



Aldershot and the Basingstoke Canal

Distance: 10 km=6 miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 26-mar-2018

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Refreshments: *The Foresters*

Map: OS Explorer 145 (Guildford)

The maps in this guide should be sufficient but the OS map may be needed in case some paths are closed for military use, requiring a diversion.

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

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Pinewoods, canal, woodland stream, sandy paths, heath, views

In Brief

This is a walk of great variety, combining pine woods, an oak wood, a great sandy wilderness and a canal towpath. The route goes over the huge wild Aldershot sand hills and pine forests. This is Defence land but there are *no* live exercises and families, children and dogs are always welcome.

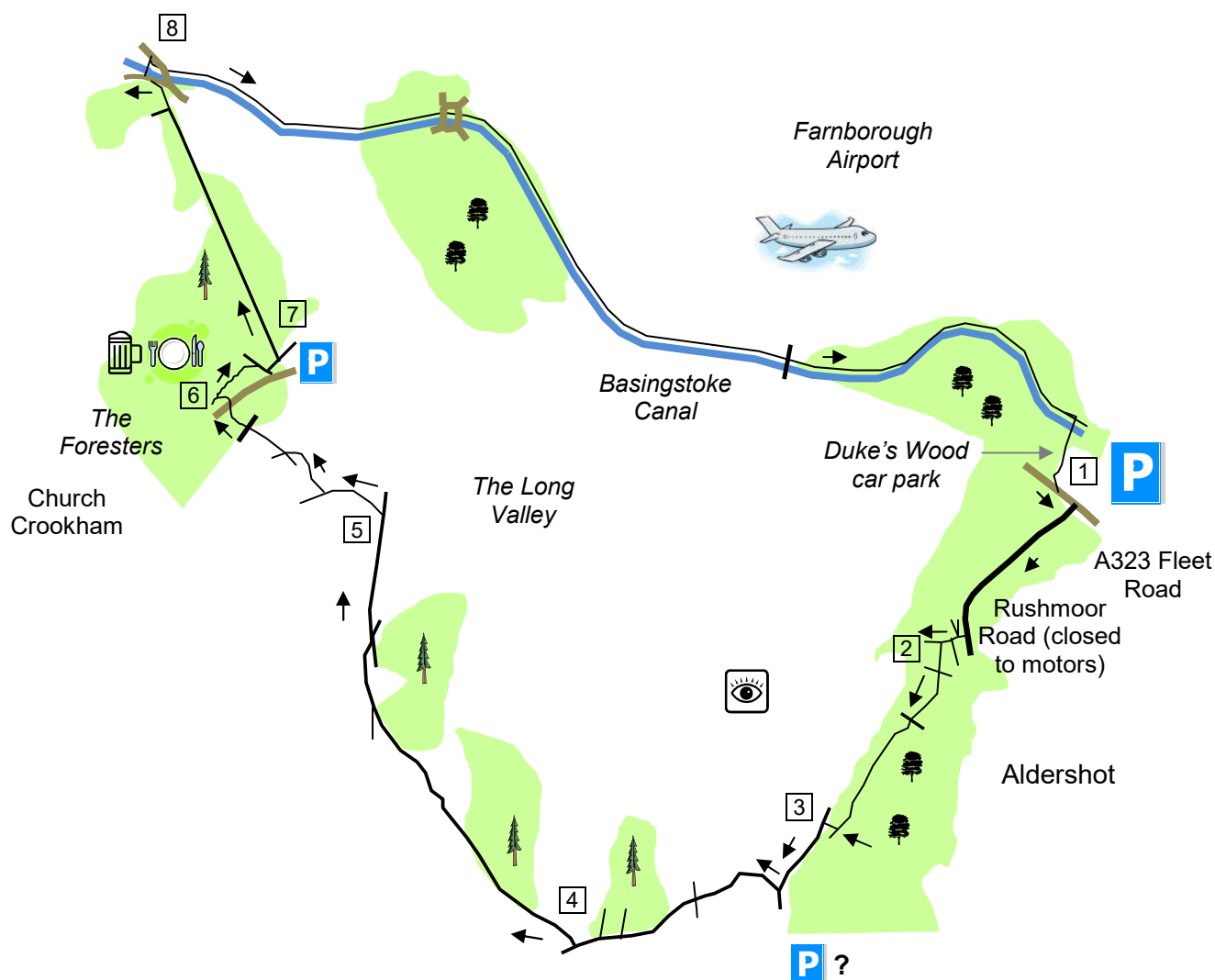
If you do this walk in mid-July of an even-numbered year (e.g. 16-22 July 2018), you will have a grandstand view of the displays from the canal towpath – but you might have to weave through the crowds.



