



Charlwood Bluebell Walk

Distance: 4½ km=2¾ miles

easy walking with some steep banks

Region: Surrey

Date written: 11-mar-2012

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Refreshments: Charlwood

Last update: 2-jun-2021

Map: Explorer 146 (Dorking) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Woodland, bluebells, village, church, pub



In Brief

This circular walk finds some areas of spectacular bluebell woods in south-east Surrey, near the Sussex border. This walk takes some unusual paths through the wood where you may be one of the few people to witness some of the best hidden displays. The best time to see the bluebells is usually mid-to-late April.



There are no nettles or undergrowth. Normally any sensible footwear is fine but if it has been wet you will encounter some muddy patches where good boots or wellies will be needed. Your dog will be in good company.



The walk begins in Charlwood village, **postcode RH6 0DS** near the church and the *Half Moon* pub. The lane near the pub is one-way and is a tight right turn (if coming from the north) from The Street. It tends to get full up towards lunchtime and on Sundays, in which case there are spaces in the village. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

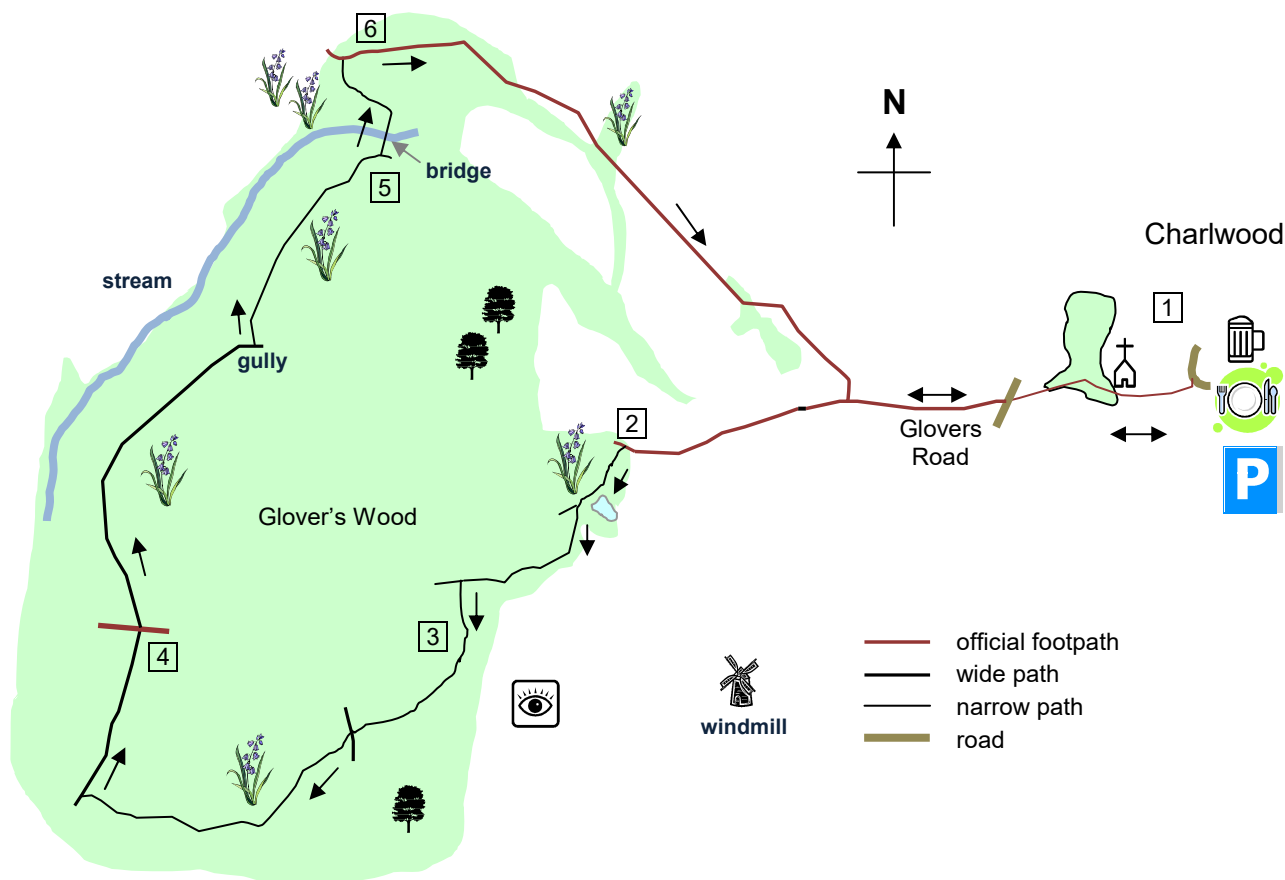


The Walk

The ancient village of Charlwood, its Norman church and the Half Moon pub are all well worth getting to know. For more information, see the pub walk in this series "The Half Moon at Charlwood".


- 1 **See map overleaf.** Go through the churchyard with the church on your right. Ignore a signed footpath on the left. Cross a road and continue up Glovers Road. Ignore a footpath right and continue through a small gate in the black wrought iron gate of *The Glovers* with its intriguing scrapyards of old planes, along a path beside the driveway between fences, between fences and meadows. The path goes through a swing-gate and enters Glover's Wood.


