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## Graffham and Lavington Common

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Distance: 11½ km=7¼ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 5-mar-2013

Author: Hautboy

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Refreshments: Selham, Graffham

Last update: 10-jan-2025

Map: Explorer 121 & 133 *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Villages, woodland, pubs, commons, heath*

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### In Brief

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This walk is pure innocent pleasure, taking you through the commons and heathland around the West Sussex villages of Graffham and Selham. There are three good pubs along the route. (To enquire at the *Three Moles*, ring 01798-861303; for the *Woodcote*, ring 01798-867331; for *The Foresters*, ring 01798-867386.)



There are very few nettles to be found on this walk, so shorts should be wearable. In spring we found two watery sections not long after the start of the walk, after which the course was dry; in winter there are some flooded sections around Selham which are manageable (one needing a bypass); so boots are recommended, at least in winter, and possibly wellies. Your dog can certainly come with you on this walk; one or two of the stiles have no dog gate but most are easily negotiable.



The walk begins at the **Lavington Common and Plantation** car park, nearest postcode **GU28 0QL**, [www.w3w.co/quote.beans.firewall](http://www.w3w.co/quote.beans.firewall), grid ref SU 948 188, south west of Petworth, West Sussex. **Warning! isolated car park: leave car visibly empty - see Guidelines.** For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

### The Walk

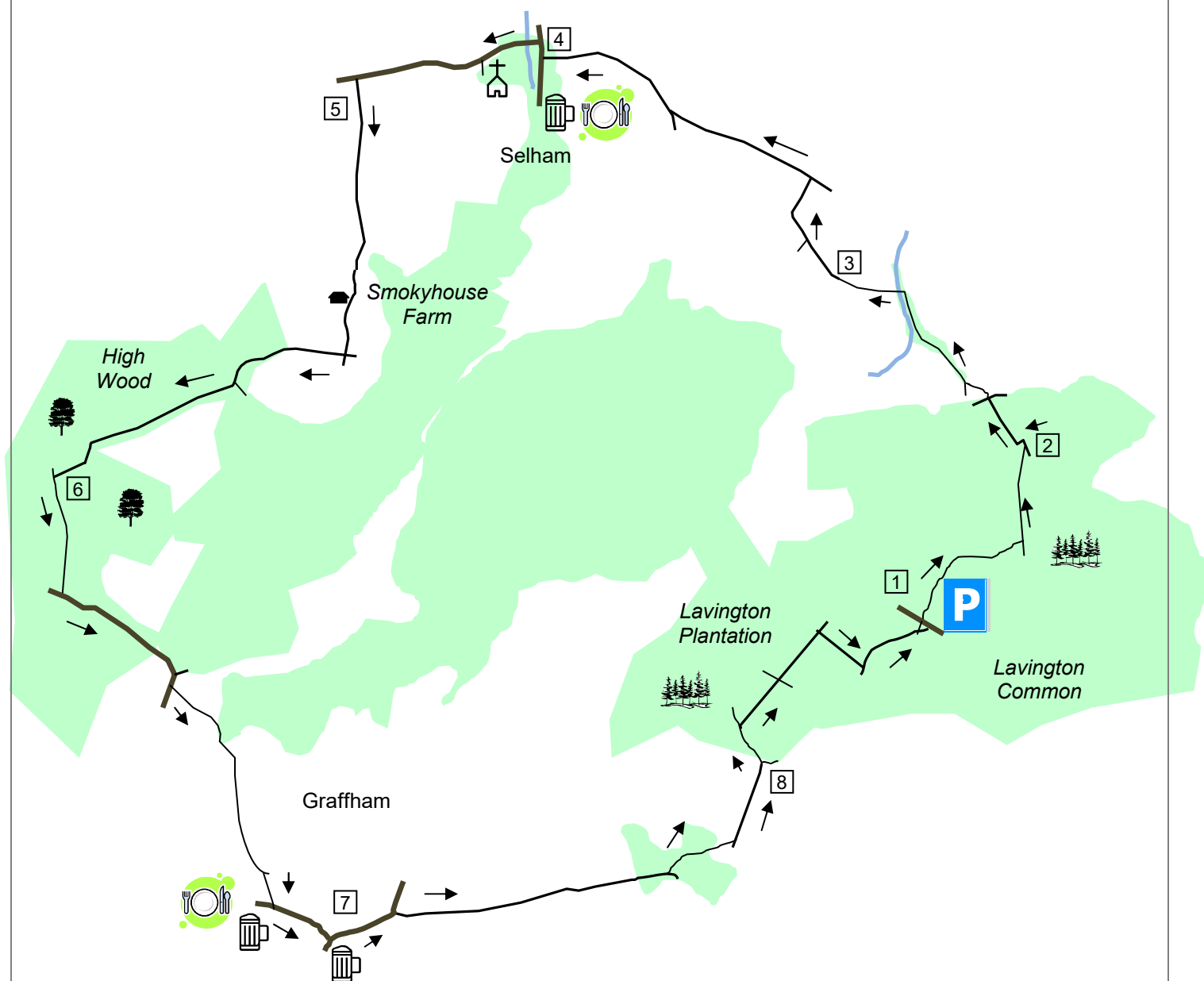
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**See map overleaf.** The Lavington Common and Plantation car park has a picnic table and an optional 20-minute woodland walk that you can try later. From the car park, take the broad path just on the **left** of the **large notice-board**. This path takes you across the open heath of Lavington Common, with heather dotted with small pines, snaking right and left and heading for a fringe of trees. At the trees, go over an unneeded stile into the pine-woods. Turn immediately **left** on an unmarked path that runs just inside the woods. Avoid all side paths, going up and over a gentle rise, now with woods on all sides. *The woods were recently overwhelmed by alien*

