



## Walk facts

**Distance:** 1.4 miles / 2.3 km circular walk

**Time:** 1 hour (approx)

**Start point:** Hindleap car park

Beware! Some paths can be muddy any time of the year.

**Highlights:** Remains of rabbit warrens

Old quarries

Ghyll woodland

Views of South Downs

Common heathland plants

### Gradient profile:



### Toilets and Information:

Ashdown Forest Centre Tel: 01342 823583

[www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org)

### Refreshments and Accommodation:

Help support local businesses - pick up your copy of *Ashdown Forest Area Visitor Map & Guide* or visit [www.ashdownforest.com](http://www.ashdownforest.com)



## Caring for Ashdown Forest

A Board of Conservators manages Ashdown Forest as a quiet, natural place for you to enjoy and as a refuge for wildlife. A team of ten full-time staff carry out day-to-day management of the Forest. If you would like further information about the work of the Conservators, visit the Forest Centre at Wych Cross. Tel: 01342 823583 or visit [www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org)



## Getting to Ashdown Forest

Have you thought about using public transport for your journey to the Forest?

**East Grinstead** (6.3 miles / 10 km away)

Twice hourly trains from London Victoria

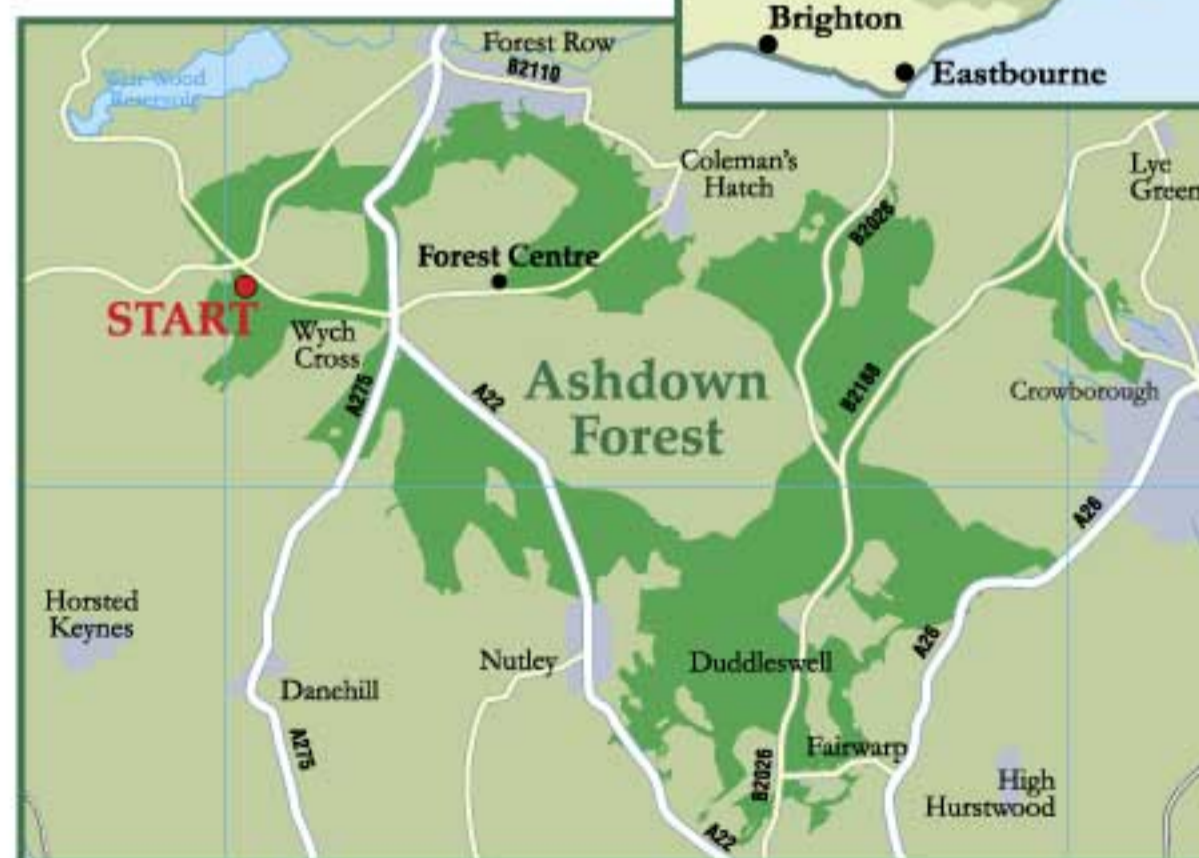
Take bus 54 from East Grinstead Station to

