



Farleigh Wallop

Distance: 14½ km=9 miles or 13 km=8 miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 2-apr-2016

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Last update: 4-oct-2021

Refreshments: Ellisfield

Map: Explorer 144 (Basingstoke) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Village, valley trail, views, woodland, isolated church

In Brief

This is a walk through typical but little-known Hampshire countryside, with several surprises, beginning at the very start of the walk. The terrain varies from a beautiful long surfaced path in the valley, to a driveway through parkland, a forest trail and an old trackway. Views change constantly.

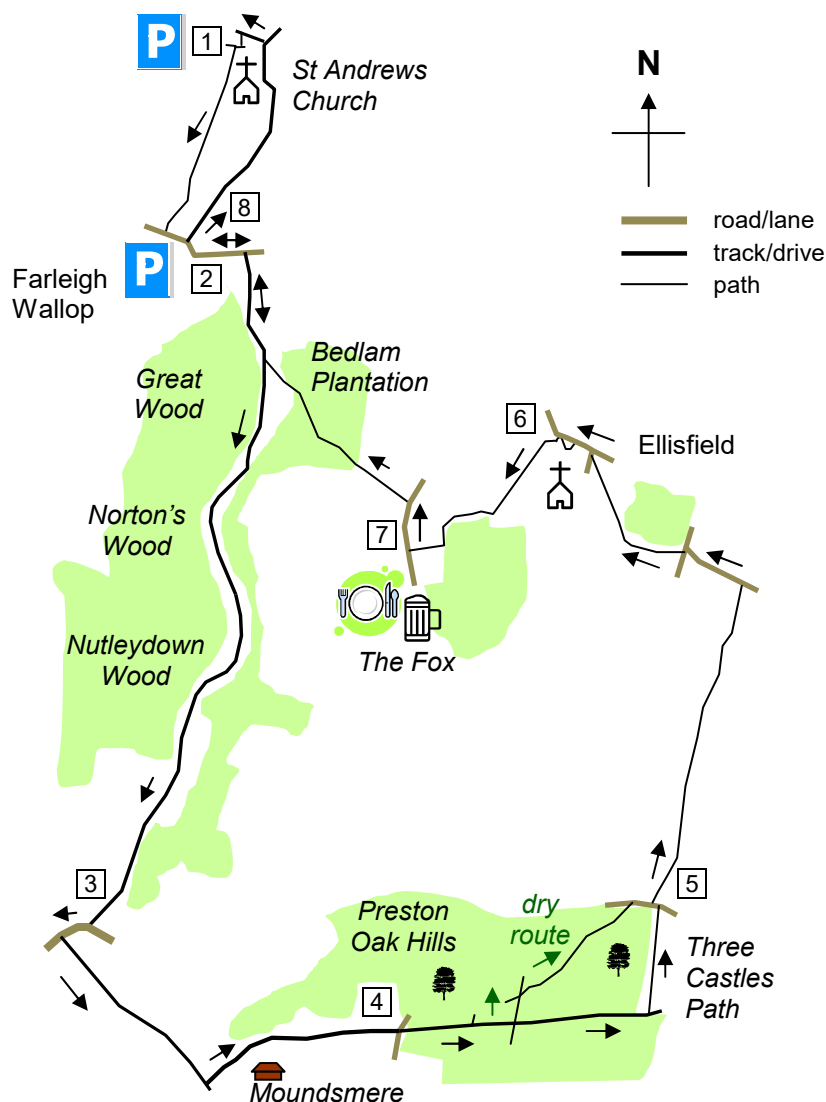
There is a friendly peaceful hostelry about 80% of the way round, **closed** on Mondays however. See under section [6](#). (For enquiries at *The Fox Inn*, ring 01256-381210.)



The undergrowth is normally light but in high summer you will find some sections that are very overgrown with nettles, especially in section [3](#), when long trousers (and possibly a stick) are essential. Boots are recommended because of mud in the wood and one very stony path. This walk would be fine for your dog too.

The walk begins at **St Andrews Church, Farleigh Wallop**, near Basingstoke, Hampshire, postcode **RG25 2HH**. The church stands in a field in splendid isolation from its home village. The approach is along a narrow lane and the “parking area” is a dirt space with room for about six cars at a pinch. A service is held here only every *fifth Sunday* in a month of *five* Sundays (plus Christmas Eve) at *11am* and on all other occasions you should find the space all but empty. So the dates when you should *not* park for the sake of the parishioners are: in **2021**: 31/10, **2022**: 30/1, 29/5, 31/7, 30/10; and so on. On these days, or if you prefer to shorten the walk a little, start the walk in **Farleigh Wallop Village**, postcode **RG25 2HU**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



If you are beginning the walk in Farleigh Wallop, go east along the road and start the walk at section [2](#).

- 1 Starting in the small parking area by the church, go through the small wooden gate towards the church. [Jul 2020: gate was padlocked but you can join the footpath by continuing left along the lane for a few metres and turning right over a stile onto a marked footpath which takes you to the front of the church.]

