Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Titty Hill, Rother Villages, Henley

Distance: 20 km=12½ miles easy walking with exertive sections
or 2 sections of 14 km=9 miles and 10 km=6 miles

Region: West Sussex Date written: 21-jul-2011

Author: Hautboy Date revised: 24-apr-2013

Refreshments: Henley, Milland Last update: 28-aug-2026

Map: Explorer 133 (Haslemere)

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

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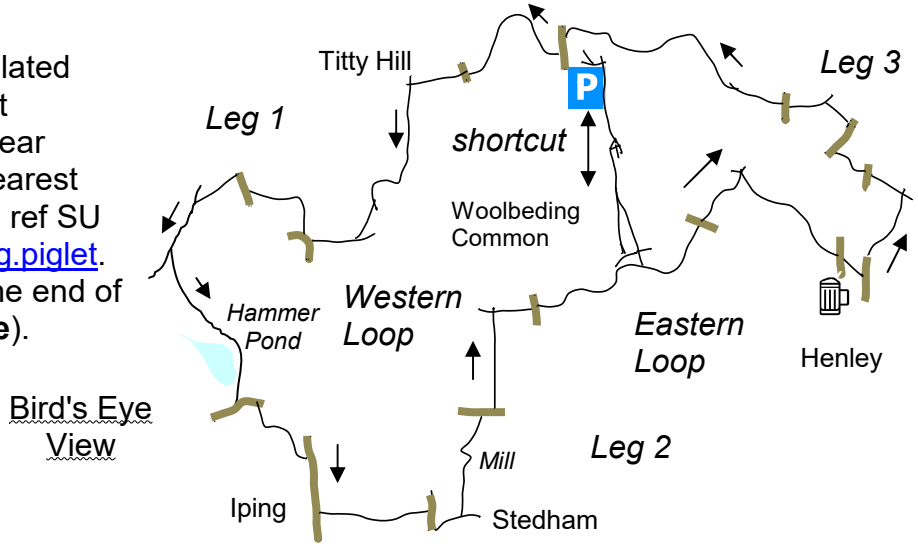
Hills, views, woodland, hidden lakes, heath, villages, Buddhist retreat

In Brief

This is a walk of haunting beauty in the fascinating and complex hills and moorlands of West Sussex, though easily accessible from London. The walk makes a satisfying day but it can be split into two shorter sections. The *Western Loop* visits Titty Hill, the Hammer Pond, the Buddhist Retreat and the villages of the Rother Valley. The *Eastern Loop* visits Henley and the woodlands that surround it. The star refreshment stop is in Henley in the Eastern Loop, in the form of the *Duke of Cumberland* (ring 01428-652280 for information). This walk is another tribute to Raymond Hugh's *Adventurous Walks* books and follows one of those routes, with minor changes.

There are some nettles and scratchy undergrowth in the woodland near Redford and, in high summer some thick ferns and nettles on the path to Stedham, making a stick (hiking pole) all but necessary. Because of the gradients and rough - and occasionally damp - terrain, you will be most comfortable wearing boots. (Note that some of the bridges on this walk are made from railway sleepers and are *extremely slippery* when wet!) Your dog will enjoy this walk.

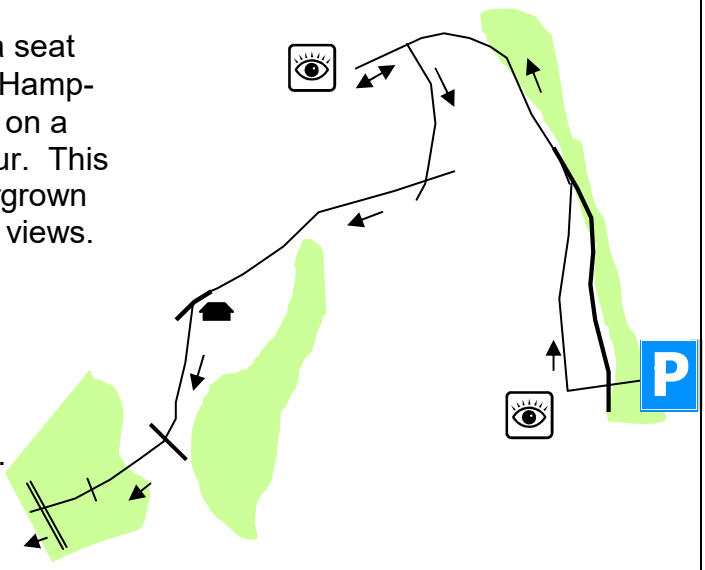
The walk begins in the isolated **National Trust** car park at **Woolbeding Common**, near Redford, West Sussex, nearest postcode **GU29 0QD**, grid ref SU 868261, w3w:highly.wiping.piglet. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



