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## Popham and Woodmancott

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Distance: 7¼ km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Hampshire

Date written: 14-sep-2020

Author: Cascarrabias

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Refreshments: picnic, or later in East Stratton, or pubs on the A30

Maps: Explorer 144 (Basingstoke) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Church, easy field tracks, hamlet, woodland tracks*

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### In Brief

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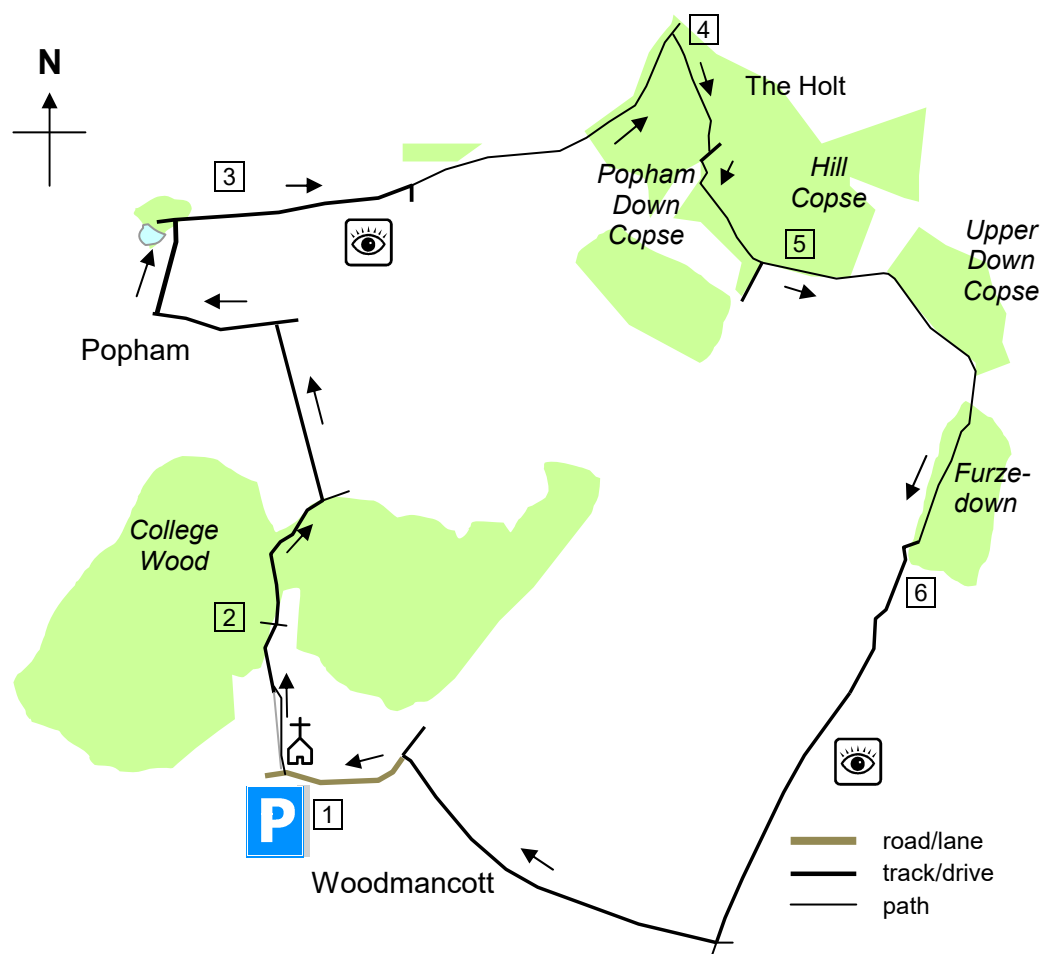
This is a walk through two isolated hamlets in what was once a great medieval parish. The terrain is divided between good woodland paths and easy farm tracks. There are *no stiles* and no livestock, and the field paths are all very wide and always round the edge of the fields. An especially picturesque time of year to do this walk is late summer when the fields of sunflowers are at their best. This walking area offers a wide choice for refreshment after the walk, with a country pub in East Stratton and two pubs close by on the A30.



There are no nettles and no scratchy undergrowth on this walk, so shorts can be worn. Good walking shoes or trainers are adequate. Your dog will also enjoy this walk.

The walk begins outside the little church of **Woodmancott** near Winchester, Hampshire, [www.w3w.co/monkey.wonderful.races](http://www.w3w.co/monkey.wonderful.races), or set your navigator for "St James Church Woodmancott". For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## The Walk



*From 2001 to 2017, the tiny hamlet of Woodmancott was the site of the "Best Small Festival" (awarded in 2007) just over on the other side of the M3. The Blissfields festival, which took place early in July, consisted mainly of pop, folk, indie, rock, and dance and was family-friendly.*

- 1 From the roadside by the church of St James, cross the grass and go through the wooden gate into the churchyard. After possibly taking a look at this picturesque little church, walk past the left-hand side of the church and go out of the churchyard through one of two wooden gates, onto the beginning of a long straight avenue of trees. Walk along the avenue (a more charming choice than the track on your left) and, at the end, continue straight ahead on the chalky track. **In late summer, a crop of sunflowers will be smiling in the sunshine – one of many to be seen today.**
- 2 At a crossing track, keep straight ahead on an attractive wide track with the trees of College Wood on each side. Stay on the track as it bends **right** past a fingerpost. At a marker post, turn **left** on the main track to proceed on a long straight path between crop fields. At the top, at a T-junction, turn **left** on another wide track. You shortly meet a large closed metal gate. Slip round to the **left** of the gate into the field and immediately go **right** through a small wooden gate to re-join the track. But almost at once, after the house on your right, turn **right** on a tarmac lane, passing the houses of the little hamlet of Popham.

