Fancy Free Walks

point your feet on a new path

Arundel: Park, Hills and Forests

Distance: 20 km=12½ miles — moderate walking

Region: West Sussex — Date written: 27-jun-2013

Author: Hautboy — Last update: 30-sep-2016

Refreshments: Arundel, Houghton, Whiteways Lodge

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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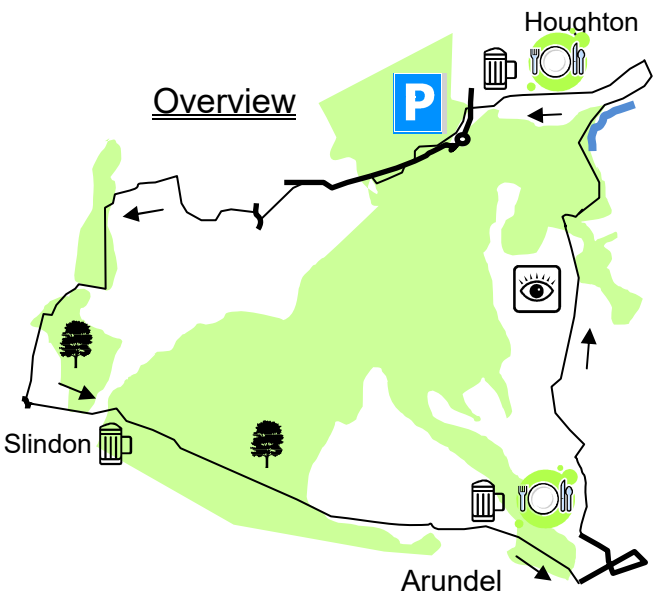
Woodland, villages, historic town, parkland, hills, views, river, pubs

In Brief

This is a spectacular walk on the South Downs, visiting Arundel with a chance to see the Castle and the historic town centre. You approach by an unusual route through villages, over meadows and via beautiful woodland to the west of the town. The climax is Arundel Park with its unforgettable views. There are excellent opportunities for refreshment along the way. A walk of great variety.

There are some nettles either side of some of the paths but they don't interfere with walkers. Because of the demands on your feet, as always, boots are recommended. A fit medium-to-small dog could certainly come with you as the stile count is moderate.

The walk begins at the **Whiteways Lodge** car park on the A29 road, three miles north of Arundel, **postcode BN18 9FD**. The car park closes at 8pm or perhaps at dusk in the winter (always check the notice at the entrance). If this might be a problem, you can park in the Houghton Forest car park, as follows. From the big roundabout, take the A29 exit signpost *Bognor*, and immediately turn right on a minor road, signpost *Madehurst*. The small car park is 500m on the right. There is also a car park on the B2139, off the main roundabout, signposted *Storrington, Amberley, Houghton*, 750m on the left. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



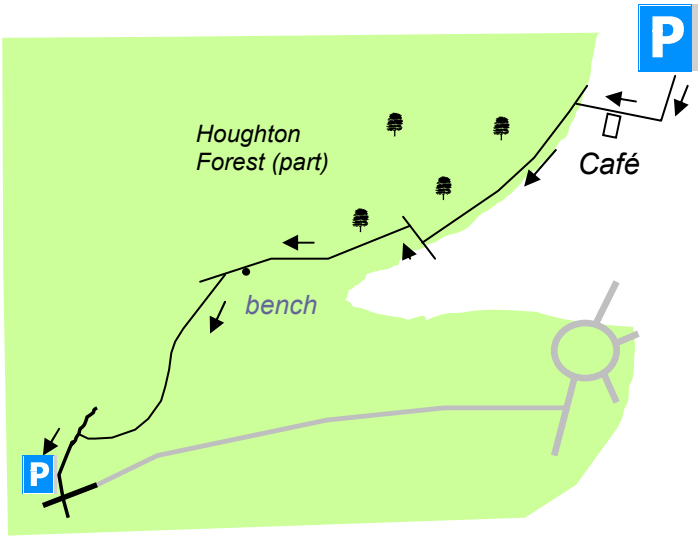
The Walk

WC

Whiteways Lodge has a café and toilets.

