



## Circular Walk 4: Around Nuthurst

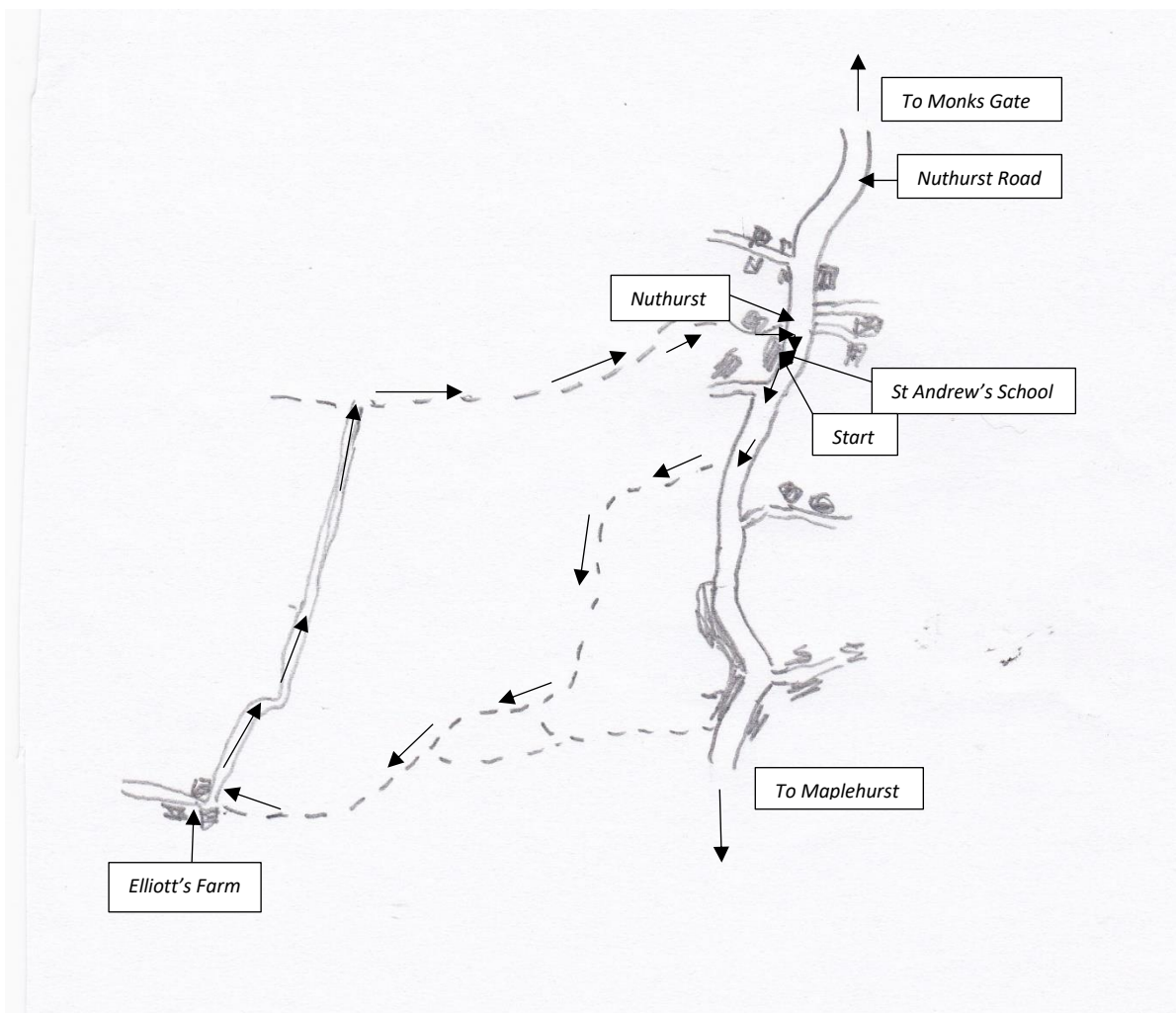
Distance: about 2.5 miles

Time: about 1.5 hours

Map: OS Explorer Map OL 34

Starting Point: Parking layby, St Andrew's School, Nuthurst

Grid Reference: 261 192



Fairly easy walk with some gentle slopes. This walk follows bridleways and can be muddy after rain. However, it is a lovely walk in the Spring when the wild daffodils are out and later, when bluebells carpet the woods. In the Autumn, blackberries, sloes, haws and rosehips provide plentiful food for birds and mammals. In sunny weather from late Spring to Autumn lookout for butterflies and other insects on the flowers.

