



Lower and Upper Wield

Distance: 9 km=5¾ miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 12-apr-2021

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Refreshments: Lower Wield

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

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

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Historic villages, views, easy field paths, ancient country highway

In Brief

If it were not for these two delightful villages, this would be called the “Skylark Walk”. In late spring and early summer the chirruping of these birds is everywhere, thanks to the rolling landscape of hedges and fields. Part of this walk is along the Ox Drove Way, an easy straight walk over across the Hampshire paysage, giving you wide views. The villages are a delight, with many thatched and timbered buildings.

There is a good inn in Lower Wield. To enquire at the *Yew Tree*, ring 01256-389224.

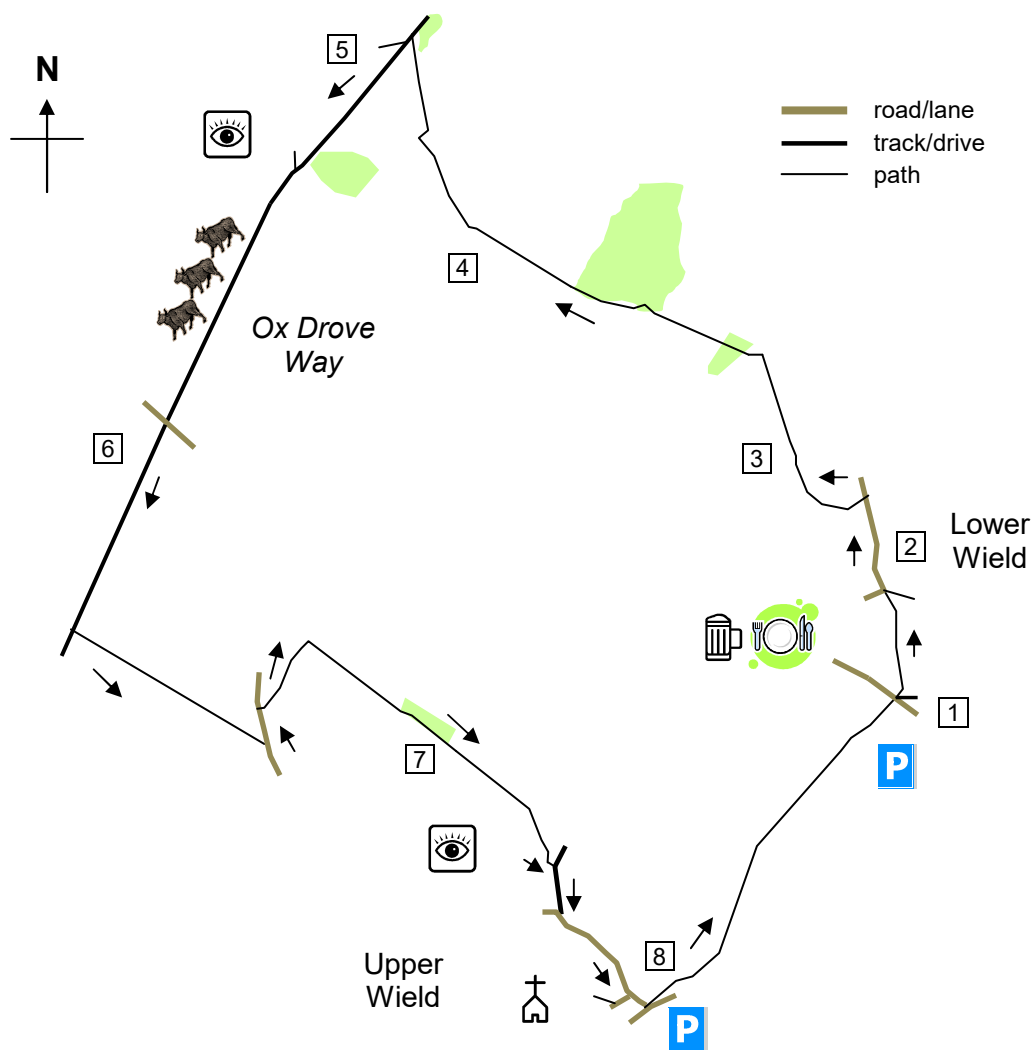


There are no nettles and no undergrowth to speak of on this walk. All the paths are well made, so there is no restriction as to footwear and clothing. This walk should be fine for your dog too, but please note that there are ground-nesting birds in many of the fields, requiring close control.

