



Burton Mill and Sutton Common

Distance: 14 km=9 miles

easy walking with one short steep ascent

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 11-jun-2012

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Date revised: 18-jun-2015

Refreshments: Sutton

Map: Explorer 121 (Arundel) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Lake, heath, woodland, views, village, parkland, churches, nature reserve

In Brief

This is a walk of huge variety, full of surprises. It includes some of the most delightful, contrasting but unknown areas of pure West Sussex nature: the wild heath of Sutton Common, the hangers of Barlavington and Newpiece Moor nature reserve. Like its sister walk *Bignor and the South Downs*, it takes you to some high points with tremendous views.

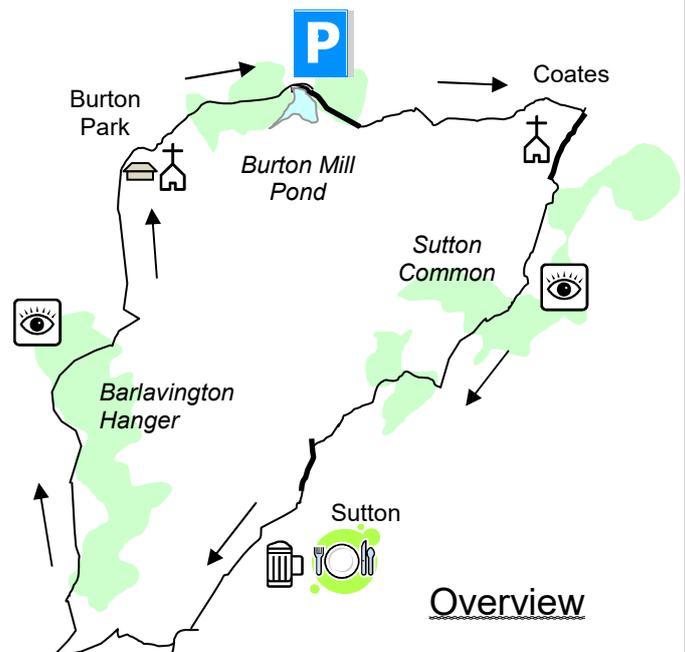


At the middle of the walk there is a village inn with a genuinely original and fresh lunch menu. To enquire at the *White Horse* in Sutton, ring 01798-869221. You need to arrive in good time as the pub is closed in the afternoon.



