



Penshurst Pubs and Poundsbridge

Distance: 7 km=4½ miles

easy walking

Region: Kent

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Refreshments: *Bottle House, Spotted Dog*

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Map: Explorer 147 (Tonbridge) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Pubs, views, water meadows, woodland, green hillsides

In Brief

This is a pleasant walk in west Kent, taking you up a few short, exhilarating hills, through sheep meadows bordering the River Medway, and back across delightful little meadows to the start where you have a unique choice of two truly great pubs. (To reserve a table at the *Spotted Dog*, ring 01892-870253. For the *Bottle House*, ring 01892-870306.)

*In May 2025 the **Spotted Dog** is being beautifully re-furnished and will re-open at the start of **June 2025**.*



? There are some nettles and tall scratchy undergrowth in the first section of this walk, possibly enough to discourage wearing shorts in high summer. In high summer too, there is a short but very overgrown section shortly before the first pub. Apart from some slurry at Nash's Farm, this is generally a dry walk, so boots are optional in the warmer months. Your dog can certainly come on this adventure, but with a lead of course because of the sheep pastures.

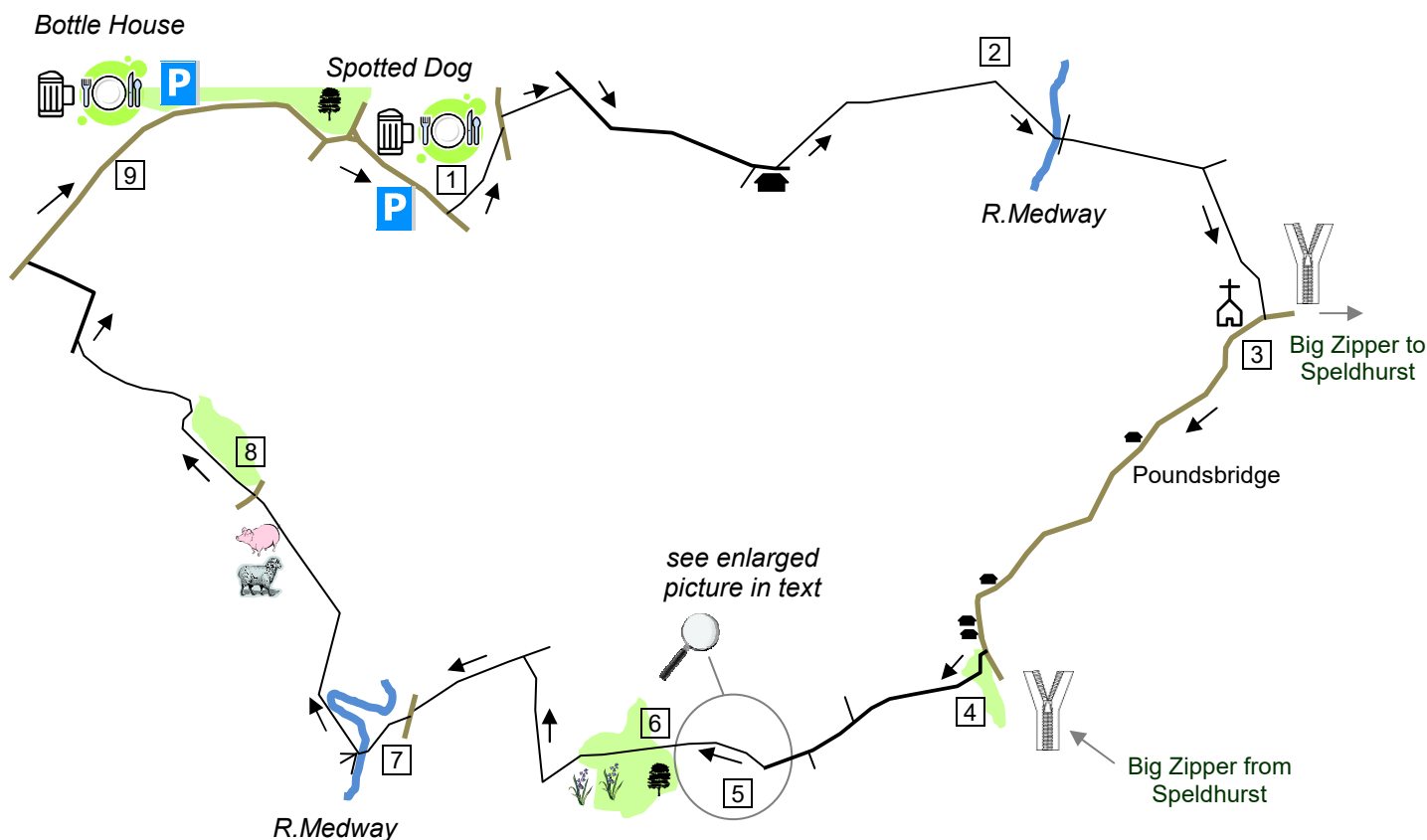


For a longer (10 miles=16 km) walk with a historic village, a classic pub and some great woodland walking, this walk can be zipped up with the adjoining *Speldhurst* walk. Zip points will be found at all the relevant junctions.

The walk begins at the car park opposite the *Spotted Dog*, near Penshurst, Kent, postcode **TN11 8EP**, www.w3w.co/play.amazed.students. (They expect you to be a customer when you return from the walk.) The *Bottle House* also has good parking, www.w3w.co/rails.berated.skippers. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

There are two great pubs at the start and end of this walk. The one opposite, the *Spotted Dog* is described in detail at the end of this guide. The *Bottle House*, a short distance along the road, is also a favourite.