Leg 1: Whiteways Lodge to Slindon 6½ km=4 miles

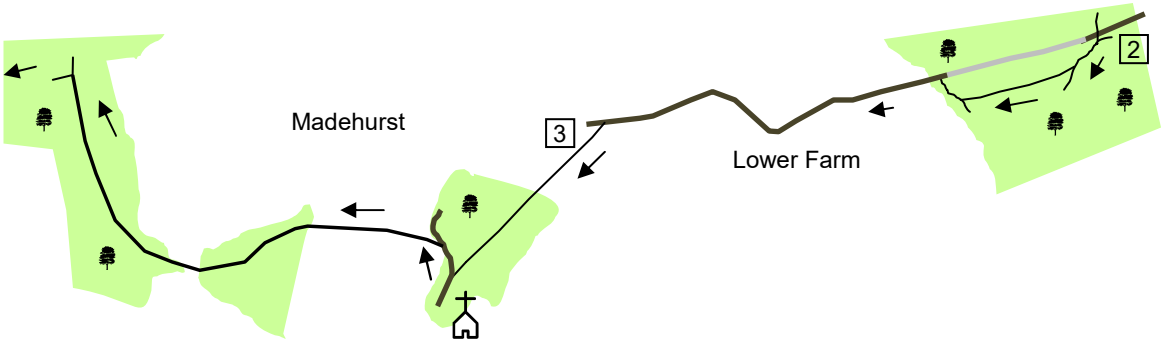
1 *The start of this walk gives you the opportunity to see a little of the great Houghton Forest and is a little tricky. After that it is very straightforward. If you fear getting lost, simply go **south** and turn **right** on the narrow lane into Madehurst (see grey line in mini-map).*



Go to the **back** of the café (past the bins) and 20m down the grass, under tall ash trees, into the woods. (There are several paths leading into the woods.) Turn immediately **left** on a path that runs **just inside** the wood. You go under tall beeches and, after 50m, you pass the remains of some fence posts. There are several of these posts for another 80m until you reach the last post at a T-junction with another path. Turn **right** and, in 10m, turn **left** to regain your direction, on a clear woodland path. In under 150m, you find a wooden bench on your left. 20m after the bench, there is a fork. Take the **left** fork, the more level option. The path winds through woodland and finally curves right down to a wide forester's track.

P Turn **left** on the track to reach immediately a metal barrier, an FC notice and a small car park (alternative start).

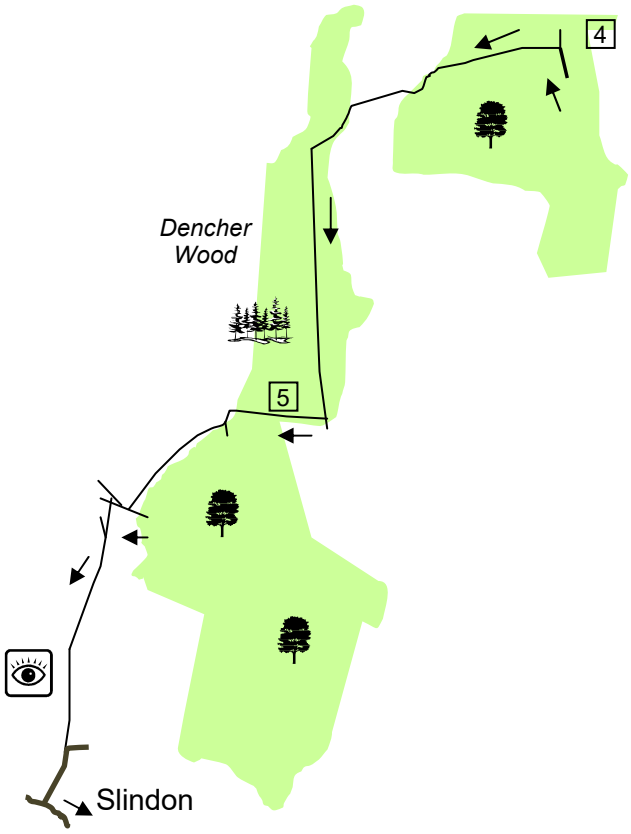
2 You could now simply turn **right** along the quiet lane to Lower Farm but, as this is FFW, it would be a shame to miss some more handsome woodland.



