



Circular Walk 2: Around Maplehurst

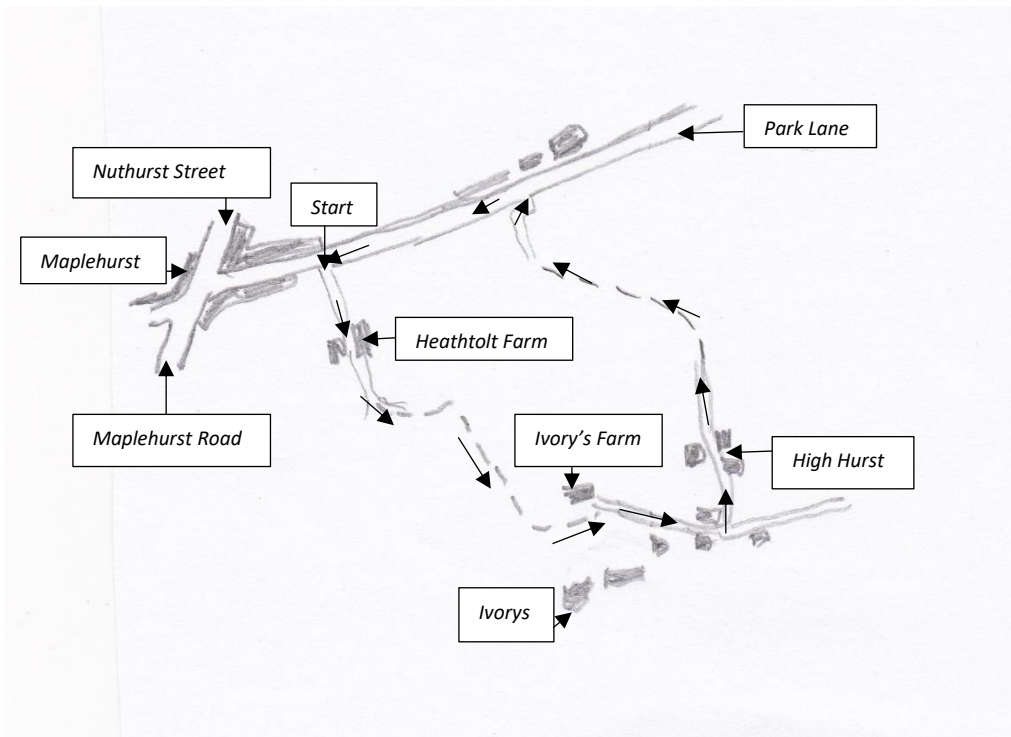
Distance: about 2 miles

Time: about 1 hour

Map: OS Explorer Map OL 34

Starting Point: Park Lane, Maplehurst, at entrance to Heathtolt Farm

Grid Reference: 247 192



This easy walk with some long gentle slopes gives you some lovely, far reaching views of the South Downs. It starts in Maplehurst. "Hurst" in Old English means a wooded hill, and on this walk you will understand why early settlers gave the land this name. A thousand years ago the whole area would have been heavily wooded. In the 19th and 20th centuries, much of it was cleared for pasture for dairy cattle, but now much of it is given over to horses. Notice how the trees though support wildlife. You could even keep a count of the numbers of different wild flowers that you see in the

woods, especially in spring before the leaves on the trees burst out. Keep an eye out for buzzards in the sky soaring on the thermals. Listen too, and you may hear one “mew”.

1. Drive through Nuthurst and at the crossroads in the centre of Maplehurst, turn left into Park Lane for a short distance. Park on the right, near the entrance to Heathtolt Farm. Take the public footpath through the 5 barred metal gate (note: you have to line up the lug with the notch on the bolt) downhill towards Heathtolt Farm. Notice lots of cows in the field because this is a dairy farm. Such farms are getting rarer with supermarkets insisting on buying milk at low prices. In the winter/early spring you can see hundreds of noisy black rooks in the rookery in the trees on the left or on the ground turning over the cow pats.

2. Go straight ahead through the farm yard and look at the huge open stores of cattle food on either side. Immediately after the right hand store, take the footpath to the right of the hedge (look hard as it is easy to miss) and head slightly uphill towards a small copse. As you enter the copse, turn left and walk uphill. Notice the coppiced hazel and the beech and oak trees. In March, the undergrowth will be a picture with violets and white wood anemones. Later in May it will be covered in bluebells.

3. Emerge into a large field, though unfortunately the view to the South Downs is spoiled by pylons. Turn left along the side of the field and after about 100 metres look for a footpath sign in the hedge on the left (also easy to miss). Now turn right and head across the field, under the pylons. Turn and look at the South Downs and on the left you will see Chactonbury Ring (a ring of trees). On the right, in the distance, you will see a hill with a pylon on its summit. This is Bignor Hill, famous for its footpath sign in Latin! The Roman Stane Street, and Bignor Villa nearby would once have been very busy. How odd when the Romans left our shores and these villas fell into disrepair. The Saxons simply ignored them!

4. Go over the stile, across a wooden bridge over a ditch and into another copse with a small pond on the right. Walk downhill through the copse, noticing the oaks and beech and a relatively new plantation on the right. Go past a bamboo gate on the left, cross the stream using the wooden bridge, then over a stile and turn left. Almost immediately at a four way footpath sign, turn left, go over another stile and head towards a large oak in the field. On your left is a pond in the large garden of Ivory's Farm and on the right is a large house called Ivory's which is just visible behind a stand of trees.

5. Head towards the left hand corner of the field and by a telegraph pole, you will find another stile. Climb over it, cross a tarmac drive, over another stile and walk along a tarmac drive with a small pond on the right. At the first bend leave the tarmac drive and follow the path to the left hand side of a four barred metal gate. Walk straight on, past a riding school on the left and through a stable area. Head towards two semi-detached houses with black doors. At the footpath sign, turn left up another tarmac drive towards High Hurst Manor (though not signed as such).

6) Walk through the area with stables on both sides, bear a little left up a concrete drive and walk straight on uphill towards High Hurst Copse. Just before you reach the copse, turn and look at the panorama of the South Downs. With binoculars, in a direction of about 10 o'clock you can see the white windmills called Jack and Jill, straight ahead note the forest of communication masts at Devils Dyke and at about 2 o'clock you can see Chactonbury Ring.

7. Enter High Hurst copse which is carpeted with white anemones and violets in the Spring and is thick with bluebells in May. Then bear left into an area that is mainly coppiced hazel and leave the copse over a stile into a field. Head diagonally left across the field, towards the left hand side of a small stretch of hedge. On the right, notice the houses on Park Lane and how the Lane goes along the top of the ridge of high land. This will be an ancient routeway because the high up land is drier than in the valley.

8. Just before the hedge, turn right and after a short distance go over the stile and go through a gate with a small pond on the right. Follow the path straight ahead, up a hill, where primroses and wild strawberries grow in the bank in the Spring. After climbing two more stiles you will reach Park Lane. Turn left and walk with care along Park Lane to your parked car.