



## Ashdown Forest, Visitor's Centre, Colemans Hatch Pines, Views and Woodland Trails

Distance: 15½ km=9½ miles

moderate walking with long easy sections and one short scramble

Region: East Sussex

Date written: 3-jun-2012

Author: Stivaletti

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Refreshments: Colemans Hatch

Last update: 20-may-2022

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Heath, woodland, views*

Our *sixth* walk in Ashdown Forest, in a central spot so you have some of the best views in all directions. It makes brief contact with the other five walks and also takes you to the Ashdown Forest Visitor's Centre. This walk is an ideal introduction to Ashdown Forest with a variety of terrain, including dense woodland, streams and wide heathland. As is so typical with the walks on this site, you follow some secret paths that you would not find in any other guide.



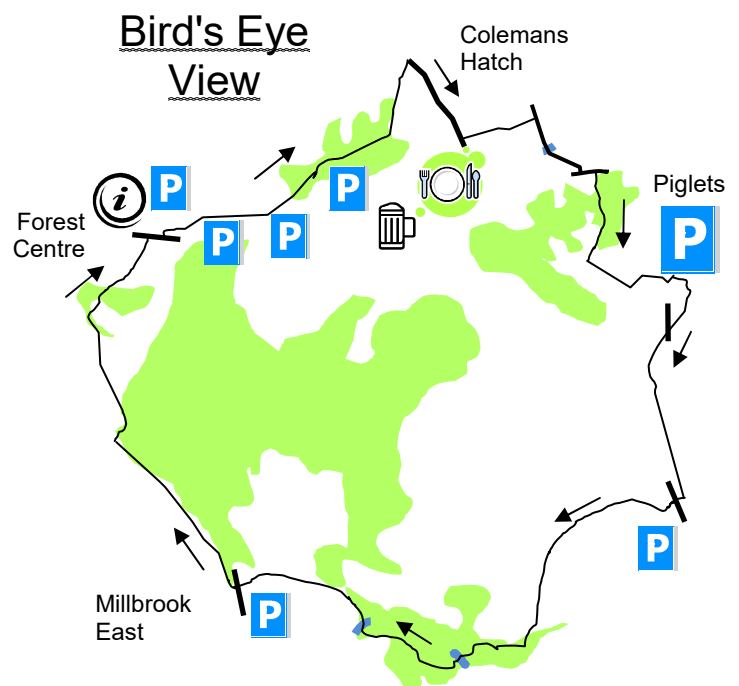
For a refreshment break, there is an adorable village pub with good food. (To enquire at the *Hatch Inn*, ring 01342-822363.)



There are very few nettles to worry bare legs, just some high bracken in summer. Boots or strong trainers will be fine. Your dog is welcome.



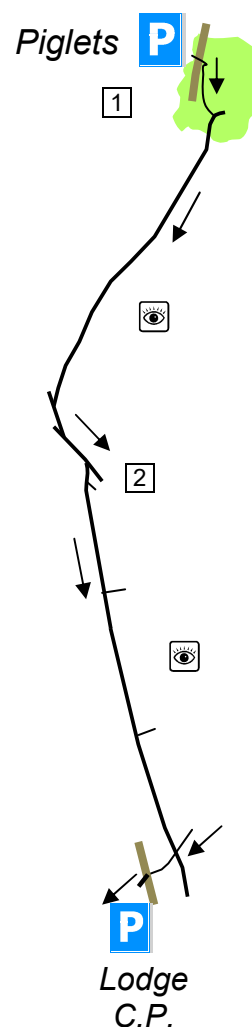
The walk begins at **Piglets car park** on the B2026 Chuck Hatch Road, [www.w3w.co/fatigued.worked.tumblers](http://www.w3w.co/fatigued.worked.tumblers), nearest postcode **TN7 4WW**, grid ref TQ 469 322, 2½ miles south of Hartfield. There are a host of other car parks along the way which you could choose, depending on the time you would like your refreshment break. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



