

Hemel Hempstead: exploring Box Moor Trust land

This walk was devised by Norman Jones, Area Secretary, and published in Stile 49 (June 2016), very shortly before his death.

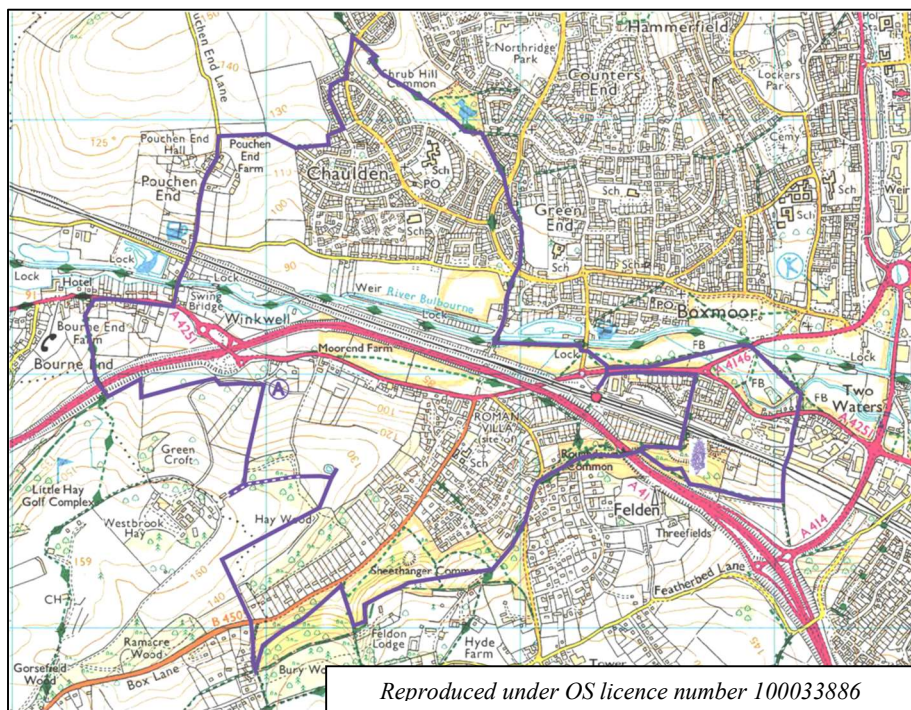
A large part of this walk is on land owned by the Box Moor Trust, which include commons and other areas acquired by the Trust where there is open access according to the general Trust policy. However the availability of such routes is not apparent from Ordnance Survey Explorer Maps.

The starting point is Hemel Hempstead Station, OS Grid Reference (GR) TL 043059. Parking at the station costs £4.20 after 10.00 and at weekends. There is no alternative parking nearby but there is a small car park at Point A in the description and marked on the map. GR TL 030059. This is 100 yards up the road signposted Westbrook Hay School from the A4251. Parking may also be possible at the Three Horseshoes in Winkwell for patrons midweek.

Length: Longer route 7 miles. Shorter route: 6.2 miles.

The Box Moor Trust is a charity which originated in 1594 following a gift of lands in Boxmoor from the Queen in 1574 which were soon after purchased by three local inhabitants for £75, who then passed it in 1594 to 67 people to permit their grazing. Further land was added partly through acquisition of lands from the local Borough Council. Further details are on the Box Moor Trust website: www.boxmoortrust.org.uk

On leaving the station, head slightly right down the station forecourt to cross the main road on a pelican crossing. Follow tarred path ahead across Station Moor to road. Cross the road, turn right and descend to canal towpath just before the bridge. Continue straight along the canal towpath, immediately after the next bridge climb steps to lane. Cross the bridge over the canal and walk up the quiet Old Fishery Lane past Old Fishery Cottage. At the major road (Northridge Way) at the top of the lane, cross it going slight right to follow the footpath up an incline, then to the left along an enclosed path with allotments on the right. At the end of the enclosed path cross road ahead (Lower Sales) and then turn right in front of No 8 and then turn left by No 10 to follow road Upper Sales down to a major road (Northridge Way again).



Cross the road and take pavement in front of houses on the right above the roads facing which are Jocketts Road and Shrub Hill Road. Continue ahead at the end of the pavement following Footpath 20 entering Shrub Hill Common which is a Local Nature Reserve. Follow the path through the wood with open grassed land on the left before becoming more enclosed following a junction but continuing in the same direction. Where you have a choice of paths, keep just inside the left edge of the woods until you reach the signed junction of Footpath 10 and Footpath 20. At this point, bear left to remain on Footpath 20 through the trees, with the open space now on

your right. The path eventually

risers to a road, Long Chaulden, next to the Adventure Playground.

