



Matfield

Distance: 6 km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

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Refreshments: Matfield

Map: Explorer 136 (The Weald) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Village, pubs, restaurants, woodland, orchards, oast houses

In Brief

In the charming rural village of Matfield you are blessed with *three* pubs, covering every range of taste. The *Wheelwrights Arms* is a jewel of a traditional country pub. The *Star Inn* is recently refurbished, awaiting reports from walkers. The *Poet at Matfield* is a gastropub where soup is called “velouté” and crème brulée is called “burnt cream”. As well as the pubs, there is a village store and a butcher who also sells pies, vegetables and cheeses. Next to the village is Cinderhill Wood, a nature reserve with a host of trails, and this walk takes you on a visit there, returning through green pastures and a whole series of oast houses. Because of the comfortable distance, you can treat this walk as a Pub Walk. (To reserve a table at the *Wheelwrights Arms*, ring 01892-722-129; or for the *Poet* ring 01892-722-416.)

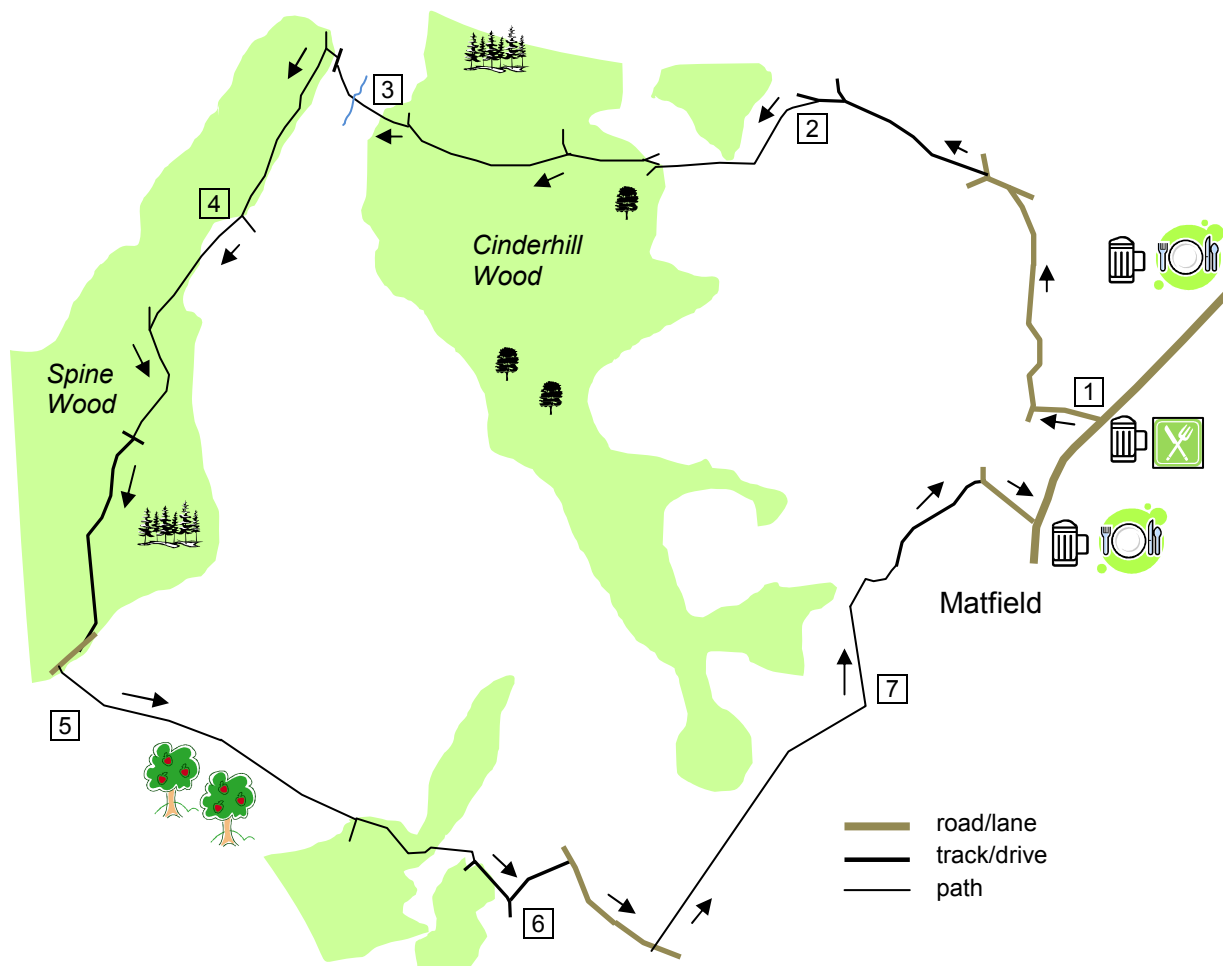


There are not enough nettles to worry bare legs on this walk. Good sensible walking shoes are adequate as there is very little mud. There are quite a few stiles and these may be a challenge to a dog, although they all have a dog-sized gap.

The walk begins in the village of **Matfield, Kent, postcode TN12 7JR**. Park on the roadside near the *Star Inn*. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

The village's name was first recorded as "Mattefeld" in 1230. The "field" is obviously the large open space (the Green is the largest in Kent). The "Mat" could come from the ancient Matta people or perhaps it indicates a "meeting place" for tribal councils. The most famous child of the village was Siegfried Sassoon, poet (and survivor) of WWI but many artists have also lived here.