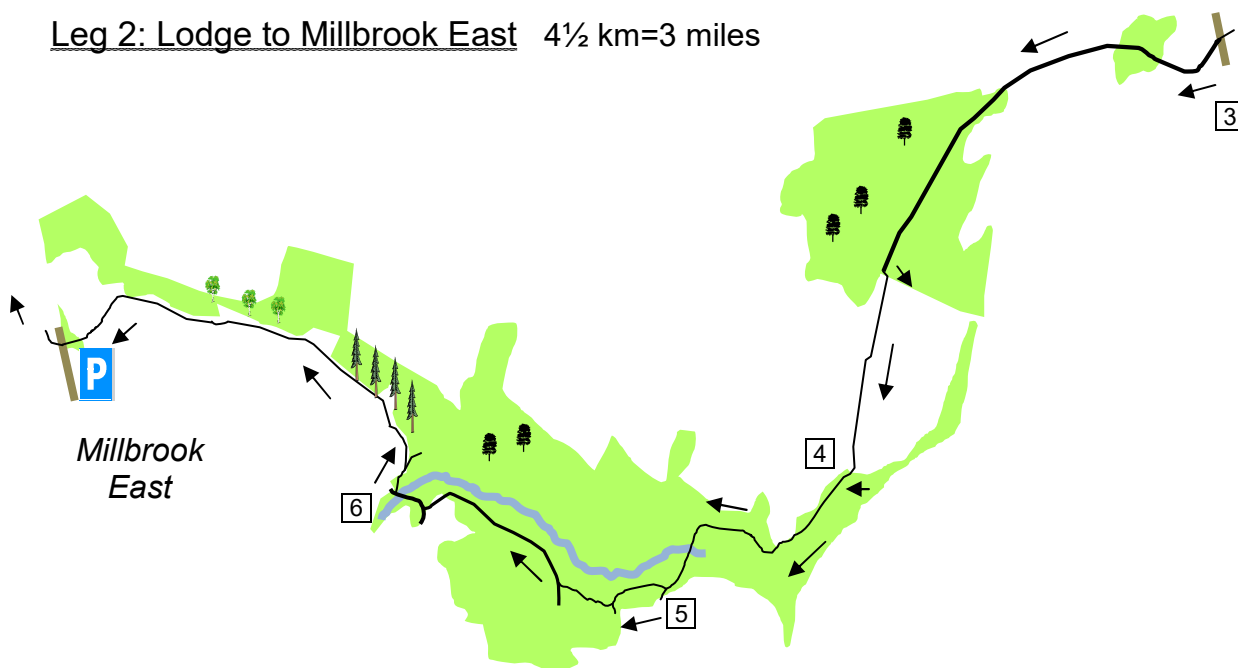
## The Walk

### Leg 1: Piglets to Lodge 2 km=1 mile

- 1** From the car park, go back to the road, cross the road, a fraction right, and take a narrow path opposite into the woods. Immediately veer **right** on a path parallel to the road. In 100m the path comes down to meet a wide track at a bend. Turn sharp **right** uphill on the track. *For some way now you will have a magnificent view left to the eastern forest and the High Weald, one of many views that characterise this walk.* The great wood on your left is the Five Hundred Acre Wood (see the other walk in this series *Ravines and Parkland.*) In 600m or so, your wide track veers left as it meets a track coming from the right, followed in 50m by another similarly. 80m later, at a wide gap in the gorse, fork **right** and keep on uphill on a wide track.
- 2** Continue between lines of gorse. *Note that you are on part of the Vanguard Way, a long-distance path from London to the sea.* You pass a junction on your left after 250m and another after another 250m or so. In a further 250m, when you are about 50m short of the highest point, you arrive at the **third** junction, which is the Wealdway, another long-distance path, crossing your path at an angle (usually marked with “WW” but the markers have gone). Turn **right** here on a grassy path leading quickly to the main B2026 road. Cross the road and take a tarmac drive opposite, marked *Private Road to Old Lodge*, which is also a footpath. The Lodge car park is close by on your left (see the walk *“Rock Wood and Purple Heather”* in this series).