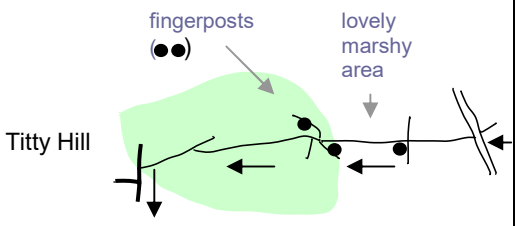
The Walk

Decision point. If you are doing the shorter **Eastern Loop**, go to the end of this text and start with section called **Woolbeding Common South** . The text below is the start of the Western Loop and of the Full Walk.

Leg 1: Woolbeding Common to Iping 8 km=5½ miles

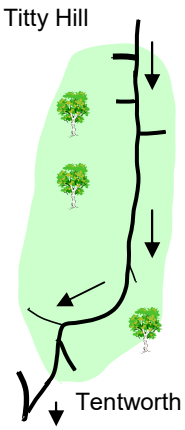


1 From the car park, cross the lane towards a seat where there is a great view westwards into Hampshire. Just 10m **before** the seat, turn **right** on a narrow level path that runs along the contour. This winding path through gorse may seem overgrown but it is quite easy to follow and gives great views. It comes back to the lane by a seat and a marker post. Don't re-join the lane but instead turn left through a small wooden gate onto a wider level track. Where the track nears a triangulation pillar (possibly hidden) on the right, veer **left** with the track. In 25m, take the **left** of two parallel paths. At a marker post with the *Serpent Trail* snake symbol, turn left through a small wooden gate and onto a path heading down into the valley. However, by continuing another 50m (and back), you reach a seat with more great views. The path curves right and reaches a marker-posted junction after 150m. Veer **right** here, going through another of the small wooden gates in the electric fences and onto a level path. The path runs through ferns and woodland and, after 250m, reaches a house, *Barnetts Cottage*. Keep **right** past the house and, at their round parking space, keep **left** following the wooden fence onto a narrow footpath. In 50m, cross straight over a tarmac drive, passing a garden and another house, *Honeysuckle Cottage*, on your left. Cross straight over their drive and go down a narrow path down a bank opposite to reach a wide gravel driveway by a signpost. Cross straight over the drive onto a narrow path leading through woods. At the next marker post, the path on the left leads to a beautiful lake, but this is not on your route. The path eventually leads down to the road near Redford, just by the village name sign.

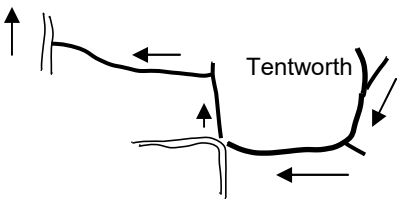


2 Cross straight over the road to a path opposite. The path leads through woods for 150m to a signposted 4-way junction at the edge of an open area. Go straight across on a path in a luminous area of marsh grass with very young birches. You reach a 4-way fingerpost. Veer **right** to a 3-way fingerpost on the edge of an oak forest. Veer right here (following the Serpent Trail emblem) to reach another 3-way fingerpost only 10m away. Veer left onto a woodland path, thus regaining your original direction, again following the Serpent Trail symbol. The Serpent Trail is a 108 km=67-mile sinewy path from Petersfield to Haselmere. Follow this enchanting path through light woods to a 3-arm fingerpost at a T-junction. Turn left here. This path leads up to another 3-arm fingerpost by track. Turn left on the track to reach immediately the hamlet of Titty Hill *(named after the little birds that favour this area, not the shape of the hill)* with its charming green and cottages.

