



## Circular Walk 6: Mannings Heath to Sedgwick and back (1)

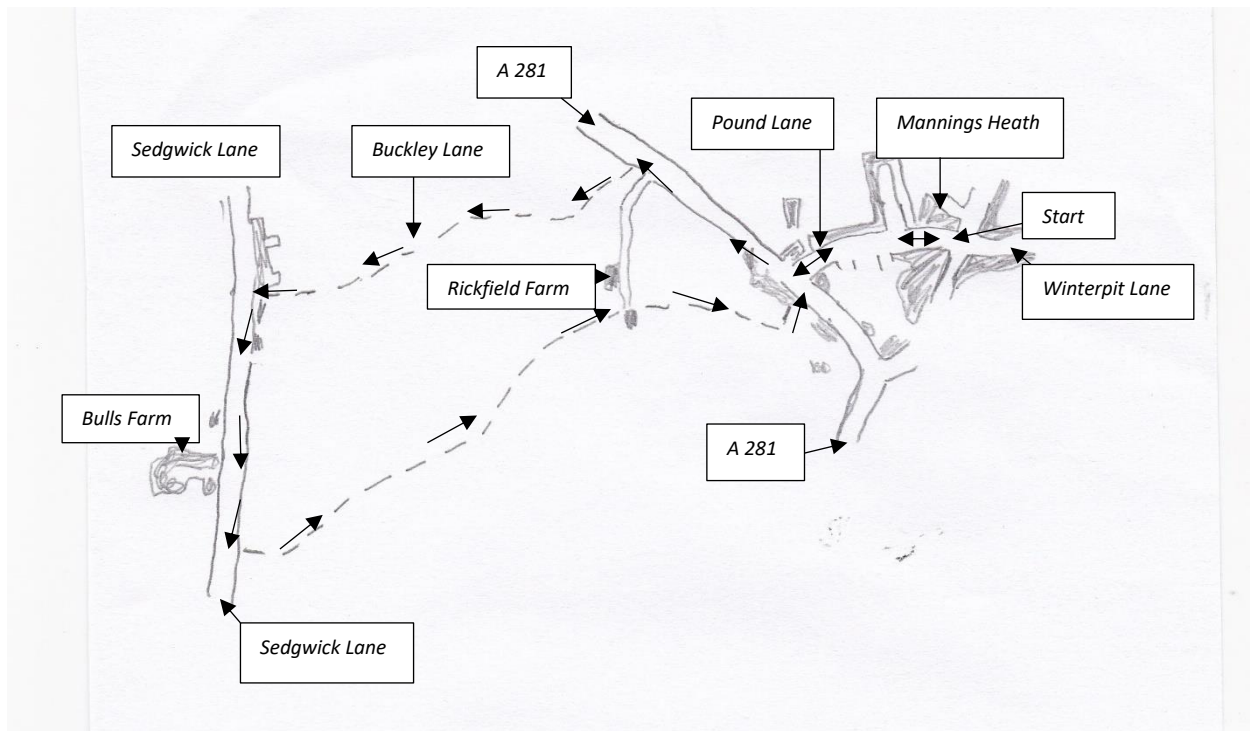
Distance: about 2.5 to 3.0 miles.

Time: about 1.5 hours.

Map: OS Explorer Map OL 34: Crawley and Horsham

Starting Point: Mannings Heath Village Shop

Grid Reference: 288 204



Fairly easy walk. Some stiles, no hills, just a gentle uphill stretches along a bridleway and along Sedgwick Lane. Can be muddy at times. The walk passes through fields with sheep grazing. Please keep dogs on leads

1. From Mannings Heath Village Shop, walk along Pound Lane to the A281. Turn right and carefully cross A281 just before the Elite Garage. Walk in single file along the tarmac pedestrian path towards Horsham. The A281 is a very busy and fast road.