- 1 With the *Spotted Dog* pub on your left, walk along the road to the end of a line of cottages. Turn **left** here at a signpost, shortly through a small metal gate and down a narrow path, steep in places. At the end, go past a broken stile and down steps to a road. Turn **left** on the road and, in 20m, go **right** by a signpost on a grassy path down the left-hand side of a field. At a T-junction at the bottom, turn **right** on a wide farm track. In 400m you reach the buildings of Nash's Farm. Ignoring a track ahead towards some houses of the farm, go diagonally **left** on a much grubbier track, passing dilapidated sheds, then out between open fields. Shortly, as you approach some trees and another field beyond, keep **left** on the track but, in 20m, fork **right** on a very narrow, greener path running between hedges [2025: Care! this path is dark and hard to see at first, it may be overgrown in summer]. You pass a small murky pond on your right and come through the smaller of two metal gates into open pasture.
- 2 Your route is a fraction to the **right**, staying not far from the right-hand edge of the pasture. Continue down a slope to cross the River Medway by a long metal bridge. Keep straight ahead, avoiding footpaths on your left and right. Soon you are walking alongside the edge of the pasture beside a stream on your left. After a (usually open) metal gate, your path elbows diagonally **right**, up the centre of the next meadow, crossing under power

lines. Continue to the top, avoiding a footpath on your left. Go through a rider's gate, shortly followed by a wooden gate [2025: dismantled and shifted]. The path leads up to a tarmac lane with All Souls Chapel Poundsbridge on your right. *Although the chapel is usually closed, the cemetery garden here is a perfect place to rest on one of the bench seats and take in the view. This "chapel of ease" serves as a kind of overflow for Penshurst churchyard which was overpopulated.*



Decision point. If you are doing Big Zipper walk to Speldhurst, turn **left** on the lane and follow the Speldhurst walk where indicated by the "zipper" sign.