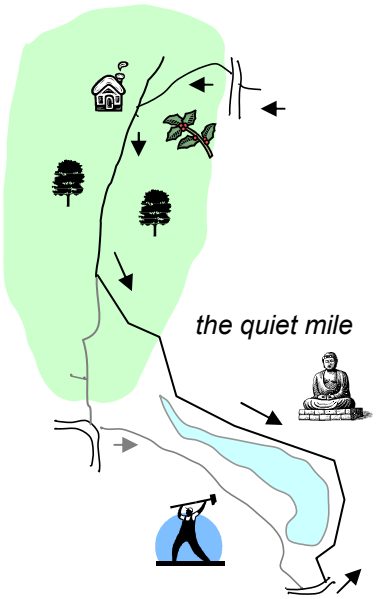
3 Keep left on a track, signposted to *Wispers*, thus avoiding a private drive ahead and leaving the *Serpent Trail* which bends away right. In 150m at a 3-arm fingerpost, avoid a bridleway branching off on the right and, in nearly 250m, ignore a bridleway on the left. When you see a house 300m further on, take the right fork, as directed by a marker post. Just before the house, take a very narrow , uphill track , passing the house on your right. Your track zigzags left-right in 100m. After nearly 200m more, keep **right** on a sunken path thus avoiding a dead-end branch. Any mud here is short-lived. Soon after, where the path curves left, ignore a signed footpath on the right. 50m later, at a post, take the **right** fork, following the blue, not the mauve, arrow. The path rises. Oaks and birches give way to rhododendrons and you emerge suddenly at the immaculate landscaped garden hamlet of Tentworth.



4 Keep in the same direction, gradually approaching and joining the driveway on the right. Follow this tarmac drive, curving right, and going another 300m, joining a private track from your right and meeting a road at a bend. Turn **right** on the road and immediately turn **right** again at a 1-arm fingerpost onto a sandy, later stony, byway that runs between banks. In 400m, look out for a 3-way signpost, high up on your right. Turn **left** here onto a path by a coppice which is full of bluebells in May. The track has ancient stone walls on both sides and soon goes through hollies and runs past the garden of *Stubbsfield*. It is then joined by driveways coming from the houses and meets a road. Turn **right** on the road.



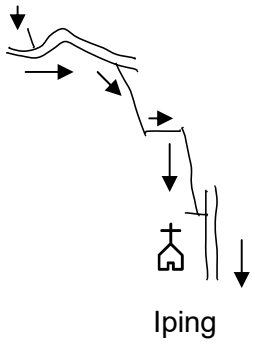
5 After just 50m, take a footpath on the **left**. *(Well hidden: don't miss!)* It runs initially parallel to the road. This path curves left with fine views south and then drops down through woodland ,reaching a 3-arm fingerpost at a T-junction by the most delightful cottage and garden with spectacular magnolias. Turn **left** here, passing the cottage. After roughly 400m, look to your left for a large wooden gate and a "welcome" sign. Now is the time to finish any topics of conversation and prepare for twenty minutes of **quiet**, a chance to contemplate silently the wonderful country. Fork **left** (*) over a stile, or through the gate, into the grounds of Chithurst Buddhist Retreat, known as *Cittaviveka*.



The monastery was established in 1979 in the lineage of the Thai Forest Tradition of Theravada Buddhism. The current abbot Ajahn Sucitto was born in London in 1949 and became a bhikkhu in 1976. The resident community consists of 20-25 monks, nuns and novices, as well as lay guests. Uniquely in Europe, the monastery owns this wonderful 144-acre (60 ha) Hammer Wood.

This wide path runs high above a wooded stream valley on your right. It curves left to arrive at a 3-way junction. Bear **right** here on a high path with more views below as you reach the Hammer Pond. *This area was a centre of the iron industry for many years before the age of coal.* The path goes down steps to the sandy lakeside. It bends left by a millrace and shortly goes left up steps. Turn **right** on a track, going past some buildings of the Retreat. Immediately turn sharp **left** uphill on a rough tarmac lane. [* If permission to use the path through the Retreat is withdrawn (as it was during the "pandemic") or is not evident, simply continue past a zigzag to a road, turn immediately **left** on another path and follow it to the same tarmac lane. (See grey lines on mini-map.)]

