



Burnham Beeches: *Blackwood Arms* (pub walk)

Distance: 7½ km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Chilterns

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Author: Phegophilos

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Refreshments: Littleworth Common, Burnham Beeches

Map: Explorer 172 (Chiltern Hills East)

but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Woodland, nature reserve, pub

In Brief

Really, this walk should be called the *John Barleycorn Trail*, because the pub at the centre of this walk has renamed itself as the *John Barleycorn Bar and Restaurant* but, as Juliet said, what's in a name? It's still a fine local. You know it will be a welcoming place when you see a pair of boots hanging by the door with a sign *muddy boots welcome!* It's tucked away in a tiny hamlet near Burnham Beeches so, as they say, "*You'd have to be lost to find us*". Indeed, it is the ideal place to stumble upon. For real ale lovers, this is a dream story: *Brakspear's plus three guest ales*. The pub runs its own beer festival, with sixteen ales and four ciders to choose from at one visit. Good wines are also stacked for quaffing. The food is also now very favourably reviewed: try the duck cassoulet and the fruit crumble. *Please note: the pub is closed on Mondays and they stop serving food at 2pm.* For reservations, ring 01753-645672.

This walk takes you round the famous Burnham Beeches Nature Reserve for a quick tour, on to the pub and back through more wonderful forest .



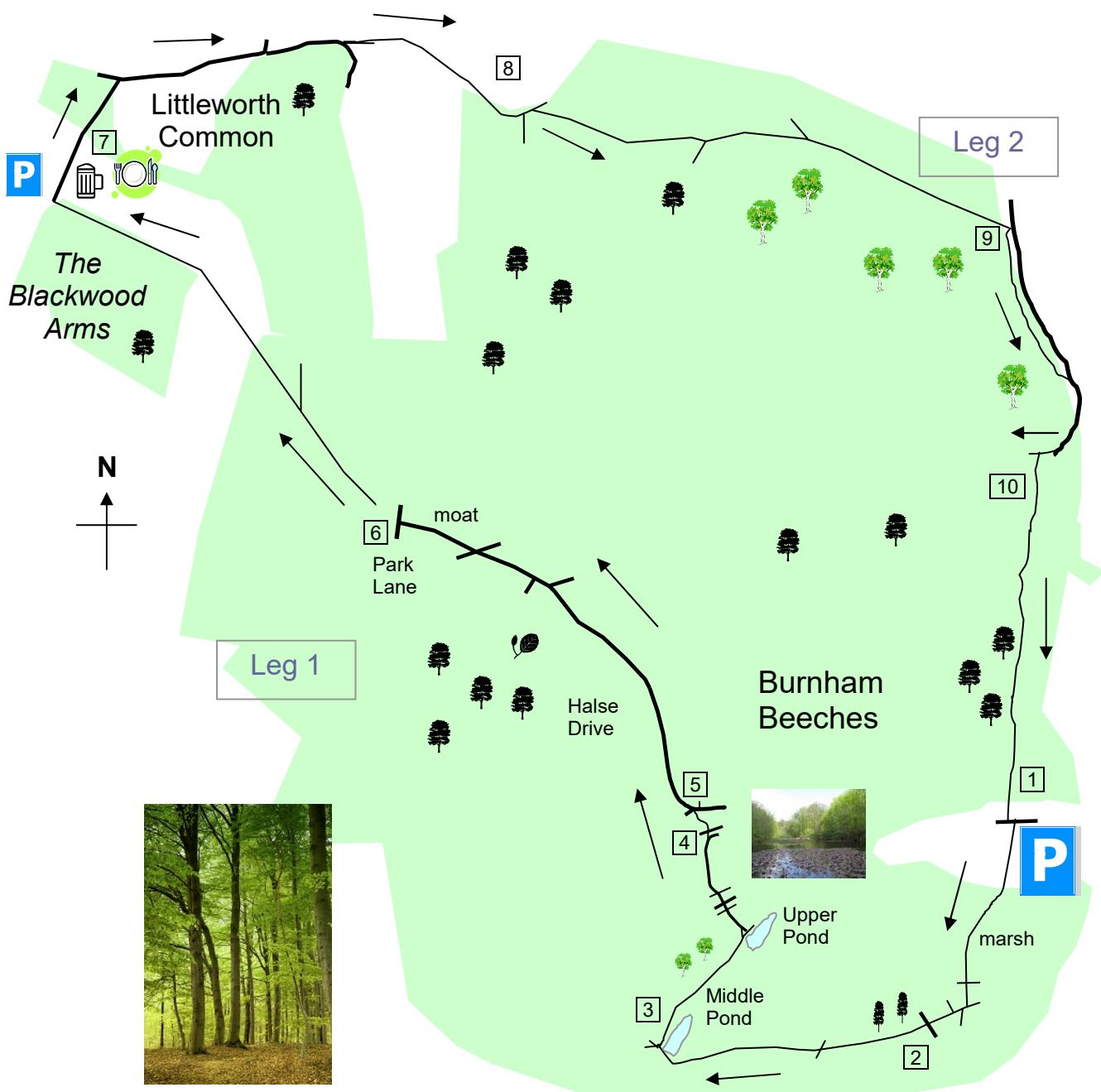
There are no nettles to worry bare legs and any kind of sensible footwear should be fine. However, after a spell of wet weather you may encounter some deep mud just before the pub and then good boots are essential. Your dog is very welcome, especially in the pub.

