



Buxted Park, Hurstwood, Blackboys

Distance: 18 km=11½ miles or 17 km=10½ miles
easy-to-moderate walking

Region: East Sussex

Date written: 1-jul-2012

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Last update: 14-jul-2015

Refreshments: High Hurstwood, Blackboys

Map: 135 (Ashdown Forest) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Villages, quiet meadows, parkland, woodland, views

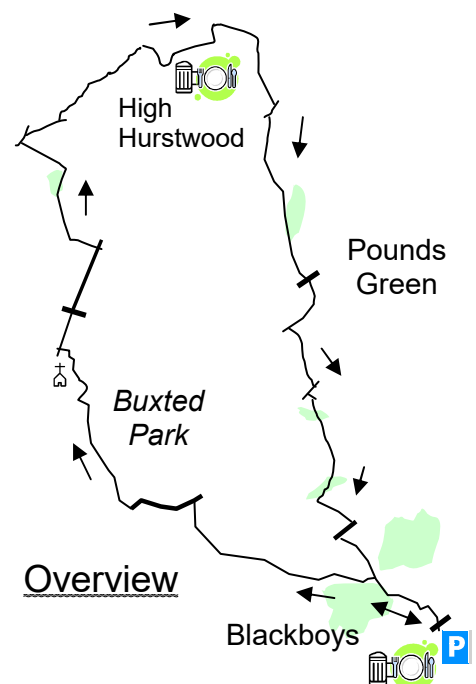
In Brief

This walk is a walk of great variety in the gentle woods and meadows just south of Ashdown Forest, with a good pub/restaurant at the centre. Buxted is just a place on the A272 that you drive through without noticing, but the country all around it is a delight. This walk follows, for part of the way, two of the long-distance footpaths in the Southeast: the Wealdway and the Vanguard Way.



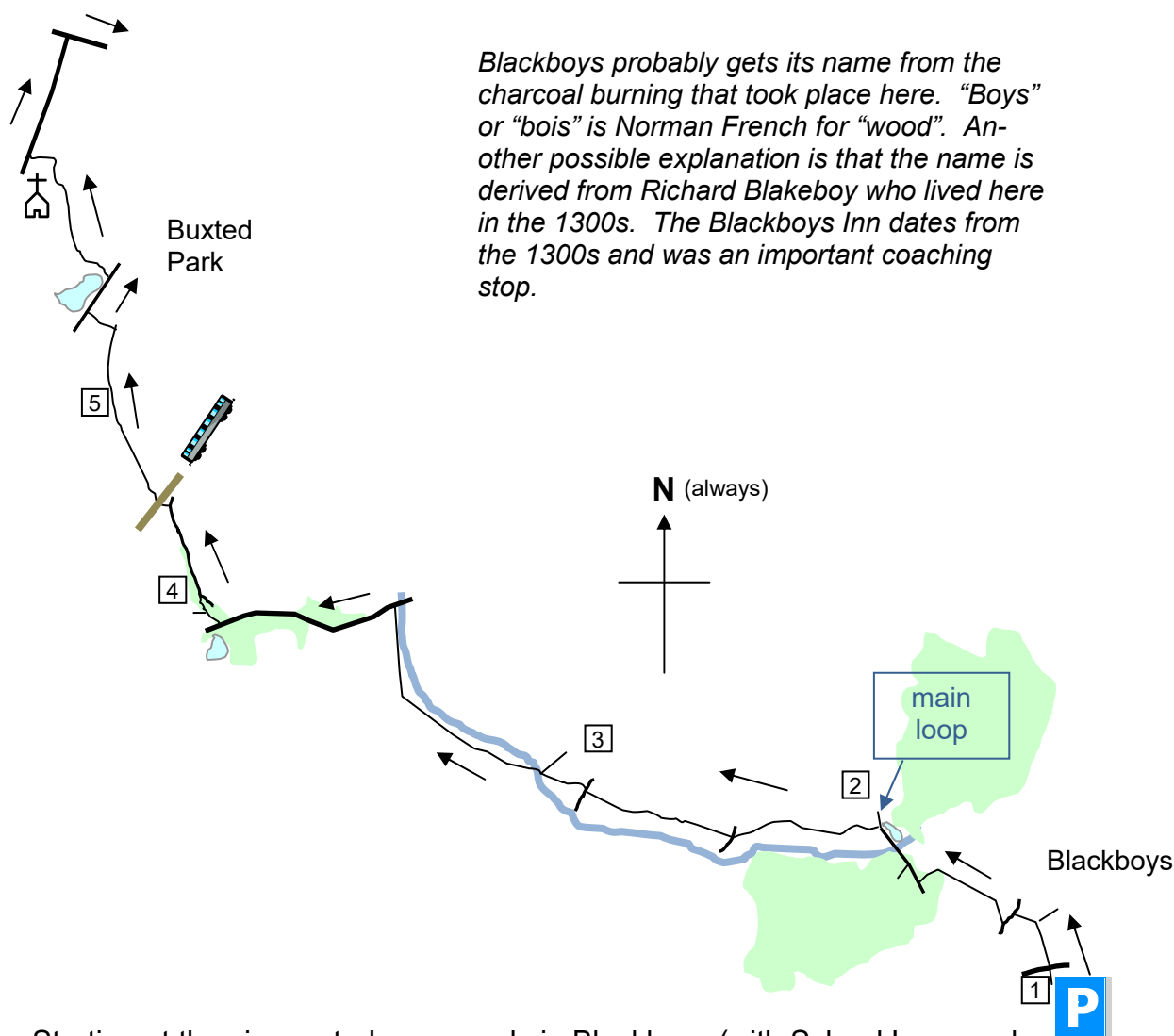
There are just a few nettles, probably not enough to trouble bare legs. In the wetter seasons you will find boots a comfort, although this walk is fairly dry. Your dog is welcome but a large dog will have a problem with some of the stiles.

