



Rock Wood and Purple Heather Ashdown Forest, Fairwarp

Distance 14km=9 miles or 2 walks of 10km=6 miles and 8km=5 miles
easy walking

Region: East Sussex

Author: Stivaletti comments please to feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

Refreshments: Fairwarp or picnic

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest)

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Heath, woodland, hills, views

In Brief

This circular walk has long soothing descents and hardly any noticeable uphill so it feels effortless for its whole length. Maybe the sheer lightness of the air of Ashdown Forest buoys you as you go.

The walk can be split into two contrasting walks, the **Northern Loop** which is mainly high moorland and the **Southern Loop** which is mainly forest.

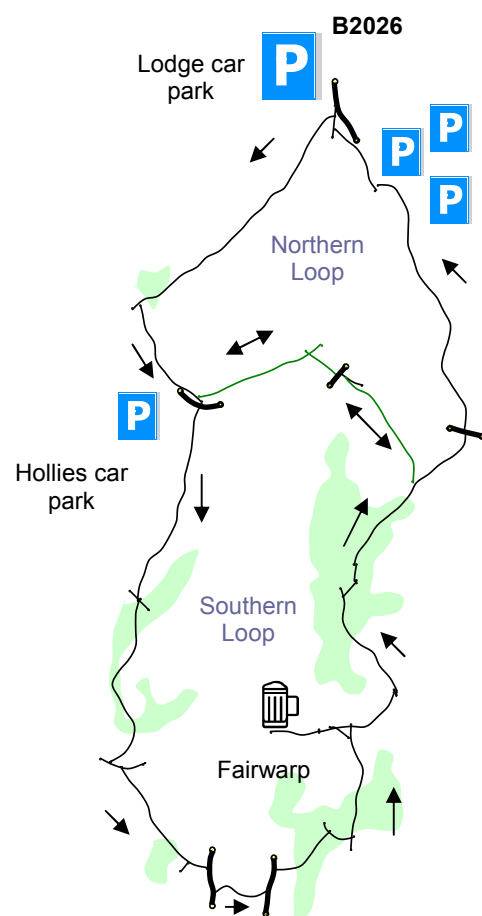


There are some nettles on the Southern Loop where shorts are not advisable. The going underfoot is smooth so any good strong footwear is sufficient. The Northern Loop is ideal for a dog.



The **full walk** and the **Northern Loop** begin at the **Lodge car park** (grid ref 470305). This is just off the B2026. If you are coming from the north, this is on the **right**, 500m before the junction with the B2188 (sign-posted *Tunbridge Wells*). It is small but easy to recognise because it is just beside a private tarmac drive. If you reach the Bush Willows, Pines or Kings Standing car parks, you need to turn round. If the Lodge car park seems full, you can park on the grass verge in the car park; or park at one of the other nearby car parks, even the Nature Reserve just north of there.

Overview



The **Southern Loop** begins at the **Hollies car park** (north side). This is just off the Crowborough Road, not far from its junction with the B2026. You can also reach it from just north of Nutley on the A22, signposted *Crowborough, Tun.Wells*.

