



Ashurst Circular Walk

A walk via Pooh Bridge to the attractive Wealden village of Hartfield, with a longer option over the elevated heathland of Ashdown Forest.



Length	Main Walk: 20½ km [†] (12.7 miles). Five hours walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 9½ hours.
	Long Walk, via Ashdown Forest: 25¼ km [†] (15.7 miles). Six hours 20 minutes walking time.
	Short Walk 1, omitting 500 Acre Wood: 16 km (9.9 miles). Three hours 45 minutes walking time.
	Short Walk 2, also omitting Hartfield: 11½ km (7.1 miles). Two hours 45 minutes walking time.
	Alternative Walk, starting from Buxted: 24 km [†] (14.9 miles). Five hours 55 minutes walking time.
[†] Subtract 6¼ km (3.9 miles; 90 minutes) if finishing in Hartfield. See Walk Options below.	

OS Map	Explorer 135. Ashurst, map reference TQ507388, is on the East Sussex/Kent border, between East Grinstead and Tunbridge Wells. Buxted is in East Sussex, 15 km S of Ashurst.
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Toughness	6 out of 10 (8 for the Long Walk, 3-4 for the Short Walks, 7 for the Alternative Walk).
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Features	This walk starts with an undulating stretch in the low hills on the north side of the Medway Valley , then descends to cross the river into the small village of Withyham with its notable parish church . After an early pub lunch in this village there is a choice of two full-length walks, both of which loop around the Wealden countryside to the neighbouring village of Hartfield . The author AA Milne lived nearby at Cotchford Farm and
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coachloads of tourists regularly descend on this attractive village to buy all manner of Winnie-the-Pooh memorabilia at **Pooh Corner**.

The **Main Walk** heads south through the extensive **Buckhurst Estate** into Five Hundred Acre Wood, then loops back to cross the famous **Pooh Sticks Bridge** on its way round to Hartfield. The **Long Walk** climbs steadily through this large wood and continues around the rim of a valley in **Ashdown Forest**, the largest area of elevated heathland in south-east England. It goes past some recognisable features from the children's stories – take care not to fall into Pooh's **Heffalump Trap!** – and takes in a celebrated viewpoint with a plaque commemorating AA Milne and his illustrator, EF Shepard. It then makes a long descent into Hartfield, rejoining the Main Walk shortly before Pooh Sticks Bridge.

After a tea stop in this village there is a fairly long but easy stretch along the Medway valley to return to Ashurst station.

As with any walk in the High Weald, you will need to be prepared for muddy or waterlogged paths at almost any time of the year.

Walk Options

If you want to shorten the walk after Withyham you could switch to one of two **Short Walks**. One takes a direct route into Hartfield, the other misses out this village and joins the return route at Balls Green.

A completely different route up to Ashdown Forest was added in 2024, starting from a station further down the same line. The morning section of this **Alternative Walk** is essentially the reverse of the Buxted Circular walk (#95) with the same lunch pub on the edge of Ashdown Forest. It continues across the open heathland to join the Long Walk at its southernmost point.

On all the walk options the final leg to Ashurst station is not ideal as there are no more refreshment stops after Hartfield. You might prefer to finish the walk in this village instead and take Metrobus 291 to East Grinstead (details below). This bus goes through Withyham too so you could also start at (or finish) the walk there.

Additional Notes

This walk was substantially revised in 2024, partly because a footpath on the original ending had become rutted and awkward to use. By changing both the outward and return legs from Ashurst the walk has also been made slightly more balanced, with a longer and more strenuous morning section and an easier ending. At the same time the new option of starting from Buxted was added.

Transport




Ashurst and Buxted have an hourly service (Mon–Sat) from London Bridge on the Oxted–Uckfield line, taking around 50 minutes to Ashurst and 70 minutes to Buxted. On Sundays you have to travel from Victoria and change at Oxted, which adds about 20 minutes to the journey time.

For the variations which finish in Hartfield, Metrobus 291 goes to East Grinstead in one direction and Tunbridge Wells in the other (hourly Mon–Sat with a reduced evening service, two-hourly Sun & BH up to around 5pm). A return ticket to Ashurst (Kent) or Buxted is more likely to be

accepted at East Grinstead since this route is also operated by Southern, with a half-hourly off-peak service to Victoria.

On the Alternative Walk you could use Brighton & Hove 29 (half-hourly Mon–Sat, hourly Sun & BH) to start or finish the walk at the lunch pub in Poundgate; it connects with trains on the Uckfield line at both Eridge and Uckfield.

If driving, the station car park at Ashurst costs around £3 Mon–Fri, free at weekends (2024). For the Alternative Walk you could park at Ashurst and take the train to Buxted for the start. There is no public transport from Hartfield to Ashurst, so in all cases you would have to complete the full walk.

Suggested Train	Take the train nearest to 10:00 from London Bridge to Ashurst (Kent) . For the Alternative Walk the train an hour earlier might be better.
Lunch	<p>The suggested place on the Circular Walks is the Dorset Arms (01892-770278) in Withyham, after 6¾ km. In 2014 this attractive old pub was bought by the Buckhurst Estate and fully refurbished as an up-market pub/restaurant; it has plenty of outdoor seating (including a new back garden) and serves good but rather expensive home-cooked food until 2.30pm (4pm Sun).</p> <p>The suggested place on the Alternative Walk is the Crow & Gate Inn (01892-603461) in Poundgate, after 8¼ km. Part of the Vintage Inns chain, this is a large and popular pub/restaurant with a wide range of food options and plenty of outdoor seating.</p> <p>The only other pub on the walk routes (except Short Walk 2) is the Bear Inn (01892-770424; formerly the Anchor Inn, closed Mon & Tue lunchtime) in Hartfield. This probably comes too late on the longer walks, but it would make a reasonable alternative for lunch on Short Walk 1 (after around 9 km if you skipped the out-and-back loop to the Dorset Arms).</p>
Tea	<p>There are no refreshment places near Ashurst station so you would need to stop for tea in Hartfield, 6½ km before the end of the full walk. If you arrived before 4.15pm (3.15pm Sun & BH) you could take some of Kanga's 'Strengthening Medicines' at Piglet's Tearoom (01892-770595); if not, the Bear Inn (see above) is open in the afternoon.</p> <p>If you return via East Grinstead you might find the station café open but you will have more choice if you get off the bus a little earlier, in the High Street. There are plenty of refreshment places in Tunbridge Wells if you take the bus there.</p>
Help Us!	<p>After the walk, please leave a comment, it really helps. Thanks!</p> <p>You can also upload photos to the   SWC Group on Flickr (upload your photos) and videos to  Youtube. This walk's tags are:</p>
By Car	Start

