Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Burnham Beeches and Littleworth Common

Distance: 5 km=3 miles — easy walking

Region: Chilterns — Date written: 26-may-2019

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Refreshments: Littleworth Common

Map: Explorer 172 (Chiltern Hills East) *hopefully not needed*

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

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Deep woodland trails, ancient beechwoods, meadows, heath

In Brief

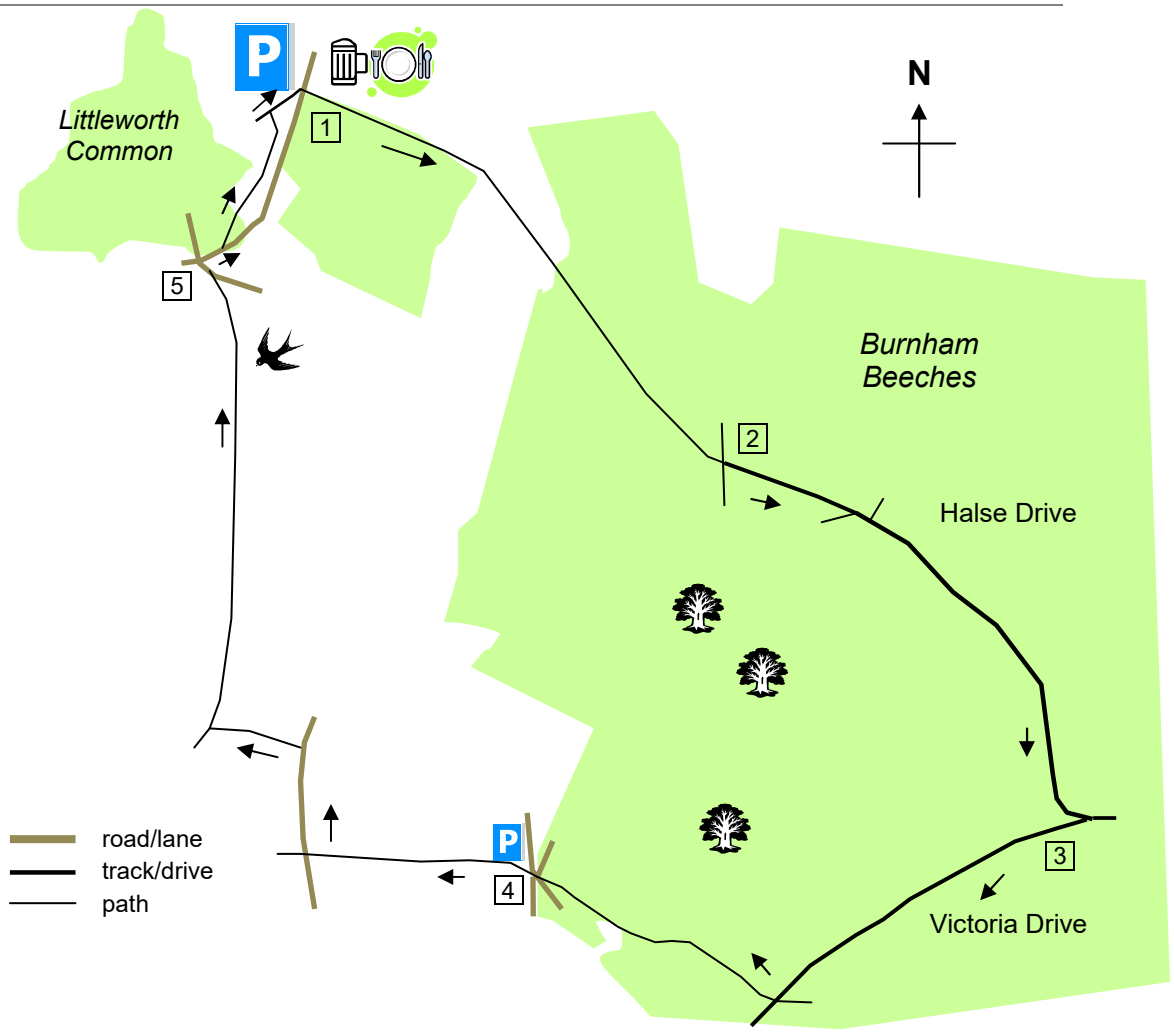
This walk contains an awesome trip through some of the densest and least-known parts of Burnham Beeches, where the great trees seem to envelop you in a shroud of leaves and limbs. As a contrast, the latter part of the walk is along an easy field border, under more great oaks, with a final section across the beautiful Littleworth Common.

The *Blackwood Arms* is famous for its sign "muddy boots welcome!" Its perfect location, quaint garden and historic building are a draw for visitors. Being a Brakespeare pub (with guests), it offers excellent liquid refreshment. Its menu of pub standards has been described as excellent. Note that the pub is **closed on Mondays** and they stop serving food at 2pm. For reservations, ring 01753 645672.