Wych Cross. Time: 28 minutes.

### Useful websites

[www.transportdirect.info](http://www.transportdirect.info)

[www.traveline.org.uk](http://www.traveline.org.uk)



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## Hindleap walk



MP

MP



## A Forest of beauty

Ashdown Forest is a place of beauty. It is an area of open heathland on the highest sandy ridge-top in the Heart of the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB). People and their livestock have created heathlands here over many centuries. Ashdown Forest has the largest and best-preserved area of heathland in the South East. The word 'Forest' derives from its use as a royal hunting ground.

## A Forest full of wildlife

Ashdown Forest is a place bursting with wildlife. Heather and gorse grow on the open heath. Listen for birds such as the nightjar, which sings its churring song at dusk in summer. The silver-studded blue butterfly is common here: its caterpillars eat gorse and heather. Oak, silver birch and beech, along with holly and hazel, grow in the wooded areas of the Forest. Look out for deer - mainly fallow - dawn and dusk.



1. Fallow deer were introduced to the Forest in Norman times.
2. Can you spot nightjars blending into their surroundings?
3. Look out for the silver-studded blue butterfly in July and August.

## A Forest steeped in history

Ashdown Forest is a place steeped in history. Look out for two stretches of Roman road and remains of the 38 km medieval 'pale' - a ditch and bank that surrounded the Forest. Can you spot the pillow mounds once used for rabbit farming in medieval times? The Forest is covered with hollows, where iron ore and sandstone were dug.



Kate Chitham

*The Romans used waste slag from iron smelting, to build roads.*

## Sun worshippers

People have cut heather on the Forest for thousands of years. In the Stone Age, the first people to live on the Forest may have cut heather to thatch their temporary houses. In more recent times, Commoners cut heather for animal bedding and thatch on houses and haystacks. The Conservators now regularly mow heather on the Forest. This regular cutting means that there is always heather of different ages present. It also creates bare ground, where you could see common lizards and adders sunbathing.



*The first people on the Forest may have lived in a house like this, made from hazel and thatched with heather.*

## Rarer than rainforest

Heathland, with its combination of heather, gorse, and grasses, make it rarer than rainforest. Heathland grows on the Forest for a combination of reasons. The underlying sand rock makes a poor and acidic soil - ideal for it. Scientists now believe the high ridges of the Forest may not ever have been densely wooded, instead had heathland plants growing in open areas and under scattered trees. When Stone Age people began clearing the remaining trees, it gave the sun loving heathers and grasses more room to flourish. Grazing livestock and repeated cutting over thousands of years prevented trees re-growing. The common heathland plants you will see today continue to dominate the Forest.



Kate Chitham

*Stone age people cleared trees from the Forest with flint axes.*

## Digging in

Look carefully and you will see the remains of rabbit warrens on this walk. They are shown on Ordnance Survey maps by the words 'pillow mound'. The Normans introduced rabbits to England during the 12th century. People prized their meat and fur. Originally, rabbits were delicate animals, not suited to the English weather. People had to dig warrens to give them shelter from the elements and protection from predators. A warren was a mound of soil about 200 metres long and 7 metres wide with a fence around it.

