

## Walk facts

**Distance:** 2½ miles / 4 km circular walk

**Time:** 1 hour (approx)

**Start point:** Forest Centre car park

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

**Highlights:** Common heathland plants, ghyll woodland, views of High Weald and North Downs.

**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 by picking up your copy of *Ashdown Forest Area Visitor Map & Guide* or visiting [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

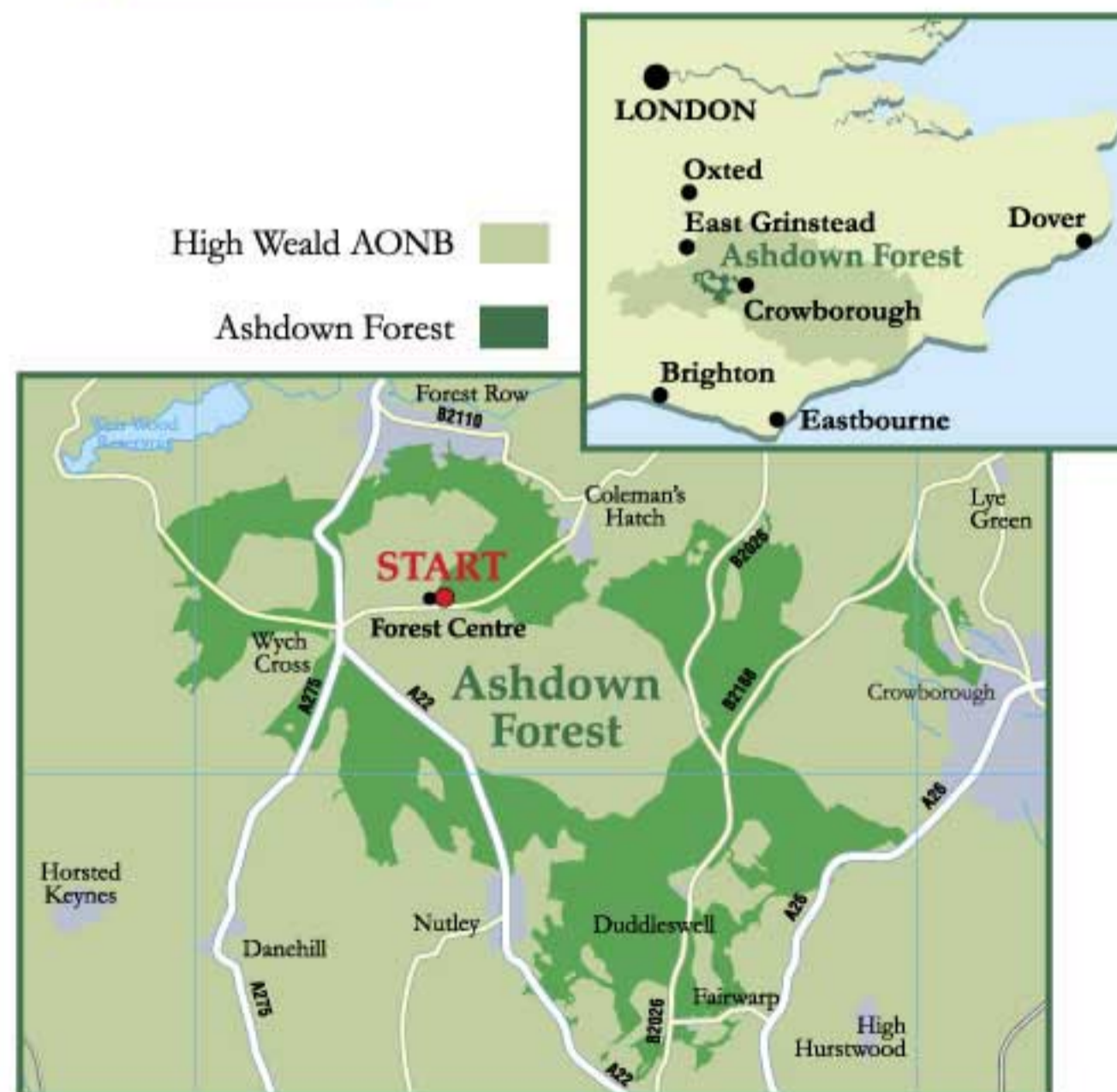
Take bus 54 from East Grinstead Station to

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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## Broadstone amble





## 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.*

## Stone country

The rock buried under Ashdown Forest is sandstone. Builders dug sandstone from small quarries like the abandoned one on this walk. Many local houses and churches were built using sandstone, because it was so readily available. The Forest is peppered with small quarries because the bad roads made it very difficult to move the sandstone long distances.