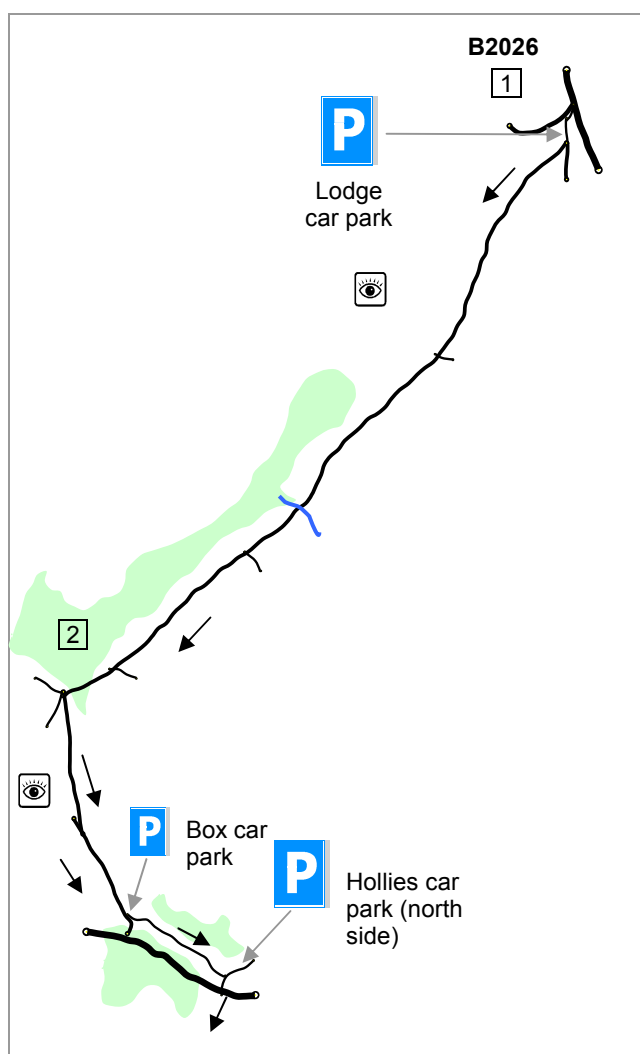
For more details of the location of the car parks, see the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Leg 1: Lodge to Hollies 3km=2 miles

Begin here if you are doing the **full walk**. If you are doing the short **Northern Loop**, you can begin here **or** at the Hollies car park (north side). The **Southern Loop** begins at Hollies (below).

- 1 From the back of the car park, take a grassy path between bracken (**not** the tarmac drive). This leads through a small wooden gate into an open meadow with an immediate choice of two wide paths. Take the **right**-hand fork downhill. *You now have a wonderful spread of pines, heather and grassy slopes on all sides. Ahead on the hilltop is Friends Clump which will be familiar if you have done the "Turnstile and Windmill" walk in this series.* Follow this very wide, sandy track all the way down to cross a bridge at the bottom. Continue up the other side, still on a wide track. The track comes down to enter trees by a spring on the left.

