



Durford Heath and Milland Mill

Distance: 20 km=12½ miles or 11½ km=7 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 9-apr-2007

Author: Hautboy

Date revised: 2-sep-2016

Refreshments: Rake

Last update: 31-aug-2020

Map: Explorer 133 (Petersfield) *but the guide maps below should be sufficient*

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

Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.

Views, woodland, heath, nature

In Brief

This is a remarkable walk in West Sussex near the Hampshire border, passing through extensive and isolated areas of forest, heath, marsh and meadows. What makes this walk so memorable is the sheer variety of terrain and the dazzling assortment of flora and trees encountered on the way, as though for your private view.

This walk has an optional shortcut after Combe Pond which omits the Mill, the Hanger and Chapel Common.



There are no nettles to worry you on this walk, although you will encounter some undergrowth. After recent rain there are a few muddy patches, so boots are advisable. Your dog will be very welcome on this walk.

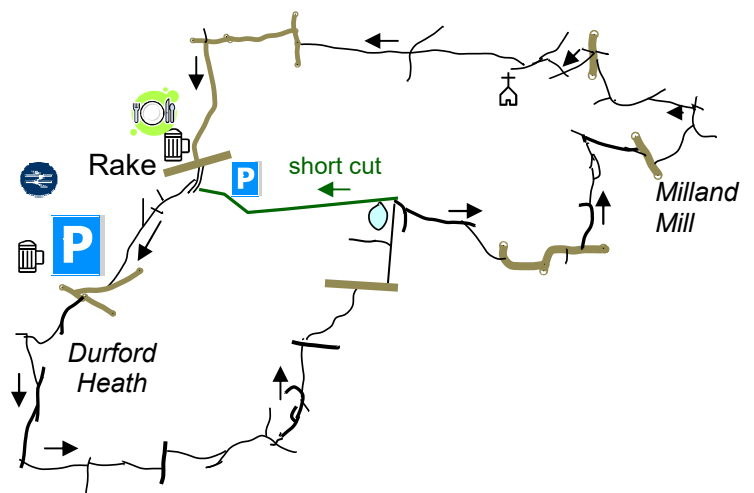


The walk begins at the National Trust **Durford Heath** car park in West Sussex near Liss, Hampshire, **postcode GU33 7QP**.

Alternatively, you can park by the roadside in Rake, nearest postcode **GU33 7QL**. This walk is reachable by **rail**, but with a 2½ km extension each way. For more details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



Bird's Eye View

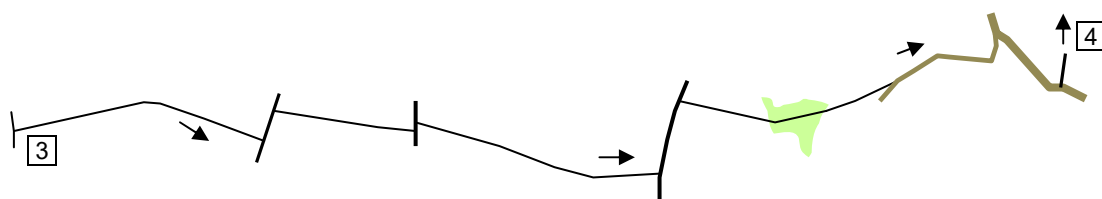
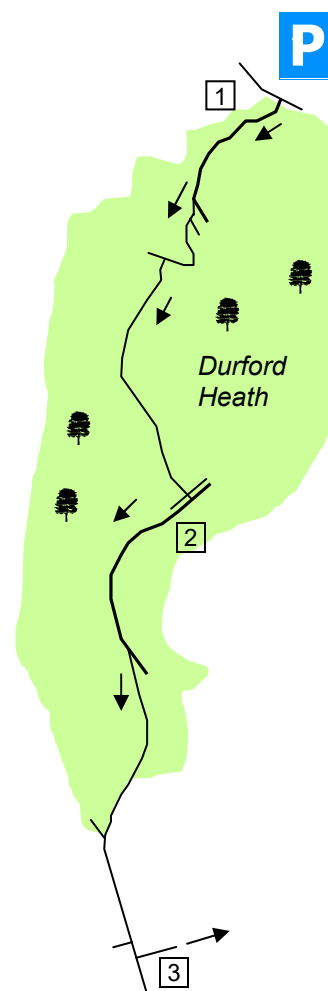


