

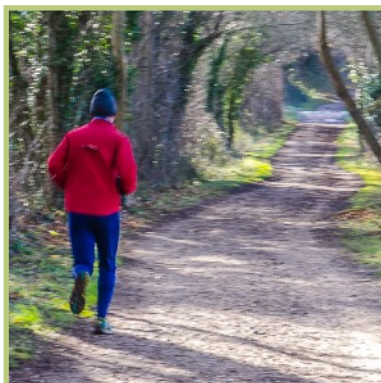
THE WHITE HORSE AND ROTHAMSTED PARK, HERTFORDSHIRE



Moderate Terrain

4 miles
Circular
2 hours

301217



The White Horse is a delightful pub with a cosy bar, a light and fresh dining room, a leafy garden and a sunny terrace, perfect for refreshments before or after your walk.

A 4 mile circular pub walk (including an easy-access option) from the White Horse in Hatching Green near Harpenden in Hertfordshire. The walking route performs a simple loop through the surrounding countryside, taking in the stately Rothamsted Park and House, the Nickey Line former railway, a bluebell wood, quiet arable fields plus a golf course, and enjoying splendid views along the way.

Getting there

Hatching Green is located five minutes from the bustling centre of Harpenden on the one hand or from Junction 9 of the M1 on the other. The White Horse is situated on the B487 Redbourn Lane and has its own car park. There is additional roadside parking along the side road named Hatching Green, adjacent to the pub. If you are coming by public transport, there are bus stops directly outside the pub on Redbourn Lane and Harpenden rail station is just a one-mile (20 mins) walk away.

Approximate post code **AL5 2JP**.

Walk Sections



Start to Bridleway



Leave the pub car park via the vehicle entrance and turn right along the pavement, passing in front of the pub. Immediately after the pub, you will see two side lanes on your right. Take the second of these, Hatching Green,

Access Notes



- 1. The route follows a mixture of surfaced paths and unmade paths across grass and fields, the latter of which can be muddy in winter or after periods of rain.*
- 2. There are no stiles or livestock on route.*
- 3. The full circuit includes some steady gradients, four kissing gates and a flight of steps plus three road crossings that need care. It also crosses one paddock that may be holding horses and a golf course (so please watch out for any stray flying balls).*
- 4. If you are looking for an easy-access option, by following the outward leg to the bluebell wood (Knott Wood) as a 'there-and-back' route (of 3 miles), you will avoid all the obstacles, road crossings, horses and golf course. This version would be suitable for rugged pushchairs and mobility scooters whenever the ground is firm.*

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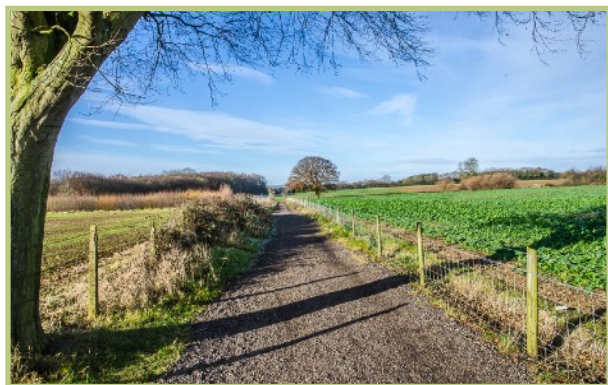


which leads you between triangular areas of grass. At the end of the green, keep straight ahead on the access lane, signed as a public footpath into Rothamsted Park (passing the park lodge on your left). Beyond the buildings, continue ahead on the park's main entrance avenue which leads you between arable fields.

Rothamsted Park is one of four sites managed by Rothamsted Research, a world-leading research organisation dealing with agricultural science and strategy to benefit farmers worldwide. The centre runs a number of long-term agricultural experiments covering topics from crop rotation to insects and grazing. The Broadbalk Experiment, a study of wheat grown continuously in rotation, has been running here since 1843.

Towards the end of the avenue, ignore the tarmac side branch on your right and ignore a footpath through a kissing gate on your left. Instead, continue just a few paces further then turn right through a wide gateway to join the signed grass bridleyway. (If you reach the fork in the drive by the entrance for Gatsby's Mansion, you have gone too far).

1 → 2 Bridleway to Knott Wood



Follow the grass bridleway path with a fence running on your right. Further along, the bridleway swings left, leading you to a pair of wide metal gates. Pass through the gap to the left of these and you will reach a surfaced track. Do NOT turn sharp right to join this (signed as the bridleway into Rothamsted Park), instead turn left for a few metres to reach a crossroads of tarmac tracks (with a fingerpost on your right).

You will have a good view of the rooftops of Rothamsted Manor ahead. The first record of the Rothamsted estate was made in 1212. The house we see today was created after the English Civil War. The clock bell has the date 1650 and the stack of 5 chimneys bears the date 1654 on its base. John Bennet Lawes, the founder of Rothamsted Experimental Station, now Rothamsted Research, was born in this house in 1814. The house had been the ancestral home of his family since 1623. During World War II the house became a listening post, recording and feeding messages to Bletchley Park for decoding. After the war it was converted into accommodation for staff and visitors to Rothamsted and today is used by the park and also as a wedding and events venue.

