

Brockenhurst Circular - The New Forest

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| <p>This walk has been revised and checked once, however the publisher cannot accept responsibility for any problems encountered by readers.</p> | | | |

Length: 16.8 km (10.5 miles). 4 hours 10 minutes. For the whole outing including trains and meals allow 10 hours.

Map: OS Landranger Nos 195 and 196. Explorer Map OL22. Brockenhurst Station, map reference SU 301020 is in Hampshire, 6 km south of Lyndhurst.

Toughness: 3 out of 10.

Features: This mainly level walk from Brockenhurst Station crosses Balmer Lawn to the north of Brockenhurst and enters a densely wooded part of the New Forest using wide cycleways through Parkhill Inclosure to emerge South of Lyndhurst. To aid navigation here the walk route mostly follows well-defined cycle tracks with numbered marker posts. The lunch stop is either the Crown Stirrup at Clayhill or The Oak Inn at Bank, south west of Lyndhurst. After lunch the route retraces your path through the village of Bank and Brick Hill Inclosure before crossing the more open Black Knowl to return to Brockenhurst for tea.

Shortening the walk: 14.2 km (8.9 miles). Stop for lunch Crown Stirrup at Clayhill and omit the extension to Bank in the afternoon. There is also an hourly bus service on Saturdays (every two hours on Sundays) from the Crown Stirrup in Clayhill to Brockenhurst Station.

History: The New Forest was created as a royal forest by William I in about 1079 for the royal hunt, mainly of deer. It was created at the expense of more than 20 small hamlets and isolated farmsteads; hence it was 'new' in his time as a single compact area. It was first recorded as "Nova Foresta" in the Domesday Book in 1086, where a section devoted to it is interpolated between lands of the king's thegns and the town of Southampton; it is the only forest that the book describes in detail. "Probably no action of the early Norman kings is more notorious than their creation of the New Forest", observes H. R. Loyn, who adds that the

picture of evicted peasants and houses burned is uncritical. Twelfth-century chroniclers alleged that William had created the Forest by evicting the inhabitants of 36 parishes, reducing a flourishing district to a wasteland; however, this account is thought dubious by most historians, as the poor soil in much of the Forest is believed to have been incapable of supporting large-scale agriculture, and significant areas appear to have always been uninhabited. Two of William's sons died in the Forest: Prince Richard in 1081 and King William II (William Rufus) in 1100.

Saturday Walkers Club: Take the Weymouth train nearest to 9:00 am (before or after) from London Waterloo to Brockenhurst. There are two trains per hour on Saturdays and Sundays. Journey time 1 hour 32 minutes on Saturday and 1 hour 45 minutes on Sundays. Trains back from Brockenhurst to London are every half hour.

Lunch: The suggested lunchtime stops are either Crown Stirrup at Clayhill (tel 023 8028 2339) or The Oak Inn at Bank (tel 023 8028 2350). For either pub, groups of more than 10 should phone ahead. The Crown Stirrup comes 7.5 km into the walk and offers good pub food with a garden open from 12:00. The Oak Inn (10.4 km into the walk) serves food from 11:30 to 3.00 pm on Monday to Friday and from 12.00 on Saturdays and Sundays. The Oak Inn is very popular and may not accept a booking at busy times and you will probably have to eat outside. There are some outside tables under cover a few of which have heaters.

Tea: The suggested tea place is The Thatched Cottage, 16 Brookley Road, Brockenhurst tel 01590 623090. There are many alternatives including the Rosie Lea Tea House and Bakery at 76 Brookley Road. The station is a 5-minute walk from The Thatched Cottage.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Brockenhurst Station to Balmer Lawn 1.6 km

Coming off the London train at Brockenhurst Station cross over the footbridge and turn right towards the main road, your direction NE. In 200 m at the main road turn half left along Lyndhurst Road. Stay on the main road going N passing the Rose & Crown on the right. After 450 m you come to Waters Green on the left-hand side, turn half left and go through the gate on to the green to cross it diagonally towards a white house with three red gables, your direction 320 deg. Cross the road after 100 m and continue towards the white house with red gables (Greenmead). Fork right on the track in front of some houses and turn right on a tarmac road to rejoin the main road. Cross this with care and turn left to go N over the bridge and then turn right into Balmer Lawn Road.

Balmer Lawn to Clayhill 5.8 km

Follow Balmer Lawn Road in an easterly direction for 400 m with the Balmer Lawn Hotel on your left. Where the road begins to bend left and a track continues straight on turn left leaving the road and track to cross the grass, your direction 350 deg. In 200 m bear right on a faint path towards a wooden plank bridge over a ditch. Once over this bridge bear half right (your direction 50 deg), towards two more plank bridges crossing third after 400 m. Continue in the same direction for a further 260 m with forest starting on your left until you come to a fence and gates.

