

Hodgemoor Riding Association

Love the Woods and want something a bit different?

Guide to the hacks accessible from Hodgemoor Woods

By Susie and Marcus Bicknell November 2013 updated Jan 2019

Notes:

- a. The place-names used here are those on Google or on the Ordnance Survey Explorer sheet 172, so you can select map or satellite view on your computer or tablet to familiarise yourself with these routes before you leave.
- b. Neither the authors nor the Hodgemoor Riding Association can be responsible for any changes to routes or incidents en route. Horse-riding is dangerous and you should assess the risks of these routes in advance and during.
- c. Do not cross a main road on horse-back unless you are a responsible adult with relevant experience or accompanied by an expert horse-rider with knowledge of the crossing(s) concerned.
- d. Take relevant equipment including fluorescent tabard and horse marking, well-charged mobile phone, Ordnance Survey map and compass.

**Maps to be added
to this document**

The support of other riders and members of the Hodgemoor Riding Association in prospecting, photographing and writing up these and other routes; thank you for any input you can give.

1. Chalfont Equestrian from Hodgemoor

Start option 1: The Charcoal Burner (most westerly option)

Start option 2: Trail onto Bottrells Lane at the corner of Amber's Trail and the Bracken Ride

Start option 3: Trail onto Bottrells Lane at the Spring Link (most easterly)

In all three cases, make your way to the Hodgemoor Woods car park on Bottrells Lane and turn North into Bottom House Farm Lane. You have a mile of gentle downhill ride on tarmac but nothing too slippery. The road is single track so you occasionally have to negotiate a car coming either way and find a passing place. Stay on the road past the cottage on the left, the road bending right, and continue to the Swerlings' farm and Chalfont Equestrian's stables. After the outdoor school turn right up the gravel road. We are requested not to trot or canter until past the horse paddocks where there is a turning to the left and the farm's bonfire. Thereafter the trail opens up with fields on the right and there is a nice uphill canter on firm rather stoney ground to Kiln Cottage. Continue over the brow to the tarmac road (Bottrells Lane) and turn right (West) to rejoin the wood.

Distance:

Time:

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2. Chalfont Equestrian from Chalfont St Giles

Start: Chalfont St Giles village

For many riders this requires a walk from the White Hart in Threehouseholds down the main road (Deanway) through St Giles or Back Lane and Bottrells Lane (we prefer the latter). Once in the village, turn North into Stratton Chase Drive opposite the deli and the flower shop... not the Back Lane road but the drive just to its right. To our knowledge this is not an officially-approved horse trail but it is certainly a public right of way and wide enough to be a bridle path. Be most sensitive to walkers and habitants. Come back to a walk and be prepared to stop. After half a mile you arrive at Mill Lane, a tarmac road. Turn left and right (North) after 30 metres into Hill Farm Drive. Now you have a pleasant amble through salubrious houses and their gardens (or a brisk trot) but there is traffic from the car repair shop at the end so keep an eye open for passing spaces. After the left right bend there and two houses on the left (one is the Hinds' Flexmore Farm) the tarmac ends and there is an old wooden sign post... go straight ahead where the Swerlings have recently laid a new surface of black scrapings to make a more solid surface for farm vehicles. Walk quietly down this hill; when you see Chalfont Equestrian and the Swerlings' farm, turn left (South) onto the farm track at the T junction. This trail opens up with fields on the right and there is a nice uphill canter on firm rather stoney ground to Kiln Cottage. Continue over the brow to the tarmac road (Bottrells Lane) and turn left (East) to St Giles or right (West) to rejoin the Hodgemoor Woods.

Distance:

Time:

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3. Chalfont St Giles up Nightingales Lane to Shortenills Wood

Consider boxing if you can find a parking place. Long hack on the busy St Giles to Little Chalfont Road

To follow

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4. Chalfont St Giles to Chalfont St Peter, Denham and the "Ups and Downs"

Consider boxing if you can find a parking place. Quite a distance from Hodgemoor but worth the trip for spectacular views of the Denham lakes.

