



Selborne Common and Noar Hill

Distance: 8 km=5 miles or 7 km=4½ miles

moderate walking with easy sections

Region: Hampshire

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Refreshments: Selborne

Map: Explorer 133 (Petersfield) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Village, woodland, high hills, views

In Brief

This is a classic walk from one of Hampshire's prettiest villages, best known as the home of naturalist Gilbert White who knew all the woods and meadows covered by this walk. Along the way you will visit a remarkable hilltop nature reserve. The return trip is a long level hike along heavenly Selborne Common and down using the *zig-zag* that the White brothers dug back in the 1700s.

For refreshments, there is a good pub in Selborne village. But there are rules "no dogs, no muddy boots and no muddy shoes"! They stop serving food at 2 pm. (For information, ring Nick & Hayley Carter on 01420-511247.) Just around the corner there is a tea room serving sandwiches, cakes and tea.



There are some nettles on this walk, so shorts might be uncomfortable. Underfoot the terrain is a mixture of dry paths and muddier sections up on the hill, quite extensive in winter, where you will be glad to be wearing ankle boots outside of a dry summer season. This walk would be fine with your dog, because all the stiles (*) have a gap or can be easily hopped around. (* Except one stile on the Link path where your dog needs to jump over or be lifted.)



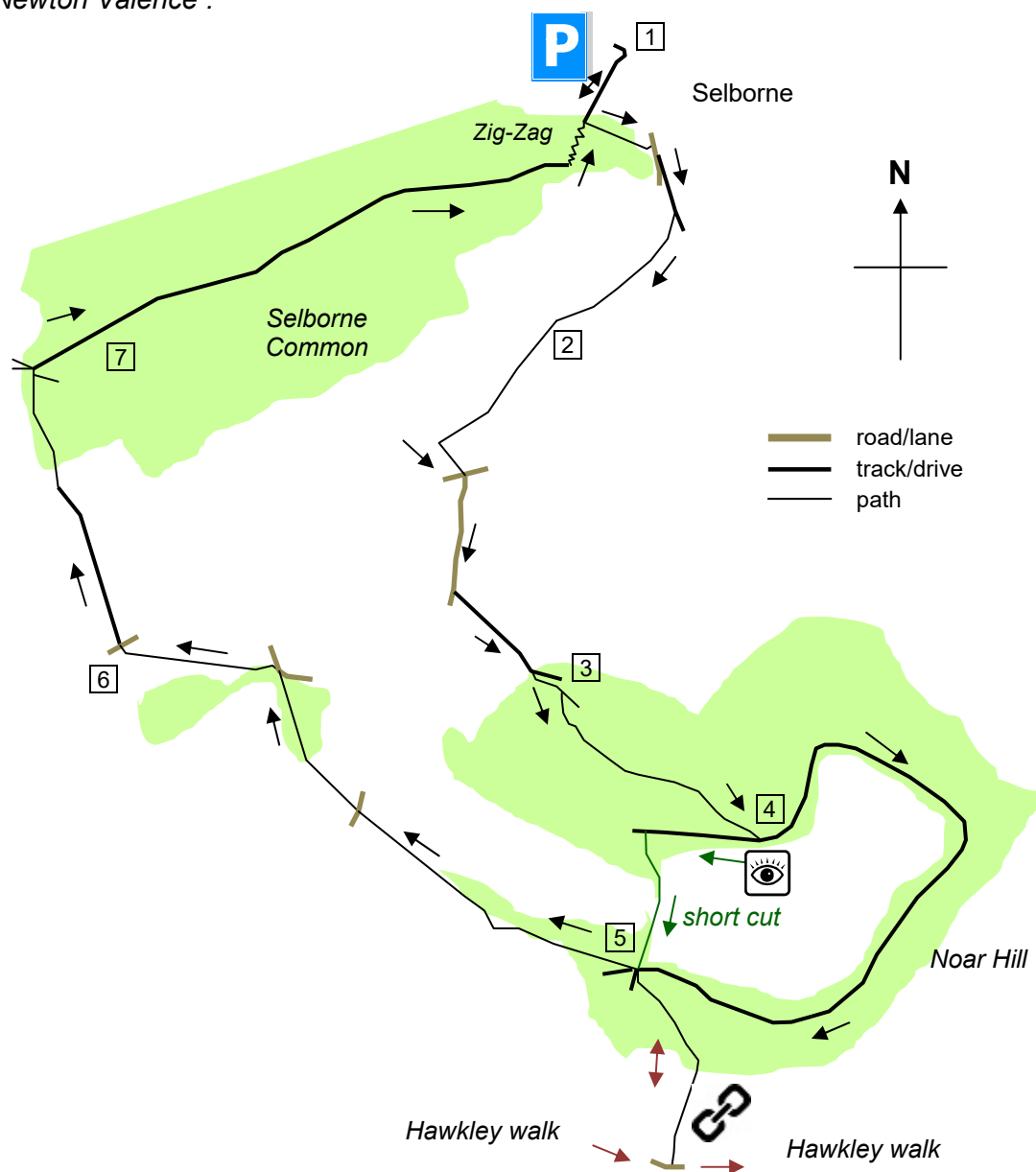
This route can be walked as the northern link of the *Hampshire Hangers Chain*, giving you a long walk through Hawkley, Froxfield or Steep.

