

## 15-mile route description

Heartwood Forest, Nomansland Common, Historic Wheathampstead, Ayot St Lawrence and returning via part of the Hertfordshire Way and Devil's Dyke, to Heartwood Forest

***Route checked and route description revised September 2024***

***From 6 September, check out <http://www.oxfamstalbens.co.uk> for the latest version.***

**Please note:**

- The walk starts at the Scout Hut in Heartwood Forest, Sandridgebury Lane, Sandridge, St Albans, **AL3 6JB**, but use the adjacent Heartwood Forest overflow carpark (for Oxfam W4W), nearest postcode **AL4 9DQ**. The carpark opens at 8.00 and closes at 20.00. Follow the yellow 'Herts Hike' signs to the Scout Hut. Please share a car or use public transport if you can, as weekends can be busy. There is also nearby parking in Sandridge, off the main road.
- **The Scout Hut will close at 17.00.** Allow plenty of time for parking and signing in, for the walk itself, some stops, and for signing out and tea & cake on your return.
- The **± 15-mile** route takes about 6 hours at a steady pace and without a break, so we advise you to you **start your walk between 8.30 and 9.30.**
- **Bring your own** copy(s) of this route description, water, packed lunch, snacks, sunscreen, tissues, hat, anorak, boots, a small first-aid kit, and a fully charged mobile phone. **Please be prepared that there may be overgrown stinging nettles & brambles on the route so dress accordingly to prevent injury.** Also bring some cash for tea & cake and purchases at the St Albans Oxfam shop stall, and your bank details to make your Walk4Water donation on JustGiving. We have no card-reader.
- We advise you use this route description, and only to use the map for reference.
- There are **6 Check Points, C1, C2, C3, C4, C3 again & C5.** Their location is underlined in this route description. Every attempt will be made to have these in place within the times indicated, but if not attended when you pass, please **call Marian Ferguson on 07870 236931.**
- There will be **no yellow Herts Hike route signs** after **C1**, but the arrows in this route description **← ↖ ↑ ↗ →** indicate your direction. The distances are approximate. For those of you finding it useful, OS Grid References are shown as: {2 Grid letters 3 figures (easting) 3 figures (northing)} e.g. {TL 189 149}.
- **Orientation points** are highlighted in **bold. Benches, café's, and pubs are highlighted in italic.** It is advisable to book a table if you have lunch at any of the pubs.
- Do check out <http://www.gov.uk/countrysidecode>, stay on the public footpaths and bridle ways, keep dogs on a lead, and step aside for horse-riders, cyclists and other walkers.
- **In case of emergency, or if you will not return to the Scout Hut to sign out, it is important to call Sue Cockell on 07535 695744, or Wilma Mendonca on 07305 807288.**
- **And last but not least, please remember that all walkers and volunteers take part at their own risk, and under 18's cannot register unless accompanied by an adult.**

**Enjoy your walk!**

## Section 1: Scout Hut to Check Point C1.

- 1 At the **Scout Hut entrance gate** turn left ← onto the **Scout Hut drive**, then left ← onto a bridleway, and almost immediately right ↗ through a kissing gate into **Heartwood Forest**.
- 2 Go ahead gently uphill on the diagonal gravel path ↑.
- 3 Where the gravel path divides left and right at a **signpost**, go straight ahead on the grassy path ↑ towards a second **signpost on the skyline**.
- 4 Here turn left ← onto a track, soon passing on your left a **bench dedicated to Matt Risby**.
- 5 Continue straight ahead ↑ passing the **Woodland Arch** on your left as you go.
- 6 Where paths cross, (with the corner of **Pudler's Wood** in front of you), go straight on ↑. Continue ahead with wood on either side.
- 7 Take the first turning right →, onto the broad grassy path, passing between a **memorial stone on the left for Brian & Brenda** and a **bench** on the right. At the T-junction turn left onto the bridleway for a few yards, to the edge of a wood.
- 8 Turn right →, continuing on the grassy path ↑, between a wood on the left and a young wood on the right.
- 9 Going downhill, when the track forks, take the left grassy path. You can see **Check Point C1** {TL 162 122} in a shady spot, between **8.30 and 15.30**. **Please show your walker number to the Marshal.**

