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## East Meon: Low path / High path

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Distance: 13 km=8½ miles

easy-to-moderate walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 2-may-2013

Author: Botafuego

Last update: 2-nov-2016

Refreshments: East Meon, Stroud

Map: Explorer 133 (Petersfield) and 132 (Winchester)  
*but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Meadows, streams, village, woodland, hills, views*

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### In Brief

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This is a circular walk through the gentle country of East Hampshire, far from the bustle of the towns, on paths that are seldom used, giving you a feeling of peace. East Meon is the half-way destination and the main objective of this walk, with its pubs, cottages, church and chalk stream of the kind written about by Izaak Walton. The return route is over the hills with some great views that will stretch your legs a bit.

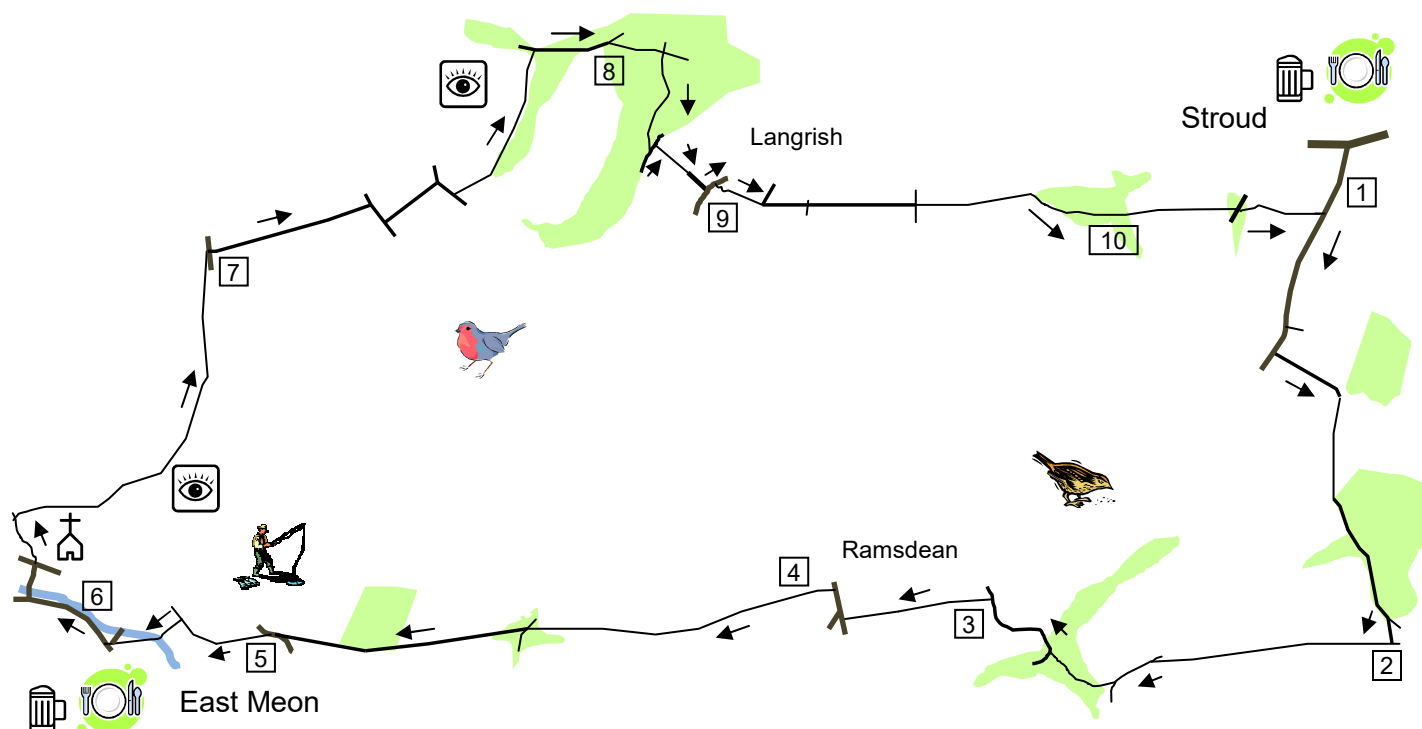
The *Izaak Walton* pub is an excellent half-way stop and walkers report the food is very good value for money. Dave and Ashley McGeorge have just (December 2013) taken over as landlords and are continuing to run the pub on the same lines. Booking is advisable: ring 01730-823-252. *The Izaak Walton is closed on Mondays but there is another pub in the village, also a rather sparse village stores.*



There are no nettles on this walk. It was *fairly* dry underfoot when planned in late spring, but in wetter months there are more muddy patches and boots are always necessary. Although many of the stiles are passable with a dog, a large one will have some difficulty.

