



Chiddingfold, Alfold, Forests and Canal

Distance: 22½ km=14 miles easy-to-moderate walking
or two shorter walks of 13 km=8 miles and 11 km=7 miles

Region: Surrey, West Sussex

Date written: 13-apr-2009

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Date revised: 12-jun-2024

Refreshments: Chiddingfold

Maps: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) and 134 (Crawley) *hopefully not needed*

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Two villages, long woodland trails, canal

In Brief

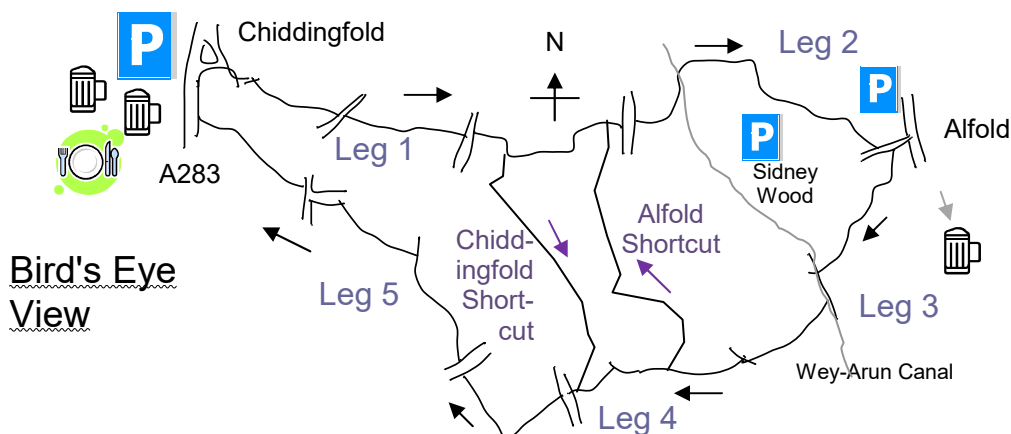
This is a circular walk in dense, varied countryside between two villages. The villages differ from each other but not in their charm. The country between them is remarkable. There is almost no road walking. You will see fine houses, magical woodland glades, beautiful wild forest and residual parts of the old Wey-Arun Canal. [This walk is also part of the Hindhead-Alfold Monster](#). This walk is also divided into two shorter "halves": the **Chiddingfold Loop** at the western end (13 km=8 miles) and the **Alfold Loop** (11 km=7 miles) at the eastern end.



The **full walk** begins in **Chiddingfold** (postcode **GU8 4TX**) or **Alfold** (post-code **GU6 8ET**). But, now that the pub in Alfold is closed, it may be better to start in **Alfold** with lunch in Chiddingfold, where there is a good choice of refreshment, and with a shorter return leg. Another good starting point is **Sidney Wood** (postcode **GU6 8HU**), giving you a refreshment stop 2/3 of the way round. For full details see the end of this document → **Getting There**.



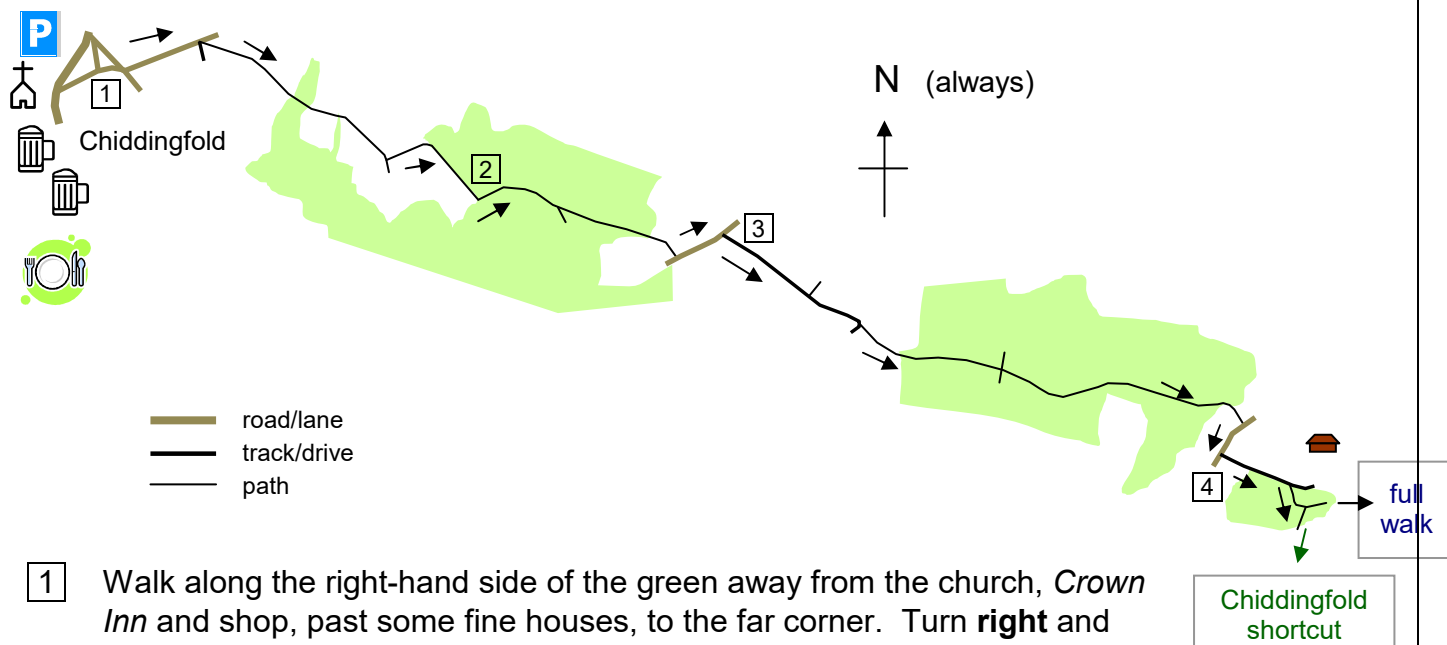
This is a wealden walk so in winter some short muddy sections are inevitable but most can easily be hopped over. So, except after a long dry spell, boots are essential. A stick is recommended. This walk should be ok for a fit dog, the only problem being occasional livestock in two of the fields. There are no nettles or briars to speak of.



