

Strolling Guides

NEW FOREST

A Mock Up



*Large streams from little fountains flow,
Tall Oaks from little acorns grow.*

David Everett, 1770-1813

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* Partially completed. Available on the CD only at present

† Some photographs on the CD only.

‡ Planning stage only

Welcome to the Strolling Guide to the New Forest

The New Forest covers most of Hampshire west of the Solent and is an attractive mixture of heath land, ancient woodland, more recent forestry enclosures and open 'lawns'. Throughout the unenclosed parts of the forest New Forest ponies can be found roaming free, along with cows, donkeys, and the occasional pig.



The New Forest proper (the coloured areas on the map) covers some 34,600 hectares (93,000 acres or 143 square miles) of south-west Hampshire. Of this, just over 19,000 hectares (45,500 acres) is unenclosed common grazing, the largest unenclosed area in lowland southern England.

Outside this, the *New Forest Heritage Area* (marked by the thick black line on the map), which was created in 1992, extends around the unenclosed Forest bringing the total area to over 58,000 hectares (143,500 acres) in all. It includes, or borders onto a number of interesting spots, such as Lymington, Lepe, Hythe, Breamore, Fordingbridge and Ringwood

The heritage area has a status similar to that of a national park and consists mainly of farmland and private forestry plantations, with very little unenclosed land.

History

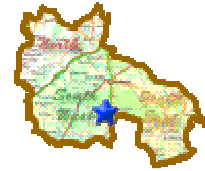
The history of the forest may be divided into four broad periods:

- The **early years** when the area was used for both hunting and timber extraction, as well as some pottery.
- The **medieval period** when the area officially became a forest and the emphasis was firmly on preserving the deer stocks for the royal hunt.
- The **15th to 19th centuries** when the emphasis increasingly moved to timber production for the Royal Navy.
- The **modern period** when the amenity value of the Forest has increasingly been recognised.

HISTORIC MILESTONES

Early	c.3000BC Bronze Age settlers build Round Barrows
	c.500BC Iron Age hill forts built
Deer	c.100AD Roman potteries in production
	c.500-1000AD Anglo-Saxons settlers found all of the forest villages, with the exception of Beaulieu.
Timber	980 First mention of a Royal Manor in the area
	1079 The traditional date on which New Forest created by William I. Actually we don't know the exact year, but it was certainly before 1086.
Amenity	1100 As commemorated by the Rufus Stone, William II (Rufus) is killed while hunting in the forest.
	1204 Cistercian abbey at Beaulieu founded.
	1544 Post of Surveyor General for Crown Woods created.
	1584 Pollarding of oaks made illegal.
	1601 First recorded felling of 200 trees for the Royal Navy.
	1673 Estimated 3000 trees a year being felled.
	1698 New Forest Act outlaws coppicing, attempts to restrict charcoal burning, but recognises the rights of the Commoners.
	1776 Scots pine introduced at Ocknell and Bolderwood.
	1851 Deer Removal Act. An attempt to destroy all deer in the forest. Deer population reduced from around 9,000 to about 200. Also introduces 'rolling powers of enclosure', and restricts commoners' rights.
	1877 New Forest Act (sometimes known as the Commoners' Charter). Verderers' powers changed to protect commoners' interests. Right to enclose new areas reduced. Ancient and Ornamental woodlands protected.
1924 Forestry Commission takes over management of New Forest's Crown land from the Office of Crown Woods.	
1939-1945 Ten airfields built in and around the forest.	
1949 New Forest Act reduces powers of the Verderers. 2,000 acres of 'Verderers' Inclosures' are created.	
1964 The 'adjoining commons' are brought within the forest bounds and under the control of the Verderers.	
1971 New Forest declared a Site of Special Scientific Interest.	
1979 The Queen plants the Queens Oak as part of the 900 years celebrations.	
1992 Government agrees special status equivalent to a national park.	

Brockenhurst



Brockenhurst is a good example of a village that has migrated over the years leaving its parish church stranded outside the village. A process encouraged by the Lords of the Manor, who lived next to the church.

