



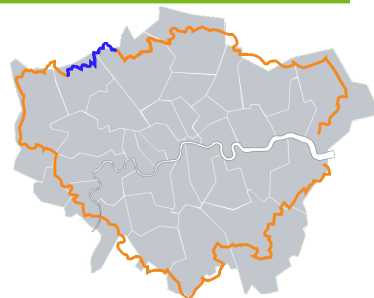
**London LOOP**  
Section 15  
Hatch End to Elstree



**Transport  
for London**

*walk*  
**London**

**Start:** Hatch End (TQ121913)  
**Station:** Hatch End  
**Finish:** Elstree (TQ189962)  
**Station:** Elstree & Borehamwood  
**Distance:** 10 miles (16 km)



**Introduction:** This section follows the green belt on the fringe of Greater London crossing the Hertfordshire border several times. It goes through picturesque woodland and pastures and is easy walking on mostly level ground with a few longish slopes and some field edge, farmland and woodland path walking.

The highlights of this walk are Grim's Ditch, the mansion of W S Gilbert, of Gilbert and Sullivan fame - now Grim's Dyke Hotel, Bentley Priory with its World War Two Connections and the Roman Watling Street.

There are many stiles and kissing gates. The sections more suitable for the less mobile and pushchairs include Bentley Priory Open Space, Grove Fields and Aldenham Country Park.

The walk starts at Hatch End Station on the line from Euston and ends at Elstree Station with trains from King's Cross and Luton. There is a café and public toilets at Aldenham Country Park as well as pubs along the way.

V1 : July 09

**Directions from Hatch End station:** Leave the station and at the junction with Uxbridge Road go right. Turn right down Grimsdyke Road and continue passing both entrances to Hillview Road. At the junction turn right down the no exit road to join the LOOP and follow the LOOP signpost leading to the public footpath towards Pinner Wood Farm and Little Oxhey Lane on the right. Go over the stile and turn right into the field to join the LOOP.

**Section 15 directions:** Follow the fence along to the corner of the field and into the wood to reach a junction of paths. Go left here keeping the playing field and later residential fences on the right. Continue straight ahead, passing over Colburn Avenue following the fence between the houses and farmland until the end. Turn sharp right here and then left at the waymarker towards a stile in the fence. Cross it and strike out across the field towards the electricity pylon on the other side in the right hand corner. Pick up the track to the right of the pylon and head through the wooden gate to enter Hertfordshire. **A**

Proceed between the playing fields and the fence to reach Little Oxhey Lane; cross it and turn right, continuing over the railway bridge and passing St. Georges Drive and Harrow Way until reaching the busy junction with Oxhey Lane.

Cross Oxhey Lane via the island at the lights, and go through the kissing gate opposite. A newly restored path climbs the hill between fences to reach another kissing gate in the hedge which borders Grim's Dyke Golf Course. Once on the course, skirt left around one of their greens and continue up the hill following the white topped posts with trees to the left. Coming to the top, go left keeping the green keepers barns to the right, to find a track, Ass House Lane, **B** leading on. Before the end of the lane, which leads onto Old Redding, turn sharp left onto a path that's just inside the edge of the wood.

Grim's Dyke or Ditch, which the Saxons named after the devil, or Grim, crosses here. Archaeologists believe this ditch was made in the late Iron Age/early Roman period which means it is at least 2000 years old. The ditch may have been constructed to separate two estates to prevent stock from straying, but it does not seem to have had a defensive purpose. When the Saxons came across these linear earthworks which stretch across the Chiltern Hills, they didn't understand their origin and so associated them with the devil.

At the pond near the telecom mast, turn right and continue to an access road. Cross the access road to take a path into the wood, continuing past groves of rhododendron to the drained Grimsdyke Lake.

The artificial lake and surrounding land were once luxurious ornamental gardens owned by Sir William Gilbert of Gilbert and Sullivan fame. Tragically this is where Sir William died in 1911, helping a young female house guest who had got into difficulties while swimming. Lady Gilbert had the lake drained and closed. Gilbert had always said he would like to die on a summer's day in his own garden and sadly he had his wish. The beautiful fully restored house, now Grim's Dyke Hotel, was built for Gilbert by the famous architect Norman Shaw in 1872 in the Tudor Style. Highly secretive work was done here during World War II. Explore the area further to see the giant redwood trees and other plantings of specimen trees from Gilbert's time.

Keep the lake to the left and at the end of the lake where the path splits; go right, up the bank and then left, along the ridge, crossing a small wooden bridge and into the woods of Harrow Weald Common.

The odd undulating ground here is due to gravel having been extracted from the Common for building. The coming of the railway provided access to more convenient and alternative sites and so the practice died out here.

