



Chawton Park Wood, Bentworth and Bushy Leaze Wood

Distance: 16½ km=10 miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 5-nov-2013

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Refreshments: Bentworth

Map: Explorer 132 (Winchester) and a small part of 144 (Basingstoke)
but the map in this guide should be sufficient

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

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Woodland, village, green meadows, quiet byways

In Brief



This is a lovely walk through rolling Hampshire farmlands and woods. Paths are good with very few nettles, on the whole dry underfoot, although there may be a bit of mud in places, especially in a wet winter. The walk is also excellent for your dog. There are *no compulsory stiles* at the time of writing (because there are some that you can simply walk round).

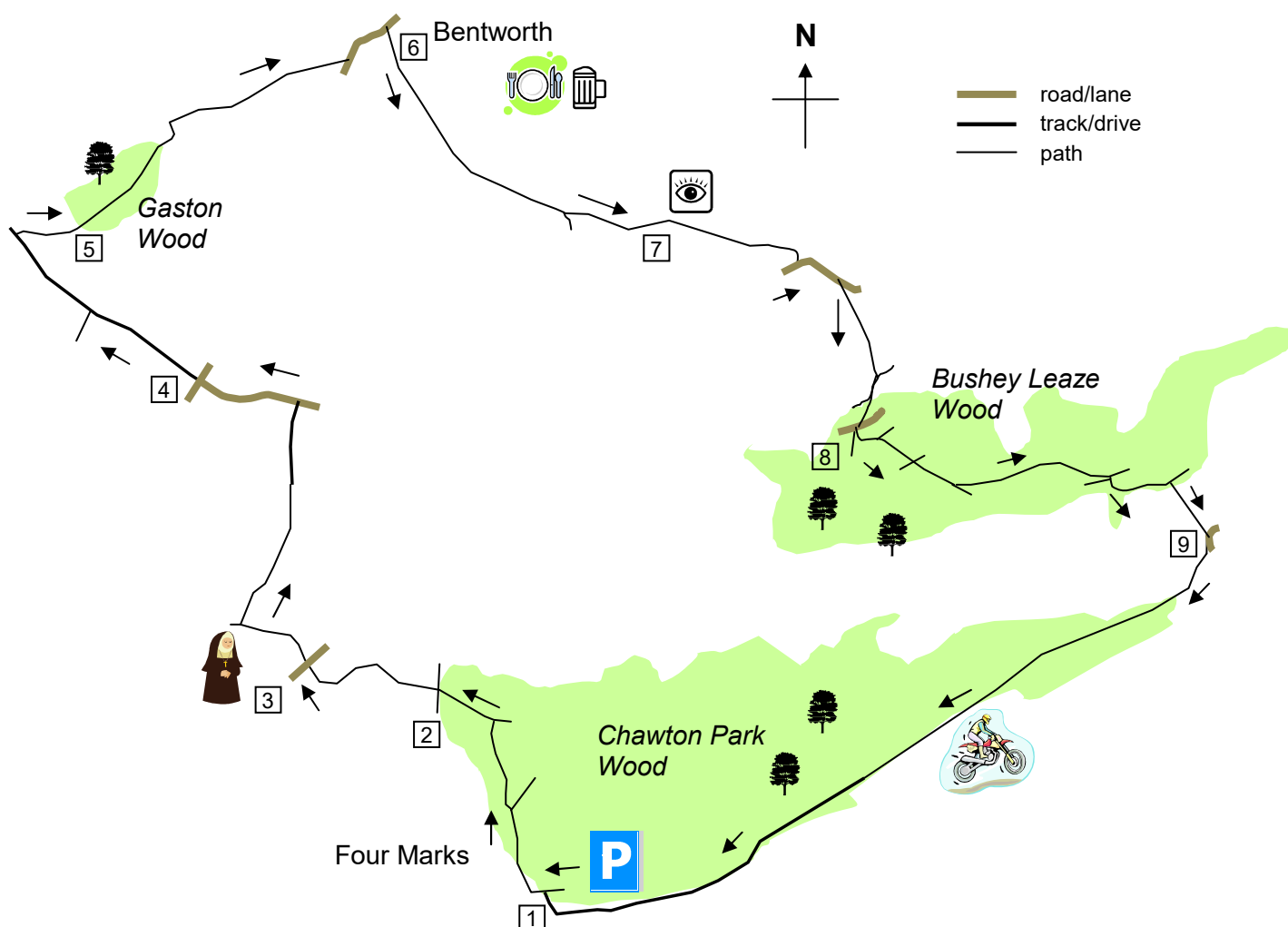
Along the way, you visit the two ancient woods in the title. Looking at the sketch map, you might believe that there's a short cut from Bushy Leaze Wood to Chawton Park Wood, cutting out the eastern loop at point 9. One contributor warns that this is *not so!*

If you have walked this before, one walker suggests it's even better in *reverse direction*, so that the long traipse through Chawton Park Wood is downhill.