To follow

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5. Hodgemoor to Windmill Farm's gallops

From Threehouseholds along Narcot Lane (horses are not permitted on the cycle and foot path, but we may use the grass verge). At Chalfont Grove turn left (North East) in to Bowstridge Lane. After 250 metres the entrance to Windmill Farm is on the right. If you have made arrangement in advance and pay the modest fee you would be able to ride past the school down to the bottom of their half-mile all weather gallop. It nicely enclosed by post and rail fences and it's uphill ... a delight for an eager horse or pony. You end up in a coral near the gate you came in. For an alternative route back, turn right (North) onto Bowstridge Lane. As you come down a small but steep slope into some houses, turn left (West) into Dibden Hill. This is just a gravel bridle path but is used by cars to get to their various properties. After the ducks and geese on the left and the horse paddocks ahead turn right (North) on the bridle path. After some tumbledown farm buildings this become The Lager. Once on the tarmac turn first

left (Narcot Way) or second left (Narcot Road) to rejoin Narcot Lane. Turn right for the White Hart and Three Households.

Distance

Time

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6. Hodgemoor to Chalfont Grove and round the satellite dishes

From Threehouseholds along Narcot Lane (horses are not permitted on the cycle and foot path, but we may use the grass verge). At Chalfont Grove continue straight on until you see the layby on your right where people park to walk their dogs. This is not to our knowledge an official horse trail but you can turn into the woods, follow the path West until you come to wide clearings with Chalfont Grove satellite dishes on your right. A circular ride round the clearing is very satisfying. We intend to check ownership and right. Then retrace your steps to the lay by in Narcot Lane and turn left onto the road. For an alternative route back, turn right onto Bowstridge Lane opposite the main entrance to Chalfont Grove. After a mile, as you come down a small but steep slope into some houses, turn left (West) into Dibden Hill. This is just a gravel bridlepath but is used by cars to get to their various properties. After the ducks and geese on the left and the horse paddocks ahead turn right (North) on the bridlepath. After some tumbledown farm buildings this becomes The Lager. Once on the tarmac turn first left (Narcot Way) or second left (Narcot Road) to rejoin Narcot Lane. Turn right for the White Hart and Three Households.

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7. Twitchells Lane, Jordans and Seer Green

Considerable road work with the Wilton Lane bridlepath as a reward. We do not do it often.

Distance

Time

To follow

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8. The Widmer to Blue Close Wood Loop

Distance 3km Time 40 minutes

A pleasant ride with the roadwork on almost traffic-free single track. The loop through Blue Close Wood is a joy and horses who enjoy cantering (on the flat and uphill) are in for a treat – but do wear a helmet and beware of overhanging branches and thorny hedges. The short length of time taken makes this loop an ideal addition to a hack round Hodgemoor.

(1) Starting at (1) **Widmer Corner** (the southwest exit of Hodgemoor Woods with a green metal barrier and space for two cars), go south along the single track road.

(2) Where a bridle path goes off to the right, continue straight on.

(3) After a kilometre there are **Seer Green** houses on the left. At the junction with a larger road (3), now just in a built-up area, go straight on right for 20 metres and turn right into an opening in the hedge, marked footpath and bridle path. In the field turn immediately left onto the bridle path which goes diagonally west toward the gentle brow, fields either side. You can have a trot or a quiet canter up this path if there are no walkers.

After 200 metres, at the white gates at the brow, slow down because the upcoming downhill path is quiet steep and there is a fence on your left.

(4) At the bottom, marked (4) on the map, turn right onto a nice bridle path suitable for a canter. Welcome to **Blue Close Wood**. You are now heading north. After 250m there's a slight zigzag under trees, leading to a gate which is left open. With a tall hedge on your left and a fence to a field on your right, there is another 250m of canter if it has been cut back, but often you might choose to walk or trot.



Now you're in **Bottom Wood** still heading north. The trail here looks inviting but there are flints embedded in the path; don't canter unless your horses is well shod and fit. The grass verge on the left is a bit softer. After 250m you're at point (5) on our

map (first photo, right) and in **Starveacre Wood** and you meet the bridle path from the A355 crossing at White's Hill (see "The Coles Hill Loop" below).

(5) Turn right, eastwards, and prepare for a dash up the narrow flinty path (second photo, right) which many fit horses love to canter up. The hedges in the open air at the top tend to get overgrown in the summer but remain passable, especially if you and some friends were to go there on foot with clippers and give the worst bits a trim. Bucks County Council are meant to clear this bridle path but to our knowledge do not do so. The farmer on either side reaches over when the hedges are being done, so the bridle path hedges get some attention (third photo, right).