In the 1600s, you would have been standing in the centre of the village. The houses were probably destroyed during the Civil War, leaving only the church of St Andrew in its isolation. The church was rebuilt in 1733 and then again in 1871-73. So much of the Wallops is on display, the church stands as a kind of memorial to the family.

Just before the wooden barrier and the wire fence, turn **right** across the grass and walk the length of the meadow, keeping roughly 15m from the right-hand edge, heading for a stile visible ahead. Go over the stile and take a clear path across a crop field to go over a stile on the other side. Keep straight ahead, to the right of an electricity pole, heading for a large house. Go over an unneeded stile and keep ahead, to the right of a wall. Go over a stile and along a short path to the tarmac road in Farleigh Wallop. Turn **left** along the road, passing that large flint-walled house, *Farleigh Hassocks*.

The Wallops are an old Hampshire Family. The first Wallop to take ownership at Farleigh was John in 1450. Robert Wallop was one of the parliamentary judges who condemned King Charles I. After the Restoration, he escaped death but was sentenced to be imprisoned in the Tower and to be taken once a year to stand under the gallows with ropes about his neck. Farleigh House, the Wallop residence, was burnt in 1667 (possibly with regal approval) and not rebuilt till 1731 by new owners. The current house, with its huge grounds, is a super-luxury location for events.

- 2 Go past the long black shed of Home Farm and continue on the lane as it begins to go downhill. Before it descends too far, go **right** on a bridleway by a fingerpost. Follow this clinker track as it curves left and right past the thatched *Bedlam Bottom Cottage* and through the smaller of two wooden gates. Keep straight ahead on the track, ignoring a footpath on your left. Proceed to the far end of the grass space and, in the far corner, go through a small wooden gate (or the large metal gates which are usually open). Avoid a track forking up left into the woods which are a conservation area. You are on an excellent surfaced valley path with woods sloping up on each side. After 700m, keep straight ahead, avoiding an ascending left fork. After another 600m, a track joins from your right and the woods on your right give way to a crop field. At the end of this large field, your track reaches a thatched house (with a thatched garage), *Bermondspit House*. Go out past a large gate to a road.

- 3 Turn **right** on the road. Ignore a bridleway on your right and, 30m later, turn **left** on a signposted bridleway. The path leads very gently uphill between lines of thornbushes and fields. After 700m, a wooden gate leads you onto a clinker drive, with a further wooden gate leading onto a concrete drive by Moundsmere Manor Farm. Your route is immediately **left** through the farm buildings, but first it is worth walking on a short distance to admire the entrance avenue and metal gates of the house.

Moundsmere Manor was granted by Henry VIII to two of his wives: Anne of Cleves and Catherine Howard. After executing Catherine, he gave it to Winchester College. The current house, despite its appearance, was built in 1908 by Sir Reginald Blomfield, a master of Queen Anne revival.

Having turned left through the farm, follow the concrete / tarmac drive past farm buildings, stables and old livestock pens. The driveway takes you past a wooden gate and onwards with tall elegant trees and various conifers lining the route. You pass on your right various houses of the estate, with expansive parkland on your left. After 600m or so you reach a tarmac lane.

- 4 Cross straight over the lane to a bridleway opposite into the woods of Preston Oak Hills. **That long comfortable stretch on firm surfaces cannot last! Now, for the first time, you may now encounter some mud – but there is good news to come.** Follow the bridleway through the woods. If the main track is muddy, you should find a drier narrower path on your left. One compensation in late spring is the first sight of bluebells. After 500m (exactly ½ km) into the wood, you will find a narrow crossing path. (As a guide, this is the *second* narrow crossing path. The first crossing path has a broken stump, about 1m high, clearly visible, on the left – this is *not* your path!) Here you have an unofficial relatively dry optional route which, in late spring, takes you through the best of the bluebells. It is unmarked and unsigned but is well used by local people and horse riders.



For the official path: go straight on for another 600m, keeping to the main path. Before the end of the wood, as you reach the corner of a field on your left, turn **left** on a narrower bridleway, part of the Three Castles Path (3CP) (a 60-mile long-distance footpath running from Winchester to Windsor via Odiham Castle). Follow it for 400m or so to a lane. Turn left on the lane and, in 20m, turn **right** on a signposted bridleway, still on the 3CP.

For the dry route: turn **left** on the narrow crossing path. In 120m, you meet a narrow diagonal crossing path. Fork **right** on this crossing path. This narrow winding path leads you through the depths of Preston Oak Hills. Your route is always straight on, avoiding any narrow side paths, at one point going over a shallow ditch. After about 250m, in late spring, you pass through a vast bed of bluebells. The path ends at a lane. Turn **right** on the lane and, in 80m, turn **left** on a signposted bridleway.