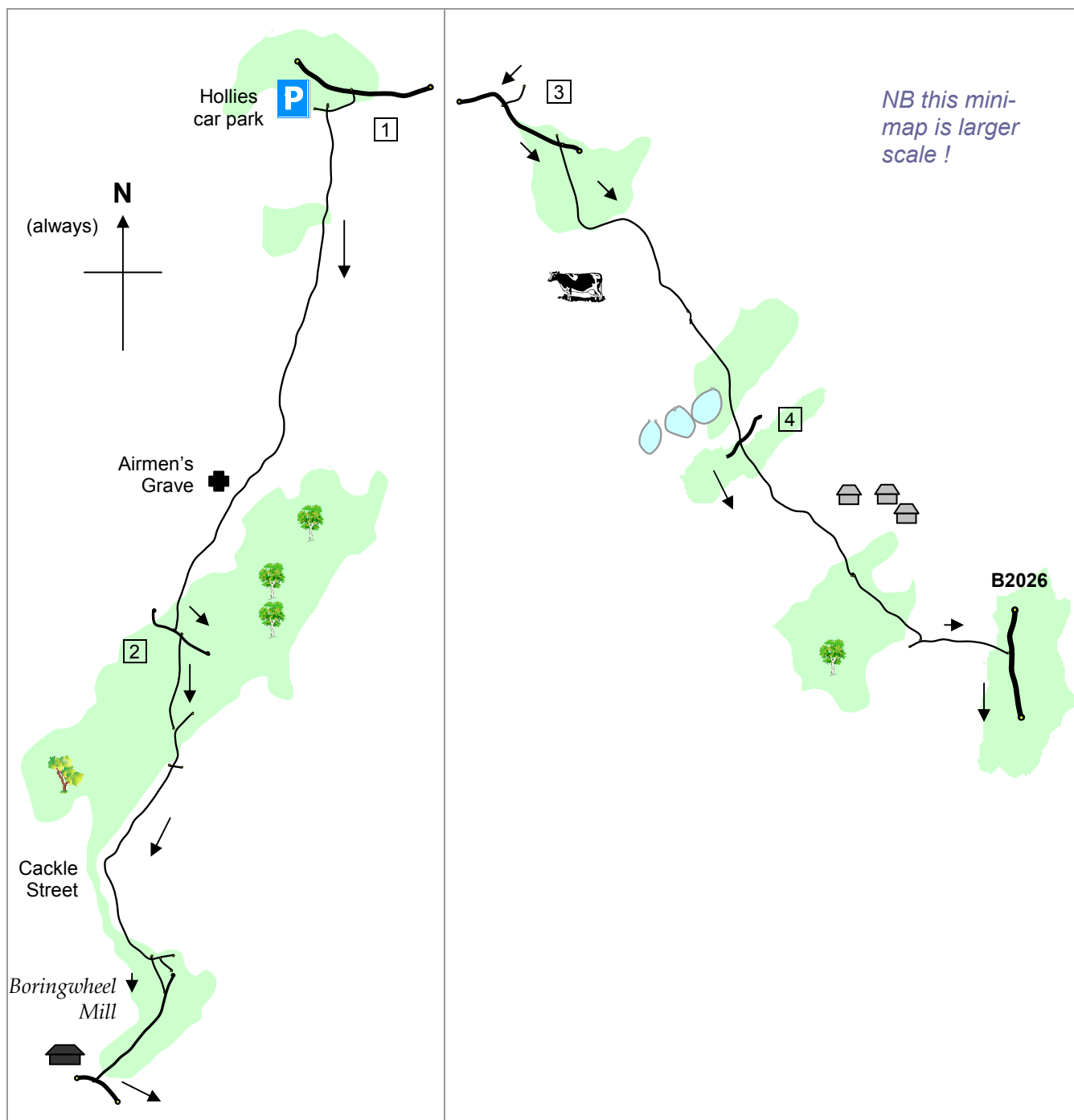


- 2 Go up a bank on the other side and turn half-**left** on a track uphill. You can see the track ahead snaking up the hill to guide your direction. At the top, a track joins from the right. The track reaches the Box car park, just off the Crowborough Road. Don't cross the road but traverse the car park and follow a wide grassy strip with woodland either side. This quickly leads to the Hollies car park (north side).

If you are doing the short Northern Loop, you need to skip to the end and do **Over Camp Hill (eastward)**. Otherwise continue with the next leg.

Leg 2: Hollies to Lampool 4km=2½ miles

The shorter **Southern Loop** starts here.



- 1 Cross the Crowborough road to the other Hollies car park (south side). Don't take any signposted footpath. Instead, walk half way across the car park, admiring the magnificent view to the south, to a small slanting information tablet. Take a grassy path gently downhill by the tablet. The path is soon joined by a horse track from the left. Follow the wide bridleway which becomes a wide grassy slope. You reach a small war memorial which looks rather like an alpine sheep pen from the back. Continue down through trees to a sandy crossing path. Turn **left** for 10m (by means of a little two-plank bridge if you like) and turn **right** on another path, thus regaining your original direction.

- 2 The path winds through trees and soon there is an open area on the left from which a path joins. Stay on the level sandy path, ignoring all turnings off. Soon there is a metal gate, which you avoid, and meadows on the right. You come to a fork in the path. Take the **right** fork down into woodland. At the bottom, a path comes in from the left and you reach a gate and stile. Go through the gate, passing the tumbledown barn of Boringwheel Mill to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. However, just on your right is a gate giving you a better view of Boringwheel Mill farm.