## Section 2: Check Point C1 to Wheathampstead Underpass C3

### 10 CAUTION – ROUTES DIVIDE HERE!

- 11 **Don't just follow the people in front!** The 2.5 & 4-milers turn left, whilst the 5, 8, 15 & 20-mile walkers turn right →.  
Continue ↑ until you reach a **kissing gate** {TL163 123}.
- 12 Go through the gate ↑, & down the steps until you reach the red bin on the left, turn right → onto a broader path, where you will pass **Check Point C2** in a shady spot, between **8.45 and 12.00**. **Please show your walker number to the Marshall.**
- 13 Having reached the open space of **Nomansland Common**, continue for ± 0.5 mile ↑, remaining parallel with the road on your far left, eventually passing a **public car park** on your left. From here, continue to follow the path ↑ to the left corner of the Common {TL175 124}. (The **Highstreet B651** lies ahead of you).
- 14 At the black bin, turn left ← to cross **Ferrers Lane WITH GREAT CARE** at the (now quite faded) road sign '**Give Way–50 yds**'.
- 15 **CAUTION – ROUTES DIVIDE HERE!** At a small field the 5-milers turn right, whilst the 8,15 & 20-mile walkers go straight on ↑, aim for the **house** seen beyond the **cricket pitch**.
- 16 Follow the gravel path on right side of the cricket pitch ↑, passing 3 **benches**, and notice the small **historic puddingstone** in the **semi-circular bench**.
- 17 With the **Wicked Lady pub & eating-house** ahead of you, leave the pitch, and at the **Wheathampstead Heritage board** turn left ← on to the tarmac drive of the **cricket**

**pavilion.** With car parking on your left, pass a single parking bay on your right, before - close to the Cricket Pavilion - you come to a 3-car parking bay on your right →.

- 18 Take the narrow path into Nomansland Wood, and follow the path to the left ↖ onto a wider path.
- 19 At the T-junction turn left ←. Where paths cross, turn right → to the edge of the wood [TL173 128].
- 20 Continue straight on ↑ onto a surfaced path, with a hedge on your left and a field on your right, and follow a short section of **telegraph wires**.
- 21 At the corner of the field go straight on ↑, taking the right fork onto a gravel path → through a short section of wood.
- 22 At the T-junction turn left ←, soon to arrive at a large playing field on your right →. Leave the path to cross this field to the opposite side, towards the right of the new pavillion ↑.
- 23 Head for the green barrier-gate and cross the car-park ↑, then through the gate onto Old School Drive ↑.
- 24 At the T-junction at the end of the road, cross the road **WITH CARE**. Turn right → and take the first turning left ← into Maltings Drive.
- 25 Cross the playing field on your left, to the opposite corner with a playground and a bench. Turn right → onto an asphalt path.
- 26 At Cross Wick Avenue, cross the road ↑, to continue on an asphalt path to the left of **house number 39A**.
- 27 At the end of the path turn left ← to continue gently downhill on a path above the **High Street**.
- 28 Descend by steps to street level, turn left ←, and continue on the pavement, past the bus stop and a **bench**, down into Wheathampstead with **The Swan pub** on your left.
- 29 At the corner of **Church Street** turn left ← for ± 5 yards, away from the busy junction, before crossing **WITH CARE**.
- 30 Returning to the High Street, pass the **lychgate to St Helens Church**. (Time permitting, you may like to stop and see the windows and monuments inside this lovely building).
- 31 Proceed to the foot of the hill and just before you get to **Loafing Bakery & Coffee Shop**, (or **Charlie's Coffee Shop** would be a bit further on, past the Pharmacy and the mill stream), cross the High Street at the **zebra crossing**.
- 32 Turn right → between **The Bull pub** and the **Jessamine garage** into **East Lane**. Walk past the **public car park** on your left (note there are **public toilets** available here) ↑ and as the road bends to the left, pass the **Women's Institute Mead Hall** on your left and a **bench** on your right.
- 33 At the **East Lane** road sign keep left ↖ as **Meads Lane** carries on gently downhill past the **Kindred Nursery** and emerges in the **river meadows** ↑.
- 34 At the end of the road, enter the park & cross the footbridge immediately to your left ← crossing the **River Lee**.

