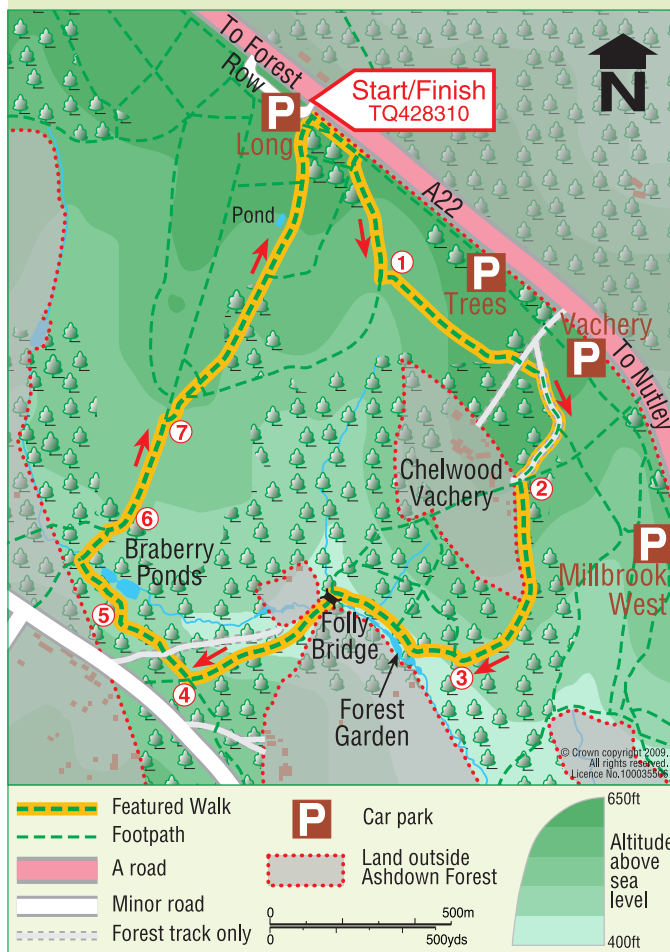


Braberry Ponds are fed by the Millbrook stream that descends to the Vachery and eventually exits the Forest at Newbridge, Coleman's Hatch. With funding from Natural England under the Higher Level Stewardship scheme, the Conservators dredged these ponds in autumn 2009 and cleared encroaching scrub from the adjacent heathland.

Bear left ⑤ and follow the path along the line of ponds and stream to reach a bridge. Turn right over the bridge and ascend to a track junction ⑥. Follow the main track towards the crest of the hill. About 75m before the crest, turn right onto a narrower ride ⑦. Ignoring other rides, remain on the widening ride, passing a pond on the left after about 600m. The ride bears left and passes along the left hand side of pine woodland. In a further 150m it joins with the main ride by the A22. Turn left to return to Long car park.

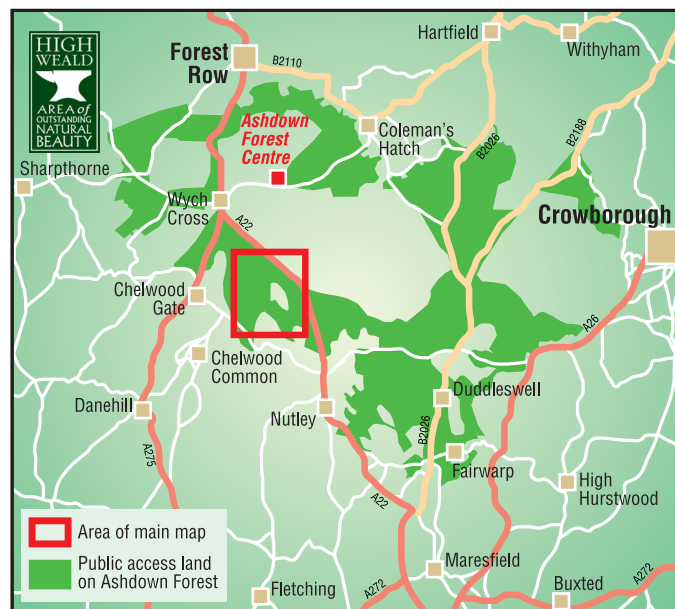
Another walk in this series explores the area west of this car park.



## Information

A Board of Conservators manages Ashdown Forest as a quiet, natural place for you to enjoy and as a refuge for wildlife. At 2500 hectares (10 square miles), Ashdown Forest is the largest open access space in the South East. Nearly two thirds of it is heathland, one of the rarest habitats in Britain. On account of this, the Forest is a Site of Special Scientific Interest and an EU Special Area for Conservation and Special Protection Area.

This leaflet is produced as part of the Conservators' contribution to the The Weald Forest Ridge Landscape Partnership Scheme. This is a £3.3 million programme of activity, supported by the Heritage Lottery Fund, to enrich the area's natural and cultural heritage and to enable people to enjoy and care for the area.



