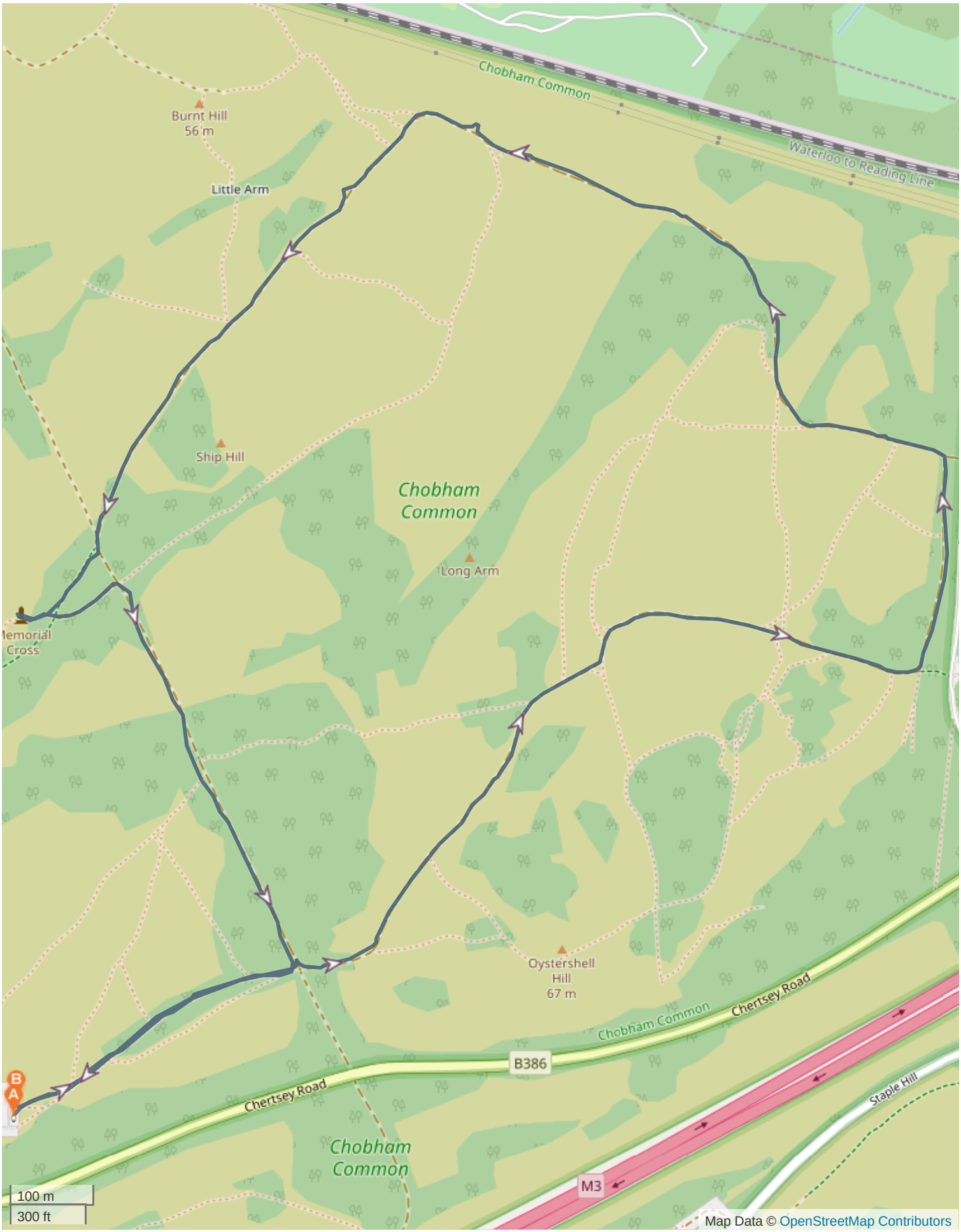
Chobham Common North Circular Walk



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Chobham Common North Circular Walk - 4.3km