- 35 Immediately turn right → and follow the path along the **riverbank**, past a **bench** on your left, until it climbs to join a bridleway (**Lea Valley walk**).
- 36 Turn right →, passing a **bench** immediately on your right. After passing through two gates the path turns right →.
- 37 Go through the metal gate at the end. Look on your left for **Check Point C3**, in a shady spot, between **9.30 and 15.00**. **Please show your walker number to the Marshall.**

### Section 3: Wheathampstead Underpass **C3** to Ayot St Lawrence

- 38 **CAUTION – ROUTES DIVIDE HERE!** After visiting **C3** the 8-milers turn right (away from the underpass), whilst the 15 & 22-mile walkers turn left ← through the underpass of the **B653 Cory-Wright Way**.
- 39 Continue on the gently rising track. Go straight on ↑ past the metal gate on your right. Keep straight on ↑ until you eventually reach **Codicote road**.
- 40 Cross the road **WITH GREAT CARE**, and follow **Footpath 40** (Gustard Wood 1 1/4 mile) ↑. Keep the boundary on your left, and the field on your right, heading for the metal kissing gate in the corner.
- 41 Go through the gate ↖. This was **Lamer Park Golf Course** but is no longer in operation. Continue between barbed wire fences on both sides ↑. Walk for some distance ↑, always guided by the fences. **Beware of stinging nettles & brambles along this part of the track.**
- 42 Where a track joins from the left, bear right ↗, and go straight on ↑, continuing through two gates.
- 43 Carry on until you reach a metal kissing gate. Go through onto a track. Turn right →.
- 44 Walk past the big gate to your left nearby, then turn left ← through the kissing gate, onto **Footpath 38** into a wood, with a barbed wire fence on your left.
- 45 On leaving the wood, continue ↑ in your original direction - but crossing a large field. When you reach the boundary, go through a kissing gate ↑ to cross the lane, then through another kissing gate opposite ↑. Note the 'Bluebell Plea' on the gate & as requested, make sure you stick to the path.
- 46 Continue through a wood on a wide track ↑. Stay on the long meandering path through the wood.
- 47 When you reach the end of the wood, go through a metal kissing gate {TL 177166} and turn immediately right → onto **Footpath 36**, which in due course narrows. Walk with a field on your left and a wood on your right.
- 48 Follow this path to the next kissing gate ↑.
- 49 Mind your head on the fallen tree & continue with the wood on your right, now with an electric fence on your left and a view across the field on the left of **Bibbsworth Hall farm**.
- 50 At end of the field, go through the kissing gate on the right →. Then immediately turn left again ← to continue in your original direction, with a hedge on your left and a field on your right.

- 51 Go through the kissing gate straight on ↑. Go along a wood to the left and a barbed wire fence and a field on your right. **Beware of stinging nettles & brambles along this part of the track as it is VERY narrow.** Continue through a wooden gate ↑, onto **Footpath 36.**
- 52 At a crossroad of tracks go straight across ↑ on **Footpath 13** direction Ayot St Lawrence. Watch out for some low hanging branches.
- 53 Follow the track ↑ by a barbed wire fence, to a waymark where the path forks, where **Checkpoint C4** is in place between **10.30 and 13.00.** **Please show your Walker Reference number.** {TL 191166}. (At this point, 20-milers are advised to check if there is enough time to complete their last loop and return to the Scout Hut before 17.00, or divert onto the 15-mile route at St Lawrence Church).
- 54 Turn left ← to go **up 5 steps** ↑, still on **Footpath 13.** Continue with a field and a gate on your left and a hedge and paddocks on your right, going through a private garden until you reach **Bibbs Hall Lane.**
- 55 Turn right →. Follow the lane **WITH CARE,** and at the bend turn left along a gravel track ←, Signposted '**To the Church**'.
- 56 Turn right → to go anti-clockwise around **St Lawrence Church** and go inside, or rest on the **benches** or the **steps** to take in the view. Continue on the grassy church path, and go through the metal church gate ↑.

#### Section 4: Ayot St Lawrence to Wheathampstead Underpass **C3**

- 57 **CAUTION – ROUTES DIVIDE HERE!** The 20-milers go straight on, whilst the 15-mile walkers will turn right.
- 58 With your back to the **church notice board,** turn right ↗ through the metal kissing gate onto a **footpath marked 'Hertfordshire Way clockwise'** {TL 192169}.
- 59 Keep going straight on ↑ through a field, with the church behind you, passing a **bench in memory of June and Archie Laing.**
- 60 Go through a kissing gate, now on a narrow path between electric fences, and exit through another kissing gate ↑ and across gravel to reach **Hill Farm Lane,** where the 20-milers re-join the 15-mile walkers. If you wish to stop off and have a look at the old **church ruin** or visit **The Brocket Arms pub,** turn left.
- 61 Otherwise, turn right → and follow the lane **WITH GREAT CARE,** as it curves left past an **old red telephone box.** Come to the **sign for "Shaw's Corner"** and go straight along **Bride Hall Lane** to the left ↙, passing the garden of **Bernard Shaw's house on your right.** Again, **TAKE GREAT CARE** on this stretch of road.
- 62 Cross the road **WITH GREAT CARE** and just past the **house called 'Amesbury'** on the left, at the corner of a field, take the public bridleway ↑ **Public Bridleway 1, Codicote Road 3/4, Ayot Greenway 2.**
- 63 Continue along the bridleway for 3/4 mile ↑, keeping to the path on the right as you go, first between hedges, then passing a small wood on your right ↑, and eventually a small strip of wood on your left and a field your right ↑, until you reach **Codicote Road.**

