Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Easebourne and Henley

Distance: 10 km=6¼ miles — easy-to-moderate walking

Region: West Sussex — Date written: 9-may-2022

Author: Hautboy — Last update: 25-sep-2026

Refreshments: Henley, Easebourne

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Views, easy field paths, long woodland trails, villages, pubs

In Brief

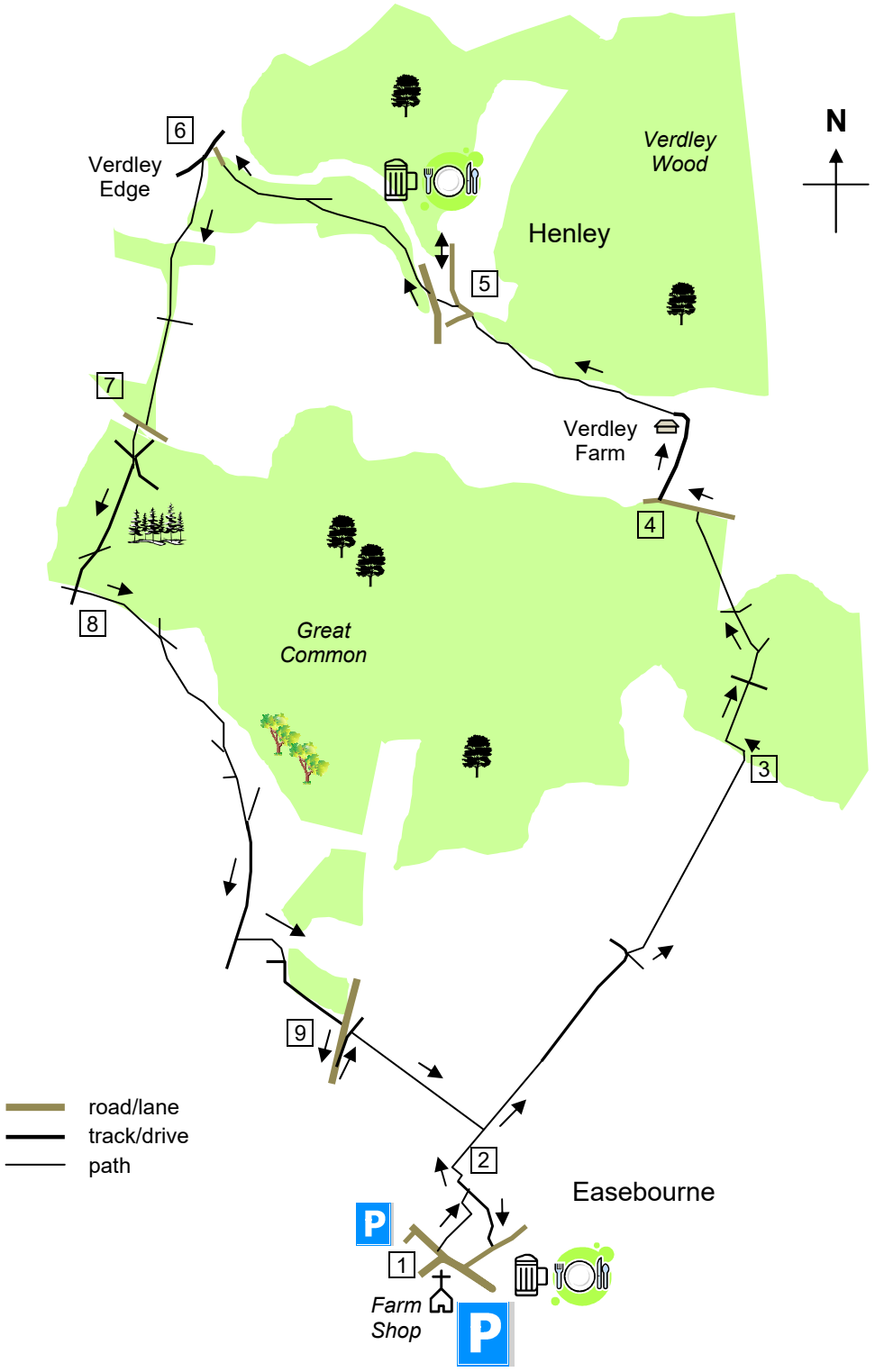
This is a quite heavenly walk from this large West Sussex village up into the wooded hills to visit the picturesque hamlet of Henley where there is a perfect country pub in a flower garden. Much of this walk is on winding forest paths under tall beeches and oaks. For variety, this walk includes stretches on a field edge or in meadows to give you the best views. Sometimes the terrain is dramatic, along a sunken path or through coppices. If you have done other walks in this series in the same region, you will find many of the paths new and unfamiliar. There are one or two slightly rougher or steeper sections, making this walk just a little more challenging.