The Walk

Leg 1: Durford Heath to Combe Pond 7½ km=4½ miles

- 1 Take a descending path on the right of the car park, going through a small wooden gate. You are 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.* Soon you reach a fingerpost and a similar NT sign. *This walk now diverges from the SBP in the valley onto a high path to give you a much wider experience of this wonderful region before you leave it.* Take the **right** fork here, thus temporarily leaving the SBP. In 20m, fork **right again** on a path that rises over the beautiful wooded hill. After 300m, the path wheels sharp **right**. In 60m, at the next junction, turn **left** on a path and follow it for nearly 500m on a fine high path through birch and pine until it descends and eventually comes down to the bottom of the valley. Cross over the first wide track and turn **right** at a T-junction on a parallel track, re-joining the SBP.

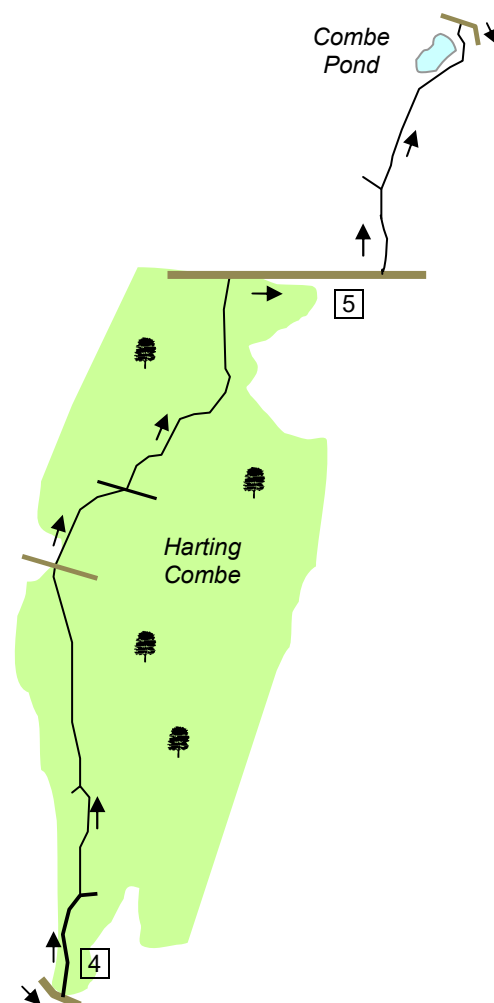
- 2 In about 250m, at a marker post, ignore a left fork and continue uphill in the direction of the blue arrow. Finally, the path comes out of the wood with fine views ahead to the South Downs. Continue, passing a bench under a fingerpost, then another fingerpost, as far as a crossing-path. Here there are two fingerposts, 20m apart. Leave the SBP here by turning **left** at the second fingerpost between fields.



- 3 You pass *Carrols Cottage* on your left. Where the path ends, go through a hedge and turn **left** at a 3-way fingerpost on a sunken path. In 40m, turn **right** by a marker post, as indicated by a yellow arrow, on a footpath which takes you over a stile and across a crop field with more great views of the South Downs (see the *Harting Down* walk in this series). *The rather nondescript farmstead ahead is Tipsall's, where asparagus is grown and harvested in early June using temporary labour.* Another stile leads to a farm track. Continue straight ahead over the track and along the north (left-hand) side of the next field. *This path was completely overgrown a few years ago, forcing walkers to take an unofficial route through the asparagus farm; later it was planted with with pumpkins, walkable but uncomfortable; but in 2019 it is quite ok.* In 400m, at a 2-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a tarmac track, passing a sign for *Commonside House*. In 100m, before reaching a house, at the corner of a fence, turn **right** on a footpath by a marker post with a yellow

arrow. The path crosses a field, goes over a stile and through trees. Keep to the left of *Hunters Cottage*, keeping ahead on a tarmac lane at the hamlet of Halecommon. After 200m, where the lane bends left before a road junction, turn sharp **right** down the major road.