There are no nettles and no undergrowth on this walk, making shorts perfectly wearable. In dry weather, many walkers wear trainers on these easy paths. With no stiles and only two road crossings, this walk is ideal for your dog.

The walk begins at the **Duke's Wood** car park in Aldershot, off the A323 Fleet Road, near Puckridge Barracks. It is well publicised in brochures as part of *Wellesley Woodlands*. The nearest postcode is **GU11 2HF** but your satnav will probably direct you north, instead of south, of the canal. If arriving on the A325, follow signs for Fleet near the Potters International Hotel (postcode **GU11 2ET**). Another good starting point is the car park 150m from the *Foresters* (*not* the pub's own car parks!), postcode **GU52 9EP**. (Starting at Duke's Wood is better, just in case of the extremely unlikely event of the pedestrian access to Rushmoor Road being locked for some military purpose, giving you a chance to choose a different walk.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the Duke's Wood car park, go out to the road, turn **left** and, in 50m, turn **right** on Rushmoor Road. (Rushmoor Road is closed to motor traffic: your access is through a pedestrian gate on the left of the large metal gates.) After 500m through forest, just after a left bend, you see a metal barrier on your right, just before a bridge over a track. Turn **right** here down a slope to arrive at a junction of paths. Avoid the first path on your left, continue another 25m to cross a narrow stream (the Claycart Stream) and turn **left** on a narrow path which runs beside the stream on your left.
- 2 **The path is muddy at first but quickly improves.** In nearly 100m your path goes over a crossing path. In another 200m your path reaches a crossing track. Go straight over, still following the Claycart Stream but this time with it on your right. *If you hear a din of engines nearby on your left, this is from the Aldershot Raceway where hotrods compete in the Caravan Destruction Derby and other delights.* As you continue through this beautiful oakwood, the stream on your right sinks into a deep cleft. Finally, 400m from the last crossing, you meet a narrow path on your right where the stream runs over a concrete channel and cascades down.

- 3 Turn **right** here over the channel, to come out in 50m onto the open sandy moor. Turn **left** on a wide surfaced track. In 250m, you reach a major 3-way junction. Turn sharp **right** on a wide path which curves left uphill. Keep going for 650m on this undulating path to pass a large pinewood on the right of your path with a track running through it. Continue past the pinewood, out into the open again, for another 80m. Here the wide path forks. Take the **right** fork, a wide sandy path which branches off diagonally.
- 4 Your course is now fairly straight for 1½ km. In 150m your path runs beside a pinewood on your right, enters the wood and emerges again in 150m. It winds left and right and comes out of the dark woods up into an open space where a path joins you from the left. The path descends gradually, re-enters woodland and arrives at a metal barrier with a warning about the Test Track ahead which is used to test military hardware. Shortly, at a wide diagonal crossing path, take the **left** fork. In 300m, your path goes through a metal swing-gate next to an animal grid. Just 30m further, turn **left** through a metal gate.
- 5 In 100m, your wide path bends left and passes a little pond on the right (which may be dry). 40m after the pond, turn **right** on a clear path through gorse bushes. Keep following this undulating and winding path with a hillock on your left, avoiding side turnings, heading towards the pinewoods and the possible sound of traffic on the main road. Your path curves left to meet a crossing path. Here, **leave** your previous path which continues upwards over the heath by turning **right** on a narrow path. (This area has been cleared of gorse bushes and you may still see the remaining stumps). The path goes past some pines and takes you through a swing-gate (sometimes awash: please help by dropping a brick or a log!). Cross straight over a wide grassy strip onto a very narrow path into the trees opposite. Keep to this winding path, through hollies, leading up to a car park of the Foresters pub/restaurant. Cross over into the pub's main car park.



