



A Woodlands Walk.

A pleasant walk of about 5 miles through the local countryside with tree shaded footpaths that criss-cross this ancient north–east forest boundary.

We start the walk in the Forest by leaving the Hotel by the front drive and turning left along Bartley road until a gravel road on the left that leads to Busketts car park, surrounded by lawns and great trees. Heading northwest along the edge of the Forest following the line of the boundary ditch a completely different countryside can be seen to the right of our path. Here, the lawns and woods of the Forest give way to Rolling Meadows and the ordered plantations of Woodlands. The path leaves the forest & follows a leafy bridleway over Goldenhayes Park. Further footpaths and lanes lead to Woodlands village past (or in) to the Gamekeeper pub, ideally set about half way round the walk. There is then a slight change of scene as a longer wooded footpath winds across the fields eventually to run by a stream and meet the Fletchwood Road by Great Fletchwood Farm. This soon becomes a track & heads south past Martins Croft Farm and Fletchwood Copse. Judging by the name this now privately owned wood must have once been an important source of arrows. Another attractive footpath brings us back to Woodlands and the Hotel for a well-earned cup of tea or something stronger!

Historic interest.

Looking at Woodlands today, it is hard to imagine that it was probably the site of a major battle that helped decide the fate of southern Britain. After the departure of the last of the Roman legions around AD410 waves of invaders attacked Britain. In the south the Romanised Celtic inhabitants struggled to hold back the Saxons. The Saxon chronicler Florence of Worcester wrote of the battle that took place in AD508 saying Cerdic and Cynric slew a Welsh king, named Natanleod and five thousand men with him. The district was afterwards called Natanleag. In spite of the passage of time, the defeated king has never been forgotten. He has lent his name to Netley Marsh only a mile north of Woodlands and also to Netley on the banks of Southampton Water where perhaps there was a preliminary skirmish.

Map. OS Explore OL22 New Forest- available from reception.

Difficulty. Easy walking with options to shorten the route if you wish.

The walk

1. From the Hotel, leave by the front entrance and turn left walk along Bartley Road until the road turns right. Turn left along the gravel track towards the car park, before the car park turn right along a track marked as a no through road, (this private road is open to walkers). The track runs close to the Forest boundary with typical forest scenes on your left and hedged and gated fields on your right.
2. When the gravel track ends (turning right to a house) keep straight ahead through the woods. There is a narrow path but this is not always easy to follow. Pick your way through the tree keeping the boundary ditch and fence about 50yds on your right.
3. After about 200 yards you come to a more open area. Look across to the left and you will see the house at Nicholas corner. The path divides, do not follow the path towards the house but turn right along a path, which soon becomes better defined. You are still following the line of the boundary ditch and fence which curves right at this point.
4. Continuer to follow the line of the boundary until you come to a small wooden gate marked with a blue arrow bridleway sign on your right. Turn right through the gate to leave the Forest and follow the hedged bridleway through a second gate to cross Goldenhayes Park.
5. The bridleway brings you to a road. Turn left along the grassy roadside for about ½ mile to a gravel track on your right by a thatched cottage, Rossiters Lane.
6. Navigate carefully here! Turn down Rossiters lane and follow for only about 40yards, then turn left along another track with a fence on your right. After a few yards the track becomes a wide grass covered path. Continue for about 1/3 mile then go through a gate to a lane.
7. Turn right to follow the lane to the Bartley Road then turn right for a short distance past the sign for Woodlands village to Green Close.

8. Turn left through the Close and follow the footpath sign, a little to your left along a gravel track, which soon becomes a path. Cross a stile by a gate and follow the path to cross a second stile. Follow the narrow path ahead beside a fence on your right.
9. Navigate carefully again at this point as the footpath sign is broken. When the fence on your right ends, leave the main track. Cross a track running down the fields on your right and keep ahead beside a field with a hedge on your left. You may see the remains of the footpath sign indicating your route buried in the hedge! At the end of the field cross a stile and a small bridge to enter woods. The path runs through trees beside a stream for almost a mile to meet Fletchwood Lane.
10. Turn right along the lane, which soon becomes a gravel track. Follow the lane for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile to pass two barriers. Just past the second barrier a gravel track joins our way on the right.
11. Turn right to walk between houses on your left and a hedge on your right. Go through a gate and keep ahead to follow another pleasant footpath for about $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, which leads through a gate to the road in Woodlands village. Turn left and follow along the roadside back to the Hotel.

