



Hawridge and Cholesbury

Distance: 10½ km=6½ miles

easy walking

Region: Chilterns

Date written: 21-aug-2022

Author: Phegophilos

Last update: 26-jul-2023

Refreshments: Hawridge, Cholesbury

Map: Explorer 181 (Chiltern Hills North) *but the map below should suffice*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Woodland, easy field paths, views, villages, pubs, windmill, ridge walk

In Brief

The author devised this walk privately, only to find later that it was a “Chiltern favourite”, after being overtaken along the way by very happy ramblers and weekenders. You can see why: an iconic pub, a windmill, lovely woodland and, at the end, a glorious ridge walk with views all round. This route finds an unexpected path out of the forest to lead up to the road on the outskirts of Cholesbury where you have a memorable view of the Windmill, with the pub close by.

There is a pub at each end (see notes in the text). If you need to enquire at the *Hungry Olive*, ring 01494-744101. For the *Full Moon* it's 01494-758959.

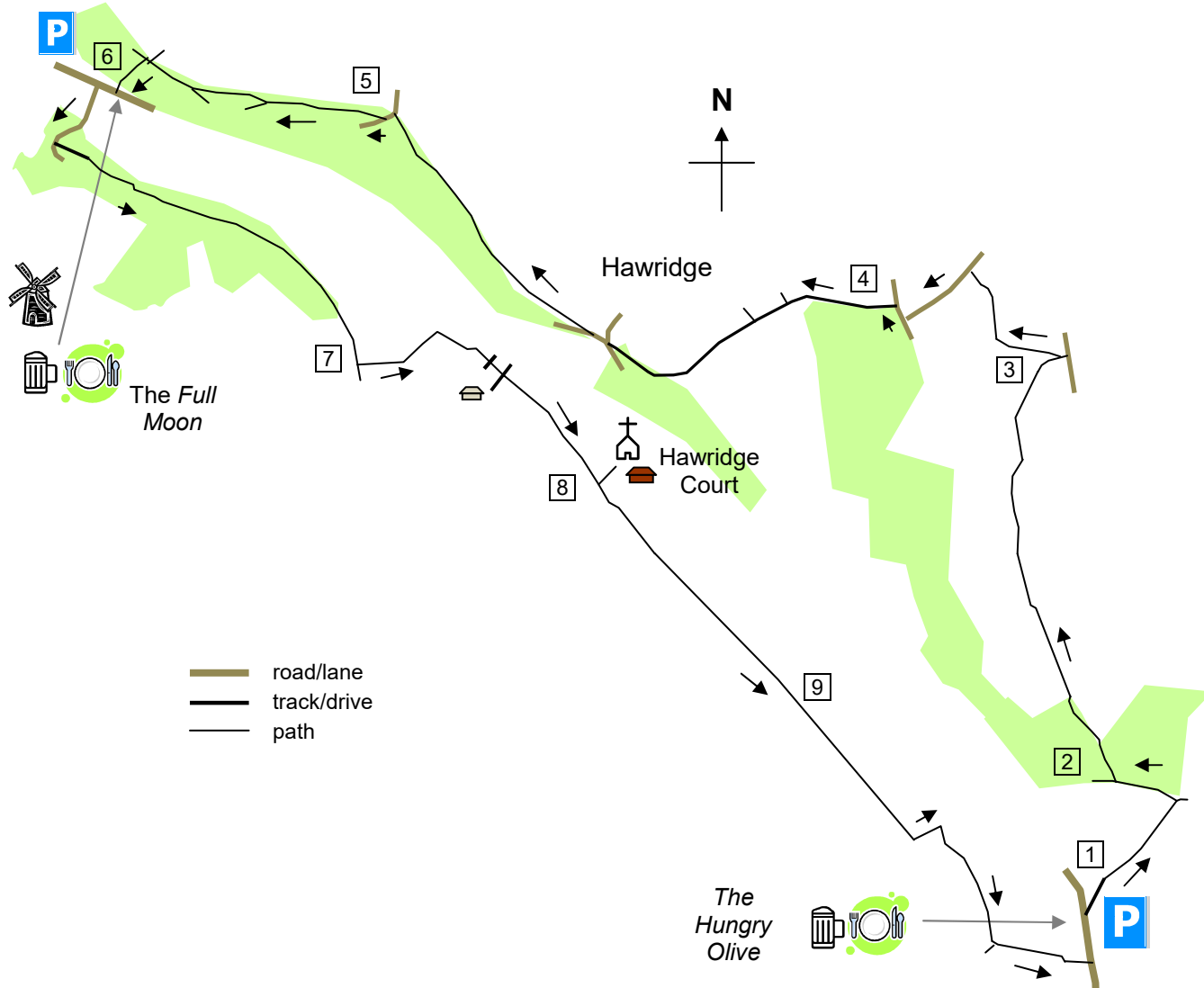


The paths are mostly wide tracks beside farmland or wide horse paths in woodland, but there is one short narrow woodland stretch with undergrowth and tall nettles which might make shorts uncomfortable. In the dry summer of 2022, good trainers were fine but it is easy to imagine that boots would be needed in the wetter months. With only a handful of easy stiles, and no obvious livestock, it would be a good walk for your dog too.

The walk begins in the car park of what used to be the *Black Horse Inn* and is now re-opened (2023) as the *Hungry Olive*. It is in The Vale, near Chesham, Bucks, postcode **HP5 3NS**, www.w3w.co/pretty.boots.smooth. The new owners are very friendly and happy for you to use their car park as a returning customer for food and drink at the end of the walk. This is a large car park and rambling groups often start here. The grassy section at the far end is used as an overflow area. You could also start at Cholesbury, on the roadside (*not* at the pub), www.w3w.co/dolly.slurs.rewarded, postcode **HP5 2UH**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Cholesbury



- 1 Beginning at the Inn, cross the road and take a semi-tarmac track, rising diagonally past a house named *Broadview* and some art studios. The track becomes gravel and runs straight, slightly uphill. At the top of the slope you reach a junction with blue and yellow arrows. Fork **left**, at the yellow arrow, and immediately before a large metal gate, go **left** into a field. Walk up the right-hand side of the field. Just to the left shortly, you will notice a seat, placed in a nice position to rest awhile and enjoy the views over the countryside. A fraction before the seat, roughly 200m after you turned into the field, turn **right** into woods, by a sign *Copas Farms*.