The walk begins in the Hampshire village of **Lower Wield**, postcode **SO24 9RX**, www.w3w.co/earplugs.artichoke.honeybees. Nominally, the walk starts near the *Yew Tree* pub. There is a dirt strip a short distance along the lane at the point where the footpath crosses. You can also part in **Upper Wield**, www.w3w.co/aquatic.pronouns.acclaimed, where there is usually space to park around the green or in the village hall car park if no events are in progress. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).


Wield is pronounced like “Weald” and has the same meaning, i.e. “wood” (cf German “Wald”). The parish is split between Alresford and the Candovers (see other walks in those villages).

The Walk



- 1 With the *Yew Tree* pub on your left, walk along the lane, passing on your left a small field used for parking and reaching a point where there are footpaths on both sides and a dirt strip on the left (which may be where you parked). **Ignore** the wide byway on the left (*important!*) and instead take the narrow footpath just to its left. This path quickly takes you through a small wooden gate into a large green meadow. Take a faint path across the meadow diagonally **left** to a wooden swing-gate in the hedge at the other side. Take a path diagonally **left** and find a path that runs between a house on the left and a low chalet-style house. This path runs between wire fences and leads out to a tarmac lane at a bend.
- 2 Ignore a footpath on your right and go straight ahead along the lane. You pass *Old Windmill House* (site of a vanished windmill) and several thatches. Ignore a footpath on your right and continue past the next thatch. Just before a white-gated driveway to a house, turn **left** on a narrow path up three steps. (*Don't miss!*) A wooden swing-gate leads you onto a narrow path between thorn bushes. You come through a small (avoidable) metal gate. *Note that you are on part of the Three Castles Path, a 61-mile long-distance path between Windsor and Winchester, passing King John's Odiham Castle.* Your path runs diagonally across a meadow, through a metal gate and diagonally across the next meadow to a small wooden gate. You find

yourself now in a delightfully landscaped lawn with flowering cherries in spring and other trees.

- 3 Keep straight on, keeping close to a black fence on your right. Go over a stile, or through a large wooden gate, and straight ahead on a track. The path now runs along the right-hand side of a large crop field. Where the edge of the field bends right keep straight on. When you reach the far side, turn **left** and in only 20m turn **right** at a footpath sign into a copse. Your path crosses a farm track and continues through trees. You come out into a large cereal field. Go straight across on a sandy path that crosses the right-hand section of the field. At the other side, your path winds through an old coppice and emerges into a long meadow. Walk the length of the meadow, beneath wires at first.
- 4 Your path has become chalky as it runs between crops, with the pink-pink of larks pricking the air in early summer. At the other side you meet a 3-way fingerpost. Ignore a footpath on the right and go straight through a gap in the hedge, into another field. Keep straight on along a rising path between crops. The path kinks round the edge and very gradually descends towards a grove of beeches. You come to a T-junction. This is the Ox Drove Way, a historical long-distance path (*see also the "Medstead and Bighton" walk in this series*).
- 5 Turn sharp **left** on this wide track across the field and immediately **avoid** a yellow-arrowed footpath that forks away to the right. After an open landscape, you pass a copse. Ignore a footpath on the right here. The path is now sparsely tree-lined, allowing wide views on both sides. After a few mild gradients, having walked nearly 1½ km on the Ox Drove Way, you reach a tarmac lane. Cross straight over to continue on the other side as before.
-  6 The track runs between fields with partial shade. Your next turning is a wide path exactly 700m on the left across the field, but you can usually see it well in advance when the crops are not too high. You need to look for a 2-way fingerpost and a wooden barrier. Turn **left** through the barrier and take that path across the field. You exit through a gap beside a large metal gate onto a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane. In 100m, at a signpost, turn **right** on a footpath which immediately bends left along the edge of the crops. After 250m or so, you come to the corner of the field. Turn **right** here along the edge, with a hedge on your left.
- 7 In 300m your path runs between dense lines of trees. You come out into another field with the first houses of Upper Wield visible ahead. Keep straight on along the left-hand side of the field. In the far corner, go **left** over a stile and down steps, then **right** on a tarmac drive leading into the village. At the end of the drive, go over a stile (not needed if the gate is open) and turn **left** on a tarmac lane, immediately ignoring a stile and footpath on your left. The surprisingly large thatched *Old Post Office* is on your left followed by *Wield Manor*, with its water sculpture, on your right. After more picturesque houses, ignoring another footpath on your left, you approach the central road junction of the village.



