

Long Walk

Distance: 7 miles, allow 3½ to 4 hours

Access Information: No stiles, 6 kissing gates, flight of 8 steps downhill and narrow natural paths. A steady uphill climb for ¾ mile and steep descent, otherwise fairly level.

Description of route:

- Leave Harlington rail station and turn right over the bridge. Then turn immediately right down a footpath between the house and fence. Keep right alongside the fence until you reach a pond.
- At the pond follow the road straight on and around to the left. After 100m turn right at the footpath sign towards fields, then right at the fence, around the back of the house, then over the footbridge and across the field alongside the hedge. Continue to follow the path through the wood and then alongside fields.
- When you reach the gates for the disused tip at the junction with the railway underpass turn left following the path between the hedges (with the tip on your right). When you emerge turn right and follow the path alongside the field edges, eventually heading uphill following the Icknield Way. Then turn right through a gap in the hedge following the bridleway and Icknield Way signs, follow the path uphill to a gate.
- (To divert to Sundon village from this point, take the path diagonally across the field through another gate and along the track to Common Road and the Red Lion Public House. Approx ½ mile.)
- To continue on the walk, turn left, then take the path on the far side of the hedge to the right, uphill, to the top of the field. Then turn left, following the hedge, then past a gate.



- At the road turn right, then after 20m cross the road through the kissing gate into Sundon Hills. Go through the picnic area following the fence. Go through the 2nd kissing gate on the left, into the field, and follow the path next to the trees, heading away from the car park and road.
- Then go through the next kissing gate and follow the path around to the right and take the next right turn through another kissing gate (waymarked Chiltern Way) and then alongside the hedge. At the end of the field turn left and follow the path past the wood, then turn left along the track, then turn right (follow signs) following the field edge path with the wood on your right.
- To follow the **Medium Walk** back to Harlington take the path to the left across the field and then follow directions below. To continue the **Long Walk** to Sharpenhoe take the path to the right into the wood.
- In the wood turn right at the waymarker, heading uphill. Go through the wood then follow the path slightly to the right and along the track (with views through the trees on your left). When the track bends around to the right go straight ahead through the kissing gate, then across the field towards the right. Then through the next kissing gate, down the steps and across the road to Sharpenhoe Clappers car park.
- From the car park follow the surfaced path. From here there are 2 routes to reach the pub at the bottom of the hill. You can take the first left following the bridleway downhill; this is surfaced, less steep with no steps. Or you can continue along the top of the slope around to the left with great views and then descend a steep flight of 160 steps (see **Short Pub Walk below for directions to the pub**).
- From the pub walk alongside the main road to the left (in the direction of Harlington) to the end of the village.



Then turn left at the footpath sign into a field and follow the track alongside the hedge. Then turn right at the hedge crossroads (the hedge should be on your right). Follow this path around the field as it veers to the left - don't take the first path to the right over the bridge but do take the 2nd path on the right through the hedge and over a footbridge, then turn left and straight on (ignore the path to the left). Then follow the path to the right alongside the ditch.

- Cross the road and follow the footpath alongside the hedge, then through the gap and follow the hedge on the other side. Then turn right alongside the ditch heading uphill, past the wood on your left, to the road.
- Turn left along the road, then left again alongside the wall and across the park, past the church. Then turn left at the road. At the crossroads go straight across along Station Rd to the rail station (or turn left for the pub).



Medium Walk

Distance: 5½ miles, allow 2¾ to 3¼ hours

Access Information: No stiles and 2 wide kissing gates. Narrow natural paths. A steady uphill climb for ¾ mile and quick descent, otherwise fairly level.

Description of route:

- Follow the description for the Long Walk until the Medium Walk is mentioned - then follow the path across the field and into the wood through the kissing gate. Then ignoring paths to the left and right go straight downhill, through a small clearing, eventually reaching a field.
- Go through the kissing gate and head diagonally across the field towards the hedge, then turn left along the bridleway. Turn right and follow the country road for 250m, then turn left following the footpath alongside the hedge, then to the right at the waymark post to follow the path across the field. Eventually cross over a ditch and then straight on, crossing to the right over the next ditch and then turn to the left following the path alongside the ditch heading uphill, past the wood on your left, to the road.
- Turn left along the road, then left, again alongside the wall and across the park, past the church. Then turn left at the road. At the crossroads go straight across along Station Rd to the rail station (or turn left for the pub).