The walk begins in **Blackboys**, near Uckfield, East Sussex, **postcode TN22 5LR**. There is roadside parking in School Lane (signed at the crossroads) and in other side streets. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). Alternatively, you can begin the walk anywhere on the main loop, such as the car park near the church in Buxted Park, thus saving one mile (1½ km).



The Walk

Leg 1: Blackboys to Buxted Park 5¾ km=3¾ miles



Blackboys probably gets its name from the charcoal burning that took place here. "Boys" or "bois" is Norman French for "wood". Another possible explanation is that the name is derived from Richard Blakeboy who lived here in the 1300s. The Blackboys Inn dates from the 1300s and was an important coaching stop.

- 1 Starting at the signposted crossroads in Blackboys (with School Lane and Gun Road), walk along the main road westwards (i.e. with the white signpost on your left) for 100m and turn **right** on a footpath through a small wooden gate. The path runs between a fence and a hedge, then between allotments. Ignore a footpath on the right here. *Note that you are on the Vanguard Way, a long-distance path running from Croydon to Newhaven.* At the bottom, turn **left** on a track. In 30m, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a narrow grassy path. The path runs beside a fence and between sheep pastures. It then runs by a field with pines on the right and takes you down steps to a stony drive. Turn **right** on the drive and immediately ignore a stile on the left which is on the Wealdway. *The Wealdway is another long-distance path, this time from Gravesend to near Eastbourne. Blackboys is one of the two places where they cross.* Follow the drive between houses, over the weir of the Tickerage Stream and go through a large wooden gate ahead. Turn immediately **left** over a stile.
- 2 You have joined the Wealdway which you will be following for some distance. The path goes along the left-hand side of a meadow, through a small wooden gate and over a 2-plank bridge. It now goes beside a 2-bar wooden fence with a meadow on your left. Next is a wide grassy path with a house on your right,

eventually taking you through a small wooden gate (or over a stile) to a lane. Cross straight over the lane and negotiate a stile (or a large wooden gate), taking you along the left-hand side of a meadow. After going through a metal gate and between fences, the wide path continues and goes out via a small wooden gate to a lane. (A short diversion here **left** on the lane takes you to Uptons Mill, its Oast, the mill pond, the Tickerage Stream and weir, a charming prospect.)