The Walk

There is a shop at Chiddingfold and the Crown Inn (founded 1250) and the Swan Inn serve good food. The Chiddingfold Butcher sells amazing sausages. Chiddingfold church, which dates back to around 1190, and its churchyard with its notable brick-vaulted graves are worth visiting.

Leg 1: Chiddingfold to Burningfold Manor 4½ km=3 miles



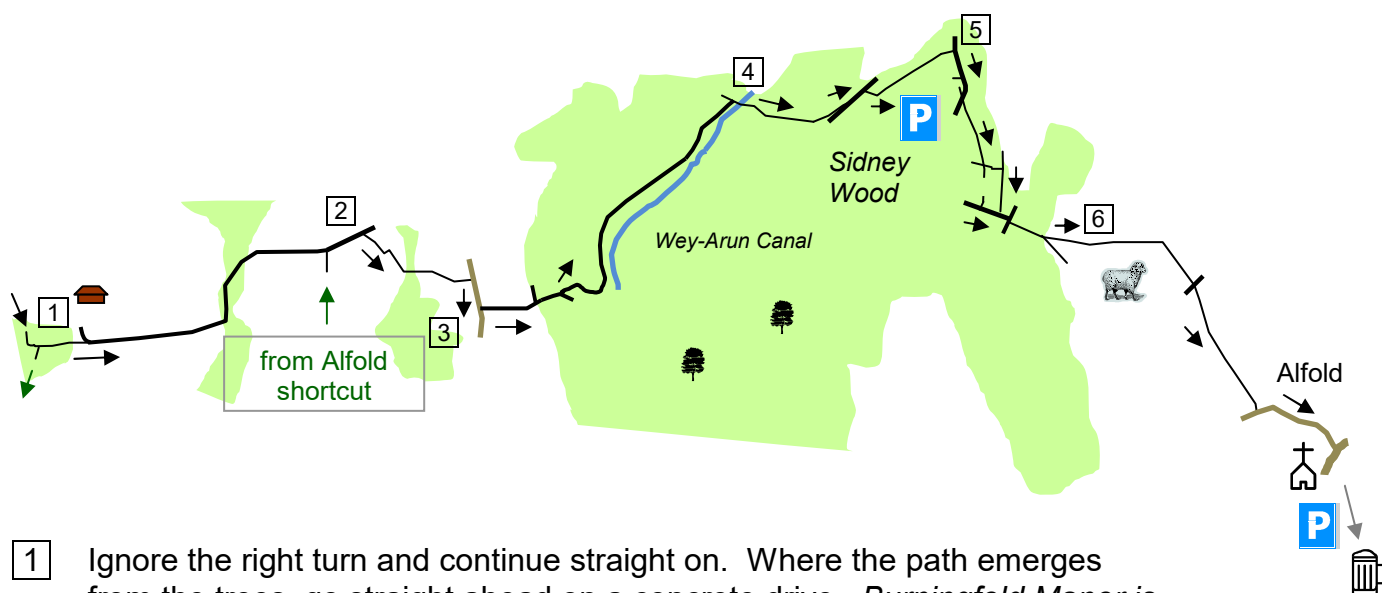
- 1 Walk along the right-hand side of the green away from the church, *Crown Inn* and shop, past some fine houses, to the far corner. Turn **right** and immediately **left** up Pockford Road, past the Post Office [Feb 2022: closed down], *Pound, Autumn, Spring and Rose Cottages*. Opposite *Solars*, go through a wooden swing-gate on the **right** into a meadow, ignoring a bridgeway to its right. Cross the meadow diagonally to another gate, cross the next field diagonally on a very faint path which soon becomes clear. Pass through a wide strip of woodland with a bridge, cross another field, a thin line of trees and another field. Go over a 2-plank bridge in a gap in the hedge, ignore the path ahead across the meadow and turn instead immediately **left** alongside the hedge. At a marker post turn **right** round the corner of the meadow, soon going downhill.
- 2 At the bottom corner, turn **left** on a path into woodland, **right** over a large wooden bridge and **left** at a marker post on a path, at first parallel to the stream. You are now in fine woodland, the ground thick with wild garlic and, in spring, wood anemones, violets and bluebells. Always keep to the main path, avoiding all turnings off, as it veers away from the stream and ascends. At a junction by a fingerpost [Jun 2024: grounded], keep straight ahead ignoring the right fork. Eventually the path goes past a small garden gate on the right and the garden and house of *Deerfold* with its tennis court and meets a road. Turn **left** on the road.
- 3 After 150m, opposite a signpost, turn **right** on a bridgeway next to the entrance to *Dunsfold Ryse*, using a small metal pedestrian gate, leading immediately to a large wooden gate. Shortly before the gate, press a button on a black pillar on the right, marked *press for bridgeway* to open the gate and go straight ahead on the track. The track runs for some distance becoming grassy, going through a small wooden gate, over a stream and passing the drive to *Dunsfold Ryse* by a pond on the right, after which it

