



West Grinstead and the Downs Link

Distance: 3¾ km=2½ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 21-sep-2020

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Refreshments: picnic or local inns after the walk

Maps: Explorer 134 (Horsham) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Church, small fields, woodland, dismantled railway

In Brief

This is a restful easy walk from the medieval West Grinstead church over the meadows to join the Downs Link path for part of the route (the dismantled railway, now beautifully resurfaced and a joy to walk on. You return over high field paths with more views, ending on the drive that leads back to the church and car park.



There are no nettles or scratchy undergrowth on this walk, so shorts are wearable. The terrain is mainly firm, but there are two field crossings where you might pick up some mud in winter making boots advisable. The stiles on this walk are all fairly well-made and several of them are bypassable.

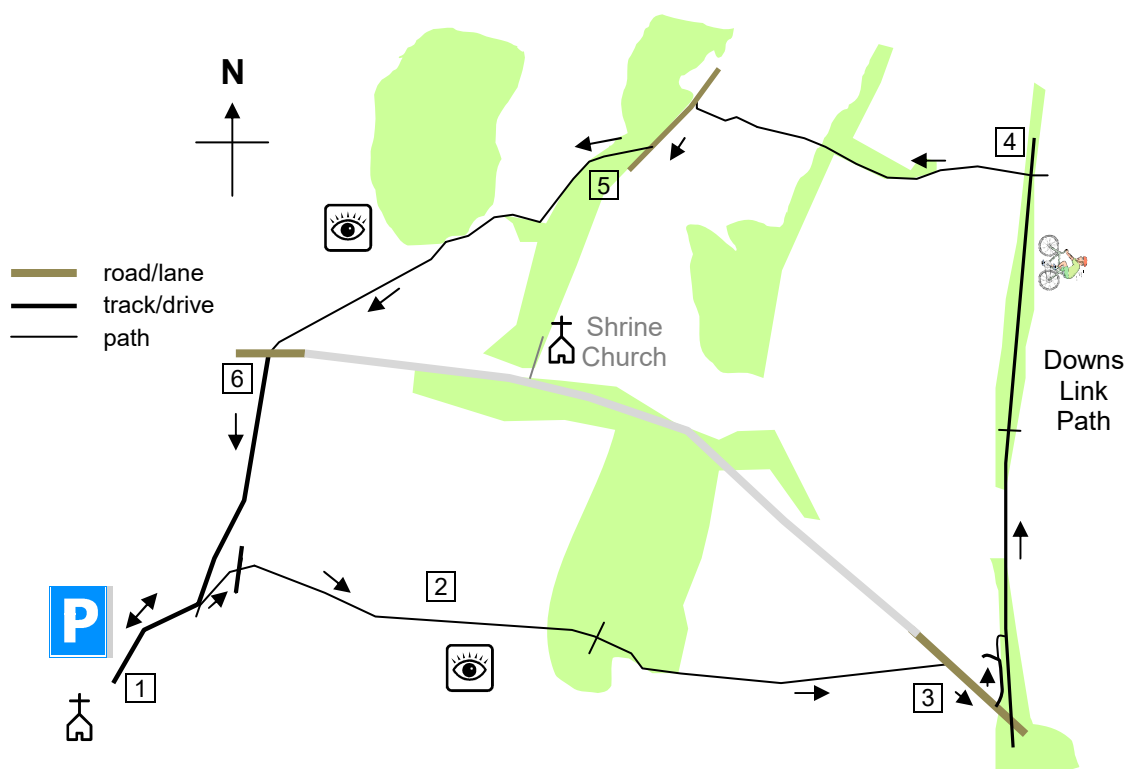


You dog could come with you if he is not very large.

The walk begins near the little church of St George, West Grinstead, nearest postcode **RH13 8LR**, **what3words: ///anchovies.fancy.teaching**. There is a large car park near the church, which is available to the public. However, on Sundays worshippers must be given priority. Each month, services are usually held on the first and third Sunday at 11am and every fourth Sunday at 4pm. So, do not arrive shortly before these times. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

For more information on the village of West Grinstead and the church of St George, see the sister walk "West Grinstead and River Adur".