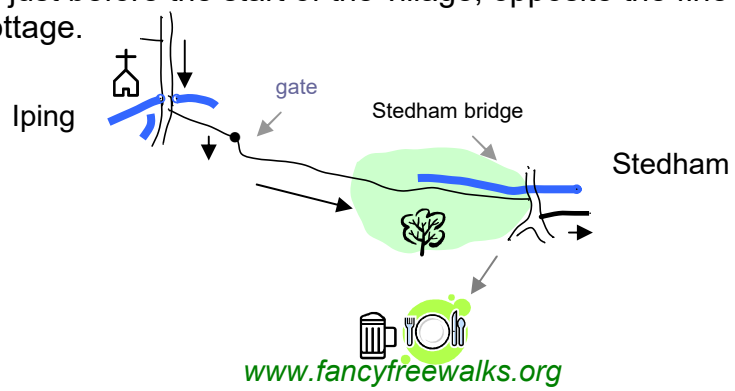
6 Follow the lane between banks until it levels out and emerges into the open. Here turn diagonally **right** at the opening to a field and cross the field diagonally, as indicated by a footpath sign. (If crops are growing across the field, simply keep left and right at the corner as far as an oak tree.) In the opposite corner, go **left** over a stile under an oak tree. Where the hedge on your right ends, keep straight ahead towards a strip of woodland. At a waymarker [Aug 2026: grounded], turn **right** and head along the length of the meadow in the direction of some houses, keeping close to the left hand side. At the far side, go through a metal swing-gate onto a track, turn **left** and immediately **right** on the road. Welcome to Iping!



The name Iping *comes from the name of a Saxon chief "Ipa". Just north of here was a Roman settlement, a walled town of modest size. The River Rother runs through the village and the bridge over it is partly from the 1600s with its four round arches. Just west of there are mill buildings. The mill was valued at 3s.4d. in the Domesday Book. At different times there were a wheat-mill, a malt-mill, a fulling-mill and a paper-mill here. Iping is the setting for H.G.Wells' book "The Invisible Man".*

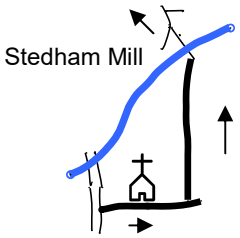
Leg 2: Iping to Henley 6 km=4 miles

7 Pass St Mary's Church, which is worth a visit, ignore a fingerpost indicating the New Lipchis Way and continue along the road to the picturesque bridge and river course from where the old newly-converted mill buildings can be seen. 50m after the bridge, opposite a private drive, turn **left** on a bridleway. Cross a drive and join a gravel drive straight ahead, going between gardens. In 30m, at a 2-arm fingerpost, turn **right** through a metal gate on a path running parallel to the drive. The path runs between fields and then through woodland with the River Rother down on the left. It ends at a road in Stedham. As a quick diversion here, it is worth walking a short distance to the left to admire the old bridge and the view of Stedham Hall along the riverside. Turn **right** on the road to Stedham for 80m to the first road junction by 30-mph signs just before the start of the village, opposite the fine 17th-century *Tye Hill* cottage.

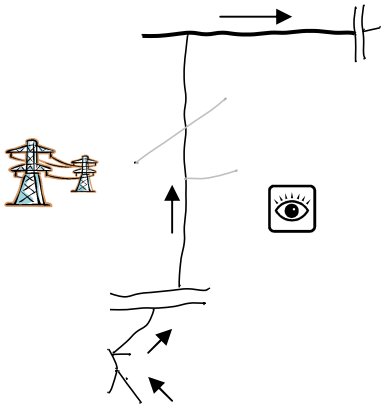


The parish of Stedham, like so many in this area, is long and thin, going up to near the Surrey border. The church of St James is mentioned in the Domesday Book and was probably extended in the 1200s and again in the 1600s. One of its windows is from the 1100s. Its ancient yew tree is said to be 2000 years old. Stedham Hall, north of the church, is a building of stone and timber-framing dating from the middle of the 1500s but with many later alterations. The village is well worth exploring and it is easy to navigate a little circular walk around the green. The Hamilton Arms in School Lane is unfortunately a bit off the route but it is probably worth the effort for those that like authentic Thai food to continue the theme after the monastery.