becomes grassy again. Continue straight ahead, ignoring a large wooden gate on your right, soon going through a small wooden gate into the vast, spectacular area of protected forest of Lagfold Copse. After a 1 km long straight stretch between tall trees, keeping straight ahead at a junction of paths, now on a wide surfaced forestry track. Where the track ends at a large turning space for vehicles, keep straight ahead on a narrow path. Go through two wooden gates at either end of a path between gardens and turn **right** on a road beside imposing *Dunsfold House*.

- 4 In 120m, opposite *Keystone House*, turn **left** onto a tree-lined driveway for *Burningfold*. In 100m, between two blue arrows (the right hand one sometimes hidden in foliage), the bridleway runs on the right, parallel to the drive. *Hascombe Hill* is visible on the left. The bridleway bends **right** into the wood, crosses two bridges, and then turns **left** through larches. In only 30m, you come to a marker post with a yellow arrow to your right.

Decision point. If you are doing only the shorter **Chiddingfold Loop**, skip to near the end of this document and follow the separate section called **Chiddingfold Shortcut** before re-joining the main walk where indicated. If you are doing the full walk, continue with the next section.

Leg 2: Burningfold Manor to Alfold 4½ km=3 miles



- 1 Ignore the right turn and continue straight on. Where the path emerges from the trees, go straight ahead on a concrete drive. *Burningfold Manor* is over on your left. The drive crosses a stream, passing a polo pitch, curves left and right, and goes past farm buildings and cottages. Just after *Howicks*, ignore a footpath on your right.

The Alfold Loop re-joins the main walk here.

- 2 In 120m, just after *Hurlands*, take a marked footpath on the **right**. Very soon, just after the pond on the right, go through a tall wooden gate, across a driveway, and through a smaller wooden gate. Cross the small field, veering slightly to the right, heading for woodland only 50m away at the other side. Go through another wooden gate, across a strip of woodland and into a flowery meadow with its wide variety of unusual horse jumps. Keep to the left side, avoiding a gap to the left, to go via a new wooden gate to a road. Turn **right** on the road.
- 3 In 90m, past *Sprunks Cottage*, take a footpath on the **left** through a swing-gate. This wide path skirts some huts on the left (note the “landrover” weather-

vane), zigzags and goes over a bridge into the vast labyrinth of Sidney Wood. Go straight on uphill, avoiding a path on your left. In 50m, fork **left** uphill. After a short climb, the path meets a remnant of the old Wey Arun Canal. *In the 1800s this canal made it possible to travel by boat from London to Littlehampton on the south coast. Much of it has now been restored by The Wey & Arun Canal Trust and boat trips can be taken on several large sections.* Go straight on with the canal on your right, incidentally joining the Wey-South long-distance path. At a marker post, keep to the canalside. You pass two land bridges and a milestone showing the distance to those two rivers. Where you eventually reach a T-junction by a metal gate, turn **right**.

