

Wildlife and flowers

As you follow your walk, look out for the wildlife around you. Remember the forest is home to these animals, so please respect their privacy.



The most noted are the New Forest ponies, but if you are lucky, in the wooded parts you may spot deer.

Other animals are not so obvious, so keep your eyes open! You may spot frogs, specially in boggy areas.



As you near the end of the walk, you can see Wood Ant nests in the trees, which can be up to three feet tall. Each can contain 250,000 ants.

All the pictures on this page were taken on one walk in June.

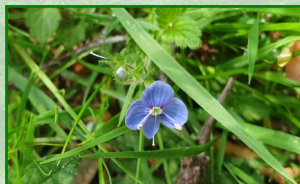
The plant life of the forest is very important and there are many protected species and areas of special scientific interest. You may spot many plant types, including these.

Foxglove is a poisonous but pretty plant was recorded as early as the time of Edward III. Other names include goblin gloves, and dead men's bells. It is also used in medicine.



Cow Parsley or Queen Anne's lace. This name harks back to a folk tale that it would bloom for Queen Anne and her ladies-in-waiting, and reflect the delicate lace they wore.

Germander Speedwell is considered a good luck charm for travellers. The bright blue flowers are meant to 'speed' you on your way.



All these plants are important to forest insect life as well.

Brockenhurst and Beaulieu Road

Brockenhurst Station owes its size to being on the original 1847 line from London to Dorchester via Ringwood and Wimborne. With severe gradients to the south west, this station was essential as it was where heavy trains were split to enable them to be hauled up the inclines. The branch line to Lymington and the Isle of Wight ferry opened in 1858, then the direct line to Bournemouth in 1888.

From the beginning, the line detoured south after Southampton. This was to avoid Lyndhurst where villagers feared disruption from the railway. In turn that meant crossing Lord Montagu's land. He demanded his own station as recompense. Thus Beaulieu Road station came about.

At first trains didn't stop regularly. A signal was made if Lord Montagu or his staff wished to board the train. Officially it was called a 'halt'. Such was the low usage that Beaulieu Road station, opened in 1847, officially closed in 1860, only to reopen again in 1895. The staff lived in the cottages you can see at the station.

Next door across the rail line is the Drift Inn a dog-friendly pub and restaurant. Across the road from there is the market, where ponies (which are all privately owned despite appearances) are bought mainly in the autumn to be sold. They're collected across the forest by their owners in 'drifts' where they are rounded up and health checked. Hence the pub's name.

The original line from Brockenhurst to Ringwood was closed in 1964, but Brockenhurst station remains busy.

As you pass through you may see flower baskets or the history displays. These are examples of voluntary work by the Friends of Brockenhurst Station. You are welcome to join our small happy group if supporting sustainable transport, and the station and railway interests you.

Please email us at:

friendsofbrockenhurststation@gmail.com



Rail and Ramble

A half-day round train ride and walk from Brockenhurst to Beaulieu Road and back



Be inspired - take a train to a New Forest station. Walk into the forest and immerse yourself in this wonderfully unspoilt area.



Rail and Ramble - A four hour round walk to Beaulieu Road and back

Start this round trip at Brockenhurst Station, where you need a single ticket to the next stop towards London, Beaulieu Road, leaving from platform 2. Not all trains stop at Beaulieu Road, but there are usually half a dozen a day. The train journey takes around seven minutes.

Beaulieu Road station is isolated in the middle of heathland, on the Lyndhurst to Beaulieu Road.

From the station gate, turn left, and walk along the road towards the next turn on the left, down the track to (1) Shatterford Car Park. This is the start of your walk. You'll see a path at the far end of the trees, extending to the right across the heathland, and towards Denny Wood. As you walk you'll cross a stream on a (2) wooden bridge, and then, about 100 metres to your left, is a 4,000 year old burial mound. Ahead you'll see Denny Wood, which you enter. Here paths spread out left and right – you need to keep to the main, central / straight-ahead, pathway.