Help

National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33
(12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

Version

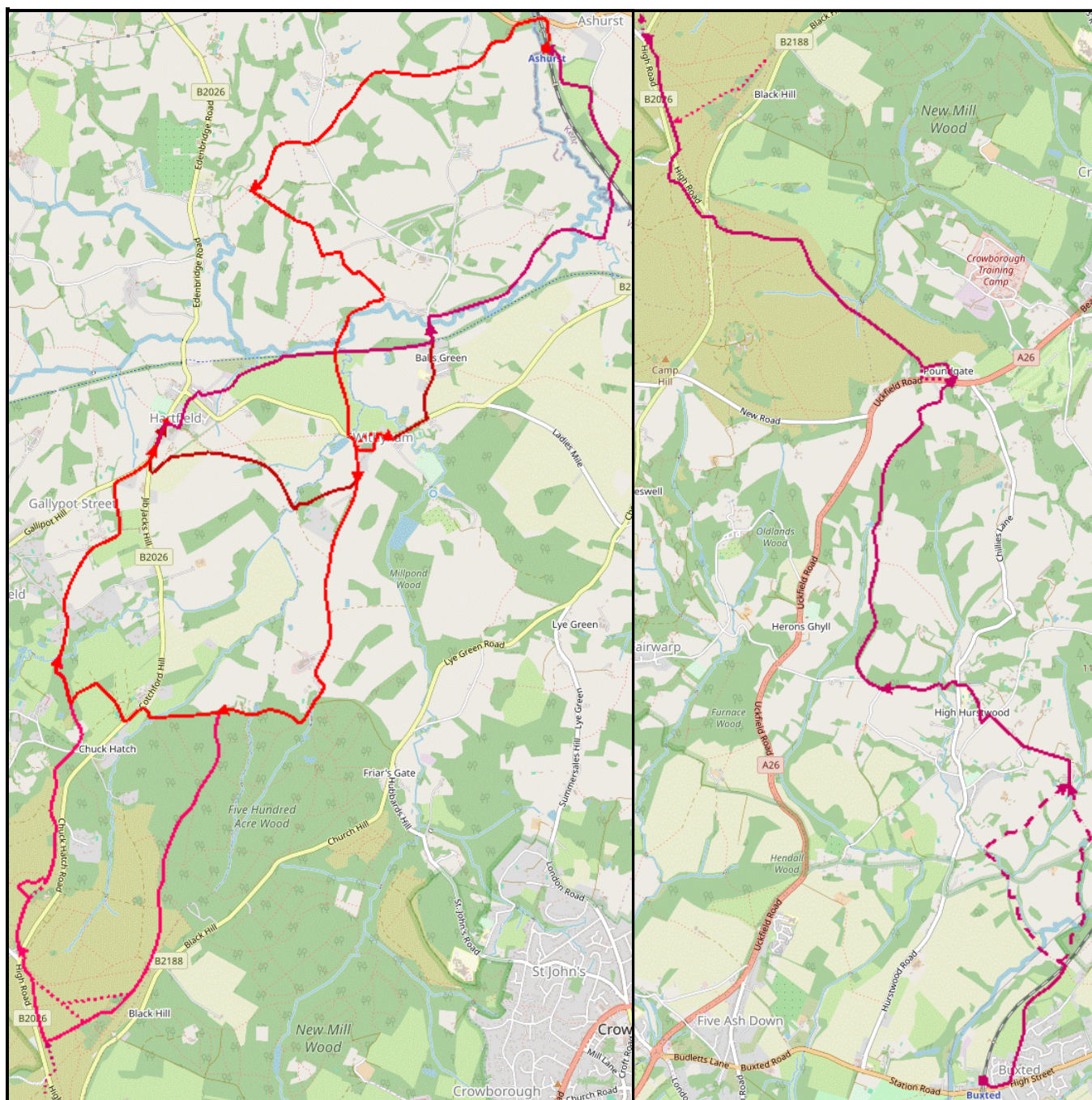
Feb-25 **Sean**

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Walk Directions

Walk Maps



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Walk Options (Circ. | Alt.)

M. Main Walk (20½ km)

- i. Main Walk, finishing in Hartfield (14¼ km)
 - a. Long Walk, via Ashdown Forest (25¼ km)
- ai. Long Walk, finishing in Hartfield (19 km)
 - b. Short Walk 1, omitting 500 Acre Wood (16 km)
 - c. Short Walk 2, also omitting Hartfield (11½ km)
 - d. Alternative Walk, starting from Buxted (24 km)
- di. Alternative Walk, finishing in Hartfield (17¾ km)
- dii. Alternative Walk, starting from Poundgate (15¾ km)

Walk Directions

If you are doing the Alternative Walk from Buxted station, start at §I.

If you take bus 29 from Eridge or Uckfield to Poundgate, get off at the stop by the Crow & Gate Inn and start at §L.

If you take bus 291 from East Grinstead to Withyham, get off at the stop opposite the Dorset Arms and start at §C.

A. Ashurst Station to Perryhill Farm (3¼ km)

This section is the reverse of the ending of Walk #175 (Hever to Ashurst).

1. Turn left out of the station, go down its access road and turn left onto the A264. Follow it under the railway bridge and over the **River Medway**, crossing from Kent into East Sussex. After an awkward 125m along the grass verge of this busy main road **bear left** into a lay-by. Halfway along go over a stile next to a metal fieldgate into a copse and fork right at a Y-junction.
2. On the far side cross a ditch on a plank bridge and turn right onto a fenced path going up the right-hand side of a meadow. At the top go through a small metal gate and continue on a grassy path slanting up a field, initially heading **SW** and curving to the right in a clump of trees. At the top of the field go through a wooden side gate to continue on a wide concrete track, passing some farm buildings.
3. Go up a flight of steps cut into the bank ahead and turn left onto another concrete track (a public bridleway), then almost immediately **turn right** through a new wooden gate with a footpath waymarker. Follow this slightly sunken grassy track gently uphill, away from Lodgefield Farm.
4. At the top go through a small metal gate into the top corner of a field, with fine views over the Medway valley to Ashdown Forest. A footpath waymarker on the gate indicates that the right of way continues across the field, gradually diverging from a chalky farm track along its top edge.
There is no path on the ground and if there are cattle in the field you might prefer to walk around its edge on the farm track.
5. The exit from the field is about 25m down the track from the right-hand corner. Go through a pair of small metal gates into the top of some (private) parkland, with a prominent house (Highfields Park) 500m ahead. Bear slightly left down the field, heading **W** and gradually approaching a wood on your left. At the corner of the wood turn half-left to continue alongside it, now heading **SW**.

