

Rickmansworth Waterways Trust

Strolls from the Lock Number 9 – To the ‘Rose and Crown’, Harefield Road and return

Time approximately 2 hr 40 minutes

Distance 6 miles

(This walk returns by the same route in order to avoid busy roads. Part of the route may be muddy)

Turn right out of the Lock Centre, up the steps to the main road, go left to pass over the canal, continue to the roundabout and on to Moor Lane. Cross to a road on the right close to the roundabout, signposted to Rickmansworth and Moor Park Golf Clubs. A footpath crosses the fairways, marked by posts and arrows at intervals. It begins on the left of the road just after the golf shop, by a sign ‘Moor Park Golf Club’. Walk up the hill with the hedge on your right, then diagonally to cross over the road at the brow of the hill. Go along a small track, where a sign indicates the path to the left of a small copse. Further on, cross the fairway, to join a track through a rough area, containing an oak tree with bird box, which is approximately level with a small hut on your left.

There are fine views here of Moor Park Mansion. This was built in 1678 for James, Duke of Monmouth (executed for his rebellion against James 2nd) and reconstructed by James Thornhill in 1720 for Benjamin Styles, who had made a fortune in the ‘South Sea Bubble’ affair. Lancelot ‘Capability’ Brown re-modelled the gardens in the mid-18th century for the next owner. There are some beautiful trees – look for the cedar next to the Mansion, and the Sweet Chestnuts alongside the road. Later, several generations of the Grosvenor family lived here, until it was sold by Lord Ebury in 1919 to Lord Leverhulme, the soap magnate. The grounds were then developed as a golf course and for housing. The district council acquired much of the land to stop more housing developments just before WW2. Moor Park Mansion itself was requisitioned during the war, and Operation Market Garden, resulting in the Battle of Arnhem, was planned here. The house is now the Clubhouse of Moor Park Golf Club, but guided tours take place at various times throughout the year. The frescos inside are exceptional. Indeed, Pevsner called it ‘the grandest 18th century house in Hertfordshire’. The grounds also contain the site of a Roman villa to the north west of the mansion.

The footpath continues through the trees, past a tee to the right, across a fairway and past a lake on the left. Cross another fairway and head towards the right of a white house. Go between the rhododendrons here, to a small road and turn right towards the main London road. Cross this to a small road almost opposite, with a sign ‘Batchworth Heath’. This is a remnant of wet heath on high ground and probably the site of original settlement in the area. Walk along this road, keeping the pond on your left. Batchworth Heath House, the first house on the right, was once the home of Robert Morier, appointed British Ambassador to Russia in 1884. He was detested by Otto von Bismarck at the time of the great power struggles between Britain, Germany and Russia. His tomb at a Northwood church displays an urn given by Czar Alexander 3rd. The funeral was attended by representatives of Government and Royalty, both Russian and British.

At the end of the houses here, bear left over the heath towards White Hill Road which runs parallel to road you have just walked along. The indistinct path is on the right, entering woodland between bushes, about halfway between the houses and White Hill Road, by a small oak tree. This is part of the London LOOP (London Outer Orbital Path), a 150 mile walk around London, which is marked at intervals by a small green disc containing an arrow. However, there are none here where they are needed. The path can be wet and muddy, but gets better further down the hill. It initially runs parallel to White Hill under a pylon. At a second pylon, there is a footpath sign post; turn right to ‘Bishops Wood’. The path improves in size, has green disc directional signs, and the sound of the road disappears. At one point, a LOOP sign indicates to the right. About 10 minutes from the Heath, the path passes over a wooden bridge, and through a fence, where a LOOP sign indicates right onto a larger track. The route now becomes more open. Ignore a path to the right approximately ¼ mile on, but take the next one, which has a 5 bar gate across with a LOOP sign.

