



## Walk facts

**Distance:** 1.5 miles / 2.5 km circular walk

**Time:** 1 hour (approx)

**Start point:** Church hill car park

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

**Highlights:** Remains of rabbit warrens

Lake

Coppice woodland

Common heathland plants

Pillow mounds

### 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

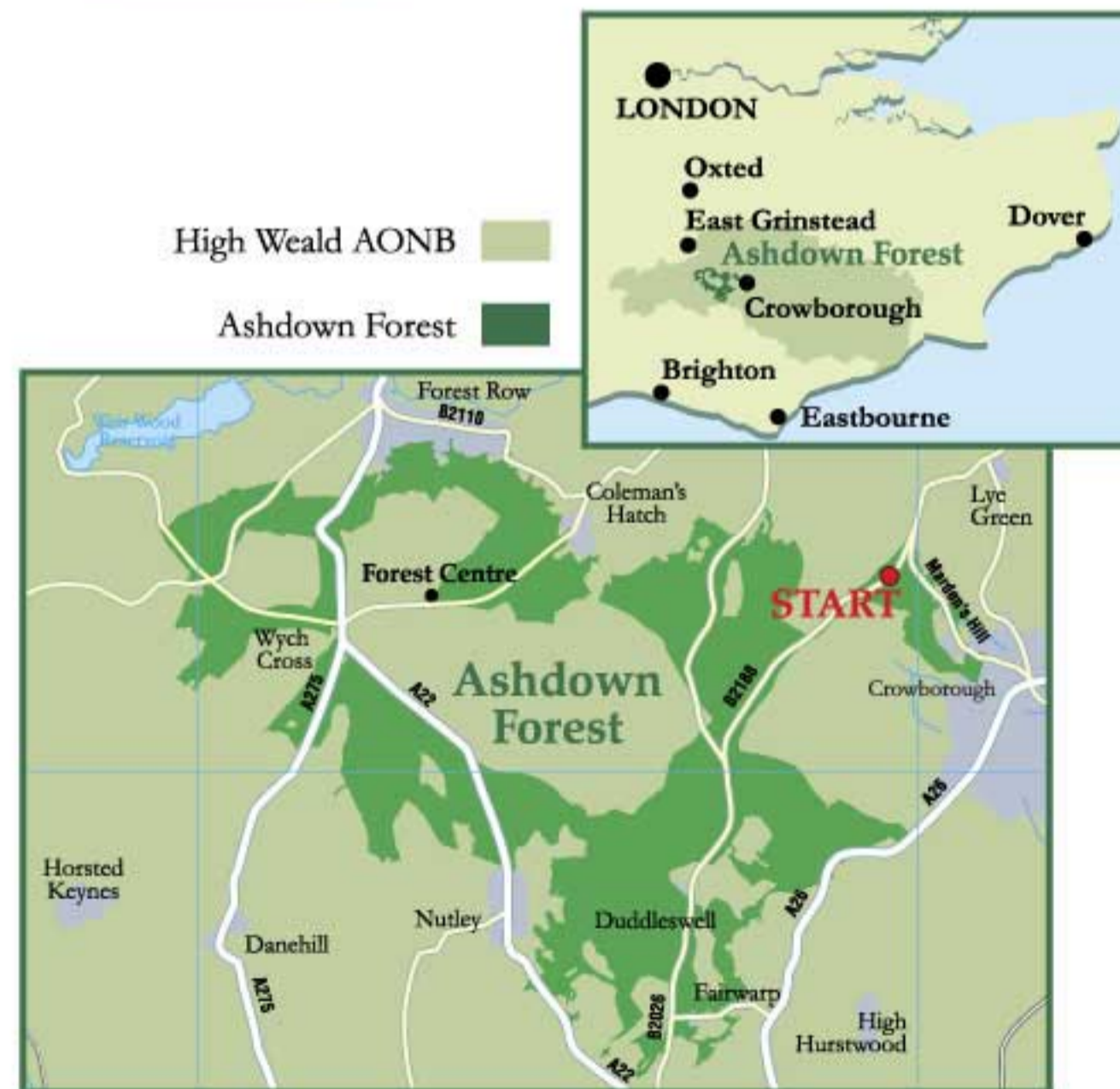
Take bus 54 from East Grinstead Station to