Cross straight over the lane to a narrow path opposite into woods and immediately at a T-junction turn **right** on a narrow path parallel to the lane. The path veers left away from the lane and shortly, 100m since you crossed the lane, you see a bank and a path on your right. Turn **right** here, down the bank, on another clear winding path through beautiful woodland, once more parallel to the lane. In 250m, your path goes through an old coppice and reaches a T-junction before a meadow visible ahead. Turn **right** to return to the lane and turn **left** on it. The lane comes out of the trees and bends right past Lower Farm (a bad name as it has no cattle). You pass flint cottages in the scattered hamlet of Madehurst. Nearly 200m after the cottages, uphill, just before the lane curves right, take a narrow signposted footpath **left** up a bank and over a stile. *Don't miss this turn!*

3 Immediately veer slightly right and go diagonally across the grassy meadow, passing under wires. *You have views left to Fairmile Bottom.* Head for a metal gate in the trees ahead. There, go over a stile beside the gate onto a straight woodland path. A short track takes you out to the lane. Your route is **right** on the lane. *But first a short detour along the lane to the left will take you to the tiny isolated church of Mary Magdalene, perfectly appointed with two bells, an organ and vaulted roof.* Having turned right on the lane (or returning from visiting the church) go down the lane for 50m to where it bends right. Here, turn **left** on a private road to New Barn Farm. *The rape fields here are stippled with red poppies in the summer.* At a junction of tracks, go straight ahead on a tarmac drive. *The field on your right is adorned with three noble cedars in a line.* The drive curves right uphill and enters trees. Avoid several tracks left to *Dale Park House*. After passing a house on your right, at a junction, turn **left**, avoiding a stony track ahead.

4 Where the drive bends right to *Home-wood House*, keep straight on on a stony track. You come out of the trees with sudden great views ahead. At a junction of farm tracks, go **right** and over a stile beside a large metal gate. Keep straight ahead down the meadow following wires and keeping a fence on your right. At a bank of maples, veer **left** round the edge, thus leaving the wires. As you pass a marker post, continue straight across the grass to reach a large wooden gate under beeches. Go over a stile beside the gate to enter the wonderful Dencher Wood. In 40m, at a 3-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead, now on a superb straight path through the wood. The trees are mature beeches, but mottled with yews and other ever-greens. 20m before the end of the wood, with an open meadow ahead, turn **right** at a marker post on another path, just inside the wood.

