



Ashdown Forest, Fairwarp *Rock Wood and Purple Heather*

Distance: 14 km=9 miles or 2 walks of 10 km=6 miles and 8 km=5 miles
moderate walking

Region: East Sussex

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Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest)

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

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Heath, woodland, nature reserves, hills, views

In Brief

This circular walk has long soothing descents and hardly any noticeable uphill so it feels effortless for its whole length. Maybe the sheer lightness of the air of Ashdown Forest buoys you as you go.

The walk can be split into two contrasting walks, the **Northern Loop** which is mainly high moorland and the **Southern Loop** which is mainly forest.

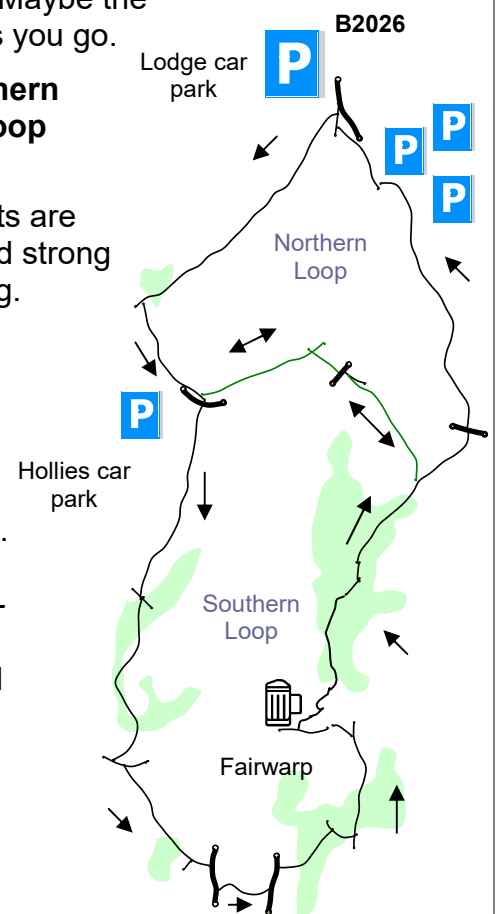


There are some nettles on the Southern Loop where shorts are not advisable. The going underfoot is smooth so any good strong footwear is sufficient. The Northern Loop is ideal for a dog.



The **full walk** and the **Northern Loop** begin at the small unmarked car park next to the **Old Lodge car park** (grid ref 470305, www.w3w.co/nourished.slumped.cowboy, post-code **TN22 3JD**). This very small car park is next to a private tarmac drive marked *Old Lodge*, just off the B2026. It's not certain whether charges apply now (2023). If you are coming from the north, this is on the **right**, 500m before the junction with the B2188 (signposted *Tunbridge Wells*). It is 50m after the Old Lodge Nature Reserve car park, which you could use instead. It is small but easy to recognise because it is just beside a private tarmac drive. If you reach the Bush Willows, Pines or Kings Standing car parks, you need to turn round. If the little car park seems full, you can park on the grass verge in the car park, or in the Old Lodge car park or at one of the other nearby car parks.

Overview



The **Southern Loop** begins at the **Ellison's Pond car park, postcode TN22 3JA**, or the **Hollies car park** opposite. They are just off the Crowborough Road, not far from its junction with the B2026. You can also reach them from just north of Nutley on the A22, signposted *Crowborough, Tun.Wells*.