The walk begins at **Stroud, Hampshire**, near Petersfield, **postcode GU32 3PJ**, less than a mile from the A3 road. Park in Ramsdean Road which is next to the *Seven Stars* Pub Restaurant, signposted *Ramsdean*. On a weekday you may have competition from the school run. There is always space on one side or the other, if necessary past the entrance to the school. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk



*Stroud itself is an unremarkable village, spoilt by the busy A272 road. For this walk, it is nothing more than a very convenient jumping off point, for the magic begins immediately. In the Middle Ages, you would already be within the great parish of East Meon and this is your principal destination.*

- 1 Walk away from the village along the quiet side road, Ramsdean Road, going past the school on your left, with table-shaped Butser Hill looming ahead (see the “Butser Hill” walk in this series). Just before a right-hand bend, **ignore** a footpath left by a metal gate. Only 70m further, turn **left** into the smart gravel drive of Stroudbridge Farm, marked as a footpath. Pass their little garden on the right with a bridge over the Criddell Stream. You now have the farmhouse on your left and the stream on your right as you follow the track ahead. The track veers right over the stream, taking you over a stile into a large rough field. Keep to the right-hand side of the field [care: do not stray!], not far from a wire fence. The field narrows under tall oaks. In the far corner, go over a stile or through a large metal gate and continue on a wide brick-lined path ignoring, after some 30m, a wide path uphill to the right. Widow Knight’s Copse is the woodland on your left. Keep to the main path that curves **right** uphill, avoiding the narrow level official footpath straight ahead. You pass a crumbling farm building on your right. *On your left you can see Dean’s Farm with its vineyard.* At the top of the slope, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a signed footpath.
- 2 Butser Hill is now prominent on your left with Lythe Hanger on your right. Your path is a wide grassy strip beside the field on your right. The next field also has a grassy strip as you approach the buildings of *New Barn*. At the corner of a small grassy field attached to the house, keep straight ahead staying on the grass strip. The path runs near the buildings on your right and joins its concrete drive. Where the drive curves left, leave it to continue straight ahead down a grassy meadow. In only 20m, veer **right** past a marker post and downhill through the woodland of Nutcombe Copse [June 2015: going through or left around some fallen branches]. At the bottom, veer **right** on a wide ancient sunken track that runs along the valley.

*Unfortunately it is muddy in parts, since it shares its course part-way with a stream, but this is easy to avoid using the bank on your right (sometimes swapping to the left). The winding stony track rises between steep banks. Where it begins to come out of the trees and you see the buildings of Orchard Farm ahead, go **left** up steps (easily missed!) over a stile [June 2015: careful! the top step is loose] and into a large sheep meadow.*