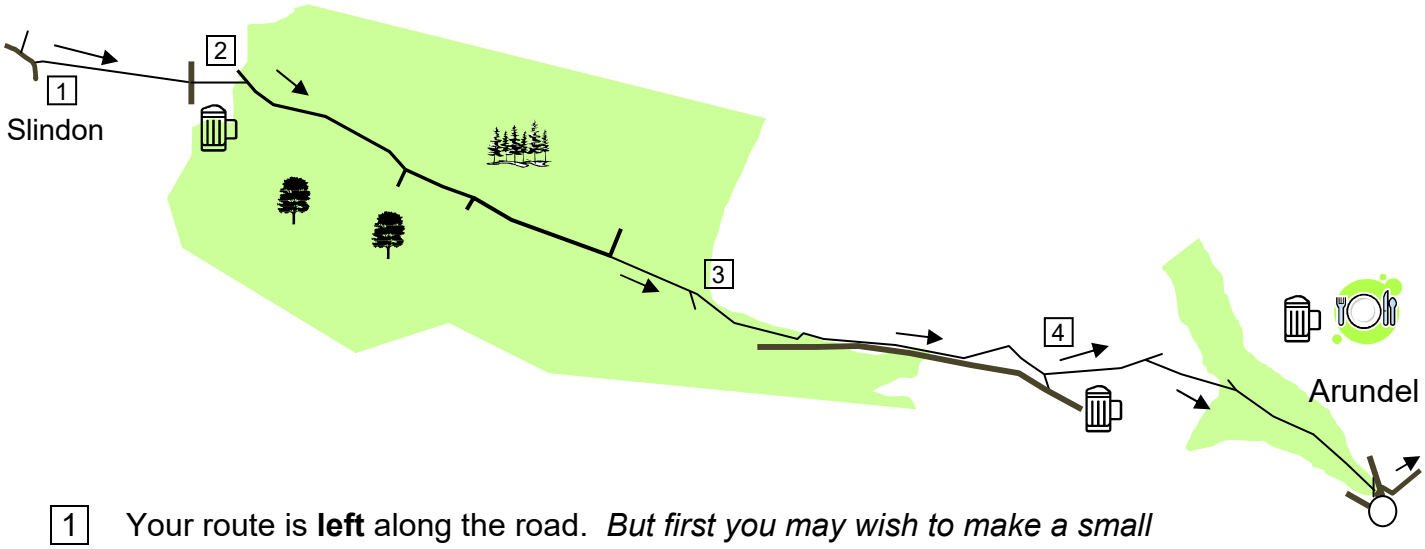


5 The footpath eventually descends and emerges on a narrow path beside a field on your right. In 20m you encounter a 3-way fingerpost. Take the **right** fork, the wider path, which runs beside the field again. It rises through trees to fingerpost at a T-junction with a bridleway. Turn **right** on the green hillside. In 25m avoid a path forking right and, 10m later, turn **left** on an-other grassy path. *But for a quiet break, it is worth making a brief detour to the right where you can see an old signpost showing "Bridle Road to Bignor"; here there is a bench where you can admire the views and maybe enjoy a picnic.* In 30m, fork **right** on the main path into Baycombe Wood, keeping straight ahead in 20m at a 3-way fingerpost. A farm track joins from the left after which you go between fields in the open. *The Isle of Wight is visible ahead to the right, as is Chichester Cathedral, with a bench to admire them from. The large house is Slindon College, an independent school.* Continue between pastures, down to a double wooden gate in the

village of Slindon. Continue straight ahead on Mill Lane to the centre of the village.

Welcome to the seaside! Well, in the middle ages, the sea was 30-40m higher and would have been lapping the fields opposite. Slindon goes back much further, to the early stone age, through the bronze age, and all the fields around were shaped from that time. King Caedwalla of the West Saxons gave Slindon in 686 to the See of Canterbury and it became the archbishop's favourite hunting ground. St Mary's church was begun in 1106. Archbishop Stephen Langton, a mediator for the Magna Carta, died here in 1228. (See the "Friday Street" walks of this series in the Surrey region.) The church is notable for its perfect wooden effigy, probably of Sir Anthony St Leger who died in 1539. One of Slindon's claims to fame was in developing the game of cricket.

Leg 2: Slindon to Arundel 6 km=4 miles



1 Your route is **left** along the road. *But first you may wish to make a small detour right to see the Pottery and, a little further on, the church.* You pass thatched and flint cottages. Where the road bends right, keep straight on on a driveway and, at the end, go through a wooden gate, across a playground and through another wooden gate. Cross a farm track and keep straight on between pastures beside a fence on your right. A small metal gate takes you by the fence of Highfield house on your left. At the end, go down steps to the main A29 road. Cross carefully straight over to a signpost and stile on the other side. *But, for a refreshment break, "The Spur" pub is on your right, just past a garage. It has a pretty garden and serves light lunches. It also boasts a skittle alley and is open all day.*

2 Go steeply down a bank, across the grass, over a stile and down steps into woods. Go quickly over another stile, down a meadow of tall grass, over a stile and through attractive woodland to reach a crossing bridleway. Turn **right** on the bridleway, a wide woodland trail, gently uphill. A bridleway meets you from the right as you go up through yews into an area of pits and steep banks in West Stubbs Copse. Keep ahead, a fraction left, going just to the right of a marker post, on a path between steep banks. In 70m, your path goes by a metal barrier in a lighter area. This good path is joined by a farm track as you go past timber stacks. Later a broad gravel track joins from the right. Where the track bends left soon after, leave it to continue straight on on a narrower forest path.

3 In 350m, as the path enters an especially dark part of the forest, you see a 3-way fingerpost on your right. Keep straight on here, ignoring the right fork. Your path gets gradually closer to the main A27 road. In 400m, the path ends close to the road. Ignore the useless right turn to the road and instead go **left** through a small wooden gate and turn **right** on a permissive horse path beside the field on your left. In 400m, you pass a junction with a drive on your left. Keep straight on, still parallel to the road. The track curves left and then right past the entrance to a large house, and reaches a junction of tracks near the road. Your route is **straight ahead** on a concrete track leading to Park Farm. *But, on the right, by the roadside, you will find the "White Swan", a large inn and modern pub/diner with a terrace at the front.*

