



Circular Walk 1: Around Copsale

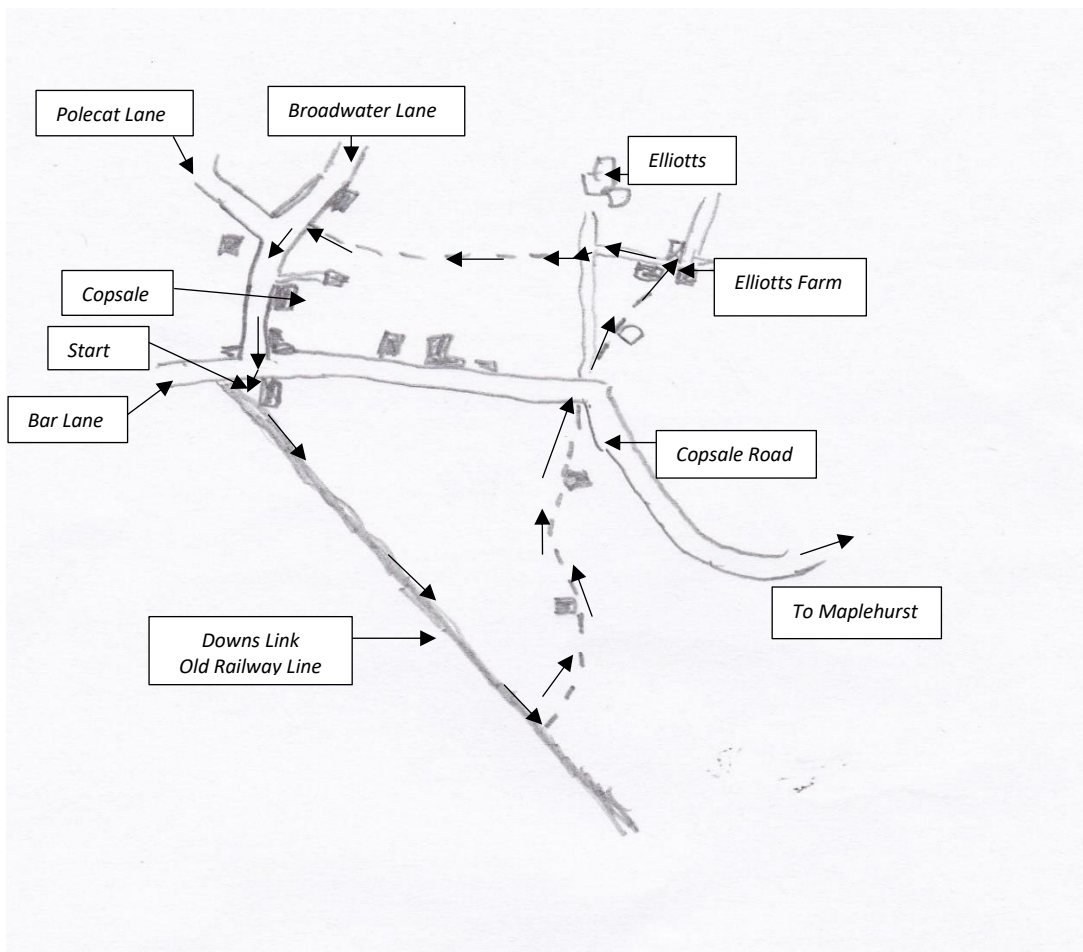
Distance: about 2.5 miles

Time: about 1.5 hours

Map: OS Explorer Map OL 34: Crawley and Horsham

Starting Point: Parking place off Bar Lane, Copsale

Grid Reference: 248 171



Easy, level and varied walk along an old railway line, through woods and pastures and an equestrian estate. Parts of the bridleways can be muddy after heavy rain.

1) Park in the car park opposite Bridge House (once a King and Barnes pub, now being converted into a house) on Bar Lane in Copsale. Start to walk along the Downs Link. This uses part of the old railway line between Guildford and Shoreham which was closed in the 1960s. You can read more about it on the notice board at the start of the walk.

2 Continue along the Downs Link. Notice the mixed hedges of blackthorn, hawthorn, hazel and elderberry interspersed with scrubland and some oak trees. These provide an important habitat for birds and insects. See how the initial part of track is on an embankment and then it goes through a cutting. Notice how straight the stoned track is. It is dry underfoot even after heavy rain. Ignore gates into fields on left and right.

3) At the four way footpath sign, turn left (just before a wooden bench on the right) and go over a stile onto a footpath. Notice how sunken it is indicating that it is likely to be an old routeway. Look for the coppiced hazel on the banks and also the holes of burrowing animals. Who do you think lives in these holes – could it be rabbits, foxes or badgers? Go straight across the track leading to Blakes Farm and over the stile into the grounds and orchard of Blakes Farm, keeping the farm house on your left.

4) Go over the next stile, cross a small field, then over two stiles (just to the left of a gate) and into another field. Keep to the right hand side of the field. Then cross another stile into a small field with Great Steeds farm on the right and over another stile into a larger field. Keep to the right side and walk under a stand of oak trees. Look at the pond on the left where, if you are lucky, you may see ducks and geese. In the right hand corner of the field, turn right over a stile into another field. Keep to the left hand side along a hedge, initially of hawthorn, then blackthorn interspersed with hazel. Listen and you may be lucky to hear the “mewing” of a buzzard or you may see one perched on a fence post or in a tree looking for small mammals.

5) In the left hand corner of the field, turn left over a stile into another field (the thistles in this field were awash with butterflies in August) and walk just to the left of two big oak trees towards a stile in the right middle of the hedgerow. Go over the stile and carefully cross Copsale Road. Take the bridleway to the right of the white gates leading to “Elliotts”. This is an equestrian estate and you should see some fine horses in the fields. Follow the bridleway between a fence and a line of oak trees past a tile hung house on the right and then past a line of conifers with birch and beech trees.

6) When you reach some outbuildings, bear right onto a tarmac drive and then immediately left along the drive. When you reach a half white cottage, called “Elliotts Farmhouse”, turn left (note there is no footpath sign, but it is a public right of way) and walk along the tarmac drive with the much newer “Elliotts” on your right. At the junction of drives go straight across the grass to a small 5 barred gate into a field. Walk across the middle of the field with views to the South Downs on the left.

7) At the four way footpath sign, go straight ahead through a 5 barred gate. After about 20 metres look over a 5 barred gate on the left to see Chactonbury Ring (a ring of trees) on the South Downs. Follow the path between a hedge on the left and a line of trees on the right and notice the blackberries in the autumn. Enter a mixed deciduous wood and cross the wooden bridge. Careful

you don't trip on the exposed tree roots. This is a good place to see fungi in the autumn, particularly the distinctive red with white spots "fly agaric". But please don't touch fungi as many of them are poisonous.

8) Leave the wood into a field. Keep to the right hand side and notice the strip of scrub at the margins of the field. These margins are important to wildlife and farmers get grants to maintain them, but they are worried that these grants will cease with Brexit. Leave the field and turn left onto Broadwater Lane. Walk along the lane with care as it is narrow and quite busy with traffic. At the junction with Copsale Road/Bar Lane turn right along Bar Lane and back to the car park on the left.