Short Pub Walk from Sharpenhoe

Distance: 1½ miles, allow ½ to 1 hour

Access Information: No stiles and 3 kissing gates (wide enough for pushchairs). Narrow natural paths. A steep uphill climb for ½ mile and steep descent of 160 steps.

- From the pub in Sharpenhoe turn right along the main road, then take the footpath on the right alongside the field. Before the wood turn right following the path across the field. When this meets the road, follow the bridleway to the left heading uphill.
- At the top of the hill turn left and follow the main path, which eventually bends around to the left, through the wood before emerging with views to the left. Continue to follow the path alongside the fence, with the wood on the right.
- Turn left at the end of this path taking the path steeply downhill (160 steps). Then continue downhill alongside the field edge to the road. Turn left to the pub.



About the walk

Enjoy the fresh air and fantastic views of the Chilterns countryside. These circular walks take you to the top of the Chiltern Hills, across meadows carpeted in wildflowers and through magnificent beech woods. The Chiltern Hills are to the north-west of London and easily reached on a short train journey.

You can start, break or finish your walk with a tasty meal or refreshing drink.

Walking gets you fit and keeps you healthy!!



Features of interest:

Harlington was known as *Herlingdone* in the Domesday Book of 1086, which means 'hill of Herela's people'. Herela was a Viking family that settled in Britain around 900AD.

The **Icknield Way** is probably the oldest road in Britain – dating back to Neolithic times, about 5,000 years ago. It was part of an ancient trading route that followed the ridge of chalk hills across southern England from the Norfolk coast to Dorset. It is still possible to walk some of this route today by joining together the Peddars Way and Ridgeway National Trails with the Icknield Way Trail, which forms part of this walk. www.nationaltrail.co.uk

This area is nationally important for the conservation of wonderful flowers and insects which live on unimproved **chalk grassland**. The flowers and butterflies provide a riot of colour in spring and early summer. Across England



around 25% of this type of habitat has been lost since 1960, largely due to changes in farming. The grass has to be grazed by animals during the autumn and winter to keep it short, otherwise delicate plants are shaded out by more aggressive plants and grasses. Without the tireless work of conservation organisations, volunteers and farmers most of the remaining chalk grassland would be invaded by bushes and eventually develop into woodland. **Sundon Hills** and **Sharpenhoe Clappers** are managed by a partnership between The National Trust and Bedfordshire County Council. Call 01582 608489 www.nationaltrust.org.uk

In summer strange **crop circles** have sometimes appeared in wheat fields at the foot of the hills. A local farmer affected by a crop circle is quoted in a local paper as saying "I know people think it's weird and wonderful and done by aliens but it isn't. It's vandalism." www.iwasabducted.com

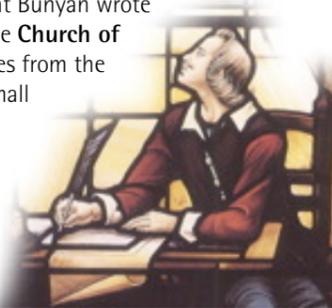


Some historians believe that 2000 years ago **Sharpenhoe Clappers** was the site of an Iron Age hill fort. A beech wood now covers the plateau that might have been the interior of the fort. Its commanding position would have dominated the local landscape providing not only defence but also displaying the status of its inhabitants. The fort would have been one of a series of defended sites established along the Chiltern Ridge during the Iron Age. The name 'Clappers' derives from the mediaeval Latin term 'claperius', meaning a rabbit hole. Rabbit warrens provided a consistent supply of meat and skins and were a large part of the economy of the time.