- 4 Continue on the path, immediately passing another metal gate. Soon, a field and house come into view over on your right. Your path meets a wide diagonal crossing path just before a tarmac drive. Veer **left** on this path. It runs parallel to the drive on your **right** and, in 150m, merges with it. *Fir Tree Copse on your left is a nature reserve carpeted in spring by bluebells, but it is not on this route.* Cross the drive and, at a fingerpost, take a bridleway on the other side running parallel to the drive, this time with the drive on your **left**. This path runs for about 100m alongside to the drive, then gradually diverges from it and in around 350m ends at a T-junction with a broad track near the Sidney Wood car park. Turn **right** on this track.



- 5 Stay on the main track past a metal barrier ahead and, in 40m, ignore a small path on your left. The track curves gently right and straightens. Here, about 150m after the barrier, turn **left** on a narrow but clear path that crosses the track diagonally right-left in staggered fashion. (The right-hand path leads through trees to the far end of the car park.) In 50m, fork **right** with the main path. Continue another 200m to a marker post, turn **left** for 70m to another marker post at a T-junction. Turn **right** for 20m to another T-junction. Turn **left** past a sign *Riding By Permit Only* and cross a wide muddy horse track, continuing over, shifting a little to the right, on a footpath by a yellow marker.

- 6 In just over 100m, fork **left** to a modern swing-gate into a meadow ahead. Stay on the left side of the meadow, cross a track via two more gates and cross the centre of the next meadow. Go through the metal kissing-gate and into another meadow and turn **right** to a gate visible ahead in a fence. Cross a farm driveway through a second gate. Walk straight ahead along the next meadow lengthwise with the farm buildings on your right until you see a kissing-gate on the **left** just before a jutting corner. Go through the gate, over a bridge, and take a clear path through ferns and nettles. Continue straight ahead until you finally reach wooden fencing. Turn **right** here, then **left**, to follow fencing which leads you down four large steps to a road. Turn **left** on the road. Ignore the first footpath right but, just after *Rectory Cottage*, turn **right** into the main churchyard of Alfold church. *A visit to this ancient church is not to be missed.* Go round the church, past the stocks and the picturesque *Church Cottages* to the main road and the village centre.

Alfold's name is a rendering of 'old fold' ('fold' in the sense of 'animal enclosure' - think of 'sheepfold'). Being virtually lost in the great forest, it counted for little in Norman times and later became a centre for smuggling. Local farmers would be gifted a bottle of brandy for allowing their barns to be used for contraband. The church of St Nicholas was recorded in the time of Henry III (roughly mid-1200s) but dates back at least two centuries earlier. In fact, the beautiful font dates from 1080. The oak timbers are probably 14th century. There was an inn here (the Crown) until recently but it is now closed and its future is in doubt.





If you started the walk in Alfold and have a car, the “Sir Roger Tichborne” at Alfold Bars is only 700m south on the main road. It is open all day every day and has a good lunchtime menu. (See the walk in this series “Rudgwick, the Canal and a Watermill” for the interesting story behind this pub.)

Leg 3: Alfold to Hogwood 4½ km=3 miles



- 1 From the little triangular junction near the church in Alfold, walk away from the main road and up the cul-de-sac, Rosemary Lane. Just after *Rectory Cottage*, turn **left** on a track by a sign for *Alfold Cemetery*. Keep to the left through the cemetery, go over a [2023: bypassable] stile and down a grassy strip. *The South Downs are visible ahead on a good day*. Go through a modern kissing-gate and straight over a small meadow heading just to the right of the farm ahead. The path goes over a bridge, through a small metal gate and up the left-hand side of two horse meadows. At the end go through a small metal gate and go over two driveways, over a stile in the wooden fence and turn **left** on a horse exercise track.
- 2 Where the horse track curves right, go straight on over a 2-plank bridge and through a gate in the corner, then diagonally **right** across the meadow to a kissing-gate in the opposite corner. Go across the next field in the same direction and, at the other side, go through a small wooden gate beside a large metal gate. Cross straight over the bridleway by a 4-way fingerpost and past an isolated wooden gate. Continue straight ahead across the centre of the field. When you reach the corner of the trees turn **left** as directed by a fingerpost. Go through the gap in the hedge by another fingerpost and across the centre of the next field on a clear path. Go through a small wooden gate and straight ahead through a metal gate by a lake (lift the chain over the gatepost and replace it afterwards). Go over a small footbridge and up to a stile and a large wooden bridge over the dry canal. Turn **left** along the canal side.
- 3 You are now beside the Wey-Arun Canal, looking lovely after restoration work 2015-2021. Ignore both a yellow-arrowed footpath on the right and a footpath over a bridge on your left, passing a milestone indicating distances to the rivers. At a 4-way fingerpost with a major crossing of tracks, turn

