



Penshurst Pubs and Poundsbridge

Distance: 7 km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 18-apr-2016

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Last update: 31-jul-2018

Refreshments: *Bottle House, Spotted Dog*

Map: Explorer 147 (Tonbridge) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Pubs, views, water meadows, woodland, green hillsides

In Brief

This is a pleasant walk in west Kent, taking you up a few short, exhilarating hills, through sheep meadows bordering the River Medway, and back across delightful little meadows to the start where you have a unique choice of two truly great pubs. (To reserve a table at the *Spotted Dog*, ring 01892-870253. For the *Bottle House*, ring 01892-870306.)



There are no nettles and no scratchy undergrowth on this walk. Apart from some slurry at Nash's Farm, this is generally a dry walk, so boots are optional in the warmer months. Your dog can certainly come on this adventure, but with a lead of course because of the sheep pastures.

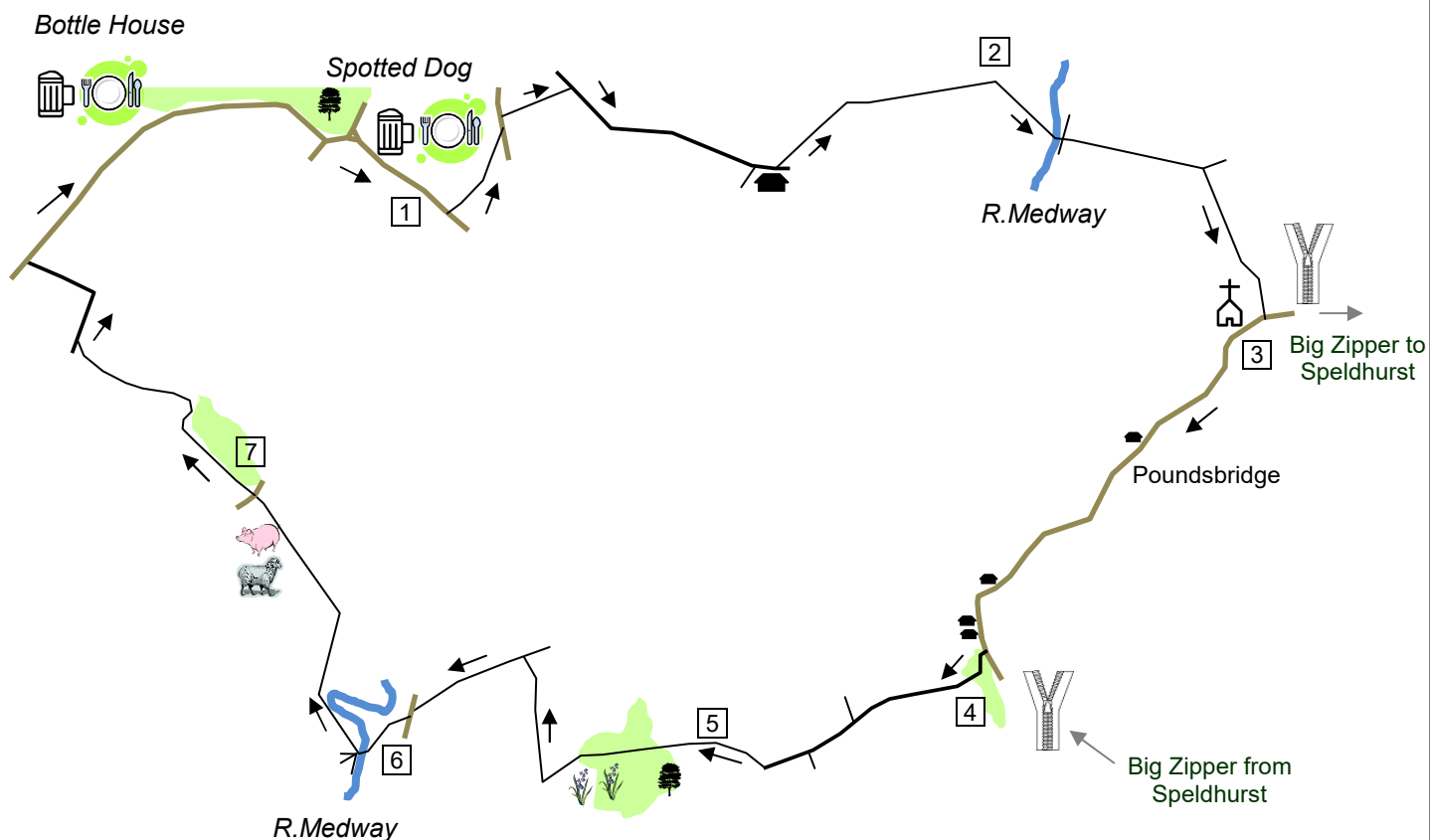


For a longer (10 miles=16 km) walk with a historic village, a classic pub and some great woodland walking, this walk can be zipped up with the adjoining *Speldhurst* walk. Zip points will be found at all the relevant junctions.

The walk begins at the car park opposite the *Spotted Dog*, near Penshurst, Kent, postcode **TN11 8EP**. (They probably expect you to be a customer when you return from the walk.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

There are two great pubs at the start and end of this walk. The one opposite, the *Spotted Dog* is described in detail at the end of this guide. The *Bottle House*, a short distance along the road, is also a favourite.



- 1 Facing the *Spotted Dog* pub, go **right** to the end of a line of cottages and turn **left** at a signpost, shortly through a small metal gate and down a narrow path, steep in places. At the end, go over a stile and down steps to a road. Turn **left** on the road and, in 20m, go **right** by a signpost on a grassy path down the left-hand side of a field. At a T-junction at the bottom, turn **right** on a wide farm track. In 400m you reach the buildings of Nash's Farm. Ignoring a track ahead towards some houses of the farm, go half **left** on a much grubbier track, passing cow sheds, possibly having to skim around some short-term slurry. Your path runs between fields and becomes a hard-core track between hedges. You pass a small pond on the right and come over a stile [jul 2018: only a stump remaining: be careful!] into open pasture.