“The Foresters” at Church Crookham is as much a restaurant as a pub and the food may be a bit pricey. Nevertheless, there are several well-kept ales on tap and the food is imaginative with ostrich steak and tempura courgette flowers thrown into the gastronomic mix. There is a sizeable garden and patio to enhance the outdoor atmosphere.

- 6 After a possible break for refreshment, go to the back of the pub's car park and turn **left** through a metal kissing gate. Turn sharp **right** and follow a path which runs outside the back of the pub's garden. The path runs down to a T-junction. Turn **right**, going through a gate beside an animal grid, to arrive at the Aldershot Road car park (alternative start).
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- 7 Turn **left** just before the car park (or, if you began the walk here, avoid a grid straight ahead and instead turn **right**) on a wide straight path, going through a gate beside an animal grid after 40m. Immediately after the grid, turn **left** on a wide straight path. Follow this woodland path for most of a km to its end where you can hear a main road close by. Ignore the path where it bends left and instead keep ahead through a large kissing gate to arrive shortly at a side road (Valmead Road). Turn **left** on the road and quickly turn **right** between bollards over a canal bridge. After the bridge, turn sharp **right** to join the canal towpath, going under the road (mind your head!).

- 8 You will be following the canal on your right for a total of 3½ km, with the main roads far enough away to your right to allow you a long period of peaceful walking. In 1 km you pass under two carriages of a main road. The trees change to thin birch and the terrain opens out as you become aware of Farnborough Airfield close by on your left. The next bridge is the Eelmoor Bridge, a black girder bridge, which has a small car park. Continue along the towpath, now in quiet woodland once more. After 1 km, you see a second black girder bridge. Fork left to turn **right** over the bridge. [On your right is one of the gates into Duke's Wood: worth a look for its wooden sculpture, bridges and nature trails.](#) In a minute you are back at the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car:

from the M3: come off at exit 4 (*Farnborough etc.*); at the first roundabout, keep right as for *Farnborough etc.*; at the big roundabout, keep straight on, still for *Farnborough A325*; in 200 yds, **avoid** a left filter but, after passing under a road bridge, filter **left** for *Farnborough A325*; at the next roundabout, turn **right**, go straight over the next roundabout and turn **left** at the next larger roundabout, always following *Farnborough A325*; keep straight ahead for 3½ miles over several junctions; filter **left** for *Fleet A323* and turn **right** under the trunkway still for *Fleet*; in ½ mile, stay on the main road as it elbows right; the car park is ⅓ mile on the right, it is not marked.

from the A31 (Guildford / Farnham): filter left at a sign for M3, *Farnborough etc.*; at a roundabout, take the A331 (signposted *Farnborough etc.*), keep ahead through an underpass and after 3½ miles total, filter left for *Farnborough A3011*; at the next roundabout keep straight on, still signposted *Farnborough A3011*; in ½ mile, go straight over a roundabout; in ⅓ mile turn **left** on the A325 signposted *Farnham, Aldershot*; in just under 1 mile filter **left** for *Fleet A323* and turn **right** under the trunkway still for *Fleet*; in ½ mile, stay on the main road as it elbows right; the car park is ⅓ mile on the right, it is not marked.

By bus/train: bus 7 runs from Aldershot to Church Crookham; bus 10 runs from Fleet and Farnborough, including Saturday . Check the timetables.

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