



The Downland Half Marathon 22nd to 25th April 2021

Strava Segment and map:

<https://www.strava.com/segments/27908834>

Reminder: Start / stop your watch about 30m before / after the start and finish points. When studying the Strava map for this segment, bear in mind that the gps tracking may appear to cut the occasional corner. Read the instructions and recce the route!

Your health and safety

Please take note of these points even if you are an experienced downland or long distance fell / mountain runner. Plan your race and be sensible on the whole course, do the right thing for your own safety, and that of other Downland walkers and animals. The course has an ascent of just under 450m, (and classifies as a Fell Run C2??). There is an alternative town course for runners who have not attempted a course like this before.

Road crossing: the course crosses the Beacon road where you **MUST** stop and wait for a safe moment to cross.

Social distancing: car parking is at Ditchling Beacon which can be crowded. There are gates throughout the course which can become congested so be considerate and use hand sanitiser as needed.

Countryside code: the course takes you through beautiful countryside and it's lambing season, so please respect the environment and make sure all gates are firmly shut after you.

Drink and food: normally, drinks stations are compulsory on a course of this length. As this is a virtual race, it becomes compulsory for you to take your own – for the race and afterwards too. If you plan on using a bottle belt or similar make sure you've tried it out before race day to make sure it fits you well (without chafing).

Downland running: the Downs are very exposed and changes in the weather can be sudden. A sunny start can turn into cloud and rain later in a race, which can have an adverse effect on your core body temperature. Take note of the forecast prior to running, carry your mobile with you and tell those at home as well as your team captain when you are planning to run and when you'll be back. If you think your race is going to last two hours or more you should consider carrying a light jacket. **RUN WITH ANOTHER CLUB MEMBER** – even if you are not together for the whole race, this is allowed under the rule of 6 and makes sense as your safety is most important. Taking a whistle is another good safety precaution.

Running conditions underfoot: this is uneven and in places stony, so supportive and well laced shoes are a must. Most of the course is on grass, as well as chalk and flint or winter mud mixed with clay which has turned hard in the warmer weather. There is a short section leading to Moon's Corner which is tarmac.

Course summary

Start is at Ditchling Beacon car park (you need money or an NT card). Head west along the SDW to the gate before the Keymer post. Touch the gate to record the segment and head back to the Beacon car park (4 km). Through the car park and cross the beacon road safely then continue east along SDW for about 500m to a gate hidden by the first clump of trees on your right. Follow the initially grassy path downhill and then through a small woodland before getting onto a farm track still downhill to St Mary's farm. Galvanised gates lead onto a tarmac section past a few houses and onto Moon's Corner at about 8km, take a hairpin left and head up an initially stony footpath.

Stay on this footpath as it heads NNE, and after about 2.5km it merges with the SDW just after the pylons. Continue on the SDW until the access gate to Blackcap, turn right and follow the path up the hill and heading towards the trig point. Keep to right of the trig point and follow the footpath heading in the direction of the millennium beacon (fire basket). 12km to this point.

The next section is an approx 5km loop around to the stud farm returning on the lower path to the Blackcap gate. So, continue along the worn area of footpath, passing to the left of the beacon, to an access gate leading downhill, sweeping to the right and under pylons. At approx. 14km, turn right onto a footpath which after 50m turns right again through a gate – up a slight rise the stud farm comes into view, through a gate and right again onto an open access track uphill back into the Blackcap field.

After the gate, it's uphill under pylons, taking the lower path to the Black Cap gate (ignore the footpath on the right leading back to the trig point).

Through the Blackcap gate, head west along the SDW to the Ditchling Beacon gate which is the end of the race.



Start your watch before the gate

In detail – 1. Ditchling Beacon car park to gate before Keymer post and back (4km)

Start your watch on the footpath before the gate heading west from the car park.

The segment starts 5m west of this gate.

Follow the SDW, running through 2 more gates. At approx 2 km, you'll reach the gate before Keymer post – touch this gate to record the segment (red blob, picture right). Return on the same route eastwards to the Beacon, through the car park and cross the road when safe to do so.