<p>The original village was clustered around and below St. Nicholas Church at the top of the hill near to the old Manor House.</p>	<p>With the coming of the turnpike the village slowly migrated down the hill to the new road, and started to spread along Brookley Road to the west.</p>	<p>In 1847 the railway cut the village in half, rerouted the Beaulieu Road and made the old Church Road redundant. Subsequent development is all north of railway.</p>

St. Nicholas Church

St. Nicholas (pictured opposite) may be stuck on a hill all by itself but what a little gem it is. It claims to be the oldest church in the forest. The church certainly existed by 1086 as it is recorded in the Domesday Book and, going further back there is some evidence of Saxon stonework by the South Door.

Some people have speculated that the mound the church sits on may be partly artificial, and certainly the word 'henge' immediately sprang to my mind when I saw the bank behind the parking area.

Given the early Christians habit of building churches on old pagan

sites of worship, it is quite possible that this has been a religious site since Bronze Age times. However, that's enough speculation, what of the church today.

Like most old New Forest churches, St. Nicholas is a

glorious mixture of different periods. The original Nave dates from around 1130 and contains some fine late Norman stonework, particularly the South Doorway. The addition of the neo-classical North Aisle and the Gallery in 1832 more than doubled the capacity of the church.

The windows in the north aisle contain some lovely stained

glass from the 1930's. It is often said that glass from this period



lacks the vibrancy of both earlier and more recent glass, but I rather like the subtlety and fine detail it often presents.

The Chancel dates from around 1260 (as does the Porch) with a fine 17th century barrel vaulted



roof. Its chief glory however is the stained glass in the four side windows; depicting grapes, sunflowers, lilies and passion flowers. They are believed to date from about 1877.

Outside, the Tower was completed in 1763, the earlier one having been in danger of falling down. It is a fine example of Georgian brickwork surmounted by a short octagonal spire covered in Mathematical Tiles.

The Great Yew tree has been carbon dated to be more than 1000 years old and there is every reason to believe that it is at least as old as the church.



It has a trunk over 6 meters (20 feet) in diameter at its widest. Like most yews of its age, the trunk is hollow and the width is in part due to splitting.

The churchyard was full of bluebells when I visited in early May. Bluebells are a rarity in the forest due to the pressure of browsing animals, and it is only in enclosed areas, such as churchyards that they are to be found in abundance,

You could spend all day in the churchyard trying to decipher the inscriptions on the old gravestones, including that of 'Brusher Mills', a local snake-catcher. However, perhaps the most surprising sight is the Anzac war cemetery.



Finding the graves of almost 100 New Zealanders and being reminded of the horrors of the Great War in such a stark way, in the peace and quiet of the English countryside is quite a shock to the system.

Why are they here? Well between 1916 and 1918 the No. 1 New Zealand General Hospital was based at three sites around Brockenhurst. At its height this had a staff of over 300 and admitted, on average, around 26 patients a day.

Brockenhurst Village

As explained above, the modern village of Brockenhurst post-dates the arrival of the railway. This includes St Saviours Church, originally built as a private chapel for Rhinefield House, but given to the town in 1890.

The best that can be said for the rest of the village is that it is blessedly free of the 'gift' shops that swamp so many villages in tourist areas. It is a real village with shops for local people.

To be continued...

Fritham



Fritham is a strange place. It is surrounded on all sides by open heath or ancient woodland, and yet when you are in the village, you can only see green fields and cows. You could be almost anywhere in southern England.



Approaching the village by road from the north, the first thing you see is an extraordinary tower. This does

nothing to dispel the impression of a place that is slightly eccentric.

Walking along one of the tracks that borders the village, I was suddenly aware of what it must have felt like to live in feudal times, when the Forest was first created. When villages were small islands of civilisation fenced in against the untamed wilderness, and people rarely travelled from one village to another.



A little further along the track I came across some pigs exercising the ancient right of 'Pannage' as they have done from earliest times, and a pile of timber no doubt collected by one of the commoners under their 'Common of Fuelwood'.

These days the Forestry Commission tells the commoners where they can collect the off cuts from the Commission's commercial activities rather than letting them gather wood for themselves, but the principal still applies.

With the exception of the farms, most of the village buildings seem to date from the nineteenth century or later, including Fritham Free Church United (something of an oxymoron in my experience), which is dated 1904.



This presumably reflects the importance to the village of the nearby Schultze Gunpowder Factory, which operated for about fifty years from 1869.

The factory was based at Eyeworth Lodge, just down the hill from Fritham, which was originally a royal hunting lodge, and later a Forest Keeper's house before being taken over by the factory.

