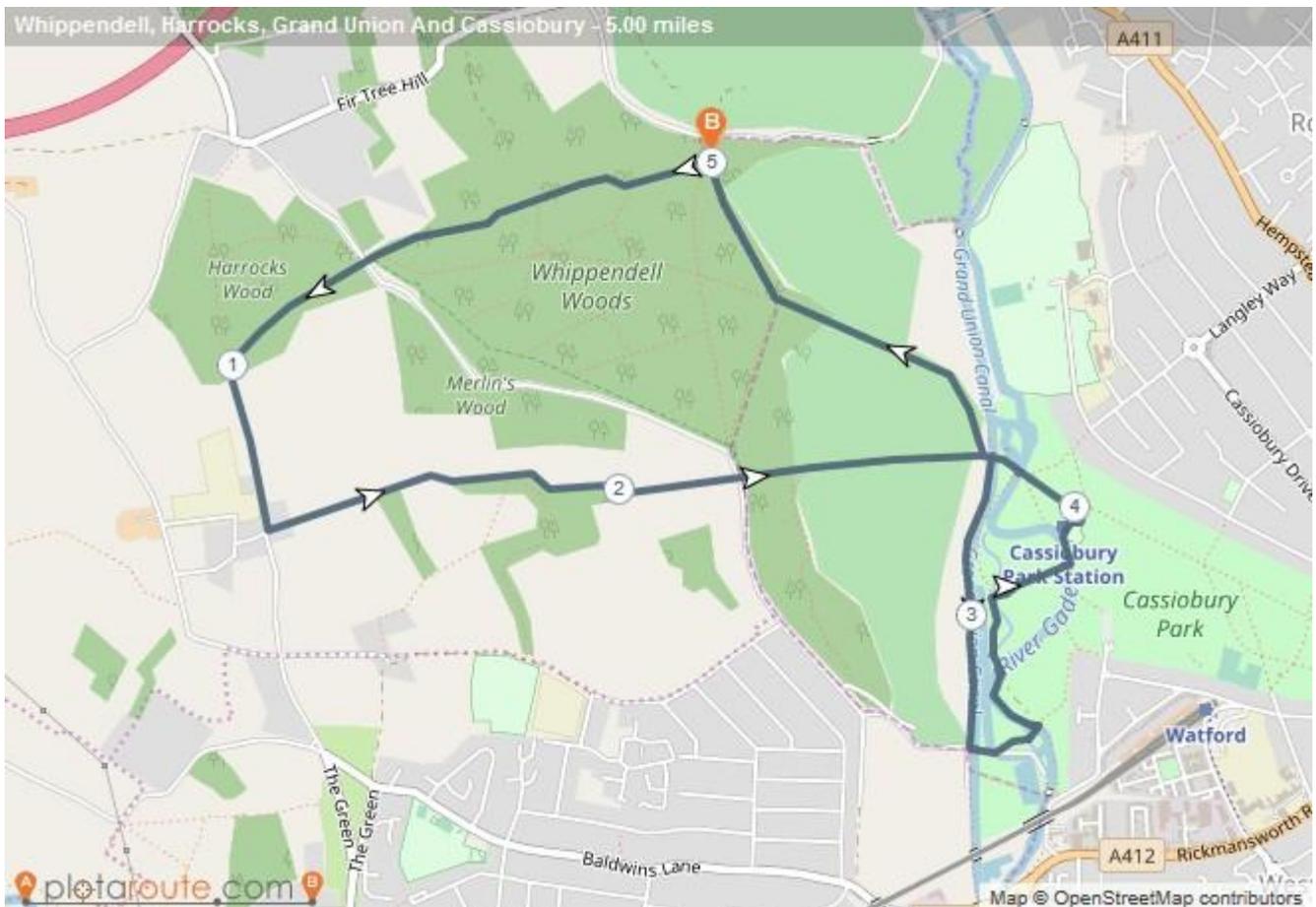


2019 Late Winter Walk - Whippendell Woods, Harrocks Wood, the Grand Union Canal and Cassiobury Park

This 5 mile 'figure of eight' walk takes in several woods and fields in the southwest of the county in the Three Rivers and Watford Districts. The walk also includes the Grand Union Canal towpath and the Nature Reserve in Cassiobury Park. A shorter walk is possible by doing either one, but not both, of the loops in the 'figure of eight'.