*rhododendrons but they are being drastically thinned. After 350m, you reach a post with a blue arrow and a track coming from the right.*



- 2** Veer **left** on the bridleway and immediately turn **left** and **right**, according to white-on-blue arrows, so that you are walking on the other side of a long bank. The path goes gradually downhill through mixed woods and, in 250m, reaches a rough driveway. Go straight over the drive on a narrow path which shortly veers right when it meets the official footpath. The path may be watery in winter at first, as it shares its course with a stream, followed by a short winding section downhill through ferns and brambles. (This overgrown section is short and does not repeat – persevere!) The Graffham Stream meets you for a quick double rendezvous before you finally go over a stile. In 20m, turn **left** to cross the stream by either of two bridges and veer **right** to go over a stile and a two-plank bridge. After a short marshy section you reach a marker post just before going uphill. Turn **right** into a bluebell wood, followed by another short spongy section beside a crop field and a stile. You are now walking along the left-hand side of a field where, before a stone house, you meet another field on your left.

- 3 Keep straight on over a stile beside a locked large metal gate ([careful! there are two strands of barbed wire where the stile is](#)) then keep **right** to go over another stile and through a large metal gate. In 20m, at a 3-way fingerpost keep straight ahead. Your track bends round to the right and takes you up a straight wide raised path. Ignore the farm track on your left and keep ahead through a large (open) metal gate just before the electricity wires. [\[Jun 2020: the Private signs only seem to prevent straying off the official footpath.\]](#) You have reached the dismantled railway which used to be part of the old Pulborough to Midhurst line. Turn **left** on the old railway. In 400m, you pass some cattle sheds after which the path is more grassy. The path goes down a bank, through a large metal gate, and joins a farm track coming from the left. Follow the track, soon passing the large Hurlands Farm and coming down to the road in Selham. Your route continues to the **right**, but first you will wish to visit the *Three Moles* pub (*see note below*) which is a short distance to the left.



*Selham is a tiny village and its pub, The Three Moles, is the smallest in West Sussex. The pub opened in 1872 and used to be the Railway Inn because, surprisingly, the village had a railway station until 1963, but the name changed in 1873 to convey the coat-of-arms of the Mitford family who built and still own the pub and other land in the area. This cosy and unspoilt traditional real ale house offers 4 draught ales all year round, making it a popular CAMRA pub. There is a full traditional pub grub menu and the pub is open 7 days a week from midday, **except on Mondays** when it opens at 4pm. The pub, although small inside, offers a large beer garden with plenty of outdoor seating. It welcomes dogs on a lead and “well-behaved under-18’s”. This is a highly individual place, streets away from the standard commercial outlet. If you need confirmation about opening times, kitchen opening hours and facilities, call 01798-861303 or visit their website: [www.thethreemoles.co.uk](http://www.thethreemoles.co.uk).*

- 4 Having turned right on the road (or backtracking if you visited the pub), go 50m and turn **left** on a lane signposted *To Selham Church*. Over a stream and past *Glebe House*, you pass the tiny Church of St James. *This church is partly Saxon and partly early Norman, with beautiful stonework, and has hardly changed. You may need to rouse one of the sleepy inhabitants to gain entry.* Ignore a footpath on the left. (*It leads to a field from where you can see the old Selham Station through the bushes.*) Next are the stone buildings of Selham Priory. [\[Nov 2023: walkers found the ford after Smokyhouse Farm flooded and used a diversion - see below.\]](#) In another 300m, turn **left** at a fingerpost on Smokyhouse Lane (unnamed at this end), marked as a bridleway.

[Diversion in case of flooding at Smokyhouse Farm.](#) This is likely after heavy rain if you have encountered deep water along the road etc. Turn **left** instead of right on the quiet road in the village, passing the *Three Moles* (or take a short cut past the church). In about 800m fork **right**, passing *Selham House*. 250m after the house, turn **right** on a wide forest path. It leads to the four-way fingerpost described in the next section. Go straight over.

- 5 This tarmac lane (*look out for a sign “WHOA horses and dogs”*) goes past a house and a stud, over an old railway bridge and through a farm, after which you pass an unneeded swing-gate. The lane is now a stony track. Follow it between fences and meadows until you reach a new four-way fingerpost in open country where four fenced tracks meet. Turn **right** here. In 200m, the track enters the pine and gorse of High Wood. Keep straight ahead avoiding turnings off, with the extensive expanse of woodland on view to your right. The path goes down to a fingerposted footpath by a fence. Turn **right** here on the bridleway, avoiding a footpath on the left.