- 1 Starting at the side of the Green by the butchers shop, near the *Star Inn*, take the narrow lane that runs beside the pond on your left. On your right shortly is the magnificent grade-I listed *Matfield House*, a George II residence built in 1728. At a T-junction turn **right** on Maycotts Lane, passing another fine house *Maycotts*. At a T-junction turn **left** on Chestnut Lane, cross Foxhole Lane on your left and immediately leave the main road by forking **left** on a narrow tarmac lane which has a sign for a *Nature Conservation Area*. At a fork, ignore a residential lane on the right and continue as for *Cinderhill Wood*. In only 20m, fork **left** at a yellow-topped post on a narrow path. *Don't miss this turn!*
- 2 Follow the path along the edge of a wood, shortly bearing right with it. The path soon enters Cinderhill Wood itself at a junction of paths. Keep right to a marker post and, in 20m, turn **left** at a T-junction on a good gravel path which takes you through a chestnut coppice to meet two gates on your left. On your right is an open-air classroom with a wooden "snake". Just before the classroom, go **left** through the smaller, wooden gate and follow a path through an open area with a wire fence on your left. Continue slightly downhill until you reach a similar pair of gates. Go through the wooden

gate and veer **left** past an information tablet, paying no attention to the white arrow on a post. Follow the path descending through woodland, down steps and over a stream using a bridge with a rail.

- 3 Your route follows an enclosed path between meadows with a pond, popular with geese, on your right. It takes you over an unusual stile. Turn **right** now on a track and immediately go **left** over a similar stile. At the end of the path, go over a [2014:broken] stile and turn sharp **left** to join a wide path that traverses the pinewoods. Your path keeps near the left-hand edge of the wood but it veers away temporarily to avoid a whole series of fallen trees before widening again. You reach a marker post: ignore a footpath on the right here, as indicated by a yellow arrow, and keep straight on. The woodland section ends at a wooden fence and a stile. Avoiding a narrow path on the left, go over the stile and keep ahead across a meadow with the oast of Albans Farm House visible on your left.
- 4 Cross another stile and continue along the right-hand side of the next meadow. Your path goes down into woodland again, over another stile. Stay on the main path, avoiding side paths, until you meet a junction with a wide path coming up from your right, beside another marker post. Veer left on this path. In 70m, avoid minor paths on the left and stay on the main path which veers slightly right through dark hollies. You reach a broad crossing path: go straight over on a wide forestry path. Your track curves left, passes a large metal gate with an unneeded stile and reaches a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane and immediately sharp **left** by a large metal gate over a stile which conveniently has a V-stile next to it for thinner people.
- 5 Follow the path along the right-hand side of an apple orchard. Shortly you will see another orchard on your right behind the hedge. In the corner, go over a stile (avoidable with a squeeze) and ignore a stile on the right. Continue along the left-hand side of a pasture, then straight ahead similarly in the next pasture. In the corner go over a stile and down across the grass on a pleasant path between orchards. Your path now enters a wood and descends, soon going over a line of six little bridges. It now enters a small pasture where you may need to duck under a string placed there to keep the horses from straying. You pass a pond on your right and go over a small bridge, after which you may need to lift a string on a plastic fence pole. Now continue straight up the slope and over a stile [2014:wobbly] into a dusty driveway. Disregard the wooden hut on your right and continue straight ahead uphill towards a large wooden gate. Go past it to reach a driveway next to the picturesque timbered *Playfoots*.
- 6 Turn **left** on a wide track, soon reaching a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane. Just after *Bramblings* where there are metal gates on both sides of the lane, go **left** in the corner over a rather hidden stile. Follow the path along the right-hand side of a meadow with excellent views on your left. At the first boundary, the path continues along the right-hand side of another pasture with smoother grass. There are usually decorative horse jumps here whilst, on your left, there is a good view of the twin oasts of Lodge Farm. Your path enters a third meadow where it goes straight across. Into the fourth meadow, you meet a white-topped post with an arrow where your straight route diverges slightly.

- 7 Veer **left** across the centre of the meadow, aiming for near the far corner, roughly 30m to the left of some white-tipped oast houses. Here, go over a stile and take a grassy path ahead between hedges. Your path turns right in the corner, close to the oasts, then left down to a drive. The drive leads to the Green in Matfield. Turn immediately **right** to the road where you will find the *Wheelwrights Arms*.



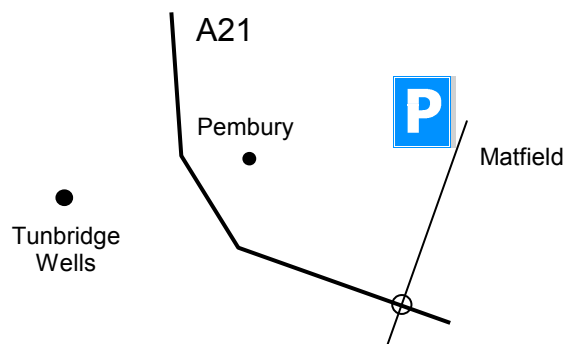
This little country pub, originally one of a pair of white weatherboard cottages, looks like a gem from the outside and is even more of a jewel when you enter. The food usually starts with a little bowl of olives and homemade bread and butter (yes, even the butter is home-churned). The menu changes frequently. Definitely not pub grub. The pub is part of Shepherd Neame so you get Whitstable Bay, Master Brew and other reliable ales.



Continuing along the Green beside the road, you reach the other pub, the *Star Inn* where the walk began. The “Star” was wilting in the shadow of its flourishing neighbours but has now been refurbished; it used to provide more traditional “pub grub”. The “Poet” at Matfield is only a short distance further along the road.

Getting there

By car: Matfield can be reached from the A21 (Hastings) road. Matfield is signed left after the junction for Pembury, at the end of the dual carriageway.



By bus/train: bus route 3 runs from Tunbridge Wells to Matfield. Check the timetables.

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