Glover's wood is a site of special scientific interest and one of the largest areas of woodland in the Surrey Weald, situated on Paludina limestone overlying Weald Clay. It covers 96 hectares, of which 28 hectares were acquired by the Woodland Trust in 1983.





- 2** Turn immediately **left** on the woodland trail, indicated by a white arrow with a two-leaf symbol, going along a short walkway. The path skirts a small pond with a bench seat, going over a small bridge. You will now catch your first sight of extensive bluebells. Follow a trail of wooden slats and immediately keep **left** at a junction, still following the white arrow, staying close to the edge of the wood. Follow the path for 200m to reach a junction near the corner of a meadow. [Apr 2021: the left fork here was fenced off during work on ash dieback. Instead, continue on the main path for a short while and veer **left** shortly onto a narrower path which leads diagonally through the bluebells. This path ends at a junction with a wider path. Turn **left** onto this path and continue to the end, ignoring a wide path that branches off to the right shortly before the end. At the end you will see the barrier at the other end of the path that you would have taken if it was open. You can now turn **right** back onto the intended route.] Fork **left** here with the main path, staying on the edge of the wood. Clearly visible on your left now face-on is Lowfield Heath Windmill.

Lowfield Heath Windmill is a grade-II-listed post mill but its origin is a mystery. It goes back at least to 1741 and was moved to this site (windmills were sometimes relocated) but from Lowfield Heath near Gatwick. It ceased to operate from wind in 1880 but worked on by steam power. In the 1930s it was revived for aesthetic reasons but within 25 years it was derelict again. After a campaign, it was restored in 1989 and subsequently was put into full working order. The windmill is open on the last Sunday of each month, on National Mills Day and at the Heritage Open Weekend.

 **3** Keep to the main path as it curves right and, where it meets a wide diagonal crossing path, cross **straight over**. Follow this path deep into the wood of oaks and beeches for some distance. In 300m you pass a major junction on your left. The bluebells thin out at one stage and then re-appear in all their glory. Nearly 200m later you come to a T-junction with a deep valley ahead. Turn **right** here on a good wide path. If there are few bluebells for a while, don't worry – they quickly return. In 200m or so, you reach a crosspaths with a yellow arrow [May 2021: removed], indicating that you are crossing an official footpath.

 **4** Go **straight over** the footpath. The deep stream bed is on your left as the path gradually bends right. After more than 400m from the crosspaths (about 6 minutes' walking), you will notice, running *parallel* on your left, a very deep and prominent natural narrow gully, like a long ditch sliced into the earth. The gully meets your path at a junction. Turn sharp **left** here, going over what remains of the gully, onto a wide path. (As a guide, this is the first significant turning on your left.) This rather tortuous path soon becomes a fine area for bluebells. The stream valley is still on your left, although further away. About 300m (4½ minutes) along this path, look to your **left** for a narrow path that leads downwards into the stream valley. (As a guide, it is after a long series of fallen branches but just before a solitary fallen tree-trunk which blocks the path ahead).

 **5** You know you have the correct path because you can see a small bridge over the stream in the bottom of the valley. Turn **left** downhill on this path and cross the bridge. [Apr 2020: This bridge is straddled by two thick branches of a fallen tree: please be very careful and cross one at a time.] Keep **right** up a steep bank and, in only 10m, turn sharp **left** on a very narrow, fairly level path. The path goes over a small gully, up a short rather steep slope, snakes a bit, and approaches a green meadow. You come to a 3-way junction where you meet the official footpath. Turn **right** at this junction.

 **6** The footpath eventually crosses a gill and many fallen trees and branches [Apr 2020: one at chest height which you can bypass]. Where the woodland path ends, go over a stile and continue along the **right**-hand side of a green meadow. In the far right-hand corner of the meadow, go over a stile, through a small wood, with more bluebells, and a kissing-gate, into a large grassy meadow. Some houses of Charlwood are visible a little to your right. Go down the length of the meadow **diagonally right** downhill, aiming for the bottom **left**-hand corner. Go **left** over a stile in the bottom corner and over a 2-plank bridge. Follow the right-hand side of a rather scruffy meadow until the path bends right over a stile and reaches Glovers Road. Turn **left** on this lane, retracing your outward journey, crossing the road, passing the church again and reaching the lane and pub where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: One way, out of many, to get to Charlwood, if coming from the north, is via Betchworth. Go south on Station Road, reachable via the A24 and Headley or via Dorking and the A25. Turn left at a T-junction and first right through Betchworth village, continue on the Sowerhill Road to Leigh where you need to turn left at a T-junction. This road leads you to Charlwood village. Turn very sharp right just after a builder's works, opposite a timbered house, marked *The Half Moon*.

Another way is via the M23. Come off at the Gatwick Airport exit. Follow signs for the A23 until you see a left turn at a roundabout for *Charlwood*. Go past the *Greyhound* pub and 400m later veer left on a narrow lane to the *Half Moon*.

In case there are **no spaces free** near the pub you can:

- Park in **Glovers Road**, postcode **RH6 0EH** (see the map) which is on your route and has a few spaces near the road junction, *but don't miss a visit to the church!* Please park considerately away from houses!
- Or continue a little further along the main road and park in a side road, **Chapel Road**, on your left.

By bus/train: bus 526/527 from Crawley station. Check the timetables.

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