Standing outside Hadley Wood station, turn right and set off past the shops and continue to the top of Crescent West. Cross Camlet Way and go down Parkgate Avenue, keeping left where the road divides. At the bottom of the hill follow the bend to the right and find the narrow path on the left after No.61, marked by a Neighbourhood Watch sign, that leads into Monken Hadley Common. The woods are a remnant of Enfield Chase, a Royal Hunting Forest that was disenchased in 1777. The Common was given to the village of Monken Hadley by King George III, Duke of Lancaster, and is maintained by volunteers.

Follow the path on the left across a plank bridge, a squelchy area in wet weather, and you will shortly come to the railings alongside the railway. Keeping the railings on your left you will see shallow ditches on the right that may be the remains of a hillfort that could date back to the Iron Age. Head on until you join the metalled track that is part of the London Loop, the path that encircles the Metropolis.
Turn left across the railway bridge. As you get to know the woods, you will find there are innumerable routes that will bring you to this bridge but there are no signposts so you will need to rely on your own sense of direction or a good map.

Across the bridge, steps to the left take you deep into the woods, while the main track leads downhill between steep banks and exposed tree roots, and levels off past Jack’s Lake slightly off to your left and across a small brick-walled bridge.

A detour to view the lake without disturbing the fishermen’s concentration should not be missed.

Carry on and very soon the path bends right then left and starts to climb up steadily (but not steeply after the first 20 yards). At a fork in the track, the right fork brings you on to a metalled private road whilst the left fork brings you off-road and across grass to meet the same metalled road (which you can see to your right). At the top the road passes through some white gates marking the boundary of Hadley Common.

Follow on along Games Road, passing ‘The Cock’ unless it has reopened, and left into Chalk Lane. Pause beside the war memorial at the junction with Cockfosters Rd to reflect on those who gave their lives in the two world wars before crossing the busy main road carefully using the bollarded crossing point and turn right towards Cockfosters.

Enter Trent Park through the main entrance on the left. Just inside on the right there is a pond teeming with birds, bugs and water lilies.
Trent Park was also given by King George III in 1777 to Dr Richard Jebb for saving the life of his younger brother, the Duke of Gloucester, at Trento in Italy, hence the name. Sir Philip Sassoon who inherited the estate in 1911 rebuilt much of the mansion and faced it in neo-Georgian style, using red brick purchased from the demolition of Devonshire House in Piccadilly. In the thirties Sir Philip threw lavish parties to entertain prime ministers, Winston Churchill, Edward VIII and everyone of political and social standing. During the Second World War the mansion was used to eavesdrop on high ranking German prisoners revealing vital intelligence about navigation systems, the V-rocket programmes and the concentration camps. The house is currently under wraps during refurbishment as a museum and apartments.

Walk on beside the main drive towards the car park and café (a welcome glass of fresh orange juice or other refreshment of your choice when it is open). Continue on and just beyond the café look for the turning on your left which takes you away from the car park driveway and into the woods. Follow the path down through Oak Wood. At the bottom of the hill, it bends right and follows straight on again. Eventually you come out of the woods, onto a large grassy park area. Continue along the path with a hedge and field on your left and the grassy area of Trent Park on your right. At the end of the hedge, turn left where paths cross, and head a few yards down to a big old tree. As you continue past the tree (now on your left) you will see the Trent Park lakes on your right and beyond them on the opposite side of the lake the buildings that were once part of Middlesex University, now being replaced by private residences.

Keep ahead and follow the wide gritted path of the London Loop up a slight rise. As it levels out, take the left turn (signposted for the London Loop) and follow this for about 1/3m passing Camlet Moat on your right.

Expect to share the path

Be sure to take a look at Camlet Moat, a Scheduled Ancient Monument that may have been constructed shortly after the Norman Conquest by Sir Geoffrey de Mandeville, Earl of Essex and owner of Enfield Chase amongst many other estates. It was probably used as a hunting lodge and the base for the head forester of Enfield Chase, ‘the Cockfoster’. It is said to be frequented by the ghosts of Sir Geoffrey, Dick Turpin, the highwayman, and others.
Continue along the path, which bends sharply to the left and takes you after 2-3 minutes to the Obelisk with a fine view down the Vista back to the mansion. The obelisk and two other eighteenth century memorials were bought from Wrest Park in Bedfordshire by Sir Philip in 1934 and re-erected at Trent.

Retrace your steps to a small wooden gateway and turn right up to Ferny Hill (You are only a few minutes walk away from Ferny Hill Farm café and produce shop). As you emerge on to Ferny Hill, turn left. Caution with children – this is a very busy road and there is no clear footpath although there is a grass verge. Keep children safe by holding their hand. Once you are a little further from the bend that hides you from the sight of oncoming vehicles, cross over as soon as it is safe to do so.

A little way along is a footpath sign pointing through a gateway and following the path down to the right. This is the Silver Jubilee Path.

The path goes down past Ash Wood for about 1/3m. At the bottom, turn left and follow West Lodge Path straight ahead through fields and under this magnificent dead oak tree until you come out at the bottom of Stagg Hill and opposite the end of Waggon Road. Again, this is a busy road and it’s easiest to cross using the white markings for the mini-roundabout.
Either make your own way home from here or go a few hundred yards towards Lancaster Ave and turn right along this narrow path that leads through to Kingwell Road. Walk along Kingwell Road to its end. Cross over, turn right then very soon left into Courtleigh Ave. Walk along Courtleigh Ave, past Hadley Wood School. Beyond the site manager’s house on your left, turn left go through the pathway to the Open Space that is cared for by the Hadley Wood Association.

You are now in the field where the Bonfire Night Fireworks display takes place. Go diagonally on the cut grassy path to the right, between the trees and through the next field with the wild flower meadow on the left.

There are two paths through the wood over the top of the railway tunnel and you can take either. Just to the right of the upper path you can see the bomb crater, filled with water in winter, where the Luftwaffe tried unsuccessfully to destroy the East Coast Main Line in 1940. When you reach the crossing with the Sustrans National Cycle Route 12 you can either go straight on into Bartrams Lane field or turn left down the railway path and cycle route back to Hadley Wood station, passing the gateway to Bartrams Lane on your right opposite the disabled path exit from Platform 4.

Allow two hours for a strenuous route march but three if you want to savour the scenery, the trees, the plants and the wildlife and get absorbed in conversation.

There are countless variations to this circular walk through Hadley Common, Trent Park and the Green Belt that surround Hadley Wood. With a good map, such as the Ordnance Survey 1:25,000 Explorer Sheet 173 that can be downloaded to a mobile phone, it is easy to branch out along the smaller less crowded paths without getting lost and enjoy the delightful countryside on our doorstep.

Walk planned and tested by Joycelin Hobman with map and photos supplied by John Leatherdale