6. On the far side go through a small metal gate to briefly rejoin the farm track you were on earlier. In front of a double metal fieldgate **bear left** to go through another small gate. A footpath waymarker indicates that the right of way through the rest of the parkland has been diverted, with at best a faint grassy path on the ground.
The route for the next 600m is different from that shown on old OS maps.
7. Start by going straight ahead across the parkland, then **bear left** as you pass to the right of a clump of trees surrounding a small pond. You should now be able to see a wire fence stretching across the field 125m ahead; aim for a small metal gate in this fence, a little way off to the right of a metal fieldgate. Go through this gate (with a footpath waymarker) into another part of the parkland.
8. Aim to pass between two small clumps of trees about 150m ahead, initially heading **SW**. On reaching them **bear slightly left** towards the left-hand edge of a fenced enclosure surrounding another group of trees 100m away. After skirting the enclosure (with a waymarker on one of the posts to confirm the route) **bear slightly right** to head **SW** again.
9. In the far corner leave the parkland through a new metal kissing gate. Go straight across a minor road (Beech Green Lane) and over a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate onto the continuation of the footpath. Go all the way along the left-hand edge of a large field, heading **W** and with glimpses of another large house (Beech Green Park) 500m away to the right.
10. In the field corner go past a metal barrier onto a short path through a belt of trees. At the end go through a gate into the top corner of a large steeply-sloping field (with a bench where you could pause to take in the view towards Ashdown Forest). Continue along the top edge of the field, with a line of tall poplars on your left.
11. In 150m go through a small metal gate and bear left across the corner of the next field. Go through another small gate onto a narrow enclosed path in a belt of trees, skirting the buildings of Millwood Farm. At the end go through an old metal fieldgate and down a grassy track. Keep ahead along a short driveway to a T-junction with a bridleway at the bottom of the slope, with the large **Perryhill Farmhouse** on your left.

B. Perryhill Farm to Withyham (Dorset Arms) (3½ km)

12. At the junction **turn left** onto the bridleway, initially a farm track passing below the elevated farmhouse. After passing a cluster of outbuildings the bridleway continues as a narrow path between trees and a tall hedge. At the bottom of the slope, where the bridleway swings left, **turn right onto an easily-missed footpath**, squeezing past an old metal fieldgate in a potentially overgrown area.
13. In 50m follow the path round to the left and uphill, now on a broad grassy track between a hedge and a wire fence. At the top keep ahead on a short path through a strip of woodland, then go over a stile into a field. Bear slightly right towards its top corner, passing a fenced enclosure on your left.
14. In the corner go through a metal fieldgate, bear right and go through another gate to continue on a tree-lined grassy path, with paddocks on your right. In 200m **turn left** at a signposted footpath junction, going through a fieldgate onto a track past the buildings of Top Hill Farm.
15. In 150m the track merges with the driveway from the farmhouse. Immediately afterwards **turn right** to head **S** on another farm track, with a footpath waymarker on the gatepost. After passing some outbuildings the footpath continues briefly as a broad grassy track between fences, passing a house on the right.

16. Shortly after the track turns half-left **go over a stile** to the left of a metal fieldgate to maintain direction on a narrow fenced path going gently downhill. At the end of the path go over a stile on the left and along the bottom of a field. In 50m turn right to cross a stile in the tree boundary, now with fine views ahead across the Medway valley.
17. Go straight across a farm track onto a clear path down through a large farm field, gradually approaching the left-hand field edge. Go through a small metal gate in the hedge boundary, turn right and go down the edge of another field. At the bottom go through a small metal gate and **turn sharp right** onto a broad grassy track between hedges, joining the **Wealdway**¹ (WW).
18. In 100m **turn left through an easily-missed gap** in the hedge, with (at best) a partly-concealed footpath signpost to indicate the route. Go down a few steps and follow the footpath round to the right, now as a narrow path between fences. In 175m you come to a signposted Y-junction.
19. Unless a proposed footpath diversion has come into place **fork left** down an awkward little slope, staying on the WW. At the bottom make your way through some undergrowth alongside the **River Medway**, go over a stile and across a ditch into a water meadow. Bear right and follow a grassy path diagonally across it to a new wooden footbridge.
At the start of 2024 East Sussex Council applied to divert this footpath, perhaps because the short downhill section was eroding. A notice on the footbridge indicates that the proposed new route would be to keep right at the Y-junction, followed by a new path down to the footbridge.
20. Either way, cross the river on the footbridge and continue through another meadow. Go over a stile (or through a wooden fieldgate) in the tree boundary and straight across the **Forest Way**². Go over another stile and follow a broad grassy path heading **S** across two large meadows to meet the B2110 just to the right of Hewkins Bridge.
21. Turn left to go over the narrow bridge, **crossing over with great care** to the other side of the road so that you can **fork right** up a lane signposted to the church. In 75m you come to a junction of lanes, with a Private Drive ahead and the church on a small hill on your left.

Unless you are doing Short Walk 2, the route returns to this junction after looping out to the Dorset Arms (with the option of visiting the church in either direction). If you are not stopping at the suggested lunch pub you can skip to §C, resuming the directions at [26-c] from the church or [28] if you want to carry straight on.

22. Route via the church

- a. **Bear left** at the junction to go up the driveway towards the **Rectory**³ for a short distance, then **turn left** up a flight of steps into the churchyard. Turn right to reach the entrance to **St Michael and All Angels**⁴.
- b. After visiting the church return to the path and turn left. Follow it around the eastern end of the church and leave the churchyard through a wooden gate on its northern side.
- c. Follow a new public footpath sloping down the hillside. At the bottom go through a metal kissing gate and turn right onto the pavement beside the B2110.

23. Direct route

Turn sharp left at the junction, almost doubling back. The track curves round to the right past a few cottages and continues along a pavement beside the B2110.