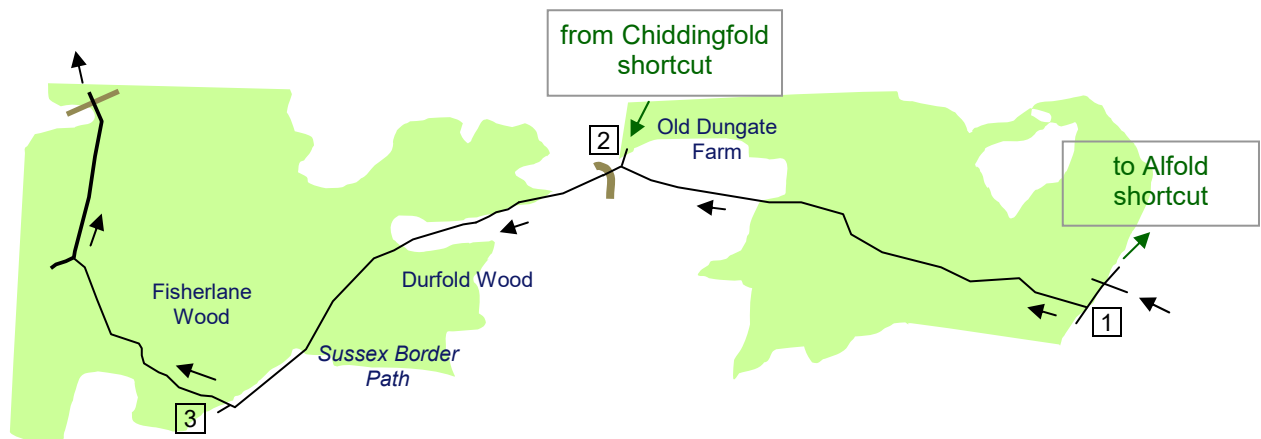


right. You are now on the Sussex Border Path (SBP). *The Sussex Border Path runs from Rye in the east to Emsworth in the west, with another section from East Grinstead down to near Brighton. It passes through some of the most remote and peaceful parts of Southern England.* Go over a bridge across the River Lox and through a new swing-gate. Cross straight over the short side of a narrow meadow, then onwards between fields and woodland and through a gate. Soon there is a muddy area and you have woodland on the left which in spring is full of bluebells. Eventually you approach a large modern house on the left with an untransformed red phone box and simulated cows (now hidden by a wooden fence). Follow the fence **right** and, at a signpost, turn **left** again, staying on the SBP. Just after a swing-gate, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a wide dirt driveway.

- 4 In 100m, at a Forestry Commission sign, **leave** the SBP by turning **left** on an unmarked path which immediately curves right, at first going parallel to the drive you were on. You are now in the beautiful Hogwood in part of West Sussex. Stay on the main path at all times as it winds left and right several times. After near 1 km, after a plantation on your left and just before the path enters an area of tall forest trees, you pass a marker post on the right with yellow arrows. *Don't miss this important checkpoint!*

Decision point. If are doing only the shorter **Alfold Loop**, skip to near the end of this document and follow the separate section called **Alfold Shortcut** before re-joining the main walk where indicated. If you are doing the full walk, continue with the next section.

