

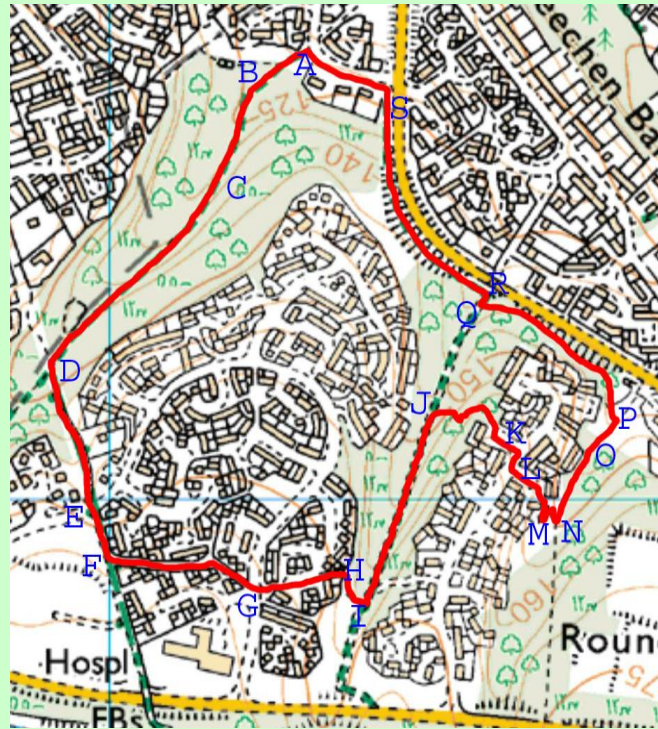
This 3.6km walk is signed both anti-clockwise and clockwise and may be joined at any point; it can be shortened at several points. For the purposes of this guide the walk starts at the northern end of Coal Bottom (Tunbury Wood) by the cul-de-sac Woodlands (off Beechen Bank Road) and proceeds anticlockwise.

Starting at an interpretation noticeboard **A** (at Coal Bottom, so-called because of charcoal production), walk south up the valley along a gravel/hardcore path. To your right a tarmac footpath leads up to Sherwood Avenue **B**. The dry valley bottom with semi-natural ancient woodland contains a range of standard trees including ash, oak and the odd beech. 'Over stood' hornbeam coppice predominates at first (this is old coppice that has grown up into medium or large size trees, many with several trunks). Hazel, elder and hawthorn (midland and common) are common components of the under storey, along with saplings of ash.

At first both sides of the valley have meagre ground layer vegetation. This is caused partly by the deep shadow and partly by motorbikes. Further up the valley the woodland ground layer becomes more obvious and contains a range of species including dog's mercury, bluebell (April & May), wood anemone, bramble, etc. During spring you may even spot a patch of toothwort – a saprophytic plant with no chlorophyll that feeds directly from tree roots. Where summer light levels are good along the footpath edges or in small clearings, stinging nettles and bramble quickly dominate. Walking on past a waymarker post **C** with a footpath forking left uphill to Bracken Hill, you come to a small open area.

Walderslade Woodlands Circular Walk

The three valleys walk



Just after this on the right side of the footpath you will notice a ditch feature which is the ancient medieval wood-bank or boundary ditch between Aylesford and Boxley parishes. A little further on there is a collection of 'sarsen' stones near to a small clearing.

As you meet the tarmac footpath **D** the circular walk continues up the steps to the left. Straight ahead leads to the Walderslade Woods road and the path on the right leads to Tunbury Avenue. Follow the steps up to Impton Lane **E** and cross straight over to the tarmac footpath opposite.

Follow this footpath for about 90m and then at a junction **F** turn left following the waymarker signs. This path now runs between housing (behind Orbit Close, Spenlow Drive, Trotwood Close and Bellgrove Court) and emerges again onto Impton Lane **G** just to the north of the Alexandra Hospital. Carefully cross Impton Lane and continue straight down the tarmac footpath past some rose beds and through some more housing (Olivine Close). Keep going straight towards the woodland down a tarmac path with garden fencing on both sides. Immediately in front of you is a waymarker post **H** near to a large cherry tree. The path turns right and goes down a flight of gentle steps into Cossington Valley. At the bottom of the steps there is a Walderslade Woods notice board **I** and a waymarker post directs you to turn left down Cossington valley.