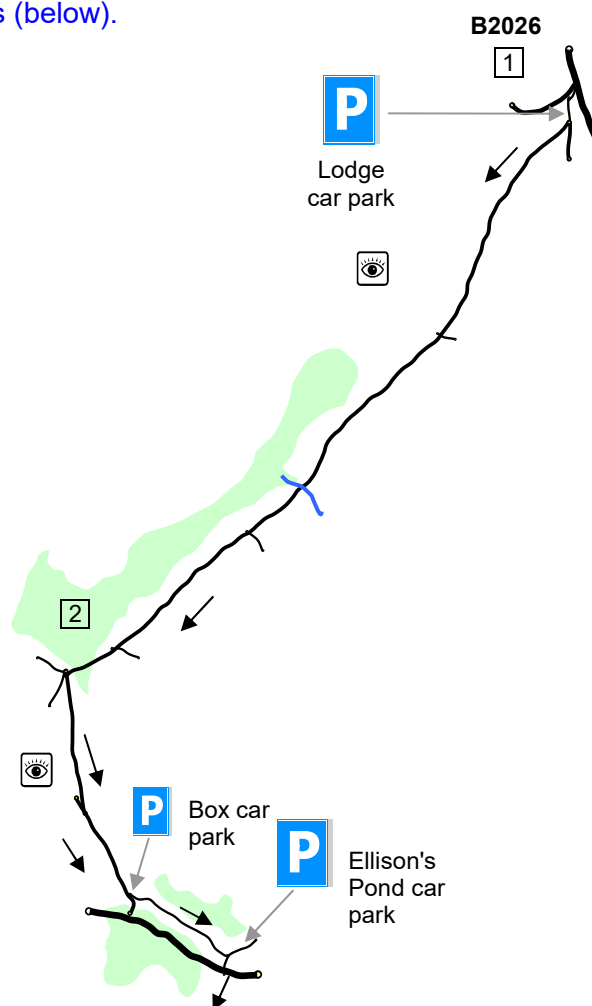
For more details of the location of the car parks, see the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Leg 1: Lodge to Ellison's Pond 3 km=2 miles

Begin here if you are doing the **full walk**. If you are doing the short **Northern Loop**, you can begin here **or** at the Ellison's Pond car park. The **Southern Loop** begins at Ellison's Pond or Hollies (below).

- 1 From the back of the car park, take a grassy path between bracken (**not** the tarmac drive). This leads through a small wooden gate into an open meadow with an immediate choice of two wide paths. Take the **right-hand** fork downhill. *You now have a wonderful spread of pines, heather and grassy slopes on all sides. Ahead on the hilltop is a dense group of pines **Friends Clump** which will be familiar if you have done the "Turnstile and Windmill" walk in this series.* Follow this very wide, sandy track for 1 km down to cross a wide bridge at the bottom. Continue up the other side a faction right, still on a wide track and still heading straight for Friends Clump. The track comes down in 750m to enter trees by a spring on the left.