Boringwheel Watermill was a small corn mill of quite sophisticated design. The Boringwheel Pond is on the other side, not visible from the lane. There is a local tradition that cannon were bored here, encouraged by parliamentary surveys of 1658 (shortly after the Civil War) referring to the pond by that name.

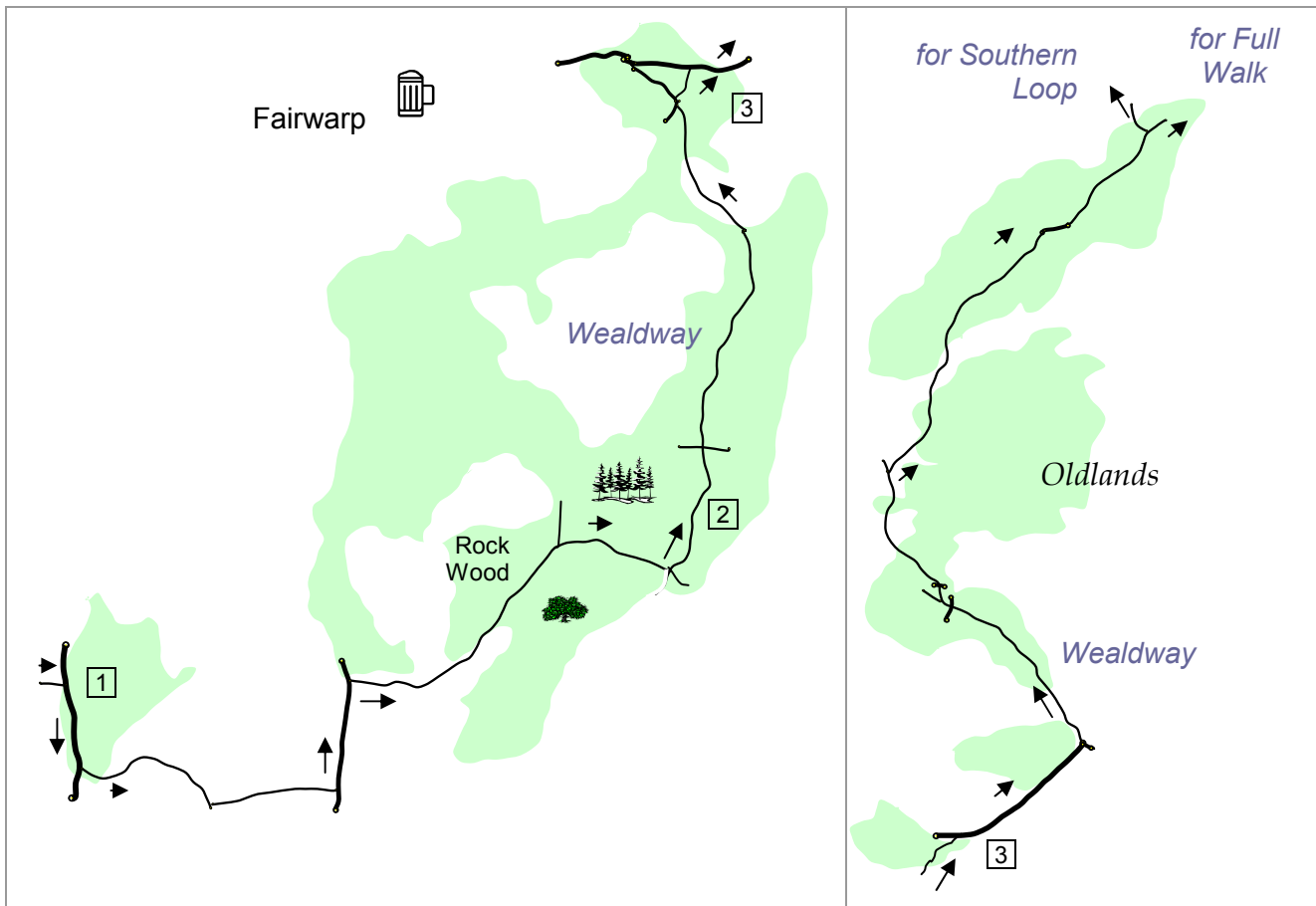
- 3 Just past the second house *Beck House*, turn **right** over a stile on a narrow path, easily missed. The path leads through a hawthorn wood, over a rickety stile into a pasture. Turn **left**, past a pond on your left and turn **right** round the edge of the pasture. In the far corner, keep ahead through a gap on an unclear path, along the short side of the next meadow and down to a metal gate. Go over a stile beside the gate past a lily pond and through an unneeded metal gate and more woodland to a lane.
- 4 Cross the lane, slightly right, to a footpath opposite beside *Kates Cottage*. Go over a rickety stile to a grassy area serving some houses on the left. Keep ahead to the right where there is an enclosed path. The path leads up through woodland, then on the right-hand side of a wire fence and past a depression on the right, reaching a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **left** on an enclosed path, over a bridge to a main road, the B2026. Turn **right** on the road.

