



Turnstile and Windmill Ashdown Forest, Sheffield Forest

Distance 16 km=10 miles, moderate walking

Region: East Sussex

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Author: Stivaletti

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Refreshments: Nutley, Tanyard Fisheries

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest)

Problems, changes? *We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org*

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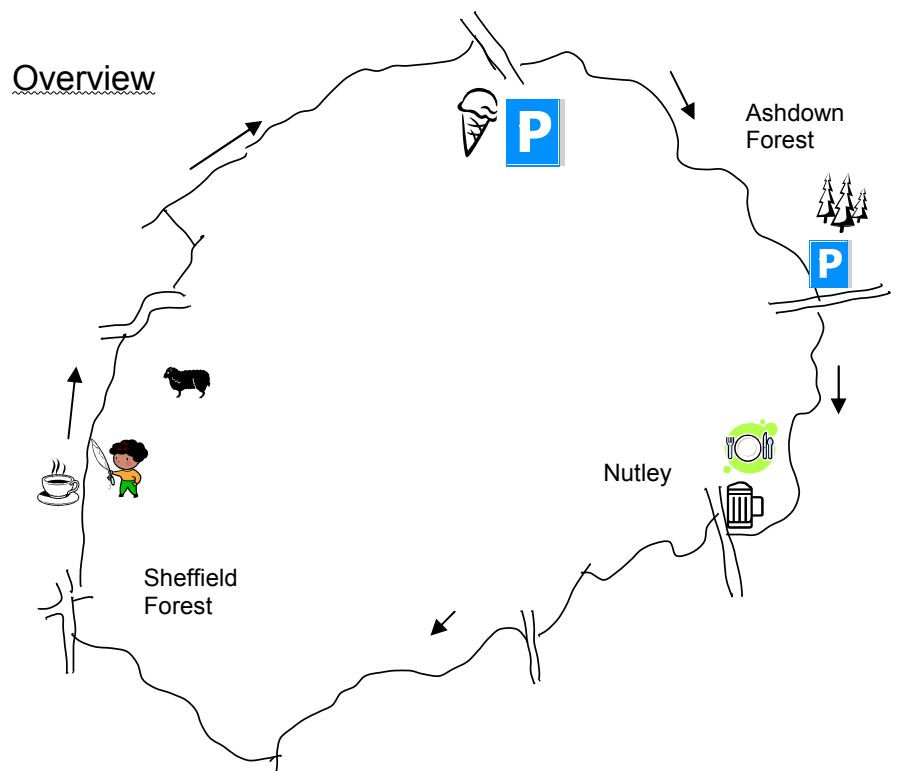
Extensive heath, forest, views

In Brief

Ashdown Forest in East Sussex is in fact a huge area of undulating moorland, planted in places with pines that give it an unforgettable atmosphere. It is also the setting for the *Winnie the Pooh* stories. This circular walk also goes through a different forest, this time dark and brooding.



The going underfoot is fine except for one muddy patch around Hollybush Wood, so boots are recommended though not essential. There are no nettles. Ashdown Forest is ideal for dogs and your dog is welcome on this walk.



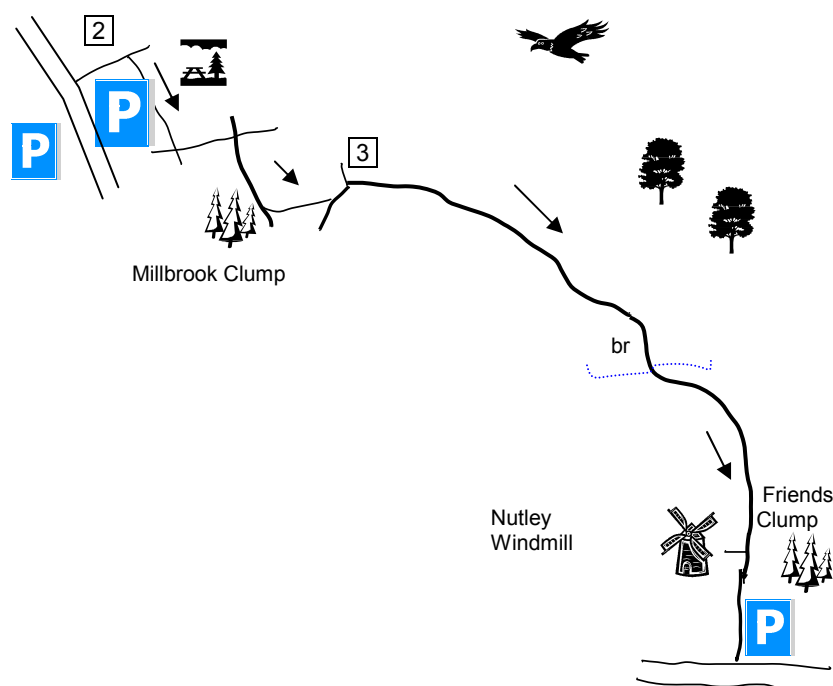
The only places to eat en route are at the *Nutley Arms*, which is about 1/3 of the way round, the Tanyard Fisheries, which is always open for tea, and the icecream / hotdog vendors in the car park. You can also take refreshment afterwards in a nearby town or country pub.