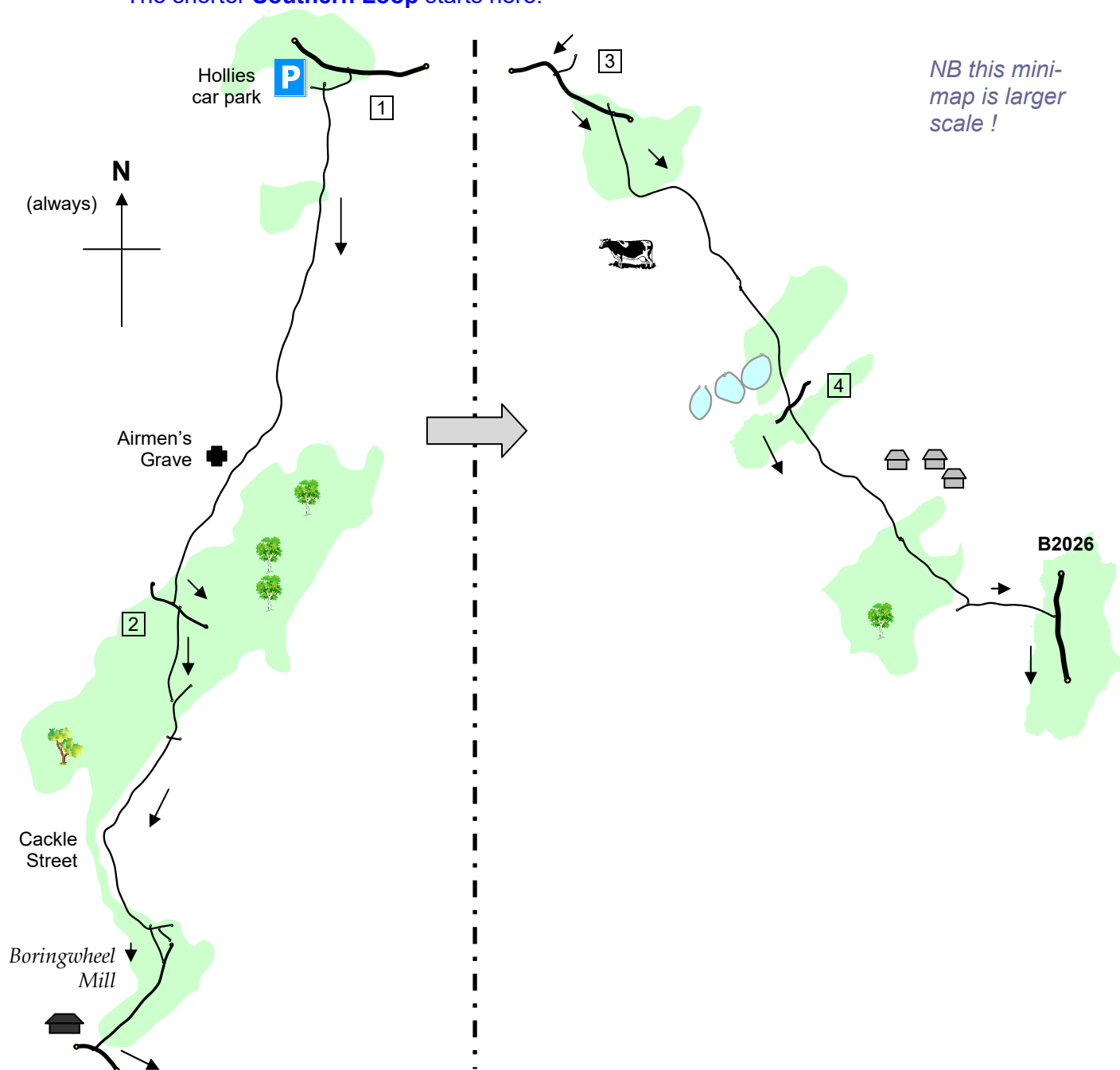


- 2 Hop over a stream, go up a bank on the other side and turn diagonally **left** on a wide path uphill, avoiding the steeper track ahead. You can see the track ahead snaking up the hill to guide your direction. *As you go you have a good view, behind you, of the Old Lodge on the broad hill.* At the top, a track joins from the right. The track reaches the Box car park, just off the Crowborough Road. Don't cross the road but traverse the car park and follow a wide grassy strip with woodland either side. This quickly leads to the Ellison's Pond car park.

If you are doing the short Northern Loop, you now need to skip to the end and do **Over Camp Hill (eastward)**. Otherwise, continue with the next leg.

Leg 2: Ellison's Pond to Lampool 4 km=2½ miles

The shorter **Southern Loop** starts here.



- 1** Cross the Crowborough road to the Hollies car park. Don't take any signposted footpath. Instead, walk half way across the car park, admiring the magnificent view to the south, to a small slanting information tablet. From the tablet, take a broad unmarked path straight ahead and follow it steadily downhill, ignoring any side paths. About 1 km from Hollies, you reach a small war grave which looks rather like a sheep pen from the back. From the war grave, continue down through trees for 200m to a stream bed and a wide sandy crossing path. Go

straight ahead, a fraction left, across this path, to a wide forest path which runs beside a high earth bank, thus regaining your original direction.



The **Ashdown Forest Monster** joins the walk here.

- 2 The path winds through trees and soon there is an open area on the left from which a path joins. Stay on the level sandy path, ignoring all turnings off. About 600m from the stream, you see a metal gate, not on your route, and meadows on the right, part of the hamlet of Cackle Street, a common name for a place of many chicken farms. In another 200m, you see a large wooden gate on your right through which you can glimpse the Boringwheel Lake. Just 50m later, you come to a fork in the path. Take the **right** fork down into woodland. At the bottom, where you meet a major path coming down from the left, veer **right** on it and continue to a gate and stile. Go through the gate, passing the refurbished house and the tumbledown barn of Boringwheel Mill to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. However, just on your right is a gate giving you a better view of Boringwheel Mill farm.