The walk begins at the **Selborne car park**, postcode **GU34 3JR**. This free car park is behind the *Selborne Arms* pub in the middle of the village and is clearly marked with a brown tourist sign. It only holds about a dozen cars, so it is advisable to arrive early. There are also loos here. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

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The Walk

The historic village of Selborne is especially known because of its famous son, Gilbert White. For more details of the village, the church and of this world famous naturalist, see the other walk in this series "Selborne and the Zig-Zag to Newton Valence".



- 1 From the Selborne car park, take the wide enclosed footpath that runs on the far side of the toilets towards the steep Selborne Hanger. You can see the White brothers' famous "zigzag" path ahead which will be on your return route. At the end of the path, avoid the swing-gate ahead and turn **left** just before it onto another wide level path. If this section is a bit muddy, don't worry: it will not be like this for the rest of the walk. This path runs between hedges down to a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane and immediately fork **left** on a track marked as the Hangers Way (HW) parts of which you will be following on this walk. The Hangers Way is a 21-mile long-distance route from Alton through Petersfield to Queen Elizabeth Country Park. At a little wooden house, fork **right** on a drive and immediately fork **left** on a narrow path to the left of a wire fence. This path takes you through a wooden gate, beside paddocks on your right and over another stile into a meadow.

- 2 Keep along the left-hand side of the meadow to go through a wooden barrier and continue similarly. [Your next destination, Noar Hill, is in view on your left and, on the horizon, the unmistakable outline of Blackdown.](#) After a V-stile (or a large metal gate), your path passes a house on your left, followed by another V-stile to a 3-way fingerpost in the corner. Do *not* go over the stile here but turn **left** in the meadow and go through a metal kissing-gate to a road. Cross the road and take a lane opposite, signed *Noar Hill*. The lane passes a converted barn and approaches another house. Just before the house, turn **left** on a track signposted as the HW. Near the top, at a sign board for *Noar Hill, Hampshire Wildlife Trust*, filter **right** through a swing-gate into this historic nature reserve.

Noar Hill nature reserve is owned and managed by the Hampshire Wildlife Trust. It consists of chalk grassland and “scrub mosaic” i.e. a mixture of vegetation that have taken root on the chalk. Some of these plants are rare in the UK, including various orchids (11 species have been found here). Cowslips and the rare early gentian also grow here. Over 35 breeding species of butterfly have been recorded here, including Duke of Burgundy, brown hairstreak and the silver-washed fritillary.

- 3 In 60m, when you are opposite a swing-gate that [\[Dec 2021: now gone?\]](#) is almost completely covered in vegetation, take a **right** fork, the major path. This takes you up to the highest point of Noar Hill. Go right-left after the first hollow and then keep straight on down a long hollow. (Or, to avoid a climb, keep left round the top edge of the hollow.) *These many bumps, hollows and hillocks are the result of farmers digging for chalk in past centuries.* At the end of the hollow, you need to climb up quite steeply. Keep ahead on a nice wide grassy path passing more earthworks. Stay on the wide path as it curves right and runs beside a ragged old coppice on your right. At the end, you come to a fingerpost, a T-junction with a bridleway and a rustic bench with great views across the land (summer foliage permitting) to the South Downs.



Decision point. [There is a short cut here that avoids the circular path round Noar Hill. This misses the best part of the hill and some good views. If you want to take this short cut, skip to near the end of this text and do the **Noar Hill Bypass**.](#)

- 4 After a pause to admire the view, turn **left** at the fingerpost. The path takes you through a small wooden gate and out of the nature reserve, bearing slightly left. It now winds through woodland and is joined by a bridleway coming in from the left. For the next 1½ km=1 mile, you will be walking this circular route round the hollow hill, turning right in stages, with good views where the foliage permits. The path narrows at the southern end of the hill with a steep drop on your left. Finally the path drops to a junction. Veer **right** here on another bridleway. The path gently rises and, after ½ km, you arrive at a multiple junction with two ****fingerposts**. [\[**Dec 2021: walkers be aware here! Area cleared of trees due to ash dieback – these two fingerposts, in fact *all* waymarkers, **gone or grounded** – so **avoid** the wide clear path straight ahead **and** the hard right turn. Find a winding path, veering slightly right, a pace or two after the only remaining marker post.\]](#)



Decision point. [If you would like to walk another 5 miles or more by switching to the next **Link** in the Hampshire Hangers Chain, do the following. Turn **left** at the **first** fingerpost on a footpath, marked as the HW and do the section near the end of this text, labelled the **Noar Hill Link**. Otherwise ...](#)

Keep straight ahead ignoring both ****fingerposts** and take a footpath marked with a yellow arrow, passing just to the right of a marker post.



