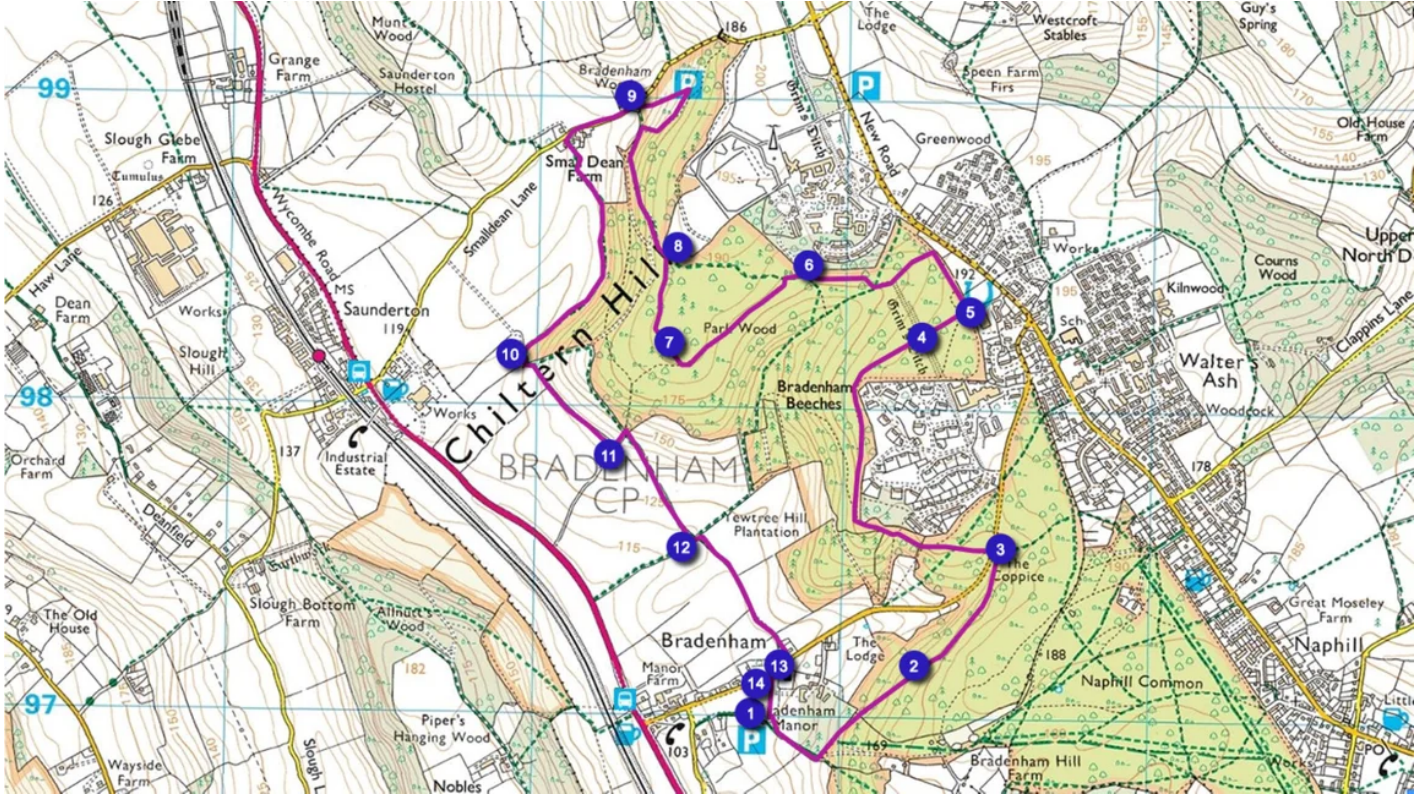


Bradenham beech woods walk

This walk takes you from the pretty Chiltern village of Bradenham into the Bradenham Estate and a classic Chiltern landscape that blends hills topped with beech woodlands and gently rolling valleys. You'll get a number of glimpses into the deep and varied history of this part of the Chilterns, ranging from ancient earthworks to wartime bunkers and ballrooms.



Information

Address: Bradenham National Trust car park, Bradenham, Princes Risborough HP27 0PR.

OS map: OS Map 172

Activity: Walking

Moderate: Soft footpaths that can become muddy. For further details, please see Terrain section.

Dog friendly: Dogs are welcome, but must be kept under strict control as livestock is grazed on several parts of the route.

Full trail: Miles: 4.4 (km: 7.04)

Access: Challenging

Duration: 2 hours

Terrain

Most of the walk is on soft footpaths, although you will need to cross a road twice, and there is a short stretch on a quiet but narrow country lane. There are no stiles but a number of gates. There are several short, steep climbs. Some paths can be muddy and slippery after prolonged or heavy rain. Stout walking shoes or walking boots are recommended in wet conditions or after heavy rain.

Total steps: 14

Start point: National Trust car park in Bradenham village, near the cricket pavilion. Grid ref: SU827969. Satnav: HP27 0PR.