Boringwheel Watermill was a small corn mill of quite sophisticated design. The Boringwheel Pond is on the other side, not visible from the lane. There is a local tradition that cannon were bored here, encouraged by parliamentary surveys of 1658 (shortly after the Civil War) referring to the pond by that name.

- 3 Just past the second house *Beak House*, turn **right** over a stile on a narrow path, easily missed. The path leads through a hawthorn wood into a sheep pasture. Turn **left**, past a pond on your left and turn **right** round the edge of the pasture. (The hedge separating you from a smaller pasture on your left has been ripped up and may soon be all but gone.) In the far corner go over a stile beside a large metal gate. Walk straight ahead, with the murky lily pond on your right, for about 20m and veer **right** through an unneeded metal gate and through more woodland to a tarmac lane.
- 4 Cross the lane, slightly right, to a footpath opposite and small wooden gate beside *Kates Cottage* and its poultry sheds. It leads to a grassy space serving some houses on the left. Go up the right-hand side and, in the corner, continue up through a holly wood. Your path runs beside a wire fence on your left and past a depression on your right, reaching a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **left** on an enclosed path, finally over a bridge to a main road, the B2026. Turn **right** on the road.

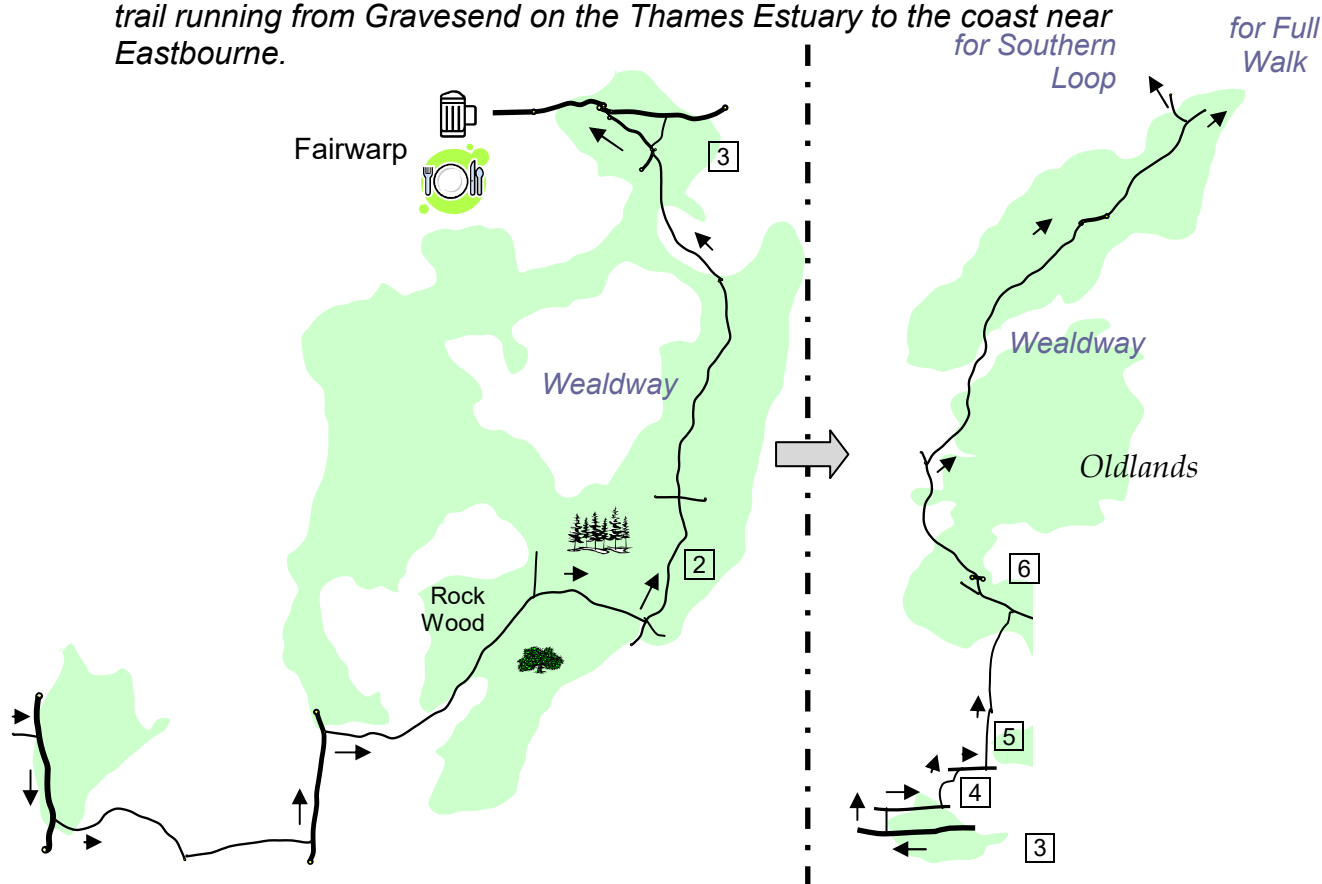
Leg 3: Lampool to Oldlands 4 km=2½ miles

