

#### WALK 4.

#### **THIRT WAY LOOP via West Down**

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

Distance: about 3 miles (3.6k); Time: about 1.5 hours. Level: easy

Further information about the places you encounter can be obtained by accessing the website:

**[www.chilboltonandwherwell.info](http://www.chilboltonandwherwell.info)**

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

1. Leave the pub and **TR** and walk about 100 yards along the village street.
2. **TR** down gravel track. This is **Cart Lane** (indicated by a finger post) with a cart carved on the finger. Walk along 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 and a hedge on your right. Look back and to your left and admire the view.
3. Continue along this path until you reach an obvious junction with tarmac and the gates to **Hunts** (John Deere dealers). You will see a grass island with statues on it. Keep **SO** down a wide tarmac road. Ignore the roads to left and right. Hunt's place, with lots of agricultural machinery, is on your right. The road soon narrows and becomes a grass track. There is a Dutch barn on your left. Shortly, you will see houses in front of you. The path bends sharply to the left. Continue **SO** along it until you hit tarmac. This is **Martins Lane**.
4. **TR** and walk along the road for about 60 yards. Then **TR** down a wide gravel track with houses on both sides. You will see a post indicating that this is a **BW**. You are now in **Birch Grove**. Continue **SO** until you come to a T junction of tracks. The wide gravel track across your bow is **Drove Road**.
5. **TL** and walk along Drove Road until you come to a T junction with a concrete road. This is the **Thirt Way**. Ahead of you you will see the **HBS** Oil and Gas Storage Depot.
6. **TR** and you will see a very large steel gate. To the right of this you will see a way marker. **TR** and go through a gap then **TL** and walk along a wide, level grass path (**Thirt Way Path**). There is a hedge on the left and a fence on your right. To your right you will see a large radio telescope. This is the **Chilbolton Observatory**. Keep **SO** until you reach a T junction of paths and a fingerpost. The path that crosses your bow is the **Mark Way**.
7. **TR** and walk along the Mark Way. You will pass close to the observatory on your right. Carry **SO**. You will come to a fingerpost on your right at a gap in the hedge indicating the **Little Drove Path** (a permissive **BW**) on your right. Ignore this and carry **SO**. Walk along a narrow path with a double fence on your left and a hedge on your right. Shortly, the path bends sharply to the left. Continue along the path slightly up hill. You will see another path on your right, following the path you are on. Ignore it. Continue along the Mark Way until the path bends to the right (indicated by a way marker on a wooden post). You have now reached the eastern edge of **West Down Nature Reserve**. Part has been designated a Site of Importance for Nature Conservation (SINC). West Down is managed by Chilbolton Parish Council.
8. There is a path on the left and a path to the right. Ignore them and take the path **SO**. Walk through some trees until you come to a post and rail fence. At the gap in the fence ignore the path on your left and go **SO** through the gap in the fence. Ignore the obvious grass path veering to the

left and take the grass path which goes **SO** hugging a hedge on the right. Follow this path until you meet a broad grassy path coming from the left. Join it and **TR** along it. Go through a gap in an earth bank and you are in the **top car park** of West Down.

9. Go **SO** and follow the car park around until you see the West Down Nature Reserve sign. You will also see a green refuse bin and a dog poo bag dispenser. It is also the start of the **Nature Trail** marked by a post and notice board.

10. Immediately after passing the refuse bin **TR** along a concrete road.. Almost immediately look for a gap in the trees opposite you. Mount the kerb and go along this narrow track through trees. On your left you will see the ruins of a brick building which was once part of a wartime airfield. Shortly you will come to a wider path crossing your bow. (This is a permissive **BW**). Ignore it and head for a wooden kissing gate in front of you. Go through the gate and take a grassy path which initially veers slightly to the right. You are now in the enclosed area of the **Chilbolton Nature Reserve**. Red Devon (Ruby Reds) cattle are kept here as conservation grazing. They are small, very attractive and docile.

11. Shortly, you will see a wooden bench and beyond it some houses. Walk down the hill which is covered with ant hills. Head for a cattle pen with a wooden kissing gate to the left of it. Go through the kissing gate and **TL** to follow the **Test Way** along the verge (way marked).

12. When you reach the tarmac road (Coley Lane) **TL** and almost immediately **TR** (signposted) and cross the road. Go through a gap in the hedge. You will see the Coronation Tree to your left with a bench underneath marking the Diamond Jubilee of the Queen. There is a fine view of the **River Test**. After a few yards **TR** along a narrow path. You will see some attractive water gardens on your left and the gardens of Watch Cottage on your right. You are now on the **Test Way**.