[The Link from the *Hawley and the Hangers* walk joins here.](#)

- 5 Follow the winding footpath, keeping to the right-hand edge of the hill. It takes you into a large field. Turn **right** along the edge of the field. Keep on the right-hand side, rounding a copse and continuing beside a second field. You reach a tarmac drive with good views towards Selborne on your right. Cross the drive onto a narrow path and follow it between bramble hedges. [2015: in summer, this path may be impassable; if so, take a well-worn path to the left of the bridleway marker post which leads to a field, proceed along the right-hand side of the field, parallel to the bridleway.] You come out to a tarmac lane on your right. Keep ahead on the lane for only 20m. Here, go **left** over a bank by a fingerpost and follow a footpath, first along the left-hand side and then diagonally across the field. [The house on the hill ahead is Longhope in Newton Valence which you will soon pass.](#) At the far side, go through a gap in the hedge to a road.
- 6 Cross the road and take a bridleway opposite, gently rising between fields. In 400m or so, your bridle path goes through a wooden gate, passing a NT notice for Selborne Common. Keep ahead through open woodland. On your left soon is that house, *Longhope*, and paths leading to the charming village of Newton Valence (*see the walk in this series "Selborne and the Zig-Zag to Newton Valence"*). You reach an open area with two fingerposts. Ignore the first fingerpost but turn **right** at the **second** fingerpost.
- 7 You are on a beautiful wide greenway that spans Selborne Common, a route taken regularly by Gilbert White. Stay on this wide green path, more-or-less straight on at all times. This lovely end to the walk lasts for more than 1 km. Near the end, paths join from the right, you go through a swing-gate and approach a white house. Keep **left** to arrive at the top of the Zigzag. *The zigzag path was cut by Gilbert and John White by 1753 to make it easier for them to climb the steep Selborne Hanger.* Go **left** down steps and descend the zigzag. After one or two zigs and zags, there is a convenient bench with a view of Selborne. Continue down to the bottom. Turn **right** here through a swing-gate and keep ahead on a familiar wide path, leading back to the car park where the walk began.



For final refreshments, the Selborne Arms is accessible from the car park. It is open all day at weekends and all the meat in its good reasonably-priced menu is locally sourced. (For information, ring Nick & Hayley Carter on 01420-511247.)

Noar Hill Bypass

[Do this section if you want to shortcut the long scenic route round Noar Hill.](#)

Turn sharp **right** on the bridleway at the fingerpost and follow it through sparse woodland. After 250m you come to a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **left** here on a narrower path which winds down to a sign board and a wooden gate. Continue down a sunken path, going over a farmer's path and up through trees again to meet a multiple junction with two fingerposts.



Decision point. If you would like to walk another 5 miles or more by switching to the next **Link** in the Hampshire Hangers Chain, go straight over the main track, a fraction left, to take a footpath down into trees, as indicated by the left-hand fingerpost and do the section below, labelled the **Noar Hill Link**. Otherwise, turn **right** on the track, ignore the second fingerpost, take a footpath just to the right of a yellow-arrowed marker post and re-join the main walk at section [5](#).

Noar Hill Link

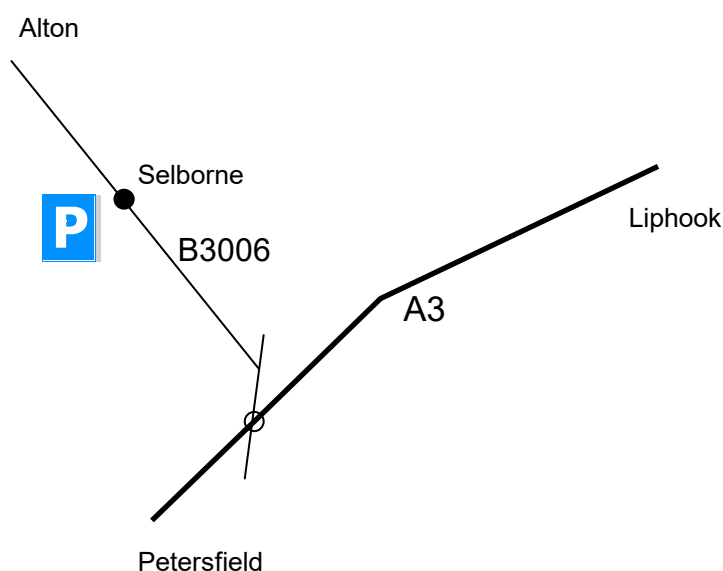


This section is the **Link** to join the *Hawkley and the Hangers* walk, part of the Hampshire Hangers Chain.

Your path goes fairly steeply down and you may need to take care in slippery conditions. After walking under beeches and yews, you come down through a metal kissing-gate into a field. Head straight down, a fraction left, towards the bottom right-hand corner. Here, go through a kissing-gate and keep left to go through another kissing-gate to a lane with a ford on your right. Turn left on the lane and pick up the *Hawkley and The Hangers* walk at section [5](#).

Getting there

By car: Selborne, on the B3006 road, is easily accessed in 3 miles from a roundabout on the A3 road just north of Petersfield, from where it is clearly signed. It can also be accessed from Alton.



By bus/train: bus 38 runs infrequently between Alton and Petersfield stations and stops outside the pub in Selborne, but *not weekends!* Check the timetables.

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