- 1 **See map overleaf.** In 100m, opposite a drive to Lampool Farm, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a drive to *Lampool Edge*. Continue on a footpath running on the right of a drive, past a pair of new wooden gates, soon on a rather confined course between fences. Turn **left** over stile and follow a path to the **right**, enclosed between the high fence and a hedge, then out to the lane beyond. Turn **left** on the lane. In 170m, just after some cottages and a high wooden gate, turn **right** on a marked footpath over an avoidable stile, past a barn and a redbrick shed. Go over a stile and follow the path across the meadow between wire fences. At the end, go over a stile into the wonderful dense ancient species-rich Rock Wood. *This is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and is of biological significance, with rare mosses and ferns growing alongside the stream which flows through it and, in spring, bluebells in profusion.* Go over a bridge, ignore a left turn at a 3-way post and cross a flowing stream by a large

wooden bridge. Ignore a path left and ascend steeply through birch, hawthorn and hazel.

Hazel was once the dominant tree in Britain, sweeping away the birch that followed the last great ice age about 13,000 years ago.

At the next 3-way fingerpost, just before a large crop of sandstone, keep **left** joining the Wealdway (WW). *The Wealdway is a long-distance national trail running from Gravesend on the Thames Estuary to the coast near Eastbourne.*



- [2] The WW runs through pinewood, down steps and across a track in a clearing. You are now walking on a lovely level path carpeted with pine needles. You pass a stick “theatre” on your left. Cross a long bridge across a wide stream and immediately turn **right** through a wooden gate into Brickfield Meadow. Walk the length of the meadow and exit through a large wooden gate. The path re-enters woodland via a small wooden gate beside a large one and, 10m later, arrives at a T-junction. Turn **right** here on a wide dirt track. In 20m, the track bends left.

This walk now takes you to Fairwarp for refreshments. If you do *not* want a break, you can stay on the WW as follows: leave the track by keeping straight ahead on a faint path through trees, leading to a road. Turn **right** on the road. Ignore a footpath left for Fern Hill and continue to the iron gates of *Oldlands Hall*. Keep **left** here and in 50m fork **left** on a narrow path. Follow it for 300m to meet a wide crossing path by a 4-way fingerpost. Continue straight over and re-join the walk at section [5].



Stay on the track as it bends left, thus temporarily leaving the WW. The track ends at a tarmac lane, Turn **left** reaching, in 200m, the village of Fairwarp. The *Foresters Arms* (Hall and Woodhouse) serves good basic food. It offers a pool table and a garden. It is open all day every day, but it is advisable to ring 01825-712808. Note the “telephone box” library.