Leg 3: Lampool to Oldlands 4km=2½ miles

- 1 **See map overleaf.** In 100m, opposite a drive to Lampool Farm, turn **left** on a drive to Lampool Edge. Cross a useless cattle grid and continue on a footpath next to a fence on your left, then an enclosed path. Go over a rickety stile, along the right-hand side of a meadow and then through two metal gates to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. In only 170m, just after some cottages and a high wooden gate, turn **right** over a rudimentary stile, past a barn and redbrick shed. Go over a stile and along the right-hand side of a grassy meadow that bends left. Then continue along the left-hand side of a deep valley on your right. At the end, go over a stile (or simply unhook the ribbon) into the wonderful dense ancient species-rich Rock Wood. *This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is of biological significance, with rare mosses and ferns growing alongside the stream which flows through it.* Go over a bridge, ignore a left turn at a 3-way post and cross a flowing stream by a large wooden bridge. [April 2012: this bridge is now stacked on one side. It is possible to cross it but do so with great care!] You now ascend through birch, hawthorn and hazel.

Hazel was once the dominant tree in Britain, sweeping away the birch that followed the last great ice age about 13,000 years ago.

At the next 3-way fingerpost, just before a large crop of sandstone, turn **left** onto the Wealdway. *The Wealdway is a long-distance national trail running from Gravesend on the Thames Estuary to the coast near Eastbourne.*



- 2 The Way runs through pinewood, down steps and across a track in a clearing. You are now walking on a lovely level path carpeted with pine needles. Cross a long bridge and turn **right** through a wooden gate into Brickfield Meadow. Cross the meadow and exit it through a large wooden gate. The path goes through more woodland and then through a small wooden gate alongside a large wooden gate. 10m later, at a T-junction, turn **right**. In 20m, where the track bends left, keep straight ahead on a narrower path marked with the now familiar *WW* symbol.



However, if you would like midday refreshment, you can keep **left** with the track and turn **left** for 200m into Fairwarp. The florid Foresters Arms (Hall and Woodhouse) serves good basic food. It is not open after 2.30pm (3pm Sundays). You can either return on the road or turn **left** immediately next to the pub car park by the drive to *Forest Lodge*, turn **right** at the T-junction onto a tarmac drive and use your map to regain the Wealdway.

- 3 At a T-junction, turn **right** onto a quiet lane. At the big iron gates to Oldlands Hall, turn **left** past *Corner Cottage*. *Oldlands is a large estate and the Hall was built in 1869 by the antiquary Alexander Nesbitt, to a design by Sir Matthew Digby Wyatt. it has been owned by an assorted series of capable businessmen.* In 50m, at a junction, bear **right** on a path with a yellow arrow. The woodland path crosses a drive, is joined by a path from the left and wheels right across an open area. In 50m, after re-entering woodland, the marked path forks **right** on a narrower path. Don't miss this turning! The path crosses a drive and goes down to another drive. Bear **left** on this drive, going past cottages with attractive gardens and continuing straight ahead by a hedge. The path turns abruptly **right** uphill by the stainless steel chimney of a house. It then goes through a light area of young birches, across a drive, and joins a track coming from the right. [Aug 2011