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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## Church Hill walk



## 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.*

## Fencing the Forest

Landowners enclosed the land that is now Five Hundred Acre Wood and other large areas of Ashdown Forest during the 17th century. These areas had been common land until then and possibly consisted of open heath. The disgruntled commoners resisted by breaking down fences and continued grazing their livestock in Five Hundred Acre Wood. Look out for the small earth banks, which date from the area's enclosure and mark the original 17th century boundary of the wood.



*Look out for earth banks, they indicate the original boundary of Five Hundred Acre Wood.*

## Roman invaders

Coppicing has been practised on the Forest since people first learned to make flint axes in the Stone Age. Coppicing is the term given to the repeated cutting of trees every 15-25 years. Coppiced trees are easy to spot: any tree that has several trunks was once coppiced. Look out for coppiced sweet chestnut on this walk. The Romans first brought this tree to Britain. Today coppiced woods are a valuable wildlife habitat. Bluebells and wood anemones thrive in woods that are regularly coppiced.



*A carpet of wood anemones takes hundreds of years to spread through a wood.*

*Buying local wood products, like bbq charcaol or fencing made of sweet chestnut helps protect wildlife.*

## Digging in

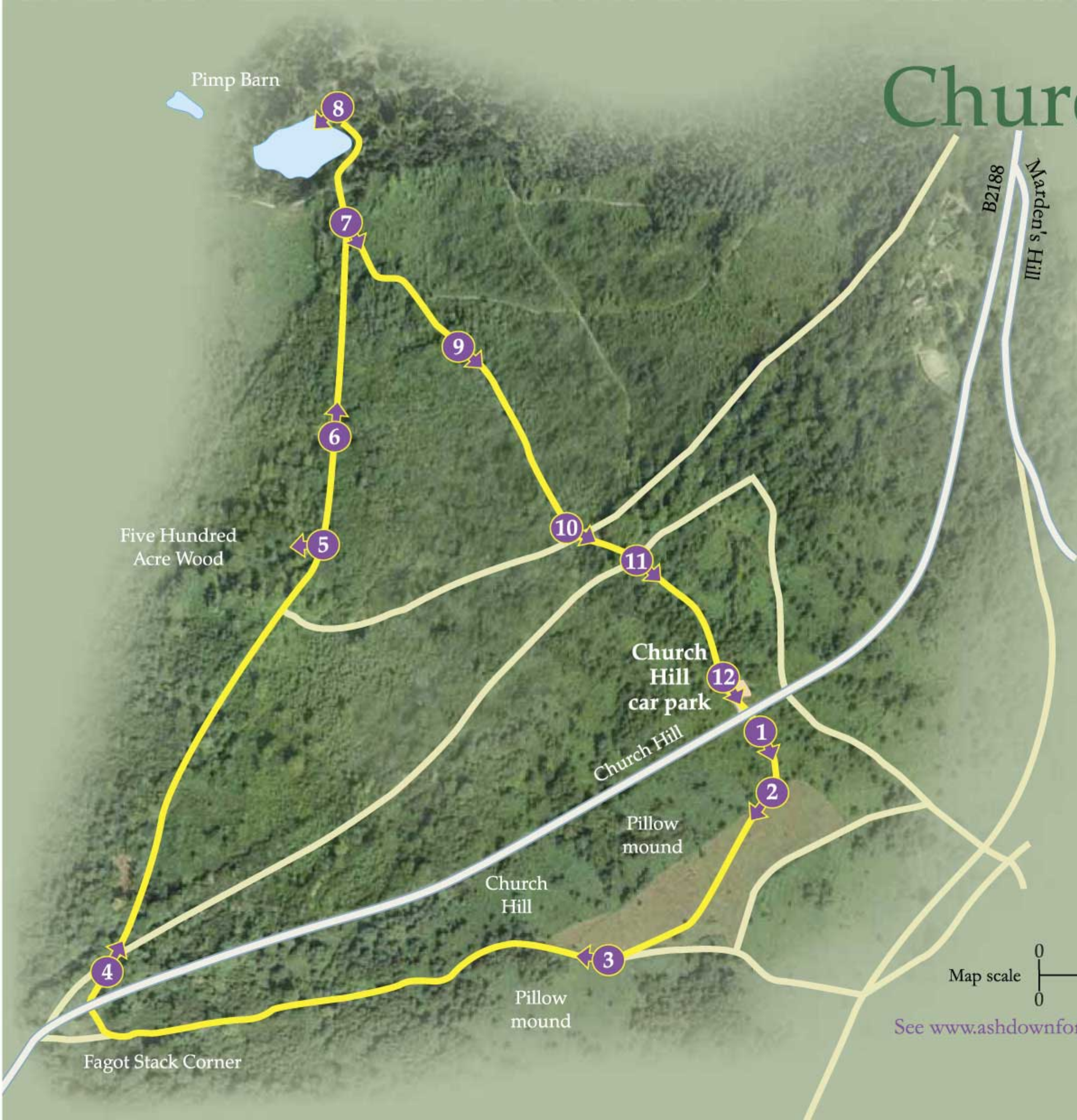
Look carefully and you will see the remains of rabbit warrens on this walk. They are shown on Ordnance Survey maps by the words 'pillow mound'. The Normans introduced rabbits to England during the 12th century. People prized their meat and fur. Originally, rabbits were delicate animals, not suited to 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.