24. The **Dorset Arms** is on the same side of the road but the pavement inconveniently ends just after the footpath down from the churchyard. You have to **cross the road with great care**, go past the village hall and then cross back again (just as carefully) to reach the pub.

If you are doing Short Walk 2, go to §H.

C. The Dorset Arms to Forstal Farm Cottage (drive) (¾ km)

25. Return to the B2110, joining the **High Weald Landscape Trail**⁵ (HWLT) from the lane past the side of the pub. As before, you have to **cross the main road carefully** and turn left onto the pavement on the other side, then cross back again after going past the village hall. At the start of this stretch of pavement there is a signposted footpath on the left, with the same choice of whether or not to go via the church.

26. Route via the church

- a. **Turn left** off the pavement onto this new public footpath. Go through a metal kissing gate and follow a grassy path sloping up the hillside.
- b. At the top go through a wooden gate into the churchyard. Follow a path up to and around the eastern end of the church to reach the entrance to **St Michael and All Angels**⁴.
- c. After visiting the church, return to the path and turn right. Ignore a private path on the left leading down to the **Rectory**³ but a little further on veer left down a flight of steps and turn right onto its driveway.
- d. At the junction of lanes from your outward route **turn sharp left** onto the 'Private Drive' heading **S**, with WW and HWLT waymarkers confirming that it is also a public footpath.

27. Direct route

Carry on along the pavement, which continues as a track curving round to the left past a few cottages. At the junction of lanes from your outward route **bear left** onto the 'Private Drive' heading **S**, with WW and HWLT waymarkers confirming that it is also a public footpath.

28. Follow the lane gently uphill, passing some interesting old houses off to the left; the first one (with the 'sawn-off' corner) is **Monk's House**⁶. In 300m there is a stile on the right immediately after the driveway to Forstal Farm Cottage.

If you are doing Short Walk 1, go to §G.

D. Forstal Farm to Five Hundred Acre Wood (2½ km)

29. Ignore the stile and continue along the drive, leaving the HWLT but staying on the WW. After 1¼ km you go past a string of cottages and "The Farmhouse". In a further 200m (where the way ahead is a private driveway) **go over a stile on the left**, next to another gated driveway. Continue along the edge of a field, with the drive behind a fence on your right.
30. Follow the field edge downhill and round to the right. Go over a stile onto a short woodland path, soon joining the parallel driveway. Keep ahead at a crossing, passing a cottage on the right. Stay on the surfaced drive through **Five Hundred Acre Wood**⁷, taking the right fork at a couple of junctions in the next 150m.
31. The drive goes gently downhill for 400m, curving round to the left. At the bottom of a slope pass to the left of the gated entrance to Kovacs Lodge to climb back uphill on a rough track, heading **W**. At the top the path turns half-left in front of a high fence, then 25m further on comes to a footpath junction with a waymarker post.

If you are doing the Long Walk, go to §F.

E. Five Hundred Acre Wood to Pooh Sticks Bridge (2 km)

32. **Fork right** at the path junction, leaving the WW and heading **W**. In 500m the path crosses a stream on a wooden footbridge and veers up to the right, merging with a sunken track. Follow this potentially muddy track as it curves round to the left and continue up a bank to the B2026.

33. Turn left and go along the road for 150m, taking care as there is only a narrow grass verge. Just before a gate for Forest Ridge House on the left, **turn right** off the road into an inconspicuous gap in the tree boundary with a concealed stile. Go over the stile (which has a yellow footpath marker) into a horse training ground.
34. Follow the clearly waymarked route across it: over a horse track flanked by wooden gates, across a patch of grass, then back over the track on the far side. Keep ahead through a gap in the hedge onto a broad track heading **NW**, with a meadow on your left. At the end of the meadow **turn left** as indicated onto a grassy path along its bottom edge.
35. On the far side of the meadow follow the path into **Posingford Wood**⁸. Go up to an oblique path junction and **turn sharp right** onto a bridleway, almost doubling back. After descending for 250m the track curves left to cross a stream on a wooden footbridge, then swings right. In a further 150m it comes to **Pooh Sticks Bridge**²⁰, where it is of course obligatory to play a few games of **Pooh Sticks**²¹.

Continue the directions at §N.

F. Five Hundred Acre Wood to Gills Lap car park (4 km)

36. **Fork left** at the path junction, heading **S**. Keep to the main path as indicated by occasional WW posts, climbing steadily through this large wood and veering right after 450m to head **SW**. In a further 200m keep ahead at a path crossing, going past a wooden fieldgate into the Access Land of **Ashdown Forest**⁹. Follow the main path through the wood, still climbing steadily.
As before there are occasional wooden posts with WW signs, which originally had white-painted notches at the top indicating the direction. Although these have deteriorated over time they are still of some help in determining the route at path junctions.
37. In 700m (where you can see open countryside through the trees ahead on your right) **fork right** to emerge onto heathland, with fine views across a valley¹⁰ on your right. Continue to follow the WW posts on a broad ride across Ashdown Forest, initially heading **S** and later curving gently to the right.
38. In 800m you come to a T-junction in front of a small clump of trees, where the simplest route is to go straight ahead on a short path through the trees. At the end bear right onto a broad ride, soon merging with another from the right. In 50m fork right at a Y-junction in front of another clump of trees, leaving the WW. In a further 100m keep left at the next junction¹¹.
 - For a short cut you could take the right fork here, then in 500m turn right at a major path crossing to go directly to the car park (which you can see 500m away). If you do this, continue the directions at §M.
39. On the suggested route you come to a clearing in 150m, with **Greenwood Gate Clump**¹² ahead on your right. Make your way to the far side of these trees (going round either side) to continue on a similar grassy ride about 60m to the right of the WW, gradually diverging from it but still heading roughly **SW**. In 200m keep ahead at a major path crossing.
 - Again, you could turn right here to go directly to the car park (which you can see 750m away). If you do this, continue the directions at §M.
40. On the suggested route you are rewarded with views of the South Downs, 20 km ahead. In 300m you come to a T-junction with another broad ride, with the B2026 (partly screened by trees) 50m ahead. **Turn right** at this junction, parallel to the road and briefly joining the **Vanguard Way**¹⁵ (VGW).