Leg 4: Hogwood to Tugley Wood 4 km=2½ miles

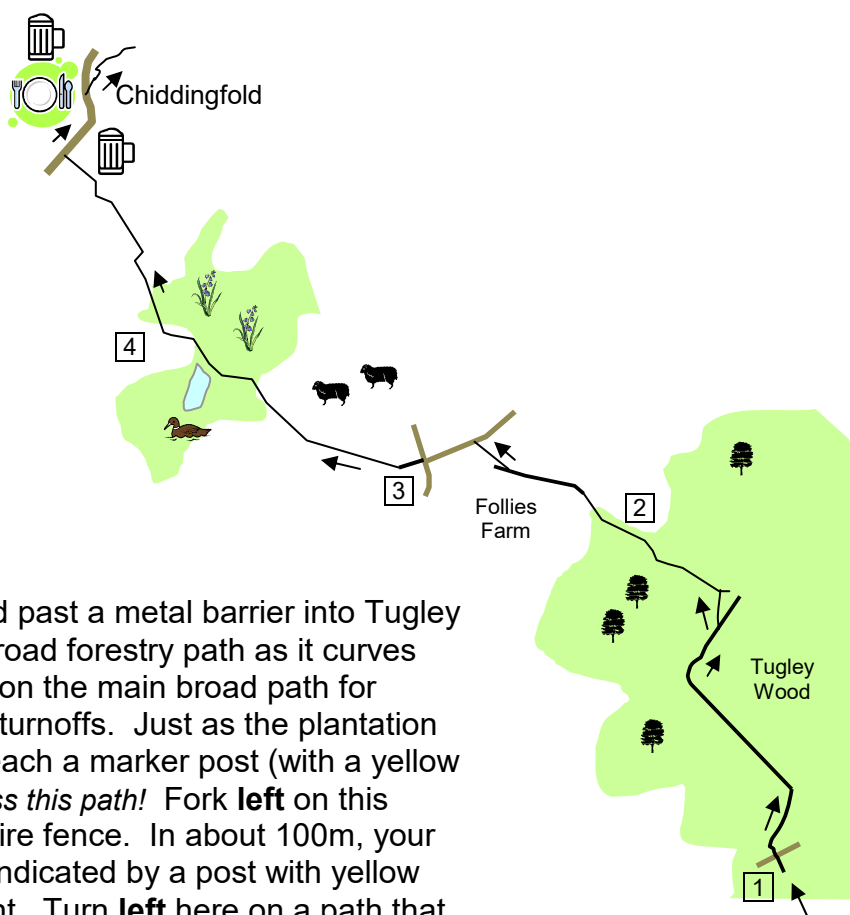


- 1 Turn **left** at the marker post, thus re-joining the SBP, going past tall pines. In 50m, at a post with a yellow arrow, turn **right**, still on the SBP, on a narrow woodland path. *Don't miss this turning!* After 200m through this lovely wood, the path reaches a marker post. Ignore the marker post and continue on the path as it bends round to the right. In 20m, wheel **left** again with the path, still on the SBP. The path now follows an attractive route, always roughly straight on. On two occasions, the path descends to cross a small wooden bridge and rises quite steeply on the other side. Eventually, at a post with yellow arrows, keep straight ahead, still on the SBP. 5m before the field ahead, turn **left** and then **right** at a fingerpost. Cross a (high) stile into a dairy pasture and follow the hedge on your right, heading for *Old Dungate Farm* ahead. On reaching the farm, avoid a metal gate into the farm, but soon after, turn **right** through a small wooden gate and then left onto a drive that leads to a road.

The Chiddingfold Loop re-joins the main walk here.

- 2 Cross straight over the road to a narrow bridleway by a brick pillar next to *Primrose View*, going beside gardens on your left. Go past houses and, at a junction and a footpath sign, keep straight ahead on a residential track. Continue straight on past houses, at one point going close to a house on your left along its gravel drive. As you go through a holly wood, ignore two signposted footpaths on the left. After a birch wood, your path runs alongside a field on your left. At a large metal gate, turn **right** with the path and immediately at a finger-post **leave** the SBP by keeping straight ahead on a signed bridleway into the depths of the wood.
- 3 Your route through Fisherlane Wood is now guided by blue arrows which you need to watch out for. Keep straight on at first, ignoring a minor path on your right after 180m and passing a wooden seat on your right. 30m later, at a T-junction with a marker post, turn **left**. Your path immediately bends **right** over a stream and, in 50m, **right** again. In 50m or so, it goes **left** and, after a swampy section, in 80m it veers **right** on a path coming from your left. After 200m more, your path comes to a T-junction with a wide forestry track. Turn **right** on the track. It leads in about 450m to a wooden barrier and a road.

Leg 5: Tugley Wood to Follies Farm & Chiddingfold 4 km=2½ miles



- 1 Cross straight over the road past a metal barrier into Tugley Wood. Stay on the main broad forestry path as it curves right and wheels left. Stay on the main broad path for another 600m, avoiding all turnoffs. Just as the plantation on your left ends you will reach a marker post (with a yellow arrow) on the left. *Don't miss this path!* Fork **left** on this narrow footpath beside a wire fence. In about 100m, your path comes to a wide fork indicated by a post with yellow arrows pointing left and right. Turn **left** here on a path that is grassy and sometimes marshy. The path takes you over an old brick bridge and eventually runs uphill to reach a wooden barrier.
- 2 You now have a fine grassy path between woodland on the left and a meadow on the right and you walk beside the lovely garden of Follies Farm. Stay by the fence on the right and continue over a flat brick bridge, straight ahead on the driveway. *The owners have some friendly dogs: if they worry you, just ignore them.*

Just before a cattle grid, fork **right**. *This is a pig breeding area and you will notice the tracery on the metal door of a pig killing a partridge with two porkers topping the gate posts.* Proceed on a pleasant grass strip, through a small wooden gate, towards a small house, then straight ahead through another gate to a road. Turn **left** on the road.