*The hamlet of Popham is part of a much larger historical manor from which the an eminent family spread its influence. It was in 1141 that the Empress Maud (or Matilda) made a triumphant procession through Winchester after defeating her cousin Stephen in her claim to the English throne. Her son Henry II granted the manor special rights in thanks for their loyalty and the family took the proud name "de Popham". The motto of the Pophams is "Mens pristina mansit" meaning "the original mind hath remained", something like "always loyal".*

At the end of the village, you arrive at a T-junction next to an attractive willowed pond with tall ash trees. Ignore the stile opposite and turn **right** on a tarmac drive.

- 3 Go round a green metal barrier and continue on stony track. In 600m, where the track bends right, leave it by continuing straight ahead on a grassy track which runs between field hedges. Soon there is an open field on your right revealing views across the county. *In late summer, the last corner is devoted to those smiley sunflowers.* In the corner, keep ahead through a hazel coppice, part of Popham Down Copse. After 250m in the wood, you reach a junction just before a fingerpost. (If you find yourself going downhill and out of the wood, you have gone too far and need to backtrack.) *[Oct 2025: fingerpost had fallen and was propped up in the wrong place: you may need to go back a short distance]*. Turn sharp **right** here on a path signed as *footpath only*. *[Oct 2025: fallen tree blocked path; you may need to clamber round to find the path which has consequently become disused; walkers improvised a way-around using the track and a map.]*
- 4 This clear path runs through the centre of the wood, in an area known as *The Holt*, bypassing two fallen tree trunks. Keep to the main twisty woodland path until, after a total of 350m, you emerge from the wood. Turn **right** here on a track to come instantly to a crop field. Turn **left** along the edge of the crops and wheel **right** in the corner, ignoring a marker post. Only 40m after the corner, turn **left** with the path into the wood. More hazel coppices are evidenced in this extensive forest. After nearly 250m, your path leads straight over a rough track and reaches a track beside a fingerpost showing two optional paths. *The bridleway on the right (not researched) leads direct back to the church; the route chosen offers further charming woodland and more views.*
- 5 Avoiding the bridleway on the right, go straight over, choosing the footpath (whose "finger" pointer seems to have vanished). This oak-shaded path runs for 300m or so, beside the woods of Upper Down Copse, leading to a 3-way junction with a field visible on your left. Turn **right** at this junction, continuing on a woodland path, close to a field on your right. It leads out into a large field with views left. Keep ahead down the short right-hand end. Your path zigzags left-right into the woods of Furzedown and runs in a wide clearing dominated by tall oaks and ash. In 150m, you cross a green clearing, continuing under tall firs and other large evergreens. At the end of the wood, your path veers **right** and resumes **left** on a wide farm track.
- 6 You are walking beside a crop field on your left with great views ahead. Entering the next large field, your path continues along the left-hand side. In 200m, continuing beside the next field for 700m, you reach the next junction. Turn **right** here, passing a low farm shed. This wide track path runs gently uphill with a crop field on your left. In 500m, ignore a junction on your right. In a further 150m, the track levels out and, 200m later, comes down, through a metal barrier, to a junction of tracks by a house, *Woodmancott House*. Turn **left** on a tarmac drive, passing the house and



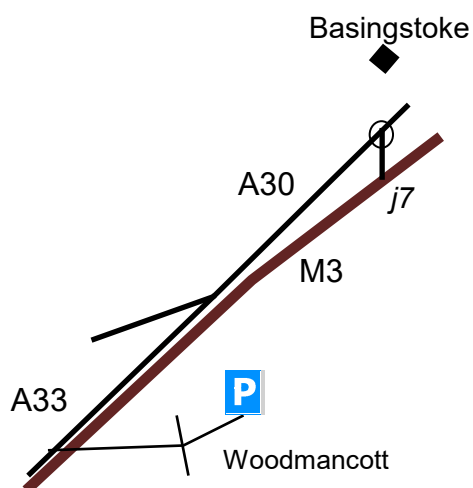
Manor Farm, quickly reaching the little green beside the church of St James where the walk began.

*For final refreshments, the Sun Inn on the A30 does as excellent lunch.*

## Getting there

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By car: Woodmancott and Popham are close to the M3. If arriving from the London or M25 area, come off at junction 7, the second exit for *Basingstoke*. Follow the A30 for  $\frac{1}{3}$  mile to the next roundabout and turn sharp **left** onto the A30. In 2 miles, avoid the right fork to Andover, now on the A33. Woodmancott is signed left in just over 2 miles. The church is in about one mile, ignoring side lanes.



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