

as possible with the land falling steeply on your left and the pit always on your right. Eventually you will either come to a small lane or a small car park. Go through the car park and along its access track to the small lane. Do not be tempted to use the route opposite, shown by green circles on the OS map. Although it leads directly to the pub, the second part of this old byway is little more than a wet marsh. Instead turn left, downhill along the small lane, bend right, join the larger road, and look right for the Royal Oak sign.



For the return journey, there are several options. Firstly, you can retrace your steps exactly, or you can use the end of the route out that you didn't use going. When you get back to point A, you have a chance to be adventurous. Consider continuing straight ahead steeply uphill, and follow the return route shown on the sketch map.

This route keeps high above Chibden Bottom, with fine views down into the valley on your right. Soon you will pass Robin Hood's Clump (RHC), a small copse of pines covering an obvious disc barrow. Keep on the main path just above the valley, eventually reaching a complex path junction (PJ). Turn right here, either along the large marked path, or half right to strike out across the heath. The sketch map shows 3 possible routes

down across Great Bottom: 2 vague paths shown in red, and a third indication to find the head of a very distinct marsh and follow it downhill. Whichever route you choose, there should be no real difficulty in identifying the outward leg route below you, and returning to it. When the walk is complete, I hope the beer is an adequate reward.

Maps: The OS 1:25,000 are the best maps for walkers. The relevant map for this walk is **Explorer OL22** (New Forest). **Be aware though that this OS map does contain errors in the area of Great Bottom.** Unusually, it shows extra footpaths in this part of the New Forest in green. I think this is a relic from when this land was privately owned. Some of these paths do not exist now; I believe my sketch map to be better in the Great Bottom area.

Seasons: Being a predominantly open exposed area, this is really a walk for any time, except in hot sun or very cold or rainy weather. Autumn is always a good time in the Forest: late October is usually best.

Times: Each half of the walk is about 3½ miles, so allow about 1½ hours each way for the walking part.

Transport: There is no public transport to the Red Shoot Inn, but the Royal Oak is close to the X3 Ringwood – Fordingbridge bus route.

Car Parking: Both pubs have somewhat limited car parks. Please get permission before leaving your car there. There is also a Forestry Commission car park in Appleslade Inclosure, just down the main road from the Red Shoot Inn. Also there is very limited roadside parking just after the start of the walk.