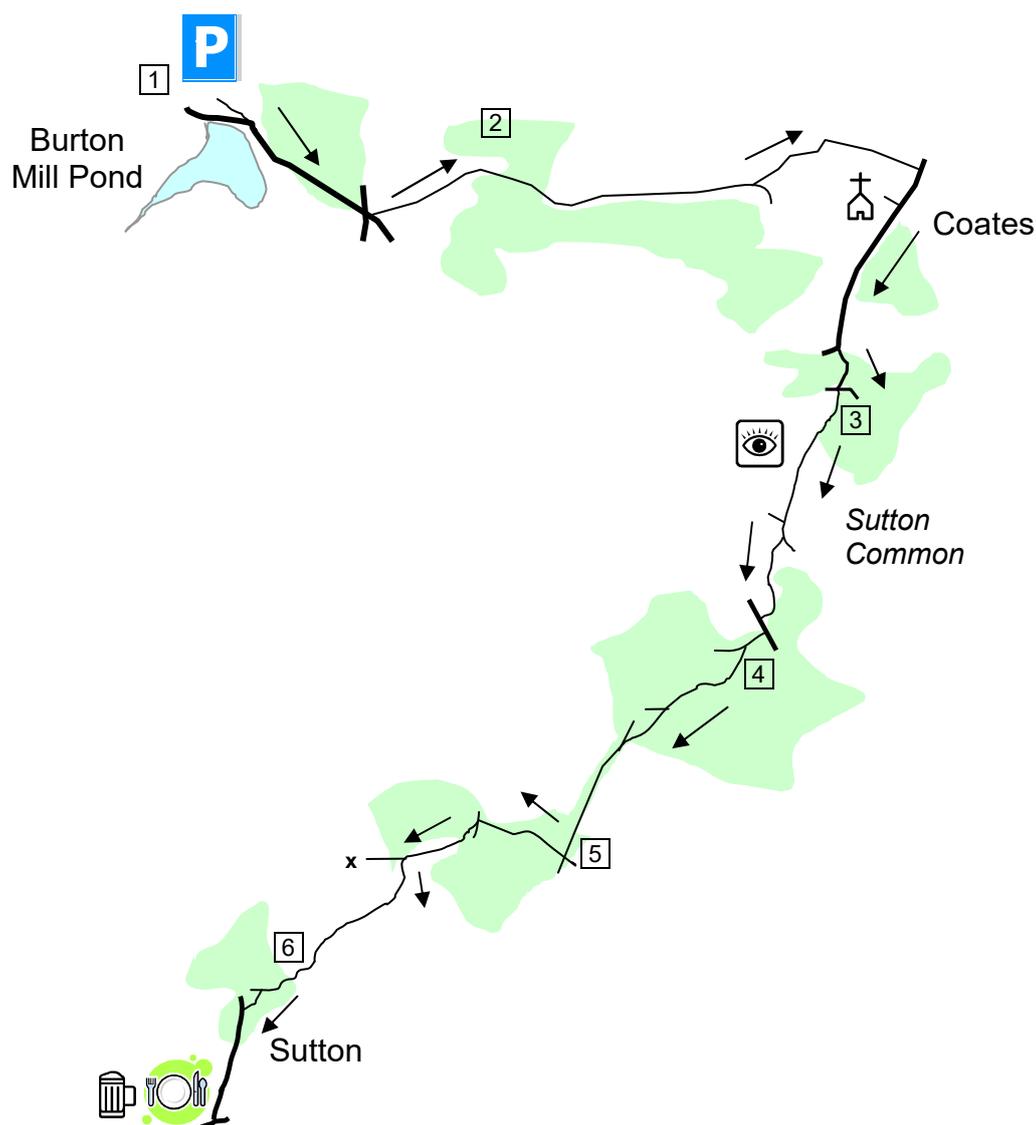
There is only one small section with nettles. In a dry summer, paths are generally sandy with little mud, so any sensible footwear should be fine. In high summer, the crops and undergrowth may be high and scratchy. In the wetter seasons, you will encounter mud especially during Leg 1, so it is advisable to be prepared. Your dog will enjoy this walk too as all the stiles have a dog gate.

The walk begins at **Burton Mill Pond** car park, near Duncton, West Sussex, gridref SU978180, **postcode GU28 0JR**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Burton Mill to Sutton 6 km=4 miles



- 1 Facing the road, turn **left** through the car park and continue on a tarmac drive, going over a stream past Burton Water Mill which still has some of the old mechanism on view. Keep **right** on the tarmac drive up to the road in front of Burton Mill Pond itself. Turn **left** on the road, ignoring a footpath soon on the left. Follow the road and continue past a road junction. Just 10m after the junction, go **left** through a swing-gate and across the centre of a meadow on a grassy path. Your path joins a farm track coming from the right and passes some old livestock sheds on the left. As your path curves left towards a stile and a large gate, leave it by turning **right** on a grassy path, passing a water trough on your right, leading down to woodland. Go over a stile (or through an open metal gate) into the woods.
- 2 Your path rises to cross a track and continue on a wide path between bracken. At a junction of tracks, avoid a track curving up right which leads to *Coates Castle*, an early-1800s castellated mansion (not on the route). Instead, keep straight on into a large field. On your left is a stone barn and to your right is a low hill with a large oak at its base. Your route is a narrow level path, or vehicle tracks, across the field, heading just to the **left** of the low hill. [Summer 2016: the field was planted with tall maize. If you prefer not to

fight your way through, you can take a different tractor track going further to your right, over the hill. It joins the lane about 200m *after* St Agatha' Church at an entrance marked *Coates Castle*. You would need to make a short diversion *left* 200m along the lane to see St Agatha's unique church.] Your path skirts the low hill, curving right as it does so, and leads you to a marker post at the start of a line of tall oaks that separate two fields. Keep to the **left** of the line of oaks, along a grassy path on the right-hand side of the smaller field. The path joins a track and comes out beside the splendid Elizabethan *Coates Manor* to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane, soon passing, on your right, St Agatha's Church. This tiny downland church is definitely worth a visit.

No one is certain when this church was built, although it was before 1100, and why it has the rare dedication to St Agatha. The roof is supported by six massive beams. Unusual features are the square font and the priest's chair or "sedile".