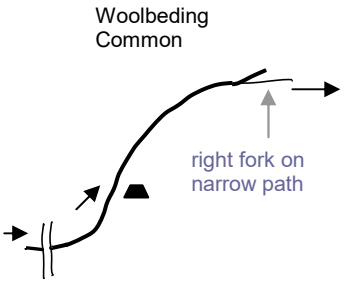
8 Fork sharp **left** at that first road junction and go past the church. From here, the Hall is visible over on the left. (If you take the path to the church, you have to jump down to the road or backtrack as there is no path on the other side.) At a junction, turn **left** with the tarmac lane. The lane passes the entrance to Stedham Hall and then a stud that keeps Lipizzaner horses. *You can tell how ancient some of the hedges here are from Hooper's Rule: "the number of different species in thirty yards of a hedge equals roughly the hedge's age in centuries".* The lane ends at the picturesque *Stedham Mill*, an old flour mill, beside the River Rother. Veer **left** and cross the river here over the little footbridge by the weir. (The stepping stones are *not* usable.)



9 Go through a wooden swing-gate and, at a 3-arm fingerpost, ignore footpaths on your left and right. Instead, continue to the other side and join a path that climbs steeply uphill eventually meeting a road. Turn **right** on the road and in 50m turn **left** by a fingerpost up a bank, through a tall wooden gate, and into a field. Continue along the left-hand side of the field, gently uphill. You must have noticed that the walks in this series usually try to avoid these large fields, preferring pleasant grassy meadows. But the effort is repaid here when you near the top and look back: a fine view of the South Downs! In the next corner, go through another tall wooden gate to continue similarly between fences, passing under power lines. At the next corner, leave the field edge to go ahead through a gap. Turn **right** on a grassy track between fields. At the corner, take a short woodland path to a road.



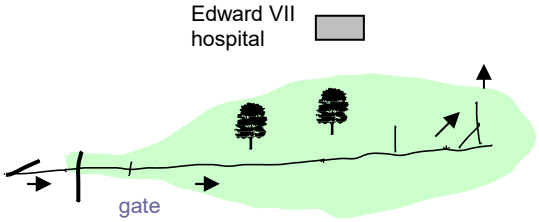
10 Cross the road, a fraction right, to a public footpath with a sign for *Dene House*. Always keep straight ahead on the main stony track, avoiding any paths branching off left. Your path leads through woodland and gently uphill into the open. This is Pound Common, another part of Woolbeding Common, albeit remote from your starting point. On reaching a house on the right, 300m from the road, keep straight ahead steeply uphill, avoiding a footpath on the right by a paling fence. The path leads up into an open land-scape. In another 350m or so, gently uphill, with a dense band of trees visible ahead, you will see a yellow arrow indicating a narrow path forking **right** beside a stone wall with a field on the other side.



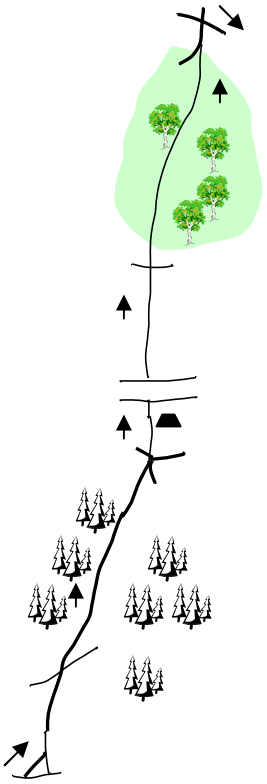
Decision Point. If you are doing only the **Western Loop**, you should now take the short cut back to the car park: go to section called **Woolbeding Common North**, near the end of this text.

To continue the full walk, take the indicated **right** fork.