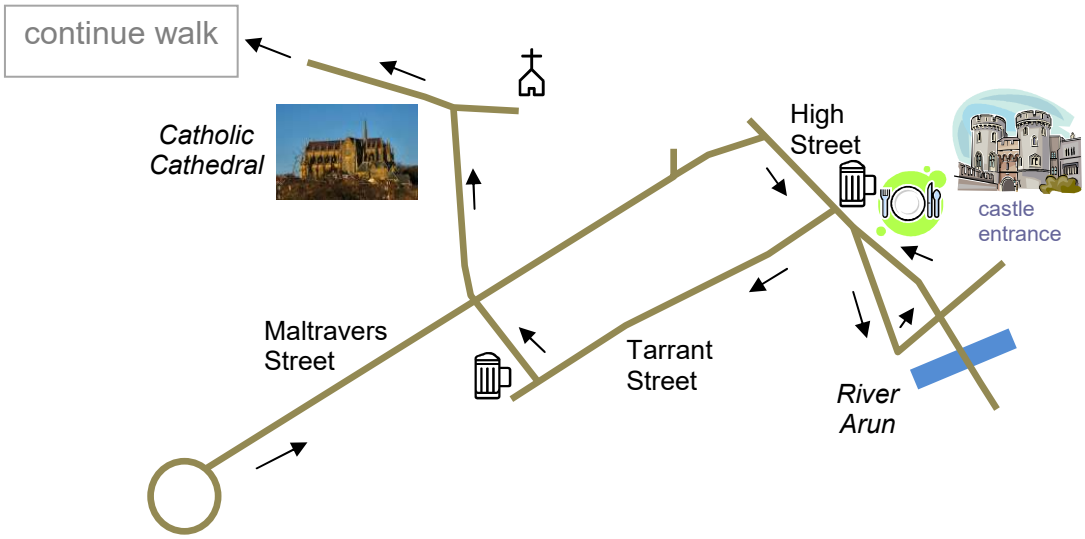
4 Continuing ahead on the concrete track, when you reach the farm buildings, ignore a driveway on the right and continue beside the buildings. Just 30m after them, go over a stile on your **right** and go diagonally across the pasture and through a large metal gate in the corner. Continue along the left-hand side of the next meadow into the far corner where there is a tall oak. Go over a stile here into woods. Immediately, at a fingerpost, join a bridleway coming from the left. Follow this pleasant woodland trail for about 600m. There are one or two muddy patches, easily circumvented. When you finally reach a driveway, turn **right** to reach the main road near a roundabout. Turn **left**, cross the A284 Pulborough Road and take the next road **left**, Maltravers Street marked *Town centre*. The route continues **left** up Parson's Hill and **left** at London road by the Cathedral, but this is by-the-by because you will want to explore the town.

Arundel is probably the most famous town in Sussex, from Roman times when there was a villa here, through Norman times when Roger de Montgomery was Lord of Arundel and every Norman king visited it, to the Civil War when the Castle changed hands three times. The best approach is from the sea and the Arun estuary where the Castle, the 14th-century church and the Cathedral parade themselves on the horizon against the South Downs. The name "Arun" probably comes from a Celtic word "Arno" meaning to run or flow, but there are other theories. The town's 18th-century brick or flint houses are a mixture sandstone, a variety of brick colours, sometimes in geometric patterns, with quoins, brick lintels and arches, the roofs pitched and hipped and covered in hand-made tiles or slate. In the 19th century, Arundel had declined as a port. The Earls of Arundel were the oldest English peerage, created in 1138 and, by marriage, the title has been held by the Dukes of Norfolk, a catholic family, whose seat is the Castle. It was Henry Fitzalan-Howard, 15th Duke of Norfolk, who did much to revive the town in the 19th century, building the Catholic church and preserving the town's medieval character.

Arundel Castle was built by the Normans and has been in the hands of the Fitzalans or Howards since 1243, with only a few interruptions. In the Civil War it was half ruined. Duke Henry (as above) re-modelled the Castle in the later 1800s to what you see today. It sometimes masquerades as Windsor Castle in TV and films such as Doctor Who and The Madness of King George.