### Leg 2: Lodge to Millbrook East 4½ km=3 miles



- 3 Follow the tarmac drive, going between pillars by the *Lodge* gatehouse. *(The sign No Bridle Way only applies to your horse!)* Your route is along a fenced driveway across the heath with a nature reserve on each side. Soon the drive runs through mature mixed woodland with some elegant tall scots pines. You may also see deer on this path. Over 1 km from the main road, about 50m before the ornate wrought iron gates of the *Old Lodge*, turn **left** through a tall wooden swing-gate and then **right** along a grassy path with more views left to the heath and horse pastures. *The Old Lodge, which you can hardly see from the path, is one of the great Sussex mansions, built in palatial style, now owned by an Arab visitor. It replaced the old oak-beamed Elizabethan mansion which burned down.* Go through a large metal gate, or over a stile, and straight ahead through another metal gate, avoiding a metal gate on your right. Your route is now down a similar grassy path. Just before the bottom, go **right** over a bridge together with a stile.
- 4 Keep straight ahead between fences **avoiding** a tall swing-gate on your left. In 200m, the path runs through a patch of bracken and immediately bends right, taking you through a tall swing-gate on your **left**. Follow the path straight ahead away from the fence going downhill between pines. In 50m, at a yellow arrow on a pine tree, turn **right** on a level path which can be muddy in the damper seasons. In 80m, your path goes over a 2-plank bridge and continues for nearly 150m on a fairly level path which snakes around trees to avoid mud, with the forest falling away on your left. Your path suddenly descends to cross a stream via a long bridge. *This Ashdown Forest stream is one you encounter often: it's the same as the stream that runs under the Pooh Sticks Bridge.* Your path veers left and gradually rises with the stream now down on your right.
- 5 About 100m from the bridge, at a fork, avoid a path on your left that rises onto the heath and stay in the woods next to the stream. In 150m, the path curves left away from the stream and immediately forks. Again, avoid the wide path curving left uphill onto the heath and fork **right** on a narrower path, staying in the woods. Your path plunges over several dips, still with the stream on your right and, after 150m or so, rises to meet a wide path at a T-junction. Turn **right** and follow this pleasant clear broad sandy path through birches. In 300m, you reach a damp patch in the woods. Previous walkers have carved out a **left** fork here to avoid the mud: you need to wheel **right** again to re-join the path which is now straight and grassy. Your path meets an open space and curves **left** beside a line of trees keeping the open space on your left. In only 80m, it meets a wide horse path at a curve. Turn abruptly **right** on the horse path, down a slope and over a heavy-duty flat bridge across a stream. *This bridge is crossed, in the opposite direction during the other walk "Turnstile and Windmill".*
- 6 **Immediately** after the bridge, turn **right** on a narrow path beside the stream, going along the narrow edge of a bank (*careful!*). Hop over a small fern-banked stream, immediately next to the wider stream on your right. Now climb a steep bank straight ahead. (You can avoid the bank by going up over a little "waterfall" on the left.) Keep straight ahead now, avoiding a right fork, and thus leaving the stream and heading up into the open. Your path runs along the edge of the heath with a thick pinewood on your right. Continue alongside this fringe of pines, soon passing a post with the word *horses* on the other side. Where a space opens up on your right, keep ahead, soon rejoining the fringe of trees as your path becomes wide and sandy and the trees change to silver birch. *In another 250m, near the top,*

there are two tree stumps near a metal gate on the right which form a perfect picnic spot with views of Nutley Windmill and Friends Clump. After a long steady climb, you come out into an open area. Veer **left** to go through a wooden gate (from where your walk continues straight over the main road) or (for the car park) a chain stile just to its left, to arrive at the Millbrook East car park and the main A22 road. **There is usually an icecream / drinks vendor in the car park, plus several seats.**

