

The Bransbury Common Walk (@4.5 miles)

Bransbury is a small hamlet close to Barton Stacey - you can reach it directly off the A303 when travelling towards Andover. Once off the dual carriageway you are surprised by how rural the lane becomes in this close-nit beautiful hideaway.

You will drive over a bridge and the river Dever before seeing in front of you a path, which is the start of your walk - only one or two cars are able to park but if you visit the Riverside yurt cafe at Riverside Cottage they will no doubt allow you to leave your car there before returning for a coffee or two!

From the gate of Riverside Cottage turn left and follow a hedged track which becomes a meandering green lane, flanked by farmland on your left, and by a long stretch of scrub woodland on your right. Walk straight ahead despite a gate to deter you and not down the bridge path which will take you behind Riverside Cottage and onto Barton Stacey - this may be another shorter walk where you will reach a road first but by turning left and following it, you will soon get to the Barton Stacey church, shop and pub!

If you walk past the gate ahead and up the rugged path to the end of the woodland you emerge onto Bransbury Common - you need to climb the fence and keep dogs from chasing any cows that may be grazing there - a broad and bushy riverside pasture with Harewood Forest in view beyond it. The path becomes ill-defined in places but you keep as close to the common's leftward edge as conditions permit and will fairly soon see the river Test sweeping into view, not far from where it is joined by the river Dever. Here the fence on your left-hand side bends left and you also turn in that direction.

Pass through a gate to follow a tree-bordered track which was once a Roman road and is now a mere public path. A little way along disregard a track which turns right and keep straight on to a where the track you are following joins a road.

You follow the footpath sign which points diagonally left across arable farmland, cutting a corner to rejoin the Chilbolton-Barton Stacey road within a few hundred yards.

Carry on down the road and you will see a road to your left with signpost saying Bransbury - this will take you back to your starting point where you can enjoy the houses en route.

If you fancied a long walk - do not turn left to Bransbury but instead walk down the side of the church into Barton Stacey village - the shop will be ahead of you - but turn left as you hit the main road. You need to walk closely along the edge of the road past the houses and over the bridge by Dever Springs. Just past the fishing springs is a dogs kennel home - although seemingly private you walk left between the house / kennels and the horses down to the path and wooded area. Keep walking until you reach a lane - keep going and you will end up in Bransbury - turn left over the bridge and you will see your car / the Riverside yurt café in front of you (open March to October)