- 3 At a T-junction with another road, go straight on up an imposing drive for *Old Pickhurst*. Before the gate posts, go over grass and a stile tight on the **right** and alongside a sheep pasture. The path veers right by a metal gate through a free-range area for partridges and, at a magical spot, crosses a bridge over a weir, across a stream, by a lake whose surface in some seasons seems to boil with ducks. Go up a flight of steps to a stile [Feb 2022: take care – broken] and then along the right hand side of a meadow. *With the sun probably now in the west, the perfect grass of this long meadow has an intense sheen.*

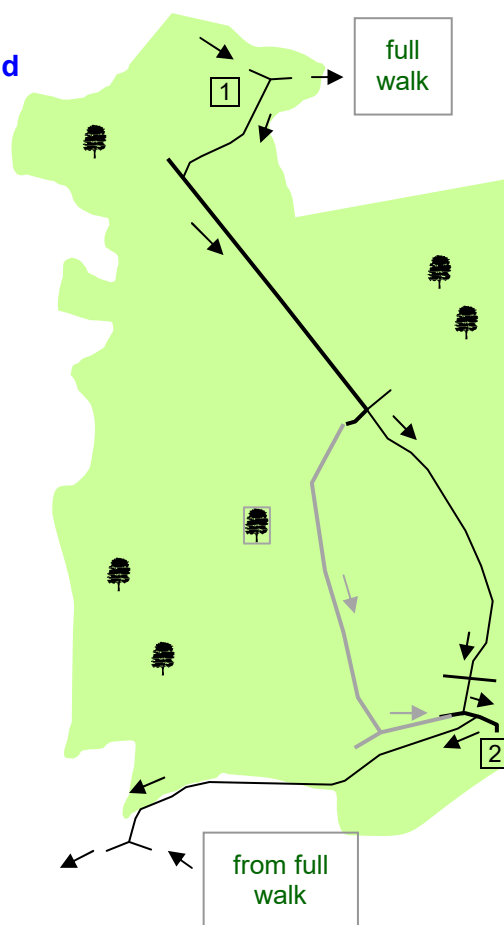
- 4 In 100m turn **right** over a stile and bear **left** down into a bluebell wood, then back into the open. Your path runs beside two meadows on the left, along the top of a ridge and through a new kissing-gate, over a 3-plank bridge. Stay on the left by the fence until just before the end of the second meadow. Turn **right** here down steps and along the **left** hand side of a sheep meadow, through another metal kissing-gate and along a fenced path with some of the back gardens of the houses of Chiddingfold showing on your right. In a short distance, the path leads down to a main road. Turn **right** on the road. The road goes over a bridge, past the *Swan Inn*. Just after a butcher's shop, turn **right** through a passage that leads back to the Green where the walk began.



Chiddingfold Shortcut 2 km = 1¼ miles

Take this short cut if you want to do only the **Chiddingfold Loop** of the walk, omitting the canal and Alford.

- 1 Turn sharp **right** at the junction with the marker post. The path runs between conifers, passes a circular horse exerciser and goes over a stile. The narrow woodland path soon meets a wide straight stony crossing track. Turn **left** on the track through Tidy's Copse. After 500m, **leave** the track which turns suddenly right, avoid a path on your left and continue **dead straight** ahead on a very narrow unsigned woodland path. [Dec 2020: some major logging was in progress: if this is still underway, you can stay on the original wide track (grey lines on map) which gradually curves left, turns abruptly left after 600m, and meets you where it says "turn left on this track" at the bottom of this section.] At first, this path looks unpromising and you may think you have been misled, but it is quite straight and easy. Avoid all minor branching paths. There are faint signs of vehicle tracks under the tall oaks. After 500m, you pass a natural obstacle course due to a succession of fallen tree trunks (which are unlikely to be cleared since this is not an official path). In a further 200m, under young beeches and dense saplings, you reach a very wide gravel track. Turn **left** on this track.



- 2 In only 20m, turn sharp **right** on a bridleway that crosses diagonally, marked by a fingerpost, before a sign reading *Riding By Permit Only*. The terrain is now wet grass and muddy patches at first that you can skip over. The path soon has a meadow on the left and woodland on the right. This path can be extremely muddy in parts but there are dry fringes and this section is thankfully short. The path joins the Sussex Border Path (SBP) by *Old Dungate Farm* and comes out to a road.

Now re-join the main walk at **Leg 4** section 2.