The walk begins at the **Millbrook East** car park on the A22, 2km north of Nutley, grid ref TQ438297. For full details see **Getting There** at the end of this document.

The Walk

Leg 1: Millbrook East to Friends Clump, 2½ km=1½ miles

Look half left to the top of the hill in the distance to find, hopefully if the weather is clear, the distinctive Friends Clump of pines which is your first destination (and an alternative starting point). Down and to its right is Nutley Windmill, a dark wooden structure on the edge of a field. (This is usually a very prominent landmark but sometimes it is harder to see, especially when the sails have been taken off.) Below the windmill you can see a band of trees and, just below and to the left of that, a steep rough sandy track. This track is your target on the first stretch, in case you should stray or take a different route from the text here. This is absolutely glorious country and it will give you a true flavour of Ashdown Forest.

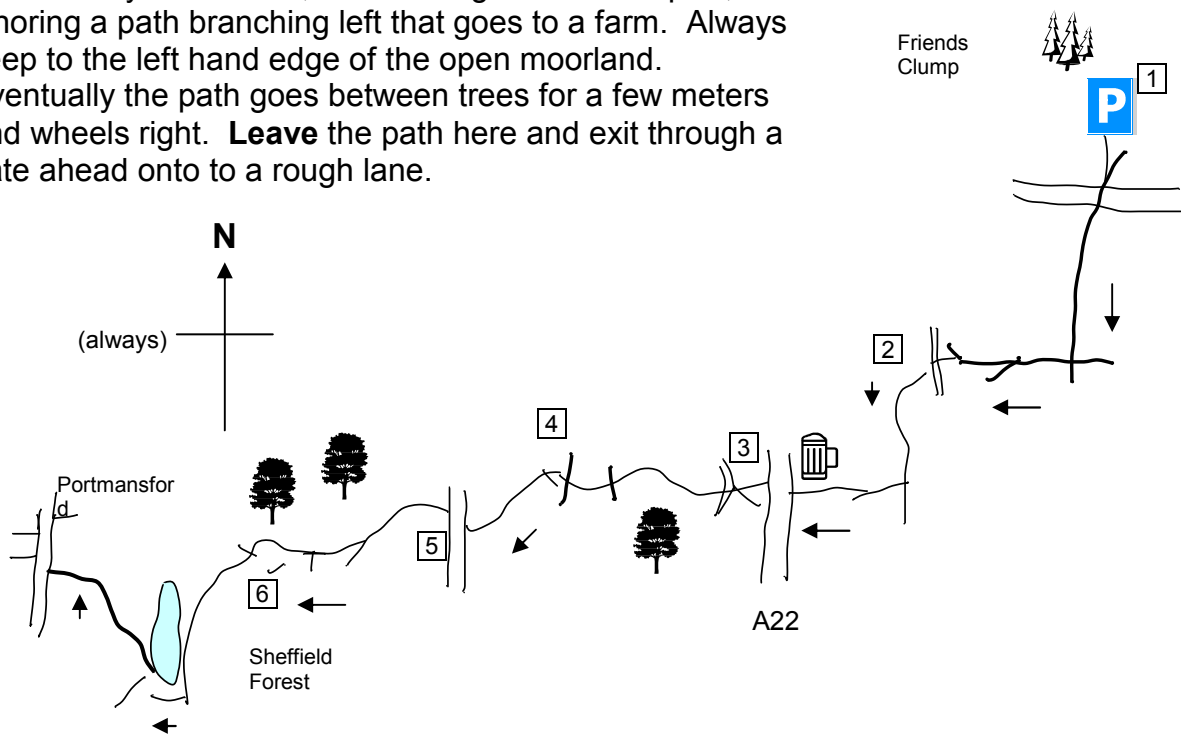


- 1 With your back to the road, go over the grass and through a small wooden gate beside a large one. Turn **right** on a wide grassy strip. Continue down the slope for 100m and turn **left** where you meet a clear grassy path. In 300m, where you reach a very wide crossing track, wheel **right** onto it. Go past a conifer copse known as *Millbrook Clump* and, 20m after, turn **left** on another track. *Your future route can now be seen half right, a sandy path ascending towards the windmill.* On meeting a track coming in from the right, turn **left** and immediately **right** on a broad green slope.

- 2 On finally reaching the bottom, cross a stream via a heavy-duty wooden bridge. Keep to the track as it wheels right and then left uphill and becomes a pleasant wide grassy path through the forest. Near the top of the hill, just as you emerge from the trees and that Friends Clump comes into view, there is a path on the right shortly leading to Nutley Windmill. *Nutley Windmill is an open-trestle post mill, the last in Sussex. It is open on the last Sunday of each month from March to September from 2.30 to 5.30.* Retrace your steps back to the broad path and continue uphill to Friends Clump and turn **right** into its car park.

Leg 2: Friends Clump to Portmansford, 7½ km=5 miles

- 1 Cross the road and continue due south on a path away from the road across the moor, passing a seat, a little bridge and some notices. Stay on the grassy path heading through the trees, soon crossing a wide diagonal crossing path. Stay on this path on a high prominence for about 700m, with views over the valley to your left and ahead to the South Downs. You reach a wide crossing path just as the path meets a line of birch trees. Turn **right** here. Stay on the broad path as it goes down into a sandy streambed, over a bridge and then uphill, ignoring a path branching left that goes to a farm. Always keep to the left hand edge of the open moorland. Eventually the path goes between trees for a few meters and wheels right. **Leave** the path here and exit through a gate ahead onto to a rough lane.