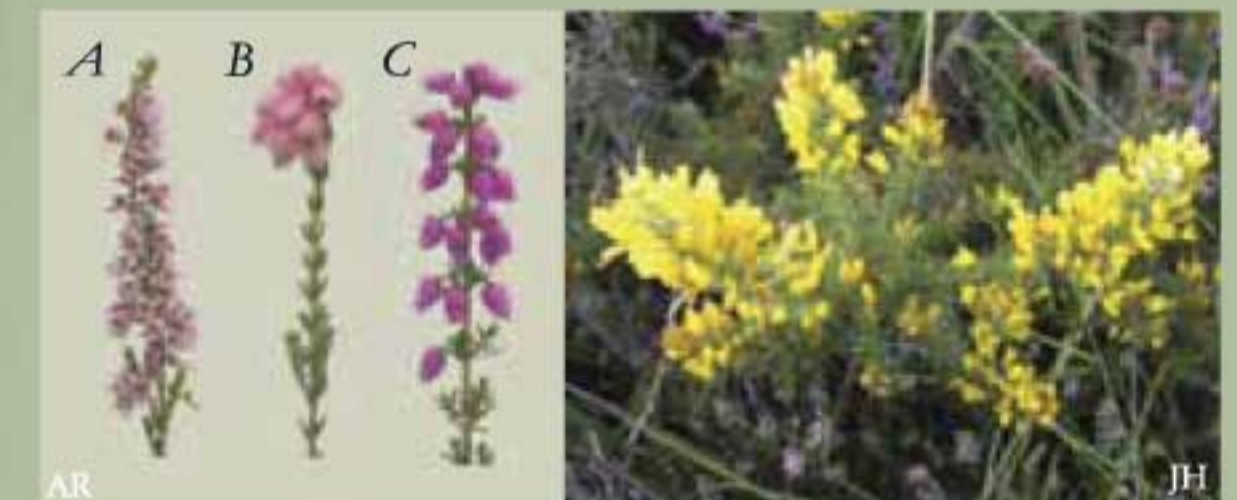
Tony Ashton

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

# Church Hill walk



You will see great views of Ashdown's patchwork of heath and woodland



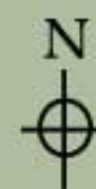
A) Ling is the commonest heather on the Forest. It flowers between July and September.