At the centre of the walk is the pretty village of Bentworth, with one remaining (but very good) pub, the *Sun Inn* (ring 01420-562338 to enquire).

The walk begins at the **Chawton Park Wood** car park in Four Marks, near Alton, Hampshire, **postcode GU34 5ED**, grid ref. 672362. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From the car park, face the entrance and take the last path on the right through wooden posts to cross a grassy green. Fork **left** in the centre of the green following a faint path to reach a T junction with a wide gravel track. Turn **left** here and in about 20m turn **right**. Follow this path alongside fields on the left, through the edge of High Wood. Where in 120m the path forks, take the **right** more obvious fork which swings away from the fields into the wood. [2018: Badly churned up: you can delay forking right till you find a dry path to cut across and re-join the route.] In about 10m fork **left** thus continuing in your original direction. Follow this path ignoring all turnoffs. Where a wide grassy path forks off right, keep straight ahead on the narrower path with a fir plantation on your left and birch bushes of the right. After a while the path enters a magnificent beech wood with large fir trees on the left. The path descends to a wide grassy crossing path opposite a four-way finger post (with one finger missing!). Turn **left** here and follow this path until in 250m you reach a crossing path by a wooden post.
- 2 Go ahead into the field past a section of wooden fence and follow the path across the field. Walk past the left of a hedge that juts into the field, and continue straight ahead towards the field corner and a new metal gate. Pass through this gate and swing **left** with the path into a field with long grass and scrubby bushes. Follow the path along the left hand side of the

field and through a small patch of woodland. You soon reach the remains of a broken stile. Bear **left**, passing the back of a large garden on your right. You soon come across a broken metal gate. Bear **right**. Almost immediately you'll see a post marked with three yellow arrows on your right. Take the **right** fork here and head toward a substantial wooden gate ahead, as you pass more back gardens on your right. Pass through a second wooden gate and turn **right** onto another path. The path follows a wire fence and shortly zigzags right and then left, it then continues between gardens and high hedges to reach a road.

- 3 Cross the road to the path opposite which runs between high hedges to reach a metal kissing gate with another path joining from the right. Ignore this path and go through the gate into a field and cross the field to reach another metal kissing gate on the far side. The path continues alongside a large building which is the *Convent of the Sisters of St Lucy* in Medstead. At the far side of the convent buildings you meet a concrete slabbed path on a bend where it emerges from brambles and nettles. Avoid the slabbed path by turning immediately **right** to go through trees and enter a field. Follow the left side of the field alongside the hedge with great views through the trees. Pass through a line of trees into the next field and follow the path across the middle of the field. At the far side houses become visible ahead. Follow the path towards the houses with a hedge on your left. Exit the field to the left of two logs onto a tarmac drive with the house *Hazeley* on your left. Follow this drive for some distance till you reach a T-junction with a tarmac lane. Turn **left** here and continue on the lane until you meet a road just after a white building labelled *The Workshop*.
- 4 Cross the road to the gravel track opposite. Follow this track, keeping ahead as you pass *Kestrel Cottage*. After a while on this rough grassy flinty track, a grey barn and some houses appear on the hillside to the right, and on the left a field gateway. Ignore a footpath sign on the left and, instead, continue on the track through or past two metal gates. About 150m after the sign, you come to a fork in the track. Do *not* take *either* fork. Instead, walk through a gap in the hedge on your **right** past a fingerpost. Head up the hill toward a copse, keeping a high deer fence on your right. The path passes through some trees with a deep pit on the right and enters a field. At the far side is a wooden gate. Go through the gate. On your right is a lawn bounded by a wooden fence, and sometimes several noisy but quite harmless dogs. At the end of the lawn is another wooden gate leading into a wood.
- 5 Follow the path straight ahead through Gaston Wood. In 150m you pass a post with a yellow arrow and in another 50m you reach a not very obvious fork in the path by a large chestnut tree. Take the **left** hand fork. This path widens, passes a pheasant enclosure on the right and zigzags into a field. Follow the path around the left-hand side of the field to join a track. Turn **right** here and follow the track as it descends, then rises, going through a large metal gate. It passes farm buildings on your left and right and becomes a concrete drive. Continue ahead on this drive, ignoring a footpath on your right, eventually reaching a large house on the left bounded by a typical Hampshire brick and flint faced wall to reach a road. Turn **left** on the road to reach the village of Bentworth. Continue through the village to a little 3-way floral roundabout. *Note the pillory! [Nov 2013: stolen!]*



The quiet village of Bentworth, maybe surprisingly, is famous for the Bentworth Blues Festival, which each August offers two dozen acts. A short excursion takes you to the church with its ancient oak door and flint walls and, in the churchyard, the Holy Thorn with its legendary miraculous history. The Star Inn, despite new management, is now **closed**. However, another typical village pub, the "Sun Inn", is nearby. Either: fork right and go 500m through the village; turn right on a lane to find the pub in 200m; or: go through the churchyard which also comes out to the same lane. (After the pub, you may find a quicker return route by turning **right** on the footpath which intercepts Tinker's Lane.) Bentworth boasts one of the gold Post Boxes from the 2012 Olympics honouring Peter Charles the show Jumping Gold Medallist.

