



Plumpton Fields and Meadows

Distance: 6¾ km=4¼ miles

easy walking

Region: East Sussex

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Refreshments: Plumpton

Map: Explorer 122 (Brighton). *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Green pastures, woodland tracks, church, racecourse, woodland, inns

In Brief

This walk explores the gentle countryside just north of this tiny village. Unlike its sister walk, *Plumpton and the South Downs*, it stays on level ground, but this does not diminish the great views you have all around the route. You also visit a medieval church and have a close view of the Racecourse. The final section is a wonderful patchwork of little fields and woods.

There are two notable inns on this walk, one an outstanding gastropub (see the text), the other at the start, described together with the village, in the sister walk.



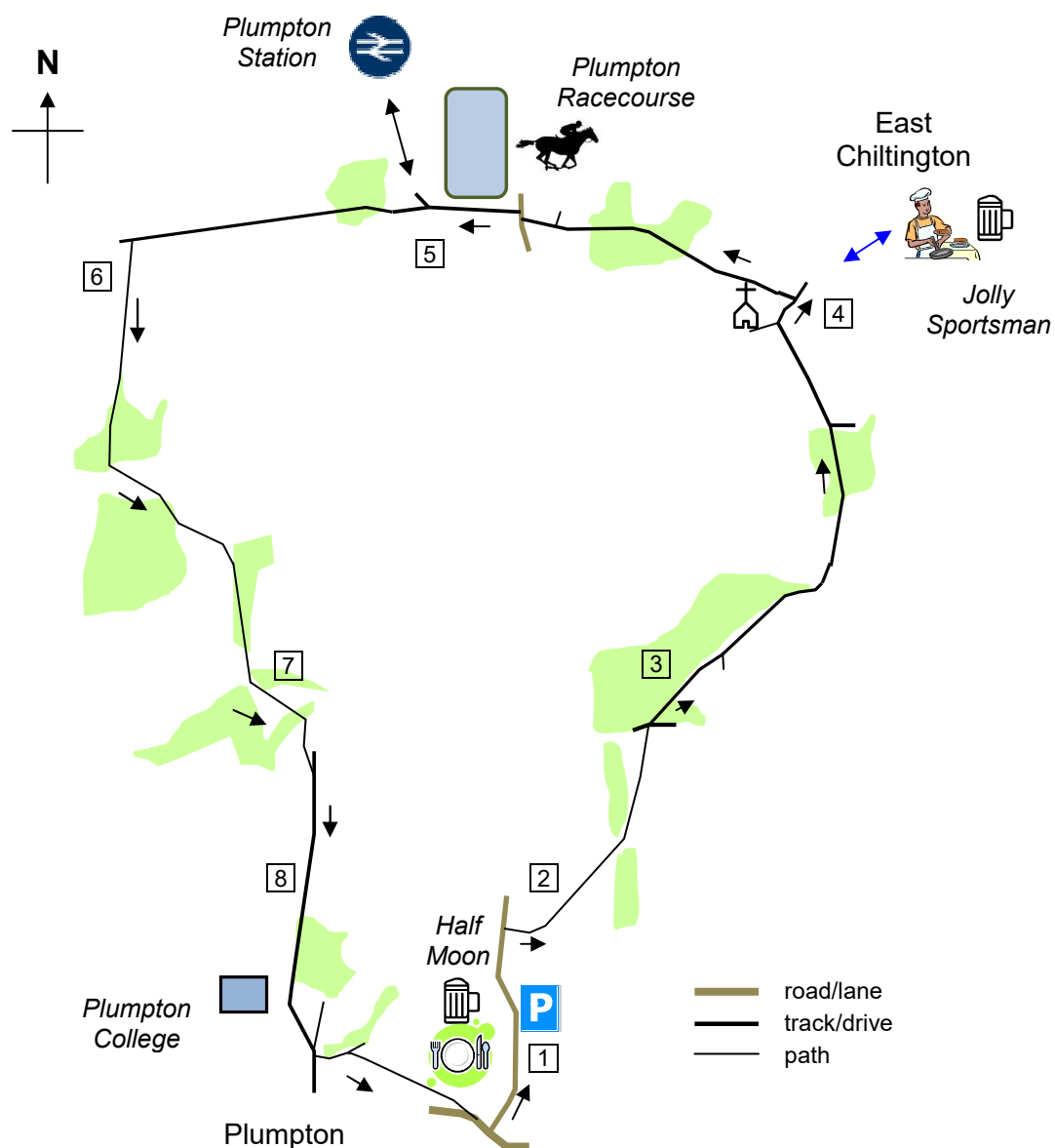
There are no dense patches of nettles or undergrowth but, with the chance of seasonal changes, it is best to cover legs - and wear boots, especially in non-summer months. You may find some muddy patches but these are brief. There are several stiles but these are a pleasure to mount, almost a feature of this walk, thanks to the Monday Group who build them. Your dog can probably handle them well but the “dog” symbol has been left out in case of doubt.