Start and finish are at Whippendell Woods car park on Grove Mill Lane, north of Watford. The walk can also be accessed using public transportation: take the Metropolitan Underground Line to its terminus at Watford Station and then walk through Cassiobury Park.

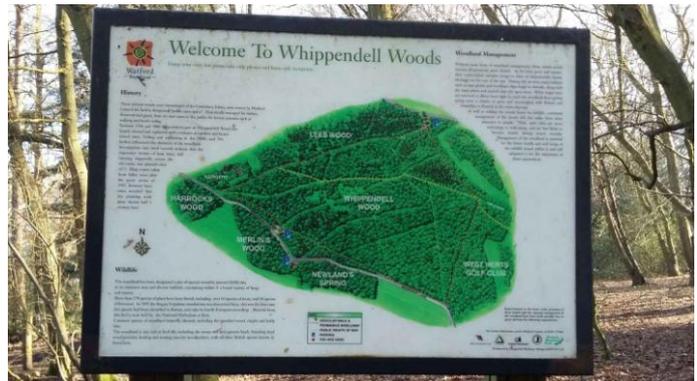
Although CPRE did this walk in February and it was lovely then, optimal timing may be late April / early May when the woods should be carpeted in bluebells.



Drive to the start from the A411 north of Watford. Turn west onto Grove Mill Lane. After 0.8 mile, the Whippendell Woods car park (free) is on the left. Be aware there are barriers preventing wide vehicles from entering.



At the south end of the car park is an information board describing the woods, which are a Site of Special Scientific Interest, and showing the many footpaths.



Our walk leaves the car park via the broad level path heading west. After a quarter-mile, stay on the main path to the right of a large depression, ignoring paths to the sides. The path then dips and rises and runs alongside an ancient earthbank and a series of fences on the right.



Keep an eye out for flora and fauna. We spotted two bouncy muntjac deer, a bird building her nest, and clumps of snowdrops.



Eventually the path descends to a wooden gate at Rousebarn Lane. Go through the gate and cross the road, watching for any traffic, and go through the gate on the other side.



You are now entering Harrocks Wood. Follow the broad path straight ahead in a southwesterly direction.



After another quarter-mile, there is a bench, and soon after the path forks. Follow the left-hand fork, which turns south.



Proceed through a wooden kissing gate, and follow the path straight ahead (south) with open fields on the left.



After a few hundred yards there is a clear view of the pasture with alpacas on the right.



Continue south on the path, through a metal kissing gate and onto a gravel track that soon turns to tarmac. Walk past a house and then a school playground on the right. Just after a large open-sided barn on the left, there is a signpost pointing east "Public Footpath Rousebarn Lane 3/4".



Turn left here, passing through a wooden kissing gate.



Follow the path east, initially hemmed in by hedgerows but soon opening up with pleasant views over the fields to the north. Continue straight ahead alongside the field.



You will soon come to a wooden gate on the left marked "Newlands Spring", and then a bit further on a wooden gate on the right marked "Dell Wood". You stay on the main path straight ahead.



Continue with the wood on your right and a field on your left. At the end of the field, pass between two wooden posts (one marked "Croxley Green Boundary Walk") and straight ahead through the middle of an arable field towards the wood beyond.



Pass through a wooden kissing gate and across the road, watching for any traffic.