- 3 Cross the lane, go over a stile and along the left-hand side of a meadow. After a small metal gate and a small meadow, a path joins you from the right just as you cross the stream via a wooden gate and a bridge. Your course is now along the right-hand side of a large sloping meadow. In the next corner, go over a stile and along the right-hand side of the next meadow with the stream meandering its way close by on your right. Ignore a path left at a 3-way fingerpost and continue over two stiles, one at each end of a wooden bridge, and finally over another stile to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane, still on the Wealdway. The lane ascends gently, soon passing Highlands Wood on your left and approaching an anglers' pond. Here, turn **right** at a fingerpost into a belt of trees.
- 4 Avoid a stile on the left, thus leaving the Wealdway, and go over a small bridge. Your path joins a wide track, running beside a large meadow on your right. At the end, avoid a metal gate ahead and turn **left** to a robust stile. Go over the stile, down steps and carefully across the railway line, with the same obstacles in reverse on the other side. Go straight across the horse pasture, with good views to the South Downs, cutting the right corner and aiming for a metal gate. Buxted Church is visible ahead. In the far corner, go through a tall metal kissing-gate into the grounds of Buxted Park.

You will shortly be crossing the site of the lost medieval village of Buxted ("Place of Beeches"). It was known for its silk weaving, its oast houses and colourful characters. There was old Nan Tuck who was accused of witchcraft in the 1600s and fled into the woods and now haunts a spot where no trees will grow. There was Mary Relfe who died just before her wedding day and whose heartbroken betrothed died a week later. Then there was George Watson, an illiterate village idiot in the late 1700s who could nevertheless do impossible sums and could remember details of every day of his life, including the state of the weather. In the early 1800s, Lord Liverpool, then prime minister, finished building the new house Buxted Place and "persuaded" the entire village to move to its present location (compare Albury in Surrey). All the buildings except the church were obliterated, leaving the deer park as you see it. It is now a SSSI (Site of Special Scientific Interest) and an important conservation area. The house is now a hotel.

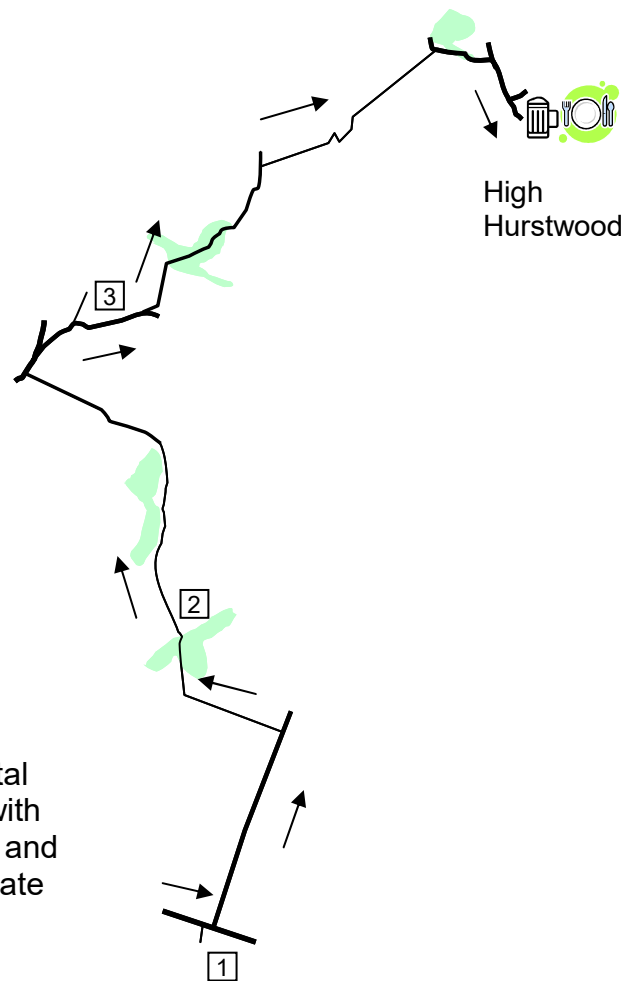
- 5 Follow a clear winding path over two tree branches and many molehills towards the hill ahead. Go over a long wooden bridge across a stream and follow the path through long grass, taking you to a 3-way fingerpost. Veer **left** here, going over a sturdy bridge across the River Uck, then over another bridge to a T-junction. *There are various ponds around you and the Park is worth exploring, now or another day.* Turn **right** at the T-junction. After the pond on your left ends, turn **left** at the first available grassy path. The path zigzags left-right, still uphill, heading for the church whose steeple can be seen. You pass a wall and stony gate pillars on your left. Fork **left** round the fence towards the church and keep ahead towards the cricket pitch visible ahead. Turn **left** on a wider path and thence into the churchyard. Pass the church on your left. *St. Margaret's Church was built in the mid-1200s of local sandstone in the Decorated style.* Turn **right** on the drive. At the end of the drive, go out through the eagled and porticoed grand entrance to the main A272 road.