The walk begins next to the *Half Moon* pub in Plumpton, East Sussex, postcode **BN7 3AF**, www.w3w.co/eyeliner.vaccines.live. There is a wide dirt strip used for parking in the side road, Plumpton Lane, beside the pub. If you arrive early, park anywhere tight on the left: when you return you may find cars parked all the way down, even on the grass verge. Don't use the large pub car park as this is a popular place and all the spaces get filled up at lunch time. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



You can instead arrive by train to Plumpton Station (frequent trains to London). The way to join the route (not fully researched) is from the further of the two footbridges, on the side *away* from the station building, on a tarmac footpath which goes beside Plumpton Racecourse on your left. The path goes behind buildings, bending right-left-right. It is joined by a footpath from the right, elbows left and comes to a T-junction. Turn **right** to join the walk just after the start of Section **5**.

The Walk



- 1 Walk up the side road, Plumpton Lane, alongside the *Half Moon* (where you may have parked). In 50m or so, avoid a marked footpath on your right and continue on the road as it curves left downhill, soon making use of the grass fringe. Finally, 500m from the pub, just after the last house, go **right** over a stile into a perfect long sloping meadow.
- 2 Keep straight ahead along the left-hand edge. In the corner go diagonally **left** past an unneeded stile into an adjoining meadow. **There is some mud at these narrow points but it usually clears quickly.** Take a path diagonally across the centre. At the other side, go over a low stile, a bridge and two V-stiles into a new pasture. Your path runs near the left-hand edge, between two large oaks, past a goat pen, over a ladder stile (although the wooden gate is usually open), past the garden of a house, reaching the far corner. Here, go over a ladder stile. **(Thank you, The Monday Group, for these excellent**

stiles: walker please support them!) Turn **right** on the tarmac to a house and fork **left** past a large metal gate on a rough track.

- 3 The track turns out to be an imposing wide drive running between lines of laurel and mixed woodland, soon shaded by some large oaks. You pass the rear entry gates to *Novington Manor* (a manor recorded in 1258 now a late-Victorian house and garden). The drive winds past a fenced enclosure: ignore a footpath on the right here and stay on the drive. In a further 300m you pass a large pond on your right. The drive finally meets a tarmac drive at a bend. Keep **left** here, passing the historic Tudor *Stanton's Farmhouse*, finally going round a large metal gate to reach East Chiltington church.

East Chiltington is a historic scattered parish which extends far beyond the church. The church, which is usually open, has no dedication for reasons unknown. The central part was built in the 1100s and that squat little tower dates from only about 100 years later.

- 4 Ignore a footpath on the left just before the church and continue past the church where there is a small car park (they are planning to enlarge it).



For a short excursion of only 300m each way, by turning **right** on the lane, you can visit one of the most unusual country pubs in the whole county. *The Jolly Sportsman*, in a traditional whiteboard house in an open landscape, is one of the notable gastropubs of Sussex. Main courses are suitable fine dining, but many people come for the Crab and Lobster menu, or possibly the BBQ menu of wagyu beef and spatchcock poussin. Booking is essential: ring 01273 890400. Remember: you still have some mileage!

Immediately turn **left** beside the church on a gravel drive. Where the drive bends left, keep straight ahead on a rough track. You pass over a bridge across a stream. At a small 3-way fingerpost, keep straight on, passing the iron gates of *Chiltington Ferrings*. After about 700m you reach a road (Plumpton Lane again). Cross straight over, a fraction right, onto a concrete drive by a sign for *Plumpton Racecourse*. Shortly, you pass the south bend of the racecourse, identifiable from the double white railings.

Plumpton Racecourse began life in 1876 for hare coursing but changed to the geegees a few years later. But the racing is not on the flat, like Brighton and Epsom (see that walk), but it is run by the National Hunt as a jumping course, with several hurdles arranged around its one-mile length. It was originally owned by Alexander Popham, of that west-country family (see the Popham walk in Hampshire on this site). It is now run from rival Lingfield Park. The racecourse has also hosted music events, such as Black Sabbath and The Who in 1969.