The walk begins at the **Burnham Beeches** main car park, **postcode SL2 3LB**, www.w3w.co/loose.glass.tables, all-day charge £3. You can of course park opposite the pub in Littleworth Common, **postcode SL1 8PP**, www.w3w.co/fresh.onion.vanish, and have the refreshments at the end. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Leg 1: "Before" 3¾ km=2¼ miles

- 1 Starting near the beginning of the car park, go past a ticket machine, notices and litter bins, **straight across** the grass. Pass to the right of an isolated clump of trees and two benches and join a wide path ahead leading into trees to a large wooden gate. Go through a small wooden gate beside it and continue ahead on a board walk that takes you dry-shod over the wetlands. Avoid the small board walk branching off on the right, which is only open seasonally, and continue to the end. Go straight over a crossing path and, in 40m, turn **right** at a T-junction on a wide path, avoiding all other paths leading off.



- 2 Cross straight over a tarmac lane. On your right is an area of open grass-land and tall pines where you will often see the white cattle that graze the enclosed part of the Nature Reserve. Your path quickly becomes a well-

made sandy shingle path lined with wooden branches. The trees are now denser as you pass several junctions, always keeping ahead on the main path. The path runs along another boardwalk. It now bends right by a fence and takes you to the top of the **Middle Pond**. (There is a worthwhile brief diversion (250m each way) here, through the gate on the **left** keeping the brook on your left. It leads through some of the most spectacular beechwoods and ends at a plaque marking the site of *Gray's Nodding Beech*, celebrated from the famous *Elegy*. You need to retrace your path afterwards as this is not on the route.)

- 3 Walk along the head of the pond, next to a wooden fence, and turn **right** at the next corner on a wide path following the **longer** side of the pond. The path veers away from the pond through beechwoods and reaches the **Upper Pond**. At the **near** corner of the pond, immediately **after** a bench seat, turn **left** to join a wide cinder path leading away from the pond. Your path goes over a crossing path, over a tarmac drive and over another wide crossing path. Stay on the main path as it bends **half right** past a hollow beech to reach the border fence of the enclosure.
- 4 Go through a small wooden gate and bear **right** with the main path. In 50m, at a T-junction with a wide path, turn sharp **left**. In only 30m, turn sharp **right** on a narrower path that runs steeply downhill. Your path skirts a steep hollow on your left. Stay on the path till you are at the far side of the hollow where the path turns **right**, away from the hollow, towards a tarmac drive visible below. When you meet the main drive (**Halse Drive**), turn **left** on it, **ignoring** Victoria Drive on your left. Halse Drive is a highway that spans the entire Nature Reserve.
- 5 Halse Drive takes you through a deep wide area of beechwoods. After some time, the forest becomes lighter and you pass Dukes Drive on the right and Woods Drive (now grassy) on the left. Soon after, you reach an oblique crossroads by a shelter. McAuliffe Drive is sharp right and Morton Drive forks left. Ignore both by keeping dead straight ahead between bollards on a wide but relatively rough path. Soon, *over on your right is a diamond shaped protective earthwork known as Hardicanute's Moat. It is speculation whether it was built by the Viking king since the artefacts found here are 12th-13th century*. Your driveway leads by a green metal barrier to a lane, Park Lane.
- 6 Cross straight over the lane through a large kissing-gate, marked as part of the *Beeches Way*, keeping to the wide path ahead through a wood of oak, silver birch and rowan, which is part of the Portman Burtley Estate. In just over 300m, avoid a path forking right. Soon you are out of the woodland, passing a wet area on your right. Go through the wooden gate and onto a path between fences with horse pastures each side. At the other side, go through a (bypassable) kissing-gate onto a path between a meadow on the right and a wood. (You may find some mud here but it quickly clears.) Go through a small metal gate and continue on a track, passing finally through a kissing-gate out to a lane with the pub on your right.



