



Mattingley and a magic circle Diple Mill, West Green Garden and Common Whitewater River, *Leather Bottle* Inn

Distance: 6 km=3¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 1-jun-2019

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Last update: 14-sep-2019

Refreshments: Mattingley, West Green House

Map: Explorer 144 (Basingstoke) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Church, meadows, mill house garden, tree-lined paths, woodland, famous garden, parkland, river, pub

In Brief

This short circular walk is the best of Hampshire, like a full magic taster menu with a morsel of every kind of delight. Near the start, you take a path across a river and through a mill garden which you can see in full on certain dates. Later, you have the chance to see (with a charge to non-NT members) one of the celebrated small gardens of the county. In between, there are deep woodland, grassy meadows and tree-lined avenues.

Refreshments are available in the garden and also at one of the classic pubs of northeast Hampshire which never seems to close. (To enquire at the *Leather Bottle*, ring 0118-932-6371.)

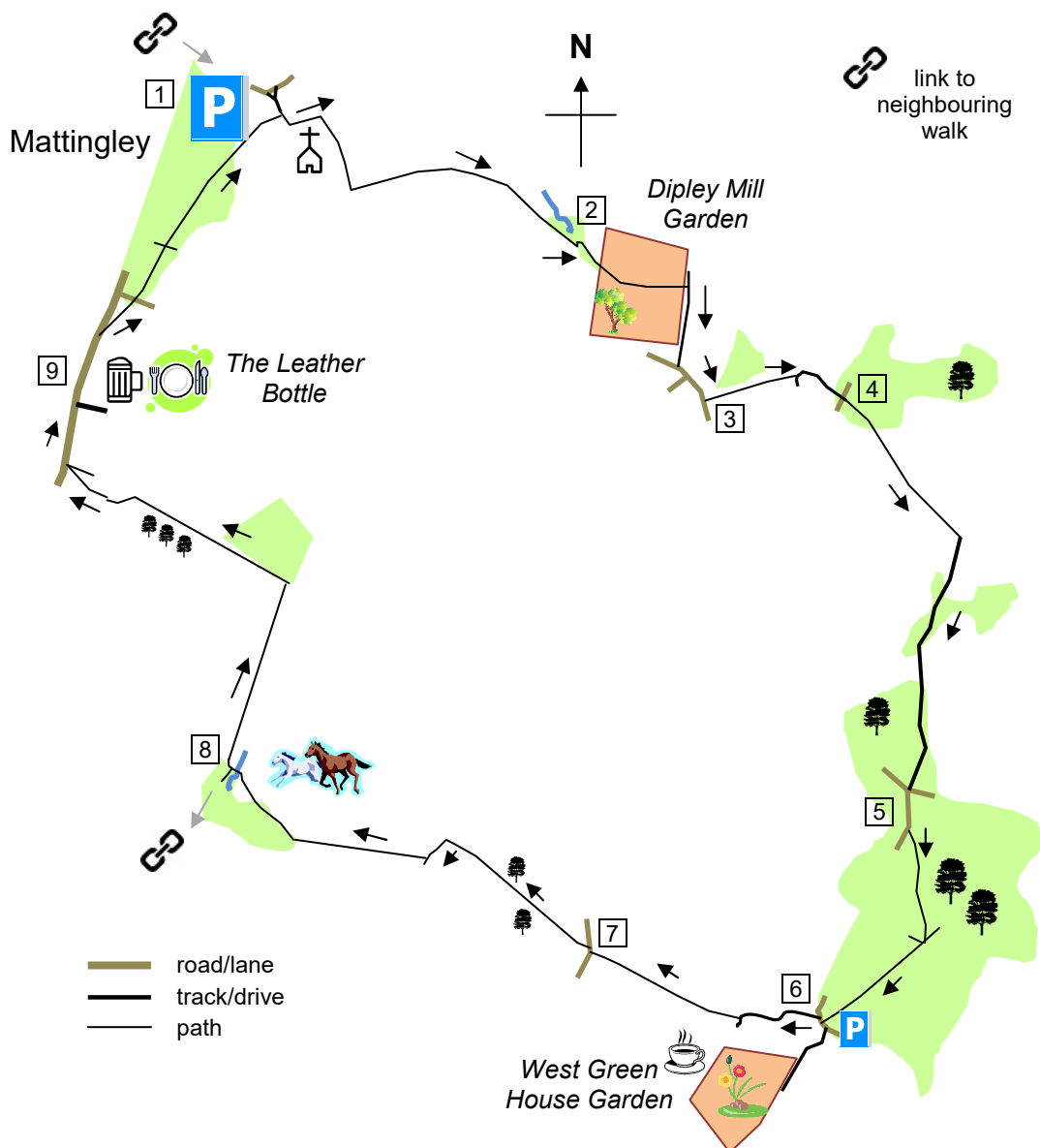
This walk can be combined with its neighbouring walk "Rotherwick" to make a very satisfying 13¾ km=8½ mile walk. Unless you double back, you will *miss* the *Leather Bottle* pub but you will *gain* an excellent tea at the West Green House Garden. See the "chain" symbols on the map below.