 Per-Rambulations  
Text by Per-Rambulations  
[www.per-rambulations.co.uk](http://www.per-rambulations.co.uk)  
and the Conservators

If you would like further information about the work of the Conservators and the Friends of Ashdown Forest, visit the Forest Centre at Wych Cross. Telephone 01342 823583 or visit [www.ashdownforest.org](http://www.ashdownforest.org)

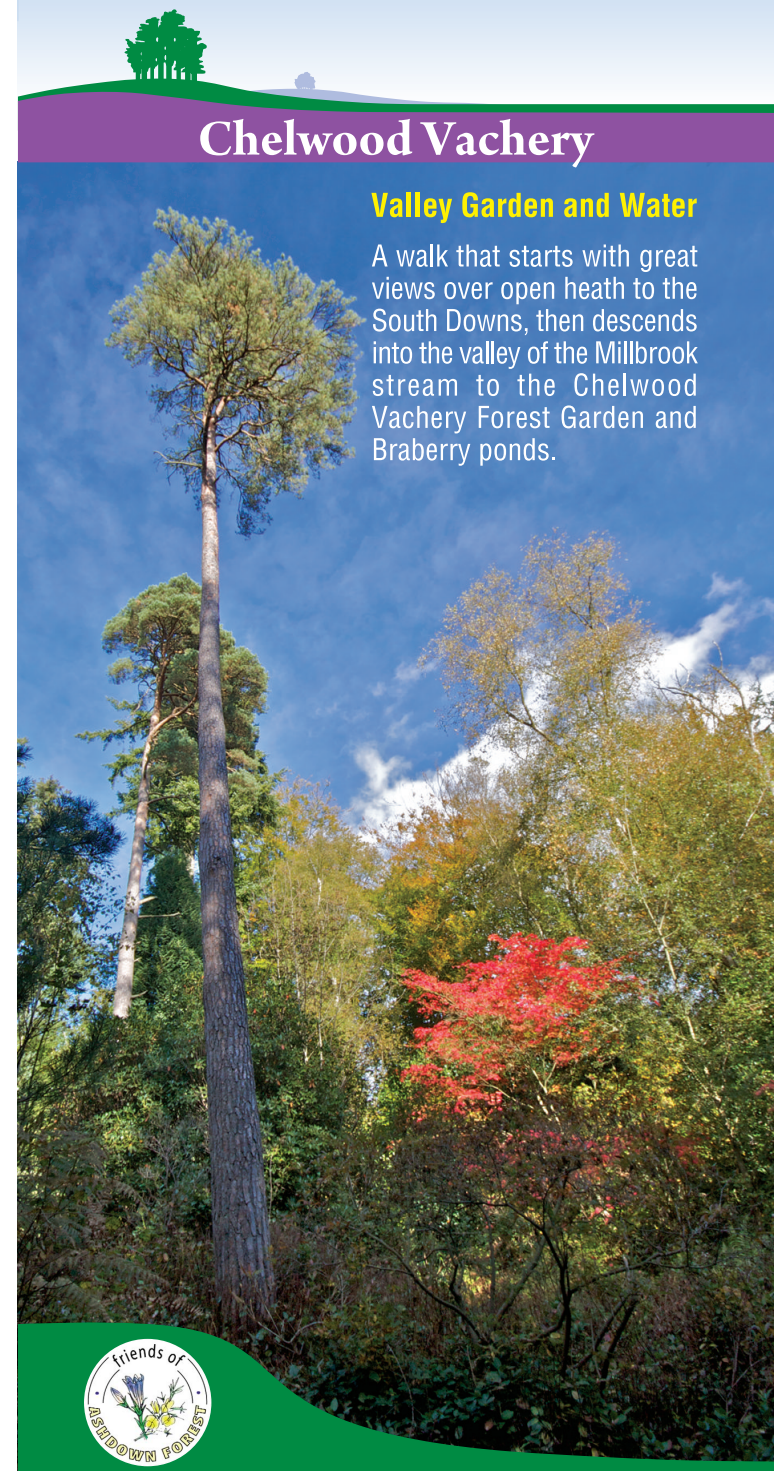


Cartography, photography and graphics by Mapping Ideas Ltd. [www.mappingideas.co.uk](http://www.mappingideas.co.uk)

## Chelwood Vachery

### Valley Garden and Water

A walk that starts with great views over open heath to the South Downs, then descends into the valley of the Millbrook stream to the Chelwood Vachery Forest Garden and Braberry ponds.



Exploring Ashdown Forest on foot



## Chelwood Vachery

2.75 miles / 4.5km

Starting in Long car park, head south-eastwards from its southern end onto a wide ride and continue parallel with the A22 road for about 150m. Turn right onto another ride towards trees and bear left on a gently descending ride. At the junction of tracks ① turn sharp left and gently ascend across heathland. Cross over a tarmac drive and continue to a second drive. Turn right and follow it for 300m to reach the entrance to some houses, part of the former Chelwood Vachery estate ②.