The most substantial relic of the factory is Eyeworth Pond (see opposite), created in 1871 to provide water for the works. This is now home to many ducks, including the brightly coloured mandarin ducks which, although introduced, now breed in the Forest using holes in trees.

Running north from Eyeworth Pond car park is the unmade Powder Mill Road, the start of the Howen Bushes Walk. This was once used to transport gunpowder up to the main road, thus avoiding taking it through Fritham village.

Just off Powder Mill Road is a chalybeate spring called Irons Well that feeds into Eyeworth Pond,



along with another small stream. The spring was once valued for its healing qualities, but unfortunately has had to be fenced off giving it a rather un-natural appearance.

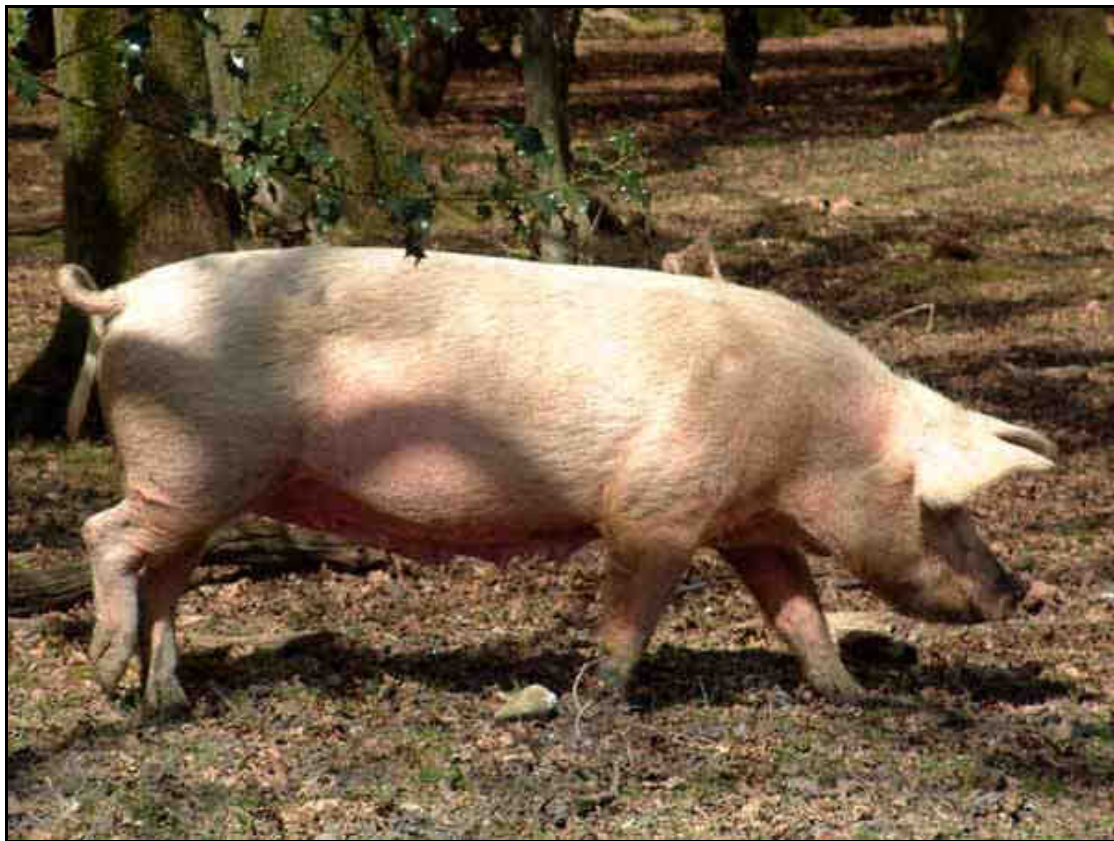
What with that, the iron-coloured water and the all-pervading smell of rust, this can be a slightly depressing spot.

Other than the pond, the only other remains of the factory are a few brick-built gunpowder storage houses in the

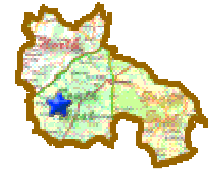
field at the southern end of the Eyeworth Lodge estate, and the factory foreman's house at its entrance.



