

Walk 6.

WHERWELL LOOP via the Test Way and Harewood Forest

Abbreviations: turn right **TR**; turn left **TL**; straight on **SO**; footpath **FP**; bridle way **BW**.

Distance: about 4.5 miles (7 km). Time: about 1 hour 50 minutes. Difficulty: easy/moderate.

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

1. With your back to the pub you will see a triangular green on the far side of the village street. It has a telephone box and an old grindstone on it. Cross the street and you will see a narrow gravel track running between the **Grindstone Green** on your right and a thatched cottage (Abbot's Rest) on your left. A fingerpost points to the track which leads to **The Common**. Walk along this track.
2. Shortly, you will come to a pedestrian gate. Go through it, making sure you close it after you. Cross the wooden bridge over the **Abbot's Stream**. You are now on **Chilbolton Cow Common** a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Conservation grazing by cattle takes place from late spring until autumn.
3. Go **SO**, bearing slightly left, along a grassy **FP**. Cross a gravel track. You will see three houses on your right. The middle one is the Old Inn. Continue along the grass path until it merges with a gravel **BW**. This is the **Test Way**. Follow the **BW** to the right and cross over the **Purleygigg Bridge**. Follow the **BW** straight ahead until you come to the **Long Bridge**. Cross over the bridge admiring the views of the River Test as you do so. You are now leaving the parish of Chilbolton and entering the parish of Wherwell.
4. When you get to the tarmac road **TL** and walk a few yards and then **TR**. You will see a fingerpost indicting the **Test Way**. Climb up the steps ahead of you and **TR** where you see a broken stile. Ignore a grass **FP** that heads to the left up a hill and carry **SO** along the grass **FP**. You will see a white painted house on your right. You go gently up hill until the path bends sharply to the right. Go through the wooden barrier and you have reached the hairpin bend on the Wherwell-Andover Road. The **Test Way** is way marked here on the fingerpost.
5. Cross the road and head downhill for a few yards. You are looking for a small gap in the bank on the left of the road way marked **Test Way**. **TL** climb up the steps and follow the narrow **FP**. After about 300 yards the path emerges onto tarmac. On your right you can see the Home Guard Club. In front of you to your left is a row of semi-detached houses. This is **Beech Grove**. You will also see the **Test Way** way marked **SO**.
6. Walk along Beech Grove until, after the last house, the road becomes a narrow, shady **FP**. The **Test Way** is way marked on a telegraph pole on the right. Carry **SO**. You come to steps which you descend to a wide gravel track in front of you. This is **New Barn Lane**.
7. **TL** and follow the way marked **Test Way** up hill along a sunken lane. After reaching the top of the hill the path descends until you reach a junction with buildings (**New Barn**) ahead. Go straight on with these buildings on your left. The path soon has wire fences on both sides.
8. You will come to a junction of tracks. The **Test Way** goes **SO** indicated by a way marker. **Harewood Forest** is on your left. There is a wonderful display of bluebells in the spring. You will come to a yellow way marker indicating a path to your left. Ignore it and carry **SO**. You should look out for another way marker after about 500 yards at a junction of paths. You will see a **Test Way** arrow for **SO** and, on another side of the post, a **yellow** arrow indicating a **FP** to

your right. (If you get to see derelict farm buildings on your left you have gone too far. Retrace your steps.)

9. Follow the **direction of the yellow arrow** and **TR**. Walk along a wide grassy path on the left of a field. There is hazel coppice on your left with more bluebells. You will see woodland ahead of you. When you reach this woodland you will see a yellow way marker. Turn left and walk along a track through the wood (sometimes very muddy). On your right you will see a pheasant rearing pen. It is advisable to keep your dog on a lead at this point.
10. Shortly, you will see another yellow way marker on you left. Carry **SO** along a track on the right of a field with more woodland on your right and more bluebells. You will come to a gap in the woodland on your right. You will see a yellow way marker indicating a right turn.
11. **TR** and follow the gravel track as it descends steeply towards a large field. Follow this as it bends to the left and walk downhill along a wide track at the left hand side of the field. You will come to another yellow way marker pointing under the old railway bridge. Go under the bridge. The bridge used to carry the Longparish Branch Line which ran from Fullerton Junction to Hurstbourne. Passenger services ended in 1931. It was used for freight until 1956. It was busy during World War 2 as there was an ammunition dump near Longparish. You will pass a house on the left with kennels. You will be greeted by a storm of barking!
12. You will see a concrete road leading to a metal gate. Go through the pedestrian gate and you emerge onto the **Longparish Road** (tarmac). **TR** to head back towards Wherwell. You will pass Dublin Farm House; a sports field and Wherwell County Primary School all on the left. Soon you will come to a T junction. Shepherds Cottage is on your right with a spectacular display of roses.
13. **TL** to head back towards Chilbolton. You will cross two bridges over the **River Test**. After the second bridge you will see two black and white chevron road signs indicating a left hand bend. After the last of these signs you will see a wooden stile on your right. Climb over this and take the grassy **FP** that goes diagonally left across a field. The **River Test** is on your right. You will come to a gap in the hedge in front of you. The path can be very muddy here. Go through the gap and follow the **FP** as it bends to the left.
14. You will come to a wooden bridge over a stream. Cross it and follow the **FP** diagonally to the right (yellow way marker on the handrail). You will come to a stile. Climb over it. You are now on tarmac.
15. **TR** and walk along the road towards Chilbolton. You will come to a triangular green on your right as the road bends to the left. You will see the old school house on your left and directly opposite a metal gate and stile. To the right is the road to the Manor Farm House.
16. **Climb** over the stile and follow a grass **FP** through a field, but as you do look back and to the left for a good view of the handsome Old Rectory. Go diagonally left and make for the top, left hand corner of the field. You will see the parish church on your left. You will come to a kissing gate. Go through it and follow the **FP** to another kissing gate. Go through it. You are now in **Frog Lane**.
17. **TL** and you will shortly reach the village street. **TR** and walk along the street until you reach the **Abbot's Mitre** about 300 yards on your left.

You have reached the end of the walk. I hope you enjoyed it.



Image from Google Maps