41. In 400m the ride starts to drop gently downhill and bends slightly to the right. Turn left at a T-junction with another broad ride, then in 75m **fork right** where it splits. Go up to the B2026 and cross the road. Instead of simply taking the continuation of the horse ride, the suggested route is to **veer left** into Gills Lap car park to find a stone plinth with an information panel about “the playground of Winnie-the-Pooh”.

Continue the directions at §M.

G. Forstal Farm to Hartfield (Church Street) (2¼ km)

42. **Go over the stile**, leaving the WW but staying on the HWLT. Follow a mown path across the field, passing to the left of a large oak tree and with a **stone tower**¹³ coming into view ahead on the left. Follow the path into a small wood, where you might have to negotiate some muddy patches.
43. On the far side of the wood the path bends left and comes to a farm track where you **turn sharp right** to cross a stone bridge over a stream. On the other side **immediately bear right** off the track to continue along the bottom edge of a large field, heading **NW** towards Forstal Farm Cottage. After passing the house go through a gate and across a small grassy area into the bottom corner of a large field.
44. Take the **left-hand** of the two signposted footpaths, a faint grassy path sloping up the field towards a waymarker post in the centre of a line of tall trees 250m away. Keep ahead past the trees to the far side of the next field. Go over a stile in the hedge into another field and **turn half-left** to go diagonally across it to the opposite corner. *At the time of writing there was no path through the crops, but waymarkers at both corners confirm that this is the right of way. Other walkers appear to have gone around two sides to the far corner but you would be entitled to go directly across the field.*
45. In the far corner go through a gap in the trees into another field and continue along its right-hand edge. Follow the tree boundary round to the right, go out through a gap and turn right onto the B2026. As there is no pavement **cross over carefully** to go along the edge of a small triangular green with a large oak tree.
46. At the road junction **cross the B2110 carefully** and turn right onto the pavement to go up Hartfield's High Street. **Piglet's Tearoom** is on the left in 125m, part of the Pooh Corner shop. The **Village Stores** and the **Bear Inn** are a similar distance further on, near the junction with Church Street. *Opposite the Village Stores the Hay Waggon still looks like Hartfield's alternative pub, but it has been elegantly converted into a pair of houses.*
- Continue the directions at [83] in §O.*

H. The Dorset Arms to Summerford Bridge (1 km)

47. From the pub return to the B2110. **Cross the main road carefully** and turn right onto its pavement. After 150m there is a wide grass verge on this side of the road, with a path a little further away from the traffic. In a further 150m **turn left** into Station Road, signposted to Balls Green.
48. Follow the road down through the village, ignoring a couple of culs-de-sac on the right. At the end of the houses the road crosses the **Forest Way**², with a decorated signpost at the old level crossing¹⁴ showing that this disused railway line is now part of Cycle Route 21. Keep ahead on the road (now Beech Green Lane), in 150m crossing the **River Medway** on Summerford Bridge.
- Complete the directions at §P.*

I. Buxted Station to Holders Farm (3¼ • 3 km)

49. From the single platform bear right up the station's short approach road and turn left onto the A272, Buxted's High Street. Keep ahead at a mini-roundabout, go past the **Buxted Inn** and in 150m **turn left** into Church Road. Go along this narrow lane for 400m, passing the parish church of **St Mary the Virgin** up on the right.
50. Just before the lane bends right **fork left** onto an unsurfaced driveway which is also a public footpath (though not signposted when last checked). Follow this gently downhill and round to the right. After passing between a barn and the house (Mole End) the easiest way into the field ahead is through a metal fieldgate, but if this is locked take the narrow fenced path to its right which leads to a stile.
51. Make your way onto a broad grassy path through the middle of the field. In 250m it crosses a slight dip and curves left, gradually approaching the field edge where there is a metal fieldgate leading onto a bridge over the Oxted-Uckfield railway line.
52. Unless this gate happens to be unlocked, go through a small metal gate to its right and double back over a stile in order to cross the bridge. The farm track leads into a sloping meadow with two grassy paths ahead, plus other paths to both sides.

At the time of writing there was a footpath closure notice on the main route in [53] because a failed culvert has made it awkward (though not impossible) to cross a stream. A possible alternative along rights of way (not crossing the railway here and joining the Vanguard Way at Stones Rough) is notoriously muddy where it goes under the railway, so the suggested alternative route in [54] is along a well-used woodland path which joins the VGW near the end of that muddy stretch.

53. Main route (3¼ km)

- a. Take the **left-hand** of the two paths ahead, heading **NW**. In the tree boundary at the bottom of the meadow cross the **River Uck** on a wooden footbridge, with a footpath waymarker. Keep ahead on a grassy path through another meadow.
- b. After going along its right-hand edge for most of the way the path swings round to the left to come to an exit in the left-hand corner. Cross a stream and continue along the left-hand side of a smaller meadow.
If the footbridge over this stream has not been replaced this crossing will be awkward.
- c. In the corner the path comes out onto a minor road (Fowley Lane). Turn left to recross the stream on the road bridge, then almost immediately **turn right** onto the continuation of the footpath, a narrow and muddy fenced path to the right of a garage.
- d. The path continues through a copse and emerges into a field. Keep ahead on a grassy path near its right-hand side, with a striking **sandstone outcrop** ahead on your left. In the far right-hand corner go back across the stream on a wooden footbridge.
- e. Where the path comes out into the open **turn right** to go along the edge of a field, climbing gently and heading **NE**. Follow a grassy path in roughly this direction for 800m, going through wooden gates in the tree boundaries between fields.
- f. In the right-hand corner of the last field cross a ditch on a plank bridge and go along a short fenced path past some outbuildings. After crossing a farm track and going through a hedge **turn left** at a signposted footpath T-junction, joining the **Vanguard Way**¹⁵ (VGW).

54. Alternative route (3 km)

- a. Ignore both paths ahead and **turn right** to go along the top edge of the meadow. In the corner the path drops down into a wood. Follow the meandering woodland path for around 300m, heading roughly **NE**.
- b. The path eventually comes to a T-junction with a public footpath where you turn left, away from a bridge under the railway and joining the **Vanguard Way**¹⁵ (VGW).