- 64 Cross the road **WITH GREAT CARE** ↖ turn left, and then immediately right to continue in your original direction ↑, onto another bridleway.
- 65 Carry on ↑ while the path meanders. Ignore the left turn (No Public Access). Stay straight until it eventually enters the wood and continues ↑ until it comes to another field on the right.
- 66 Continue on the path in the same direction ↑, with the hedge now on your right.
- 67 At the **old railway bridge** do not pass under the bridge, but immediately before it turn right →, up a slope, to join the **Ayot Greenway**.
- 68 Turn right → here and continue along the old railway track, passing under **another bridge**.
- 69 As the path comes out of the cutting and a path merges from the left, there is a **black & white Ayot Greenway post** on the ground to your left. Keep straight on ↑.
- 70 Keep going ↑ until you reach a gravel path to your left. At this point turn left ← downhill on a broad gravelled bridleway, with a field with **telegraph poles** on your left and a hedge on your right.
- 71 Continue ↑ to the bottom of the field, passing a locked metal gate on the right. Turn right → at the T-junction of tracks. In due course the narrow path broadens and becomes surfaced when entering the next field.
- 72 At a metal kissing gate continue ↑. Go through, into a long meadow. Follow the path between the fences, with the **Lea River** still on your left and the **telegraph poles** and a **bench** on your right. Ignore a diagonal track on your right, carry straight on until you reach another kissing gate ↑.
- 73 Go through the gate then follow the path straight on to the kissing gate straight ahead ↑.
- 74 Go through the kissing gate and turn right →, between **two wooden fences**. Turn left ← to go down some **steps**, and you will be back at **the underpass of the B653 Cory-Wright Way**. Turn left ← on to the track and go through the underpass.
- 75 You are now back at **Check Point C3**, in place between **9.30 and 15.00**. **Please show your Walker Reference number**. Here, the 15 & 22-mile walkers re-join the 8-milers.

### Section 5: Wheathampstead Underpass C3 to Hammonds Farm

- 76 From the Checkpoint, follow the gravel track and crossing the **River Lea** bridge, where it leads onto **Sheepcote Lane**.
- 77 Continue up the lane ↑. With **L'Olivio Italian Restaurant** on your right, cross over **Marford Road WITH GREAT CARE**.
- 78 Carry straight on ↑ into **Dyke Lane** and continue **WITH CARE** uphill to the **Wheathampstead Heritage Trail information board** with the entrance to the **Devil's Dyke** on your left.
- 79 Pass through the **metal gate** ↑ to enter the **Pre-Roman earthworks**. Carry straight on through the **deepening ditch**, over a **wooden boardwalk** at one place.
- 80 Follow the Dyke until a flight of **wooden steps** on the right →. Go up, onto **Footpath 24**.