- 2 Your route is a fraction to the **right**, staying not far from the right-hand edge of the pasture. (As a check, you can see the cemetery of the Poundsbridge Chapel straight ahead.) Continue down a slope to cross the River Medway by a long metal bridge. Keep straight ahead, avoiding footpaths on your left and right. Soon you are walking alongside the edge of the pasture beside a stream on your left. After a (usually open) metal gate, your path elbows right, up the left-hand side of the next meadow, crossing under power lines. At the top, go through a walker's metal gate, shortly followed by a wooden



gate. The path leads up to a tarmac lane with All Souls Chapel Poundsbridge on your right. *Although the chapel is usually closed, the cemetery garden here is a perfect place to rest on one of the to bench seats and take in the view.*



This “chapel of ease” serves as a kind of overflow for Penshurst churchyard which was overpopulated.



Decision point. If you are doing Big Zipper walk to Speldhurst, turn **left** on the lane and follow the Speldhurst walk where indicated by the “zipper” sign.



Turn **right** on narrow quiet Coopers Lane. You pass through the hamlet of Poundsbridge with some period houses, an oast and a farm. 350m after the farm you pass some grey wooden bungalows on a left bend. 50m after the last bungalow, fork **right** on a dusty track.



The Big Zipper walk from Speldhurst joins here.



This farm track bends right uphill and leads you through very untidy Palmers Farm, over a grid and past cottages. As you pass by, ignore footpaths right and left and stay on the main driveway, through a large wooden gate. You pass between long lines of farm junk (which might be cleared when you do the walk, but this is unlikely). Immediately after the junk, there is a grassy meadow straight ahead. Do *not* enter the meadow but fork **right** on a downward path, with the hedgerow on your left, under tall oaks.