There is an iconic pub at the middle and end of this walk (to enquire at the *Duke of Cumberland*, ring 01428-652280, for the *White Horse*, it's 01730-813521.) Note that the *Duke of Cumberland* in Henley does not open till 12 noon (although they may be happy for you to wait in their garden).

Because this walk keeps mainly clear of farmland, you won't encounter many nettles or other uncomfortable undergrowth. (However, the path down into Henley goes through some prickly hollies.) The walk was researched in a dry May when any tough shoes would have been fine. In a a wet season, it is still *relatively* dry but boots would be advisable. Your dog can come too.

The walk begins in **Easebourne** (near Midhurst) in West Sussex, postcode GU29 9AG where there is a car park by Cowdray Park farm shop and café (w3w:wacky.shin.outfitter), as well as roadside parking. (The author parked in Cowdray Road: w3w:plugged.newsreel.centrally.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk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Easebourne, pronounced "Ezborn" or "Ezbun" to distinguish it from that East Sussex seaside resort, is a modest village and parish on the River Rother, dominated by the great Priory and the remains of Cowdray House. Actors Billie Piper and Laurence Fox were married here in St. Mary's church. It is well-known locally for its fine golf course and its polo ground (in common with its larger neighbour Midhurst). The Augustinian Priory was founded in the 1200s by the local de Bohun family. The Tudor Cowdray House was built in the early 1500s but was devastated by fire in 1793 and has not been occupied since then. The church is notable for the fine carved memorials in the south east corner. One group is of the grieving William and Elizabeth Poyntz. Their two sons William and Courtnay were boating in 1815 off Bognor with their father. Elizabeth reputedly had a superstitious dread of water and had stayed at home and was watching from the window with her three daughters when a sudden squall capsized the boat and the two boys drowned.

If you parked in the car park at Cowdray Park farm shop and café, turn **left** on the main road for 100m, ignore a road junction on your right, go another 50m and turn **right** on Wheelbarrow Castle.

1 The walk begins in the centre of Easebourne at a bend in the A272 main road, at a junction with the A286 road, called Wheelbarrow Castle. Go along Wheelbarrow Castle for only 20m to find a flight of steps on your **right**, marked as a public footpath. Go up the steps onto a path which runs beside Easebourne Park on your left, a play park and nature area. The path slips slightly right and bends left beside a cemetery. *Note the sculpted tree trunks.* Your path turns right beside allotments. At the top, turn **left** on a track. But, in only 30m, just after a wooden seat, fork **right** at a marker post out into a crop field.

2 Follow the path as it turns right between fields. In 150m, at a 3-way finger-post, keep straight on, passing beneath wires. *Looking back soon, you have a great view of the South Downs.* Continue on a farm track, shortly joining a semi-tarmac track known as Wick Lane. After 350m along this deep ferny cutting, the track bends left to meet a new 4-way fingerpost. Ignore the track on the left and a narrow footpath sharp right but turn **right** on a farm track uphill, thus regaining your original direction. The path runs along the right-hand side of a crop field, passing under power lines. At the next field, take a wide path ahead, with a new barbed wire fence on your right. At the top, go directly ahead into woods.

3 *The paths here are used by the Cowdray Hunt, part of the Pony Club, and you may see many young riders.* Your path immediately turns **left** at a marker post. In 50m or so, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a broad woodland path. You pass between two wooden huts, the left one having a table, ideal for an early picnic. Cross straight over a track, following a 2-way fingerpost. In nearly 100m you meet a marker post with a yellow arrow. Take the **left** fork, in the direction of the arrow. In 130m, cross straight over a crossing path. Your path leads across a heath and straight through a long coppice, with bluebells in late spring. At the end of the path, turn **left** on a tarmac lane.

4 In 130m, as the lane begins to descend, turn **right** on a signposted wide gravel track, leading to Verdley Farm. Keep straight ahead with the farm buildings on your left, finally turning **left** before a wooden fence. Go through a small wooden gate (close it!) into a horse paddock. Keep to the left side, enjoying great views right, across Verdley Wood. At the far corner, go through a wooden barrier to the right of an unnecessary stile,

onto a woodland path. If you hear gunfire, this originates from the nearby Hownhall Shooting Range – they don't roam the open country! After 300m along this path, with a steep drop on your right, at a marker post, your path forks **right** downhill *(don't miss this turn!)*. Shortly, you are walking along a high path with terrific views into the valley by Henley. Your path descends and takes you down steps with a handrail. You come down to a tarmac lane at a bend. Turn **right** downhill, for only 40m, to a fingerpost. Your walk continues **left** here.

But first you simply cannot pass up this chance for a quick excursion through this pretty hamlet to the very chic *Duke of Cumberland*, only 200m down the road. Return the way you came.