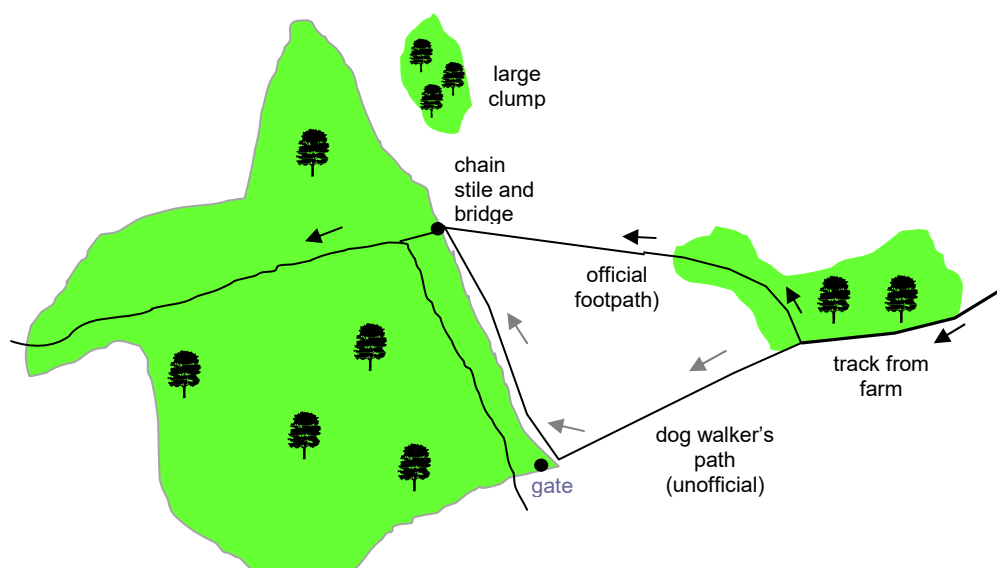
Turn **right** on narrow quiet Coopers Lane. You pass through the hamlet of Poundsbridge with some period houses, an oast and a farm. 350m after the farm you pass some grey wooden bungalows on a left bend. 50m after the last bungalow, fork **right** on a dusty track, with a signpost hidden in the hedge, signed *Holts Farm*.



The Big Zipper walk from Speldhurst joins here.



This farm track bends right uphill and leads you through cluttered Palmers Farm, passing the fine farmhouse and some cattle sheds. Soon you come over a grid (care! unavoidable) and go past cottages. The friendly local dog here sometimes acts as guide for walkers. Ignore narrow footpaths right and left and stay on the main driveway, coming through a large wooden gate. A wide woodland path runs between lines of farm junk, and a small wooden shed on your right. The path ends at a large open sloping grassy meadow.



Your destination is a chain stile half way along the edge of the nearby wood on the other side. Some local dog walkers go straight across the grass on a faint path, heading for a large metal gate at the left-hand corner of the wood; they turn **right** along the edge of the meadow next to the wood for exactly 70m to find the chain stile; but this guide uses the official route: Do *not* enter the meadow yet, but immediately fork **right** under tall oaks on a woodland path downhill, with the hedgerow on your left. In under 100m your path comes out into that large sloping meadow. Now walk in the same direction across the meadow, on an unmarked path, staying level, heading for the nearby wood only 100m away. A little to the right you will notice a large bulge in the wood. You need to aim 30m to the **left** of the bulge. As you pass it you will see that it is in fact a large separate clump (it hides a deep natural pit). On reaching the other side you will see the small elusive chain stile under a tall birch. (There

is also a bridge over the ditch but the chain stile is easier to spot.) Go over the little bridge, through the chain stile, into the wood.

- 6 Almost immediately you reach a T-junction. Turn **right** on a path which immediately bends left. Follow it through the bluebell wood, passing a swampy area on your left, stepping over a gurgling stream. Suddenly you are out into a field with the *Spring Hill Oast* dominating the view ahead. Continue ahead along the top left-hand edge of the field. In the corner, turn sharp **right** down the far edge of the field. At the bottom, go over a wooden bridge and turn **left** along the edge of another field, using the generous grassy fringe. A bridge, a new metal kissing-gate, and a small paddock with ponies lead you up steps, over a stile and onto the Spring Hill Road (*care! fast traffic*).
- 7 Turn **left** on the road for 10m, then **right** over a stile into a meadow with the River Medway on your right. Go across the grass, a fraction to the left, to cross the river by a long bridge and small metal gate. Turn **right** and follow the right-hand side of the field until you pass a tight right-hand bend in the river. At this point *either* continue to follow the edge of the field *or* take a diagonal path, as recommended by a notice (avoiding the risky river bank). Aim for the left-hand edge of the wood ahead, where you can see a wooden bridge. Cross the bridge and go up the left-hand side of a sloping pasture, close to a fence on your left separating you from another sheep pasture. At the top go over a stile onto a lane.
- 8 Cross the lane, over a stile, and along a wide grassy path between wire fences with some fine woodland on your right. At the end of the path, go over a wooden bridge-with-rail and turn sharp **right** over a muddy section, stepping **right** over a narrow stream, and veer **left** on the right-hand of two steep uphill paths (*very overgrown and nettly in summer but this is correct! walkers advised to have faith and keep going*). Your path eventually curves **left** and levels out. After more than 150m in thick woodland and brambles, your path snakes right uphill into a small grassy space. The path ascends over the grass, and takes you through a large wooden gate onto a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on the drive which soon bends left and reaches the Coldharbour Road. Turn **right** on the road, reaching a clapperboard terrace and the *Bottle House* pub/restaurant in 350m.