- 3 Cross straight over the sheep meadow keeping roughly 50m from the houses on the right and going past a tree in the centre. Aim just to the right of a group of tall trees which conceal dwellings, where you can see a yellow round disc on the fence. Go over a stile here and follow the tarmac drive past a bungalow *Nutcombe View* and *Ramsdean House*. At the end, turn **right** on a lane which is joined by another lane. Shortly, just before the first house of the hamlet of Ramsdean, turn sharp **left** over a stile on a signed footpath. (First however you may like to take a breather by going a little further to the triangular green where there is a bench seat.)
- 4 Your path curves right and leads you over two stiles, past pastures and smallholdings. *Barrow Hill is on your right*. Your route from here to just before East Meon is almost dead straight all the way. Keep straight ahead up the right-hand side of a pasture (you may need to lift a rope or duck under a fence), over a pair of stiles [2015: one broken] and along the left-hand side of the next field. Your way is now over a stile and straight across a crop field (usually quite clear, depending on the season). At the other side, go over another [2015: demolished] stile and keep directly ahead along the left-hand side of the next field. *Sir Williams Hill, which you will be traversing later, is visible on your right*. The path goes past a redundant stile, crosses a rough meadow and follows a wide track by willow banks. *Ahead to your left is Old Winchester Hill (see the other walk in this series "River Meon and Villages")*. After nearly 500m, this ancient track leads you onto a dirt drive (very wet in some seasons). 250m later, you reach a tarmac lane at a bend.
- 5 Cross straight over the lane and over a stile (or through a large metal gate – close it!) into a sheep meadow. *The houses and church of East Meon now come into view with Park Hill standing guard to its north*. Go across the centre, just to the left of a small enclosure and go over a stile at the end of the meadow. Veer **right** on a grassy path towards the village, through a small wooden gate and over a stile next to it. You reach a bridge on the left with the infant Meon flowing under it by a house. [There are many ways to explore the village from here, with numerous gates and bridges: the way suggested here takes you via the "back door"](#). Turn **left** over the bridge, follow the path past some attractive houses and finally through a gate into the cricket pitch. Go straight across (or round if a match is in progress). Avoid a lane sharp right but turn **right** on a major road by *Forge Cottage* (dating from 1600) and so into the village to the High Street, with the Meon running along it, and the *Izaak Walton* pub.

*East Meon (like its sisters West Meon and Meonstoke and the chalk stream) is named after a Jutish people, the "Meon", who came from Denmark (although not actually Danish in the modern sense). They settled here as early as the 500s, only a century after the Romans left. By 1086, according to the Domesday Book, East Meon had a population of 450. (In 1986 it was chosen as the representative Domesday Village by the BBC.) The Bishop of close-by Winchester, the old Wessex capital, owned the manor of East Meon and built his courthouse there. The sheer size of All Saints church shows how large and important the village was in its time. The "latest" building dates from the 1100s!*

(According to legend, King John married his “vain, capricious, and troublesome” Isabella of Angoulême there.) Reputedly, both sides in the Civil War fought a skirmish here in 1644 before the battle of Cheriton (see the walk in this series “River Itchen and Villages: Cheriton, Tichborne”). The population of East Meon is now about 1200.

The River Meon fed the villagers to a large extent, with six watermills in the environs. As a perfect chalk stream for fishing it attracted anglers for centuries, such as Izaak Walton (1593-1683), author of “The Compleat Angler”, who died in Winchester. The pub named after him offers a reliable menu and Ringwood ales but closes on Mondays and sometimes hosts a private party. The other pub “Ye Olde George” is more sophisticated. (NB “Ye” is pronounced the same as “The” – it’s just an older spelling.) In Easter 2013 a thatch fire gutted three cottages next to the Izaak Walton. The ancient walls were intact and the repair is now complete (Apr 2015).



- 6 After possible refreshment, continue along the High Street and turn **right** on Church Street past the village well, with its 1857 wellhead, on to the church, which is well worth visiting, with its large embroidery of the village and its Tournai font. Go through the lichgate and pass to the left of the church. Keep ahead over the grass and veer **left** at a fingerpost (which is well hidden in an elder bush and nettles), skirting the graveyard. The path bends right uphill by a wire fence. Just before a wooden swing-gate, go **right** up concrete steps, through a swing-gate and straight up the hillside parallel to a line of maples on your left. At the pointed corner of a field, keep **right** with a wire fence on your left. *You now have an excellent view of the whole village and, beyond it, the rolling South Downs – a classic view.* Your path curves left by the fence and then runs along the contour, and, once you are round the hill, heads for a white house, the modestly named *Park Cottage*. Go through a (usually open) gate and keep on down the right-hand side of the meadow. Go over a stile in the corner to arrive at a lane by means of another stile.
- 7 Cross straight over the lane to a footpath opposite. Follow the sandy track directly uphill, between two fields. On reaching the far side, in 500m, turn **right** with the track and, in 60m, turn **left** on the far side of a hedge on a wide cinder path downhill. In 200m, at a T-junction at the bottom, turn **right** and, in 30m, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a grassy path. You soon reach a Y-junction at the corner of a wood: fork **left**, keeping the wood on your right. The steeple of Froxfield Church is visible a fraction to the left. The field on your left ends as you reach a T-junction with a wide track in 400m. Turn **right** on the track, between tree plantations. As you descend, you pass a line of trees on your left known as *Scaffold’s Row* and arrive at a wood called *Sheep Walk* by a marker post.
- 8 Avoid a footpath left and keep **right** on the main path downhill. Keep straight on downhill under wires, shortly going over two crossing paths. You reach another crossing path about half way down the slope with yellow arrows just before a telegraph pole with a yellow hazard sign. (If you see the white cottage *Limeburners* in the valley just ahead, you have missed this turning). Turn **right** on this crossing path. The path goes uphill, bends right under a yew tree and goes downhill fairly steeply on a path cut into the sloping hanger. At the bottom, you come to an oblique T-junction. Turn sharp **left** on a level wide path. In only 20m, turn **right** on a narrow path down a slope and over a stile. Continue down the left-hand side of a grassy meadow towards some modern houses. A wooden gate and a path by a fence and garden lead you to a residential road. Keep straight on and

