



Marlow Common and Bovington Green

Distance: 5½ km=3½ miles
or 6½ km=4¼ miles (with pub)

easy walking

Region: Chilterns

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Author: Phegophilos

Refreshments: Bovington Green

Map: 172 (Chilterns East) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Beechwoods, easy field paths, grassy hillsides, views, gastropub

In Brief

This walk is sheer delight, alternating typical Chiltern beechwoods near Marlow, Bucks, with open country and some eye-opening surprises.

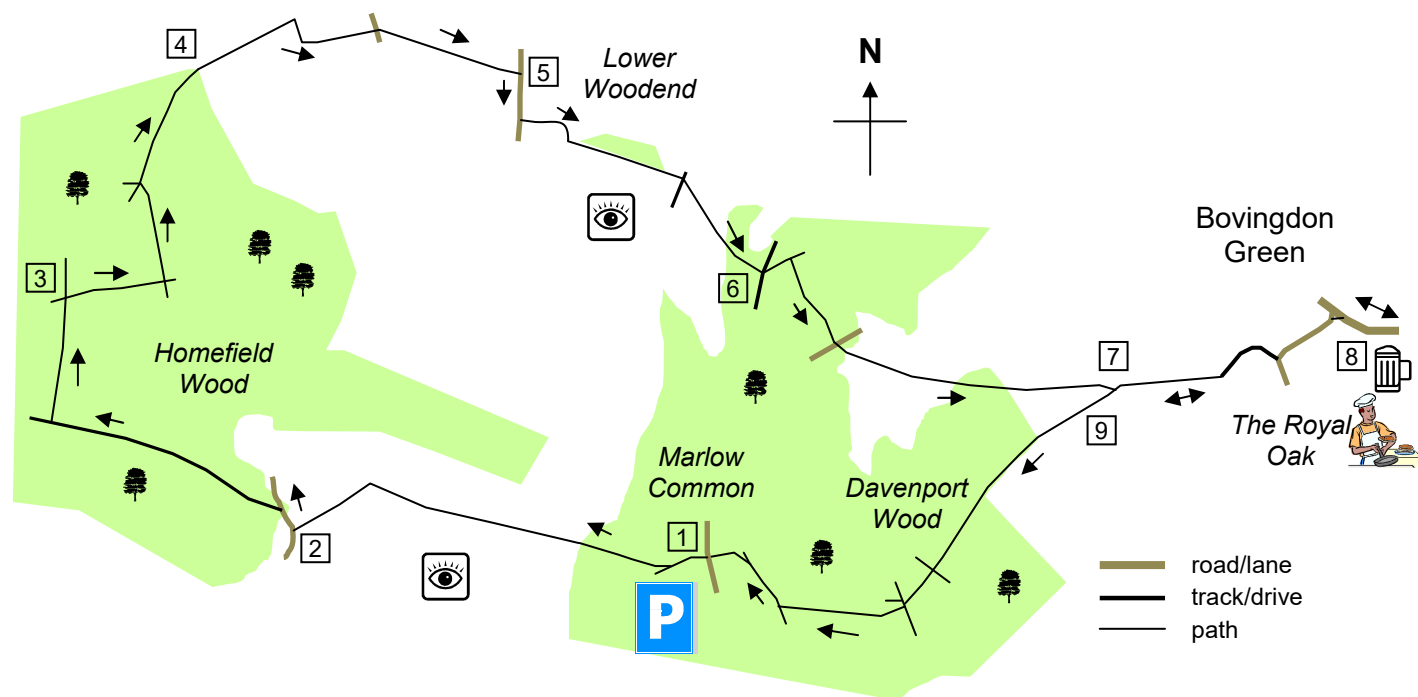
The full route includes refreshments at a stylish gastropub, just outside the village, described in the notes below. (To enquire at the *Royal Oak*, ring 01628-488611.)



All the paths on this walk are well-made and you don't need to force your way through nettles or other undergrowth, so shorts are ok. This is quite a popular rambling area and everyone seemed to be wearing boots, but in dryish weather, trainers should be fine. "Dogs, boots and children" are welcome at the pub.