Leg 2: Buxted Park to High Hurstwood 4 km=2½ miles

1 Cross the main road, turn **right** and immediately **left** on a minor road, Hurstwood Road. Pass a school and cottages and, after some distance, the Old Rectory on your right. Just over 100m further, immediately before the telegraph wires, turn **left** up some concealed steps, which are easy to miss, past a concealed fingerpost, into the left-hand of two fields and go along the right-hand side of the field under wires. As the field on your right ends, look for a small metal gate with three horizontals beside an electricity pole. Go **right** over the gate which is designed to climb over, having metal steps. Cross the sloping pasture diagonally across its centre, down to the narrow far corner. Here, go over a long barred bridge over a stream.

2 Keep ahead along the left-hand side of a meadow. At the other side, go through a metal gate [2015: now lying prone] and keep ahead with a wood on your left in a meadow of tall grass and buttercups. At the top corner, go through a gate beside a house and follow the drive, heading away from Bevingford Farm, all the way to a main road. Turn **right** along the grass verge but, after only 30m, fork **right** on a minor road, Rocks Lane, signposted High Hurstwood.

3 After a red tile-hung house, ignore a footpath on the left by a gate and stay on this quiet lane. Just before *Westrow House*, fork left on a tarmac drive for *Stonehouse*. The drive curves right, past a house on your left, and, after 500m, takes you past the entrance to *Stonehouse*. In 20m, at a fingerpost, turn **right** up a bank onto a wide grassy path. At the end, keep ahead over a stile into a rough field. In the corner, go over a rather awkward stile, down steps and **left** on a path in a woodland strip. Continue past barns and an unusual house, a Georgian mansion built onto a Tudor cottage, and follow the gravel and concrete drive, coming out to a lane, *Perrymans Lane*. Turn **right** over a bridge across a stream, ignoring a footpath on the left. At a T-junction turn **right**, soon reaching *The Hurstwood*, a country inn/restaurant.



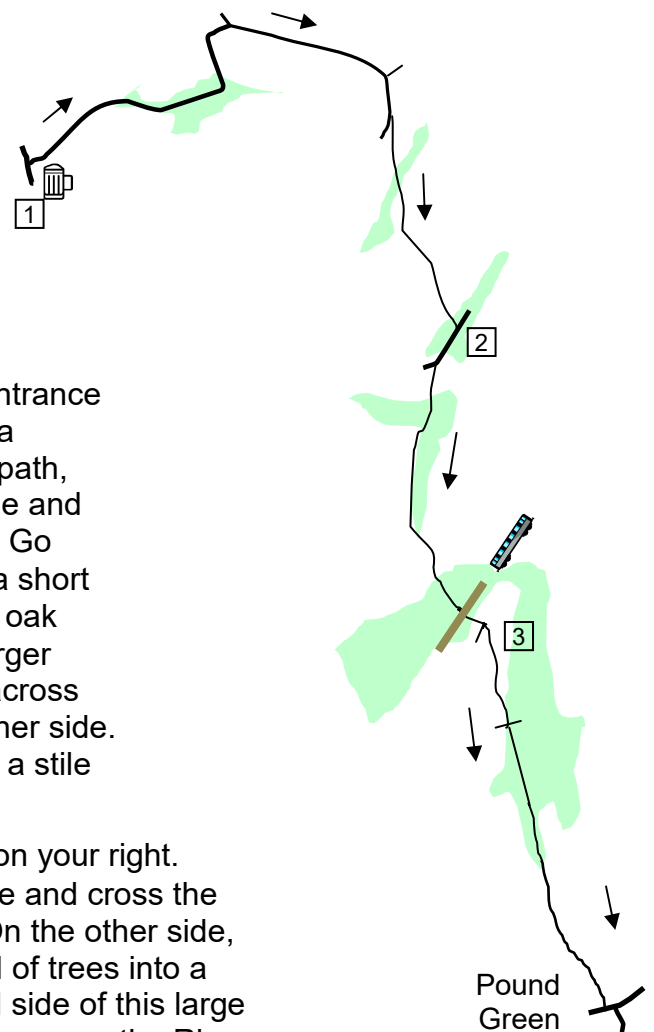
The "Hurstwood" was originally called the "Maypole" and with the new name came a new identity as a gastropub offering some dishes that really stand out, all at fairly reasonable prices. You're bound to feel you're walking into a restaurant, but you can use The "Hurstwood" as a regular pub with its three good ales (two Harveys and a guest beer), bar "nibbles" and its garden/terrace. The staff are a friendly lot. It closes at 5.30 on Sunday. If you want to reserve a table, ring 01825 732257.

