



4 Chandlers Cross

The Clarendon Arms



It's hard to believe you're just off the M25 and two miles away from Watford when doing this walk. Chandlers Cross is little more than a hamlet, dominated by its pub and cushioned from 'civilization' by a series of deciduous woods, the most prominent of which is Whippendell Woods. Once part of the nearby Cassiobury estate, the wood is now designated a Site of Special Scientific Interest and harbours a rich variety of flora and fauna.

Distance 5½ miles

OS Explorer 172 Chiltern Hills East, GR 066983

Terrain Can get slippery in the woods during bluebell time; some short sharp hills, but otherwise generally flat along well-defined paths

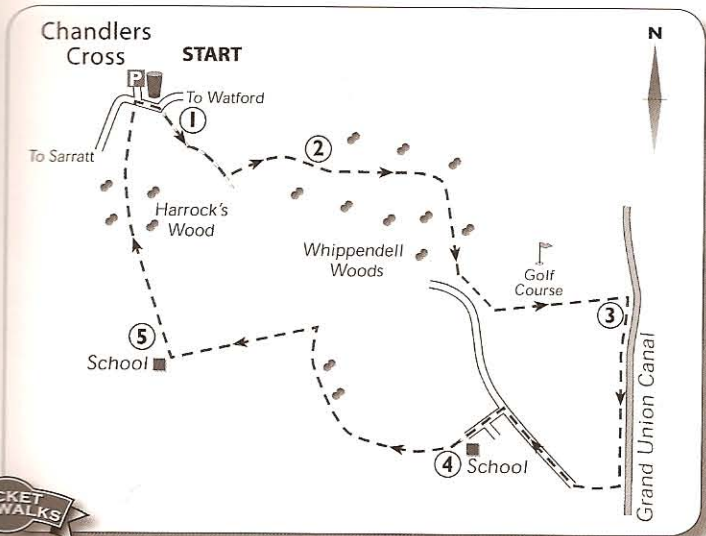
Starting point Either the pub (using the car park, with the landlord's permission) or the public car park in Whippendell Woods (GR 074977).

How to get there Chandlers Cross is 2 miles north of Croxley Green, ½ mile south-west of Junction 19 of the M25, and just west of Watford.

This walk gives an opportunity to explore the woods, and the clearings that were created during the great storm of 1987 and now offer options for picnicking. On leaving Whippendell, the route meets the Grand Union Canal and follows the towpath for a while before entering fresh woodlands, which, like Whippendell, are particularly glorious in late spring when bluebells carpet the floor.



Commanding a prominent position between two road junctions, the **Clarendon Arms** has a sweeping L-shaped bar with seating on different levels, the whole area being defined by two stone-faced fireplaces, and half-height wood panelling gives a warm feel to the place. The beers available here include Old Speckled Hen and Wells Bombardier, and the food on offer ranges from a selection of pies (including a quiche of the day) to a tapas board and delicacies such as *pescados fritos* (whitebait with horseradish) and *chorizo con queso* (pan fried spicy sausage with mozzarella cheese). The pub also has a patio outside and a large car park.

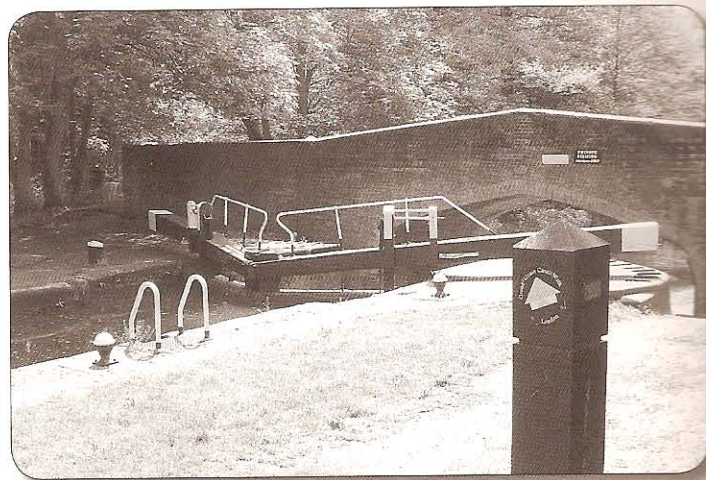


Open Monday to Saturday 11 am to 11 pm; Sunday noon to 11.30 pm. Meals are served from noon to 3 pm and from 6 pm to 9 pm.

☎ 01923 270929

1 Turn left out of the pub and walk down **Rousebarn Lane** on your right, following signs to **Blackett's Nurseries**; the road soon enters woodland. Just after the entrance to the nurseries, take the footpath on the left, signed to **Watford**, which leads you into **Whippendell Woods**. (An information board on the right notes that this Site of Special Scientific Interest is known particularly for its wide variety of fungi and insect life, including speckled wood, ringlet, and holly blue butterflies. These woods also served as the Naboo Forest in the Star Wars film *The Phantom Menace*.) The track is broad and easy to follow, with occasional clearings offering possibilities for picnics.

- 2** On reaching a triangular junction of paths, keep to the right and, shortly after, at another junction, in a clearing, take the right-hand path, heading south-west. At the end of this path, near a road, bear left and continue until you reach a fingerpost sending you left and signed to '**Cassiobury Park**, 820 yards'. (All these woods were once part of the Cassiobury estate.) After a slight uphill climb, you encounter a golf club, and the path takes you over a fairway; so look right for flying balls! Pass through another stretch of woodland and then cross another fairway before descending to a bridge over the **Grand Union Canal**, known as Iron Bridge, with a lock to the left. A couple of old lock beams have been positioned as seats by a commemorative plaque celebrating the bicentenary of the canal in 1987.
- 3** Pick up the towpath heading south (the bridge side of the lock) and follow this down to the next bridge, approximately ½ mile. Turn right here and go uphill, following a sign to **Chandlers Cross**.



The lock and Iron Bridge over the Grand Union Canal.

Hertfordshire

- Descend the hill to come out by some houses, where you head right into **Rousebarn Lane** (the opposite end from where you started). Follow the lane until, at the end of the houses, you reach a road on the left, **Little Green Lane**, which you take, climbing uphill to a school.
- 4 At this point the lane becomes more of a track, but maintain your direction, going to the back of the school. After 100 yards, pick up the footpath on the right, signed **Sarratt Parish Walk**. This passes through a narrow strip of woodland and then tracks half right across some open land. At the far side, take the path to the left at a junction, keeping the woodland to your left. Where the track ends, also by a school, go through a kissing gate and then turn right, following the sign to **Chandlers Cross**. Note the unusual wood-carving on your left.
- 5 You soon enter **Harrock's Wood**, an ancient woodland, which is known for its bluebells, as well as the rare coral root bittercress, which is visible in spring. The path follows what is known as **Finches Avenue**, a diverse woodland made up of ash, oak, sycamore, cherry and unusual conifers. The deep indentations you may notice are the remains of excavations for gravel and flint. The path emerges from the woods and brings you out opposite the pub where you started.

Places of interest nearby



Cheslyn Gardens in Nascot Wood Road, Watford, are regarded as the town's best kept secret. The 3½ acres have been designed to provide variety and colour all year round in a range of styles, including formal gardens, a rock pool and woodland, and there is also an aviary. The gardens have the added attraction of being free and open every day except Christmas.

☎ 01923 235946