Four White Gates Walk – Francesca Caine (photos 9Apr20)

About 1.5h, 4.5 miles and 10,000 brisk steps

This walk circles much of Monken Hadley Common and combines ancient woodland with a nature reserve, open fields and a lake, and lovely birdsong and woodland wildflowers. The whole route is about 10,000 steps and the wonderful OS Maps app (see screenshot) records that it is 7.3km (4.5 miles) long, undulates gently from start to finish (see below) and takes just over an hour and a half. Decent footwear recommended, especially after rain.

Starting from Hadley Wood Station, walk up Crescent East, cross Camlet Way and head down Wood Ride to the corner of Beech Hill Avenue and Covert Way at the bottom of the hill to enter the Common at Covert Way Local Nature Reserve as shown on the board below.
Keep left through a gate and bear round near the fence into **Sewit's Hill**, a field with random oak trees and good views towards Cockfosters.

Take one of the grassy paths across the field to the far corner and carry on downhill (where the going can become muddy and more uneven) to **Jack's Lake**.

Bear right over the bridge and anti-clockwise round the shore path until it runs out.

Then bear right again away from the lake and gently up the hill on muddy paths, keeping the metal fence visible to your left, until you reach **Gate #1: Cockfosters Gate**.

In normal times, there’s opportunity for refreshments at The Cock (near the gate) or The House (near Christ Church Cockfosters).

From the gate, the easternmost point of this circular walk, turn back along Games Road or the parallel main woodland path downhill to cross Pymmes Brook at the brick bridge. Continue straight ahead on the well-signed **Pymmes Brook Trail** which follows the mainly sealed path across the woods. This path is marked as a bridleway and is also the only path through Hadley Woods where bikes are permitted.

Pass a clearing to the right and cross the railway bridge.

To shorten this walk, turn right along the railway fence and bear round until you reach the opening to the alley to Parkgate Crescent and back into central Hadley Wood.
Continue up the hill and along Baker’s Hill, a sealed road, to Gate #2: Hadley Road Gate.

There is no pavement along the road for this short section so either follow the Pymmes Brook Trail signs through the gate and immediately right into The Crescent, passing the ancient cattle pound on your right and the extraordinary Monkenhurst on your left before rejoining the main road, or choose your own route across the western side of the Common past the pond, keeping the Armada Beacon on the tower of Monken Hadley Church (rebuilt 1494) in your sights.

Go through Gate #3: Monken Hadley Gate and turn right into the ancient churchyard along the path to the gate opening on to Camlet Way.
Turn left and pass Monken Hadley and The Mount schools on your left to pass through **Gate #4: Camlet Way Gate**

and so downhill along Camlet Way and left into Crescent West to return to Hadley Wood Station.

Happy walking!