Today all the quarries on the Forest lie silent, reclaimed by nature once more. There is only one commercial sandstone quarry left in the area - at West Hoathly. It supplies stone for building extensions to existing sandstone houses, for church repairs and for garden rockeries.



*Sandstone in nearby houses may have come from quarries on the Forest.*

## Time travel

A closer look at the High Weald's geology and land form reveals deep, shady ravines called ghylls, carved into the hillsides by fast-flowing streams. You will pass Miry Ghyll on this walk. Look out for ghylls all over Ashdown Forest. Their steep sides made them of little use for agriculture and hard for farmers to clear of trees. Many ghylls have survived undisturbed for centuries.

The porous, moisture-holding sandstones and sheltered, nature of ghylls provide ideal living conditions for ferns, mosses, liverworts and lichens. Many of these plants are more common in the mild and humid oceanic climate of Wales and Cornwall than that of the South East.

Not all ghylls have escaped the impact of people. During the Tudor period, iron was produced on an industrial scale on the Forest. Ironworkers dammed ghylls into ponds. They provided the huge quantities of water, when needed, to turn water wheels that powered bellows and hammers, used in the iron making process.

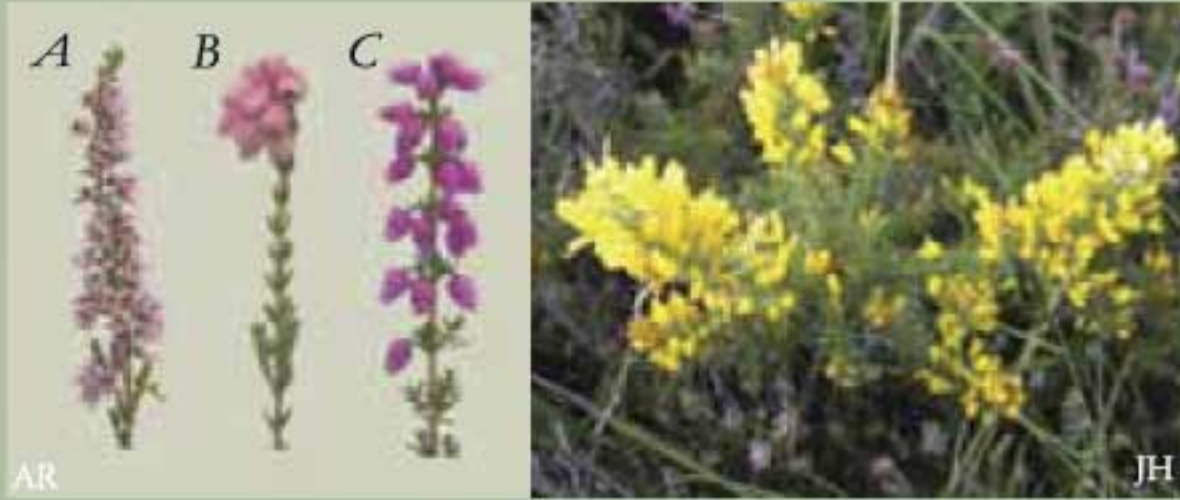
The ghyll streams often exposed iron rich sandstone. This made it easy to quarry back from the stream until the iron rich stone ran out or there was too much soil above to remove the stone easily.



*Look out for rusty water in the streams at Miry Ghyll. This shows where iron ore is buried underground.*



# Broadstone amble



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.

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



Ashdown Forest Centre

Forest Centre car park

Broadstone car park

Broadstone Quarry

Millennium Clump

Coleman's Hatch Road (Ridge Road)

Lintons car park

Ridge car park

Townsend's car park

Dumpys car park



You will see great views of the High Weald countryside.



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





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MP

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

*Background photo: The Millennium Clump.*

## Photo guide and route description

**1** Starting at the Ashdown Forest Centre car park, walk downhill with an earth bank on your left. You will be walking on a narrow path between silver birch, oak, beech and sweet chestnut trees.

**2** After about 150 metres turn right at the next way marker and follow the ride out on to the open heath. **3**

**4** At the next post turn left and head downhill on a narrow path towards a clump of trees. **5** At the trees the path turns right and goes around the top of an old quarry. The

**6** path then winds its way through the heather down to the main ride.

**7** At the main ride turn left and walk down the hill. **8** At the bottom of the hill turn right into the woods again, walking along the path with a stream on your left.

**9** Cross the first of two bridges before the path begins to climb up hill again.

**10** Carry on following this ride to the top of the hill where it bears left up to a bench, then bears right into some trees. **11**

**12** As you come around the corner out of the trees, the main road will be on your left. **13** Emerge from the woods and continue following the ride, which stretches out in front of you, heading back towards the Forest Centre car park.

**14** Turn left towards the Forest Centre and car park before the path you are walking heads down towards the woods again.