Leg 3: High Hurstwood to Pound Green 4 km=2½ miles

1 After refreshment, turn **left** before the pub on Royal Oak Lane, passing a number of houses. Eventually, the lane bends left-right and reaches a junction of tracks. Bear **right** here on a rough track. *Note that you are back on the Vanguard Way.* Stay on the track as it bends right, ignoring a footpath left. At a junction, take the middle track, avoiding side tracks leading into farmyards. Shortly after, at the entrance gate to a house, go over a stile on the left on a narrow, rather muddy (or, in summer, nettly), path, down through woodland, over a wooden bridge and through a metal gate, and up into a meadow. Go along the **right**-hand side of the meadow for a short distance until you find a metal gate beside an oak tree. Go through and turn **left** in this much larger meadow, leaving the edge to go at an angle across the centre, heading for the tall trees on the other side. Just to the left of the opposite corner, go over a stile near a metal gate into a lane, Fowly Lane.

2 Turn **right** on the lane, passing a large pond on your right. Immediately after the lake, turn **left** over a stile and cross the grassy meadow diagonally on a clear path. On the other side, go by an unneeded stile, through a wide band of trees into a field. Keep straight ahead along the left-hand side of this large field and, at the far side, go over a long bridge across the River Uck. Follow the path down through a marshy area, up through woodland and under the railway arch.

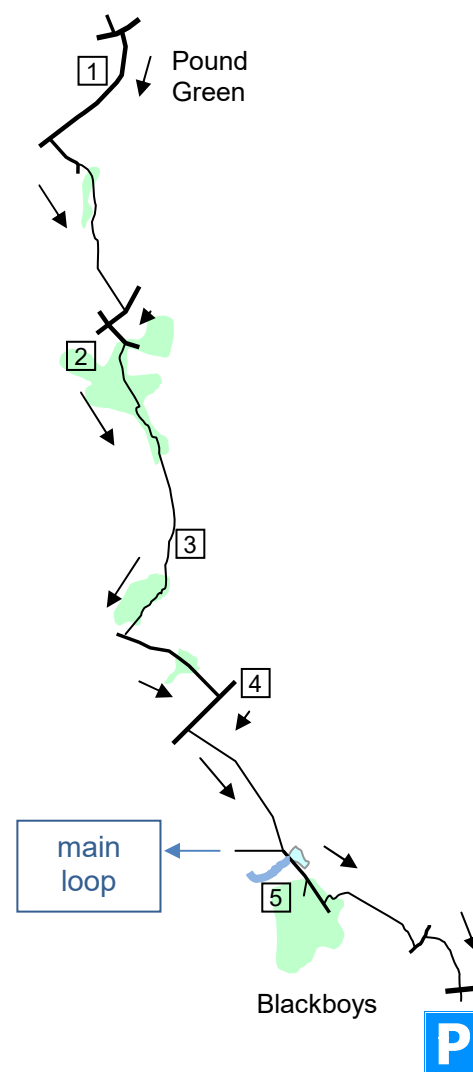
3 Another stile takes you into a hazel copse. Go straight across the next meadow, ignoring a path that goes uphill to your right and a path that goes left. Your path veers right past some metal gates in a fence by a pond. Stay roughly 10m from the fence to find the far corner. Ignoring footpaths right and left, negotiate two stiles [2012: one completely broken], past a 4-way fingerpost, and go uphill through mixed woodland. You pass some houses on your left and the path becomes a drive. As you come out into the open, there are great views on the left. Continue up to the main road in Pound Green just outside Buxted. Go straight over the road, a fraction left, onto a lane, Limes Lane, signposted *Potters Green*, thus temporarily leaving the Vanguard Way.



