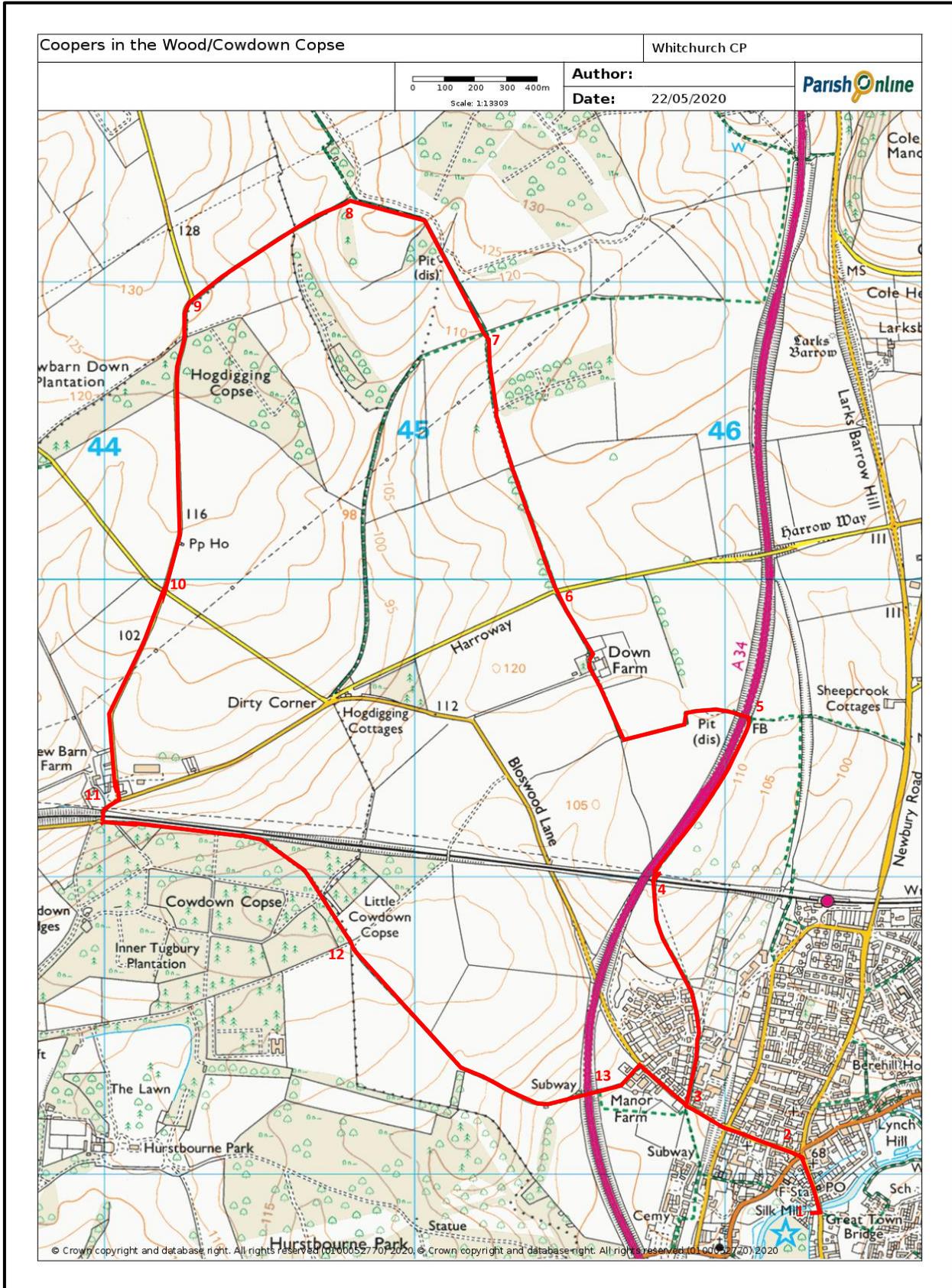




Coopers in the Wood & Cowdown Copse

(6.5 miles, allow 2.5 hours)



A circular walk from Whitchurch town centre which takes you into the North Wessex Downs towards Coopers in the Wood, looping back towards the Harroway (Neolithic road) via Hogdigging Copse, and finally returning to Whitchurch via Cowdown Copse.

Starting the walk at the entrance to the car park next to the Silk Mill and the Gill Nethercott Community Centre (1), turn left and walk into the town centre. At the town square (2), continue along Bell Street (2nd exit off the mini roundabout), under the brick railway arch and into Blosswood Lane, turning right into Blosswood Drive (3).

At the far end of Blosswood Drive, continue on a track for a short distance before forking left up a narrow path through hedgerows. Entering the field at the top, continue straight towards the top left hand corner, before crossing a footbridge over the railway line, adjacent to the A34 (4). Continue along the left hand edge of the fields, next to the A34, until you reach a footbridge on the left, crossing over the dual carriageway (5).

Continue along the path with trees on your left and fields on your right and then turn right at the corner of the field, towards Down Farm. Pass between the houses at Down Farm and continue to the junction with the Harroway (road) (6). Cross over the road and continue straight ahead on the left edge of more fields. Continue to where the marked footpaths cross (7), and carry on straight ahead on a broad path with trees either side.

At a bend left (8), there is a fork: continue to the left until you reach a road (9). (The path which goes to the right at (8) leads to Coopers in the Wood, so called because families of barrel makers (coopers) used to live and work there.)

At (9), turn left along the road, carefully watching and listening out for vehicles. Continue along the road, passing through Hogdigging Copse, before reaching a crossroads (10). Crossover the road and continue straight ahead following the road down to the buildings at New Barn Farm where the lane meets the Harroway (11).

Turn to the right and cross the road when you reach the railway bridge – **please take extra care here because of the blind bend on the far side of the bridge.**

As you emerge from under the bridge, take the path immediately to your left, which runs along the edge of Cowdown Copse, with the railway line on your left side. In the spring lookout for the bluebells carpeting the woods.

Eventually the path veers right, away from the railway line, before emerging from Cowdown Copse (12). Continue straight ahead on a broad track between hedgerows, which descends to eventually pass under the A34 flyover (13).

You will find a temporary path on the left through kissing gates, which passes behind Manor Farm Cottages, ahead of you. This temporary path is in place while the new housing development is still in progress, because of the heavy vehicle traffic accessing the site.

When you reach Blosswood Lane, turn right and retrace your steps via Bell Street to the town centre and your starting point.