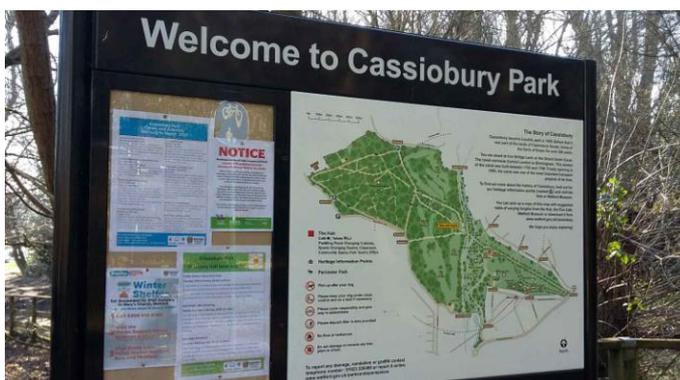
On the east side of the road there is a sign "Public Footpath 31 Leading to Cassiobury Park 820 yds". Follow the path straight on up the hill to reach the West Herts golf course.



The path then crosses the golf course before descending through a small wood to reach the Grand Union Canal at Bridge 167.



Where the path meets the canal there is a helpful information board with a detailed map of Cassiobury Park. Notice the area marked "Nature Reserve" through which the walk passes later on.



Descend to the canal towpath and head south, with the water on your left. This is a tranquil stretch of the canal for about three quarters of a mile to Bridge 168. Climb the steps up to the bridge and turn left (east) crossing over the canal.



Walk east along the tarmac lane, past the wooden sign for Cassiobury Farm and Fishery. (The farm, lake and watercress beds are open to the public in the summer.)



A few yards further on, a footpath veers off to the left (northeast), marked with a dark green and yellow bollard. Take this path.



Follow the path across a small foot bridge and then a much bigger one (photo) across the River Gade.



On the far side of the bridge, turn left and take the dirt path along the riverbank of the Gade. Follow the path along the river and then across another bridge and onto a tarmac path heading north.



You are now in the Cassiobury Nature Reserve. Continue north on the path, over another bridge and straight ahead. There is a sign "Look out for bats."



Soon you will come to a path junction. Take the path to your right immediately going over a small footbridge with green metal railings.



Follow the path across another bridge, from where you can see a modern building. Refreshments are available at "Daisy's in the Park" Cafe inside this building.



From the cafe, take the broad tarmac path heading northwest back towards the canal. Before reaching the canal you will see the weir at the site of an old mill on the River Gade.



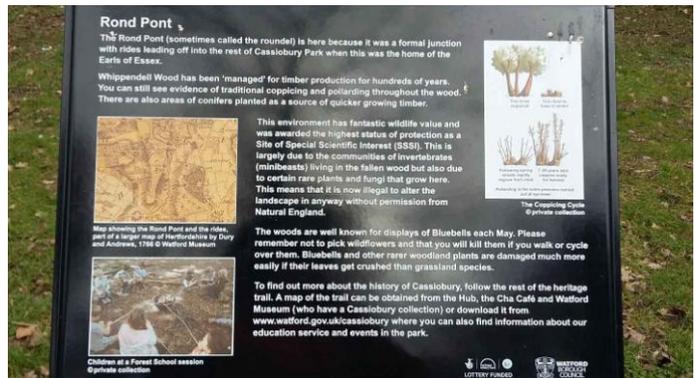
Continue across the canal. At the base of the wooden steps, turn right and take Footpath 30 to the northwest. The path climbs gently up the hill away from the canal...



... before curving left onto the broad Lime Avenue. Follow this avenue straight ahead as it crosses the golf course.



At a 5-way path junction (signed "Rond Pont") stay to the right, following the level path for about a quarter-mile back to the car park and the starting point.



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If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and celebrate the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone to enjoy. For more information on our work and how you can help, please visit our website at www.cpreherts.org.uk.

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This route last walked by CPRE in mid February 2019.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended and a compass may be helpful.

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CPRE Hertfordshire is a Charitable Incorporated Organisation, registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587. We are the county branch of the Campaign to Protect Rural England.