- 4 In 100m, take a bridleway in a driveway on the **left** leading towards a large house. As the driveway bends right, about 50m before the house, turn sharp **left** on a track as indicated by a fingerpost. When your path enters the deep wood, ignore a footpath right and continue straight ahead on the bridleway. In 70m, where the track wheels left, follow the signpost straight ahead on a somewhat narrower path though a thick forest area. In 500m you pass on your right the garden of *Nuttings* and reach a tarmac lane. Cross the lane to a bridleway opposite through Harting Combe. *You may have noticed that you are on the Serpent Trail, marked by a snaky symbol. The Serpent Trail is a 64-mile=108 km long walk following an S-shaped path through the hangers and heathlands of West Sussex between Haslemere and Petersfield.* After a deeply sunken section, your path meets a wide path at a fingerpost. Go straight over on a much narrower rocky path, thus leaving the Serpent Way. Keep to the marked path at all times, through dense pine and larch woods, carefully following the fingerposts which divert you **left** away from the main driveway. **There are a few patches of mud here in the wetter seasons.** The path eventually comes out to a quiet road by the new gates of the Fyning Hill Estate, once owned by Roman Abramovich. Turn **right** on the road.



- 5 After about 600m, 40m before the redbrick gates of *The Combe*, take a footpath **left**. Follow the path along the left-hand side of a field and over a stile, ignoring a footpath on the left, then through woods to reach the lovely Combe Pond. **At a fork, you can keep left along the bank, although if there are anglers present, it may be kinder to take the right fork.** *Combe Pond is managed by the Fyning Hill Estate.* After a wooden bridge and the end of the pond, your path meets a tarmac lane.

Decision point. If you are doing the **shorter** walk, omitting the Mill, the Hanger and Chapel Common, skip to the end of this text and do the **Rake's Progress** short cut.

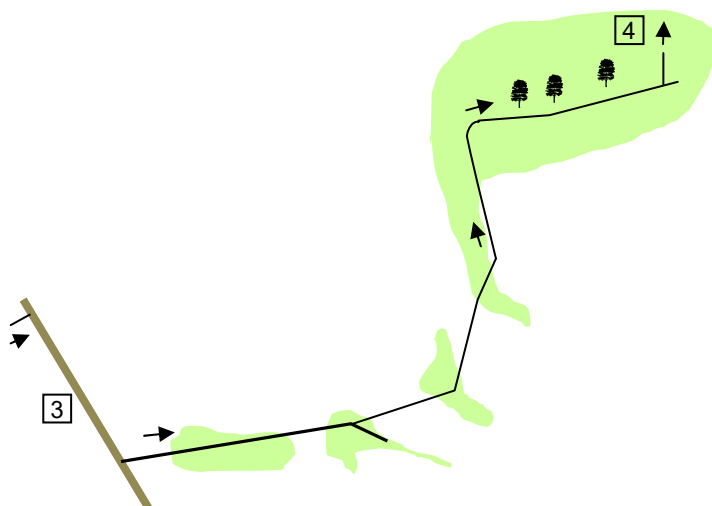
Leg 2: Combe Pond to Milland Church 6¾ km=4¼ miles