1. From the car park, head away from the village green, following the track that runs alongside the wall to Bradenham Manor's garden. The track turns left at the corner of the wall. Follow the track uphill. After it bends sharply to the left again, the track forks. Take the left fork, parallel to the manor house garden wall. Where the track curves right, go straight ahead on a footpath, ignoring any joining paths. The path soon starts to climb, and eventually it levels out. After 440 yards (400m), you'll come across some large pieces of rock that look like weathered concrete.
2. Continue along the path. Where the path splits, take the left-hand fork and continue until you reach a distinct crossing path. Turn left, then immediately take the left fork towards a footpath sign by a road. The road here possibly follows the line of The Queen's Gap or Ride.
3. Cross the road with care, and then continue along a bridleway. The path takes you in a more or less straight line through beech woods and across the head of a small valley that dips to your left. Keep right ignoring any downhill paths on the left. After the path bends to the right, you'll come to a fork in the path with a marker post in the centre. Take the right fork, initially keeping parallel to the chain link fence on your right. After passing a log jump for runners on your right, you'll come to a junction of three paths. Take the middle path, straight ahead and just to the left of a small marker post. Follow this path round to the right. About 100 yards (91 metres) after passing a white footpath marker on a post you'll reach a fork. Continue slightly right ahead towards a second marker post. Just past this post you'll cross a causeway over Grim's Ditch.
4. Continue in the same direction for about 150 yards (137 metres) until you reach a T-junction with a wooden fence ahead.

5. Turn left at the T-junction. The cleared area you pass for the next 80 yards (73 metres) on your left is the site of a cluster of buildings built and used by the RAF during the Second World War. Explore this area while taking care on the uneven surfaces, before continuing along the path. This area can become quite overgrown in the summer months, and the foundations of the buildings may not be easily visible from the footpath. About 160 yards (146 metres) beyond the RAF site turn left on to a downhill track away from the boundary fence. After another 220 yards (200 metres), turn right uphill onto a crossing path next to a footpath marker. Then, after another 50 yards (46 metres), turn left at a T-junction. Follow this path around to the right and downhill until you join a wide track coming uphill from your left. Around 15 yards (14 metres) after joining this track, another path forks left away from the track. Almost opposite on the right is a cylindrical green pillbox dating from the Cold War.
6. Take the left fork, following a path uphill. This soon levels out, becoming a track that meanders through Park Wood. Pass a footpath sign on a post and, after 440 yards (402 metres) look out for a shallow circular depression in the ground just over a metre deep, immediately to the right of the track. This is the remains of one of the many sawpits, associated with 'bodgers' and the High Wycombe Chair industry. These were a common sight in the 19th century. After the sawpit, continue to a fork in the track just next to a small depression on the right, and marked by a white marker ahead of you on a post set back from the right fork (There is a fenced off clearing on your left).
7. At the fork in the track, turn right past a more open area on the right containing a pond. This may be concealed by vegetation in the summer months. Pass to the right of the marker post, and then continue for 30 yards (27 metres) to another white marker post. Turn right onto a much narrower footpath, which wanders through trees, eventually turning left over a small fallen tree and heading gently downhill. As it curves right again, you'll cross a deep ditch. Soon after the ditch you'll reach a T-junction.
8. At the T-junction turn left, following the path downhill for 600 yards (548 metres). On reaching a junction in front of a wooden kissing gate that leads into the conservation area at Small Dean Bank, turn right, following a sunken path uphill. The path curves to your left and follows the inside edge of the woodland, with Small Dean Bank on your left. After 200 yards (183 metres) you'll meet a crossing path leading to a gate on your left. Go through the gate, where you can pause to admire the far reaching views across the Saunderton Valley towards Bledlow Ridge and Lodge Hill. Cross Small Dean Bank on a steep downhill path that leads through a gate to the National Trust car park.
9. From the car park, turn left, following the narrow lane downhill. This is usually a very quiet lane, but please keep a look out for traffic. After 270 yards (247 metres), you'll reach the buildings of Small Dean Farm. Turn left, following a footpath sign. Follow a track past some farm sheds on your right until you reach a field. Turn left and follow the path along the left field boundary for 765 yards (700 metres).
10. As you reach the end of the woodland on your left, you'll see the Art Deco buildings of The Residence ahead of you, although this may be obscured by trees in summer. Turn left, again following the left field boundary. Pass through a gap in the trees, turn left uphill then immediately right, and continue following the left field boundary for another 440 yards (402 metres).
11. As you approach the corner of the field, turn left uphill along a short, wide avenue towards an area of tall, mature woodland (part of Park Wood). As you approach the woodland, turn right and continue downhill along a clear path, following the left field boundary. After 440 yards (402 metres) you'll meet a crossing track.
12. Cross the track, and with a fence on your right, continue along the field's edge towards Bradenham. After another 440 yards (402 metres), pass through two gates to a track which emerges into Bradenham Village, by the former youth hostel's car park near the village pond.
13. From the car park, cross the road. Here you'll see further examples of sarsens and puddingstones along the edge of the village green. Keeping the churchyard wall on your left, head along the edge of the village green, past the parish church of St. Botolph.
14. Continue past the gate to Bradenham Manor House. After a few more yards, you'll arrive back at the car park where your walk began.

End point: National Trust car park in Bradenham village, near the cricket pavilion. Grid ref: SU827969. Satnav: HP27 OPR.