Henley is a hamlet with just sixteen houses, one of which is a pub and another a converted mission hall. Over half the buildings are Grade 2 listed and date back to 1575 or before, which makes the hamlet a heritage site. Watercourses run through it, sourced from a prolific local spring which never dries up even in the driest summer. Up to the early 1950s the whole lane was made up of huge, pillow-shaped cobbles the origin of which is still believed to be Roman.

The "Duke of Cumberland", hardly changed from two hundred years ago, draws people from afar who appreciate its unusual rural setting. The Duke - as it is affectionately called - has several acres of woodland gardens with ponds, streams, rushets, sinks and troughs - with trout swimming in them - and a cobbled path which leads to the front door. There is still gas lighting in the pub and long wooden tables surround a small bar. The pub is tiny and full of character with old framed deeds on the walls and other icons from a line of tenant publicans with fishing and other country interests.

5 Having turned **left** at the fingerpost (that is, **right** if coming back from the pub), go over a 2-plank bridge, up steps and across a drive by a house onto a shingle path which curves left and leads you up more steps, over a stile and through undergrowth to the main road. Cross the road carefully to a fingerpost [Jan 2024: grounded and hard to spot] marking a narrow footpath on the other side. *Note that you are on part of the Serpent Trail, a 64-mile snaking route from Haslemere to Petersfield.* After a brief section of undergrowth, your route becomes a beautiful level path beneath tall sycamores and beeches. At a marker post it begins to descend and, 500m from the road, is joined by another footpath from the right. In a further 300m you come out to a shingle path, passing some houses, to a T-junction in the hamlet of Verdley Edge.

6 Turn sharp **left** onto a tarmac track. At a 3-way fingerpost, go straight ahead up a grass slope, thus leaving the Serpent Trail. The path runs between two posts onto a sunken course under tall beeches. (There have been several tree falls and the path is strewn with woodland debris; but the trunks have been diligently sawn up to give you an easy passage; there is a diversion around one and only two require evasive measures, stepping over one and ducking under another.) This section of the path is clearly home to many badgers, judging by the number of setts along both sides. After 500m or so, go over an avoidable stile, cross a farm drive, and go over a stile onto a continuation of the woodland path, with more bluebells in late spring. In 300m the path ends at a road.

7 Cross the road, slightly right, onto a signed footpath which goes beside a house on its left. In 150m you come to a 5-way junction. Avoid a path sharp right but veer **right** onto the *second* path from the right. (The path on its left, straight ahead, i.e. the *second* path from the *left*, also winds its

complex way to the same point **(*)** in the next section, before Easebourne, but the route given here is quite beautiful.) Your path goes through a replanted forest area and then through dense pines. You pass under wires. 100m after the wires, your route goes straight across a diagonal crossing path, as indicated by a waymarker, onto a more grassy path. In a further 200m, you come to a major crossing with a 4-way fingerpost.

8 Turn **left** onto the crossing path. You are on a natural narrow woodland path with a bank and a coppice on your right. 300m from the junction you meet a diagonal crossing path and overhead wires. Veer **right** onto this level path, passing a waymarker as confirmation. Your path runs through pleasant light woodland. In 400m you join a wide path coming from the right, and soon another. A wide footpath joins from the left **(*)** as you pass beneath power lines. You pass two cottages as the path becomes tarmac. 150m further on, opposite a driveway, turn **left** up steps on a nice straight path with great views of the South Downs. (As you see, there will soon be two rows of young beeches along the right-hand edge.) The path runs under tall oaks and leads over a stile to join a driveway coming from a house, *Whitters Farm*. Follow the drive to meet the main road just outside Easebourne.

9 Turn **right** on the road using the footway on this side. (Some intrepid walkers cross straight over to an unmarked path, descending a steep slope, going right and left.) In 100m, cross the road and double back **left**, on a tarmac drive, Winters Lane. Just before a house, at a fingerpost, turn **right** on a footpath, up steps, past a "sliding beam" gate, into a crop field. Take a path straight ahead, following wires. In 500m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a path, familiar from your outward journey. Stay on the path as it turns left and right and turn **left** on a track near allotments. In 50m, if you keen to return home, you can turn **right** on the same outward path, down steps to the road; otherwise... Continue past an apartment block and cottages to a street in Easebourne. Turn **right** to find the *White Horse*, a gem of a pub, afterwards reaching the main road near where the walk began.

The White Horse quite a fancied pub/restaurant, partly because of its quaint charm, and partly thanks to its celebrity chef Daniele Boccardi who gives the menu a strong Italian twist. It is the HQ of the White Horse Shooting Club (see the note above about Hownhall) and they even invite customers to join them. The garden and terrace has its own bar "Woody's" and did we detect waitress service?! Note that there may not be a full menu out-of-season.

Getting there

By car: Easebourne is on the main Chichester road, the A286. If coming from the London / Guildford direction, take the A3 trunk road and go through Haslemere, following signs for *Midhurst*.

By bus/train: bus 70 from Haslemere Station to Easebourne. Check the timetables.

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