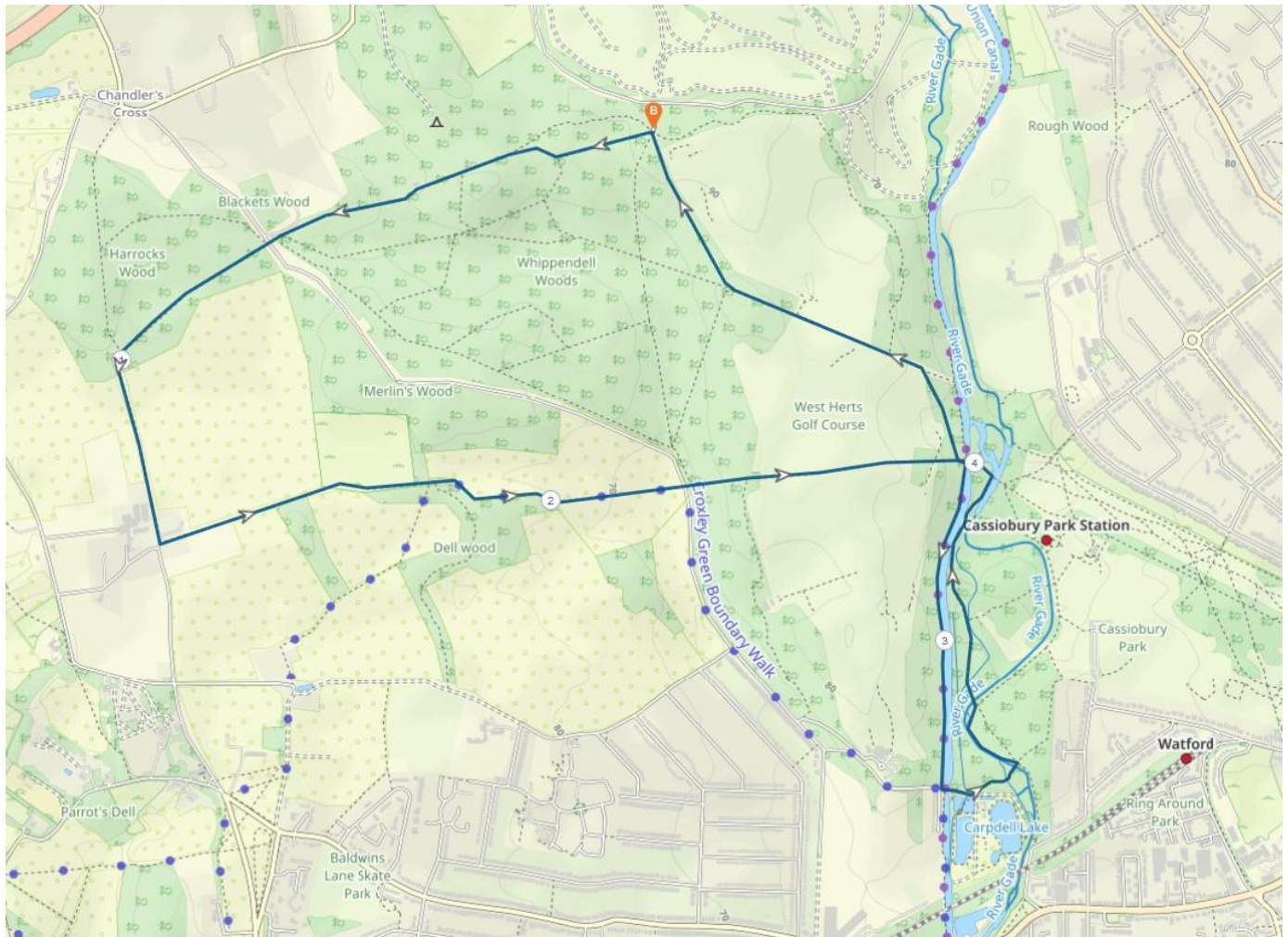




The countryside charity
Hertfordshire

Whippendell and Harrocks Woods, Grand Union Canal, and Cassiobury



This 'figure of eight' walk of just under 5 miles takes in ancient woodlands in the southwest of the county in the Three Rivers and Watford Districts. The walk also includes the Grand Union Canal towpath and the Cassiobury Nature Reserve, and is surprisingly tranquil for being so close to busy Watford.

Distance: 4.8 miles / 7.8 km

Ascent: 298 feet / 91 metres

Duration: 2 - 3 hours

Difficulty: Easy to moderate - some hills

Start / Finish: Whippendell Wood car park on Grove Mill Lane, north of Watford.
(what3words known.lift.dozed) Alternatively, start from the Metropolitan Underground Line terminus at Watford Station.