- 3 After refreshment, go back 20m and turn **left** (or right if you did not visit the pub) immediately next to the pub car park on the brick drive to *Forest Lodge*. Take a narrow footpath to the right of the drive, passing a little garden and bench. At a tarmac drive, turn **right**, going past cottages. Where the drive ends at *Casey's Way*, keep dead straight across the grass and enter woods at a gap in the bracken. Stay on the path, with gardens of various houses visible over on your right. You pass close to the brown weatherboard *Seely Cottage* on your right, followed by a short driveway and a white weatherboard house modestly called *The Cottage*. Immediately **before** the driveway into *The Cottage* bends right towards the gate of the house, turn **left** on a very narrow path into dense woodland. (*Don't turn left immediately next to the gate! You need to step back 20m.*)
- 4 Always keep to the main twisty path. After 50m, you have a large open space ahead. Avoid all narrow paths leading off left into the open space and keep to the main path which curves **right**, going down into the wood again. This rooty path descends to meet a very wide path in the valley. Veer **right** on this forestry path, going over a heavy-duty bridge. 20m after the bridge, at a 4-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a narrower path, thus re-joining the WW.
- 5 The path uses several planks to avoid a boggy section and rises through an exquisite birch wood fringed with bracken. In 200m, you pass a **WW** waymarker. The path soon runs beside a more open area on your right. Look out now for another **WW** marker post and here fork **right** up into the open ground of purple heather, avoiding a path left into woods. You meet a wide grassy path at the top. Veer **left** on this path, a bridleway running across an open area, still on the WW.
- 6 In 50m the path enters woods. 50m later, at a post with the **WW** symbol, fork **right** on a narrower path. *Don't miss this turning!* The path crosses a tarmac drive and goes down to another drive. Bear **left** on this drive, going past a line of cottages and continuing straight ahead by a hedge. The path descends to cross a bridge with a rail over a lively stream and gradually ascends for 250m through woodland and passes a large **Wealdway** sign. The path bends left near a house, then turns abruptly **right** opposite the house. It then goes through a light area of young birches, across a grass-centred drive by another large **Wealdway** sign, and in 100m joins a track coming from the right. 50m after joining the track, you will see a partly-hidden **WW** marker post pointing left and a narrow path visible 20m over on your left.

If you are doing the shorter Southern Loop, skip ahead in this text and do **Over Camp Hill (westward)** which takes you back to the Ellison's Pond car park.

To continue the **full walk**, ignore the **WW** symbol and the path on the left.

Leg 4: Oldlands to Lodge 3 km=2 miles

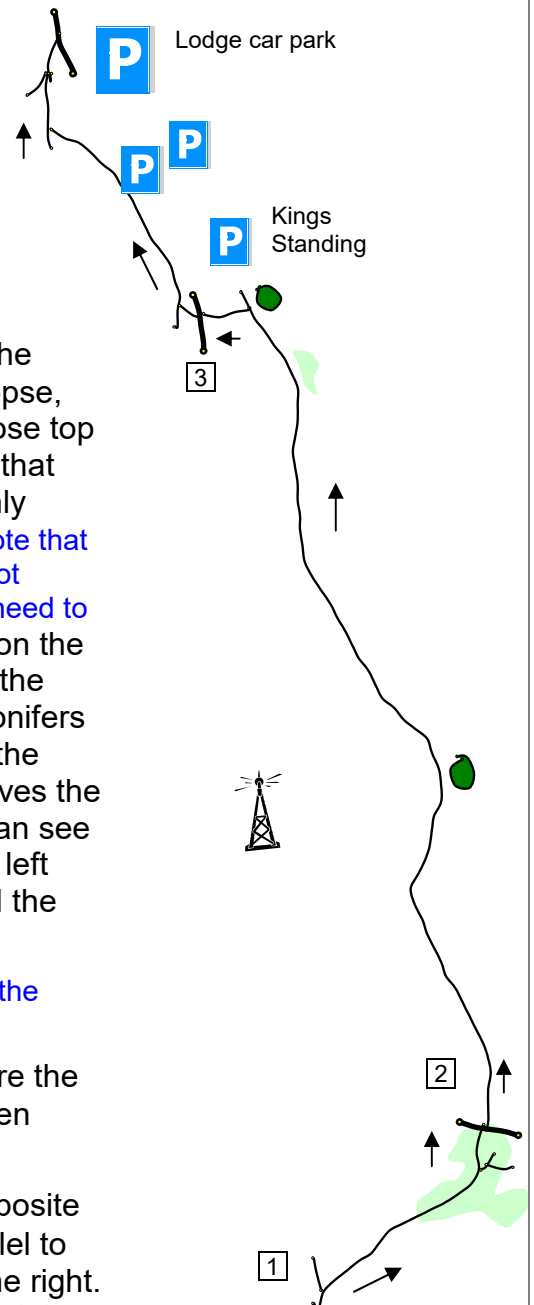
- 1 Continue on the wide stony path, thus leaving the WW. The track joins a drive coming from a house on the right. Stay on the drive as it bends left towards the road, ignoring some fingerposts on your right. Continue to the road, New Road. Cross it to a rough unmarked path directly opposite.
- 2 Keep ahead as the path crosses a wide grassy strip. The path goes through a marshy area and winds round a copse, widening as it ascends gently towards a transmitter whose top may be glimpsed above the trees. (For simplicity, note that your entire route to Kings Standing will always be roughly straight on along this extremely wide path.) However, note that the forest conservators sometimes erect temporary string (not electric?) fences to constrain the foraging animals. You will need to steer around them. They are not useful as waymarkers! Soon the transmitter is on your left while the path runs alongside the fence of the enclosure. You see a very fine clump of conifers about 30m to your right as the path veers left following the fence. Where the fence bends left again, your path leaves the perimeter, rising gently on a grassy course which you can see ahead. In 600m, at the top of the rise, the path curves left beside a little wood of gorse and birch on your right and the Kings Standing clump and car park come into view.



