

Taxiway Walk

Follow the ORANGE waymarking posts.

Distance 6km
Estimated time 2 hours

This walk follows the Northern and Southern Taxiways of the old airbase which would have been used by the huge B47 transport planes. From the taxiways the remnants of heathland, a haze of purple heather and yellow flowering gorse, can be seen. Grassland areas intensively mown by the MOD have also developed into spectacular wildflower meadow.

Stop and see what is living in the ponds created from the old fuel storage containers around the taxiway.

This walk can be undertaken any time of year but remember it's quite long and unsheltered. Please be careful in high summer – protect exposed skin and carry plenty of drinking water.

Silo Walk

Follow the RED waymarking posts.

Distance 3.5km
Estimated time 1 hour

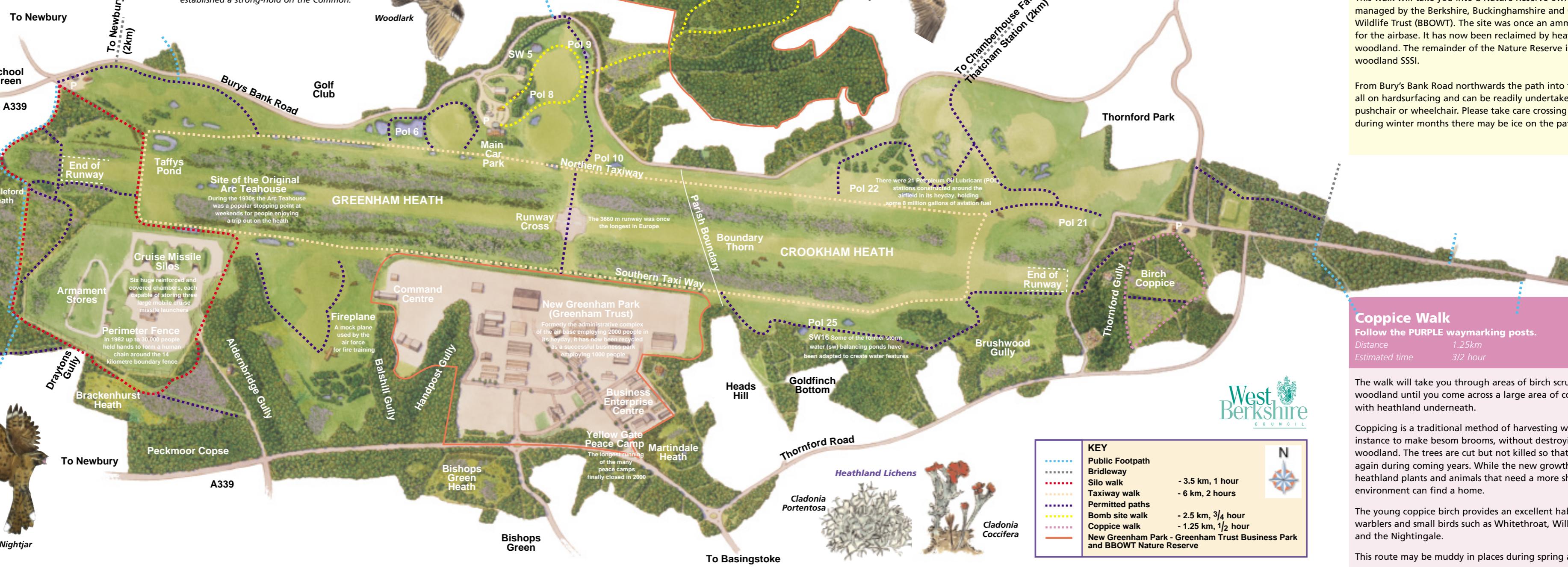
On this walk you will see examples of the restoration of the former runway areas, and cross established heathland which was outside the airbase. You can see how invasive birch trees can be in this area.

The six silos used to house nuclear armed cruise missiles were constructed to withstand air attack. Missile launcher's were parked in the silos ready to respond to any Soviet nuclear attack. Imagine the effect that the size, scale and obvious cost of the silos and what they contained had on the Eastern bloc. The silos are due to come out of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INRF) Treaty in June 2001. After this date you will be able to join a guided walk into the silo area, contact the Rangers for details.

This route may be muddy in places.



Woodlarks and Skylarks
The open grassland and heathland is home to these two birds. The rare Woodlark can be heard marking its territory from February through to June, making distinctive fluting calls as it soars through the sky. Numbers of Skylarks have recently declined sharply, but it has established a strong-hold on the Common.



Bombsite Walk

Follow the YELLOW waymarking posts.