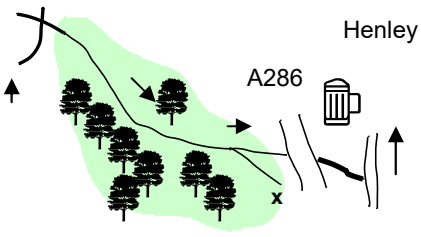
11 There are views right across the fields. After 150m, go over a crossing track at a 3-way fingerpost. The start of the Eastern Loop joins the walk here. At a National Trust sign for Woolbeding Common, go through a wide gap beside a small wooden gate. Always keeping to the main path, continue through chestnut woods (now felled on your right). Soon the green-shuttered buildings of the old King Edward VII hospital (now a top-drawer apartment complex) come into view on the left. Shortly after the view of the hospital, ignore a wide unsigned path at a junction on the left. Just 70m further on, at a 4-way fingerpost, turn **left**. (Most people cut the corner.) *Do not miss this turn!*



12 Your path goes through a conifer plantation. In 100m, you reach an oblique crossing path where the path continues ahead through more plantations. Eventually you reach a 4-arm fingerpost with a white house just ahead. Go straight ahead on a narrow path passing just to the left of the house. It leads up to a road. Go straight across the road on a signposted footpath. The path is stony at first but in spring there are plenteous bluebells. In under 300m, the path crosses a track via two stiles. This ancient byway gradually descends through tall beeches and eventually arrives at the small settlement of Verdley Edge. Go down a grass slope to meet a 3-arm fingerpost. Turn **right** and join the drive. You have rejoined the *Serpent Trail*.



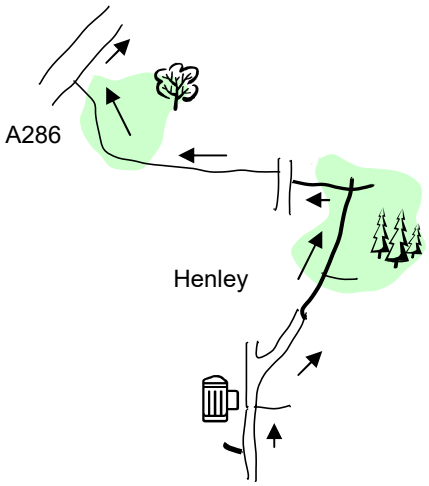
13 In 30m, turn sharp **right** at a crossing with a fingerpost, going past *The Lodge* and outbuildings with a clock. The path goes up through woods and becomes sunken. There is probably the sound of traffic from the busy A286 road below. After 250m you pass a 3-arm fingerpost. 100m further, at a fingerpost, fork **left**, thus leaving the *Serpent Trail*. Continue, gently ascending another 100m or so. Your narrow path levels out and passes a marker post before it descends to the main road. Cross it carefully to a bus stop opposite and go down a tarmac drive to its **right**. (There is a short cut left into the garden of the pub in case you intend to visit.) At the bottom, turn sharp **left** on a lane in the hamlet of Henley and in a few metres reach the *Duke of Cumberland*.



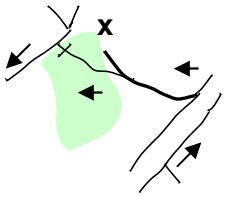
Henley is a hamlet with just sixteen houses, one of which is the Duke of Cumberland pub. For a longer description, see another walk in this series: "Woolbeding Common & The Temple of the Winds".

Leg 3: Henley to Woolbeding Common 5 km=3½ miles

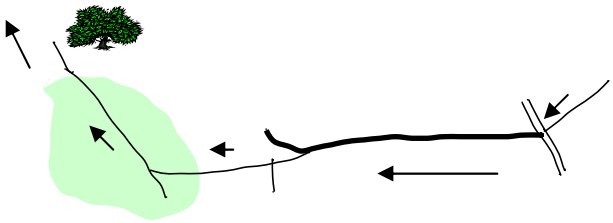
14 Continue down the lane, ignoring the first signposted track on the right and, just past a red 'phone box and *Old Smugglers*, take the **right** fork. This lane passes two lovely old cottages and becomes a track. Shortly, ignore a track on the right. In over 400m, at a major crossing track with a 4-way fingerpost and a barrier on the right, turn **left** on a footpath. The wide path leads to a lane. Go straight over, fractionally right, along the right hand side of a conifer plantation, and along a grassy path. The path enters woods in a rather muddy section and bends right before steel buildings, goes over two small bridges and reaches the main road. Turn **right** along the road.