Back up in Fritham, at the entrance to the main car park, there is an old black post box dating from nineteenth century and the days of penny postage. According to the plaque, it was erected by the Schultze Gunpowder Factory to save the postman, the long trip to the gunpowder factory each day.



Burley



The little village of Burley could hardly claim to be unspoilt, home as it is to one of the largest collection of witch themed souvenir shops in the south.

This mainly appears to be due to one *Sybil Leek*, a self-confessed white witch, who lived in the village during the late 1950's. She claimed to be a high priestess witch and started one of the first covens in the Forest named the 'Horsa' coven. She was often seen walking through the village wearing a long black cloak with her pet jackdaw (Mr Hotfoot Jackson) resting on her shoulder.



Not only was Sybil a witch, she also wrote many books about witchcraft and was a television reporter specialising in Forest ways. As she had spent many years living with gypsies, her knowledge of the Forest was excellent. Unfortunately due to the popularity of her programmes, people who wanted to see and talk to a real witch besieged her home. She, therefore, decided to leave her beloved New Forest and settle in America where she died in 1982.

One of the best of

the witch themed souvenir shops is *A Coven of Witches*. The shop was originally named by Sybil Leek and has been owned by Jenny Tucker for the past 21 years. On

the outside wall is a list of the Lords of the Manor of Burley.

King Edward I gave the first recorded Lord of the Manor, Richard de Burley, the village of Burley and Manor of Lyndhurst by as dowry to his second wife Margaret, sister of Philip of France.

There were many more occupants of the old manor until in 1852 it passed to a Colonel

Esdaile. He pulled down the old house and built the present Victorian Manor House.

Eighty years later this house became a hotel, when a restaurant and a bedroom wing were added. During World War Two, the hotel was requisitioned and was used by Lord Montgomery and his chiefs of staff as a military headquarters. Since the war it has been considerably enlarged and upgraded and is now a "baronial-style" 3-star hotel.

Around the back of the shop don't miss the very fine old Spillers Shapes advertising hoarding.



To be continued...

LORDS of the MANOR	
1223	ROGER DE BURLEY
1251	RICHARD DE BURLEY
1316	RICHARD DE BURLEY
1361	JOHN DE BURLEY
1375	RICHARD DE BURLEY
1388	SIMON DE BURLEY
1487-8	JAMES EDF
1551	JOHN MILL
1553	JOHN BATTEN
1553	WILLIAM BATTEN
1609	ANTHONY BATTEN
1623	ANTHONY BATTEN
1662	WILLIAM BATTEN
1720	WILLIAM BATTEN
1723	FRANCIS BATTEN
1724	JOHN POWELL
1726	SIR THOMAS RIDGE
1776	COLONEL JOHN CARNAC
1780	JAMES MOWBRAY
1801	MISSES HANNAH & SARAH MOWBRAY
1807	CHARLES SHAW LEEFVRE
1823	MRS SHAW LEEFVRE
1824	JOHN SHAW LEEFVRE
1824	COLONEL J.C. ESDAILE

Rufus Stone



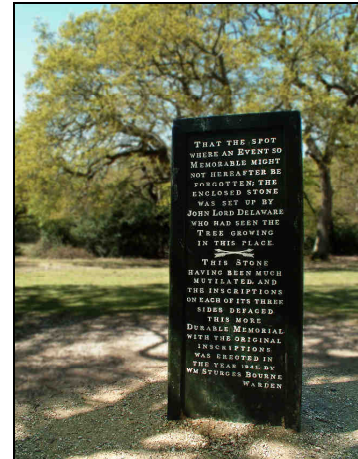
The Rufus Stone is one of those things you travel to see, look at, think that's interesting, and then go away feeling vaguely unsatisfied. From a distance it looks like a trig point and it is only when you get close to it that you realise that it is not a stone at all. It is made out of cast iron and the three sides read as follows:



Here stood the oak tree, on which an arrow shot by Sir Walter Tyrrell at a stag, glanced and struck King William the Second, surnamed Rufus, on the breast, of which he instantly died, on the second day of August, Anno 1100.



King William the Second surnamed Rufus being slain, as before related, was laid in a cart, belonging to one Purkis, and drawn from hence, to Winchester, and buried in the cathedral church, of that city.



That the spot where an event so memorable might not hereafter be forgotten; the enclosed stone was set up by John Lord Delaware who had seen the tree growing in this place.

