

10 Leisure Walks of Discovery A Boot Up THE NEW FOREST

Rodney Legg

The New Forest is generally regarded as the easiest walking country in Britain and Europe. Under foot, the paths usually stick to dry soils of gravel and sand, and skirt the occasional peat bog. Even if you find a problem, diversions are possible just about everywhere, as there is a right of public access across all this open landscape of heath and woods from Ringwood to Southampton.

Ancient oaks survive as stately specimens in woods that were otherwise stripped for Nelson's navy. Wildlife abounds. Rarities can be locally commonplace. You are likely to see Dartford warblers, harriers and a range of flora and fauna including insect-eating sundews, dragonflies and multi-coloured fungi. Deer numbers are as high as anywhere and there are the famous New Forest ponies.

The ten selected walks, ranging from 3 to 8 miles, suit the needs of families, groups of friends or individuals looking for a gentle stroll or a longer walk, and reflect the many varied facets of the area – its people, its history, and its landscape and will help first time visitors to experience some of the great scenery the area has to offer. Many of the walks feature a pub along the route.

Halsgrove's new-format guidebook, containing maps, photographs and useful information will ensure a great walking experience. Packed with colour, the book is an ideal reminder of a visit to the New Forest.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Rodney Legg is a prolific author and historian who has published hundreds of country walks. Nationally he is active in the environmental movement having been chairman of the Open Spaces Society since 1989 and a member of the ruling council of the National Trust from 1990.

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A BOOT UP THE NEW FOREST



Above: Rockford Oak



Above right: Moyles Court



Above middle: Grey squirrel



Right: Pig country



The once pollarded Knightwood Oak, the oldest tree in the Forest, has a girth of 22 feet.



Appleslade Bottom

1 Godshill and Woodgreen

Wood in 150 metres. Turn right here and then left in 50 metres, down to the stream and up to the other side of the wood in 100 metres.

9 Continue straight ahead across the fields (E), to the left-hand side of Higher End Farm in 300 metres. Turn left along this drive and then right into a green lane, which winds its way to a junction of hicks in 500 metres. Ignore the left-hand option and proceed straight to the road beside Sticklands Plantation in 400 metres.

10 Cross the road into the path on the other side into National Trust land at Hole Purleus. Cross the stream in 400 metres and climb the slope to Millersdale Copse in 300 metres.

2 Bramshaw and Plaitford

National Trust properties and other commons, all with public access, join to provide a 5-mile route across a wild expanse of open land

A necklace of National Trust commons. Across the northern path of Bramshaw parish where forest connections are at their weakest. It is the only part of the New Forest that is in the Solitary district rather than Winchester. Traditions of pig foraging are also different in that animals are turned out into the woods all year round. The border line between Hampshire and Wiltshire runs through the churchyard until 1895 and this was also the northern boundary of the New Forest until 1954.

Having been created by gypsies, poachers and other squatters, Woodgreen hamlet was regarded as such a wild place that Fordingbridge residents called it 'Ireland'.

Local 5 miles

Terminus On the wild side across the commons.

Park and estate Inside the E3077 in the country of Hampshire and Wiltshire. The country of Hampshire and Wiltshire. The country of Hampshire and Wiltshire.

Public transport Buses from Fordingbridge to Lymington.

Website www.newforest.co.uk

11 Enter the wood and bear right (S) in 100 metres. Drop down into Millersdale Bottom and follow the stream (SW) into the far end of the copse in 750 metres.

12 Here we cross Miller's Farm and climb the heathland slope (S) to return to the plateau car-park on Deadmen Hill in 500 metres.

Long-haired cattle

Example of a double-page spread.