There are just a few patches of nettles in summer, so you would be better off with legs covered. Boots are not necessary so long as you are wearing trainers or sensible shoes. Your dog is not allowed in West Green Garden, but will enjoy the walk if you omit that part and maybe visit later. (The garden has a large car park.) The pub is dog-friendly.

The walk begins at the car park beside Mattingley Church, Hampshire, nearest postcode **RG27 8LA**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Beginning at the car park by Mattingley Church, go through the little wooden gate into the churchyard.

In the Middle Ages, Mattingley ("the field of Matta's people") was called "Matingelege", worth thirty shillings, with just eleven inhabitants. Mattingley Green, the old village where you now stand, is a conservation area. Thatched 17th-century Mattingley Green Cottage is across the pond with more timbered or local brick buildings all around. You will pass "White Willows" on returning. Mattingley's church, dating from the 1400s, has no dedication because it is attached to the mother church in Heckfield. The cemetery was granted by the Pope because parishioners disliked carrying their dead across the flooded fields to Heckfield. The Victorian restoration retained its timber-framed structure.

Turn **left**, passing the church on your right. At the end of the grass, continue through a wooden swing-gate and turn **right** on a footpath, a wide path which was obviously once a farm track. Just before a large metal gate, turn **left** as directed, slipping past a large metal gate onto a wide grass path. You come through a large metal gate into a meadow of tall

grass. Follow the path which goes across the centre, then along the left-hand edge, under power lines. The path leads through a wooden swing-gate and over a small bridge beside the Whitewater River in a delightful spot. Keep ahead beside the water along a mown strip in a large private garden which belongs to Diple Mill.

Diple Mill goes back to before the Normans as a flour mill on the Whitewater River. During the 1800s it was so productive a second wheel was added, but this caused the whole building to shake. The building next door is the old bakery which became a lively inn. The garden is divided into eight smaller gardens, each with its own name and character, plus a herbaceous border and water meadow. The garden is open on certain Sundays in summer through the National Garden Scheme (NGS). You can also arrange a private tour with a silver service high tea in the barn. (Check their website.)

- 2 The path takes you **left** over a concrete bridge. Keep **right** to go over a flat bridge and straight ahead on a path through the garden of tall grass, densely crowned in white daisies in early summer. You cross a wood chip path where on your left you can glimpse the little Vesta's garden with its rose arch and statue of the goddess of the hearth. At the end of the path, turn **right** on a widening path beside a low fence. Through the shrubbery on your left you can catch sight of the adjoining property, *Diple House*. You emerge on a tarmac lane. Your route is **left** on the lane. **But by turning right on the lane temporarily for about 50m you will have a lovely view of the mill house, river and gardens.** Having turned left on the lane, ignore a junction on the right, passing the well-named *Four Oaks*.
- 3 After only 80m on the lane, staying on the same side, go **left** at a signpost on a track which, after only 10m, bears right and becomes a narrow path running between the left-hand side of a horse pasture and a hedge. It soon leads into open grassy space. You are now walking along the left-hand side of a rather scruffy meadow before you meet a semi-tarmac drive. Turn **left** on the drive which curves right and runs in a beautiful lime avenue. At the end of the avenue, go over a stile next to a wooden gate onto tarmac Stoken Lane.
- 4 Cross over the lane, bypassing a horizontal bar, onto a wide woodland path. After rounding a large metal gate you are walking between crop fields with a hedge on your left. After 200m or so, you arrive at the tiny settlement of Sherwood Farm. Turn **right** on the drive, passing their lawn, revealing ponds and usually a gaggle of geese. Soon there is water on the right too. This easy tarmac drive under those tall oaks and beeches gives you an enchanting 500m before finally you emerge on a road junction.
- 5 Go straight over on a tarmac lane signed *West Green House Garden*. In 50m, at a fingerpost, fork **left** on a footpath into the woods of West Green Common. *Note the "snail" sculpture.* After 200m of majestic woodland of great oaks, you reach a wide diagonal path. Veer **right** on this wide path, ignoring another very narrow marked path on your right. The oaks have now given way to tall beeches. At the end of the path there is an information board and some more carvings as you reach a small informal parking area and a tarmac lane. Your route is **right** on the lane. But first you will want to cross straight over on the driveway leading to *West Green House Garden*. (Keep **right** on the drive in front of the cottage, through the large open metal gate; the entrance is on your right shortly.)