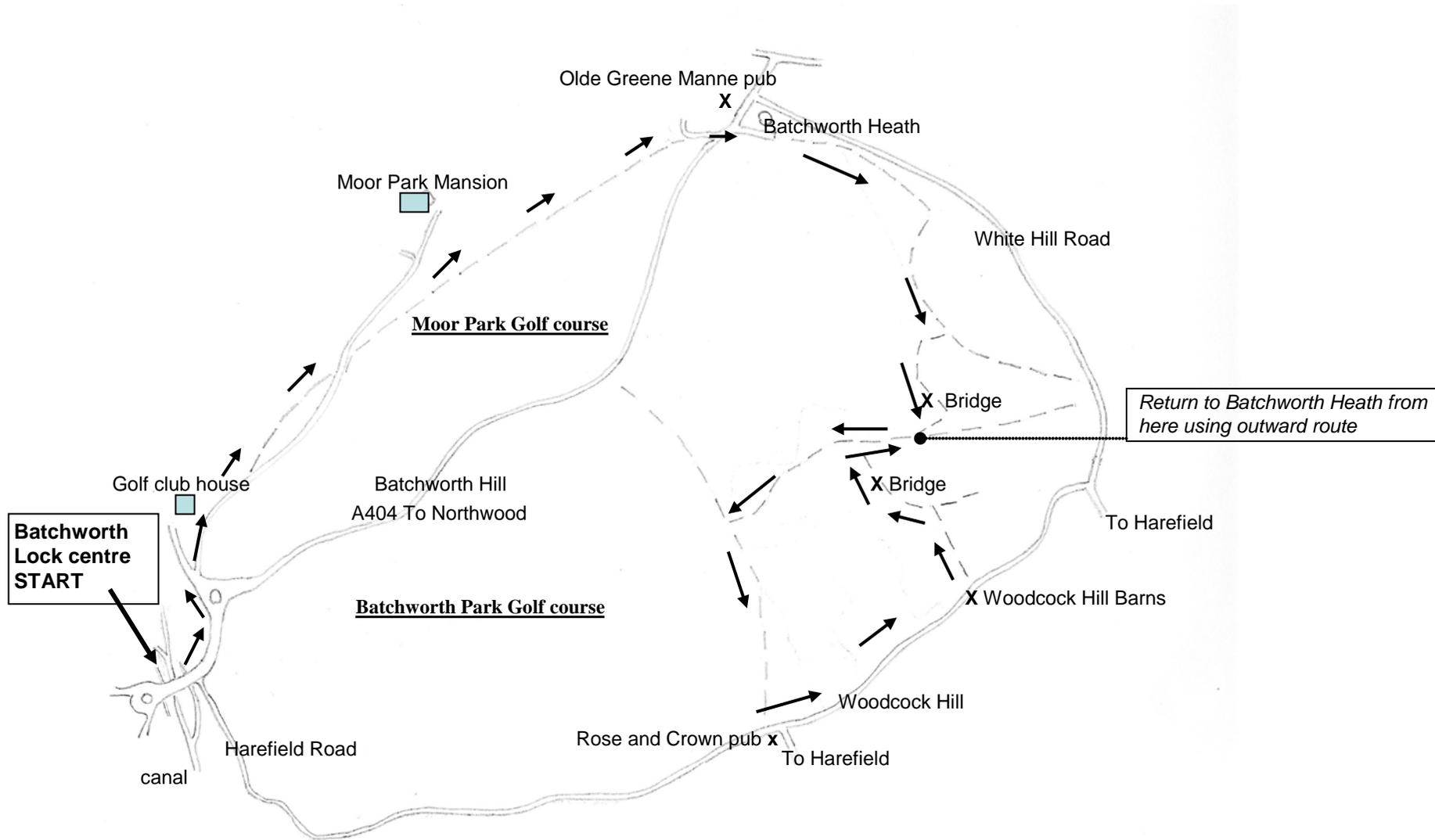
The ancient woodland passed through from Batchworth Heath is now a country park, comprising Lockwell Wood and Bishop’s Wood. There are coppiced hazel and hornbeam, but also mature oak and beech, due to varied soil types. After walking for about 30mins from the Heath, you will emerge from the trees into a meadow. Batchworth Park Golf Course, opened in 1996, can be seen ahead and to your right. Turn left and follow the path at the field edge to reach a stile. Cross here into the next field, traverse diagonally to a gap in the hedge onto a path running between two chain link fences. Take a minute to look back at the view. This is only 20 miles from Charing Cross. The large building to the left is Batchworth Park Golf Club house.

After about 100yds you will reach Harefield Road, to turn left and leave the LOOP route. Pass the ‘Rose and Crown’ on your R, and walk ahead into Woodcock Hill. There is no pavement on this road, but it is fairly quiet. Approximately ½ mile along this road, opposite ‘Woodcock Hill Barns’, a bridleway crossed by a green barrier passes through the hedge on your left. Walk straight ahead along this to return into Bishop’s Wood. Again, the track can be very muddy here. Turn left in about ¼ mile when it joins another track, with a signpost at the junction. Cross over a small bridge and at the top of the next hill, you will see, on the left, the 5 bar gate passed through earlier. Carry on straight, to retrace your steps to Batchworth Heath, Moor Park golf course and a return to the lock centre. Do not forget to turn left at the next wooden bridge where you had originally joined this larger track.

These walks are written by Jillian Christensen and are provided free by The Rickmansworth Waterways Trust but a minimum donation of 20p is suggested to help support our education programme. Thank you!

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