Continue further along the lane for another 400m and, just before it curves right, leave it to continue straight ahead on a track. When you shortly meet a crossing track, go straight over, through a small wooden gate ahead, into Sutton Common, marked on the notice as *Open Access Land*.

- 3 Even if you know the area, this landscape always comes as a wonderful surprise, with its terrific views of the South Downs and the pine trees that grace the high points and the valley down on the right. It never features on standard walks, being "off the footpath map". Keep straight ahead on a high level path which veers left between some pines and then veers right towards another group of pines. It goes over a crossing path and continues past oaks and pines with ever improving and widening views. As the path begins to descend, you reach a fork. Take the **left** fork, the more level option. In 20m, take the **right** fork, the narrower option, immediately going over a crossing path. This narrow rooty path runs level, then descends gently through bracken. At the bottom, it veers left towards trees, veers right before some conifers along a bank and veers right again to a wooden swing-gate. Go through the gate to a lane and turn **left**.
- 4 In just 20m, go **right** through a metal gate onto a bridleway through the Bignor Park Estate. In 70m, at a fingerpost, keep to the main track, avoiding a right fork. Your route passes through a mixed woodland of conifers, every imaginable kind of broadleaf and rhododendrons. 250m from the previous junction, at a post with a faded blue arrow, keep **left**, thus leaving the wide track. In about 200m, ignore a junction on the right by a fingerpost. Your path now runs along a strip of trees between fields under tall oaks. In another 400m, just before some wooden railings on the right, you come to a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a wide path which quickly narrows.
- 5 This section follows some more interesting and varied minor footpaths, opening up some exquisite landscapes. If there is a little mud at first, it will quickly disappear. Your path runs through a lighter area of shrubs and, in 120m, reaches a junction of paths. Veer **left**, as indicated by the fingerpost, on a path through woodland. The path veers right under oaks and ash and, at a fingerpost, takes you leftwards downhill, over a new wooden bridge and through a new wooden swing-gate. Ahead of you is a magnificent long tree-fringed meadow which, in season, is full of wild flowers. Follow the path beside a new wire fence on your left. Your path zigzags round the edge and reaches a marker post and a swing-gate. Do **not** go through the swing-gate but turn very sharp **left** and follow the **right**-hand side of the

meadow. At the next marker post, your path turns right and runs along the right-hand side of the next meadow. *You must have noticed that you are walking part of the West Sussex Literary Trail. This is a 55-mile route from Horsham to Chichester along which you meet Shelley, Galsworthy, Belloc, Blake and Keats.* As you pass a 2-way fingerpost, ignore a gap on your right and continue along the right-hand side of the next meadow. At the top, the path swings left to the far corner and leads you through a wooden swing-gate.

- 6 Your path goes up the left-hand side of a small meadow through tall grass to an unneeded stile. It then follows a low garden wall. When you reach a driveway by a house, follow the drive ahead to reach the road by the *Old School House*. (Or, if you are not wearing shorts, zigzag **left-right** onto a narrow path leading up steps to the road next to *Hopkins*.) Turn **left** on the road (unless you would first like to visit Sutton church which is on the right). Continue through the village of Sutton, finally reaching the *White Horse*, an excellent stopping place for all kinds of food and drink, especially for their high-quality fresh and innovative lunch menu. *For an account of this pub's interesting history, see the other walk in this series "Bignor and the South Downs".*