West Green House was built in the early 1700s for Gen. Henry Hawley who led the cavalry charge at the Battle of Culloden, quelling the 1745 Jacobite

rebellion. It fell into neglect and, incredibly, was targeted by the IRA in 1990. It was rescued by Marylyn Abbott, a feisty Australian, who also set about developing the garden. The house and garden are now owned by the National Trust (NT). The garden features boxed avenues, wooden armchairs, Chinese sculpture, secret grottos, a curvy lake with a bridge (closed for repair in 2019) and a formal garden. Look for a sculpture of the "Goose Man". The garden is also an opera venue, putting on "Fledermaus" and "Cenerentola" in 2019. The garden is open from mid-March to late October, closed Mon and Tue, except B/Hols. It has a sizeable café and a shop. NT members get in free.

- 6 After your visit to the garden, having turned **right** on the lane (that is **left**, coming back from the garden), almost immediately leave the lane by going **left** over a stile or through a large wooden gate (if open). *On your left you have a view of the House.* Go over a second stile, or through the large wooden gate into a vast area of parkland dotted with oak trees. Keep straight ahead on a driveway for 100m until it turns left towards the rear of the house. Now strike out straight ahead across the grassy parkland on a faint path, keeping to the **right** of a line of oaks. *The cattle here which roam the large parkland are very docile and well used to people.* After a scenic 300m, you come through a tall metal gate and emerge onto a tarmac lane.
- 7 Turn **right** on the lane and immediately **left** on a dirt track. The track takes you past a large metal gate onto another splendid country highway under noble mature trees, with distant fields on each side. At the end, as you pass near a wooden hut, you come out into a large green field. Turn **left** along the edge for only 50m to a marker post. Now go **right** on a clear path which goes across a crop field at a sharp angle. At the far side, go straight over a farm track to a fingerpost, over a bridge with rail and through a modern kissing-gate. The next small pasture usually contains horses, sometimes with their foals. *Don't feed them!* Keep to the left-hand side of the pasture to cross a long bridge over the Whitewater River. It is worth pausing to watch the fast-flowing stream under the overhanging trees. Ignore a narrow footpath on the left and go straight ahead through a small metal gate.

However, if you are combining this walk with the Rotherwick walk, and do not wish to visit the Leather Bottle, ignore the small metal gate, turn **left** on the narrow footpath and resume the Rotherwick walk at the noted section.

- 8 Your path turns right along the edge of a large field. After 350m, go left with the path through a wooden gate onto a straight path with a wood on your right. The path soon becomes a fine lime avenue, ending at a large wooden gate or a stile. Your path zigzags onto a grassy path running beside a pebble drive on your left (*note the grain store in the garden pond on your right*), coming out to the main road in Mattingley. Turn **right** on the road, using the grass verge, to arrive quickly at the *Leather Bottle* pub, deservedly popular throughout the region.



The "Leather Bottle" is a classic old village inn, of Hampshire brick, topped with a fine tiled roof. The name comes from the habit of publicans in history to hang a large leather bottle outside as a signal for people to come and refill their jug. The pub opened in 1714 as the "White Lion", but change its name in tune with nearby places such as "Bottle Lane" which is on this walk. Nowadays you don't need to bring a jug to try the six ales which are usually on tap, including rarities such as Tillingbourne and Dunsfold. Food includes nibbles and bites but the mains and puddings make up an impressive menu. Best of all, the pub is open and serves food at practically any hour, every day.

- 9 After a possible break for refreshment, continue along the main road, using the narrow verge till it widens. Veer right across the grass, passing a timbered house. Cross a tarmac lane onto a shingle driveway opposite, signed as a footpath, passing another timbered house on your right. Keep straight on to find a hidden path leading through the rhododendrons into woodland. You soon cross a private drive and continue beside a wall on your right. After coming through *Pumpkin Patch* pre-school, carry on past the stunning 16th-century *White Willows* to arrive next to the church with the car park on your left, where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Mattingley lies on the B3349 Reading Road, just north of **Hook**, Hampshire which is on the M3 motorway and extremely easy to get to. Get off at Exit 5 and follow signs for *Reading, Hook*. After nearly ½ mile, keep **right** at the roundabout, to go past some impressive industrial units. After another 2½ miles, you pass on your right the *Leather Bottle* pub. In another ½ mile, fork **right** at a sign for *Mattingley Church, Hazeley, Bramshill*. Turn **right** at a T-junction and immediately turn **right** again at a little triangular green. Park on the right, head- or tail-on in a gravelly strip.

By bus/train: bus 333 from Basingstoke to Mattingley, Wed-Fri. Check the timetables. The closest station is **Winchfield**, only a 7 minute taxi ride away from the walk (check Footprint Taxis 01252 844844 or Mary's Cars 01256 763288). Other stations are Hook and Basingstoke.

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