Alfold Shortcut 2½ km = 1½ miles

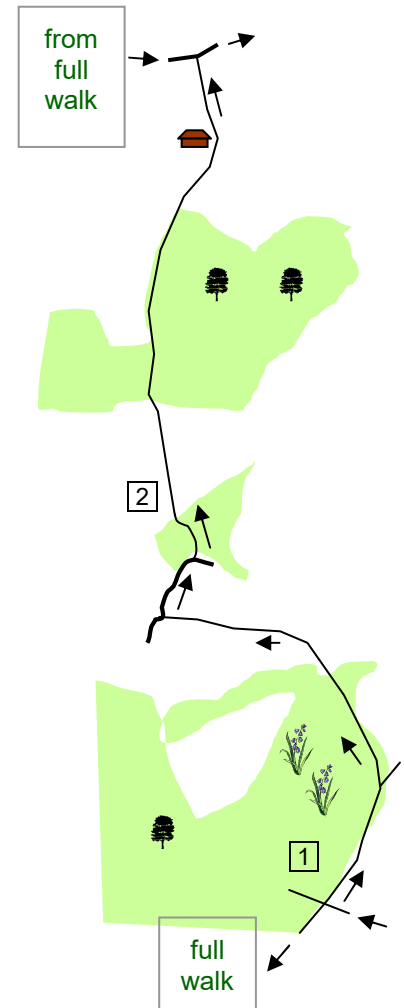
Take this short cut if you want to do only the **Alfold Loop**, omitting the area around Chiddingfold.

- 1 Turn **right** at the marker post, now back on the SBP, into a birch wood. At a 3-way junction by a farm, turn **left** on an unsigned path that runs immediately beside the farm on your right. Shortly on your right is a pasture and on your left a beautiful wood which in spring is a vast carpet of bluebells, one of the secret joys of this area. Soon you pass a fingerpost indicating a bridleway, as the path turns right and left and goes over a stream. You pass another bridleway signpost as the path curves gradually leftwards. Finally, after about 700m on this path, you reach some sheds, part of the settlement of Upper Ifold, and come to a T-junction. Turn **right** on a track and immediately turn **right** by a marker post by a fence and follow a driveway. After the drive curves right, turn **left** by a new fingerpost over a 3-plank bridge. The path is enclosed between wire fences. It bends right over a long bridge across a stream and over a [oct 2018: partly missing] stile into a meadow.

- 2 Keep to the right-hand side of the pasture next to the stream and, where the stream rounds a corner, keep straight ahead to an unneeded stile on the other side. Go up the right-hand side of the next meadow. In the corner, go over a stile and straight on through a bluebell wood of young birches. Soon your path runs beside a meadow on your left and, as you go over a stile, the beautiful large timbered house *Howicks* comes into view. The path goes round beside a fence of the house. At the end, continue by a metal gate to meet a lane. Turn **right** on the lane.

Now re-join the main walk at **Leg 2** section 2.

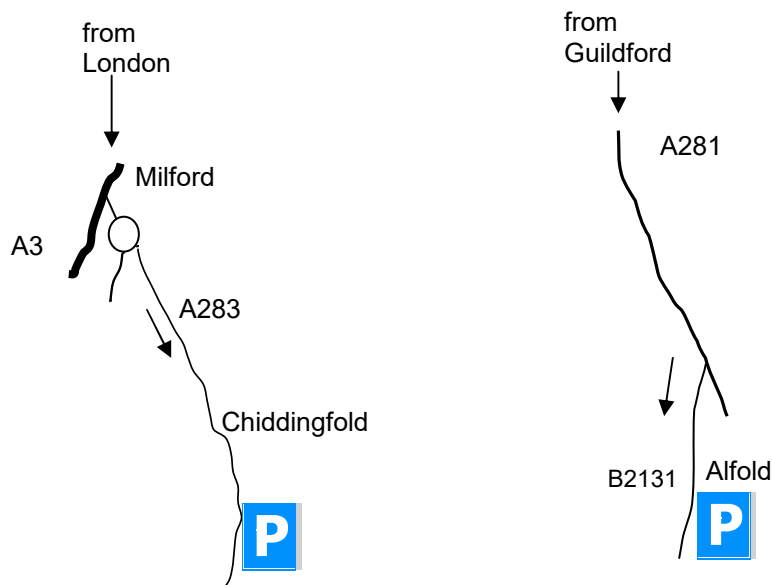
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Getting there

By car: To get to **Chiddingfold**, if coming from the London area, take the A3 through Guildford. Turn off at Milford and take the A283 Petworth road. There is plenty of parking on the south east side of the green at Chiddingfold. Sidney Wood car park is an alternative start.

To get to **Alfold**, if coming from London, take the A281 from Guildford and fork right at Alfold Crossways onto the B2131. Park on the roadside in the village.



Sidney Wood is just off the Dunsfold Road, branching off at Alfold Crossways. Keep left after $\frac{1}{2}$ mile and turn **left** at a right bend after $\frac{2}{3}$ mile.