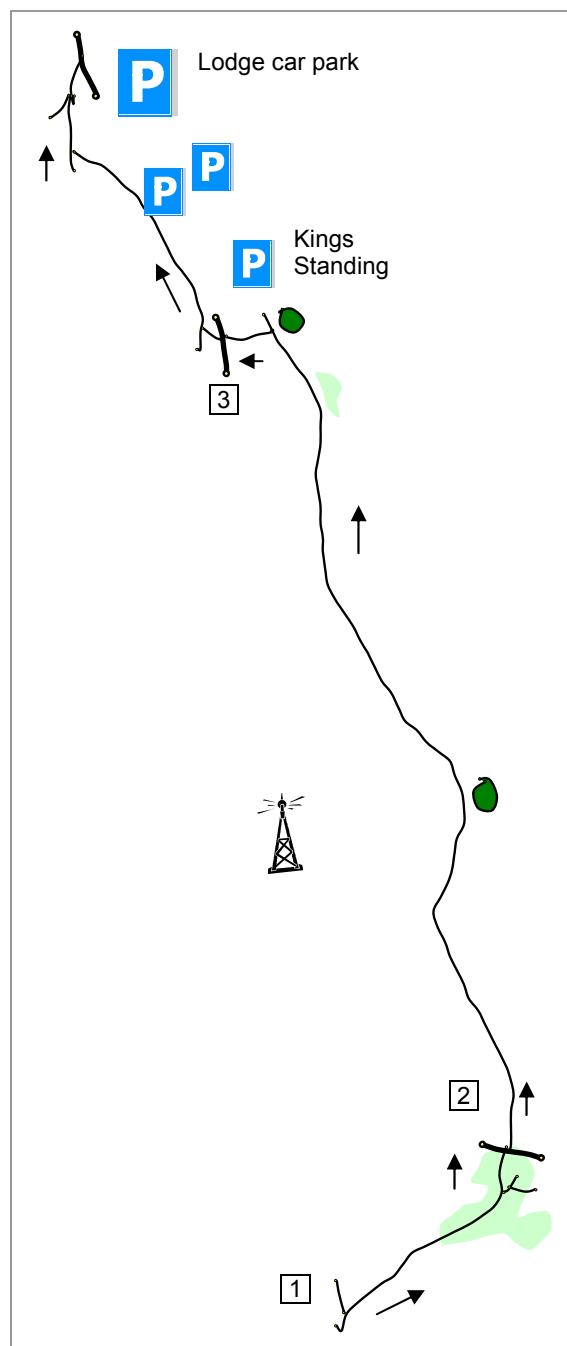
a walker reports that the text omits to mention two *additional WW* symbols before the one referred to below: one is after about 70m on the right next to a young Rowan tree; the other appears after crossing the stone drive.] 70m after this, you will see a *WW* symbol pointing left and a stile visible a few metres over on the left.

If you are doing the shorter Southern Loop, skip ahead in this text and do **Over Camp Hill (westward)** which takes you back to the Hollies car park.

To continue the **full walk**, ignore the *WW* symbol and the stile on the left.