The "Bottle House" is an ancient inn with a pleasant terrace, a good menu and some local ales. It was built in 1492, the year that Columbus sailed. It was one or two farm cottages until 1773 when it was first licensed. Parts of it were a baker, a shop, a farrier and a cobbler. Later there were a skittle alley, a chapel with graves and their attendant ghosts who still haunt the area. The current layout dates from 1938 when the two cottages were joined again. The name "Bottle House" is derived from the large number of bottles that were found in the rubble.

- 9 After a possible pleasant break, continue along the road. At road junctions keep **left** and then **right**, passing the famous double inn sign on your left. Shortly, you reach the *Spotted Dog* where the walk began.



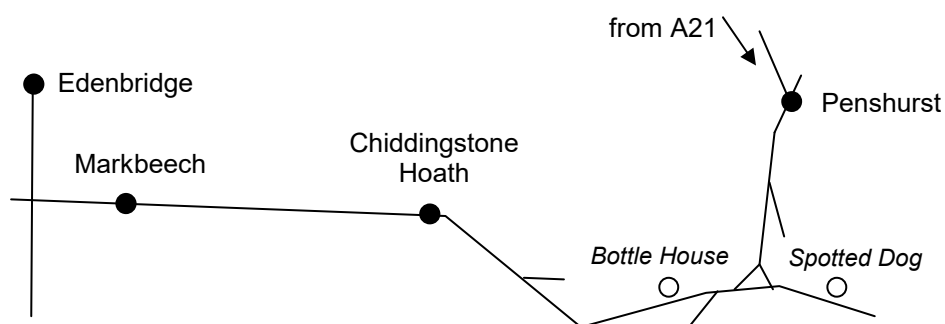
The "Spotted Dog" is one of the lovely old pubs of West Kent, housed in a 15th-century white clapboard building which started life as several cottages. There is a large terrace at the front and a smaller one at the back which affords views across the Medway valley. The menu qualifies it as a gastropub and reviews are very good. Real ales available are Larkins, Harveys plus one or two guests, such as Doom Bar and Black Cat. These can be enjoyed on the long comfortable settees, provided you mind your head on the beams. Whatever they may say, however, the "Spotted Dog" is a bit snooty about walkers who

are, at the threshold, asked to leave their boots outside. The "Spotted Dog" is open from 11.30 till the evening, closed on Mondays at 3pm, except occasionally on bank holidays. Food is available whenever the pub is open.

Getting there

By car: if coming from the London area, west side, one attractive way is from the B2026, Kent Hatch Road; about 2½ miles south of Edenbridge, at a major crossroads, turn **left** to go straight through Markbeeche; keep right at Chiddingstone Hoath. In about ½ mile, by a white house, **ignore** the first junction on the left signposted *Penshurst*. ⅓ mile later stay on the major road as it turns sharp left at a junction. In ¾ mile you pass the *Bottle House*. Continue, avoiding junctions right and left, to reach the Spotted Dog ⅓ mile further on.

If coming from the eastern side, via the A21, turn off at the brown tourist sign for *Penshurst Place*. Turn right at a T-junction in the village in the direction *Fordcombe*. ⅔ mile outside the village, fork right for *Smarts Hill*. In ½ mile, turn left for the *Spotted Dog* (or right for the *Bottle House*).



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