- 2 Cross the lane and continue on a path opposite. Stay on this path as it wheels left through birches, ignoring all minor paths off. You are now going south again. Stay on this main path as it enters a small meadow and exits left. Soon you are walking alongside a hedge with pastures on the left. You are following the Wealden Walks signs (a cursive “W”). At a junction 200m further on, turn **right** on a wide path in the direction of the “W” sign. As you approach a cottage, fork **right** on a narrow path, still following the “W” sign. The path later becomes a track and passes other small houses, eventually winding uphill to the main road (A22) by a pub *The Nutley Arms* (free house). *This is a routine pub offering food and incorporating a café. There is a large patio on one side.*



- 3 Cross the main road, **right** and then **left**, to a residential road with playing fields of Fords Green on your left. After the playing fields, another track joins from the left and your route continue across a road to another footpath, slightly right, which approaches a large house called *Prickett's Hatch*. After passing the main entrance on the left, fork **left** here into the farm yard, passing a duck pond, and continue on a grassy route between fields. Soon you are walking with Hollybush Wood on your left and after a while the path enters it. *(This is the **one** place on this walk that you might find rather muddy. Local people are known to use the clean private drive running parallel on the right. There is a gap in the fence just after your path enters the wood.)* The path crosses a forestry track, passes through a light plantation of young oaks and then darkens again before crossing a stream by a long wooden bridge and coming to a junction of sandy paths.
- 4 Cross straight over to a path opposite. In 25m, ignore a footpath left and, in 20m, turn **left** at another signpost. This path is a little tricky as you have to cross the stream and climb up a bank on your left. Keep the stream and gully close by, down on your right. The path emerges through a small gate into an open field, where you continue on its left side. The path becomes a pleasant wide enclosed path which eventually arrives at farm sheds and a road.
- 5 Cross the road on a signposted track leading to Stephens Farm. The path wheels left and passes the farm on your right. You are now on a grassy path entering Sheffield Forest and you soon go over a stile. Here you need to be alert for waymarkers. In about 200m, follow a marker and Wealden Walks sign at a **right** fork, taking you down deeper into the forest. In 400m, at a major junction of forestry paths, go straight on uphill ignoring the right turn. About 100m after the path levels out, look out for a path leading off down half **right**. You need to look hard for the footpath sign itself some distance down on a tree. Be careful not to miss this turning.
- 6 Go down to the sign which turns out to be a two-way sign. Continue straight on past it on the broader path, ignoring the right fork and thereby leaving the Wealden Walks. Avoid all other turnings off while your path wheels left. After some time a large mill pond comes into view. On reaching the end of the pond, turn **right**, passing on your left the much restored but picturesque old mill house and passing through an old turnstile. Stay on the road ahead, ignoring a footpath on the left, passing a duckpond and a meadow on the left that is sometimes full of deer, and eventually meeting a minor road. Turn **right** on the road. The road passes a turning left and immediately reaches on the right the group of cottages called Portmansford.