The walk begins on an informal roadside parking spot on an unnamed road off **Marlow Common**, Bucks, gridref **SU 822 865**, at the intersection of a signed footpath. (For postcodes, see end.) This walk includes a short there-and-back trip to the *Royal Oak* pub for refreshments. The pub has a reasonable-sized car park so, on a quiet day, they might not object if you use it, provided that you eat and drink at the pub after this fairly short walk. There is no hope of parking at Bovington Green as the whole area is a jealously-guarded "residents only" zone. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the roadside parking space, take the signed footpath straight into the woods, passing a post with several yellow arrows and the *Marlow Common, Pullingshill Wood* sign. Your route is marked with white arrows on trees, one of the unique delights of the Chilterns, a navigational aid you will use in several places on this walk. In 80m, be sure to fork **right**, following those white arrows. Your path runs downhill and, after 150m or so, reaches the edge of the wood, going over a crossing path and suddenly out into the open into green meadowland. Your path runs in a straight line alongside a line of trees on your right, with a wonderful green valley on your left. In 400m, your path elbows left and you come down to a tarmac lane.
- 2 Turn **right** on the lane and, in 30m, fork **left** past a metal barrier into Homefield Wood, a nature reserve and Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI), known for its rare orchids and insects. Follow this easy wide path through the woods, soon passing an information board over on your right. After just short of 500m in this wood, look for a wooden post with a white top on your right, also bearing a yellow arrow. *Don't miss this turn!* Go **right** here on a grassy path uphill.
- 3 In 200m or so, near the top of the slope, you meet a crossing path with a high seat. Turn **right** here on a level grassy path. In 200m you come to another 4-way junction. Turn **left** here on a path under ash trees and cedars. In 200m you reach a junction with several paths. Take the **right** fork here, a narrow but quite clear path. Very shortly, you pass a post with a yellow arrow, showing the famous Buckinghamshire swan icon, and you come between some old fence posts. Your path runs downhill under beech trees, with the remains of a fence on your right, then steeply uphill. The path veers right, leading you over a degenerate stile into a crop field.
- 4 Turn **right** along the field edge and stay on the edge round a double bend. In the corner, the path continues beside a sculpted garden hedge, runs a short distance along the top of a crop field and comes out to a tarmac lane.



Cross the lane to a wooden swing-gate and take a clear straight path across the centre of a crop field, revealing great views of the distant hills. Keep straight ahead through a strip of the field which at the time of writing was uncultivated. You emerge on a tarmac lane in the rather swanky hamlet of Lower Woodend.

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Turn **right** on the lane and, just before a hedge and a road junction, turn **left** at a signpost on a narrow path beside a tall garden fence. Your path turns **right** in the corner and **left**, over a stile. You are now on a wonderful hillside of wispy grass with a valley and woods beyond, one of the delights of this walk. At the bottom, go over a stile (rather uncomfortably wide at the top), across a track, up steps and over another stile onto the buttercup hillside. The good news is that your route is not directly up the steep slope, but diagonally **right** on an easier gradient. In the top corner, go over a stile and along a narrow path between low fences. A small wooden gate takes you back into Marlow Common. Go straight over a track, past a slanting info board. **However, by turning right on the track, you will reach a road junction with the lane which takes you straight back to the starting point: but you will miss an excellent pub and some more fine pastures and woodland.**



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Follow the path into woods, passing a bench seat. Only 50m into the wood, under a large oak with bird boxes, turn **right** on another woodland path. (There's a marker post just after the oak.) Keep to the main path, avoiding all turnings off, following signs for *2nd entrance* and the occasional white arrow. You come past a house on the left and through a small wooden gate to a tarmac lane. Cross straight over onto a shingle drive. Just before a house, keep **left** on a narrow path between laurel and wire hedges. You come over a V-stile into a horse pasture. Follow a diagonal path to the far side and go through a modern kissing-gate into a small meadow. In 20m, go **right** through a kissing-gate to meet a straight narrow path running beside a hedge. **This is the hinge point: left for a there-and-back to the Royal Oak, right to finish the walk (skip to section 9).**

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Turn **left** on the hedged path. Your path soon joins a shingle drive, curving left and right (with plants for sale), onto the tarmac of Bovingdon Green. Keep **left** at a 3-way junction on a lane crossing the green. Just before the main road, fork **right** on a narrow grass path, passing a coronation bench and a fine copper beech, and turning **right** on the main road to reach the Royal Oak. (There's a narrow footway on the other side.)



This is no ordinary pub (although you can just quaff an ale or two). The Royal Oak has been voted Buckinghamshire Dining Pub of the Year for several years, thanks to chef Dave Green. "Big plates" include several inventive vegetarian options. "Small plates" include bubble and squeak plus egg, bacon and hollandaise. Beer? Well that's Marlow – what else? A teepee is set up for special occasions in the attractive garden. The "Oak" is open all day, every day with lunch served normal meal times and all day Sunday.