For the **Ashdown Forest Monster**, keep straight on into the Kings Standing car park and return to the Overall Guide.

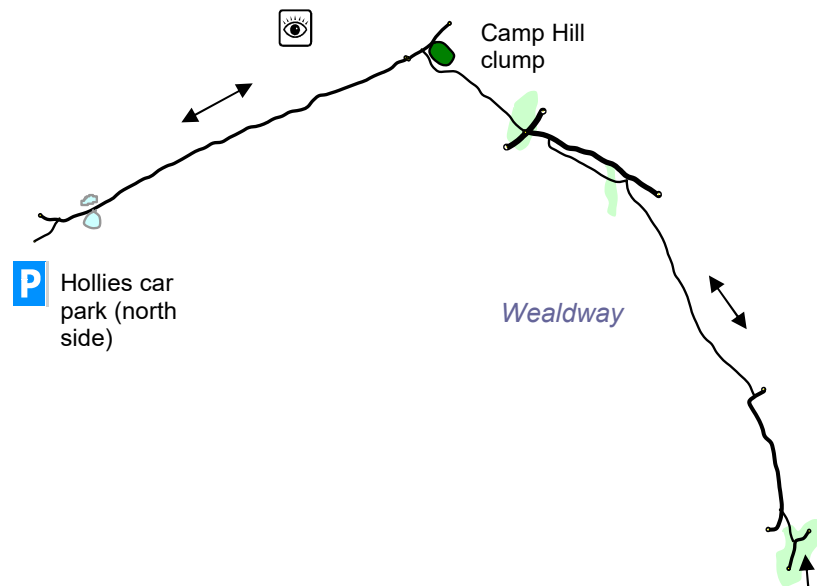
Just before reaching the corner of the clump, 50m before the car park, fork **left** on an uneven path leading to a wooden barrier and the road.

- 3 Cross the road and go through a large wooden gate opposite into a pasture. In 20m, at a T-junction, turn **right**, parallel to the road. The path passes Bush Willows car park on the right. Keep the dense bank of gorse bushes close by on your right, gradually curving **left** till you reach a T-junction, with fantastic views of the terrain you have been covering, with the South Downs forming a backdrop. Turn **right** here. At the end of the path, go through the smaller of the two gates, soon arriving back at the Lodge car park where the walk began.



Over Camp Hill (westward) 2 km=1 mile

Take this short cut if you are doing the shorter **Southern Loop** and want to return straight to the Ellison's Pond car park.