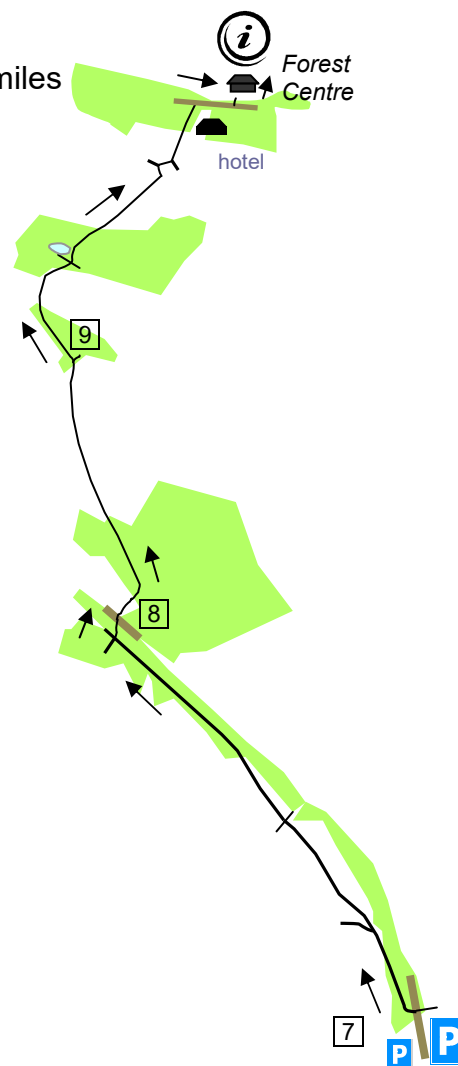


**Leg 3: Millbrook East to Forest Centre** 3½ km=2 miles

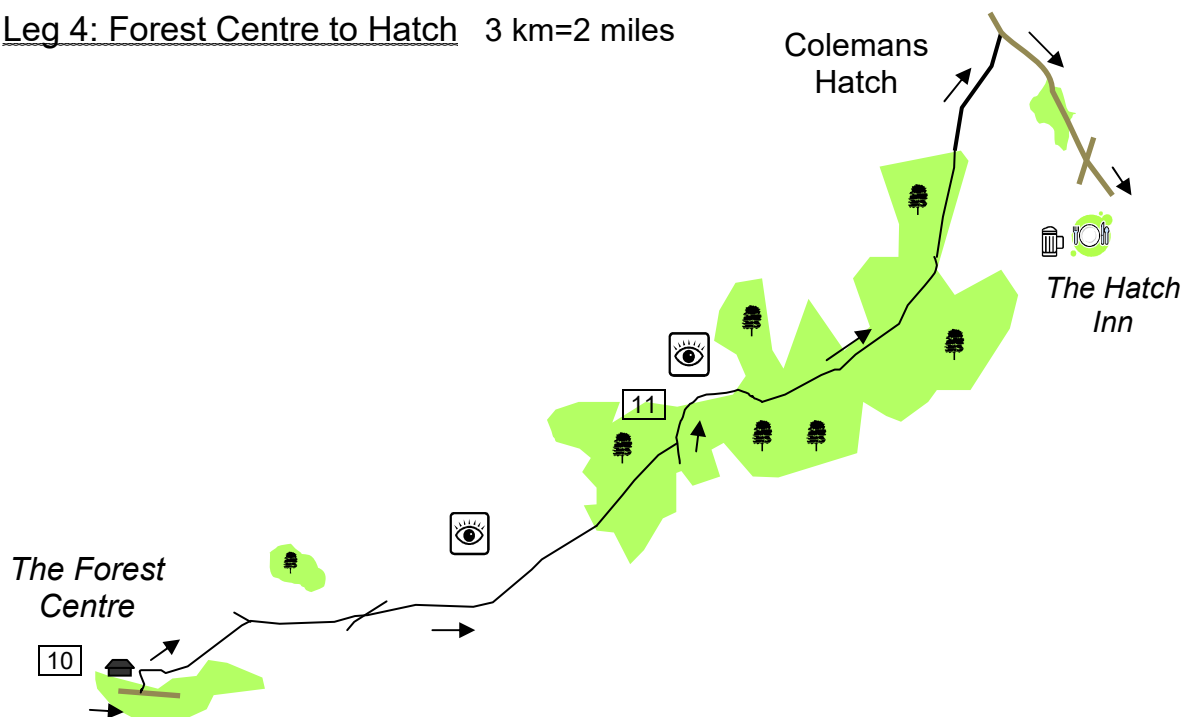
**7** From the Millbrook East car park, turn **right** on the main road for 10m, cross it carefully and take a wide path opposite which immediately bends right parallel to the road. In 250m, at a fork, keep **right**, staying near the road. In 400m, your path crosses a tarmac drive coming from Chelwood Vachery. In 300m, on your right is the Trees car park. In 450m, you are joined from the left by another wide path. Here, turn **right** through the trees on an unmarked, narrow and rather obscure path quickly leading to the main A22 road. Cross the road carefully, a fraction left, to a driveway on the other side, going beside *Lewes Park Cottages* and a yellow arrow. *From here to the hotel, this walk shares its route with another walk in this series "Hindleap and Vachery".*