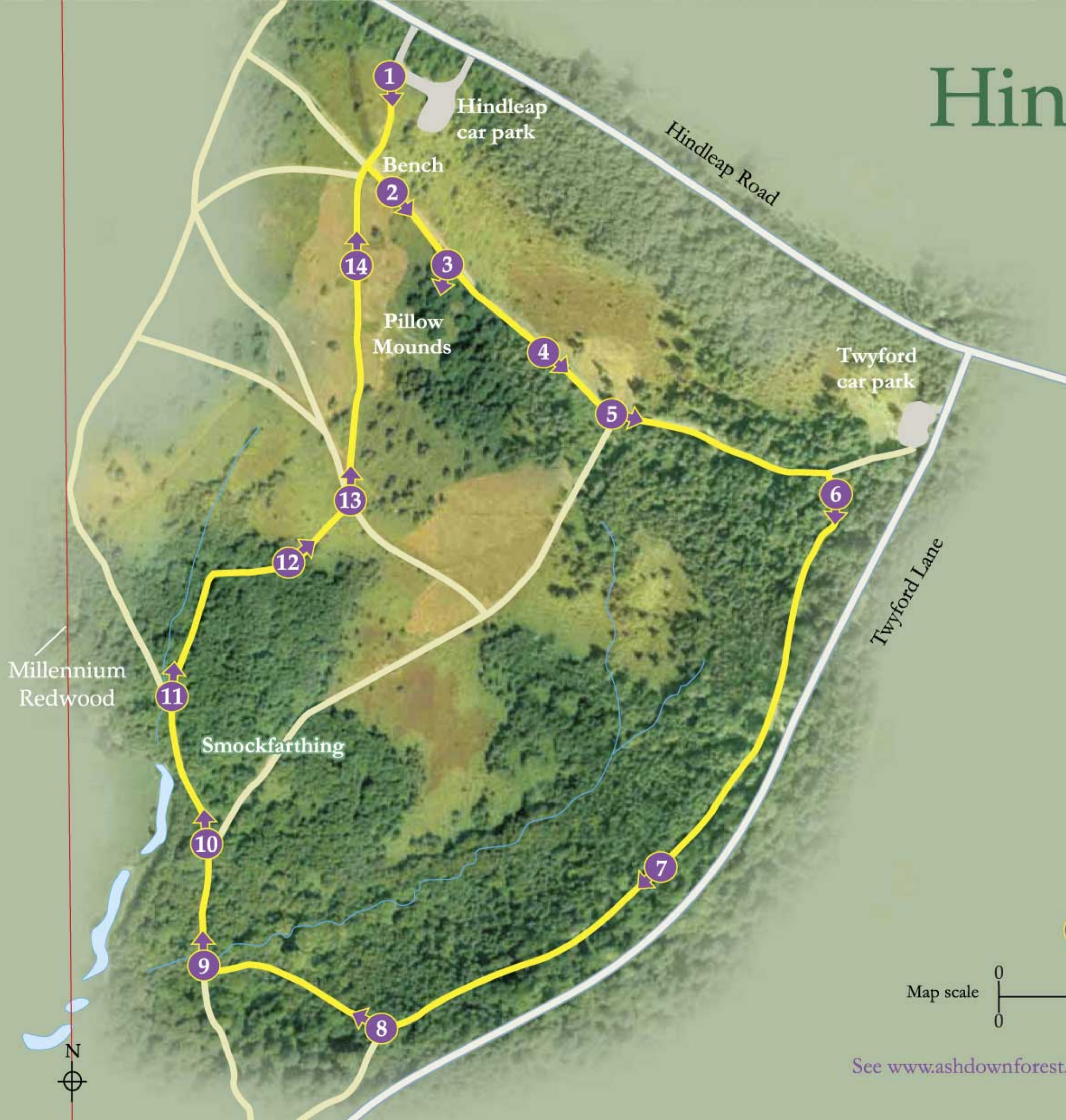


Tony Ashton

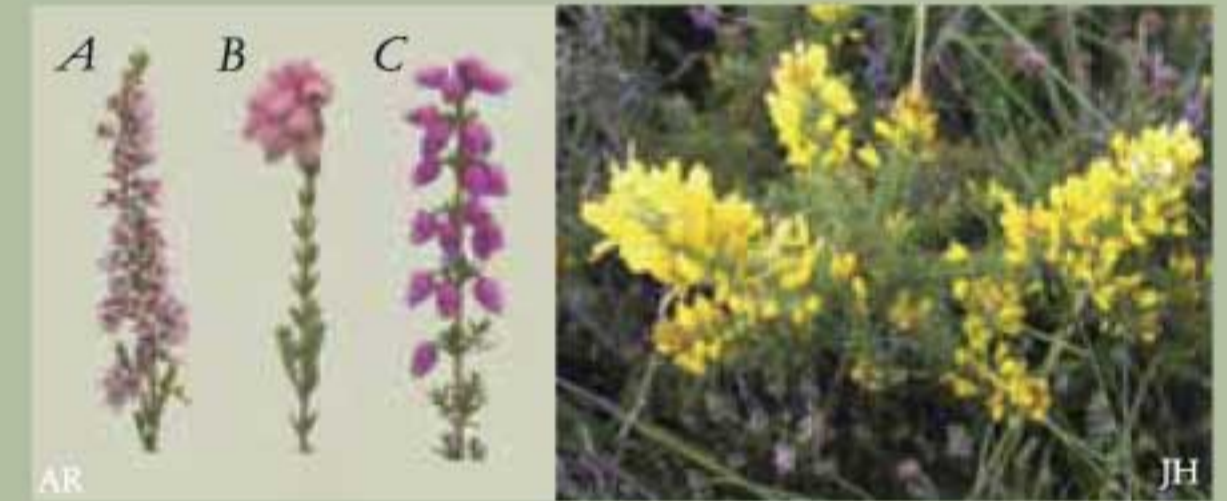
*Rabbits were caught by surrounding the warren with nets and introducing a ferret.*



# Hindleap walk



Can you spot the remains of rabbit warrens, hidden by bracken in the summer? MP



A) Ling is the commonest heather on the Forest. It flowers between July and September.

B) Look out for cross-leaved heath growing in the wetter areas of the heath. It flowers between June and October.

C) You will see bell heather growing on the drier parts of the Forest. It flowers between May and September.

Common and dwarf gorse grow all over the Forest. The first has its peak flowering in Spring, the second in August.

| Greenwich Meridian

**1** Key to photos  
(Arrow indicates the direction camera was pointing)



See [www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org) for Ashdown Forest Centre opening hours



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*For guidance only, actual conditions may be different from that shown, depending on weather and time of year.*

## Photo guide and route description

- 1** Start from the interpretation panel in the car park, head downhill on the grass between the heather and gorse.

Shortly you will come to a crossroads. Turn left here by the bench and follow the ride with silver birch trees and bracken on your right and open heath on your left. **2**

The ride now enters the woods and starts to climb gently uphill to the Twyford car park **3** which will come into view on your left as you reach to top of the hill. **4** Now turn sharply right and follow the ride steeply downhill. **6**

- 7** Continue downhill, walking parallel to the road on your left.

Continue following the ride. **8** At the next fork, go right by a holly tree and follow the path as it winds downhill between beech and holly trees to a stream at the bottom of the small valley. **9**

Cross the stream over a sleeper bridge and continue uphill again, going straight ahead ignoring the first ride you come to on the right. **10**

- 11** At the next fork in the ride, turn right up the hill between the trees until the ride finally emerges from the woods into open heath again. **12**

- 13** Continue following this ride until it comes to a T-junction, where you turn left and then almost immediately fork right up the gentle slope across the grass.

- 14** The ride now joins the one on which you started your walk. Continue on the grass back to the car park.