

Oaklands and Railway Tunnels Walk, via Harmer Green and Burnham Green 6.4 miles

Introduction. This is a fine undulating walk, with some beautiful views of unspoilt valleys, several attractive woods, and views of the East Coast Main Line as it passes over the viaduct and through the Welwyn tunnels.

Start Point. North Star Pub, Great North Road (B197), Welwyn AL6 0TA (TL246174). If not using the pub, then park discreetly in the slip road off the B197 opposite the pub. Regular 300/301 buses (Stevenage to Hemel Hempstead) stop at the shops beside the pub.

The Walk. From the pub [1] cross the road at the pedestrian lights, turn R and continue along the pavement to Turpins Ride. Turn L. Continue uphill for 400 yards, with houses on the left, open fields on the right. The track becomes unsurfaced and ends at a wood. At the Harmer Green Private Woodland board take the right fork and, very shortly, another right fork uphill to the edge of the wood. Exit the wood into the field and turn L onto a good path, downhill, with the wood on your left. As the wood ends the path swings R across fields [2]. *Enjoy the view of this beautiful unspoilt valley.*

After 300 yards the path turns R and then L. Continue with the wood on your right. As the wood ends, continue in the same direction on a crossfield path, shortly reaching a cross path. Turn L, uphill, to a wood, and, very shortly, take a path R into the wood [3]. Immediately take the path straight on, keeping close to the edge of the wood on your right. At the waymark post the path forks L uphill, eventually reaching a crossroads of paths. Continue ahead. Ignore FP going downhill on the right behind houses. *Look out for a dramatic view over Welwyn North Station and the railway viaduct below you and to your right.*

Here there is a junction. Turn L. You are now directly above the railway line, and will pass an air shaft. Continue to the waymark post, where you can watch the trains below between the tunnels. Fork R, keeping to the top of the hill. The path narrows between fences to emerge at a road by No. 51B. At the T junction turn L and follow the road through Harmer Green, past a green with a war memorial on your left. As the road turns sharp left, go straight ahead along Pennyfathers Lane, with pond on your right. Keep ahead past Keepers Cottage on left to a crossroads of paths [4]. *(Here is a possible shortcut, saving about a mile. Continue ahead downhill for 400 yards to a crossroads of*



paths, where you rejoin the main route by turning L at Point B in the text below.) Take the bridleway on the right, between hedges, and waymarked “Digswell ½”. The path emerges at an open field. Take the right hand FP, continuing in the same direction, aiming for the railway viaduct. (Note: If this path looks too muddy, take the left hand FP, rejoining the main route and turning L at Point A in the text below.)

At the bottom of the hill, follow the path round the edge of the field to meet a path at a T junction [5]. Turn L on a good track, with trees on your right, and open field on your left. Continue past a bridleway coming in on your left (**Point A**), to a crossroads of paths [6]. Turn L after a kissing gate, and continue along a field edge path with hedge on your left. *This is another beautiful unspoilt, and very quiet, valley.*

At the crossroads (**Point B**), after a kissing gate, go straight ahead across a field, aiming for the corner of a wood. Continue ahead, the wood now on your left, to a gate. Carry on uphill beside the wood. *At the top, turn round to get your breath back, and to admire the view.*

Go through a kissing gate and across a field, keeping a hedge on your left. Ignore the path on your left, and go straight ahead to exit the field at a gate, onto a green [7]. Turn L beside the road, passing the Village Hall, to reach a crossroads, the centre of Burnham Green. Carry straight on across the green, alongside White Horse Lane, aiming for the trig point. *If you want a break, there are a couple of seats on the green.*



Look out for a FP to the left of the White Horse pub, waymarked “Harmer Green Wood”. *This passes between open fields, with glimpses of Stevenage ahead, and the spire of Datchworth Church to your right.*

After 300 yards, at a crossroads of paths, at the bottom of a small dip by a wood on the right, turn L on a crossfield path, to the corner of a wood. Cross the stile (you can by-pass it) and continue with the wood on

your right to a gate. The path becomes enclosed and eventually crosses a lane. Go straight ahead, through a small gate, and on through the garden of Barneswood Lodge. The beautiful tree lined path carries on to meet a cross path [8]. Here turn R, and where the path turns right, bear L out of the wood to a gate. Continue with the hedge on your right through another gate to reach a wood. Enter the wood through another gate, and continue straight ahead, ignoring the waymarked path to your left. Stay on this path where it bears slightly to the left, ignoring a waymarked path to the right. Carry straight on to the corner of the wood, where a bench is sited for enjoying the open view outside the wood [9].

As you reach the bench, turn R at the crossroads of paths. *Once again, you are directly over the railway tunnels, and will hear the trains passing the air shafts.* At the next crossroads take the FP ahead between fences to reach a road. Carry on downhill, straight ahead at the next crossroads, to reach the bottom of the hill. Turn L, and this will lead you back to the start.

Walk devised by Harold and Carol Stokes, North Herts Ramblers Group