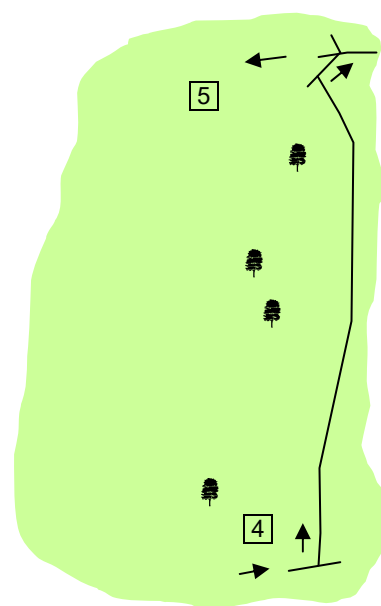
- 1 Go **right** on the lane for 100m and, immediately after a bridge, turn **left**, via an unneeded stile, on a footpath. Turn **left** immediately on a gravel track. Follow this wide track for about 300m and fork **right** at a fingerpost, leaving the track. The path immediately forks left across the grass, avoiding the gate and field on your right, over a small bridge, then over a large wooden footbridge and up through woodland. [2014: a fallen birch obstructs the path, easily ducked.] Where the path meets a meadow on the left, it veers right to run alongside it for just 50m and takes you through a wooden gate to a tarmac driveway at a bend. (On old maps the footpath is incorrectly shown going left to *Canhouse Cottage*). Continue in the same (easterly) direction on the driveway. There are fine views ahead to Woolbeding Common and Blackdown. At the end of the driveway, turn **left** on a road and shortly turn **right** with the road at a bend. After 400m or so on the road, ignore a byway on your right and, 120m further, turn **left** on a signposted footpath through a large metal gate.
- 2 Go straight ahead between meadows and through a gate where the footpath follows a broad track beside a crop field on your left. Ahead you have good views of the wooded hills (hangers) which you will soon see close-up. Where the farm track turns left, go straight on across the meadow heading for a gap where the path passes an unneeded wooden bridge. Soon the track runs alongside a wood on the right. About 30m after a junction with a track on your left, look out for a signpost taking you over a 2-plank bridge on the **right** and through a gate and turn **left** in the meadow, regaining your original direction. (Local people seem to ignore this unnecessary diversion.) At another small wooden gate, re-join the track ahead. In 170m you reach a T-junction. Turn **right** here, avoiding a track on your left in 60m. Your track goes through trees and emerges by a large grassy meadow with farm buildings visible ahead. (The rest of this section follows the official footpath but you can instead stay on the track, soon passing on your left the *Milland Pottery* with wooden benches where you can relax; on reaching the road, turn **right** with an extra 100m further to walk.) At the start of the meadow, go through a

large gate on your **right** and follow the electricity posts across the length of the pasture to a stile under trees, then a grassy path leading to a road.

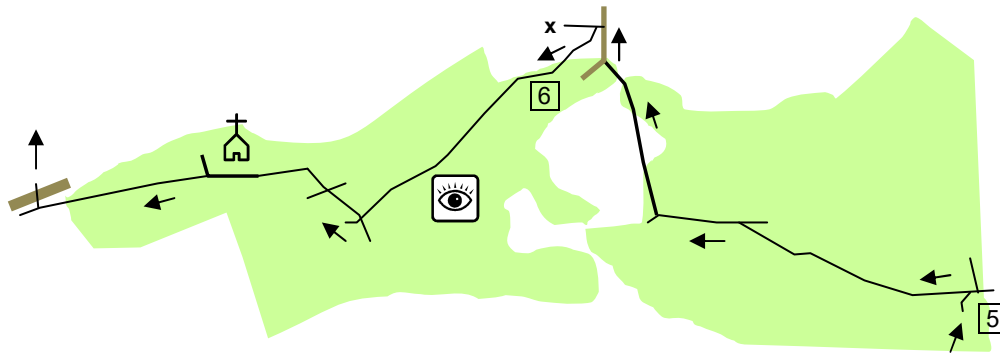
- 3 Turn **right** on the road for 100m and turn **left** on a driveway signposted to Mill Farm and marked as a footpath. *Note the pig weathervane.* In 130m, avoid the beautiful linden avenue that forks right and continue straight ahead leaving the driveway to go across the grass passing to the left-hand side of a garage. Go over a boardwalk and a wooden bridge across the lovely Hammer Stream, then **right** over a stile. The path crosses a meadow with the beautiful *Agecroft Mill House* on the left. *Soon, the mill pond can be seen on the other side of the meadow.* Go over a stile and through a small gate into another meadow. Keep on the left-hand side of this meadow to go over a stile in the corner. Follow the path through trees where it quickly bends **right**. *There are many species of tree here, overlorded by a group of fine oaks, like a secret arboretum.* You come to a junction of paths with a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **left** here to go through a gate in 10m and so into dense woodland.