- 2 A good path leads you through this bluebell wood, emerging in 150m into another field. Keep straight ahead along the left-hand edge, and soon between two crop fields. At a junction of fields, go straight over a wide crossing path and continue ahead with a tall hedgerow on your right. In the next corner, go through a large wooden swing-gate and continue as before

on a grassy path. Another swing-gate leads you onwards and a third swing-gate leads you, a fraction right, across the centre of another meadow. After two wooden gates in a line of trees, veer **right** across a small pasture, going through a large (open) metal gate. Just ahead, you will notice a second large (sometimes open) metal gate leading out to a road. About 20m **before** you reach it, look to your left for a small wooden swing-gate in the wooden fence.

- 3 Go **left** through this small wooden gate and turn **left**, almost doubling back. A small wooden gate [Mar 2023:unnneeded, now just a gap] leads you to a faint path along the next narrow meadow. Your path curves right through a large wooden swing-gate. Cross over a wide diagonal cinder track to go through a wooden swing-gate. Keep to the right-hand side of a meadow, through a wooden swing-gate in the corner and along a path between fences. You emerge via the wide concreted entrance to *Woodview Farm* onto a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane, coming down in 250m to a T-junction.
- 4 Turn **right** on the road and, in only 30m, **left** on a tarmac drive uphill. After *Hill Farm*, the drive turns to shingle. Ignore paths off, staying on the shaded track as it runs downhill and curves right into a valley. You finally reach the prosperous central hamlet of Hawridge and a junction of tarmac lanes.

“Hawridge” was in Anglosaxon times called “Aucrug”, meaning “Hawk Ridge”, but the village is now widely scattered in the surrounding valleys, so there’s no obvious centre. In fact, this entire walk is, strictly speaking, within Hawridge, since the Windmill and the pub are within the bounds. The village is part of the parish of Cholesbury-cum-St Leonards (the fourth hamlet being Buckland Common). Hawridge was billeted during the Civil War by Parliamentary soldiers and several skirmishes took place. There were so many dead horses on one lane that you cross today that their corpses were used as a barricade, hence the name “Horseblock Lane”. During WW2 so many families were evacuated here and after the war, not surprisingly, decided to stay – hence the recent big rise in population.