In less than 100m you come out into a large sloping meadow. Keep the same direction, staying level across the meadow, heading for the wood on the other side. As you come over the top of a gentle rise, you will see a gap leading you over a little bridge, through a chain stile, into the wood. Follow a good path through this bluebell wood, passing a swampy area on your left. Suddenly you are out into a field with the Spring Hill Oast dominating the view ahead. Continue ahead along the top left-hand edge of the field. In the corner, turn sharp **right** down the far edge of the field. At the bottom, go over a wooden bridge and turn **left** along the edge of another field, using the generous grassy fringe. A bridge, a stile and a short grassy path lead you up steps, over another stile and onto the Spring Hill road.



Turn **left** on the road for 10m, then **right** over a stile into a meadow with the River Medway on your right. Go across the grass, a fraction to the left, to cross the river by a long bridge and small metal gate. You now have *four* possible paths ahead, not all of them very clear. Take the **rightmost** path, staying not far from the riverside. In 130m, you pass on your right a tight loop in the river. Now veer partly **right**, going through a small gate in the fence. Keep the same direction across the pasture, heading for a rounded corner where there is a group of trees and a fence 120m away. Just to the left of the corner, you will see a bridge across a stream with a stile at each end. Cross the bridge and go up the left-hand side of a sloping pasture, close to a fence on your left separating you from another sheep pasture. Go past a small piggery on your left to go over a stile onto a lane.



Cross over the lane over a stile and along a wide grassy path between wire fences with some fine woodland on your right. At the end of the path, go over a wooden bridge and keep **right** over a muddy section and a narrow stream and veer **left** uphill. Your path goes quite steeply up and then curves left on an easier gradient. At first the path runs up across grass between brambles. It then rises up a grassy slope and through a large wooden gate onto a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on the drive which soon

bends left and reaches the Coldharbour Road. Turn **right** on the road, reaching a clapperboard terrace and the *Bottle House* pub/restaurant in 350m.



The “Bottle House” is an ancient inn with a pleasant terrace, a good menu and some local ales. It was built in 1492, the year that Columbus sailed. It was one or two farm cottages until 1773 when it was first licensed. Parts of it were a baker, a shop, a farrier and a cobbler. Later there were a skittle alley, a chapel with graves and their attendant ghosts who still haunt the area. The current layout dates from 1938 when the two cottages were joined again. The name “Bottle House” is derived from the large number of bottles that were found in the rubble.

- 8 After a possible pleasant break, continue along the road. At road junctions keep **left** and then **right**, passing the famous double inn sign on your left. Shortly, you reach the *Spotted Dog* where the walk began.



The “Spotted Dog” is one of the celebrated pubs of West Kent, housed in a 15th-century white clapboard building which started life as several cottages. There is a large terrace at the front and a smaller one at the back which affords views across the Medway valley. The menu qualifies it as a gastropub and reviews are very good. Real ales available are Larkins, Harveys plus one or two guests, such as Doom Bar and Black Cat. These can be enjoyed on the long comfortable settees, provided you mind your head on the beams. Whatever they may say, however, the “Spotted Dog” is a bit snooty about walkers who are, at the threshold, asked to leave their boots outside. The “Spotted Dog” is open from 11.30 till the evening, closed on Mondays at 3pm, except occasionally on bank holidays. Food is available whenever the pub is open.

Getting there

By car: if coming from the London area, west side, one attractive way is from the B2026, Kent Hatch Road; about 2½ miles south of Edenbridge turn **left** to go through Markbeech; keep right at Chiddingstone Hoath. In about ½ mile, by a white house, **ignore** the first junction on the left signposted *Penshurst*. ⅓ mile later stay on the major road as it turns sharp left at a junction. In ¾ mile you pass the *Bottle House*. Continue, avoiding junctions right and left, to reach the *Spotted Dog* ⅓ mile further on.

If coming from the eastern side, via the A21, turn off at the brown tourist sign for *Penshurst Place*. Turn right at a T-junction in the village in the direction *Fordcombe*. ⅔ mile outside the village, fork right for *Smarts Hill*. In ½ mile, turn left for the *Spotted Dog* (or right for the *Bottle House*).