Cross the road then turn left, turning right along the first road on the right, Middle Hill, follow this down to a T junction turning right into Rowcroft. At the end of the road turn left along a footpath, by 35 Rowcroft past a cycle barrier. The path soon turns right (at a footpath sign) then continues for 400 yards to Pouchen End Lane. (*This whole area up to the lane is designated for housing development in 5 to 10 years' time.*) Cross the stile and turn left down the lane continuing under the railway bridge past some Winkwell cottages and the Three Horseshoes Pub, cross the canal and walk up to the major road, the A4251. Turn right and continue for 300 yards to a signposted public byway on the left just after Farthings and before Bourne End Hall on the right. Continue up the track crossing a bridge over the A41. Immediately after the bridge turn left along an unmapped bridleway. Just over 100 yards after the bridleway turns right through some trees take path on the left going through a kissing gate. (*One is now entering part of the open access areas of Box Moor Trust land. If you see a "bull in field" sign here, no guarantees but recent walkers have not encountered the bull.*) Continue ahead rising slightly along the worn path which finally descends a little to a kissing gate onto a drive. Cross the drive to go through another kissing gate and immediately turn left descending partly through some trees, then through a gate to a car park (A). Turn right up worn grassy path which starts from a kissing gate at the end of the car park and heads diagonally across the field to a kissing gate. Continue upwards with the wood on the left and go through another kissing gate to rise on a fenced track

which emerges onto a boardwalk. Turn left here but continuing right for 100 yards brings you to 'The Old Barn' which provides shelter and has a map of the Box Moor Trust estate. On the main route continue along the boardwalk passing a gazebo on the right to a kissing gate. Continue ahead with the fence on the left to a sunken pond. There are two seats at viewpoint here one after a small gate in the fence ahead and another just round the corner of the hedge, facing east. Return to the pond and continue ahead slightly lower than the outward route to a gate and kissing gate visible at a gap in the wood facing. Go through a second kissing gate and continue ahead, climbing slightly along a mown path. This is Bovingdon Reach, an area left to grow naturally and is alive with wild flowers and butterflies in the spring. Continue until there is a cross track with the end of the wood and a kissing gate visible on the left. Turn left down to the gate. Go through it and continue ahead to descend down a steep hill to the busy road.

Cross the road carefully then ascend the road opposite (Bury Rise) for 200 yards. Turn left along the first footpath (opposite another path on the right) which descends slightly through the wood. When the path emerges onto the flatter open common, veer right to a sign post. Head right up the narrow tarred road. After about 150 yards turn left up the unsignposted broad track through the trees. This soon merges with a bridleway which comes from the right. When after about 200 yards the track goes to the right of a tall tree and leaves the edge of the common continue on the open common along a well use path. *(This is crossing the former golf course, the common is now managed for conservation.)* At metalled road turn left (this is the driveway to the Boys Brigade headquarters), continuing ahead when it joins a busier road (Felden Lane). Take care down this road without pavements. After 200 yards take a byway on the right, ignore footpaths on the left but keep left when track divides. Continue on the bridleway over a bridge across the busy A41.

Immediately after the bridge, there is a choice of a longer route including four sets of steps, two of which are steeply up and down or a shorter route.

Longer route

Turn right immediately after the bridge and step over the stile. After 120 yards veer left along a clear path through the trees to the top of the chalk pit continuing to the second seat, which has a good view. (This is just before the path ahead descends.) The level area around here and, less accessibly, the slope of the chalk pit is good for orchids in June and July. Take the path just before the seat and head upwards to more open land (continuation of the area where the left branch was taken, it would have been possible to have continued straight along the path at the edge of this area). Turn left through the trees descending slightly on signposted path to a kissing gate. Head straight ahead across the open area (full of Cowslips in the spring) to the hedge at the end. Turn left and descend keeping the hedge on your right. Go through the kissing gate to join the more enclosed path crossing the railway and the steep steps crossing former railways and access points in the former gas works. The path emerges to a busy road; cross it to Footpath 77 which is slightly to the right. Follow it across the bridge continuing ahead along a tree lined path towards a road bridge across the canal. Just before the bridge go through a kissing gate and follow towpath under bridge. Just after the bridge go through a kissing gate and along an avenue of trees including crossing a bridge over the River Bulbourne. At the end of the avenue continue along the moor roughly parallel to the main road to the gate opposite the Pelican crossing where the route started.

Shorter route

Continue along the track passing the chalk pit on the right, this is then joined by another track on the right which has an information board about this section of common about 10 yards up it. The joined tracks emerge onto a road, descend on this, crossing the railway, to the main road, turn left at the junction and continue for 400 yards to reach the station.