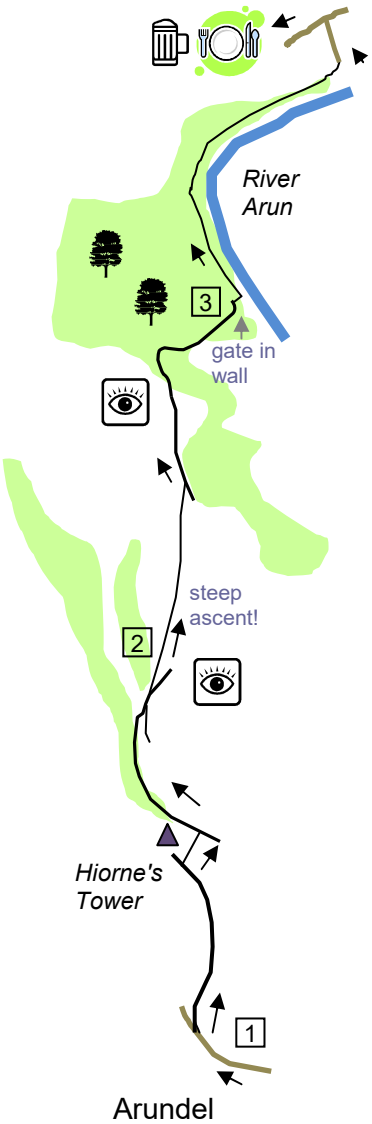
There are so many routes for exploring this historic town, that everyone's will be different. You only need to remember the continuation of this walk: the Catholic Cathedral, and London Road which leads to the Park. Just one suggested route is as follows **(see map overleaf)**. Continue up Maltravers Street, passing the austere town houses, using the raised pavements. Keep straight on at the "no entry" and turn **right** at the castle wall, down through the High Street with its many shops, pubs and restaurants. If you would like to visit the castle (April through October),

continue to before the bridge and turn **left** to the main entrance. Otherwise, after exploring the central shops, go **right** opposite the *Norfolk Arms* along Tarrant Street where there are many little shops and pubs. The *Kings Arms* (opposite Arun Street) is an ancient pub, now a free house dispensing several real ales, open all day and inviting you to eat your own food. Turn **right** up the cobbled Kings Arms Hill and, at the top, go up Parson's Hill to the Cathedral and turn **left** on London Road.



Arundel Cathedral was built in 1873, funded by Duke Henry, as the Catholic parish church. It became a cathedral in 1965, as the seat of the Bishop of Arundel and Brighton (Greek "kathedra" means "seat"). Its dedication is to Our Lady but also to Saint Philip Howard, 20th Earl of Arundel. He was a catholic martyr who refused to attend Anglican services during the reign of Elizabeth I and was imprisoned in the Tower with only his dog for company.

Leg 3: Arundel to Whiteways Lodge 7½ km=4½ miles



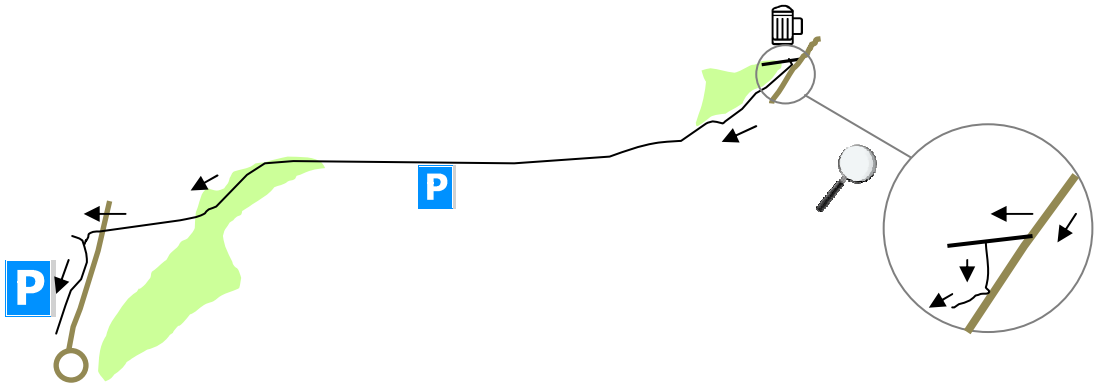
1 From the Cathedral, continue along London Road, passing the *St Mary's Gate* inn. Where the castle wall curves away on your right, fork **right** on a narrow path leading to a tarmac drive. At *Park Lodge*, go through the wooden gates into Arundel Park. Take the tarmac drive directly ahead, signed as a footpath. As you come out into the open, ahead is the triangular Tower folly built in 1787 by Francis Hiorne to demonstrate his abilities. *It is said to be haunted by a young girl who was spurned in love and threw herself from the battlements. She has been seen after sunset on the castellated roof still bewailing her lost love.* At a fingerpost, turn **right** across the grass passing the tower on your left, veering a fraction right to a post with arrows. Crossing a horse exercise track, follow the path down into woods. At another fingerpost, go **left** via a large wooden gate or stile on a chalky track. You have great views into the semi-circular valley on your right, showing why this park is so popular with walkers. Your path enters trees and very gradually descends. At a

saddle point, fork **right** to another fingerpost where another path meets you, coming from Swanborough Lake. Here, your route abandons the nice level path ahead and instead veers **left** very steeply uphill, aiming to pass the wood on your left. *This ascent is mercifully short but rewards you soon with a wonderful high path with views all around.*

