right. You will pass two benches on your right. You are now on the **Test Way**. Continue along this obvious path. You are now walking parallel to the road leading to Chilbolton (Coley Lane). You can see it below you and to your left.

11. Continue **SO** along this ridge. You will pass a couple of **Nature Trail** posts. Look for gaps in the trees to your left and you will be rewarded with fine views. Just after passing a metal bench on your right the path goes **SO** downhill. You will see a cattle pen in front of you and to the left of this is a kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and **TL** to the nearby **Test Way** sign.

12. At the **Test Way** sign **TL along the road**. After about 20 metres **TR** at the **Footpath** sign and cross the road. You will see the Coronation Tree with a bench underneath it commemorating the Queen's Diamond Jubilee. There is a fine view of the River Test.

13. After a few yards **TR** along a narrow path. You are still on the **Test Way**. You will see some attractive water gardens on your left and the Watch Cottage estate on your right. Follow this path until you reach a pedestrian gate that opens onto the playing field. Go through it. You have reached the **War Memorial Playing Field**, gifted to the Parish Council in memory of those from Chilbolton who gave their lives in the Second World War. If you have a dog, please put him/her on a lead.

14. You have a choice. You can either:

- carry **SO** in the direction of the pavilion and exit the playing field by a gate in the left hand corner of the field. Here there is a dog poo bag dispenser and a waste bin. Go through the gate and onto a wide gravel track with the Old Cottage on your right;
- or
- veer to the left. You will see a large metal roller. Head in that direction. Just beyond it to the left you will see a pedestrian gate. This is the route of the **Test Way**. Go through it and **TR** and follow the narrow path through trees. It emerges onto a wide gravel track with the Old Cottage in front of you. **TL** onto the track.

15. You have now reached **Chilbolton Cow Common** a Site of Special Scientific Interest. You will see the Old Cottage to your right and the Purleygigg Stream to your left. Follow the gravel track as it bends to the right in front of the cottage. Continue on to a five bar gate just beyond which is a **Footpath/Bridle Way** sign and a dog poo bag dispenser. You will now see a tarmac road ahead of you (Joys Lane) with gates and a cattle grid as it enters the Common.

17. At this point **TL** and walk along the wide gravel track and through a gateway. You will see three houses in front of you. The centre one is the Old Inn. About half way to the Old Inn you will pass a double man hole cover (BT) and immediately after you will see a grass path heading off diagonally to your right. Take it. It leads towards a small bridge over the **Abbot's Stream**. Cross the bridge and go through the gate. Please make sure you close it. A narrow path goes between gardens to the left and the right. Follow this path. You will come to the village street and the **Abbot's Mitre** is in front of you.

That's the end of the walk. I hope you enjoyed it.

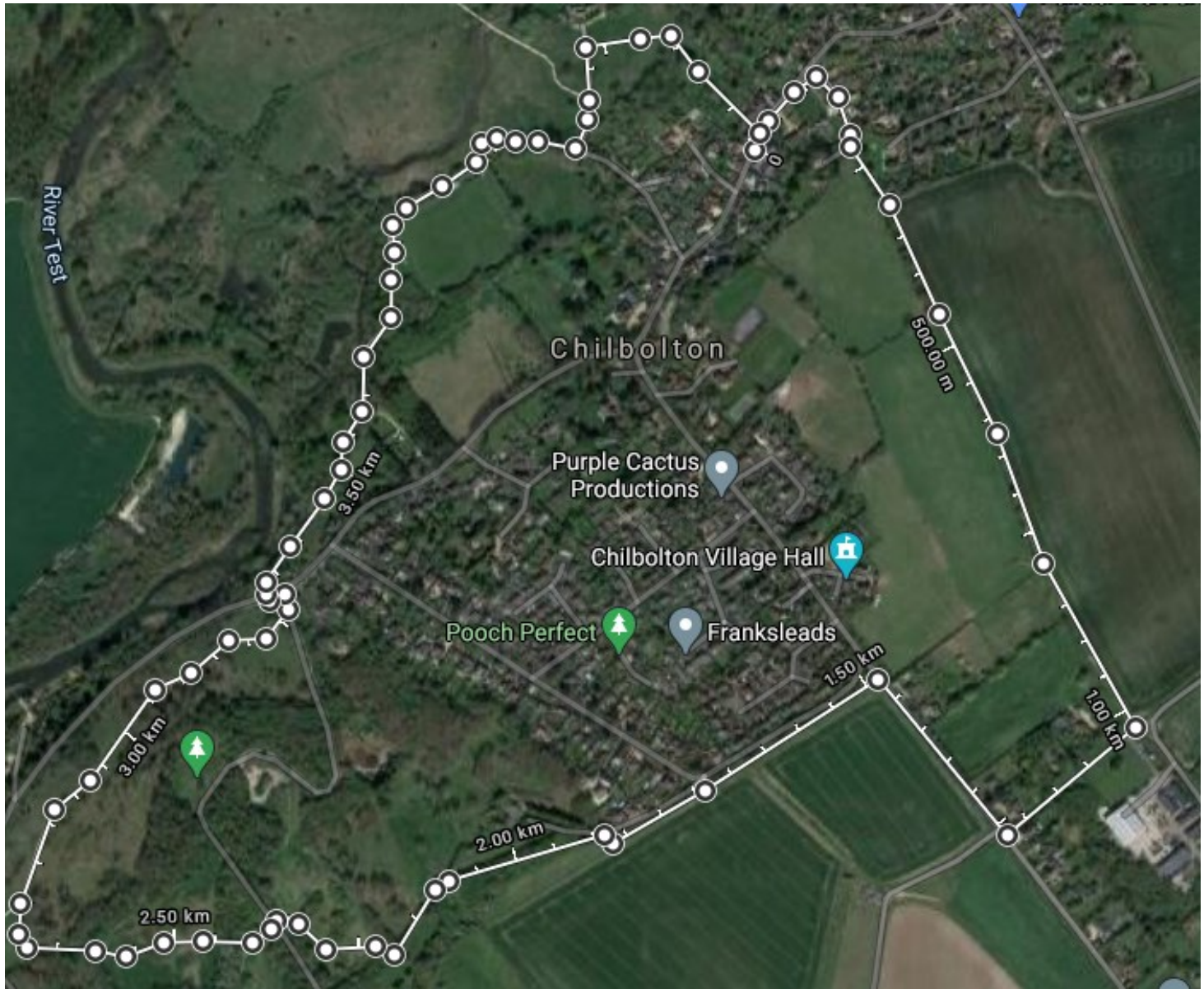


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