Turn right at the crossroads, following the tarmac track signed as a public bridleway towards the Nickey Line and the Farm. Follow the track between fields and, where it bends right, follow the bridleway signs, turning left onto a smaller track and then (with gates ahead), turning right to join a stone path between fences. After a couple of bends, the stone path continues with a woodland immediately on your left, Knott Wood, well-known for its bluebell display in the late spring. The woodland itself is not on our walking route, but there are permissive paths within the wood should you wish to explore. If you are following the easy-access version of the walk, now is the time to turn around and

retrace your steps back to the White Horse.

2 → 3 Knott Wood to A5183 Crossing



Continue along the stone bridleway path between fences, with the woodland on your left. At the end of the woodland you will come to a crossroads of bridleways, marked with a blue fingerpost. Turn left here to join the Nickey Line, signed to Redbourn and Hemel Hempstead. This path is popular with joggers and cyclists, so take care with children and dogs. Approximately 7 miles long, the Nickey Line footpath and cycleway is a former railway line (the Harpenden to Hemel Hempstead Railway). The railway was built to link the straw plait trade in Hemel Hempstead with the hat makers of Luton, but also to provide a local passenger service, soon linking to the main line services to London from Harpenden. The rail line closed in 1979.

The name Nickey Line has been given various explanations. One account is that it may have derived from the term funicular, due to the steep gradients. Other explanations include a link with the half-length trousers called knickerbockers, either because they were worn by the navvies who built the line, or because the railway was considered half size, being single track. Another theory is that the name comes from the parish of St Nicholas in Harpenden. This green corridor is a haven for wildlife so keep your eyes peeled, we were lucky enough to see two kestrels when we walked.

At the end of this stretch of the rail line, the path descends between sleeper banks and then swings right to reach the road alongside a roundabout. The route now crosses two branches of this roundabout at the designated but unsignalled crossing points, so take particular care to wait for good gaps in the traffic. Cross Redbourn Lane (ahead) and then follow the tarmac path swinging right to cross the next road branch (the A5183). After this second crossing, bear left to continue on the Nickey Line. Further along, the Nickey Line crosses a concrete entrance drive. Just 10 paces later, turn left (through or alongside the kissing gate) to reach the crossing point for the A1583.

3 → 4 A5183 Crossing to Harpenden Golf Course

Taking care of traffic, cross the A5183 and take the flight of steps ahead that lead you up to a kissing gate. Go through the gate to enter a crop field and cross this diagonally left (about 11 o'clock), following the line of the single wooden pylons. As you continue to climb up this field, remember to glance back over your shoulder to appreciate the lovely views that are opening up behind.

At the top of the field, go through the hedge gap to enter a



second field, where you will see a choice of two paths. Take the right-hand of these, a grass track which follows the line of the hedge on your right. Continue until you reach a T-junction with another grass track and a hedgerow ahead. Turn right for just 20 paces and then turn left at the waymarker post. Follow the narrow path leading you through a small woodland belt, full of trees with beautiful twisted trunks. At the end of this path you will emerge to the edge of Harpenden Golf Course.

4 → 5 Harpenden Golf Course to Paddock



The next stretch of the walk follows the edge of this golf course so please show respect for the golfers by allowing them to play their shots before you continue, and keep your eyes peeled for any stray flying golf balls. Turn right, following the line of the hedge on your right, and join the surfaced path which swings left alongside a tee. At the end of the surfaced section, simply keep ahead on the grass, keeping close to the hedgerow on your right.

Follow the hedgerow, passing several greens and tees on your left. About 20 metres before you reach an access lane ahead, look out for a waymarker arrow on a tree on your right. Turn right here to join the narrow path which winds through the small woodland. At the far end, you will emerge to a surfaced access section within the golf course. Keep ahead to join this (with a fence on your right) for a few paces. Where it ends, turn right across the grass to stay alongside the fence on your right. You will reach a kissing gate ahead which leads you into a paddock (which may be holding horses).

5 → 6 Paddock to End

Walk ahead along the paddock edge, staying close to the fence on your right. On your right you will have a lovely view of Hammonds End House, which sits at the centre of Hammonds



End Farm. The house is a three-storey, early Georgian mansion, thought to date from the early 1700s. It is Grade II listed and contains period features including a large inglenook in the kitchen and an ornate service staircase. The farm is run organically and has been in the hands of the Roberts family for three generations. The former owner, Stanley White (a keen poker player), gambled and lost a large chunk of Hammonds End Farm land. That is why, to this very day, a golf course runs right through the middle of the farm. Every year the farm grows around 10 acres (rough the size of 10 football pitches) of cereals, wildflowers and seeds that are not harvested but are left instead as a food source for local wildlife, especially birds, to feed on during the winter months when other food may be in short supply.

At the end of the paddock, pass through the kissing gate in the right-hand corner to emerge to the farm access lane, Hammonds End Lane. Turn left to join the lane and follow it leading you past a maintenance yard and then the club house and car park, both on your right. You will emerge out to a T-junction with Redbourn Lane. Turn right to follow the pavement, leading you back into Hatching Green. Cross over four side roads (Oakhurst Avenue, Oakfield Road, High Elms and Hatching Green Close) and, soon afterwards, you will reach the White Horse on your left for some well-earned hospitality.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and an Ordnance Survey map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure you check the tide times before you set out.