The chalk hills act like a sponge soaking up rainwater until it emerges at ground level to form a stream, this water eventually flows to The Wash, Norfolk. Much of the drinking water in this area also comes from chalk "aquifers". **Chalk streams** are an internationally rare habitat, only found in parts of northwest Europe and New Zealand. Their clear waters support many plants and animals, such as water voles and white-clawed crayfish. For more info about chalk streams www.chilternsaonb.org or call 01844 271300.

John Bunyan the 17th century preacher is strongly connected with Harlington – it was here that he was arrested for leading a meeting at a nearby farmhouse, resulting in his imprisonment at Bedford jail for unauthorised religious gatherings. It was whilst serving his 12 years sentence that Bunyan wrote *The Pilgrim's Progress*. The **Church of St. Mary the Virgin** dates from the early 1300's and has a small stained glass window depicting scenes from Bunyan's book. There is also a John Bunyan Trail walking route www.visitbeds-luton.com



Visitor Information

Harlington is a village at the foot of the Chiltern Hills, which has pubs and local shops. The walk also passes through Sharpenhoe where there is a pub. It is also possible to divert off the walk to the pubs at Sundon village. Pub food is usually served lunchtimes (12-2) and evenings (after 6).

The Old Sun, Harlington, 01525 872417.
Food lunchtimes & evenings.

The Carpenters Arms, Harlington, 01525 872384.
Bar food only. No food on Sundays.

The Lynmore, Sharpenhoe, 01582 881233.
Food lunchtimes & evenings, all day on Sundays.

The Red Lion, Sundon, 01525 875806.
Food all day every day.

For information about places to stay or visitor attractions in the area call 01582 401579 or www.bedsherts-luton.com

How to get to the start

The villages of Harlington and Sharpenhoe are 3 miles north of Luton, Bedfordshire.

By train: Harlington is easily reached by rail and the walk starts from the station. Thameslink run direct services between central London (50 mins) and Bedford (15 mins). Trains depart from London Bridge, Blackfriars, Kings Cross Thameslink and call at London stations such as Kentish Town, West Hampstead, Cricklewood and Hendon and St Albans, Harpenden and Luton. For train times and fares call 08457 484950 or www.thameslink.co.uk

By bus: There are separate services to Harlington from Luton Bus Station and Dunstable on weekdays and Saturdays. For bus times call Traveline 0870 6082608 www.traveline.org.uk

Parking: Harlington rail station car park, £1 week-ends, £3 on week-days, off peak. You can park in the pubs in Harlington or Sharpenhoe if you buy food or drink. It is also possible to follow these walks from the free car parks at Sundon Hills and Sharpenhoe Clappers – please do not leave valuables in the car.

This is one of a series of walks through the Chilterns Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. It mainly follows rights of way most of which are waymarked as follows:

-  Footpaths (walkers only)
-  Bridleways (horseriders, cyclists and walkers)
-  Byways (open to all traffic)

Please be considerate in the countryside:

- keep to public rights of way, and leave farm gates as you find them.
- Please keep dogs under close control.

If you have enjoyed this walk there are many other wonderful walks in the Chilterns area including other Chilterns Country walks from rail stations, call 01844 271300 or www.chilternsaonb.org; walks in Bedfordshire www.lets-go.org.uk; Walks around Luton www.northchilternstrust.co.uk; Harlington Parish Walks 01525 875933; Or buy Ordnance Survey Explorer Map 193 and make your own walk www.ordsvy.gov.uk

The Chiltern Hills were designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) in 1965. This is in recognition that the Chiltern countryside is amongst the finest in England and Wales. The Chilterns Conservation Board is the body charged with protecting the AONB. www.chilternsaonb.org.

If you, or a member of your community would like this leaflet produced in another language or format (large print or audio cassette), please contact the Chilterns Conservation Board 01844 271300.

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www.countryside.gov.uk


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Chilterns Country

Walk like the Clappers

Short Pub walk:
1½ miles

Medium walk:
5½ miles

Long walk:
7 miles

Start:
Harlington, Beds