Leg 3: Portmansford to Millbrook East, 6½ km=4 miles

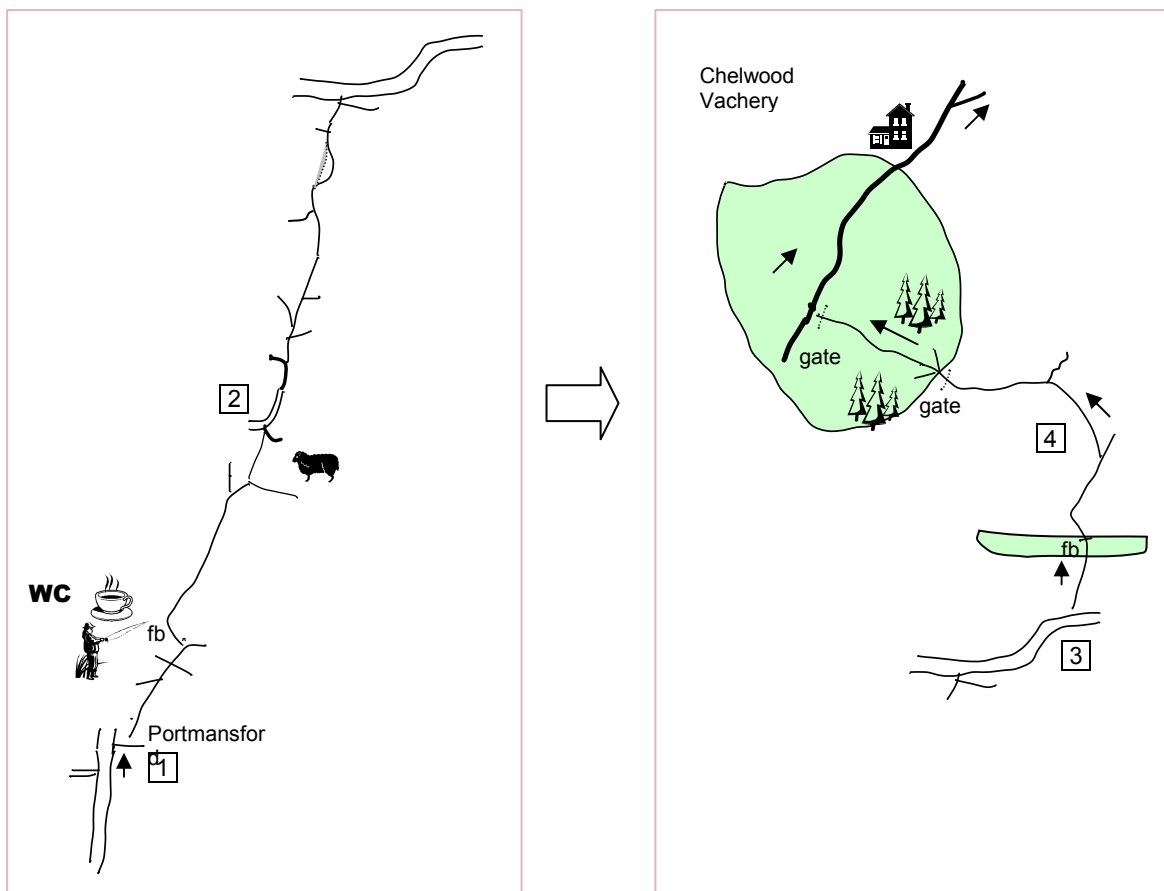
Portmansford seems unchanged from two centuries ago. The 1597 records show that "Richard Michelborne, in the right of Anne his wife, holds by deed land called Potmanford [sic], 8 acres, and other lands called Potmanford, 22 acres; Rent 5s. 4d., 1 hen, 5 eggs, and one day's work in Harvest". In 1841, the Brownings, Brookers, Slarks, Kenwards and Cheesemans had taken over.