- c. The muddy path bends right to go alongside the **River Uck** for a short distance, then goes across it on a wooden footbridge into a vast field. Bear right and follow a faint grassy path heading **N** towards its right-hand edge.
- d. Continue along the field edge, climbing all the way to the top corner. Go through a belt of trees and across another field, still heading **N**. Go over a stile in the tree boundary and turn right onto a minor road (Fowley Lane).
- e. In 125m, just after the entrance to Greenhurst on the right, **turn left** onto a signposted footpath. Make your way around a large mound of earth into a large field and follow a grassy path heading **NNW** across it, dropping down to the bottom corner.
- f. In the tree boundary cross a footbridge and bear left to cut across the corner of a smaller field. Go over another footbridge and up a slope. Go over a stile onto a narrow fenced path leading to a three-way signpost, where the main route joins from the left.

J. Holders Farm to Perrymans Lane (2 km)

- 55. Go uphill on the track, between farm buildings. In 150m it turns half-left and joins another named route, the **Sussex Diamond Way**¹⁶ (SDW). Follow this unsurfaced lane uphill for 350m, passing a few cottages. Where it curves down to the left by the entrance to Hurstwood Farm Equestrian Centre, **bear slightly right** onto a concrete farm track, staying on the VGW & SDW.
- 56. After passing the entrances to a couple of farms keep ahead on a path between hedges, eventually coming out onto a minor road (Burnt Oak Lane). The footpath continues through a gap in the hedge opposite and turns left to run parallel to the lane for 75m (crossing a driveway in the middle), then turns away from a wooden gate on the left to go down through a wooded area.
 - There is no real need for this short off-road link: you could simply walk along the lane for 75m and turn right through the gate.
- 57. The woodland path curves right and in 200m comes out through a wooden gate into a field. Keep ahead on a grassy path, initially heading towards the unusual **Holy Trinity** church on the far side, in the village of **High Hurstwood**. Its primary school is down to the left and the path bends left to leave the field through a wooden kissing gate in the bottom corner.
- 58. Unless you want to make a short detour to visit the church, turn left and go down a lane to its T-junction with a road (Chillies Lane). Turn right briefly onto the road, then in 25m **turn left** onto a signposted footpath, still on the VGW & SDW.
Old OS maps show the VGW taking a different route to the north, but that footpath has been closed for many years after a serious landslide and there is no sign of any work to restore it.
- 59. The path goes alongside a high wire fence, bends left and then turns sharply right as it drops downhill. At the bottom it crosses a stream on a wooden footbridge and comes out through a wooden gate into the bottom of a field.
- 60. Follow a grassy path steadily uphill across two fields for 450m, heading **W** and going through a gate in the tree boundary between them. At the end go out through another gate onto a minor road (Perrymans Lane).

K. Perrymans Lane to Poundgate (Crow & Gate Inn) (3 km)

- 61. Turn right and go along the lane for 125m. Where it turns half-left **go straight ahead** past an old metal fieldgate onto a track heading **NW**, leaving the SDW but with a footpath waymarker confirming that you are still on the VGW. In 150m the track turns half-right to continue through Quarry Wood.

62. For the next 500m there are plenty of 'Private' notices to deter you from straying off the right of way. Eventually you leave the wood and continue on a grassy path between high hedges. In 350m ignore another footpath going up the tree-lined bank on the right. *There will probably still be a footpath closure notice here as this is where the original route of the VGW came out.*
63. In 200m go through a wooden gate and continue alongside the hedge around a property (Stroods). On reaching its driveway **veer right** to cross it and go up a few steps cut into the grassy bank opposite. Follow the footpath through a lightly wooded area for 75m, then turn half-left as indicated to head **N** along the edge of Newnham Park Wood.
64. In 150m keep ahead at an oblique path crossing. In a further 200m go over a stile beside a metal fieldgate to continue along the right-hand edge of a field, initially heading **N** and then curving to the right. In the field corner go over a stile and back into the trees to continue just inside the wood.
65. In 250m go over a stile and bear left to follow a line of posts between two fields. In the corner turn right to go along the field edge to the next corner. Go over another stile and follow a mown grassy path curving round to the left alongside a low wooden fence. Go through a metal fieldgate to continue on a fenced grassy track, passing the buildings of Newnham Park Farm.
66. Keep ahead briefly on the farm's driveway, then **bear right** onto a narrow grassy path between fences. This leads out to the A26 (Uckfield Road), with the **Crow & Gate Inn**¹⁷ across the road on the right. Even if you are not visiting the suggested lunch pub you will need to **cross this busy main road with great care** to continue the walk.

L. The Crow & Gate Inn to Gills Lap car park (4½ km)

67. From the back of the pub's main car park (further from the building) take either of two grassy paths into a scrubby field. The two paths merge and lead to the far left-hand corner. Follow the path round to the left in a wooded area, passing the back gardens of a few houses. In 175m you reach a little triangle of paths and **fork right** onto a bridleway coming from the A26, rejoining the VGW.
 - If this useful permissive path no longer exists, simply walk along the A26's pavement from the pub's car park for 200m and turn right onto the signposted bridleway (as per the published VGW route).
68. As you go round a slight bend on the bridleway you can see that you have entered the wide open heathland of **Ashdown Forest**⁹. You now simply head **NW** on the main sandy track which you can see stretching ahead for 1½ km, steadily downhill at first to pass a few small ponds and streams in the bottom of a valley, then back up the other side.
69. On the far side of the valley the track curves round to the left at the top of the slope. At a junction of tracks here **fork left** as indicated by the blue VGW waymarker to head **W** along a ridge towards a prominent clump of trees 500m away. After the track passes to the left of **King's Standing Clump**¹² veer right onto a track leading into the eponymous car park.
70. The suggested route now deviates slightly from the published VGW. Instead of walking along a narrow grass verge beside the B2026 for 200m, go through the car park to the road and cross it carefully. Go through a squeeze gate opposite and turn right onto a broad ride running parallel to the road, hidden behind a high hedge.
71. In 200m you pass Bushy Willows car park. In the next 200m the ride swings left and comes to a T-junction with another ride where you **turn right**, briefly joining the **Wealdway**¹ (WW) as you head back towards the road. Shortly before reaching a wooden fieldgate **bear left** to find a small wooden gate in the undergrowth and go through this instead. A short path takes you into Lodge car park.

72. Go back across the B2026 and take the grassy path¹¹ opposite through a wide gap in the high hedge. **Turn left** onto another broad ride running parallel with the road, leaving the WW but rejoining the VGW. In 250m keep ahead at a path crossing, where the Long Walk joins from the right.
73. In 400m the ride starts to drop gently downhill and bends slightly to the right. Turn left at a T-junction with another broad ride, then in 75m **fork right** where it splits. Go up to the B2026 and cross the road. Instead of simply taking the continuation of the horse ride, the suggested route is to **veer left** into Gills Lap car park to find a stone plinth with an information panel about "the playground of Winnie-the-Pooh".

