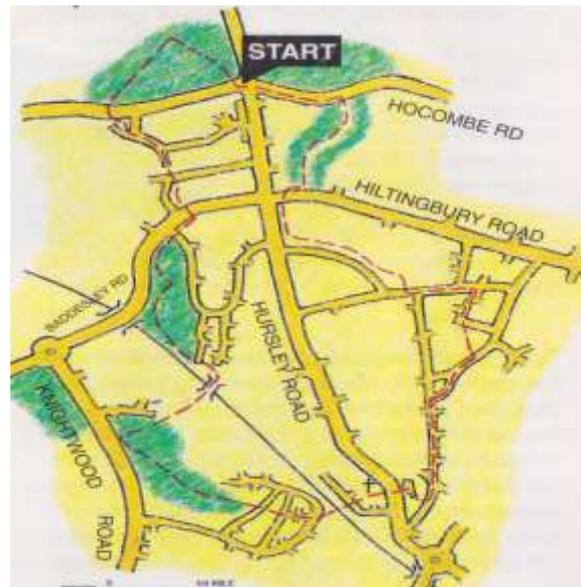


Chandlers Ford Round Walk

Description: This walk goes through ancient woodland, three nature reserves and along a number of interesting suburban footways. Length – 6 miles.

Starting point Junction of Hook Road and Hursley Road

Parking: Layby on Hook Road, adjacent to Hook Wood, 25m. from junction



From the layby, climb over the stile on the northerly side of Hook Wood and enter Hocombe Upper Plantation. Follow the footpath through this mainly mature beech, oak and birch wood – it is worth remembering that this path is shown as a road on a map of the area dated 1588. Go down a steep slope and straight up the other side. A field boundary is on your right until you turn left down a broad bridleway. You are now walking down another ancient roadway, also shown on the 1588 map, with views over open countryside towards Hawstead, Ratlake and,

where the vegetation permits, across Hursley Forest as far as Merdon Manor and beyond.

Keep straight on and eventually the path will drop down to the corner of the wood and you will emerge into Hook Road. Cross over and walk to the left along the pavement for around 30 yards until you see a finger post pointing down some steps to your right. Take this path up through the wood, past some houses on your left and you will come out into Hook Crescent where you will turn right. Follow the right hand pavement until you enter a short cul-de-sac. From the far end of the cul-de-sac there is a short, boarded footpath that leads into Beechwood Crescent. Cross over Beechwood Crescent and take another footpath that leads onto the busy Baddesley Road, which must be crossed with care.

Go straight ahead again along another short stretch of footpath before turning right along a path that runs along the back of some houses. Walk along this path, through the trees, Baddesley Road will now be on your right. Keep straight on until you

emerge on the footway in North Millers Dale where on the other side of the road you will see the entrance to a well defined path, this is **Flexford Nature Reserve**. The path winds through this coppiced woodland, over a stream bridge and then alongside Baddesley Road, through a kissing gate into a narrow field between woodland and the road.

The path eventually bears left away from the road and back into trees and you then follow the path along the stream (on your right). Here there are many birds and an occasional sight of a deer. Do not cross the footbridge on your right but keep straight ahead with the stream on your right, over the sleeper bridge and continue with the stream on your right until you come to a brick bridge some 100 yards ahead.

Cross this bridge and then another sleeper bridge and turn right, following the path with the stream still on your right. This is an area of scrub and marsh where once there were snipe and flocks of wintering birds.



The path continues to follow the stream which winds most attractively through the trees and emerges over a handrailed wooden bridge and on to a cul-de-sac road. Follow the footpath straight over and up the rise into a close. Turn right along the path between two houses (numbered 16 and 17) into Ramalley Copse, another nature reserve created by Eastleigh Borough Council.

Keep straight ahead for a short distance through the wood and then turn right crossing a bridge over the railway line that runs from Romsey to Chandlers Ford. Go through a kissing gate and up some wooden steps under an oak tree. After descending the steps on the other side the pathway narrows and becomes a pretty walk among birches and alders with a few mature trees of oak, ash and beech.

Bear to your right as you meet a stream with an open space beyond where you will see the houses of the Valley Park housing estate. Once out of the wood turn left over a bridge over the stream. Go straight ahead and follow the path across the green, along the wall, which will be on your right, and into the corner of a small car park. Cross the car park and go through the gate, into the Woodland Trust Reserve, which is part of the Knight Wood. Bear immediately left for a few yards until you are level with the car park fence and then turn right up into the wood. Continue straight ahead until you meet a wide path running parallel to the road.

To the right the gate to Knightwood Road can be seen, but take the path to the left. Follow the path, for about 500 yards, bearing left at a fork until it then sweeps left, past houses, and drops down to emerge through a pinch stile into Foyle Road, opposite no. 26, a total of 700 yards.

Cross the road and walk to the left along the footway, turn right along the board fenced footpath at the side of no. 26 and continue across the grassed area. Turn to the right along the footway and immediately left to reach the junction of Keepers Close

and Shannon Way. Cross the road and walk left for a few yards and then turn right into the way-marked footpath across the green space, over the wide cycleway and the bridge over the stream. Go up the steps, cross the railway line, STOP, LOOK AND LISTEN, then over the stile to reach the road.

Turn left and then immediately right into Kerry Close. After 50 yards turn right onto a path and continue along Prospect for 100 yards. Ahead observe a sign Southdale Court. 20 yards before this see on your left a pair of garages and a path to the side. Take it. Pass further garages, the Community Hall and the Richie Memorial Hall to the busy Hursley Road. Note St Boniface Church on your left. Cross Hursley Road and continue down the private lane opposite and through the metal pinch gate at the end. Follow the path to emerge on Park Road. Turn left along the footway, pass Merrileas Drive and Parkland Close; cross Brownhill Road. Turn right into Tyrrel Road.

After 75 yards where Tyrrel Road bends left, go straight ahead to join a narrow footpath at the far side of some houses. Follow it to cross Merdon Avenue to a sign-posted wider path. Follow it to the end of Common Road to emerge onto Forest Road. Go left past Forest Close. Just before and opposite Adamson Close take the path going left across an open space with grass and trees to Pine Road. Go left at the footway passing Park Road and Cuckoo Bushes Lane, cross the road to the protective railings on the other side. Turn into the footpath and in 200 yards you will be in Hiltingbury Playing Fields.

Once in the Playing Fields take the tarmac path to the left, under birch trees along the field edge to the far corner keeping the pavilion and a children's play area to your right. At the end of the tarmac turn right along the leafy path, which leads to Hiltingbury Road. Take care when crossing here to the gate opposite, beyond which you will see a display board for Hocombe Mead Nature Reserve.



After 65 yards, turn left along the raised board path which then meanders alongside a stream through woodland. Immediately after crossing another boardwalk. There is a clearing with decorative woodcarvings. Turn to the left (Do NOT go up the steps) and go through a kissing gate into the field. Follow the path along the stream, cross left over the railway sleeper bridge, walk up the field between the houses and out over the stile into Hocombe Road.

Turn left and walk uphill until you reach the crossroads, cross straight over Hursley Road into Hook Road where you started your walk.