



Steep and Steeper

Distance: 9 km=5½ miles

easy walking with one stiff climb

Region: Hampshire

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Refreshments: Steep

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

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

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Village, meadows, hills, views, notable pub

In Brief

This short energetic walk near Petersfield, Hampshire gives you a chance to climb to the top of Shoulder-of-Mutton Hill and gain terrific views over the county and West Sussex. Along the way there are charming encounters with country life and a gem of a small country pub.



There are very few nettles on this walk and sensible shoes should be adequate. There are only two stiles and both have a gap for your dog to slip through.



This route can be walked as the southern **Link** of the *Hampshire Hangers Chain*, giving you a long walk through Froxfield, Hawkley or Selborne.

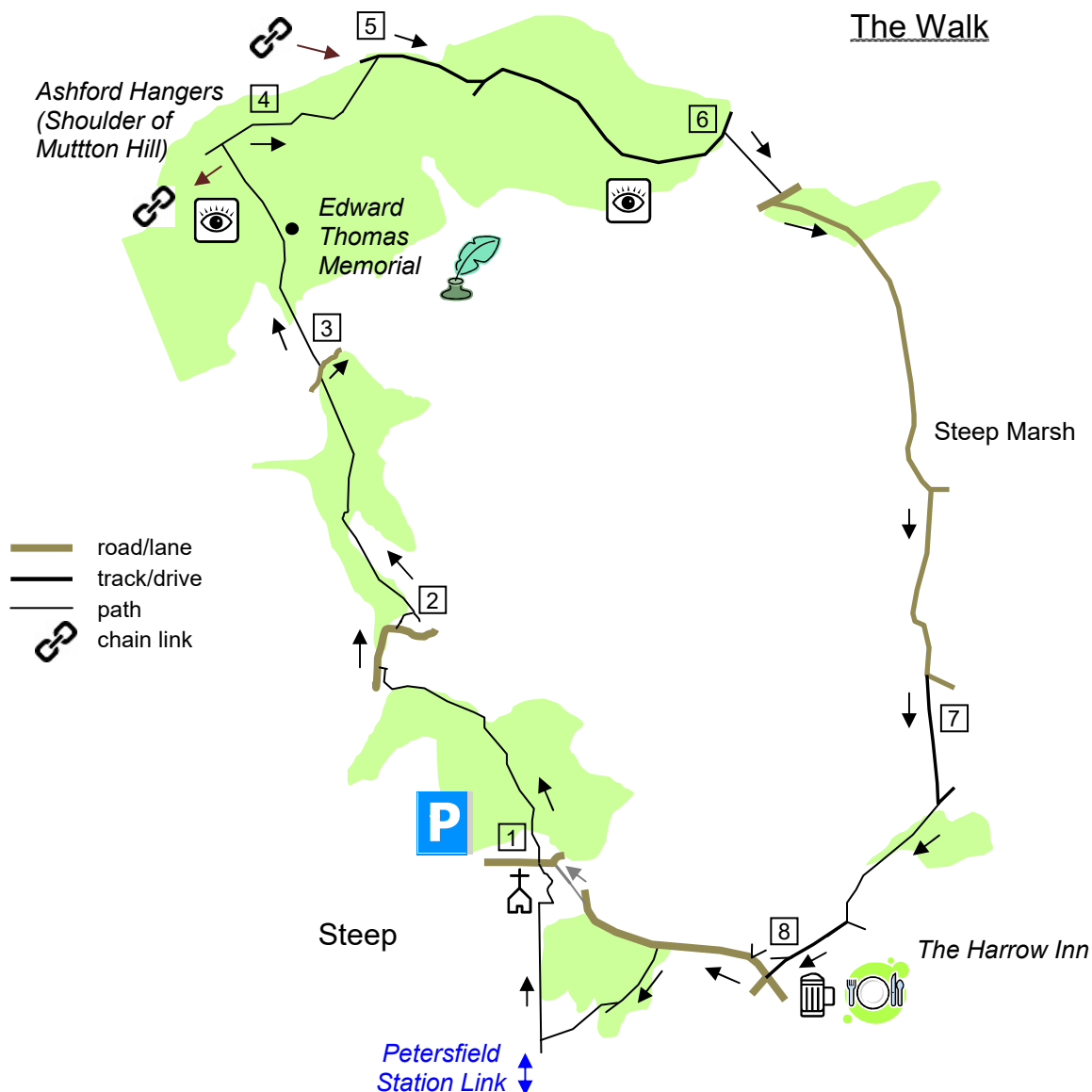


The walk begins by the roadside near the church in **Steep, Hampshire, post-code GU32 2DF**. There is room on the south side of the road and your only competition might be from the school run or parishioners attending the church. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