M. Gills Lap car park to Pooh Sticks Bridge (2¾ km)

74. From the plinth at the back of the car park head **N** across a grassy area and bear right onto a broad ride along the ridge, with fine views to the north-west. In 400m you come to a path crossing where the suggested route is to **turn left**, away from **Gills Lap Clump**^{12·18} and a trig point on your right.
 - For a small short cut you could keep ahead at the crossing. If you do this, be sure to detour left into the **viewpoint** just before the ride starts to descend after 200m, then resume the directions at [76].
75. The suggested route heads **NW** towards a lone pine tree growing in a hollow 125m away. To avoid falling into Pooh's **Heffalump Trap**¹⁹ **turn right** just before reaching it, leaving the VGW. This side path swings right and left and in 200m goes through a gap in some trees to a celebrated **viewpoint** with a bronze **memorial plaque** to AA Milne and EF Shepard, the author and illustrator of the stories.
76. From the viewpoint go out onto the main ride and turn left to start a long descent, quite steeply in places. In 500m, where the right fork leads to Wren's Warren car park, swerve left and right to continue downhill on the ride. In a further 350m, fork left into a lightly wooded area. The path swings right and a straight stretch through the trees leads to a minor road (Chuck Hatch Lane).
77. Cross over the road onto a bridleway, soon passing Pooh car park on the right. Follow this broad track down through **Posingford Wood**⁸, with Main Walk route joining at an oblique path crossing. In 500m the track curves left to cross a stream on a wooden footbridge, then swings right. In a further 150m it comes to **Pooh Sticks Bridge**²⁰, where it is of course obligatory to play a few games of **Pooh Sticks**²¹.

N. Pooh Sticks Bridge to Hartfield (Pooh Corner • Church Street) (2 • 2¼ km)

78. Cross the wooden bridge and continue on the bridleway, which climbs gently for 250m before merging with a short driveway. Bear left onto a lane and go along it for 100m, then (just past Mole End) go through a metal side gate on the right. Follow a clear grassy path across a wildflower meadow and then up to the top right-hand corner of a second meadow (with fine views back to Ashdown Forest).
79. Leave the meadow over a stile and bear right across a junction of driveways. Go through a wooden side gate onto an enclosed path heading **E**, passing the gardens of some large new houses on the left and then swerving around another (Landhurst). In a further 100m **turn left** at a footpath junction, signposted to Hartfield village.
80. Follow the path alongside a high wooden fence, past a (possibly dried-up) pond and then gently downhill, later with a field on the right. At the bottom make your way past a wooden fieldgate²² to the B2110 (Newtons Hill). Turn right and walk along its pavement, keeping left at a road junction to go up Hartfield's High Street. **Piglet's Tearoom** is on the left in 125m, part of the Pooh Corner shop.

81. Finishing in Hartfield (+¼ km)

Carry on up the High Street, past the tearoom. The bus stop for East Grinstead is on the right-hand side of the road, opposite the Village Stores. The stop for Tunbridge Wells is 60m beyond the junction with Church Street (with the **Bear Inn** at the bottom of this side street as another refreshment stop if you have a long wait for a bus).

Opposite the Village Stores the Hay Waggon still looks like Hartfield's alternative pub, but it has been elegantly converted into a pair of houses.



O. Hartfield (Pooh Corner • Church Street) to Summerford Bridge (2¾ • 2½ km)

82. From Pooh Corner (+¼ km)

Turn left out of the Pooh Corner shop/tearoom and carry on up the High Street, passing the **Village Stores** on your left. Just past the War Memorial **turn right** into Church Street, with the **Bear Inn** on its left-hand side as the last refreshment stop before Ashurst station.

Opposite the Village Stores the Hay Waggon still looks like Hartfield's alternative pub, but it has been elegantly converted into a pair of houses.

83. From the pub go up Church Street, passing several picturesque cottages. At the top of this short street **turn left** under part of **Lych Gate Cottage**²³ into the churchyard of **St Mary the Virgin**²⁴. Follow the path along its left-hand side, passing a magnificent tulip tree, and exit down steps onto a tarmac path going past a primary school and down to a small green.
84. Go through a gate and follow a tarmac path straight across the green to reach the B2110. Cross the main road carefully and take a side street just off to the right, part of Castlefields. At a T-junction turn right into Motte Field. Ignore a short cul-de-sac on the left, but 20m later **turn left** onto a tarmac path. Go over a stile and turn right onto a grassy path across a field, away from a small mound²⁵.
85. In 100m cross a ditch and bear slightly left to go up to a gap in the hedge ahead. Cross a stile and continue along the left-hand edge of a field, initially heading **NE** and slowly curving round to the right. 100m after entering a second field, **veer left** through a gap in the hedge and head diagonally across another field.
86. In the far corner go over a stile (or through a fieldgate) and up a bank to a disused railway line, the **Forest Way**². **Turn right** and go along this broad tree-lined track for 1¼ km, crossing over the outward route of the Main Walk after 400m and later a couple of bridges with steel lattice sides (over the **Withy**²⁶ and then a backwater).
87. The track eventually passes a "Forest Way Country Park" information panel and comes to a minor road by the village of Balls Green, with a decorated signpost at the old level crossing¹⁴ showing that this disused railway line is now part of Cycle Route 21. **Turn left** onto the road (Beech Green Lane), in 150m crossing the **River Medway** on Summerford Bridge.

P. Summerford Bridge to Ashurst Station (3¾ km)

88. Continue along Beech Green Lane for a further 100m, then **turn right** through a metal side gate onto a signposted footpath, joining the **Wealdway**¹ (WW). Follow a grassy path along the left-hand edge of water meadows, passing a few bends of the river as it meanders away on the right.