**8** The path goes past cottages into trees and curves left, running past a few small buildings until suddenly you pass by an unneeded stile and reach a fine grassy path with the wide open landscape of Ashdown Park Hotel all around. The hotel itself with its church is now in full view ahead to the right.

**9** On the other side of the meadow, the footpath bears left on a grassy track between woodland on the right and pastures on the left, grazed by the animals of the nearby Llama Park. In early summer, these pastures have a spectacular coating of buttercups. After a narrower and stony section, you join a tarmac drive with a pond on the left and various walks with alluring names signposted for hotel guests. Continue past the pitch 'n' putt to pass the main hotel building on your right. The footpath zigzags left-right-left and follows the yellow arrows through the car park and up a grassy slope between posts on the other side. It comes out via a small yard to the Colemans Hatch road.



Leg 4: Forest Centre to Hatch 3 km=2 miles



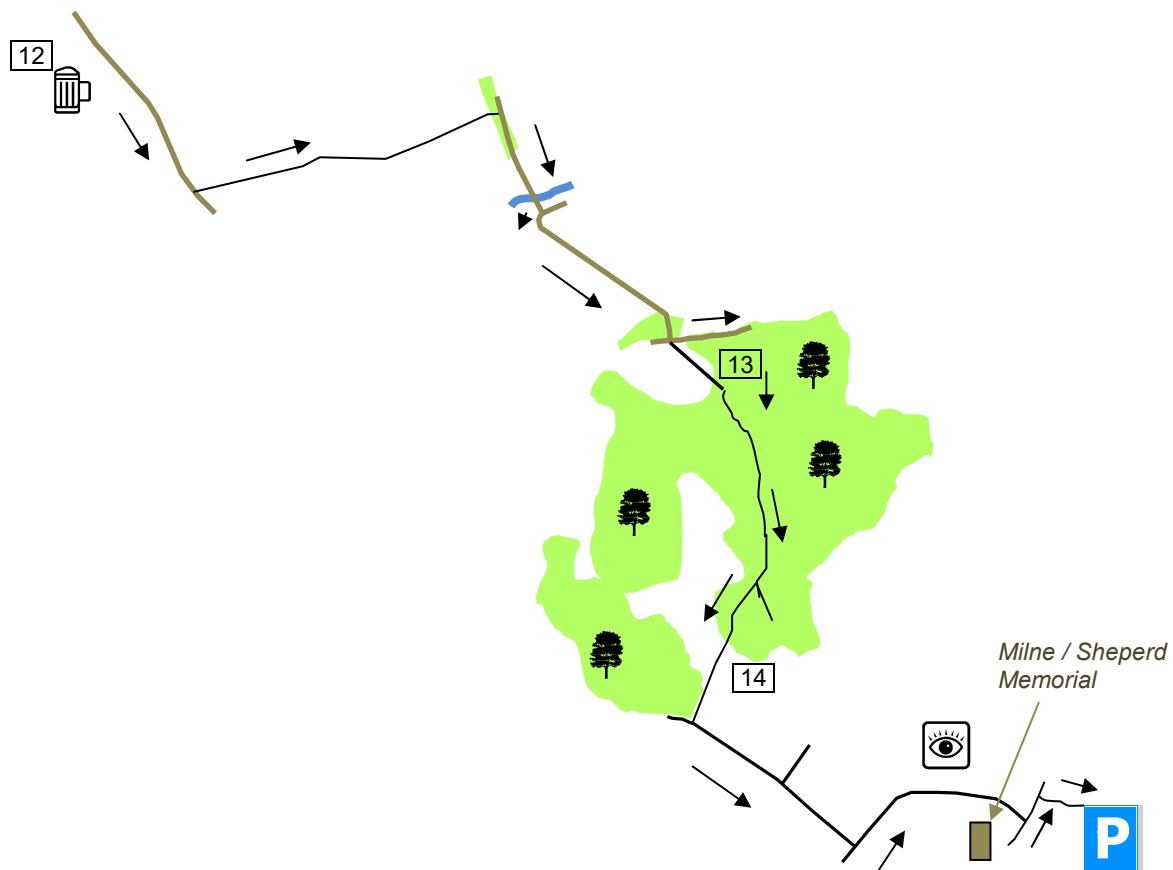
- 10** Turn **right** on the road, passing in 100m a large grey rustic barn and go **left** into the car park of the Forest Centre. Go to the back of the car park from where your route is **right** onto the open heath. But first you may wish to go **left** into the Centre. *The Forest Centre is filled with visitor's information and various exhibits about the wildlife and geography of the Forest. It is open weekends from 11 and Apr-Sep weekdays from 2pm.* Passing a slanting information tablet, avoid a minor right fork into the trees and head for the bracken of the open heath. You are on a wide level path with splendid views left as far as the North Downs. Your path meets a grassy path coming from the left and another on the right (coming from the Broadstone car park). Soon you pass on your right the Millennium Clump and Linton's Car Park. About 1 km from the Forest Centre, this pleasant path descends to enter woodland. In 250m, it meets a path on the right coming from Townsend's Car Park and veers **left**, coming out to a bench with another viewpoint.