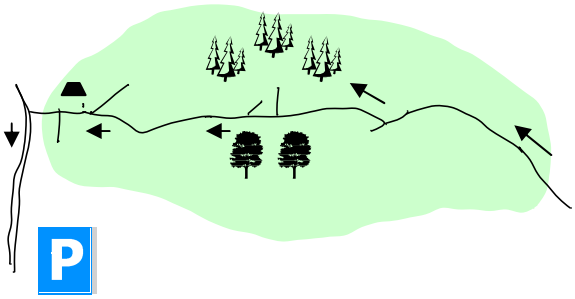
15 Go past Dawes Farm on the right and shortly after it turn sharp **left** on a track signposted to *Lassams Farm*. In 100m or so, just after a house on the right, turn **left** opposite the garages of the house. Cross over the grass to reach a marker post and continue straight ahead. The path goes through woods steeply down, over a 2-plank bridge, up the other side to a track and junction with two houses on the right. Turn **left** on the track.



16 At a crossing, go straight over on a tarmac drive. In over 500m, just after a gate on the right to Stable Cottage, fork left on a track, as waymarked. In 200m, at a T-junction, turn **right** as indicated by a marker-post. The track passes a pond on the right, curves right with the fence and passes a 2-arm fingerpost. You soon pass an unneeded stile and another 2-way fingerpost. Your path now crosses a meadow with a large lone oak tree in the middle.



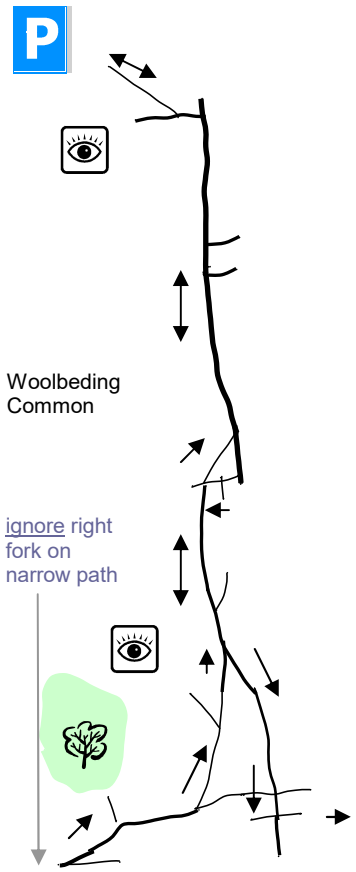
17 On the other side of the meadow, keep straight ahead on a long wide path through a dark wood, as directed by a 2-arm fingerpost. The path comes out into the light and curves **left** at a marker post. At the next marker post, wheel **right** in the direction of the arrow. The wide path passes through more forest, both conifer and broadleaf. Ignore all paths on the right. Eventually the path goes by a wooden gate where it keeps straight ahead past a garden and house (*Older Hill Cottage*) on the right. At a T-junction turn left. You are now on a sunken lane that shortly leads back to the car park where the walk began.



The Redford Coffee Lounge is no more and is now a small tailoring and music repair business. The "Rising Sun" in Milland is a quite excellent nearby inn, open all day at weekends. There is also a shop in Milland which sells snacks and drinks.

Woolbeding Common North 1½ km=1 mile

Take this **short cut** if you have decided to do only the **Western Loop** and to return to the car park on Woolbeding Common.



Follow the **upward** arrows in the map opposite. Ignore the marked footpath on the right and stay on the wide track. On your left, avoid a large wooden gate leading into a new plantation. Just after the gate, take the **left** fork, a grassy path parallel to the track on your right. The path veers left away from the track and, in 50m, wheels left, gently uphill. After 200m, ignore a path branching off left and take the **right** fork past a clump of silver birches. A path joins from the left and then a signposted path from the right. 40m later, at a fingerpost, fork **left** on an unsigned path. (This route runs parallel to the official footpath and is more attractive.) Eventually this wide open moorland path comes through gorse to a clearing with a small car park. Veer right past the car park and turn **left** on a wide gravel track. The track passes the entrance to *Scotland Farmhouse*, after which ignore another track on the right (with a Serpent Trail symbol). 250m further, at the next junction, turn **left**. In 60m, fork **right** on a lesser signposted path which leads down to the car park. *For refreshments, see the end of the main walk.*

Woolbeding Common South 1½ km=1 mile

Do this section at the start if you are only doing the **Eastern Loop**, missing Titty Hill, the Hammer Pond and the Rother Valley villages.

