



Aldershot and the Basingstoke Canal

Distance: 10 km=6 miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Hampshire

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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.

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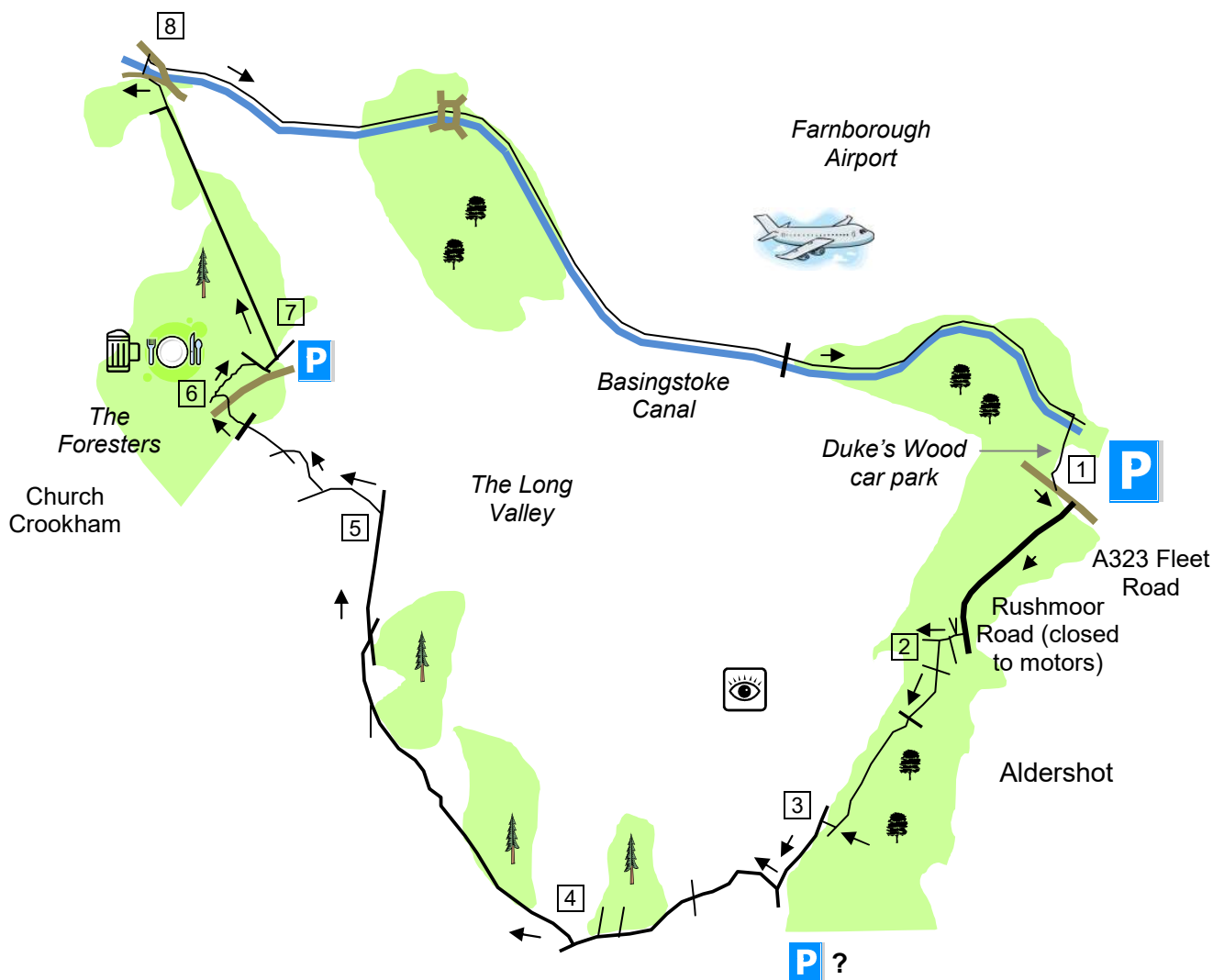
Before you do this walk, you should ring **01483-798357** Defence Training Estate, Training Area Officer (preferably on a *week day*) to check that there is pedestrian access to *Rushmoor Road*.^{*} During summer/autumn 2018 this was **only "some weekends"**. Hopefully, when the current regular exercises are finished, this situation will improve. Do *not* do this walk during the Farnborough Airshow (usually the third week of July of an even-numbered year, e.g. 16-22 July 2018) because some paths and *especially Rushmoor Road*^{*} at the start will be closed off. (*A walker climbed over the gate after finding it padlocked with a notice about military activity, although there was none that day, and other walkers had entered through different gates. The latest planning map shows a pedestrian gate further to the left of the main gate but this may be inaccurate or just "a plan".)



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 possible starting point is the car park 150m from the *Foresters* (*not* the pub's own car parks!), postcode **GU52 9EP**. However, starting at Duke's Wood is better, for the reason in blue above. 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.) **See the note on Page 1.** 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 notice about the Test Track ahead which is used to test military hardware. Shortly after the notice, you arrive at a 3-way crossing. Continue straight ahead following the same track which bears slightly **left**. (To your right and left are two wide tracks which are obviously used for military training although vehicles are *very rarely* seen anywhere, even by regular walkers). In 300m, your path goes through a metal kissing-gate next to an animal grid. Just 30m further, turn **left** through a metal kissing-gate [Nov 2018: found locked, walker easily climbed over].
- 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 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 turn **right** on a narrow path, thus **leaving** your previous path which continues upwards over the heath with the hillock on the left. Your new path keeps you in the same direction as before, down a small dip. Note that it is very narrow. (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).

- 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, passing the airport on your right, going 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): if coming from Guildford, take the Hog's Back (A31) road and ignore the first left filter for Aldershot, continuing to the large roundabout just east of Farnham. At the large roundabout, follow signs for *Odiham, Badshot Lea, Farnborough*. Follow this road (A325), straight on at each roundabout or junction, passing the *Royal Arms*, after 1½ miles. Continuing over a small roundabout and, ⅔ mile later, straight over a large roundabout. After ⅔ mile, at the corner of the *Potters International Hotel* (postcode **GU11 2ET**), turn **left** at a sign for *Fleet A323*. At the end, turn **left** on a major road and immediately stay on the 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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