

Circular walk 2 Mannings Heath to Monks Gate and back

Distance.....3 miles and can be muddy after rain.

1. Park near Mannings Heath Village shop and walk east, along Winterpit Lane. *This used to be part of the old road to Cuckfield.* Walk past the riding stables and down the hill. Turn off right down the tarmac track to Holme Farm.
2. At the fork, keep straight ahead. *Notice the coppiced hazels on your left and the beehives, just before the ponds. Currently, bees are seriously under threat from disease. In Spring the next field on your right is yellow with daffodils.*
3. Just before the first of the three houses, turn left down a bridleway and head up hill. This bit can be well churned up by horses' hooves, but bear with it! *Watch out for kestrels on the wires. The pond on the right is worth a look as you may see moorhens.*
4. Enter the woods and continue up hill. *When you reach the gate, look left to see Lower Beeding Church and the deer. Further on, you'll see Old Camp Farm. In World War 2, I think this was used to house Italian troops.*
5. Cross the A281 with great care and walk right, towards Monks Gate. This is a narrow footpath and dogs and children will need close supervision.
6. Just before the bend there is a 40mph sign and public footpath sign. Cross here and take the gravel track to Monks Gate House. At its gate, take the right hand path to Mara Cottage and go straight ahead and over a stile into a coppiced wood. *In Spring you can see bluebells here. In the Middle Ages, archers boiled up bluebell bulbs to use as glue to stick feathers into their arrows.*
7. Walk through two fields. *To your left, you can see mauve orchids in May or June. Through the trees you may catch sight of Swallowfield House. Miss Biggs, who lived here, paid for the Church of the Good Shepherd to be built.*

- 8.** Enter another bluebell wood, and then cross the stile to take a path riddled with rabbit holes. Take care!
- 9.** Continue downhill, through a couple of gates towards the ponds. The causeway between them can get muddy! *If you approach quietly, you may be rewarded with sightings of a heron or cormorant fishing. It is a pretty spot and once I even saw baby badgers here, in daylight.*
- 10.** Walk straight up the hill, with horses on your right and Lower Beeding Church once again in view.
- 11.** Cross the stile and walk alongside the riding school, and emerge onto Winterpit Lane. Turn left and walk downhill towards the village shop.