The Walk



- 1 Beginning in the car park near the church, walk **back** along the tarmac approach drive. Just after the drive bends left by the entrance to *Glebe House*, go **right** over a stile which has a little mesh gate on top. It leads into a small pasture with a goat, sheep and ponies. Cross the pasture diagonally **left** and go over a similar stile on the other side with a 2-plank bridge. Cross over a drive and take a cinder track on the other side. A (usually unneeded) stile leads to a track across a meadow. *On your left you can see the big Catholic Shrine church (see end).* You come over a stile beside a large wooden gate, followed quickly by another (sometimes unneeded). You now have extensive views to the right to the South Downs, revealing the Chanctonbury Ring (see the Chanctonbury and Steyning walk in this series).
- 2 Cross a horse pasture to the far left-hand corner where there is a large metal gate leading down through woodland. Keep straight on over a crossing path. *(The charming little lake and chalet on the right are part of the estate of Glebe House.)* A 2-plank bridge-with-rail leads out into a little glade of crab apple trees. *These trees shed a colossal harvest of fruit in autumn, so dense that they carpet the ground, and standing underneath and clapping your hands can be enough to feel the plop of a gentle shower.* Keep to the right of these trees to go through a small metal gate (easier than the stile), and keep along the left-hand side of a crop field. Where the hedge on your left ends, keep straight ahead across the centre of the field, following overhead wires at first, before you diverge a fraction to the left. At the far side, go through a wooden swing-gate to a road.
- 3 Turn **right** on the road, passing *Patchings Hovel*. Just before the bridge, turn sharp **left** at a signpost onto a track near a house. Where the track bends left, keep ahead under a huge oak tree to go through a small metal gate, bearing **left** on a wide path, the Downs Link. This path has been recently re-laid and it is perfect to walk on. You may meet a host of families and cyclists now for the first time today.

The Downs Link is a 59 km=37 mile footpath or bridleway linking the North Downs Way near Guildford with the South Downs Way near Steyning (plus some more by the coast down to Shoreham-by-Sea). It was created from the course of two railways, the Cranleigh line and the Steyning line, closed in the Beeching era.

In nearly 300m you come to a 4-way fingerpost by some old metal gateposts with a footpath on each side: keep straight on. The path goes through a cutting with mixed woodland on each side. Shortly after you emerge from the cutting, 350m from the previous junction, you reach another 4-way fingerpost. Turn **left** here down steps.

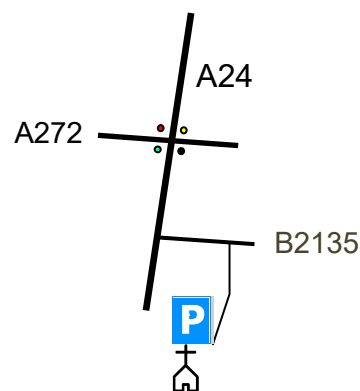
- 4 A stile leads you onto a wide grass path along the right-hand side of a crop field. In the far corner, ignore a footpath on your left and go straight over a stile, down a slope, over a 2-plank bridge-with-rail. Your path turns left and right and runs beside a wire fence. A 2-plank bridge and a few more twists lead to a stile and thence out to a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane. In 100m, fork **right** over a (bypassable) stile on a signed footpath.
- 5 Another stile takes you into a crop field. Turn **left** on the generous grass fringe and, at the end of the field, follow the grass round to the **right** and then **left** into the next crop field. Go down the right-hand side of this field, now with great views of the South Downs. In only 80m, just after the edge starts to wheel right, fork **left** away from the trees on a faint narrow path across the centre of the field. At the far side, keep left to go over a (bypassable) stile onto the main road. *(Care! sudden traffic – blind bend.)*
- 6 Cross straight over the main road, being especially wary of traffic coming from the right. Take a driveway opposite, signed *Parish Church*, familiar from your arrival route. Follow the tarmac for 200m, fork **right** before the gate to Glebe House and fork **right** again in 150m. In 100m you are back at the car park where the walk began.



Before you leave West Grinstead, there is a unique Catholic shrine only ¼ mile from the walk, in Park Lane off the B2135. West Grinstead was for long a centre of Catholic worship. The Shrine Church of Our Lady of Consolation and St Francis is a huge gothic revival church and a restful garden showing the Stations of the Cross, built in 1871 originally for Dominican nuns. The church holds the tomb of Hilaire Belloc, prolific writer including of the famous Cautionary Tales. Parking by the church is easy.

Getting there

By car: West Grinstead lies just east of the A24 (Worthing) trunk road. If coming from the London or M25 area, take the A24, passing Horsham and Southwater, until you reach traffic lights where the A272 crosses (*Billingshurst, Petersfield* on the right, *Brighton, Haywards Heath, Cowfold* on the left). Continue straight over for nearly another mile and turn **left** onto the **B2135**, signed to *West Grinstead*. In ½ mile, opposite a sign *Parish Church*, by a little whiteboard cottage, turn **right** on a drive. Take the **right** fork shortly and again by the entrance to *Glebe House* and, in another 100 yds, turn **right** into the car park.



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