13. Follow this path bordered by a high fence until you reach a pedestrian gate. Go through it. You have reached the **War Memorial Playing Field** given to Chilbolton 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 that passes the Old Cottage on the 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 until it emerges onto a wide gravel track with the Old Cottage in front of you ; then **TL**.

15. You have now reached **Chilbolton Cow Common** a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). This is conservation grazed in the late spring and summer. There are many varieties of wild flowers and fine views of the River Test to enjoy. Follow gravel track as it bends to the right in front of the cottage until you reach a gate and a Footpath/Bridleway sign near a dog poo box. You will see a tarmac road in front of you (Joys Lane) with gates and a cattle grid but ignore them.

16. At this point **TL**. Walk along the wide gravel track and through a gate (often open). You will see three houses in front of you. The centre one is the Old Inn. If you wish to explore the common **TL** along a **BW**. Otherwise, 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. Walk along 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.

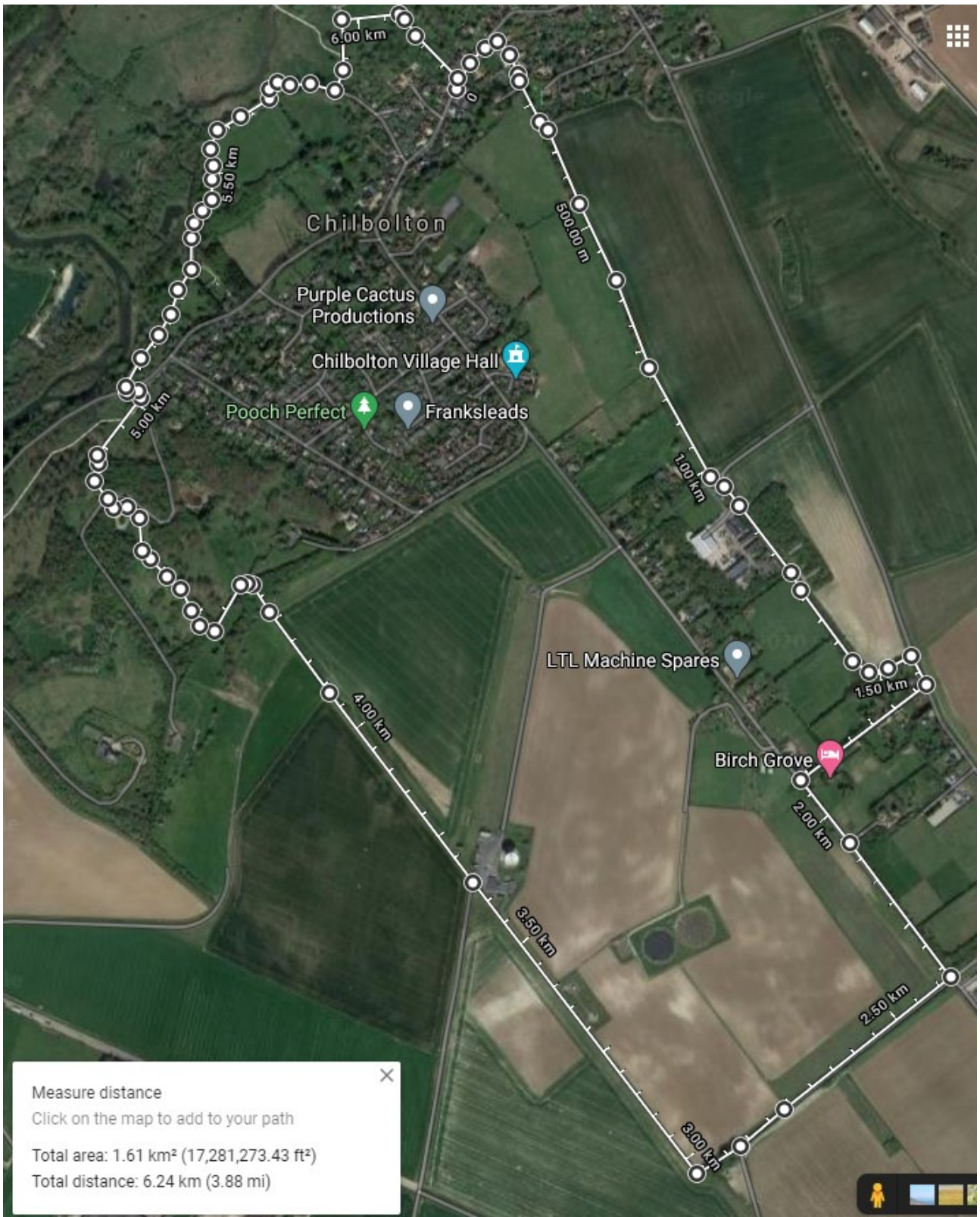


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