- 1 The route is between the first two houses (which are joined together) and the neighbouring house. This path, which used to be overgrown but has now been much improved, leads up some steps and above the stream on the left. There are bluebells here in the spring. You go through a small metal gate and pass a footpath on the left and reach a large anglers' pond, part of Tanyard Fisheries. *There are toilets on your left.*

WC



*For a pleasant cup of tea and maybe a snack or two, the fisheries café, which welcomes walkers, is always open and gives you a chance to sit outside and quietly observe the anglers. But dogs are **not** allowed and, for some reason, there is a rule "no nuts of any kind".*



Continue straight on over a crossing track and bridge. In 100m ignore a path leading up right, veer **left** over two streams and **right** up into a field corner. You are now back on the Wealden Walks. Continue along the right side of the meadow, ignoring a footpath sign left, with good views, to the left, until you finally cross a stile in the corner by a gate. Turn

right here to cross a track on a narrow footpath towards a stile visible ahead. Cross the stile into a meadow, ignoring a footpath sign right, and continue along the left side, eventually crossing a stile or gate and going straight ahead on a lane coming from the right.

- 2 The lane is reinforced from the left by tarmac. After some distance, go through a small wooden gate beside a larger one and continue on the lane, now somewhat rougher, until it bends left. Leave the lane here by continuing **straight on** into a field, past an unneeded stile, immediately ignoring a footpath sign right. You are now in a wonderful meadow with extensive views all around, especially behind you to the South Downs. The path meets the edge of the meadow and follows a track, later concrete, past a farm and scattered houses. At a big new extension to farm buildings, the path is now diverted off the track to the right along the side of the meadow until it rejoins the track. *Where you see a footpath on the left by a small wooden house, there are often deer in the field beyond, but this footpath is not on the route.* Ignore a footpath on the right, follow the tarmac drive out to a main road and turn **right**. Continue on the road as it bends left and then right and take the next footpath **left**, going north, just after *Fairplace Farm*. *Nutley Windmill is visible over on your right.*
- 3 The path takes you over a stile, through a gate, down some steps, along the right-hand side of a meadow and over a wide stream by a footbridge in a picturesque wooded valley with Ashdown Forest now enticingly visible ahead. *Here you need to be alert as the route diverges a bit from marked footpaths.* The narrow path veers left after the footbridge, comes out of the trees and begins to rise up over moorland. Just 15m after leaving the trees, the path reaches a fork. The official footpath leads into a wood straight ahead, as indicated by a yellow topped post in the distance. Instead, fork **left**. This narrow path curves right over marsh around the left hand side of the same wood. Only 10m after passing the corner of the wood, turn **sharp left** at a T-junction onto another narrow path.
- 4 This path leads into beautiful woodland and eventually up to a gate marked NO HORSES. You are entering the Woodland Garden of Chelwood Vachery which is now managed by the Ashdown Forest Conservators and is accessible to careful walkers. Go through the gate where there are three paths leading away. Take the **middle** path. This path leads though beautiful conifer woodland and over a stony stream where you continue straight on at a junction. Ignore all turnings off until you go through another gate marked NO HORSES on its other side. Turn **right** on a broad solid path here, resisting the temptation to continue through a similar gate on the other side. *(See however the other walk in this series "Hindleap and Vachery".)* This path climbs and passes on the left the walls of Chelwood Vachery.