Turn point is gate before Keymer post

2. Ditchling Beacon to Blackcap trig point via St Mary's Farm and Moon's Corner (8km)

Through the gate by the roadside, follow the footpath on the right until the first clump of trees on your right after about 500m. The gate here takes you into a grassy field where you can see evidence of the footpath sweeping downhill with Falmer in the distance. Through a gate and the path heads right through a woodland uphill through another gate. Follow the hedge line on the right which brings you to a gate onto a farm track and with Shambledean Bottom to your left, follow this track downhill to grey metal gates. Bear right past houses onto the tarmac road. Note University Halls on the right.



Moon's Corner

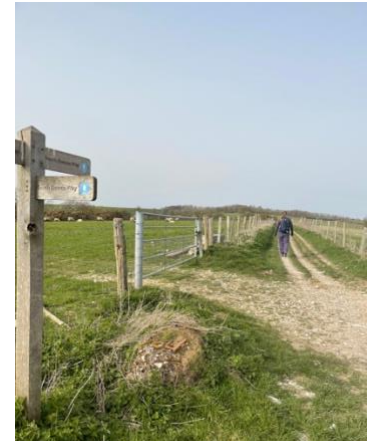
An uphill stretch, then the road heads downhill and after about 50m, look for a hairpin left turn up an initially narrow bridleway. This is Moon's Corner. From start 8km.

The footpath climbs steadily for the next 4km or so, with some sections flatter. The bridleway meets the SDW just before some pylons on your right. Keep straight on here (picture right). After a short wooded section, the gate to Blackcap field comes into view ahead of you.

Turn right into the Blackcap field and take the path up to the trig point. There's no need to go around the trig point, stay on the right of it.



Gate onto track to St Mary's Farm



Joining SDW- go straight on!

3. Blackcap loop (5km)

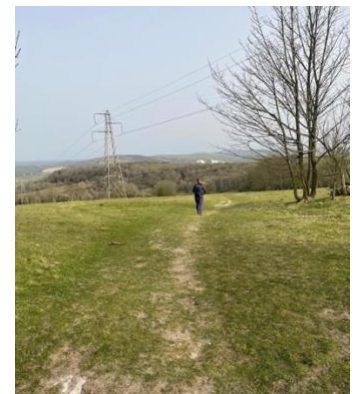
This loop heads east along part of the Lewes 10m course, then south east to the stud farm, then returning west into the Blackcap field on the lower path to the SDW.

Follow the footpath to the left of the clump of gorse (picture left). This takes you past the fire beacon and via a footpath with bushes either side to a gate.

Going through the gate into a field, follow the path as it heads downhill to the right and under some pylons (picture right) with Lewes Cliffe in the distance.



Route towards fire beacon



Under pylons towards turn point

Go through two more gates following a fence line on your right and trees on your left.

At about 14km join a path and turn right (picture left – turn point).

After a further 50m there's another sharp right turn taking you into a grassy field. Follow the fence line on the right almost to the end of the field and look for a gate about 20m to the left of the corner (picture right).

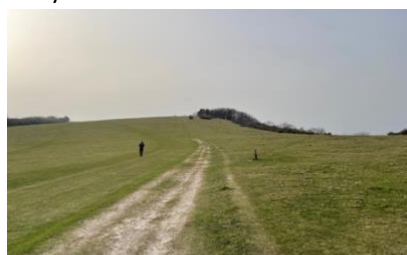


Turn point



Through gate right to go past stud farm

Through this gate and turn right and then left with post and rail fencing either side of you. With the stud farm now behind you, head up the track westwards. The track narrows and becomes stony as it heads uphill to a gate, after which you head up the chalk path under pylons. You're back in the Blackcap field. Going over the brow of the hill, you're faced with 3 paths (picture left) – take the lower one sweeping to the left which will bring you to the Blackcap gate.



Blackcap field take the left path

4. Run in from Blackcap field gate to Ditchling Beacon (4km)

Once through the gate, follow the SDW westwards to Ditchling Beacon. Those of you who have done the Blackcap handicap race will be familiar with this route, please read the instructions on the website to remind yourself if you need to!

Stop your watch at the gate to capture the segment. Take care crossing to the car park.