



Pub Walk: the Royal Oak at Hooksway

Distance 3½ km=2¼ miles easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: The Royal Oak

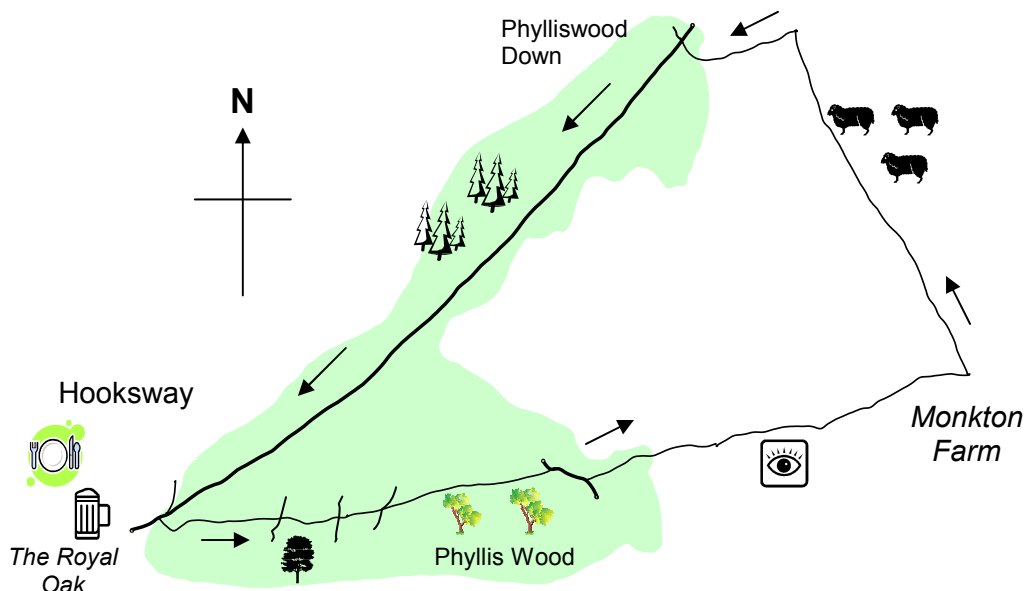
Map: Explorer 120 (Chichester) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Woodland, hills, views

The *Royal Oak* is a freehouse in a 16th-century cottage serving three permanent ales and a rota of guest ales, plus a full menu of meaty hot dishes. It is a favourite destination for get-out-of-towners because of its isolation and situation in one of the best walking areas. The pub is haunted by the ghost of one who is believed to be a sheep rustler who operated on the South Downs in about 1680, going by the name of *William "Shagger" Shepherd*. He was pursued across the Downs by a group of angry farmers and was eventually shot after taking refuge in the Royal Oak. The pub is **not** open all day, not even at weekends, so you need to arrive before 2pm for lunch-time service. The pub is open 11.30-2.30pm and 6pm-11pm but *closed Mondays (presumably also Bank Holidays)*, so the best time to start the walk might be around 10-11am or late afternoon Tuesday to Sunday.

The walk begins at the pub car park in **Hooksway** (postcode PO18 9JZ grid ref 815 162) so the refreshments are at the end of the walk. Dave the landlord says it is fine to park there when the pub is temporarily closed *provided* that you have something to eat and/or drink there before or after. For more details of the location, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).





There are one or two small patches of nettles, so shorts may be inadvisable. Good shoes or trainers are adequate. The walk is fine for your dog too.



The Walk

- 1 With your back to the pub, go **left**, past the car park. Shortly you reach a junction with three possible routes ahead. Avoid the left fork and the track straight ahead and instead turn **right** to a wooden gate and turn **left** over a stile on a signed footpath. Follow the path uphill through beeches, then go over a grassy crossing path, continuing between rowans whose leaves and berries contrast delightfully with the dark woodland earlier. Go over another grassy crossing path, then another at an angle. Finally you meet a path coming in from the right and the path veers left to a T-junction. Turn **right** on this rough track. In only 50m, fork **left** at a fingerpost on another grassy path, gently uphill. The path goes through a swing-gate, crosses a chalky track and continues ahead along the left-hand side of a field on a grassy path. On your right, you now have a fine view to the South Downs nearer the sea, around Chichester. In the far corner, go over a stile and descend quite steeply towards a brick cabin at Monkton Farm. Turn sharp **left** up a flinty track in the long green valley.

Monkton Farm was once a flourishing crofters' village until the 1400s. The name recalls its connection with a monastic order. You can still make out some of the banks made for housing or cultivation. No one is sure why the village was deserted. Disease or the result of enclosures were the most prominent reasons at that time. Certainly, there has only been one farm here for at least 500 years. Now the area is a nature reserve and especially a centre for bird watching since hawfinches, chaffinches, bramblings and firecrests are observed here.

- 2 Continue along the valley, gently rising through the sheep pasture. At the top, go through a large metal gate, usually open. The track has now mainly disappeared and you are in another, even larger, pasture. Keep to the left and, at the first corner, turn **left** around the edge. In the far corner, go over a stile beside a large wooden gate. Continue a few metres to a crossing of tracks at a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **left** at the crossing. The flinty track goes gently downhill through trees. Later you pass through a lighter area, passing gates leading to land belonging to the West Dean Estate, which you ignore. After a further stretch under trees, you reach the starting point beside the pub.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the north on the A3, take the A272, signposted *Midhurst*, and simply follow the brown tourist signs for *Uppark* (with the oak leaves symbol), round the outskirts of Petersfield and eventually through South Harting and fork left onto the B2141. From Chichester, take the B2141 from Mid Lavant. Both Hooksway and the Royal Oak are signposted east down a narrow lane.

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