1. Park in the layby outside St Andrew's School, Nuthurst Street, Nuthurst or on Nuthurst Street. Please take care as there is only a limited pavement and the road can be very busy in term time just before the school opening and closing times. Walk up Harriots Hill on Nuthurst Street and just after the white cottage, turn right through a 6 barred metal gate onto a bridleway. Follow the well-worn path that hugs the right hand side of the field. Listen to the sounds around you. You may hear a lot of birdsong in the Spring. Notice the prevalence of oaks surrounding this field.
2. In the corner of the field, go through the 5 barred metal gate, enter the wood and follow the path to the left. In May, this wood will be covered with bluebells. The bulbs used to be boiled into glue and used to stick feathers into arrows. Notice the coppiced hazel in the wood – the stems were used for fencing and firewood – and these woods would have been very busy places in the past. Hazel is the traditional home of dormice, but they are hard to see.
3. At a junction (the footpath sign may be hidden), bear left through a 6 barred metal gate into a field, hug the right hand side for a short way, then go through another 6 barred gate and re-enter the wood. Immediately bear left, cross a stream and through a 7 barred metal gate into another large field. In August there may be many thistles and other wild flowers providing an important habitat and food for many insects, such as butterflies and bees, and some birds. Hug the right hand side of the field (ignore the footpath sign half way along pointing into the wood), and in the corner of the field go through a 6 barred metal gate to re-enter the wood.
4. After about 20 metres at the 3 way footpath sign, go straight ahead into another large field. Follow the right hand side of the field. Look at the dark green conifer trees in the distance to your left. They are probably a hundred years old and planted when Gaveston Hall was built. It was one of several large houses fashionably built within parklands in the Parish, towards the end of the Victorian era. Later, it became a school and is now an outdoors activity centre. Always look at telephone wires to see if there's a bird of prey, such as a kestrel, sitting surveying the field for small mammals for lunch or tea. There are an increasing number of buzzards around. These are big birds, often soaring high on the thermals. Up there, they can see prey in the fields over a distance of three miles. They can be mercilessly mobbed by crows and will usually give up and go!
5. In the right hand corner of the field, re-enter the wood and after about 10 metres, bear left and go through another 7 barred metal gate into a smaller field. Hug the right hand edge and at the wood, cross a stream using the cement bridge. If you have children with you, they could play pooh sticks here. Turn left, follow the path along the edge of the wood and cross the racing gallops, heading towards the farm. Walk between the hedge and the post and rail fence. Note all the fenced fields and horses in this well maintained equestrian estate.
6. Turn left through a gap in the hedge, immediately turn right (ignore the footpath sign on right pointing across the fields) and then turn right again along a tarmac drive, passing the stables. In March, small wild daffodils, called Lenten Lilies up north, flower in various places along this walk. They seem much nicer than the large King Alfreds popular in gardens! On your right, there are a number of fine oak trees in the field. These are precious trees as they support a myriad of insects

and birds. In the woodpiles, look out for rabbits! We've never seen any hares but you may be luckier. Did you know that only the female hares "box"?

7. At the top of the road bear right (footpath sign is by a large oak on left hand side of road) towards a post and rail fence. Turn left and walk between the fence and the hedge, cross the gallop again and enter the mixed deciduous wood through a 7 barred metal gate. Can you spot lichens and moss here and do you know the differences between them? Lichens are a sign of good air quality and a healthy environment!

8. Cross the wooden bridge over the stream and up the hill. Exit the wood into an area of scrubland which provides an important habitat for birds and insects. Continue uphill and notice the vineyard on the right on the south facing slopes. Many more vineyards are springing up in Sussex as English sparkling wine is becoming a cult drink. At the T junction, turn right and after a short distance, look over a gate to get a better view of the Villa Elena vineyard. Also here you can admire the views of the South Downs. Can you imagine what it must have been like as an Iron Age tribesman living up there in winter, hunkered up against Chanctonbury Ring?

9. Walk on, go over the stile at the left hand side of a 7 barred metal gate into a field and hug the left hand side of the field. Then enter the wood, turn right downhill and use the footbridge to cross the stream. These streams provide a valuable function, draining the fields of surplus water but also providing drinking water for the deer and badgers and other creatures who live in this part of our Parish.

10. Exit the wood through a 5 barred metal gate, enter the field and head across the field towards the largest of the oak trees. Go through another 5 barred metal gate, cross a wood bridge over another stream and cross another small field keeping the metal fence on your left. In the corner of the field walk through a tunnel of hedges, past the gardens of houses in Harriott's Close and Nuthurst Street on your right, and the start of the graveyard on your left.

11. Enter the graveyard of St Andrew's Church, Nuthurst and carry straight on keeping the Church on your left. This site has been sacred for a thousand years but a cornerstone in the building tells you this Church is Victorian. Walk to the lych gate and pause under it to see the names of the servicemen who died in the First World War. It is a distressing number. The lych gate was used at burials to shelter the coffin before the clergyman arrived and the name is derived from the Old English word "lic", which means "body".

12. Turn right at Nuthurst Street and walk along the pavement to St Andrew's School and back to your parked car.