In the very unlikely case that the pub is closed, the "Jolly Woodman", is just across the heath via the footpath. By the way, the John Barleycorn (aka the Blackwood Arms) is the closest pub to Dorney Wood, the Chancellor of the Exchequer's country retreat. Ken Clarke used to drop in for a convivial chat. Least popular was Norman Lamont. A short scene from the film "My Week with Marilyn" was filmed here.

Leg 2: “After” 3½ km=2¼ miles

- [7] After refreshment, with your back to the pub, turn **right** on the lane, passing some of the cottages of Littleworth Common and ignoring all paths off. At a T-junction, turn **right** on another lane running between fields and pastures. At a junction, ignore the turning left and continue straight ahead on Boveney Wood Lane. Where the lane bends abruptly right, leave it to continue straight ahead on a track marked as a footpath. Your path takes you through the smaller of two metal gates, quickly followed by another similarly and shortly another metal kissing-gate beside a large metal gate, into the woods.
- [8] In about 200m, you come to a junction on the right with a permissive path. (See the walk *Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common* in this series.) Keep straight ahead, ignoring the path, and arriving almost immediately at a fork. Take the **right** fork, the one that goes into the depths of the wood. You now have a wonderful trek through this great spread of mixed woodland, still part of the Portman Burtley Estate. Your path goes gently downhill then uphill. Ignore another permissive path on your right. The forest of oak and pine here is simply magnificent. Ignore another permissive path, this time on your left. Exit the wood finally through a (bypassable) kissing-gate and follow the track, soon becoming concrete, past some cottages of Egypt Wood, and finally out to a road.
- [9] Turn **right** just before the road and take a narrow path to the right of the big *Burnham Beeches* notice. Your path zigzags left-right and runs parallel to the road and beside a bank on the right. Finally you meet a driveway. Turn **left** here to reach the road, then turn **right** for a short stretch. Just after the *Old Cottage* and a bend, turn **right** on a tarmac drive, soon reaching another big *Burnham Beeches* notice. Continue ahead past a metal barrier into the nature reserve, on Dukes Drive. In only 25m, turn **left** on a sand-and-gravel path.
- [10] You now need to keep dead straight on for about 800m to reach the main car park. You will never be much more than 50m from the road on your left, which will be audible but barely visible. At one point near the start, your path goes over a track, after which you should avoid a path forking left. At each junction, simply take the path that is the closest approximation to straight ahead. Eventually, your path goes over a stream, then up again, to pass a grassy space in front of the main car park where the walk began.



For final refreshments, the café at the far end of the car park serves teas and snacks.

Getting there

By car: The easiest way is via the **M40**. Exit at junction 2 **south**, signed A355 *Slough* and follow this road for nearly 3 miles. Approaching the shopping street of **Farnham Common**, just before an Indian restaurant, at a brown sign for *Burnham Beeches*, turn **right**. Go straight over a crossroads onto the common and park in the main car park on the left. If coming from the **M4**: exit north at junction 6, signed A355 *Slough Central Beaconsfield*. Keep straight ahead following the A355, with the occasional brown tourist sign for Burnham Beeches, until you pass through Farnham Common. After the shops, turn **left** at a brown sign. If you prefer to start at **Littleworth Common**, it is signed from the M40 junction 2 south.

By bus/train: bus 74 from Slough station to Farnham Common. Check the timetables. Burnham station is not suitable, being 5 km from the walk.

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