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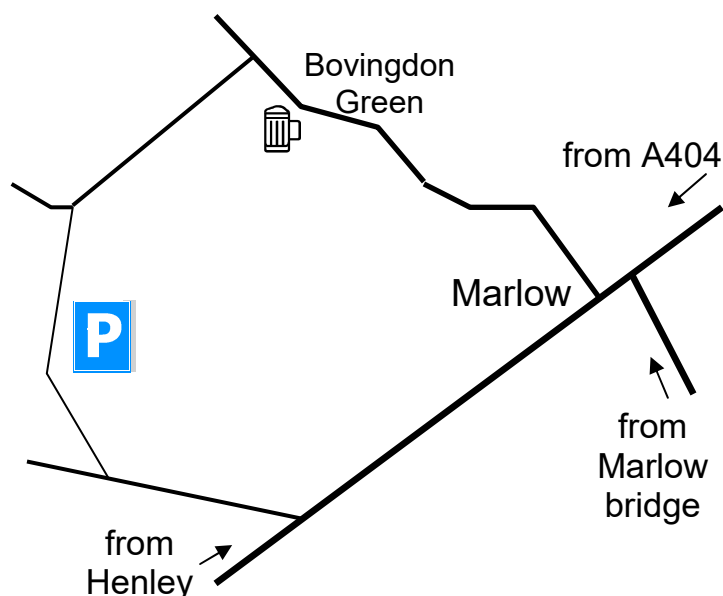
After refreshment, retrace your route (repeated here in case you began at the pub). Turn **left** on the main road, using the narrow footway on the other side. Where the footway ends, cross the road again and turn **left** on a narrow grass path which joins a tarmac road across the green. At the other side, keep **right** and follow the drive, becoming shingle, ending at a house *The Pommery*. Continue on a narrow path running beside a fence. In just over 100m, ignore a kissing-gate on the right and stay on the fenced path.

- 9 Soon you pass through two wooden barriers, continuing between horse meadows. As you pass through a wooden swing-gate under trees, you should sense the fragrance of a group of rose trees. Davenport Wood is now on your right with a dandelion meadow on your left. Soon your path enters a beechwood with the letters **CW** on a tree to remind you that you are on part of the Chiltern Way. Where the wire fence on your right ends, keep straight on, still on the CW, ignoring paths left and right. Your path descends through an area of magnificent tall beeches and meets a crossing path running along the valley bottom. Cross straight over, a fraction left, on a narrow path, marked with a yellow arrow. In 80m, you meet a very well-defined crossing path. Turn **right** on it, still on the CW according to the tree markers. In 300m, keep forking **left** to meet the tarmac lane at a small space for cars where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: all directions begin in **Marlow**, easily reached from the M40 junction 4 or the M4 junction 8/9. Go through the town on the A4155. When you reach the 3-way junction and stone needle in the centre of the town, keep straight on, as for *Henley*. There is a choice of two routes.

Route 1 takes you past the pub and through postcode **SL7 2QP**. In 200 yds, turn **right** on Oxford Road, signposted *Bovingdon Green*. In nearly 1 mile you pass the *Royal Oak* on your left. In $\frac{1}{3}$ mile, turn **left** at a signpost on Marlow Common. In $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, turn **left** on an unnamed narrow road. In nearly 400 yds, park on the right in a small dirt space. In case the space is full, there's a larger space about 300 yds further along the lane.



Route 2 takes you near postcode **SL7 2DJ**. Continue for $1\frac{1}{4}$ miles on the Henley Road and turn **right** as for *Marlow Common*. In just over $\frac{1}{2}$ mile, as you enter woodland, fork **right** on an unnamed road. In 600 yds, park on the left in a small dirt space. In case the space is full, you may have noticed passing a larger space about 300 yds before this spot.

The site is easy to see from the yellow arrows, a notice for *Marlow Common*, *Pullingshill Wood* and a long fallen tree trunk (which serves as a long rest seat for large parties of ramblers). There is room for four cars (if parked prettily) but all along the lane there are spaces to park.

By train: the nearest station is **Marlow**; from there you can take a brisk walk to Bovingdon Green or use a taxi (e.g. *Euphoria*, tel: 01628-47-7777).

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