- 5 This track soon becomes very flinty and may be uncomfortable underfoot. After 600m, you go over a farm track. After another 400m, the stones ease off and the last 400m, leading up to a road, are more comfortable. Turn **left** on the road, Bell Lane. In 300m you reach a T-junction with College Lane. Turn **left** for just 5m and then go **right** on a signposted footpath into trees. This path leads out into a field: follow a path along the right-hand edge of the field with trees on your right. In 200m the path bends right, staying close to the trees. In another 100m, the edge of the field bends right again. This time, keep straight ahead* on a path diagonally across the field heading for the far corner and go down to the lane. (*If the field is ploughed up you may need to stay on the edge, turning left in the corner beside the road.) Cross over Furzen Lane and veer **left** on Church Lane in Ellisfield. Ignore a bridleway on your right and follow the lane past a pond on your left to Ellisfield Church of St Martin. Enter the churchyard using a tiny swing-gate and across the well-tended grass keeping the church to your left.

Ellisfield is known as the "green village" because the scattered houses are connected by quiet lanes running through copses carpeted with wild flowers and inhabited by rabbits and pheasants which start up everywhere. The village has a huge sense of community with the villagers turning out to clear drains, mow and strim, cooperate in fuel and even sample wine. The church of St. Martin was built around 1200 (the date is unclear), but it was insensitively rebuilt by the Victorians in 1872.

- 6 Exit the churchyard by the church entrance at the other side, going along a charming avenue of pleached limes (planted in 1897 after a French custom), out by the lichgate. Immediately turn **left** on a track, ignoring steps ahead. The track bends right and leads you through two wooden swing-gates into a large meadow. Set a course straight ahead, on a faint path, heading for the right-hand corner of the woodland. The path leads you to a small wooden swing-gate. After the gate, continue along the left-hand side of the next meadow. In the next corner, go through a metal kissing-gate. (If you find mud around the gate, you could climb a hurdle 20m to the right.) At the next corner, turn **left** by a gate post (the remains of a wooden gate), staying next to the wood. About half way along the side of the meadow, you will see a small yellow waymarker on a post. Turn **right** here going down the centre of the grassy hillside, heading for an electricity pole with a transformer. Go through a swing-gate and down steps to a lane, next to *The Fox* pub. Your route is **right** along the lane, but first you may like some refreshment.



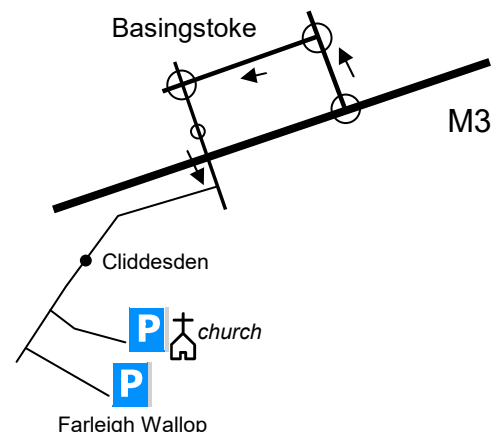
"The Fox" is a family-run peaceful freehouse and restaurant, full of amusing decorations playing on the "fox" theme, situated in the "middle of nowhere", with just the birds to listen to in the pretty terraced garden. Lucy, the landlady, welcomes you with a variety of food options from a lunch menu of sandwiches and jacket potatoes but she will happily pull out the dinner menu at any time if you're feeling more peckish. Food and charm have met with approval from users of this guide as excellent value. The Fox closes between 2.30 and 4.30 except at weekends; it is open from 10 to 10 on Sundays.

- 7 After your break, turn **left** out of the pub, walk 200m along on the lane and turn **left** at a fingerpost onto a footpath across the centre of a crop field. At the other side, your path leads straight into the woodland of the Bedlam Plantation. Go straight over a diagonal crossing track in the middle of the wood. At the far end, go through a wooden swing-gate (usually avoidable through a gap on the right) and go diagonally **right** down the hillside. At the bottom, turn **right** on a track, through the same small wooden gate, passing *Bedlam Bottom Cottage*, all familiar from your outward journey. At a tarmac lane, turn **left**, returning to Farleigh Wallop. **If you began the walk here, your adventure is over. The next section takes you back to the little church.**
- 8 After the first house, *Home Farm House*, turn **right** at a fingerpost into the precincts of Home Farm. Keep straight on on a track through the farm and out between fields, downhill and uphill. The track veers left and executes a double bend. The church of St Andrew comes into view. At a two-way fingerpost, turn **left** on an unsigned track, soon with a good view of Basingstoke stretched out in the distance. In 100m, go over a stile on your left, leading to the church. *The church may now be open and is worth a visit.* Turn **right**, going through a small gate to the small parking area where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Farleigh Wallop is near Basingstoke. Arriving by the M3, 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*. **For the church:** 1 mile after going through Cliddesden, turn **left** at a little sign for *Church* on a lane called *Broadmere*. Go through the hamlet and follow the narrow lane for $\frac{1}{3}$ mile to the small dirt parking area just before the church-in-the-field. For **Farleigh Wallop**, do as above, ignoring the left turn and continuing another $\frac{1}{4}$ mile. Turn **left** and go $\frac{1}{3}$ mile into the village. There is a large car park on the left at the start of the village belonging to the Farleigh Wallop Estate. This now (2021) has a visible prohibition to visitors, but there is room on the roadside or on the nearby verge.

By train and bus: Stagecoach C41 runs from Basingstoke to Farleigh Wallop, not Sundays. Check the timetables.



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