The woodland around you is mixed – both coniferous pine trees and traditional varieties such as oak and beech (3). There are animals such as deer – so every now and then it's worth pausing and standing still to have a quiet look around you. After twenty minutes or so, you'll see a (4) concrete water tank on the ground ahead of you – head for this.

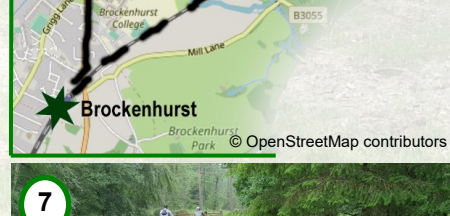
You now need to turn left onto the initially tarmac road – it soon gives way to a wide gravel track. You're passing Denny Lodge (on your right), which was built as the home of the Chief Forester in the 1900's. This also gives its name to what many believe is the second largest Parish Council area in England surrounding you for many miles. Yet only just over 300 people live in it, there is no church, or school, but there are four pubs!

Walk down the hill, keeping to the track, and through the wide gate at the bottom (5). You'll stay on this track for the next three kilometres or so. This track is on the National Cycle Network, so keep an eye open. Cyclists can travel fast, and in relative silence!

The land to your left is known as the Bishop of Winchester's Purlieu and is surrounded by a large ditch. The story goes that in a boast King John joked to the then Bishop could claim all the land he could crawl around in one day as a deer park, for hunting. However the crafty Bishop came up with a contraption to carry him while technically on his belly – and managed to cover seven and a half kilometres, enclosing a large tract of territory.

Another story goes that the Bishop crawled for 24 hours on his hands and knees. This remained the property of the Bishop until 1944, when it returned to the Crown.

After half an hour or so, you'll pass a gate on your right (number 301 is on a post next to it). Walk past this for about 500 metres or so. You want to take the next track on the right at the cross paths, opposite post 324 (6). Turn right, onto the new track. If you reach a gate and bridge over the rail line, you've gone a bit too far!



You're now walking parallel (about 250 metres north) to the rail line you travelled along earlier, back towards Brockenhurst. Again keep walking straight ahead for about 45 minutes, ignore side paths and forest trails. At post 306 (7) continue ahead and through the gate.

You'll pass the Victoria Brick and Tile Yard manager's cottage (now a private home) on your left in the woods. Bricks and water pipes were made from local clay. Faggots to fuel the furnaces were collected from local woodlands. Production ceased in the 1930's.

Rounding the corner you'll come to Standing Hat Car Park. From here take the main car track on your left, continue down the hill, across the Balmer Lawn plain to the road. Balmer Lawn plain has played its part in history – it's been a horse race track, a golf course, and a military camp for exercising soldiers before D-Day.

At the junction of the track and the road, to your right is a small enclosed area with private homes. Part of this was fenced off as a camp for Canadian lumberjacks who built their own huts, during the world war two. They felled trees for war efforts from building 'planes to large rafts.

At the road turn right, but take care, as the next 400 metres (quarter mile) doesn't have a good footpath. But past the houses at the end you'll find (8) Brockenhurst Cricket Club on your right in front of the hotel. The village team is active in Hampshire leagues, but not without challenges. Key is making sure the ponies are kept off the outfield during play!

Now at the main road turn left and carry on this pavement through Brockenhurst. You'll pass Carey's Manor Hotel and Brockenhurst College on your left, and then the Snakecatcher's Pub – named after 'Brusher' Mills, a local celebrity who caught snakes in Victorian times for sale to London Zoo. Finally by the level crossing turn right into Station Approach – and you're now back where you started!

Note
This nine kilometre / six mile walk is mostly flat, and on paths and tracks throughout. It is well within the capability of anyone who is reasonably fit. It will take a leisurely four hours, plus stops. Dress according to the weather, and if you need to, take a drink or snack.

Disclaimer: The authors cannot take responsibility for the state of the paths or weather. This is a natural environment and you may encounter obstacles such as fallen trees, which you should navigate around with care. Some areas, particularly near the start, are boggy. In spring there are ground birds nests in some areas so avoid leaving the path, and keep dogs close or put on a lead. There are signs relating to these or other hazards such as Forestry England staff at work; please note the messages. Remember to close gates please.