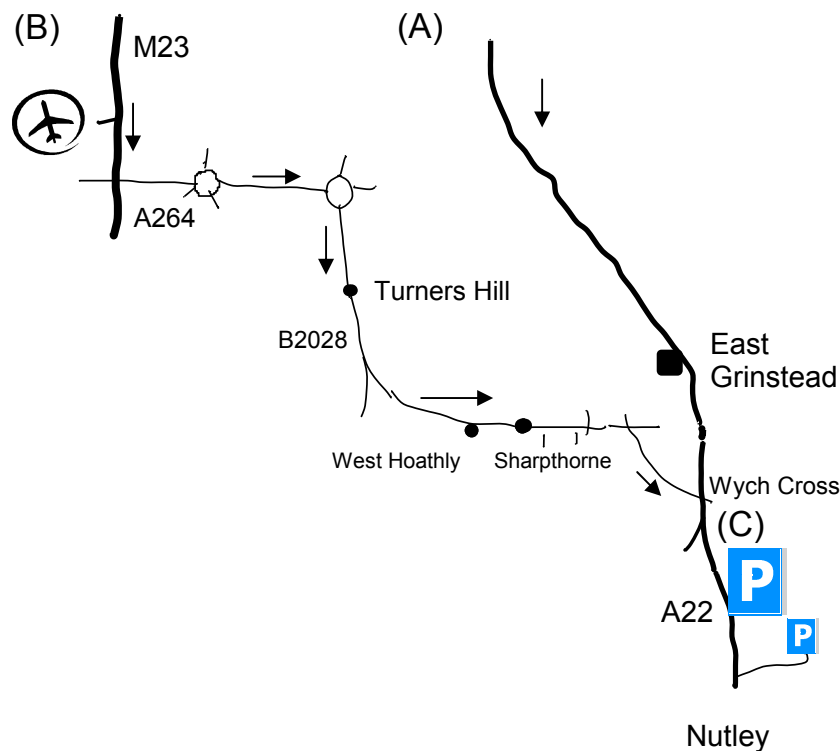


Chelwood Vachery was originally called Trimmer's Pond and Kidbrooke Park, and is now a much altered and decorated house with gardens laid out by Humphry Repton, the last great English landscape designer of the eighteenth century. "Vachery" is an old term for a cow pen.

- 5 Where the track now forks, take the **right** fork, the lesser, more attractive, path which leads down onto open moorland. The path approaches the road, the A22, and curves right parallel to it. (This is not clear on the map.) Stay on the wide sandy path which gradually gets close to the road until suddenly it bends left to meet it. Cross the A22 main road carefully and turn **right** into Millbrook East car park where icecream and drinks are usually available and where the walk began.

Getting there

- (A) If you are coming from the **east** side of the M25, take the A22 through East Grinstead and continue from paragraph (C) below. You can go this way wherever you are coming from although it's a bit dull and East Grinstead is sometimes rather congested. About 3 miles south of East Grinstead, you go through the Wych Cross traffic lights.
- (B) If you are coming from the **west** side of the M25, with easy access to the M23, the following route is recommended (see the Map) as it is more interesting and avoids East Grinstead. Take the M23 past Gatwick Airport and turn **left** at the next junction, the A264 (*East Grinstead*). At the second roundabout, turn **right**, signposted *Turner's Hill*. A mile after Turner's Hill the road forks. Take the **left** fork signposted *West Hoathly and Sharpthorne*. Pass through both these large villages, and another 2 miles (3km) after Sharpthorne, turn **right** at a crossroads signposted *Wych Cross*. You are now in a beautiful part of Ashdown Forest. The road eventually comes to traffic lights where you turn **right** onto the A22. The return route is similar.
- (C) Stay on the A22 for 1¾ miles where the road curves right and you enter the great open heath. The Millbrook East car park is the large car park on the left.



If you prefer to start at the Friends car park, continue on the A22 and, after a welcome sign for Nutley and just after a 30mph sign, take a road sharp **left**, signposted *Crowborough and Tunbridge Wells (A26)*. This leads up onto the moors and a mile further, just after a cattle grid and an Ashdown Forest welcome sign, park in the first car park on the left known as *Friends*, being next to Friends Clump. Begin from Leg 2.

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