- 81** After ± 10 yards the path forks. Take the left turn ← up to **Dyke Lane**.
- 82 TAKE CARE** both looking and listening for traffic as you emerge onto **Dyke Lane**, where you turn left ←. Follow the lane **WITH CARE**.
- 83** Pass **Beech Hyde Farm** on the left (& a sign for Footpath 22), and after ± 10 yards turn left ← onto **Footpath 15** into a large field. Follow the field boundary with a hedge on your left and then, at a **yellow waymark sign**, continue on with hedges on both sides.
- 84** Emerge onto **Beech Hyde Lane** opposite **Old Beech Hyde house**. Turn right → onto the lane.
- 85** As you come to the end of the **wall/hedged garden** on your left, look for a small break in the hedge and a **telegraph pole**. Take the footpath on your left ← **Public Footpath 14 'Lemsford 2 miles'**, pass through a wooden kissing gate, and continue ↑ across a field of long grass (be aware there may be sheep here) towards a wood and another kissing gate which you will see straight ahead.
- 86** Go straight through the gate ↑ & continue straight on an overgrown path.
- 87** Follow the path between two fences ↑. You see the white wall of the **John Bunyan pub** to your left.
- 88** Where the path forks, continue straight ↑ on **Footpath 39** (or you can turn left to take a closer look at the **John Bunyan pub**. It was so named because the famous preacher and writer stayed at a cottage on the other side of the road. Just the chimney stack of the cottage still remains, which is worth a visit, and there are a few **benches**).
- 89** Look for **Check Point C5**{TL 189 125}. *Please show your walker number to the Marshal.*
- 90** Continue straight to **Coleman Green Lane**. Cross ↑ **WITH CARE**.
- 91** Go over the large log & through the green gate ↑, continue straight with the field on your left and a hedge on your right.
- 92** Continue straight on ↑ up-hill. At a gap in the hedge ahead, with a **waymark for Footpath 48**, go right ↗ along the edge of the field with the hedge still on your right.
- 93** Where the path takes a sharp turn to the right, continue in your direction ↑ to follow the footpath diagonally across the field to the edge of **Titnol's Wood**. Do not enter it but turn right →, with the wood on your left and the field on your right.
- 94** Cross a stile and continue straight on ↑, still on the Hertfordshire Way, with the wood to your left and a field on your right.
- 95** Follow the **fence** of **Park Croft House** on the left and **stables** on the right, to a kissing gate where you turn right → onto **Hammonds Lane**.
- 96 TAKE GREAT CARE** on the lane, which is generally quiet but does have some traffic. Follow Hammonds Lane, past **Tower Hill Lane** on the right. At **Meadow Lodge** on the left, cross a stile ↑ by the sign saying "No Motorbikes". You are now on the **Hertfordshire Way Footpath 17**.
- 97** Continue straight on ↑, parallel to Hammonds Lane, with a field on the left and a hedge on the right.

## Section 6: Hammonds Farm to Scout Hut

- 98** Pass **Hammonds Farm** and **Hammonds House** on the right and two metal gates. At the corner of that field there is a wide gap in the hedge (at a metal gate). Continue straight ↑ keeping the hedge on your right to the end of the next field where you will find another metal gate, with a **large log** behind it. Here, the 5-milers re-join the 8,15 & 20-mile walkers.
- 99** Continue with the hedge on your right, towards a wood.
- 100** As the path enters the wood, continue straight on ↑, mind overhanging branches. When the Hertfordshire Way emerges from the wood, bending sharply to the left ↙, and then continues straight on ↑, with a young wood on the right, and soon with a thick hedgerow on the left.
- 101** Passing a - **sometimes dry - pond** on the left, you reach a field, and you can see the **houses of Sandridge** come into view. Carry straight on ↑ to **Langley Grove**. Cross the road **WITH CARE** ↑ and proceed through a gate onto surfaced footpath.
- 102** After having passed the garden fence of the last of the new houses, and a **waymark post** marked 'path no. 35' on the right, take a very short and narrow path, which forks off to the left ↙, and cross a tarmac lane at a small zebra crossing (take care).
- 103** You emerge into the grassy churchyard of **St Leonard's Church**. Where the path forks, keep to the right ↗ aiming for the **lychgate arch** at the front of the church.
- 104** From the lychgate go straight on ↑, past the **Queen's Head pub** on your left, towards the **bus shelter** at **St Albans Road B651**. Keep to the right of the bus shelter.
- 105** Cross the main road **WITH GREAT CARE** and walk to the drive of **Pound Farm**.
- 106** Take the drive through Pound Farm ←, leaving the **large barn** to the left.
- 107** Continue gently uphill on the bridleway, giving way to any horses, past the **Heartwood Forest welcome sign** ↑ until the **Scout Hut** comes into sight again.
- 108** Turn left ← onto the Scout Hut drive, and immediately right → through the gate.

## CONGRATULATIONS ON FINISHING YOUR WALK

Please go inside to register your arrival, give us feed-back, and hand in your sponsorship money/donation(s) or make a transfer to <https://www.justgiving.com/page/oxfam-st-albans-walk4water-2024>

And treat yourself to drinks and cakes whilst sending us your experiences & photos for our website on [oxfamstalbens.w4w@gmail.com](mailto:oxfamstalbens.w4w@gmail.com)

**THANK YOU VERY MUCH!**

We hope you enjoyed your walk, and we look forward to seeing you next year, the date will be announced shortly on <https://oxfamstalbens.co.uk/>

**Do save the date and check our website from time to time!**