Source: All Trails

Start to First Crossroads

Standing in the car park with your back to the road, walk ahead to join the path which begins immediately to the right of the two disabled parking bays. Keep ahead on the compacted stone path, passing the National Nature Reserve commemorative plaque and then the noticeboard, both on your left. This path leads you steadily downhill between areas of grassland and heath, interspersed with a few trees. Chobham Common is one of the finest remaining examples of lowland heath in the world. Heathlands are one of the most ancient and characteristic British landscapes. For over 200 generations, rural communities have carefully managed this stunning open countryside resulting in a wonderful, wildlife rich, patchwork of mini-habitats. Sweeps of purple flowering heather and sweet-scented gorse dominate the heathland, whilst the wetlands harbour insect-eating sundews and rare marsh gentians. In the undergrowth and water there are frogs, toads, newts, adders, grass snakes, common and sand lizards, slow worms and 25 species of mammal. The common is home to more than 100 species of birds, including the very rare Dartford warbler, the hobby and the nightjar, and more than 300 species of wild flower. At the bottom of the slope you will come to the first crossroads of paths, with a waymarker post and blue arrows ahead.

First Crossroads to Eastern Corner

Go straight ahead at this crossroads. The path leads you gently uphill, passing a bench on your right to reach a fork a few paces later. Take the left-hand branch, continuing on the wide compacted-stone surface. Follow this level section with gorse bushes on your right, and far-reaching heath views ahead and on your left.

Stay with the main path (ignoring any narrow paths off to the sides) as it meanders through the heath. At the top of a small rise you will reach a waymarker post, with a bench on your right. Continue straight ahead here (on the main wide path, ignoring the smaller footpath to the left). The path soon dog-legs left and then right to continue its journey through the heath. Continue until you reach the next bench (on your right), with a waymarker post on your left and buildings visible through the woodland exit ahead. This marks the eastern corner of the common.

Eastern Corner to Pond

Turn left here to continue on the main stone path. Continue for about 300 metres to reach another crossroads (with an exit visible on your right and a waymaker post ahead). Turn left here (as directed by the blue bridleway arrow) and follow this path leading gently downhill, back into the centre of the common. At the first junction, stay with the main stone bridleway path which swings right to reach a staggered T-junction. Turn right for a few paces to reach the next waymarker at a fork, and keep right again, still following the main wide compacted-stone bridleway path. This path swings left, leading you steadily downhill. At the bottom of the slope, within the trees on your left is the large pond of this section of the heath. There are a couple of narrow side paths to reach the pond and its bench, should you wish to take a closer look.

Pond to Victoria Monument

When you are finished at the pond, continue on the main compacted-stone bridleway, which leads you gently uphill, swinging left.

Across to your right beyond the edge of the common, on this stretch, is the rail line so you may see and hear an occasional train. At the next junction (with a bench on your right and a multi-trunked silver birch tree on your left), go straight ahead to continue on the bridleway. At the top of the gentle climb, you will be rewarded with far reaching views across the common in every direction. There are a couple more benches on this stretch, should you wish to pause and enjoy these views. Further along, as the main path swings hard left, you will see two side paths on your right. Here, take a small diversion to visit a monument. Ignore the first side path (immediately before the bend and alongside the waypost), instead take the second side path on the right. Follow this grass and stone side path leading you between dense sections of gorse. When the gorse on your right ends, you will come to a grass clearing on your right with a bench and information board. This marks the site of the Victoria Monument. There is a short (but narrow) path through the gorse behind this clearing to allow you to access the tall stone cross itself. In 1853, Queen Victoria visited Chobham Common to review her troops that were training here before they set out to the Crimean War. This stone cross was erected in 1901, on the death of Queen Victoria, to commemorate this visit. Chobham Common continued to be used for training troops for several wars and was home to the tank research centre. In the 1960s Chobham armour was developed here, a type of composite ceramic vehicle armour that has proven very effective in protecting tank crews from enemy fire and explosives. There is still evidence of tank tracks and bomb craters across the common. Appropriately, the common was also used to film some episodes of Dad's Army.

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Victoria Monument to End

When you have finished at the monument, retrace your steps back along the narrow path and across the grass clearing, then turn left to retrace your steps back along the side path. When you reach the junction with the main stone bridleway, turn right to continue your journey along this. Ignore the first major path on your right and you will come to the first crossroads that you passed through on the outward leg. This is marked by two waymarker posts and a vehicle barrier to a road will be visible ahead. Turn right at this crossroads and this path will lead you gently uphill back to the car park where the walk began.

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