The third side then goes on to state:

This stone having been much mutilated, and the inscriptions on each of its three sides defaced this more durable memorial with the original inscriptions was erected in the year 1841, by Wm Sturges Bourne - Warden

This leaves a lot of questions unanswered:

- Did Lord Delaware get the right tree? After all, when he erected the stone in 1745 it was almost 650 years after the event.
- What sort of stone was it that had been so defaced and mutilated that it needed replacing in less than 100 years? Presumably not granite.
- Is the stone still in there? There is no way of telling from the outside.

What we do know is that William Rufus was killed whilst out hunting in the New Forest and that Sir Walter Tyrrel was responsible. Whether it was murder or a tragic accident, as he claimed, we shall never know.

On hearing of the King's death his youngest brother, Henry, immediately rode to Winchester, seized the treasury and had himself proclaimed king by the barons. Thus forestalling the claims of his eldest brother, Robert of Normandy.

Had he not done so, we would have had a King Robert; a great loss to my way of thinking.

What are believed to be Rufus's bones now reside in a mortuary chest above the choir area in Winchester Cathedral along with those of King Canute, his wife, Queen Emma and other early royalty. The Purkis family continue to live in the Forest, and have long been associated with the charcoal burning trade.

On the opposite side of the road, past the car park are some fine old beech woods offering some pleasant walking, provided you close your ears to the drone of traffic on the A31.

Wartime Memorials

Scattered throughout the forest are a various memorials relating to events of the first half of the last century when the New Forest played a major part in both World Wars.

The Canadian Memorial



A poignant place this. Still surrounded by many wreaths, fading bunches of flower, cards and other offerings, a simple wooden cross stands overlooking a wooded valley.



The plaque reads:

“On this site a cross was erected to the Glory of God on 14th Apr 1944. Services were held here until D Day 6th June 1944 by men of the 3rd Division R.C.A.S.C.”

The Portuguese Fireplace



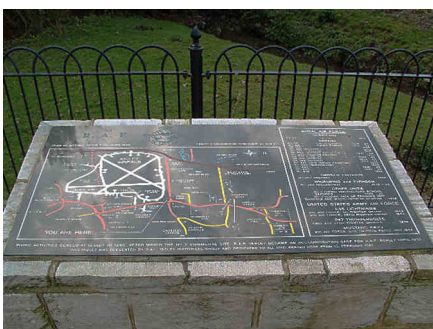
Driving along the Lyndhurst to Bolderwood road, you are suddenly met by the incongruous sight of a fireplace sitting all on its own in the woodlands to your left. The nearby plaque explains what it is doing there:



“This is the site of a hutted camp occupied by a Portuguese army unit during the First World War. This unit assisted the depleted local labour force in producing timber for the war effort.

“The Forestry Commission have retained this fireplace from the cookhouse as a memorial to the men who lived and worked here and acknowledge the financial assistance of the Portuguese Government in its renovation.”

The Ibsley Airfield Memorial



Situated on Mockbeggar Green close to the church this substantial memorial includes a map of the nearby airfield and details of all the units stationed there during the Second World War.



It was unveiled on the 24th April 2000 by Wing Commander C F Currant DSO DFC CdeG who was Station Commander at Ibsley in 1942 and Flight Officer R S George formerly of 616 Squadron who was based there in 1943.

More if, and when, I locate them...

Attractions

Exbury Gardens



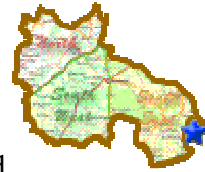
OS Ref: 426002

Has a world-renowned collection of Rhododendrons and Azaleas, and many award-winning varieties have been bred here over the years.

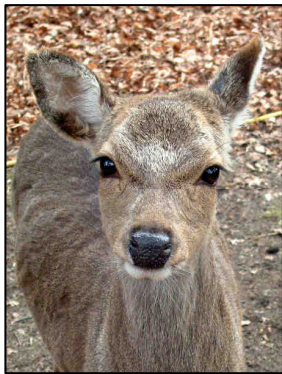
Although the gardens are at their most spectacular during the late spring, there is a large variety of mature trees, and plenty of interest outside the high season.

You can walk down through the gardens to the edge of the River Beaulieu (one of the few places where this bank of the river can be accessed) or ride on the really cool narrow gauge steam railway.