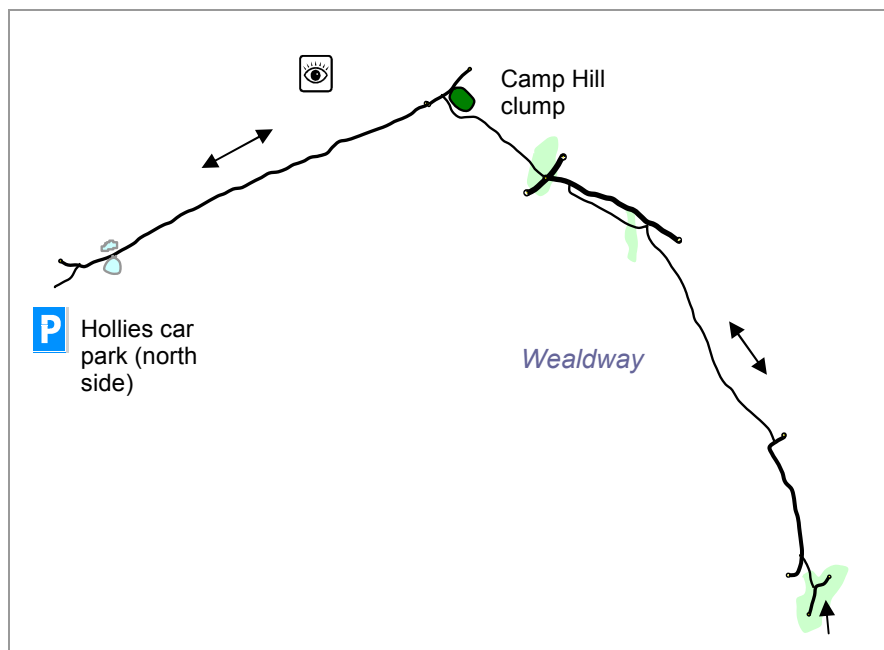
Leg 4: Oldlands to Lodge 3km=2 miles

- 1 Continue on the wide stony path, thus leaving the Wealdway. The track joins a drive coming from a house on the right. Where the drive bends left towards the road, stay on it, ignoring some paths to the right by a fingerpost. Continue to a road, New Road. Cross the road to a narrow unmarked path directly opposite.
- 2 Keep ahead as the path crosses a wide grassy strip. The path winds round a copse and then widens as it ascends gently towards a large transmitter tower. Soon the transmitter is on your left while the path runs alongside the fence of the enclosure. The path goes past a clump on the right, wheels left following the fence and leaves it, rising gently on a grassy course. It then curves left beside a little wood of gorse and birch on the right and the Kings Standing clump and car park come into view. Just before reaching the corner of the clump, 50m before the car park, fork **left** on a grassy path leading to the road.
- 3 Cross the road and go through a large wooden gate opposite into a pasture. In 20m, at a T-junction, turn **right**, parallel to the road. The path passes Bush Willows car park on the right and curves **left** to a T-junction. Turn **right** here. At the end of the path, go through the smaller of the two gates, soon arriving back at the Lodge car park.



Over Camp Hill (westward) 2km=1 mile

Take this short cut if you are doing the shorter **Southern Loop** and want to return straight to the Hollies car park.



Follow the *WW* sign by forking **left** over to the unneeded stile. Go up an enclosed path, over another stile and **right** on a track. *There are now great views left to the South Downs.* The track passes a house on the right and bends **right** at the corner. Turn **left** here on a delightful level grassy path between gorse, then birch. The path arrives almost at the road. Turn **left** here at the *WW* sign over a bridge and stile. Go along the right-hand side of the meadow, ignoring first a metal gate and then a stile on the right. Go over the second stile at a *WW* fingerpost and turn **left** on New Road. In 10m, you come to a road junction with the major B2026 road. Cross straight over the road and go through a small wooden gate on the opposite side and follow the gently rising path to Camp Hill clump, one of the many distinctive clumps on Ashdown Forest. Veer **left** around the clump to a wide sandy crossing track on the other side. Turn **left** here, thus leaving the Wealdway. (As a double-check on your direction, the tall transmitter tower, a landmark of the Forest, is now directly behind you.) Continue all the way down this very wide track, enjoying the views in all directions. At the bottom, the path runs between two ponds. The Hollies car park (south side) is straight on, up the grass bank on the left.



Over Camp Hill (eastward) 2km=1 mile

Take this route immediately from the Hollies car park if you are doing the short **Northern Loop**. If you are parked on the south side of the road, you need to cross the road first to the car park on the other (north) side.