Refreshments: The Cedar Cafe in Cassiobury Park

The free Whippendell Wood car park is 0.8 miles west of the A411, on Grove Mill Lane. Be aware there are barriers preventing wide vehicles from entering.

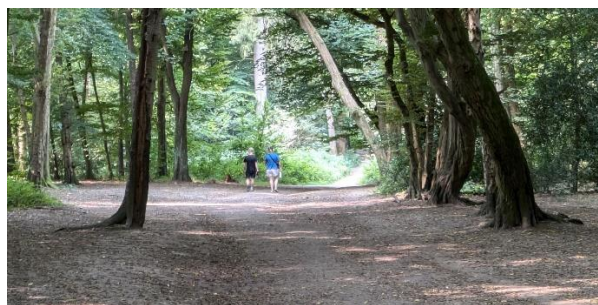
Alternatively, to access this walk via public transport, take the Metropolitan Underground Line to its terminus at Watford Station and then walk through Cassiobury Park.



Whippendell Wood is an ancient mixed woodland dating from around 1600. It is also a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is home to deer, badgers, bats and many different bird species.

Our walk leaves the car park via the broad level path heading west.

After a quarter-mile, stay on the main path still heading west and keep 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.



Eventually the path descends to a wooden gate at Rousebarn Lane. Go through the gateway 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.



Harrocks Wood is a designated Site of Nature Conservation Interest and is a good area for watching butterflies and other fauna. The spring bluebells and autumn foliage are well worth a visit.

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

Proceed through a wooden kissing gate and then a metal kissing gate, and follow the path straight ahead with open fields on the left.



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 on the right.

Just after a large barn on the left, there is a signpost pointing east “Public Footpath Rousebarn Lane $\frac{3}{4}$ ”. Turn left here, passing through a wooden 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. Stay on the main path as you pass a wooden gate on the left marked “Newlands Spring” and another on the right marked “Dell Wood”.

Continue with the wood on your right and a field on your left. At the end of the field, pass through a gate and walk straight on through the middle of another field to reach a road.



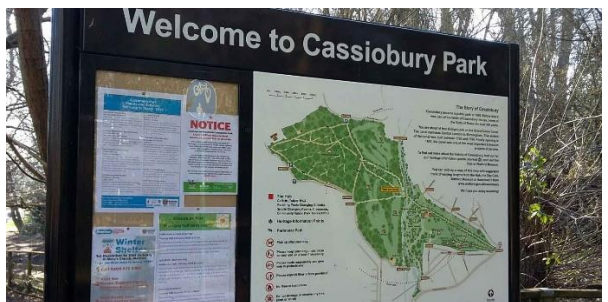
Cross the road, watching for any traffic and continue in the same direction on the other side, following Public Footpath 31 towards Cassiobury Park.

Continue on this path straight on up the hill to reach West Herts golf course.



The path 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.



Do not cross the bridge; instead, turn right and walk along the canal towpath heading south, with the water on your left.

This is a tranquil stretch of the canal, for about a little over half 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. (Open to the public on specific dates between March and October.)

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



Follow the path across a small foot bridge and then a larger one across the River Gade, one of England's rare and precious chalk streams.

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 as it twists and turns.

You will come to a path junction with a footbridge on the left. Walk over this footbridge to recross the Gade and continue on the tarmac path heading north.

You are now in the Cassiobury Nature Reserve.



The 25 hectare nature reserve is primarily wetlands, formerly watercress beds, and is a valuable habitat for many species of birds and waterfowl.

Continue north on the path, over another bridge and straight ahead.

Shortly you will come to a path leading off to the right. If you wish, turn right here to explore more of the nature reserve; otherwise, continue straight ahead on the tarmac path, past a bird hide.



Soon the canal appears on the left, and you will reach Bridge 167 once again.

At the path junction, turn right for refreshments at Cedars Café; otherwise turn left.

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.

This is a broad gravel path that slowly curves away from the canal and gradually ascends...



... before curving left onto the broad Lime Avenue.

Follow this avenue straight ahead as it crosses the golf course.



At the next path junction stay to the right, following the level gravel path for about a quarter-mile back to the car park and the starting point.

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This route last walked by CPRE in August 2024.

If you have enjoyed this walk, please consider supporting CPRE Hertfordshire in our efforts to protect and promote the Hertfordshire countryside for everyone. For more information on our work, or to sign up for our newsletter, make a donation, or volunteer with us, please visit www.cpreherts.org.uk

CPRE Hertfordshire is a registered charity no. 1162419, address: 31a Church Street, Welwyn, AL6 9LW, tel 01438 717587.

Note: all walkers do so at their own risk. Suitable footwear and clothing are recommended.