- 11** Veer **right** along the level ridge and follow the path as it wheels right near the road and crosses a brick-lined track, followed 250m later by a horse track. In a further 250m, your path approaches a field ahead and crosses another track. Keep the field just on your **right** to pass a house in 300m and join a residential drive of Coleman's Hatch with the church spire visible ahead. You come out to a road in the village. *A short diversion 100m to your left takes you to the late Victorian Holy Trinity church, often called "the church on the edge of the forest"; unfortunately it is usually locked.* Turn sharp **right** on the road. In 200m go straight over a road junction onto another minor road, Kidds Hill, taking you to immediately to *The Hatch Inn*.



*Apart from the church, The Hatch Inn is by far the most celebrated building in this sleepy rather thinly-spread village. It was originally a line of three cottages in the mid-1400s and became an inn, originally called the "Cock", in the 1700s. It still has the low beams and the traditional old bar. The Hatch serves several ales, including Harveys and Larkins and is a Camra local. There is a pretty beer garden in the rear and it's useful to note that you can take cream teas here. The menu, prepared by a noted chef, is not cheap with ploughman's at £8.50 and fish and chips, by another name, at £13.50. To reserve a table, ring 01342-822363.*

Leg 5: Hatch to Piglets 3 km=2 miles



12 Continue down the road past *The Hatch* and in about 300m, in a dip, go **left** through a metal swing-gate onto a footpath. Keep straight ahead, passing a large oak and continue with a fence on your left (**shielded from cattle by a fence**). At the far side, go through a modern kissing-gate and along the right-hand side of the next meadow. Go over a stile into the next meadow and, at the other side, go through a wooden swing-gate and down steps to a lane, Harts Lane. Turn **right** on the lane, across a bridge over that same familiar wide Ashdown Forest stream. Here at a road junction, go **right** and immediately **left** on a quiet narrow lane uphill. At the top, the lane zigzags between banks and comes to a T-junction with Chuck Hatch Lane. Turn **left** on the lane.