Same map as for westward direction, above. With your back to the road, facing north, head for the long very wide sandy track that you can see to the right, leading uphill. At first, the path runs between two ponds and then runs all the way up, with magnificent views in all directions, finishing

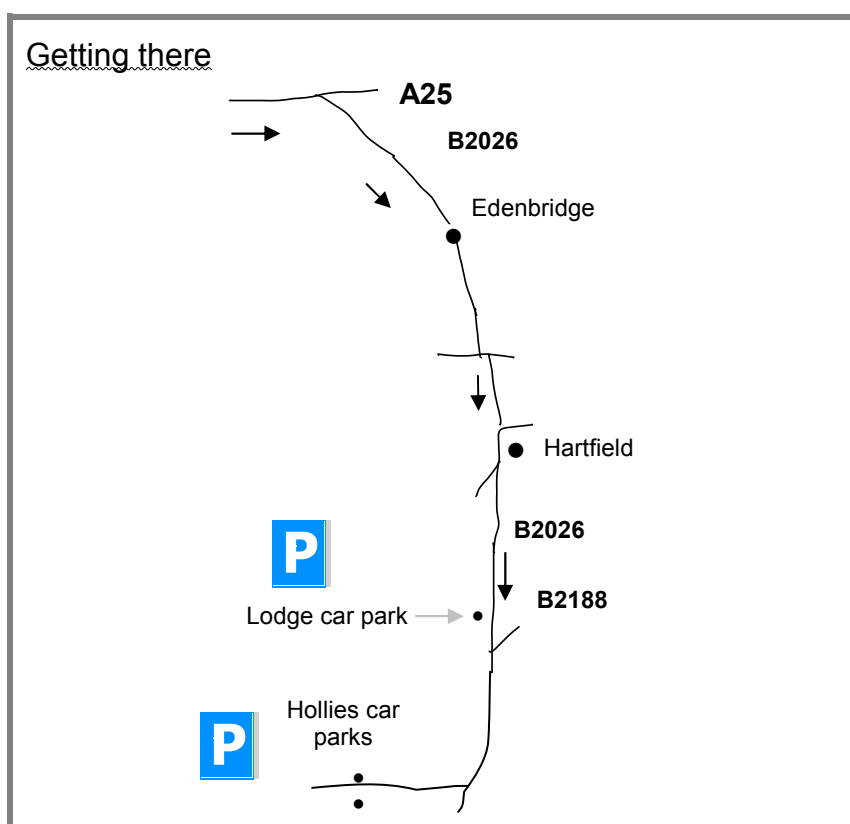


finally at Camp Hill clump, one of the many distinctive clumps on Ashdown Forest. You will now be following the small but distinctive *WW* symbols, indicating the Wealdway, a long-distance path running from the Thames estuary to the south coast. Veer **right** around the clump until you pass a concrete triangulation pillar on the other side. Take the path that has the pillar on the **right**. The path leads gently down to a small wooden gate and out to the B2026 road. Cross the road straight over to a minor road, New Road. In just 10m, turn **right** over a stile into a grassy meadow and keep **left** along the edge, ignoring another stile and a metal gate, and finally leave the meadow over a stile in the far corner. A bridge takes you almost back to the road. Veer **right** here, in the direction of the *WW* sign, on a pleasant level path through birches and then gorse. The path arrives at a drive by a small house. Turn **right** on the drive and immediately follow it as it bends **left**. *There are now great views right to the South Downs*. Before the track turns right to another house, go **left**, as indicated, over a stile, along a short enclosed path to an unneeded stile. Continue a few more metres to a T-junction with a wide stony track. Turn **left** on the track.

You now continue the main walk from [Leg 4](#).

Getting there

By car: If coming from London, the “scenic” route is the B2026 all the way through Limpsfield Chart, Edenbridge and Hartfield. From the South, join the B2026 at Uckfield. From Tunbridge Wells, take the B2188 to the junction with the B2026.



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