1

See map overleaf. Begin the walk by going through the gap to the left of the (padlocked) double wooden gates on the opposite side of the road from the church, through a small playground. Stay near the left-hand side to go past a noticeboard on a wide path into the woods of Milham's Copse. At a bench, the path veers left and runs downhill under the tall oaks of Northfield Wood. After an old kissing-gate, you are walking along the left-hand side of a water meadow with the various buildings of Oakhurst Farm visible on your right. Your path bends right at the field corner and exits via a metal kissing-gate to a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane and, just before the lane bends right at Mill Corner, go straight ahead at a fingerpost on a footpath. *First though, just to the left of the footpath there is a good vantage point to admire the old mill race, now a lovely water cascade, that comes down from the garden on your left.*



2 The narrow path goes over a concrete bridge and leads up to a T-junction. Turn **left** on a path, shortly passing a viewpoint for Little Langley Pond. Continue through a conservation area. After the meadow on your right ends, the path bends right and left through woods, with a wire fence on your right and wild garlic in evidence. *The large house on your left is Ashford Chace (yes, it's spelt with a "c")*. After a bridge your route joins a tarmac drive uphill. At the end of the drive, turn **right** on Ashford Lane.

3 In just 20m, turn **left** at a fingerpost and follow a path to the right of the hedge, with the crops on your right, with the prospect of Ashford Hangers looming ever closer. At the end, go through posts at a sign for this famous landmark, also called *Shoulder of Mutton Hill*. Ignore a horse path on your right but take the **right** fork uphill – the steeper of the two options. Your climb begins but there are steps to help. As you pass an unneeded barrier onto the more open hillside, keep to the central path: it is marked by natural steps made by a thousand feet. *You don't need an excuse to regain your breath occasionally, since it is so rewarding to turn around to look at the terrific view over Hampshire, West Sussex and the South Downs*. Near the top you reach a bench and a memorial stone for the poet Edward Thomas.



Edward Thomas, born 1878, lived in Steep from 1914 when he began to write poetry. Much of his verse shows his love of the English countryside, especially in the famous poem "Adlestrop". He was killed in action in 1917 during WWI.

Continue uphill under trees. Finally at the top, your path goes between posts to a seat, another notice and a wide level crossing path.



Decision point. If you want to take the next **Link** in the **Hampshire Hangers Chain**, turn sharp **left** just by the seat on a downhill path and pick up the *High Hampshire Hangers* walk at section **5**.

4

Turn **right** on the crossing path along the top of the Hangers. (In case the path is churned up by horses, you can go straight over the crossing path and turn **right** in 50m just before a field on a much easier track (Old Litten Lane) that you are about to join soon.) Stay on this gradually descending path as it winds along the edge of the hill with occasional views where the foliage permits. In 170m, ignore a right fork that goes down to a wooden barrier and keep left on the main path uphill. This winding horse track may be a little muddy in season but the conditions will soon improve. When you come up to a T-junction with a field beyond, turn **right** on it.



The Link from the *High Hampshire Hangers* walk joins here.



A walker suggested this quick excursion for a magnificent view north: "On the left find a short flight of steps up to a swing gate. 50m into the field reveals the 244m trig point and a bench looking north to Hawkley and beyond. Exit the trig point SE to descend to a gate/stile and rejoin Old Litten Lane". The notice board describes how the unwanted trees were removed to restore the view so admired by William Cobbett (of "*Rural Rides*").

5

Follow this nice easy track, Old Litten Lane, going very gently downhill. In 250m or thereabouts, at a fingerpost, ignore a bridleway sharp right and continue along the main track, now descending more steeply. A green meadow comes into view on your right. At the end of the first meadow, turn **right** over a stile onto a signed footpath. The path runs along a line of alders, over a new stile, between pastures and then over another stile to a lane.