For further information see the Exbury Gardens web site (details on the CD).



The New Forest Otter, Owl & Wildlife Park



OS Ref: 348101

Good collection of Otters and Owls, plus a chance to see some deer at really close quarters

There are also some polecats, hedgehogs (including a blind one), wild cats (although they could have been over grown tabbies), Wild Boar and, surprisingly, Wallabies (apparently they now live wild in this country having escaped from various Wild Life Parks).

Further information is available on the New Forest Otter, Owl & Wildlife Park web site (details on the CD).



Hythe Ferry

OS Ref: 428085



It's not so much the ferry, an efficient high capacity affair, as the pier that is the attraction here. Or to be more specific still, the pier railway.

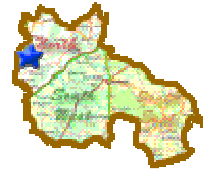
Built in 1922 (making it the world's oldest pier train) this "Heath Robinson" contraption rattles its way up and down the pier on weekdays transporting people to and from the ferries.

If nothing else it must represent one of the easiest ways of tearing yourself away from the New Forest and back to the big city; Southampton in this case.



Plenty more to follow...

Gorley Common Walk



A flat walk high on the top of a hill with views all round in a relatively quiet corner of the forest. What more could you ask for?

Gorley Common (or Gorley Hill as it is otherwise known) sticks out like a sort of peninsula from the forest with the fertile Ogden valley to the east and the Avon valley to its west.



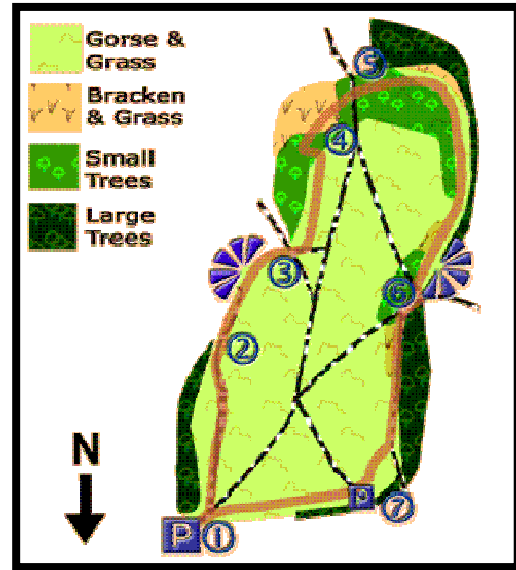
The walk starts on the eastern side of the hill and soon reaches

point **(2)** where the trees open out to offer some fine views over Ogdens and Latchmore Bottom towards the Whitefield Plantation.



Look out for the tiny pond on the side of the little valley you round the top of at point **(3)**. This is a good example of a “flush” (see Glossary).

At point **(5)** you will pass a small disused quarry on your left, this presumably



dates back to the time when marl digging was a common practice. There is rather a lot of rubbish in the bottom, I am afraid to say.



This area of the common is something of a mystery. From here to the car park at Gunville

(7) you will find yourself on the top of a bank, vaguely reminiscent of a railway embankment. Why is it here? It is obviously not defensive as it is only along one edge of the hill. Was this a huge gravel quarry? Who knows?

Eventually you will reach point **(6)** where the trees on your left thin out and you are rewarded with a fine view over the Avon valley. The New Forest Water Park and other modern gravel workings, clearly visible below you.



Appendix A

The Gorley Common Walk as held on the CD



CD Instructions

For PC's running *Windows 95* or later the CD should autorun when you insert it into the drive.

If not, and for all other systems, you will need to point your Internet Browser at the *default.htm* file in the root directory.

Optimisation

The CD/Web Site is currently optimised for Microsoft *Internet Explorer v5.5* on *Windows 98* running at *800x600* screen resolution or larger. It relies on *JavaScript* extensively, and will be largely inaccessible if this is disabled.

I have tested it with *Netscape v6.0* and *Opera v5.11* on *Windows 98* and, apart from the Search Page (which will only run under IE), the pop up's (which do not work under Opera) and a few minor layout problems, all appears to be satisfactory.

I regret to say that I do not currently have access to a *Mac* and cannot, therefore, say if any or all of the site will work satisfactorily on that platform.

The same goes for *UNIX/Linux*.



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