Cross straight over in the direction *Cholesbury*, avoiding a descending lane on your right, passing a few houses, quickly reaching a fork. Leave the tarmac here by taking the **right** fork, a stony track named *Hawridge Vale*. The track passes woodland on your left and the entrances to scattered properties on your right, after which the track morphs into a rough horse path. Keep straight ahead through woodland, avoiding a junction at a marker post, finally coming out to a minor road called Horseblock Lane (see *the historic note about Hawridge*).

- 5 Turn briefly **left** on the road, then in 15m **right**, back on the horse path, walking beneath tall oaks. Keep to the **right** at all times, with fields visible through the trees on your right, keeping **right** at a waymarker under a tall oak. After about 750m on this fine woodland path, you reach an important junction. This is where the last field on the right seems to end and your path appears to enter thick forest up ahead. **Ignore** a yellow-arrowed footpath on your right here but, just 5m further along the main path, turn **left** on an unmarked path. The path runs up through bracken and under oaks and hollies and in less than 100m emerges onto the open common and road, with the Windmill in clear view, with the *Full Moon* pub just to your left. [Before or after a break, it is pleasant to venture a few yards further into](#)

Cholesbury, perhaps to watch a game of cricket and see the Pudding Stones and the Jubilee Stone.



The Full Moon is one of the iconic Chiltern pubs, hugely popular so you may need to book (see page 1) if you want food. It is eaten outside in good weather, or in a large permanent tent on the side. No one comes for gastro delights but the food is universally appetising. A big bonus is the matchless ales from the Tring Brewery, including Ridgeway and Side Pocket, or Timothy Taylor if you are less adventurous. The pub is open from 10 a.m., but closed on Mondays, except Bank Holidays.

Hawridge Windmill used to be a smock mill (wider and two-sectioned) and it contained a steam engine, for reasons now unknown – since coal was expensive and wind free. The current tower mill was built in 1883 but it only functioned for about 30 years. The white paint and sentimental “sails” were added later when it drew much appeal from artistic folk. One of these was novelist and dramatist Gilbert Cannan who entertained a whole bevy of famous names, such as D.H. Lawrence, Katherine Mansfield, Hugh Walpole, Lytton Strachey and Bertrand Russell. The windmill is now a private dwelling. The folk of Cholesbury also claim the mill as their own, since the border is a matter of a yard or two away.

- 6 After your break, walk along the road with the pub and windmill on your left, for about 50m, to a road junction with a big white 3-way road sign. Turn **left** here on Ray’s Hill in the direction *Braziers End, Bellingdon, Asheridge*. In 250m, as the road goes round a tight bend, turn **left** on a semi-tarmac track, signed as a public footpath and part of the *Chiltern Heritage Trail*. After a section of tall ash and sycamore, keep straight ahead on a narrow woodland path beside a house on your left, passing a kitchen garden. Shortly, at a marker post, ignore a right fork into trees and shortly after, at another marker post, ignore paths left and right. The path becomes a little nettly, winding and narrow. [In late summer, this is an excellent spot for blackberries.](#) After thick bushes, at a junction in a glade, keep straight on. The terrain is now high beeches and lighter ash trees, in late spring, bluebells. Your path zigzags through a swing-gate into an open field. Ignore paths left and right at this point and keep straight on along the bottom of the valley pasture till at the end a stile leads into the next meadow.



- 7 Some walkers like to continue the valley walk along [Hawridge Bottom](#) for 2½ km, as you could too (turning left finally at a T-junction to re-join this walk); but the route chosen here switches you onto the high ridge where you will find great views and other landmarks. Turn immediately **left** up the side of the meadow. At the top, go through a large (open) wooden gate into a smaller pasture. Go along the left-hand side and, in the corner, **before** you reach a stile, turn **right** in the same pasture. Just before a house, go left-right past a redundant stile, onto a narrow path. *The big house your right is Hawridge Place.* Go over a driveway and over a stile to continue on a narrow path. You come through a wooden swing-gate, across a wide byway, and over a stile into a large meadow with a bench seat from which to admire the newly-revealed views.
- 8 In the next corner go over a stile into another meadow. Shortly, as the hedge ends, you see on your left the converted barn and outhouses of *Hawridge Court*, with the church beyond. Immediately after a stone shed, you will see a path on your left. Your route is straight ahead, but by turning **left** on this path, out through a small metal gate, onto the tarmac, you have an unmissable opportunity to see a little more of this medieval settlement and Hawridge Church, returning the same way.