turn **left** on the main road opposite the thatched *Home Farm Cottage* [May 2016: having suffered a serious thatch fire] in the pretty village of Langrish, its steeped church just visible to your left.

- 9 In only 20m, go **right** up some steps on a signed footpath, over a stile, **left** on the grass and immediately **right** at the corner. You are in the garden of the cottage with its manicured hedges but you need to make a respectful exit in 20m, **left** over an unmarked stile into the adjoining pasture. Go diagonally **right** to cross a stile under a tall oak by a large metal gate. Keep ahead to join a track coming from the left. Your path runs between fields and meadows and has a grassy central strip. Follow this track for about 500m and, when you reach a crossing track, go over a [2015: unneeded ] stile and along the right-hand side of a meadow. Go up through a gap into the next field and continue across the centre. On reaching the jutting corner of the field, veer **right** with the woodland of Mustercombe Copse on your left, perhaps with a last look at Butser Hill. About 20m before the corner, fork **left** on a narrow path into the wood.

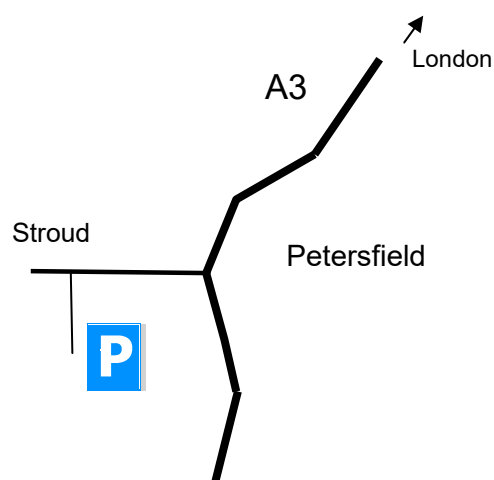
- 10 This lovely little wood makes a memorable end to the walk. At the other side, go over a stile to cross a meadow with Stroud now visible ahead, keeping to the right of a tree in the centre. Go over a stile in a fence, followed by another and a third stile with a bridge over the Criddell Stream, and through a strip of woodland to meet a tarmac drive. Go straight over the drive and through a swing-gate. Veer **left** across a small meadow which is part of a private tree garden with a small fenced-off paddock designed to house an adorable miniature pony. The fence runs down to a metal swing gate: go through it and round the edge of a paddock, through another metal swing-gate, over a V-stile, across another pasture and through a final metal swing-gate to the road where the walk began.



*The main road and the “Seven Stars” Pub Restaurant (H&W) are on the left. The pub is open all day every day and, unlike most other pubs serves food out-of-hours. They boast “unpretentious, seasonal dishes from talented chefs (not microwave technicians!)”.*

## Getting there

By car: Stroud is just off the A3 road, west at an exit near Petersfield, on the A272 Winchester road.



By bus/train: **bus 67** Petersfield station to the *Seven Stars* at Stroud, also Winchester to East Meon, not Sundays. Check the timetables.

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