Follow the **WW** sign by forking **left** over to the unneeded stile. Go up an enclosed path, over another stile and **right** on a track. *There are now great views left to the South Downs.* The track passes a house on the right and bends **right** at the corner. Turn **left** here on a delightful level grassy path between gorse, then birch. The path arrives almost at the road. Turn **left** here at the **WW** sign over a bridge and stile. Go along the right-hand side of the meadow, ignoring first a metal gate and then a stile on the right. Go over the second stile at a **WW** fingerpost and turn **left** on New Road. In 10m, you come to a road junction with the major B2026 road. Cross straight over the road and go through a small wooden gate on the opposite side and follow the gently rising path to Camp Hill clump, one of the many distinctive clumps on Ashdown Forest. Halfway round the clump, veer **left** onto a wide sandy crossing track on the other side. Turn **left** here, thus leaving the Wealdway. (As a double-check on your direction, the tall transmitter tower, a landmark of the Forest, is now directly behind you.) Continue all the way down this very wide track, enjoying the views in all directions. At the bottom, the path runs between two ponds. The Ellison's Pond and Hollies car parks are straight on, up the grass bank on the left.



Over Camp Hill (eastward) 2 km=1 mile

Take this route immediately from the Ellison's Pond car park if you are doing the short **Northern Loop**. If you are parked in the Hollies car park on the south side of the road, you need to cross the road first to the car park on the other (north) side.

Same map as for westward direction, above. With your back to the road, facing north, head for the long very wide sandy track that you can see to the right, leading uphill. At first, the path runs between two ponds and then runs all the way up, with magnificent views in all directions, finishing finally at Camp Hill clump, one of the many distinctive clumps on Ashdown

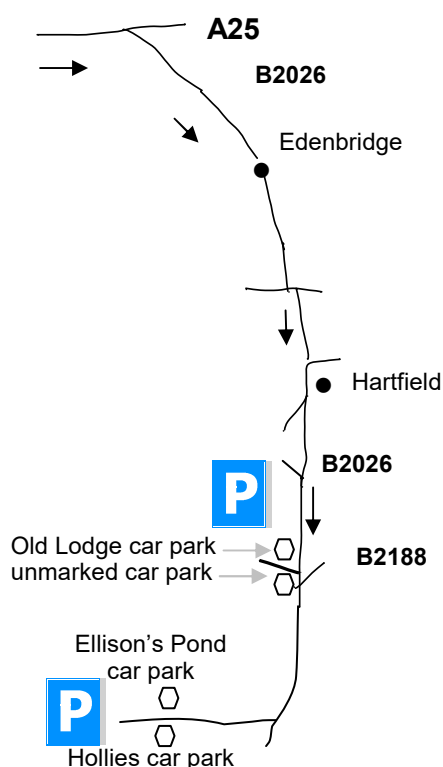


Forest. You will now be following the small but distinctive **WW** symbols, indicating the Wealdway, a long-distance path running from the Thames estuary to the south coast. Veer **right** around the clump until you pass a concrete triangulation pillar on the other side. Take the path that has the pillar on the **right**. The path leads gently down to a small wooden gate and out to the B2026 road. Cross the road straight over to a minor road, New Road. In just 10m, turn **right** over a stile into a grassy meadow and keep **left** along the edge, ignoring another stile and a metal gate, and finally leave the meadow over a stile in the far corner. A bridge takes you almost back to the road. Veer **right** here, in the direction of the **WW** sign, on a pleasant level path through birches and then gorse. The path arrives at a drive by a small house. Turn **right** on the drive and immediately follow it as it bends **left**. *There are now great views right to the South Downs.* Before the track turns right to another house, go **left**, as indicated, over a stile, along a short enclosed path to an unneeded stile. Continue a few more metres to a T-junction with a wide stony track. Turn **left** on the track.

You now continue the main walk from [Leg 4](#).

Getting there

By car: If coming from London, the “scenic” route is the B2026 all the way through Limpsfield Chart, Edenbridge and Hartfield. From the South, join the B2026 at Uckfield. From Tunbridge Wells, take the B2188 to the junction with the B2026.



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