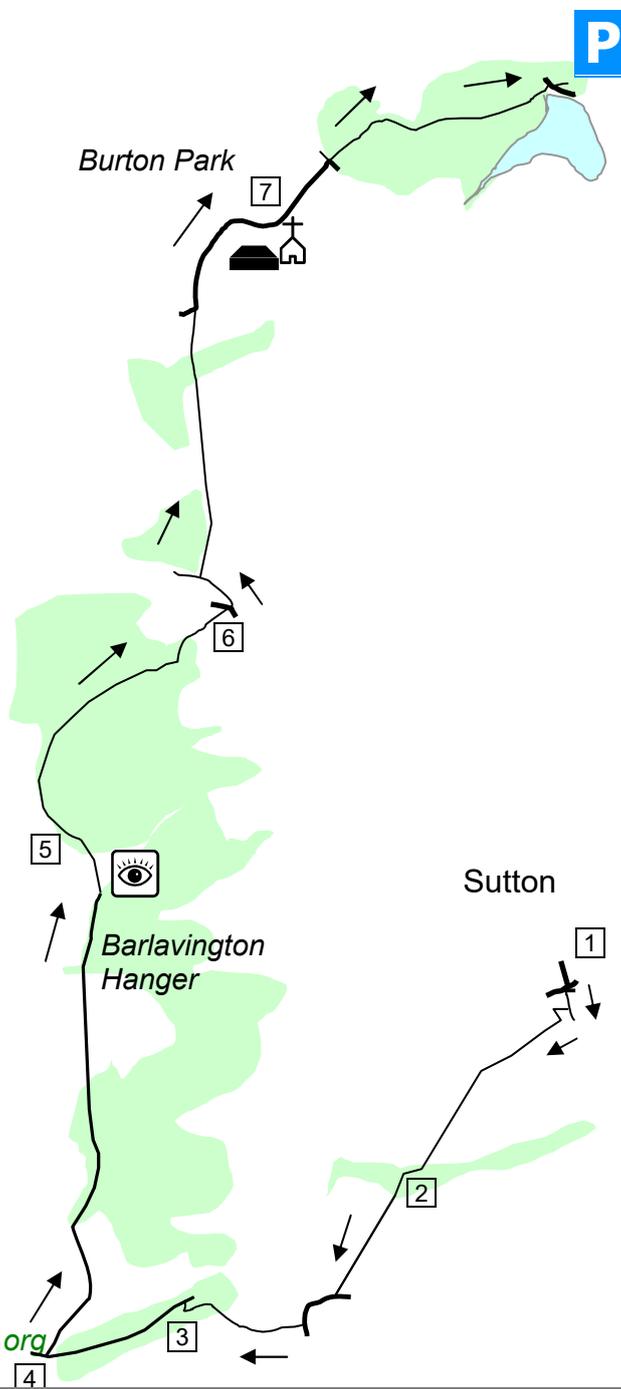


Leg 2: Sutton to Burton Mill 8 km=5 miles

- 1 Passing the front of the *White Horse*, turn **right** on a minor road for just 10m, **left** on a drive and immediately **right** up a slope on a signposted footpath and along a boardwalk. On reaching a field, turn sharp **right** along the edge, ignoring a path ahead across the centre. Your path goes left-right round a corner and passes a farmyard with very free-range chickens. Go over a stile into a horse pasture and cross it diagonally. Go over another stile and turn **right** beside a large wheatfield, ignoring a metal gate into some modern cottages. Your path continues across the centre of a field and across a wide green strip, in the direction of the aerial masts on the top of Cross Dyke in the distance and with all the hangers (wooded hills) around.



- 2 At the other side, go over a stile and steeply down to the right. Keep **right** in a small meadow for 20m and then veer **left** to cross a concrete bridge over a stream and continue ahead, still in the direction of the masts. Your path takes you over another stile. [2015: the step over the stile has broken away: you need to climb over the tall (but solid) wooden fence] Follow the path across the centre of a field. (In high summer, it may be uncomfortable crossing the rape, especially if the crop is damp. In this case, turn sharp **right**, follow the edge of the field round and turn **left** in the corner on what is a perfectly pleasant wildflower verge.) At the end, veer



right by a fingerpost to a tarmac lane, Glatting Lane, and turn **left** on it, passing the ancient barns of Glatting Farm. Immediately after a barn, turn **right** at a fingerpost on a path across the centre of a field. (This time, the path across the rape is shorter and gets easier.) Avoid any side turns made by farm machinery and head straight for the hangers. At the other side, your path veers right through a band of trees, over a stream, and crosses another smaller field. When you reach the edge of the field, continue straight ahead on a narrow path uphill into the woods, following the black-on-yellow arrow.