Leg 4: Pound Green to Blackboys 4 km=2¾ miles

- 1 Pass several houses, including a derelict one called *Retreat*. After nearly 500m on Limes Lane, just after *Tudor Cottage* and *Headley*, turn **left** on a driveway marked *Abbotswood Little Cottage*. Just before the track curves right by *Bramblehurst*, leave it by forking **left** on a narrow path. The path goes over a new bridge in a field full of yarrow and long grass. Carefully follow the path, marked out by other walkers' feet, rising to meet the **right**-hand edge. The path now runs between fences, over a stile and along the right-hand side of a meadow. It reaches the top where it flattens out, still keeping to the right. Your path follows the edge, goes over a stile, continues onward and goes over a stile to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane, re-joining the Vanguard Way.
- 2 Very shortly, at a crossroads, turn **left**, signposted *Blackboys*. In just 80m, go **right** over a stile next to a wooden gate bearing the words *Potters End*. This is a pleasant path under tall beeches, where in late spring there are copious bluebells. Soon, avoid a path forking round to the right and keep straight ahead through the forest. The woodland gradually tapers to a strip and meets a 4-way fingerpost. Keep straight ahead here, still following the narrow strip of trees between pastures. Another stile takes you out of the wood and along a delightful grassy patch past ancient farm buildings.
- 3 Go over a V-stile and head straight down a sunken path between pastures under trees. (Depending on the location of any livestock, you may prefer to keep to the grassy meadow on the left or right.) Go through a metal gate, over a long wooden bridge, through another metal gate and along the right-hand side of a meadow. Avoiding a rusty gate over on your right, keep ahead to a (redundant) kissing-gate. This takes you out into a rather untidy yard. Just before a blue lockup, turn **left** on a track uphill. In 100m, just before the track bends right, fork **right** on a path along the grass which re-joins the track under tall oaks, soon leading out to a lane.
- 4 Turn **right** on the lane and, in 150m, turn **left** on a wide track between fields. Follow this track along the length of one more field, then through a large metal gate. The track then runs between fields and onwards to a large wooden gate. You are now on familiar territory if you began the walk in Blackboys.

Decision point. If you did **not** begin the walk in Blackboys, turn immediately **right** over a stile and continue from Leg 1 section 2. Otherwise, continue with the next section.



- 5 The last stretch is the reverse of the outward one. Go ahead along the drive over the weir by the millpond of the Tickerage Stream. Continue uphill under tall beeches. Avoid a stile on the right (the Wealdway) and turn **left** at a 3-way fingerpost, up steps. Keep alongside a meadow, then on a fenced path between sheep pastures and a grassy path between gardens. Turn **left** at the top on a track and **right** on a path leading between allotments. Ignore a footpath on the left and follow the fenced path to a wooden gate and the road. Turn **left** to where the walk began.

For final refreshments, the "Blackboys Inn" is near. To reach it, simply follow School Lane for 350m.

Getting there

By car: Blackboys is usually reached via the A22 and Uckfield. Coming from the west side, turn right in the high street, over the river bridge and uphill and turn left on the B2102, signposted *Framfield Heathfield*. Buxted is reached from the A22 just north of Uckfield by going northeast on the A26 and taking the A272.

By train: Buxted station is an easy 1 km walk along the road to the start of Leg 2, with an extra chance of refreshments at the *White Hart*.

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