At the waymarker, turn right, walk down the slope and head for the gap in the hedge onto a road called Old Redding; cross it and enter the car park opposite. There's a picnic area here and some wonderful panoramic views across London. To continue, leave the car park and go right passing a pub curiously named 'The Case is Altered.'

Past the pub at the traffic island, cross Old Redding and go through the gate onto Harrow Weald Common and go straight ahead. The raised path leads through woodland to a junction of paths. Go left and then bear right passing quaint cottages built for the servants of Grimsdyke House. The path leads along the edge of the wood then continues into it. At a junction of paths look for a waymarker and go right. Go right again at another waymarker, crossing over undulating ground and up a bank and steps to Common Road. Cross it with care and go through a wooden gate opposite. Proceed along the

concrete path.

Glenthorne Open Space has remained undisturbed for nearly a lifetime. The land was requisitioned in 1940 for the expansion of the RAF's HO at Bentley Priory. The development never took place but the land remained in RAF hands until recently. Ministry fencing still bars the public to this day.

Go through the kissing gate and on to Bentley Priory Open Space. The concrete path bears left then runs parallel with security fencing.

Beyond the security fence a glimpse can be caught of Bentley Priory, the elegant mansion once used as headquarters of Fighter Command in World War 2. The famous 'Battle of Britain' was ultimately directed from here, delivering Hitler's first tactical defeat which arguably saved the nation from invasion.

At the information board go left, through the kissing gate and straight ahead to reach Priory Drive. Turn right onto Priory Drive and follow it around to the left to reach the busy road called The Common. Cross it and enter Warren Lane opposite.

Enter the car park to the left of Warren Lane and head for the LOOP fingerpost in the right corner. Take the right of the two paths which crosses an access road and eventually meets Warren Lane again. Cross over and take the path to the left of the gate. Follow this path between the wood and cricket ground. Go between two ponds and then right following the larger or 'Brewery Pond'. 100 metres before the end of the pond bear left through a line of tree towards the houses until you meet a metalled track. Go left along it, through a gate and bear left onto the picturesque Little Common.

To leave the LOOP here, walk past the pond to find Wood Lane and go left. Turn right into Dennis Lane opposite and just before the traffic islands go left through a kissing gate into Stanmore Country Park. Follow the path as it eventually bears right and into woods and across a foot bridge. Bear left

uphill and at a three way split in the path take the middle and then a right fork. Pass the electricity substation and go right through a kissing gate at the top of Kerry Avenue which leads you to Stanmore Station.

To continue: Before reaching the pond on Little Common turn left to another larger pond. The ponds are sometimes called Caesar's Pond as it was thought the Romans dug them. Walk around it clockwise to meet Wood Lane, go left and then left again into Warren Lane. At the junction of small lanes take the first right. Go past the few houses to reach a set of metal gates. Go left and then immediately right through a gate onto a small path that follows closely along the hospital fence. Go over the stile at the end of the small path, and then go down the gravel road with fields on either side. The road bears right; follow it for 10 metres then go left by a metal gate up a path to a gap in the hedge.

Proceed across the field, with the M1 Motorway on the right, to the far right hand corner. Go through the metal gate and onto the concrete path past the gas pumping station to meet Elstree Road. Go right, passing under the M1 flyover, to reach a large roundabout. Cross North Western Avenue and proceed along Elstree Road again. Just past The Fishery Inn on the right, cross the road, which has become Watford Road and go through a kissing gate to enter Aldenham Country Park. **C** Keep the impressive reservoir to the left and follow the path passing the sailing club to reach a junction of paths.

Stray a bit from the LOOP to the dam **D** that ensures the reservoir remains full. It was originally built by French prisoners of war in about 1795 to dispel concerns by local mill-owners that the Grand Junction Canal would lower the level of the nearby rivers and take their trade away. There are refreshments and toilets here.

To continue: go right to reach Aldenham Road. Cross it and go through the gap opposite into the fields. Proceed on the right of the post fence through a metal kissing gate and then straight ahead, over the open field and through a wooden kissing gate to reach Watling Street.

Of vital strategic and commercial importance to the Romans who built it, Watling Street once ran from Dover, through London, to Wroxeter in Shropshire, a distance of 250 miles.

Cross Watling Street with care and go left then right into Allum Lane. After 20 metres go left over a stile and proceed along the path. Keep going straight and then bear right at the waymarker, across the open field towards a line of poplar trees at the top. Cross the stile into Elstree Golf Course. Head towards the waymarker straight ahead and on the left of the small mound. Turn right onto the gravel path and follow it across the golf course. Bear left to pick up a smaller path leading through grass and then turn right onto a wider gravel path through the wood to reach Allum Lane again. Go left, passing Barham Avenue and Links Drive.

This section ends at the junction with Deacon's Hill Road on the right.

To reach Elstree and Borehamwood station, continue over the bridge to the traffic lights. Cross Allum Lane and go down the steps to the station on the right.