- 4 This narrow path runs through wonderful woodland with many varieties of plant underfoot. *[Jul 2014: in 120m there are two trees across the path, blocking it completely. 15m before the first tree, take an obscure narrow path on the left that skirts the obstruction in a wide loop. When you pick up the path on the other side be careful: take the woodland path and avoid the parallel path to its right, nearer the edge by the field, where there is a yellow arrow; this path is overgrown and impassable.]* After a short distance, it veers briefly **right** to meet a major junction of paths with a 4-way fingerpost. Go to the fingerpost and turn **sharp left** on another narrow path. *[2017: now widened by forestry vehicles and deeply rutted; be careful!]* This path also exhibits a variety of marsh flora with several fine pine trees over on your left.

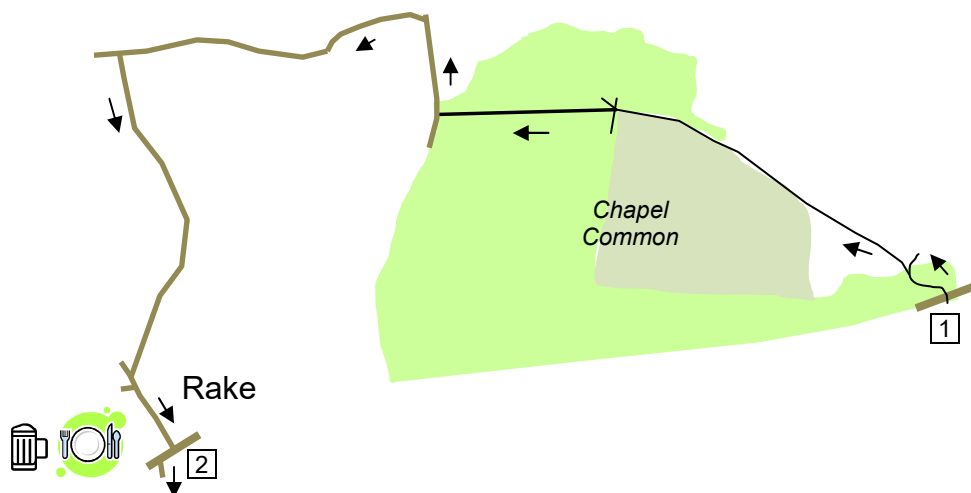


- 5 **See mini-map overleaf.** Suddenly the path zigzags left-right and the terrain changes to dense dark birch woodland. The path is joined by a wider path coming from the left. 200m further, the path wheel right to meet a T-junction. Turn **left** here on a bridleway. In another 150 or so, on reaching a wall, take the **right** fork along the wall past *Milland Place*. *Notice the old bell on the side of the house.* In about 250m uphill you come out between stone columns to a road. Turn **right** along the road for 40m arriving at a fingerpost on the left with several pointers.



- 6 Do *not* go over the stile into a field but turn very sharp **left** alongside a fence, almost doubling back. This section may be overgrown in summer but it is passable and fairly short – so persevere! In 150m, the path goes by the remains of a stile and has woods on each side. If the foliage permits, you may have a spectacular view left across the steep Maysleith Hanger. After about 350m you come to a 4-way fingerpost at a wide crossing path. Turn **right** here and follow the path through tall pines, over a crossing track and through the lichgate of the late-Victorian Milland Church of St Luke. The church is worth visiting with interesting features such as its stained glass, its high ceiling and the old font which had been in the Chapel and was rescued from the undergrowth. The adjoining Tuxlith Chapel is much older, probably dating from the early 1300s. (Tuxlith is the old name of the parish.)