Heading southeast from Long car park

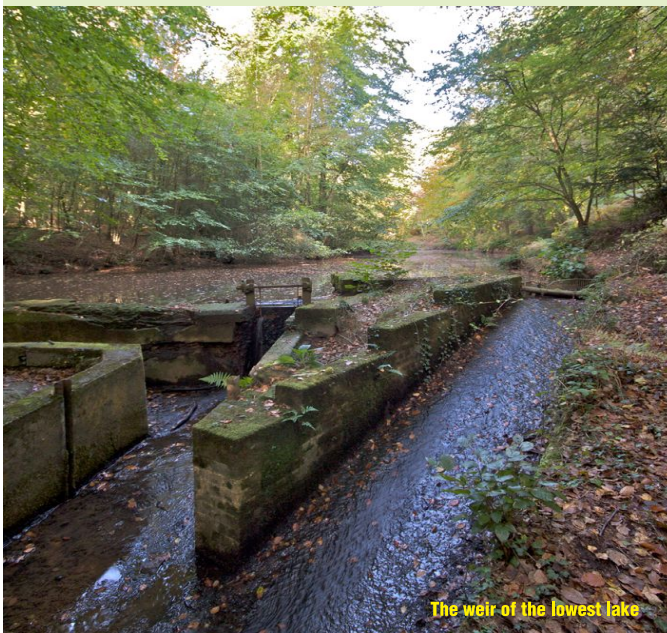


Looking back across the heath towards Long car park

One explanation (there are others!) for the word Vachery is that it is derived from the French 'vache' (cow) and from the practice, and right, of Michelham Priory (near Hailsham) to send cattle up onto the Forest in the 14th century. The area was 'disafforested' (i.e. removed from the common land of the Forest) by a decree in 1693.

The estate became covered by woodland and in 1905 a large house and spectacular grounds were created by the new owner, banker and MP Sir Stuart Samuel. In 1994 the Conservators acquired half of the estate comprising woodland and what is now called the Forest Garden.

Turn left onto a woodland track that gently descends and bears right. After 500m pass through a gate on the right ③ and descend to reach the stream and ponds of Chelwood Vachery Forest Garden. Follow the watercourse upstream.



The weir of the lowest lake

The four lakes and ponds, each with a weir and sluice, were created shortly before 1910. They were all dredged in 2008 and 2009 as part of the Garden's continuing restoration, with the support of the Vachery's previous owner British American Tobacco. Additionally, volunteers have cleared extensive thickets of invasive, purple-flowered *Rhododendron ponticum*, taking care to leave the planted species (notably *R. loderi*) that dot the valley landscape. The aim is to open up views beneath the canopy of mature trees, a mix of native oaks and beeches and ornamental red oaks, maples and juneberry (*Amelanchier*). Halfway along, the valley is crossed by a small stream. The so-called Gorge up the slope, shaped by limestone boulders from the Cheddar Gorge in Somerset, was installed in the 1920s by Col. Gavin Jones, a well-known landscape designer, at the behest of FJ Nettlefold whose family owned the site from 1925 until 1955.



*Rhododendron loderi*  
(© Leonardslee lakes & gardens)

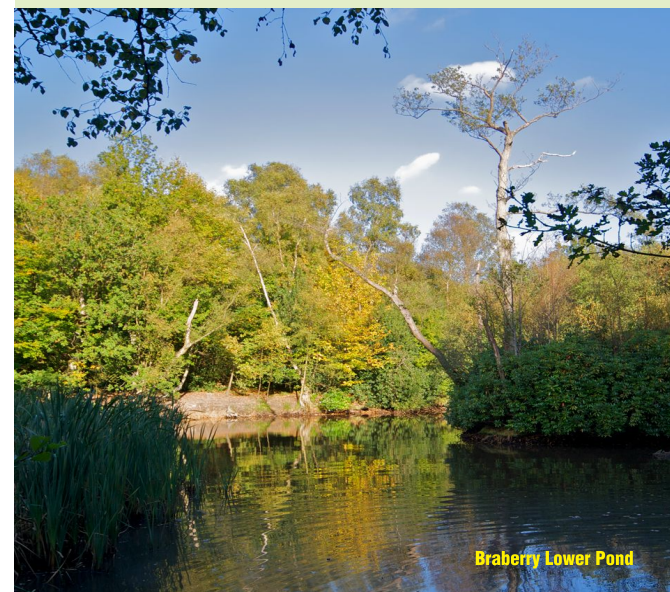
After about 400m is a stone Folly Bridge. Pass through it and cross the stream by stepping-stones (or use the footbridge to the right).



The Folly Bridge

The Folly Bridge was built in the early 1930s. Its main use now is to cross the bridleway that passes beneath it!

Continue ahead ascending steeply on the bridleway. At the top of the ascent after 500m, turn right at the cross-rides ④. Cross over a drive and after another 200m turn right on a steep narrow descending path to reach Braberry Ponds.



Braberry Lower Pond