You have a wide meadow on the left and a valley and high woods on the right. At a fire notice and a marker post, the path enters pinewoods. Keep to the main path, aided by the occasional fingerpost indicating the *Serpent Trail* an S-shaped long distance path from Haslemere to Petersfield. You come down to a T-junction with a sunken path at Hoyle Hanger.

- 6 Turn sharp **left** on the sunken path and follow this pleasant wooded valley trail. Soon you go over a crossing path and follow more pines and rhododendrons to a road. Turn **left** on the road. In 500m you reach a junction and a hamlet. Veer **right** on the major road but, in 40m, go **left** through a wooden gate beside Meadowbrook Farm. Follow the wire fence on your left, over a crest with views of the South Downs. Go over a stile into woods, over a 2-plank bridge with a railing, through an old coppice with bluebells in late spring, then over another stile into a horse pasture. Go up the slope, keeping to the right-hand side by the barbed wire, and thence into another meadow. At the top, go through a wooden barrier and past a marker post into another meadow, still keeping to the right-hand side. Pass a grey barn on your right and follow the farm track to a metal gate on the other side. Now veer **right** on a fenced path across the centre of a meadow which is grazed by various farm animals on both sides. The path ends at a stile taking you to a road with the *Woodcote* pub opposite.



*This pub, originally called the White Horse, closed in 2014 but quickly opened again under its new name, taken over and refurbished by a group of friends. The very friendly staff serve an excellent-looking new menu. They also do a good range of sandwiches. Despite the prime location and "posh" look, they welcome booted walkers. The pretty garden has lots of new furniture. The quality and range of ales has been assessed as above standard. The pub is open from about 1 pm at weekends. It is closed on Mondays from Jan to March. Also, the bar staff say they close for a couple of hours in the afternoon Mondays to Fridays, even though their website says otherwise. They own a very nice 5\* B&B next door. See [www.thewoodcote.com](http://www.thewoodcote.com) for more info.*



Turn **left** on the road (or **right** if you are coming out of the pub) to reach the village of Graffham.

- 7 At a road junction, turn **left** in the direction of *Selham, Petworth*. In 250m, just by a war memorial and noticeboard, turn **right** on a signposted byway. Just 50m further, however, you will find the *Foresters Arms*.



*Like its neighbour, the Foresters attracts some of the Goodwood set, as well as the polo set from Midhurst and the Petworth antique set. Consequently, you will find it geared towards dining and accommodation although the two log fires and the low beams imbue it with much atmosphere. It is **not** open all day at weekends.*

Having turned right on the byway (or sharp left if you visited the *Foresters*), follow the tarmac drive past a playing field and beside a wooden gate on a straight tree-lined track. Avoid several signed crossing paths and stay on the track to pass farm buildings at Upper Norwood where you meet a tarmac lane at a bend. Keep straight ahead on the lane and, just after *Keepers*, in little more than 100m, go **left** at a signpost on a footpath into the woods. The path runs through a coppice, going past a house on the right, and reaches a T-junction with a stony drive. Turn **left** on the fenced drive between horse pastures. At a 4-way fingerpost, go straight ahead, past a metal gate, onto the National Trust's Lavington Plantation.

*Lavington Plantation and Common are rare survivors of an open terrain that once stretched across the Weald of Sussex. Ideal places for bird and reptile watchers, they are home to sand lizards (reintroduced here some years ago) and adders, while goldcrests, crossbills, fieldfares, redwings, snipe, siskins, great spotted woodpeckers, stonechats and redpolls can be seen if you have patience to sit and wait in this soothing landscape.*

- 8 Go **left** through a swing-gate, by a fingerpost. [There is a shorter route to the car park but, using the way chosen here, you get a wider sense of the joys of this nature reserve.](#) The path veers gently right and, in 150m, you reach a 2-way fingerpost in the middle of a grass patch. Turn **right** here, ignoring the implied directions on the fingerpost, on a wide path across the centre of the Plantation. In 200m, your path crosses a footpath marked by a fingerpost. In another 220m, you reach another crossing footpath with signs for the *Serpent Trail*. Turn **right** on this footpath and, in 200m, at a T-junction by a water trough, turn **left**. On nearing the road, fork **left** to a National Trust sign and go through a wooden gate to the road, with the car park opposite, where the walk began.

## Getting there

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By car: If coming from the north through Petworth, continue south on the A285, signposted *Chichester*, Pass the *Badgers Inn*, a filling station and ignore a left turn to Bignor. 300m after, turn **right** at a sign for *Selham, Graffham*. The car park is nearly 2 km=1¼ miles on the right, just after a left bend. An alternative start is at Selham, which is signposted south of the A272 road between Petworth and Midhurst. This road also leads to Lavington Common.

By bus/train: Bus 91/92/93 from Petersfield station to Midhurst, then Compass bus 96 to Graffham or Selham. Check the timetables.

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