13 Immediately fork **right\*** beside the entrance to *Spring Farm* on a shingle drive, passing some houses. At the end, continue ahead on a narrow woodland path. You are back in Ashdown Forest! (**\*You can alternatively continue along the road for 100m and turn right opposite Claypit Farm on a very narrow path into the woods; after several ups and downs and zigzags, you will meet the woodland path where you can turn left.**) Your path leads up into the woods, passing a deep pit on your left 100m from the houses. As the path rises, it gets more distinct. You come to within about 50m of the open heath visible on your right, which recedes and then comes close again. 300m from that deep pit, at a fork in the path, ignore the minor left fork (although it is probably a short cut!) and keep straight ahead, still a stone's throw from the open heath. Finally your path leaves the forest and reaches a bracken open plateau.

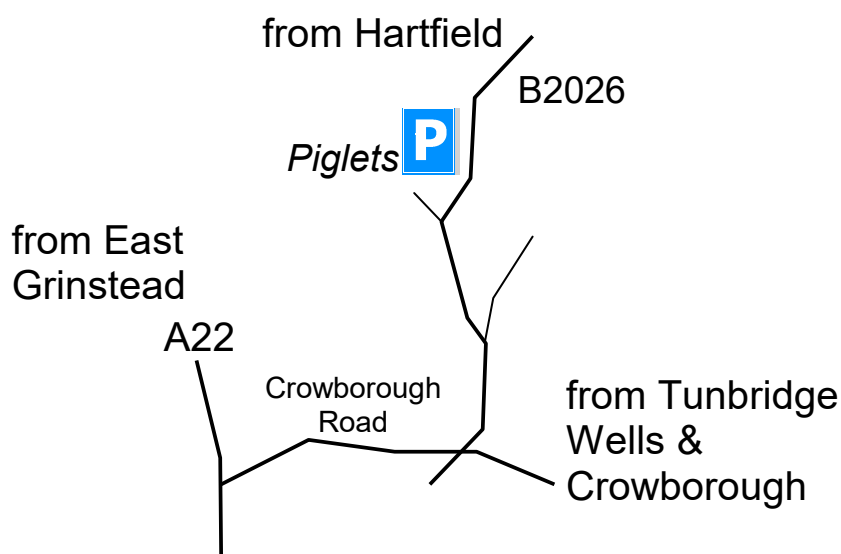
- 14 Keep straight ahead on a wide peaty path, passing a small wood on your right (and in 2017 a flock of black sheep on your left) and in 150m reaching a T-junction with a very wide track. Turn **left** on the track uphill. Keep going ever upwards for 350m, ignoring a junction on your left and one on your right, until at the top you reach a T-junction. Turn **left** on a wide grassy path with unforgettable views left, some of the best in the whole of the Forest. Your path gradually wheels right and soon passes a clump of assorted trees on your right surrounding a plaque commemorating A.A. Milne and E.H. Shepard, creators of Winnie-the-Pooh. (For more information, see another walk in this series "Poohsticks and Sandpits".) At a T-junction, turn **left** on a sandy path. In 40m, turn **right** on a narrow path through dense bracken leading back to the Piglets car park where the walk began.



## Getting there

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By car:



Piglets car park is off the west side of the B2026 nearly 3 miles south of Hartfield. One way is through Edenbridge and Hartfield in which case the car park is on the right. If coming from the A22 London-East Grinstead – Eastbourne road, go east on the Crowborough Road and north on the B2026, signposted *Hartfield*. The car park is 2 miles on the left. The car park is small and is in a wide break in the trees.

There are several alternative starting points, indicated by the symbols on the overview map. However, Piglets is the most satisfying because of the interesting finish and the position of the refreshment break.

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