2. About 30 metres beyond the entrance to Rickfield Farm, turn left down a public bridleway called Buckley Lane. Note the peace and quiet after the noisy A281! This bridleway passes through mixed woodland. The Parish largely sits on Wealden Clay, a poor soil and in times past, much of the landscape would have looked like this. Big trees, especially oaks, gave timber for buildings and ships, whilst under-cuttings were fuel to keep people warm, or were made into fences. Does this sunken, east-west bridleway look like an ancient "road", one that never got tarmacked? Most of our modern roads run north-south.

3. Follow the bridleway uphill through a finger of woodland with hedges/trees on either side. Head for a gate that leads into a field. This, like much of the land has been cleared of trees, mainly for pasture, but sometimes for growing crops. In the winter, look right and you can glimpse St. Mary's Church, Horsham, with its very appropriate wooden spire. Unfortunately, the electricity pylons spoil the views from this field.

4. Continue straight on hugging the hedge on the right. Think how old this hedge might be. The oldest hedges have lots of different species. Look particularly to see hazel nut bushes or trees in these hedges. They used to supply free pig food and animals would be brought from the coastal strip to fatten them up in Nuthurst.

5. At the corner of the field, go through a small wooden 5-barred gate into a small finger of woodland. Go past the waste water treatment works on the right (this treats sewage from parts of Horsham) and emerge onto a stony track. Walk along it to Sedgwick Lane (Magpie Lane), with the post box opposite.

6. Turn left and go gently uphill along Sedgwick Lane, past Whytings Farm on the left and Goldfinch Cottage on the right. Take care as this is a narrow lane and can be quite busy with traffic. In the summer, notice the profusion of wild flowers in the roadside verges and hedgerows. These encourage insects and birds. Just past Bull's Farm, turn left at the footpath sign and cross a stile, into a field. Follow its left hand boundary.

7. Keep vigilant now! Approximately a third of the way along this boundary, find a hidden footpath sign on your left. Follow it, heading diagonally across an area of scrub land, keeping a metal wire fence on your right. Look out for wild deer in this area.

8. Continue through the scrubland with a plantation of hazel nut trees in the field on the right. Look out for butterflies on the wild flowers and for goldfinches and other finches feeding on the seed heads, particularly the thistles. Cross two streams using the simple wooden bridges and enter a field. Head diagonally, towards a wide metal gate. Go through the gate and immediately turn right (If you look ahead you can see the South Downs), cross a ditch via a plank and then a stile into a field.

9. The next bit is tricky! Whytings Farm is on your left; walk towards its right hand barn. In the corner of the field is a gap in the hedgerow and a footpath sign!

10. Turn right into some scrub land and after about ten metres, cross another stile. Keep the barns on your left. Climb over one more stile and walk across two planks over two meandering streams. Immediately, there is another sign. Aim diagonally left towards the opposite hedge, where twenty metres away you will find yet another sign.

11. Go through a metal gate. Head diagonally across a field, keeping a large oak tree on your left. You need to be heading almost in line with some chimney stacks in the distance.
12. Cross two stiles into the next field and head for the space between some barns and caravans. Climb another stile. Cross the track running from farm to barn. Rickfield Farm has stood here since medieval times and was once part of St. Leonard's Forest.
13. After crossing the track, climb another stile and head straight on through a metal gate and under the stays for a telephone pole. This can be a muddy section if the cows are about! Hug the left hand hedge aiming for a gap in the corner of the small field. Look for rabbits running about between the hedge and field. At the end of the straight bit of hedge, under an oak tree, follow the footpath sign straight on. Just before the wood, you can sit on a bench and admire the views.
- 14 Climb the stile into the scrubby woodland, turn left and follow path until it meets the A281. Just before the A281 on the right is a development site allocated in the Neighbourhood Plan for 10 new houses including some small semi-detached houses. As you reach the A281, facing you are the Old Post House and Heath Cottage. The latter reminds us that the Parish has some outcrops of Tunbridge Wells sandstone and this supported heathland in the past.
15. Carefully cross the A218. Turn left towards the Dun Horse Pub and then right into Pound Lane and retrace your steps along Pound Lane back to Mannings Heath Village shop.