2 Near the top, your path takes you over a stile and on a lush green path ahead, with rearward views to the sea and the Tower. In 500m, you pass a solitary Macedonian oak. [Fishing for feedback, botanists: correct species?] *Note the poem by James Main pinned to the tree.* The path goes over a stile under more oaks. *You are on part of the Monarch's Way, a 990-km footpath from Worcester (where Charles II was defeated) to Shoreham-by-Sea.* The path rises to join a track running beside the fenced wood on your right. When the path comes over the brow of the hill you have stunning views north to the winding Arun and towards Pulborough. Keep ahead to a fingerpost and here go over a stile or through the gate beside it. Follow the rugged stony path downhill. In 250m, the path bends sharp **right**. Shortly after, as you come to the open hillside, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a narrow path, still on the Monarch's Way. The path winds its way down through trees and shrubs and over roots. Where you reach the corner of a flint wall, keep ahead with the wall on your right. Shortly, at a marker post, go **right** through an old kissing-gate, thus leaving the Park.

3 Turn **left** beside the River Arun. You will be following the river for over 1 km. Always keep to the main path which stays within a rod cast of the river. On your left soon are the chalk cliffs of Houghton Hill and across the river is North Stoke. At a 3-way fingerpost, ignore a footpath left up steps. In another 400m or so, your path finally bends left through a small metal gate beside a larger one. Go up the rough lane, past many thatched cottages in the village of Houghton. At the main road, the B2139, turn **left**, arriving in 150m at the *George and Dragon*.

Founded in 1292, the "George and Dragon" at Houghton may be the oldest pub in England. Charles II stopped here for a pint on 14 Oct 1651 en route for the Continent after hiding in an oak tree following defeat at Worcester. This is a perfect final pit-stop before the end of the walk, being typical in its cosy bar, its décor and low ceilings but not olde-worldy to a tiresome degree. The modern terrace has comfortable seating with a view of the countryside. It has an excellent menu and, to wash it down, two Ringwood ales plus one Brakspear.

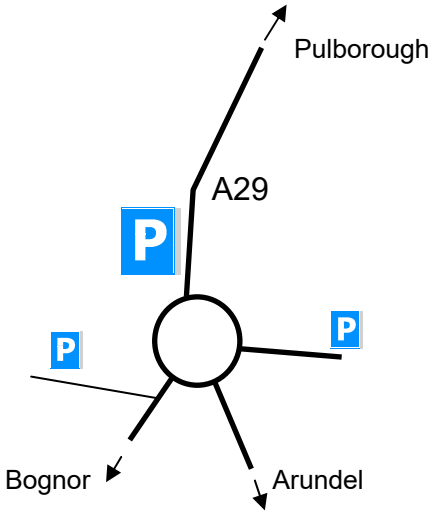


4 Immediately after the pub, fork **right** on a track and quickly turn **left**, as indicated by the sign, on a narrow path up a bank, back to the road. Immediately turn **right**, as indicated, on a narrow path by a wooden fence. On reaching a shingle drive, go straight across to a fingerpost and turn **right** beside a field on your left, with excellent views of the Arun valley,

showing the route you followed earlier. The path runs along the edge of the field and, at a marker post, runs through trees on a nice long straight path. Soon you pass near a car park on your left (alternative start). The path runs near the road and then rises into a field. Take the path straight across the centre of the field. At the top, carefully cross the A29 road and take a grassy path opposite by a fingerpost. Your path curves left into trees and meets another path at a T-junction. Turn **left** on the path, parallel to the A29 road, leading back to the Whiteways Lodge car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: The Whiteways Lodge car park is just before the large roundabout on the A29 road 3 miles north of Arundel, 6 miles south of Pulborough.



By train: Arundel station is 800m from the town; there is a taxi service. Stage-coach Coastliner buses run from Brighton, Worthing and Littlehampton (not Sun). Check the timetables.

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