Leg 3: Milland Church to Durford Heath 6¼ km=4 miles



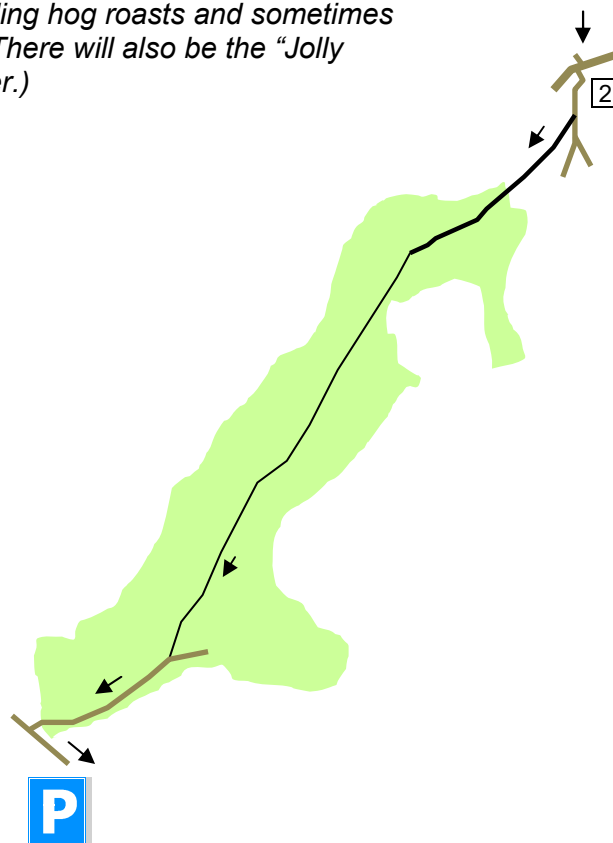
- 1 Pass the church on your right, follow the drive through a small metal kissing-gate and cross straight over, avoiding a tarmac drive on your right. Follow a brideway through the woods, gradually approaching the main road. Look out for a brideway on the other side of the dual carriageway, marked by a fingerpost with a gravelly section in the middle of the grassy central reservation. Turn **right** here to cross the road carefully and take the brideway onto beautiful Chapel Common. Go through a wooden gate to reach a junction of paths 80m further on. Bear **left** at the junction on a wider path and bear immediately **right** with the main path, thus regaining your original direction. You will be following this path in a roughly westerly direction for nearly 1 km straight across the Common. Always keep to the main path ignoring lesser branches and at least two major crossing paths. Notice that you are once again following the *Serpent Trail*, marked by a snake in a purple triangle. Finally you reach a gate and a noticeboard. Take the very

broad rising track straight ahead. On reaching a lane at a T-junction, turn **right**. (As a much less scenic short cut, you can instead turn left here to the outskirts of Rake and turn right on the main road.) Take the quiet farm lane next **left**, passing an entrance to a farm and going into part of Hampshire. Turn **left again** at the next junction, past a thatched cottage, into the village of Rake. On the way, on the right, there is the peaceful meditation and spirituality centre *White Eagle Lodge* which welcomes visitors.



The “Flying Bull” in Rake offers food and a beer garden. It is a large pub offering the impeccable Ringwood ales, providing hog roasts and sometimes acting as a launch area for hot air balloons. (There will also be the “Jolly Drover” in the main road near the car park later.)

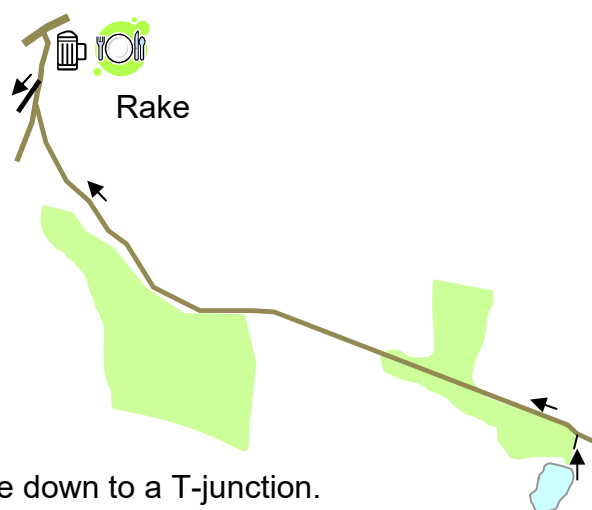
- 2 Take the small road from the centre of Rake opposite the *Flying Bull*, signposted to Rogate. In 50m, avoid a footpath on your right and, 20m later, veer off on a residential track **right** which is part of the Sussex Border Path (SBP). You pass several houses at first, especially *Coombe Farm* with its fine stone crest. Ignore a footpath on your left and stay on the track and soon follow a lovely wooded valley, avoiding several turnings off. The route soon takes a narrower path after passing *Holly Cottage* on your right. *Rake Hanger* is a Site of Special Scientific Interest partly because of its sessile oaks on the upper slopes and its woods of alders. Later you have a choice of paths but they all go the same way. You pass two information boards and finally go through a wooden barrier, approaching a road coming from the left. Join the road and follow it to a T-junction. Turn **left** along the road, immediately reaching on the **right** the car park where the walk began.