6

Turn **right** on the lane and immediately very sharp **left** on another lane. This quiet lane goes down through trees between banks. The countryside opens out as you pass (grade II listed) *Coldhayes* and a farm, entering Steep Marsh. A famous resident of Steep Marsh was actor Sir Alec Guinness who lived here for 40 years till his death in 2000. Keep **right** through the hamlet, passing some modern houses, and following the narrow lane between hedgerows. 500m after Steep Marsh, you reach a fork in the lane. Here, leave the main lane which curves off to the left and keep straight on along a narrower tarmac drive.

7

Follow the drive, passing *Kettlebrook Spring*, down to a 3-way junction. Bear **right** at the junction and follow this beautiful path with a stream deep below on your right and horses and paddocks on your left. Railings lead suddenly to a quite delightful timbered cottage. Avoid a footpath on your left here and veer **right** over a bridge across the Ashford Stream. Continue up a semi-tarmac drive and ignore a footpath that forks right. Immediately you reach *The Harrow*, a unique atmospheric country inn.



This brick-and-tiled former drovers' inn dates from the 1500s and has been in the same family (the McCutcheons) for 84 years. They don't pander to modern methods: no credit cards, no waitress service, no restaurant, no music. The busy A3 road, only 150m distant and scarcely audible, seems half a millennium away. The tiny public bar has seating for only half-a-dozen or so people inside, yet the

food is described as excellent with home-made scotch eggs, salads, quiches and pies. Some of the vegetables are grown in the garden and it is here that many guests sit on a summer's day. Beers currently (2024) include Bowman Swift One and Flack Manor Double Drop. The Harrow Inn is open from noon (11am on Saturday) to 2.30 (3 on Sunday) and daily for food 12-2pm.

- 8 After a refreshment break, continue to a road, Church Road, and turn **right**. Follow the road uphill, passing the tennis and cricket clubs. Immediately after the entrance to *The Old Vicarage*, look for a large metal gate on your left with a sign for Bedales School. Turn **left** here on an unsigned path into Warren Copse. (Alternatively, you can continue for 250m on the road and fork **left** at an almost hidden signpost, up a narrow path above and parallel to the road, then past a picturesque 16th-century house on its tarmac drive to the road.) In 150m, take the **right** fork, the wider option, leading up into an open space. Keep ahead along a sandy path across the open space, passing on your right an area enclosed by a paling fence (a small quarry). Keep right with a fence on your right, going up to a metal gate.



For the Steep-Petersfield Link, turn **left** through a swing-gate and follow the notes in the *Hampshire Hangers Chain walk*.

Turn **right** here on a straight path, ignoring a swing-gate on your left.



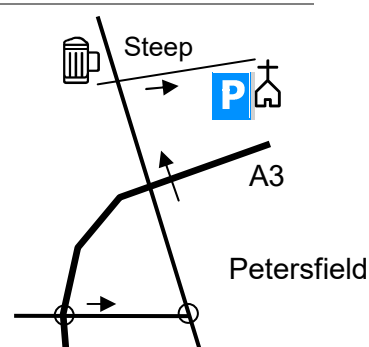
The Petersfield-Steep Link joins the walk here, from your left.

This fine path leads you through woods with the playing fields of the Bedales School¹ on your left. You pass the beginning of a cemetery on your right. Opposite a wooden gate, turn **right** into the cemetery, **left** at a memorial cross and **right** around the remarkable Steep church, out to the road where the walk began.

Steep church was built during the Civil War – not the one in the 1600s but the one in middle 1100s known as “The Anarchy” when King Stephen, the last Norman king, reigned. The spacious interior is just as atmospheric as you might expect, with lines of Norman arches. The remarkable wooden spire is Victorian however.

Getting there

By car: Steep is close to Petersfield. The best way is to take the turn-off for “*Winchester Alton*” just west of Petersfield. Turn **left** (or right if coming from Portsmouth) at the roundabout signposted “*Steep Town Centre*”. In nearly ½ mile at the next roundabout, turn **left** signposted “*Steep*”. Follow the road for 1 mile, going over the A3, and turn **right** just before the *Cricketers Inn*. In ½ mile, park on the right before the church.



By bus/train: Petersfield station is 2 km from the walk. It might be worth considering a taxi to Steep church.

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¹ Amongst the huge number of celebrities, old Bedalians include actors Roger Lloyd-Pack (“Trigger”), Minnie Driver and Daniel Day-Lewis and novelist John Wyndham (“The Day of the Triffids”).