Distance 2.5km
Estimated time 3/4 hour

This walk will take you into a Nature Reserve owned and managed by the Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire Wildlife Trust (BBOWT). The site was once an ammunition store for the airbase. It has now been reclaimed by heathland and woodland. The remainder of the Nature Reserve is an ancient woodland SSSI.

From Bury's Bank Road northwards the path into the reserve is all on hardsurfacing and can be readily undertaken with a pushchair or wheelchair. Please take care crossing the road and during winter months there may be ice on the paths.

Coppice Walk

Follow the PURPLE waymarking posts.

Distance 1.25km
Estimated time 3/2 hour

The walk will take you through areas of birch scrub and young woodland until you come across a large area of coppiced birch with heathland underneath.

Coppicing is a traditional method of harvesting wood, in this instance to make besom brooms, without destroying the whole woodland. The trees are cut but not killed so that they grow again during coming years. While the new growth is developing heathland plants and animals that need a more sheltered environment can find a home.

The young coppice birch provides an excellent habitat for warblers and small birds such as Whitethroat, Willow Warblers and the Nightingale.

This route may be muddy in places during spring and autumn.



KEY	
Public Footpath	- 3.5 km, 1 hour
Bridleway	- 6 km, 2 hours
Silo walk	
Taxiway walk	
Permitted paths	
Yellow waymarking posts	- 2.5 km, 3/4 hour
Bomb site walk	- 1.25 km, 1/2 hour
Coppice walk	
New Greenham Park - Greenham Trust Business Park and BBOWT Nature Reserve	



GREENHAM & CROOKHAM COMMONS

RESTORED TO LOWLAND HEATH FOR THE COMMUNITY OF WEST BERKSHIRE



AN INTRODUCTION AND GUIDE TO THE COMMONS

Welcome to Greenham & Crookham Commons

This leaflet provides a brief introduction to Greenham & Crookham Commons. Recently opened up to the public, the commons form a valuable wildlife and amenity site.

Try one of the suggested circular walks or just wander at will amongst some of Berkshire's most spectacular heathland and beautiful landscape.

How to find Greenham & Crookham Commons



An Introduction to the Commons

Greenham and Crookham heaths have long been 'Common Land' ~ areas of land open to the general public on which people who have 'commoners rights' may

graze their animals, take gravel, cut turf and collect firewood.

In 1941 the land was taken by the Air Ministry to become an important military base, home to British squadrons and then the American Air Force.

Now, the site is once more open to the public and is managed for wildlife by West Berkshire Council.



The Nightjar is one of Britain's rarest birds. Listen for the distinctive call on a summer's evening. Nightjars can also be seen silently hunting for insects over the heath at dusk.



Heathers are becoming increasingly rare as heathland habitat is lost. They provide a spectacular wash of colour in August and September.



Crossed Leaved Heath
Erica Tetralix



Heather
Calluna Vulgaris



Bell Heather
Erica Cinerea

Greenham and Crookham Commons make up the largest area of lowland heathland in Berkshire. Already the site has been designated a site of

'Special Scientific Interest' (SSSI) and is home to many rare and endangered plants and animals.

Heathland is a rare habitat dominated by dwarf heather and gorse and is typically found on acidic free draining soils. In recent times heathland habitat has suffered a dramatic decline in area (80% loss). As heathland is re-established on what was concrete runways this process will be reversed.



THEN, Greenham Common was once a strategic military site

Restoring and Maintaining Greenham & Crookham Commons

Returning the airbase to nature will take time and money. Parts of the site were contaminated by aviation fuel which is being cleared by a natural process bioreduction.

On the heath and grassland, mowing and grazing are used to keep down the growth of scrub which would eventually turn the heath into woodland.

Areas of open gravel are being re-colonised by heathland and grassland plants. This process is given a helping hand by scattering of mown seed heads in autumn.

Many of the special plants and animals living on the heath would not survive if it were not for such management.



Autumn Ladies Tresses

When at Greenham & Crookham Commons please be especially aware that:

The site is important for ground nesting birds which can easily be disturbed. Please keep all dogs on a lead during the breeding season 1st March to 30th June.

Bylaws that apply to the commons are published separately and should be adhered to.

Remember the Country Code!

Enjoy the countryside and respect its life and work
Guard against all risk of fire
Fasten all gates
Keep dogs under close control
Keep to public paths
Use gates and stiles to cross fences, hedges and walls
Leave livestock and machinery alone
Take your litter home with you
Help keep all water clean
Protect wildlife, plants and trees

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NOW, the Commons are full of life and here for everyone to enjoy