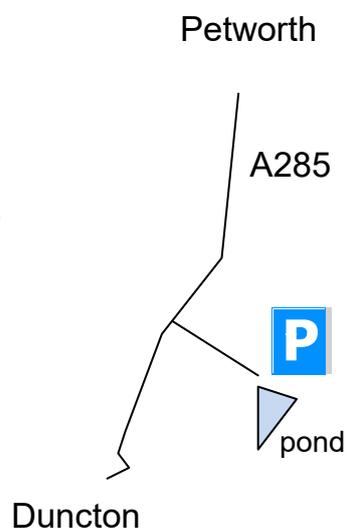
- 3 The terrain has changed dramatically and now you need to concentrate for a while. After 20m or so, your path bends left on a slightly easier gradient. You now need to look out for a point where your path turns abruptly **right** up a steep bank. This occurs 100m after entering the wood. If you find yourself on a narrow level winding path through bushes with abundant ferns, then you have missed the turning. Your path ascends quite steeply with roots acting as natural steps, curves right and rises to a T-junction. Turn **left** on a wider path. [2015: soon you will find that a tree has fallen across the path; you need to step over two trunks.] After 400m, you approach a junction with a field visible ahead. At a fingerpost, turn **sharp right**, almost doubling back, on a wide path running close to a field on your left.
- 4 You will be following this major route for about 2½ km. The path runs between fields for some distance. It then goes through a wooden gate and on a wide rising path under tall beeches. The wide chalky path runs round the side of a hill. *In early summer, pink orchids adorn the field fringes.* At the top, go through a wooden gate and into a field. *This is a fabulous high point at the top of Barlavington Hanger with views all round.* Follow the path across the centre of the field. At the far side, at a 4-way fingerpost, cross straight over a byway. In 20m, ignore a footpath on the right and, at the next fingerpost, ignore a bridleway to the right, always staying near the edge of the field on your left. Your path soon emerges from the fringe of trees and runs between wide meadows climbing up to the highest point on this walk at 192m. *Orchids are also in evidence!*
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- 5 You now enter woodland and your path runs beside a field again with the deep hanger on your right. It then veers right down a wide straight woodland track. At a fingerpost, ignore a bridleway on the left. Your path now descends through some superb woodland. At a junction by a large beech, your path veers **right**. It now runs between banks, then once again beside a meadow on your left. *Barlavington Church is visible on your right.* Finally, the path goes through a metal gate to a lane.
- 6 Cross the lane and turn **left** by some metal gates on a wide grassy path between fields beside a wire fence on your right. Just before a wood, turn **right** at the corner of a fence and follow a path which continues to run beside the meadow on your right. Soon a strip of meadow opens on your left too. Your path enters woodland and goes over a weir with a rushing stream discharging from the pond. It goes through an ornate metal gate into the parkland of Burton Park, a sudden surprise if you are not familiar with this area. Keep ahead in a meadow, full of wild flowers in season, soon to join a tarmac drive coming from the left. Stay on this drive as it bends **right**, ignoring all footpath signs on the left. As you go, you obtain an excellent view of the main house of Burton Park and pass the little Burton Church, which is worth a visit.

The lost Anglo-Saxon village of Burton is recorded in the Domesday Book as "Bothechitone". Only the church remains, dating from around 1075, rebuilt in 1291 and (partly) in 1636. Burton Park may have been founded by Sir William Dawtry in 1242, probably for hunting. The first mansion house was built around 1500 and the deer park was enclosed some 70 years later. The present neo-classical house was started in 1828 from a design by Henry Bassett. After numerous developments, the estate was purchased in 1919 by the Courtaulds who added terraces, water gardens and much else. During the war, the estate was requisitioned by the army. It then became a school and was sold for development in 1993. It is now an arrangement of luxury apartments.

- 7 Continue past the church and follow the main fenced drive away from the house. When you reach the start of woodland, at a 4-way fingerpost, under a massive chestnut tree, where the drive bends right, leave the drive by continuing straight ahead through a wooden gate into woodland known as Newpiece Moor. *This is a memorable end to the walk on a comfortable path through a luminous mixed woodland highlighted by pines and birches.* A large wooden gate takes you into a part of the wood that is now a Nature Reserve, managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Continue on the main path through this bio-rich landscape on a semi-tarmac path. Finally a small wooden gate takes you onto a path by gardens and out to a road. Turn **right** on the road, immediately arriving at the Burton Mill Pond car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Burton Mill is on Burton Park Road, nearly a mile from the A285, south of Petworth, West Sussex. If coming from the London area, go through Petworth and keep going south on the A285, signposted *Chichester*. Burton Park Road is 2 miles south of Petworth and is signposted on the **left** to *Bignor, Sutton, Coates, Burton Mill*. As soon as you reach the start of the great Mill Pond, turn **left** into the free car park. If coming from the south, the turning off the A285 is 1 mile north of Duncton, on the **right**.



By bus: bus 99 runs between Chichester and Petworth, stopping in Sutton. Check the timetables. Start from Leg 2.

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