- 6 After a possible break, retrace your route past the roundabout for 50m, just before the bus stop, and take an unmarked turning on your **left** by a thatched garage building. (If you didn't visit the pub and village, this is a right turn.) This lane is called Tinkers Lane but is not signed. Continue down Tinkers Lane ignoring a footpath crossing and keeping to the byway ahead. After more than 1 km, where the byway bends to the right, there is a marker post on the left with a clear yellow arrow. Fork **left** here and follow the path up the hill alongside a wildflower meadow to a wooden stile, which you can walk round, leading into another field. The path continues diagonally across the field to an oak tree visible in the hedge. Go over a wooden stile here (also avoidable). But before you do so, it is worth turning back to admire the view. The house visible behind trees is historic *Bentworth Hall*.

- 7 Follow the path across the next field and through a gap in the hedge into another field where Thedden Farm is visible ahead. Ignore a crossing track and keep straight on towards the farm passing a tree on your right. At the other side of the field, a track to the left has a sign saying *No Footpath*. Keep straight ahead through a narrow gap in the hedge passing a notice indicating the footpath and showing *Ground Nesting Birds Please Keep to the Footpath* on the opposite side. *Do not miss this path!* Follow the path along the edge of a field with a line of trees on your right and through a metal gate into some trees. Cross a three plank bridge, and shortly turn **left** along the back of a barn, then **right** alongside it to reach a gravel drive and a three-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here to reach a road. Turn sharp **left** on the road which bends right and then left. *On your left is another historic house Thedden Grange*. At the left bend there is a metal gate on the right beside an unmarked footpath. Fork **right** onto this path. The path goes between fields with brambles on the right and magnificent views across Hampshire to the left. It then enters trees and reaches a gravel drive. Turn **left** here. Follow this drive till it comes out onto a lane by a house opposite. Turn **right** and in 5m **left** onto another gravel drive. Follow this drive downhill till it emerges onto a road.

- 8 Cross the road and go towards a metal barrier. Just before the barrier, turn **left** into the wood and follow the yellow arrows all the way through the wood. At a T-junction turn **left** following the yellow arrow. Keep ahead with the yellow arrows, cross over a major crossing path and, in about 40m, ignore a right fork, keeping ahead till you reach another crossing path and a two-way fingerpost. Keep ahead here still following the arrows. At a fork with a post and yellow arrows, take the **right** fork. You reach a crossing of paths with a marker post on the right. Turn **right** here towards a field. At a T-junction turn **left**. Follow the path alongside fields on the right and under a canopy of hazels. Soon you reach a wooden fence on your right. Turn

right following the arrow through a gap in the centre of the fence. [Care: this turning is *important*: don't miss it!] The path leads away from the wood but still in a belt of trees. After a while, this path emerges onto a road.

- 9 Turn **right** on the road. In about 20m the road bends sharp left. On the bend on the right is a track marked *National Cycle route*. Just past this is a gap in the trees with a half hidden fingerpost saying *Bridleway* and, underneath this, *Peter Wykeham Way*. Turn **right** here. Keep straight ahead on this well used path. You are now back in Chawton Park Wood at the opposite end to the car park. After about 1½ km you reach a large and noisy (if in use) motor cycle track where the lads are trying out their skills on two and four wheels. Ignore a wide path on the right about half way along the length of the motor cycle track and continue straight ahead. The path eventually comes out onto a wide gravel track. Swing **right** here and then **left**. Where the gravel track swings left again keep straight on. [Jan 2020: the paths may have changed and your path may seem more like a right turn: but your general direction is always straight ahead] You pass some buildings on your left. Here there is a choice of two paths both going in the same direction straight ahead. They both arrive at the same place so either will do, but the one on the right is, on the whole, the nicer of the two. It follows the overhead wires for most of the way through Gibbet Copse. Where one path becomes muddy, try the other. Ignore all turnoffs and keep straight ahead at all times. After about 1 km there is a tall metal communications mast on the left. Continue past this, soon passing two large gas tanks on your left. If you are on the *left*-hand path, continue on to the road and turn **right** back to the car park. If you are on the *right*-hand path it will lead you back to the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Take the A3 to Guildford from London then the A31 over the Hog's Back and follow the A31 towards Winchester. The dual carriageway ends as you reach the village of Four Marks. About half a mile further on, just past a new housing estate, there is a turning on the right signed *Medstead 1½*. Turn **right** here. After about another half mile, the road bends sharp left with a bit of a green on the right. Turn **right** just at the green (in reality straight on as the road bends left). The second entrance on the right is the car park.

By bus/train: bus 28 from Alton or Basingstoke to Bentworth: check the timetables. Medstead and Four Marks railway station on the *Watercress Line* is about 1 km from the walk.

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