89. In 700m the path swings left to cross a side stream in the tree boundary, then continues along the edge of another meadow for 350m. After crossing another stream in some trees go along the left-hand edge of the next meadow for just 100m to come to a footpath junction, with a wooden footbridge on the left. **Turn half-right** to go diagonally across this meadow, heading **ENE**.
90. On the far side go back across the **River Medway** on a farm bridge and keep ahead through another meadow, following overhead power cables. In 250m cross **Eridge Stream**²⁶ on another bridge and **turn left**, staying on the WW and also joining the **Sussex Border Path**²⁷ (SBP).
91. Follow a clear path through the field margin and then across the main part of the field, heading **NNE**. In 300m cross the **River Grom**²⁶ on a footbridge and carry on through another meadow. The path gradually approaches its right-hand edge and then swings right to go under a railway bridge carrying the Oxted-Uckfield line.
92. Follow the grassy path gently uphill through a narrow field and keep left where it opens out after 100m. At the top of the field boundary **turn left** onto a path along its edge, staying on the SBP but finally leaving the WW. Follow this path gently uphill, passing a few derelict brick outbuildings and with fields sloping down to your left.
93. In 400m go over a stile beside a fieldgate to continue on a tree-lined farm track, still climbing. In 200m **turn left** off the track onto a broad grassy path between hedges going back downhill. At the bottom **turn right** onto an unsurfaced track, passing several farm buildings on the left including the attractive **Linkhorns Farmhouse**²⁸.
94. In 200m stay on the track as it bends left and goes down a slope into the back of Ashurst station's small car park. Turn left as indicated onto a short path leading to Platform 2, for southbound trains to Uckfield; cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

Walk Notes

1. The **Wealdway** runs for 130 km through the Kent and Sussex Weald, from Gravesend on the Thames estuary to the outskirts of Eastbourne.
2. The **Forest Way** runs for 17 km between East Grinstead and Groombridge, along part of a branch line closed by Beeching in 1966. It is part of Cycle Route 21, from Greenwich to Eastbourne.
3. The **Rectory** had a Georgian façade added in the late 18thC or early 19thC. The unusual veranda in the recessed centre has slender iron columns supporting a lead roof.
4. Most of the medieval **St Michael and All Angels, Withyham** was rebuilt after it was struck by lightning in 1663. Near the entrance hang full-size photographic reproductions of four 14thC paintings of scenes from Christ's Passion by the Florentine artist, Niccolo Gerini. In the **Sackville Chapel**, the central monument of Thomas Sackville and his parents by Caius Gabriel Cibber was described by Pevsner as having "a directness of feeling and expression unprecedented in England".
5. The **High Weald Landscape Trail** runs for 145 km across the length of the High Weald, mostly near its northern edge, from Horsham in West Sussex to Rye.
6. The curious 'sawn-off' aspect of the north-west corner of **Monk's House** is attributed to a 19thC rector, who wanted to be able to see Old Buckhurst (the home of his ancestors) from the Rectory.
7. **100 Aker Wood** in the Winnie-the-Pooh stories.
8. On the main track down through **Posingford Wood** you might be able to see **Owl's House** (close to the track) and **Piglet's House** (further back), high up on tree trunks to the right; the latter also has a little door at the base of the tree. **Winnie-the-Pooh's House** is on the other side of **Pooh Sticks Bridge**²⁰.

9. **Ashdown Forest** did not impress William Cobbett. A diary entry from January 1822 recorded in his *Rural Rides* vividly describes it as “verily the most villainously ugly spot I saw in England...getting, if possible, uglier and uglier all the way”.
10. **Eeyore's Gloomy Place** in the stories, “rather boggy and sad”.
11. On this section you are following the line of the **Roman road** from London to Lewes. Traces of it can be seen at Roman Road car park near Camp Hill, about 1½ km off the walk route.
12. **Greenwood Gate Clump**, **King's Standing Clump** and **Gills Lap Clump** are three of the original nine groups of Scots pines planted on Ashdown Forest in the early 19thC, possibly as habitats for game birds. More groups were planted in the 20thC.
13. The **stone tower** was a gatehouse, all that survives of the Sackville's original family seat. In its time **Old Buckhurst** was one of the largest houses in England, similar in size to the one later granted to them by Elizabeth I (Knole).
14. On the eastern side of the level crossing a sign at the top of the private house (partly concealed by a tall hedge) reveals that it was the old **Withyham station** building.
15. The **Vanguard Way** runs for 105 km “from the suburbs to the sea”, from Croydon in south London to Newhaven in East Sussex.
16. The **Sussex Diamond Way** runs for 97 km, from Midhurst to Heathfield through the Low Weald. It was devised by the Sussex branch of the Ramblers to mark its 60th anniversary in 1995.
17. The unusual name of the **Crow & Gate Inn** might be a corruption of ‘Crowborough Gate’. When Ashdown Forest was fenced off as a royal hunting ground access here was through a gate by a livestock pound, and the large town nearby might have given rise to this alternative to ‘Pound Gate’.
18. Christopher Robin called **Gills Lap Clump** (Galleons Lap in the stories) “The Enchanted Place” because nobody had ever been able to count whether there were sixty-three or sixty-four trees in it.
19. A **Heffalump Trap** has come to mean a trap set to catch an opponent which ends up trapping the person who set it (as happened to Pooh).
20. **Pooh Sticks Bridge** is where Pooh invented the game. The wooden bridge has had to be rebuilt several times – most recently in 1999, with a donation from Disney – because it gets worn away by its many visitors. **Pooh's House** is at the base of a tree on the left after crossing the bridge.
21. **Pooh Sticks** is of course the addictive game invented by Pooh in the stories (the Pooh Corner shop in Hartfield will sell you the Official Rules). Contestants are requested to bring their own sticks, although the *cognoscenti* know that Pooh used fir-cones.
22. A **dual-language sign** for Pooh Sticks Bridge on this gate reveals the nationality of many of the tourists making this pilgrimage.
23. **Lych Gate Cottage** does indeed incorporate the gate into the churchyard, an unusual arrangement.
24. **St Mary the Virgin, Hartfield** is a mixture of styles dating from the 13th–15thC, but was heavily restored in Victorian times.
25. The mound is all that remains of an old **Motte and Bailey** fortification, as revealed by the nearby street names Motte Field and Castlefields.
26. The **Withy**, **Eridge Stream** and the **River Grom** are all tributaries of the **River Medway**, joining it nearby.
27. The **Sussex Border Path** runs for 240 km along the length of West & East Sussex, from Thorney Island on the Hampshire border to Rye.
28. **Linkhorns Farmhouse** is a pre-Elizabethan cottage with a fireplace and chimney stack added in the 16thC, typical of Kent and Sussex Tudor architecture.

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