There are no nettles on this walk and no scratchy undergrowth, so any kind of attire is fine. In the warmer seasons, the walk is dry all the way underfoot, but boots may be necessary in damper times. Your dog too will thrive on this walk.

The walk begins at the car park opposite the *Blackwood Arms*, Littleworth Common, postcode **SL1 8PP**, w3w:dirt.flesh.stocks. The car park is public but it is polite to have at least a drink and maybe some food in the pub. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 Beginning at the car park in front of the *Blackwood Arms*, cross the lane, a fraction right, to go through a (bypassable) modern kissing-gate onto a path running between wire fences. After a small metal gate, you have sheep on your left and then horses. After another (bypassable) kissing-gate, on your right you can see *Kilnwood House* and a polo pitch. *(The owner, Thilo Sauter, fought a legal battle to level the pitch, being thwarted by a gas main and another wealthy magnate.)* After the last paddock, go through a small wooden swing-gate into the woodland of the Portman Burtley Estate. *(This relatively enlightened landowner also owns a wide area around Portman Square in London.)* Note that you are on part of the Shakespeare's Way long-distance path and also the Beeches Way. After 400m or so of fine mixed woodland, a large kissing-gate leads to a tarmac lane (Park Lane).

2 Cross straight over the lane to a wide semi-tarmac drive leading across the natural wonderland which is Burnham Beeches. *(For more details see the other walk in this series: "Burnham Beeches and Stoke Common".)* After 250m, you come through bollards to a junction with Morton Drive. Turn **left**, passing a small log cabin, and immediately fork **right**, still on Halse Drive. You pass a junction with Woods Drive (now humble grass), succeeded by Dukes Drive on your left. You can take your chance to enjoy this woodland by using one of the bench seats. Almost 1 km since you entered this wood, the driveway curves left down into a dip with paths leading off.

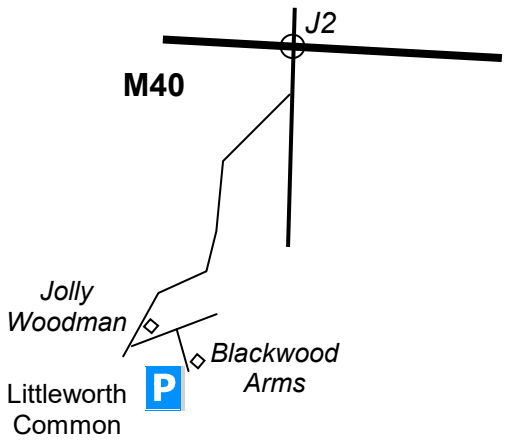
3 Turn sharp **right** here on an austere gravel highway named Victoria Drive, under a dense canopy of beeches. After more than 600m through this magnificent woodland, you reach a crossing path. (For guidance, this is the first decent junction. On the left, the path ascends at an angle.) Turn **right** here on a gently rising path. In 200m, stay on the main path as it veers left, avoiding minor paths on your right. In 100m, you enter an open area fringed with oaks. Go straight on, eventually reaching a road junction beside a large black *Burnham Beeches* signboard. Cross the junction to a signpost. There is a dirt strip on your right here, a makeshift parking area.

4 Go through a new metal gate (thank you, Hillingdon Ramblers) and keep ahead, bearing to the right of the two barbed wire fences on your left. (Strictly, the path seems to go between the fences and over a very slender stile, but there is little point.) Follow the left-hand side of the pasture all the way to a stile at the far side. (The author noticed some cute shy cattle lying in the shelter of the trees and decided to picnic; one-by-one they got up and came over to investigate; all to no avail as only human fodder was available – *never feed or touch livestock!*) After the stile, turn **right** on a quiet road. In nearly 200m, as the first field on your left ends, go **left** on a signed footpath along the left-hand side of a crop field. Where, at the end, you meet a large crop field, also fringed with great trees, where skylarks thrive in summer, turn **right** along the edge, following a line of oaks and ash. At the end, your path rises, crossing a grassy meadow between two oaks. Near the end your path forks. It is worth turning round here to enjoy the distant uninterrupted view. Take either fork and turn **left** on a road.

5 Opposite a white house (an ex-pub?), turn **right** on Common Lane. In only 20m, fork **left** on a narrow unmarked path across the heath. Follow under, or close, to some overhead wires for over 200m until you reach a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a wide path, leading quickly to the car park in front of the *Blackwood Arms* where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: the simplest way to the start of this walk is via the **M40** motorway. Exit at junction 2 south, signed A355 *Slough*. Turn **right** after 500 yds as for *Littleworth Common*. Follow the bendy main road for 2 miles to reach the *Jolly Woodman*. Now turn sharp **left** on Boveney Wood Lane and sharp **right** on Common Lane. The car park is opposite the pub on the right.



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