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

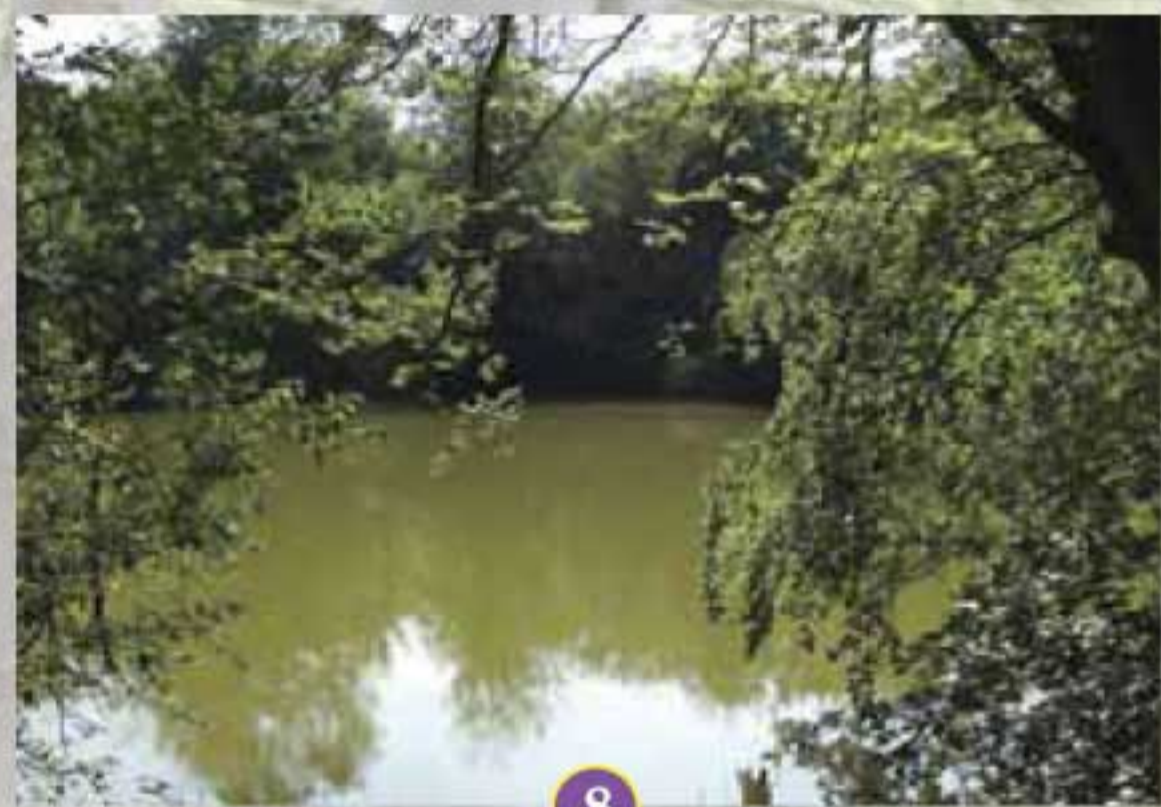
C) You will see bell heather growing on the drier parts of the Forest. It flowers between May and September.

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

**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



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

## Photo guide and route description

- 1** Starting at the Church Hill car park, walk back towards the road, cross over, and walk down a narrow path between the heather and bracken. Shortly this path emerges onto a grassy area.
- 2** Now walk diagonally to the right across the grass towards the woodland.
- 3** When you reach the woodland edge, follow another ride on your right, which takes you back towards the road.
- 4** Cross the road and walk along the track opposite. This bears to the right and then leads to a metal gate.
- 5** The path continues through a gap on the left of the metal gate into the woods following the Public Footpath.
- 6** Continue following the track through the woods as it drops downhill towards the lake. Why not take the short detour to the lake for a picnic. **8**
- 7** Now turn right at the crossroads on another track going back in the same direction you have just walked. Stay on this track right back through the woods. **9**
- 10** Eventually this path emerges on to another ride where you continue straight on between two old gate posts under the holly trees.
- 11** This path shortly emerges onto another ride, where you continue straight ahead on a narrow path between young trees and back to the car park. **12**