*Upper Wield church is on the **right**, just before the start of the green, and then right again on a short track, a brief excursion through an especially charming section of the village – not to be missed on any account! An oasis of simplicity and calm. Around the door you will see carved into the Norman stonework an ancient "mass dial" (a sundial which marks the daily timetable of prayer). Inside you will find the ghostly outlines of old paintings and fragments of the ten*

commandments. The Purbeck stone font, dating from the 1100s, was brought from a garden in Winchester. The most notable item is a superb monument to Sir William Wallop, together with his wife Margery, both splendidly carved.

Sir William Wallop (1553?-1617) was the younger son of a leading Hampshire family (see the walk Farleigh Wallop in this series). He was a merchant, an administrator in Southampton, becoming High Sheriff of Hampshire, Mayor of Southampton and MP for Lymington. In 1616, with the Grim Reaper looming, he put aside £150 for his tomb and funeral expenses and £10 for the poor.

- 8 At the road junction in Upper Wield, turn **left** in the direction *Lower Wield*, by cutting the corner across the grass. Stay on the grass verge on the left, as you approach the little village hall. (There are parking spaces in front of the village hall, probably to be used sparingly in case an “event” is in progress today.) Keep to the left of the hall, passing a round millennium seat and a signpost. Follow the footpath along a woodland strip. It leads out into a field. Go straight ahead across the centre on a good path. At the next field junction, keep ahead on a grass path beside a mature hedge on your left. Finally your path leads over a stile onto the tarmac lane on the outskirts of Lower Wield where the walk began.

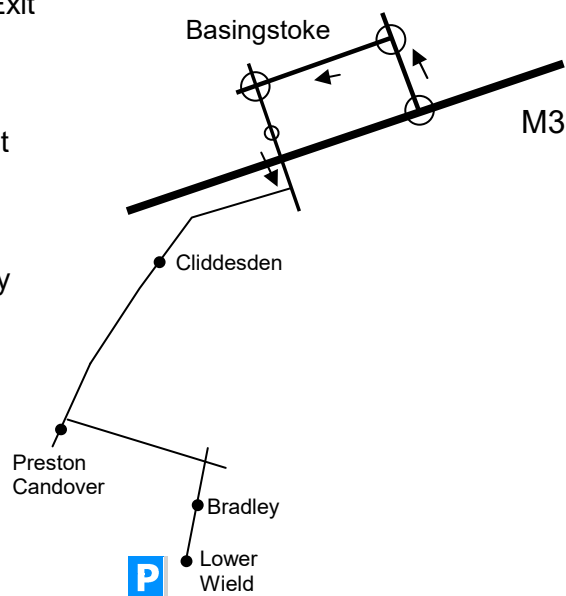


The Yew Tree is a village cottage pub which re-opened in April 2021, thanks to its garden with generous space for open-air eating and drinking. Ales are brought in from various Hampshire micro breweries, including Ringwood. They also specialise in rare whiskies and gins. Matt and Jas Clarke have provided a menu which includes Thai and Chinese rice bowls and Venison and Wild Mushroom Stroganoff.

Getting there

By car: The Wields are near Basingstoke. Arriving by the M3, one possible route is to come off at Exit 6 for *Basingstoke*. Follow signs for *A339 Town Centre*. In $\frac{1}{3}$ mile, at the next big roundabout, turn **left** for *Alton A30*. In $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, at a big roundabout, turn **left** for *Alton A339*. Go straight over a smaller roundabout and under the M3. Almost immediately, turn **right** for *Cliddesden, Ellisfield, The Candovers, Alresford*. Go on the B4036 as far as *Preston Candover*. Immediately you enter the village, turn **left** at a sign for *Bradley, Burkham*. In $1\frac{1}{2}$ miles, turn **right** for *Bradley*. Continue through the village to enter *Lower Wield* shortly after. *Upper Wield* is also signed from there.

You can also reach the Wields from the A31, Farnham and Alton, via Medstead.



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