(2) Now you're back at point (2) on the map. Turn left on the single track road and return to Widmer Corner (1)

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9. The Seer Green Loop

10. The Coles Hill Loop

From the West End of Hodgemoor Woods, exit onto the A355 lay-by from Bottrells Lane or through the gap in the trees and turn left towards the Magpie public house. There is a traffic island in the middle of the A355 and with lucky timing you can cross here, whether or not you are able to get traffic to slow for you. At the Magpie (occasionally named the Harte and Magpies, Ye Olde Maggypies, or Disney's Magpie World... it changes quite often) turn right (West) up Magpie Lane signposted to Coles Hill. Turn left immediately into a gravel bridlepath with high hedges on both sides. After the right bend there is an appealing grass strip in the middle of the bridlepath, so

a calm uphill canter is available for those that want. At Ongar Hill Farm at the top, take note of any changes to the path layout. You want to leave the farm on your left (but don't miss the nice view of Coles Hill windmill off to the right) onto a grassy acre and then turn left (due South) on a farm trail. At the next field, through the gap in the hedges, this path narrows and goes South, straight on with beeches of Tally Wood on your right. At the bottom you are at the Tally Woods crossroads; a return to Hodgemoor and Seer Green via the gypsies to the left, a return straight ahead (turn left at the top on the tarmac lane to White's Hill and the A355) and your onward course to the right. Continue on this bridle path (the uphill fork to the left is not legal). Where the beech trees thin on the right you can deviate to canter along the edge of the field, parallel with the bridle path in the woods, if permission is given. Great Beard Wood is on your left, and when it ends you have another interesting junction. On the left would be your narrow uphill route to Witheridge Wood and Penn. That's for another day (see below) so continue straight on the bridle path through a narrow wood to the road. Yes, you have arrived at the corner where Fagnall Lane meets Marrod's Bottom. Oh, English placenames!

Return option 1. Turn right on the road up Fagnall Lane (North), turn right after 250 metres on the road through Hertfordshire Wood, and left again onto Sampsons Hill. With Cole Hill village ahead, turn right (East) onto Chalk Hill which become Magpie Lane back the A355 crossing at the Magpie.

Return option 2. We often prefer to retrace our steps for a while then cross the A355 at a different place. So ride back through Great Beard's Wood and Tally Wood to the Tally Woods crossroad (big puddles most the year, a big field on a slope up to the right). Option 2a. Turn right beside the fence, on the edge of the field, up to the house at the top and turn left (East) onto the tarmac. There are usually donkeys on our right at the next house. Towards the end of this tarmac lane, White's Hill, with a house on the right, you will be aware of the traffic on the A355. Ride slowly and carefully to be able to see traffic both ways and cross directly in a dirt bridlepath the other side. Option 2b. Take some local experience the first time you do this one. Go straight ahead Eastwards from the Tally Woods crossroad; you'll find that path is soft and appealing for a canter. Don't miss a right fork after 600 metres. As the path starts to clog up with debris (the remains of the gypsy encampment which used to be here) don't turn left into the open. Find the way through the trees (and debris) to make your way up the grass verge of the A355, turn right. As you approach the road coming from the right (White's Hill) look for a calm moment in the traffic and cross to the dirt bridlepath on the other side.

Now you're nearing home. Follow the bridlepath through Starveacre Wood and Bottom Wood. When the bridleway comes in from the right it gets a bit muddy but then turns into an exciting ascent through a narrow cutting. Some horses will prefer to canter up this hill and the conditions are acceptable, but be prepared to stop for other horses or walkers as the path is narrow. Continue across the top between two fields where the hedges are (mercifully) trimmed quite often by the farmers and Bucks County Council. When you arrive at the tarmac (Bottom Lane) turn left (North) to Rwalings Lane, Widmer Farm Stables or the entrance to Hodgemoor Woods at Widmer Corner. Congratulations. Welcome back!

Distance

Time

11. Coles Hill, Witheridge Wood to Penn and Common Wood

This is an adventure which lasts 3 to 4 hours for confirmed riders and much longer in some cases. When doing it for the first time we recommend that you go with someone who knows the route and that you have someone on the end of the phone to drive to wherever you are, just in case. You could end up 6 or 7 miles from where you started! And some of our members continue onwards to Great Missenden and back. But some of the riding is terrific.

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Penn and Common Wood instructions

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