Hawridge Church of St Mary dates back to at least the early 1200s. It was in a sad state by the 1800s and was rebuilt in 1856 by architect William White using original materials, with colours chosen to outline each feature. On the other side of the hedge is Hawridge Court, now a private Tudor-style dwelling from the 1700s, originally a great Norman moated manor.



A modern kissing-gate leads into the next sloping meadow. Keep to the left-hand edge, under an apple tree, through a wooden swing-gate, leading into a large crop field. You now have terrific views to your left, across the Vale, towards Berkhamsted.

9

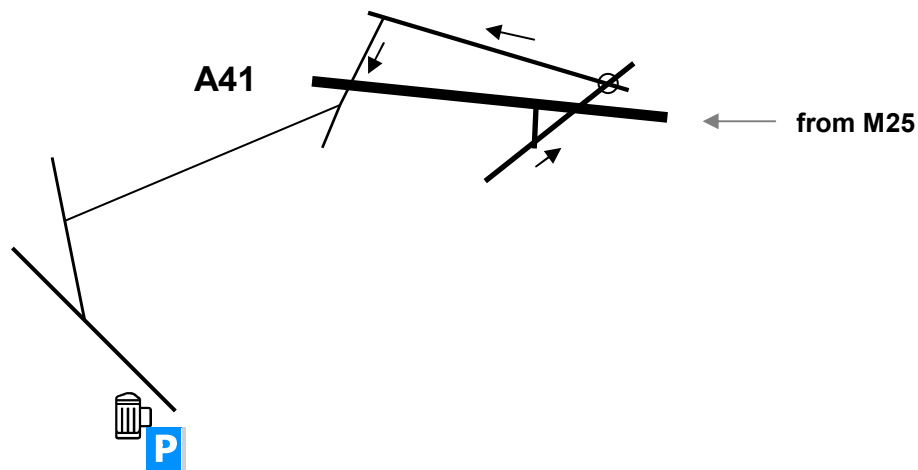
Keep straight ahead along a central path. In 500m, where the field ends, avoid a crossing path and continue this ridge walk similarly across the centre of the next crop field, now with great views on both sides. In 600m, a gap in a line of trees leads to the start of another crop field. *Ahead, to the right is the town of Chesham (see that walk in this series).* Your route is now **immediately left** down the left-hand edge of the field. Turn **right** in the corner, staying on the edge. Your path goes beside a second, rather overgrown, field and runs downhill. At the bottom, keep **left** with the path, through a modern kissing-gate, and keep **left** down a narrow meadow, under wires. At the bottom, veer **right** through a kissing-gate on a path between hedges, through a small metal gate to a road. Turn **left** on the road, quickly reaching the *Hungry Olive*, ready for some after-walk refreshment, where the walk began.



This is another iconic Chiltern pub, although recently re-named and changed. A new young chef started in July 2023. The fare is typical pub favourites, prices ranging up to the higher bracket. Ales are Vale Pale Ale (not over priced), London Pride, and one other. Staff are very young and pleasant. Opening times and facilities are currently uncertain - feedback welcome.

Getting there

By car: Hawridge is very easy to reach from the **A41** trunk road and hence from the M25 exit 20. Come out at the exit for **Chesham**, turn **left** as for **Berkhamsted**, going over the A41, turn **left** at a roundabout as for **Berkhamsted**, in 0.6 mile turn **left** at a mini-roundabout on Dennys Lane, going under the A41 again, immediately at a fork, take the right fork (avoiding the dark shady left fork), out into open fields, in 1¼ miles at a T-junction turn **left** as for Hawridge; in ⅔ mile at an oblique T-junction, turn **left** as for Chesham. The pub is 0.8 mile on your right.



By bus/train: Chiltern Railways or London **Underground** ! to Chesham, then bus 149 or 194. .Check the timetables.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org