- 5 Shortly after this, a right-forking bridleway, not on your route, leads to Plumpton Railway Station. **If you arrived by train, this is your homeward route. Retrace the steps you took at the outset.** Continue straight ahead, ignoring a junction on the left just before some farm buildings. You pass several large houses with tall ornamental trees. The drive becomes beech-shaded with great views left of the South Downs. About 200m after the last house, you will see on your left a viewpoint and plaque with info about the Plumpton Cross.



The Plumpton Cross is just visible on the distant hillside as a faint chalk patch, between two small clumps, just below the summit. The purpose and provenance of the Plumpton Cross are a matter of debate.



You pass another large house, *Eryl*. Just before it, there is a large gap in the trees: if you look approx' at "1 o'clock" in the distance you can see the Chailey windmill. Immediately after the house and its garden, turn **left** down a flight of steps onto a signposted footpath. (*If you reach the picturesque village of Streat with its cottages and church, you have missed this turning!*)

6 The path runs beside ranch fencing with pastures on your right. Next, it takes you over a bridge-with-rails and along the left-hand side of a crop field. Just before the edge starts to curve away to the right, fork **left** on a path into woodland. The path goes down a flight of steps, across a long bridge. At the end of the wood, keep **left**, past a signpost, into a crop field. Take a path straight ahead across the centre. At the far side, go over a step stile and a 2-plank bridge, into woodland. After the woodland, a step stile (*thanks ever, The Monday Group!*) takes you into a new crop field. Take a path diagonally across the centre and, at the other side, cross a farm track by a signpost, a patch of grass, a ladder stile and a flat wooden bridge into woods. Follow a very curvy path through the woods, at one time going over a 3-plank bridge, finally coming out into yet another crop field. Turn **left** and shortly **right** round the corner of the field. At the next corner, keep **left** over a flat bridge and a ladder stile into a horse pasture.

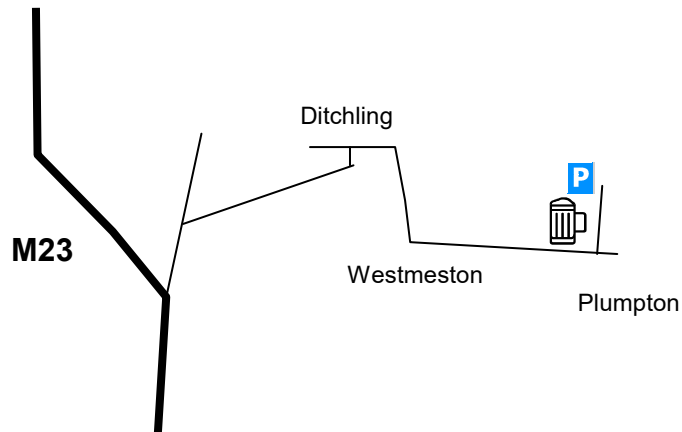
7 Keep near the right-hand side of the pasture, towards a line of poplars, and go over a narrow bridge-with-rails. (You have to lift an insulated hook at each side of the bridge.) Cross the horse pasture, heading for a large metal gate at the end of a line of ranch fencing on your left. Here, go through a wooden swing-gate onto a track. Ignore a similar swing-gate opposite (it leads to Plumpton Church, as a possible map-guided variation to this section) and instead keep ahead on a wide driveway just to your left. The drive runs between hedges and comes out into the car park of Plumpton College (Equestrian Division).

Plumpton College is a land-based college, founded in 1919, originally called Plumpton Agricultural College, which still describes it well. Courses include Agriculture, Veterinary Nursing and Equine Management. There is also a faculty of Viticulture and Oenology, reflecting the growing importance of the UK wine industry.

8 Keep straight ahead at all times, soon passing the college entrance, ignoring a narrow footpath on the left. Keep ahead on the tarmac drive, leading out. You pass the ball-topped pillars of a house on your left (the historic *Plumpton Place*). Immediately turn **left** through a small wooden gate and follow a wide grass path. At the end of the fence, go **right** through a wooden swing-gate into a large meadow to face a choice of two paths. Avoid the path tight to your left and instead take the path diagonally **left** across the centre. At the far side, go over a stile under trees. A short woodland strip takes you to the main road by the *Half Moon* pub where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: coming from the London or M25 direction, your satnav will probably direct you on the M23 as far as the Pyecombe exit, then on a pleasant tour of the villages of Clayton, Ditchling, and Westmeston (all visited on other walks in this series). Turn left just after the pub and park on the strip on the left.



By train: to Plumpton Station – see Page One.

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