



## FOREST FIRES & OTHER SURPRISES

An enjoyably easy place to get thoroughly lost in, the heaths and woodlands of the Ashdown Forest are known best as the place where Pooh and friends roamed. Last winter I helped check out some new routes for three new self-guided archaeological walks, now available free of charge from the Ashdown Forest Centre and online at [ashdownforest.org](http://ashdownforest.org) (click 'downloads' and find walks 11 to 13). Through the technique of Lidar – a sort of aerial reconnaissance photo that penetrates through vegetation cover to reveal a view of what lies beneath – a host of 'new' archaeological features have come to light. The walks point you to an array of them: we wandered through the forest to find a flattened area where the soil was unexpectedly dark and burnt-looking: this was a charcoal-burning platform, used for a forest industry creating charcoal for smelting iron ore. They're all over the Forest, and like a lot of the vegetated lumps and bumps that conceal evidence of the past they start popping up everywhere once you get your eyes tuned. On the heaths we found mounds that aligned themselves over sizeable distances: these were remains of field kitchens serving a vast militia camp of 7,000 set up in 1793 to counter a possible French invasion. There's a remarkable legacy from the two world wars, including zigzagging practice trenches dug by soldiers in the First World War, as well as firing ranges, boundary banks and pillow mounds used for raising rabbits. *Tim Locke*

**More Sussex pleasures in Tim Locke's Slow Sussex, Guide Book of the Year Finalist in British Press Awards (£14.99 from Skylark, Lewes Tourist Information Centre and Barbican House). Visit [facebook.com/slowsussex](http://facebook.com/slowsussex) for details of walks he's doing.**