Rake's Progress 1½ km=1 mile

Take this short cut if you want to do the **shorter walk**, going direct to Rake.

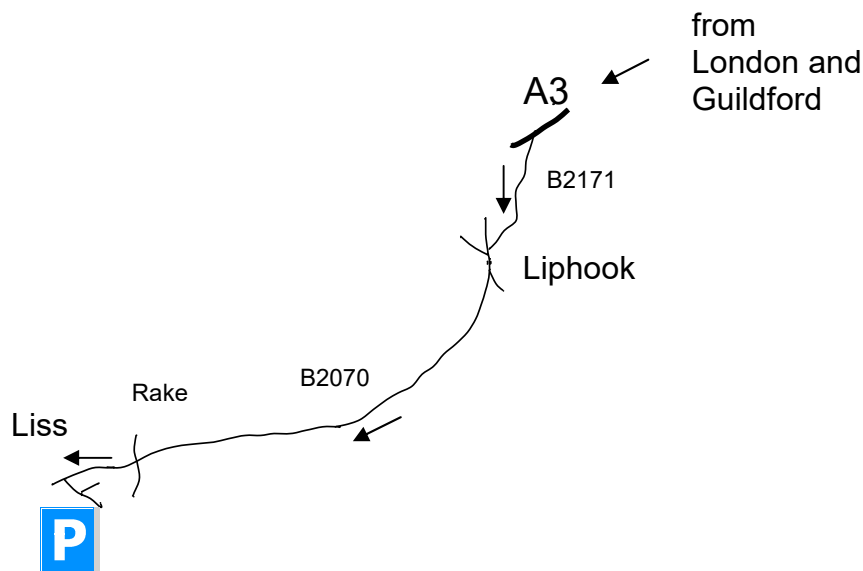
Turn **left** on the lane. You will be walking on this very quiet lane for 1½ km into the village of Rake with only 2½ km remaining to the end of the walk. The lane runs straight with the lake on your left, then some fine woodland, passing a large cottage, a centre known as Rake Industries (looking rather out-of-place), green meadows, a farm and more woodland. Finally, after more houses, you come down to a T-junction. Bear **right** on the major road. In 60m, your route continues sharp **left** on a residential track but first you will want to take refreshments in Rake village which is only 100m further along the road.



Resume the walk now at Leg 3 section 2 of the main walk.

Getting there

By car: The walk begins in the National Trust **Durford Heath** car park in West Sussex near Liss, Hampshire. To get there from the London area, take the A3 past Hindhead and take the exit for Liphook. In the centre of Liphook, take the **second** exit at the **second** mini roundabout, the B2070, Liphook-Petersfield Road. Go through the village of Rake, ignoring a sign for Rogate and, about a mile (1.6 km) further on, turn **left** on a road by the *Jolly Drover* signposted to Rogate. After only 300m (300+ yards), just past a junction with a road on the left, find the small car park almost immediately on the **right**.



By train: It is possible to reach the walk by train from **Liss station**, adding about 5 km=3 miles to the walk in total. The route is not described here but will be clear from the Explorer map.

fancy more free walks? www.fancyfreewalks.org