Before beginning the walk, cross the lane to a seat and admire the magnificent view from Woolbeding Common across to Hampshire and further south on a clear day to the South Downs. Return to the car park to begin the walk.

Follow the **downward** arrows in the mini-map above. From the car park, take a path on the left of the notice board marked as the *Serpent Trail*. Soon this joins a sandy track coming from the right, note the curled serpent carving on your right. At a T-junction, turn **right** on a wide gravel track. In 250m, ignore a left turn at a junction, soon passing the entrance to *Scotland Farmhouse*. 130m after this, just past the entrance to a small car park, at a 3-way signpost, turn **right**. In 20m, at a 3-way fingerposted junction, keep straight ahead. (The route given here runs parallel to the official footpath and is more attractive.) In 20m, at a crossing path, turn **left**. After some distance through gorse and with fine views, the wide open moorland path is joined by a marked footpath coming in from the left. 40m further, fork **left**, as indicated by a marker-post. This path leads through a fine area of heather. At the bottom, go over a crossing path next to a 2-arm fingerpost and into trees. In 40m, at a fingerposted 4-way crossing, turn **left** onto a narrow path for around 150m.

Continue the walk now from Leg 2 section 11, skipping the first two sentences.

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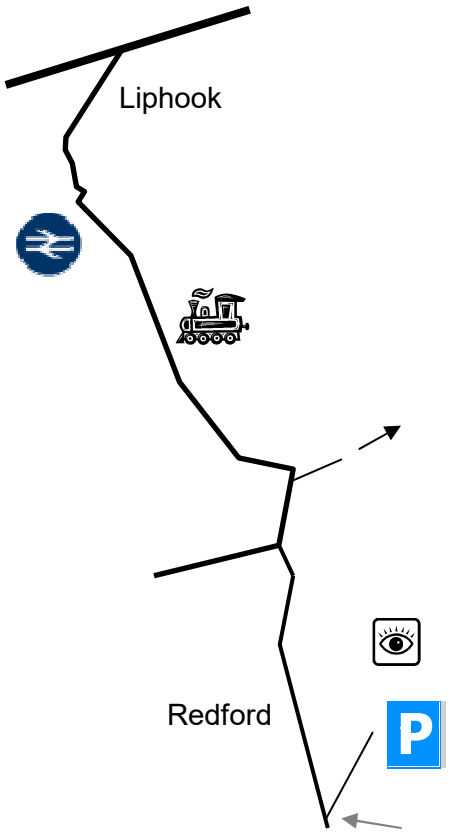
Getting there

By car: The **National Trust** car park at **Woolbeding Common** is in a beautiful isolated spot near Redford, West Sussex.

To get there, take the A3 and turn off through **Liphook**. (From London, this is through the Hindhead tunnel.) At a tortuous series of mini-roundabouts and larger ones, keep following signs for **Liphook Station** and/or the **Hollycombe Steam Collection** (with a brown tourist sign showing a merry-go-round). This will take you onto the **Midhurst Road** out of the town. The road goes over a railway bridge, past the Steam Collection, under an arch and past Iron Hill woods. About 3 miles from Liphook, ignore a left turn for Fernhurst. After 0.4 miles, turn **left** on a lane signposted *Redford* and/or *Linch Church*. The road goes past this interesting little church and after a mile it goes through Redford, as indicated by the welcome sign. About 1 mile after the end-of-speed-limit sign, look out for a road sign indicating a road junction on the left. Just after the road sign, slow down and look for a narrow lane – almost a track, opposite a small sign for **Older Hill**. Turn **very sharp left** here. It may seem barely navigable, but don't worry – this is correct. The lane runs gently uphill for nearly a mile until eventually the car park is on the **right**.

You can instead go through **Haslemere** on the A286 and turn off west at **Fernhurst**. Note that in 2013 this road was **closed**.