Go through the gate and continue in the same direction for 260 m where the path veers left your direction now 010 deg. In a further 110 m ignore a cross path and follow the path as it curves right to come to a broad gravel cycle track. Turn right on the cycle track and in 70 m

come to a 5-way junction. Turn left here (your direction 310 deg) and follow this grass path for 500 m ignoring all ways off until you come to another broad gravel cycle track where you turn right your direction initially 80 deg. Stay on this cycle track as it curves slowly to the left ignoring all ways off for 600 m to come to a T junction at marker post 273. Turn right here, your direction E, staying on the marked cycle route and in 250 m come to a T junction at marker post 272 with another cycle route where you turn left and head N for 450 m to marker post 271. Here turn half left on the cycle route, your direction 290 deg initially. Follow the cycle track for 700 m as it curves slowly to the right to come to a gate. Go through the gate to marker post 270 and turn left staying on the cycle track towards Clayhill, your direction 310 deg.

Stay on the cycle track for 1.4 km to reach a gate. Go through the gate to a small parking area with some houses ahead. Turn left through another gate on to a path, your direction 230 deg with the back gardens of houses on your right. In 220 m just before the path bends to the left, turn half right through a wooden arch with a welcome sign into the back garden of the Crown Stirrup pub, the early lunch stop. If not stopping, go through a gate on your left into the pub car park. (If you want to cut short the walk you can catch a bus from the Crown Stirrup back to Brockenhurst - the stop for Brockenhurst is on the same side of the road as the pub.)

Clayhill to Bank 2.8 km

Coming out of the Crown Stirrup turn left on the main road to walk S on the pavement for 300 m. Where the pavement ends turn right and cross the road with care to re-enter the forest over a wide cattle-grid. Follow the track for 150 m to the gates of Coxlease School. Just before the school gates turn left onto a path and continue with a fence on the right for 400 m until you reach an open area, your direction 210 deg. Turn sharp right here with a fence on your right for 200 m until you reach a gate in the fence on your right, your direction 270 deg initially. When you reach the gate, turn left to cross the open ground on a winding path, your direction 230 deg.

In 300 m go through a gate in the fence ahead and continue straight on the main path your direction 260 deg. In 250 m you come to a T junction with a wide gravel cycle track. To continue to The Oak Inn at Bank turn right here. (If you have had lunch at Clayhill and want to shorten the walk, turn left here and follow the instructions from *** below). For The Oak Inn follow the cycle track initially North for 700 m until you come to a gate. Go through the gate and turn left on to a tarmac road (Pinkney Lane). Follow the road as it curves round to the right, ignore a left turn after 300 m and in a further 200 m you will come to The Oak Inn on your left-hand side, the alternative lunch stop in Bank.

Bank to Black Knowl 3.8km

Coming out of The Oak Inn turn right to retrace your steps through the village of Bank your direction South with Rose Cottage on your right. In 200 m curve left with the road to go uphill for a further 300 m. Just before the cattle grid go through a gate on your right and continue parallel to the road. In 80 m turn right on to the broad gravel cycle track your direction 135 deg, and follow it for 650 m as it curves gently to the right.

*** At the junction where you joined this track before lunch, continue straight ahead, your direction now 170 deg. In 300 m go through a gate to cross an open area Butts Lawn continuing on the main track for 220 m to a T junction where you turn right, your direction 230 deg. In 220 m at a major junction turn left and pass a forestry commission route marker post with the number 258. Follow the track round to the right and go through another gate.

Stay on the main track for 600 m, your direction now 210 deg where you pass FC marker post 260 on the right hand side of the track. Follow the gravel track for a further 700 m as it curves gently to the left to FC marker post 261. Go through a gate and turn right, pass FC marker post 262 and in 50 m go through another gate and turn left and in 80 m cross over Bolderford Bridge (shown on the OS map). 120 m after the bridge, at marker post 264 leave the cycle track turning half left. In 50 m ignore the broad grass track ahead and bear right to take the narrow, very straight, gravel path to cross the open space of Black Knowl, your direction 160 deg.

Black Knowl to Brockenhurst 2.8 km

Follow this path for 1.5 km to the outskirts of Brockenhurst. Cross over Meerut Road and continue along a gravel track alongside Rhinefield Road, your direction 130 deg. In 200 m you pass St Anne's Church on your left and the road curves to the right. In a further 250 m turn left over a footbridge (or splash through the ford to clean your boots) into Brookley Road. The Rosie Lea Tea House and Bakery, a possible tea stop, is at 76 Brookley Road, but to reach the recommended tea stop continue along Brookley Road for 200 m, cross over the staggered junction with Sway Road and in a further 200m you reach the Thatched Cottage tea room on the left. Allow 5 minutes from the tea room to the station platform.

Coming out of the Thatched Cottage tea room turn left towards the main road, then at the main road immediately turn half right towards the station.