The next part of the route (**I** to **O**) has no waymarker posts at present. Walk down the central path in Cossington Valley, which is the most shaded of the three valleys. There is some adventure playground equipment on each side. Continue until you reach a path going diagonally uphill on the right **J**. For a shortened walk, continue straight to point **Q**. For the circular walk, follow the uphill zigzag path until you emerge in Malus Close. Walk along this **K**, turn right into Forestdale, and immediately **L** left into Fagus Close. At the far end you will see a footpath between 2 hedges leading to a wooden gate. Proceed through the gate and into Round Wood valley. Follow the tarmac path as it zigzags down the valley side (accessible by push chairs with care). If you stop at the point of the first zigzag at the top **M** and look into the wood straight ahead you will see an area with yew trees. Further down

there are a couple of large beech trees adjacent to the zigzag path and some tall ash standards as well. The ground under the large beech tree in the valley floor is thick with beechmast. Immediately opposite the beech the regeneration woodland growth is mostly hazel coppice with a dense ground cover of moschatel. Follow the zigzag footpath down into the valley bottom **N**.

The circular walk turns left and heads down the valley towards Beechen Bank Road. Turning right would take you up towards the Walderslade Woods road. The path now emerges into an open area and after a few more metres a path joins from the right (near the notice board) **O**. This path leads up the valley side and runs along the back of the Longwood houses through more high quality woodland.

Continue on down the valley path and observe that the range of species increases. The open area is dominated by bramble, nettles, grasses and cranesbill with some patches of dense bracken. Amongst the fairly young trees lining the path you will notice plums, blackthorn, alder and cherry – all of which were probably part of a garden or farm area. Further on you come across the picnic site, the table on the right being in an area once infested with Japanese Knotweed. At this point the circular route turns left at the waymarker post **P** and climbs up and along through chestnut coppice; this route can be slippery when wet.

If you need an easier route don't turn left at the waymarker **P** but head straight down Round Wood Valley and through the wooden kissing gate at the end and onto Beechen Bank Road. If you look up and ahead as you walk through the gate you will see a couple of whitebeam trees. You can turn left

there and walk down the footway to rejoin the walk **R** near the underpass.

The circular walk route from point **P** up the valley side and through the woodland first takes you through a hornbeam dominated area and then past a large oak standard. The woodland character then changes as sweet chestnut becomes dominant. This tree was introduced to the UK by the Romans and is commonly managed as coppice in Kent. The wood is traditionally used for stakes and other woodland products. These chestnuts had not been coppiced for many years and were consequently quite tall – again described as 'over stood coppice'; we have started coppicing here recently. At the rear of the residential gardens (behind Silver Tree Close) the chestnuts were cut down in 2001 and are now strongly re-growing. The path runs on through the woodland immediately above Beechen Bank Road, until it dips back down into Cossington Valley near the underpass. The descent here is quite steep and slippery when wet.

On reaching the valley floor footpath **Q** you turn right. After a few metres the circular walk turns left **R** up a fairly steep path just before the underpass (the footpath through the underpass goes towards the bypassed section of Boxley Road and can be followed to Walderslade Village). This section can be slippery in the wet. The path now follows Beechen Bank Road but at some height above it. It slowly dips down as you near Woodlands. Follow the waymarkers keeping to the main path (there are a couple of paths leading off to the left which also take you into Coal Bottom). As you approach the first house in Woodlands **S** you follow the waymarker arrow straight on (if you turn right at the barrier near the

waymarker post you can cross Beechen Bank Road and join up with a footpath towards Walderslade Village). Follow the tarmac footpath left into Woodlands and to the start point **A**.

Please take all litter home with you. There is a legal requirement in these woods to clean up after your dog. Motor vehicles are prohibited in the woods; the police community support officer can be contacted via the control room 01622 690690. Please report any serious dumping or other problems to the Parish Office, Wildfell Close – tel 01634 861237.

This leaflet is produced by Boxley Parish Council and the Walderslade Woodlands Group, with help from the KCC GIS team, and is one of a series freely available from the Parish Office.

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