



Nutbourne and West Chiltington

A scenic stroll through wine country

Distance: 10 km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Nutbourne, West Chiltington?

Maps: Explorer 121 (Pulborough) and 134 (Horsham)

maps drawn in this guide should be sufficient; but the OS maps may be useful for walkers who want to use wider bridleways, hinted at in this guide, to avoid stiles and possibly livestock in one or two places.

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

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Villages, woodland, lakes, bluebells, vineyards

In Brief

As our title says, this walk is through wine country. There are over fifty vineyards in the South East, many of which are visited on other walks in this series, such as Denbies, Bodiam, Alfriston and Bolney. But the area around these two villages is as vast as you will see anywhere, and the main product is the truly excellent English Sparkling Wine. But this is also an adventurous walk with several surprises and spectacular landscapes. In late spring, there are some little-known areas of dense bluebells. For later in the year, many cool woodland areas.

The village of Nutbourne is the distillation of quaintness with its one narrow street and an intriguing, modest village pub. (To enquire at the *Rising Sun*, ring 01798-812191.)



There are some nettles on this walk so shorts are not wearable. At the time of writing, the course was universally dry, but in wintry or damp conditions, boots are recommended as there may be some patches of standing water.

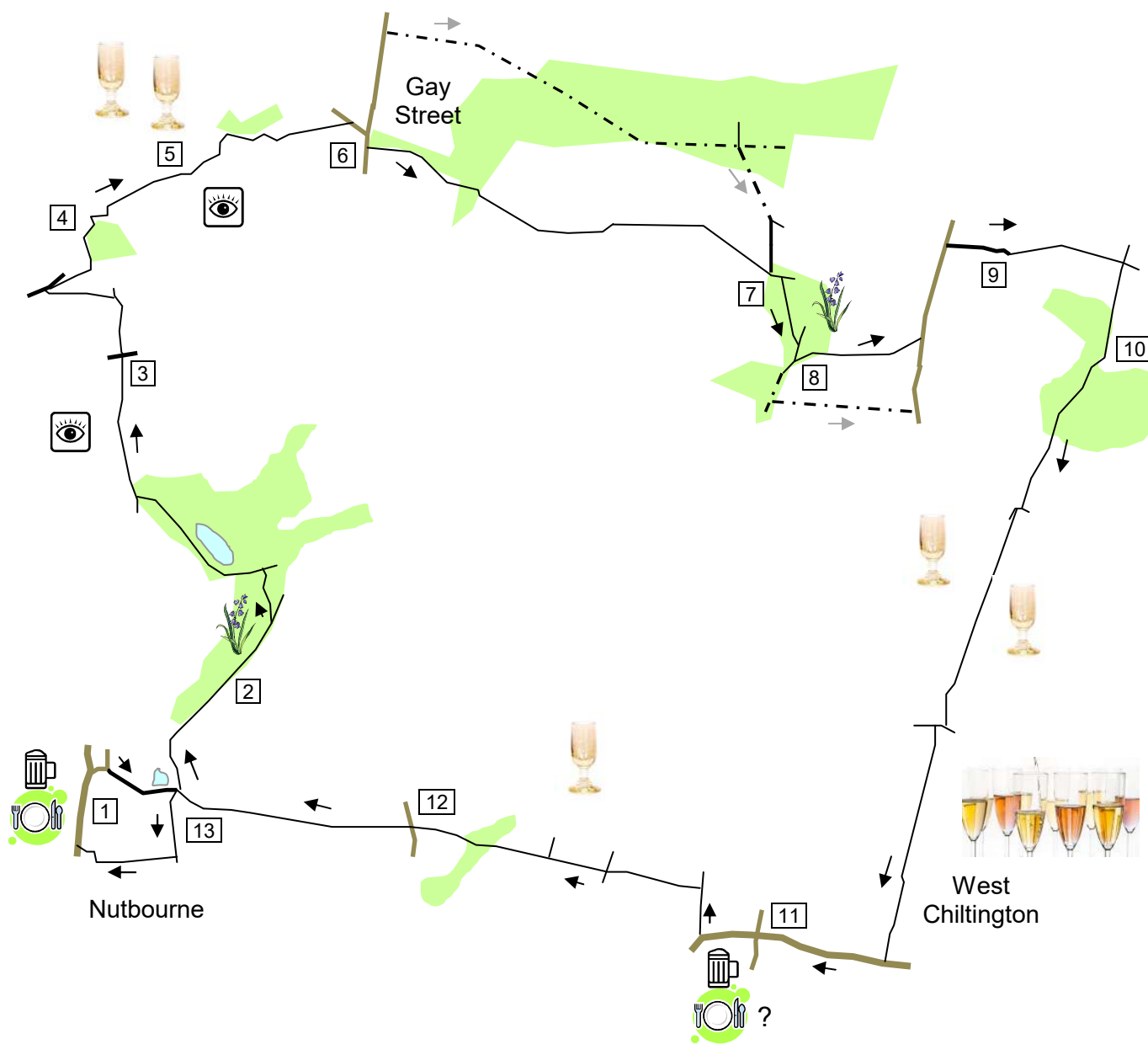


Your dog can certainly come with you on this walk.



The walk begins in the village of **Nutbourne**, near Pulborough, West Sussex, www.w3w.co/paramedic.truly.shaves, postcode **RH20 2HE**. There is parking on the roadside. The best way is through Pulborough, to avoid a narrow lane. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk




There are **two** villages in West Sussex called Nutbourne. This one is the tiny, quiet gem near Pulborough. The name, from Anglosaxon, originally “knutu burna” means “stream with nut trees”. The fruit trees that were the main income of the village have all gone now, but instead a huge patchwork of vineyards dominate the area to the north of the village, making Nutbourne one of the principal sources of fine English wine. If you walk down the main narrow street, you have seen the whole village, taking in a variety of architectural styles. The village pub, the Rising Sun, is as unspoilt as the village itself, with a modest entrance which invites the curious who are surprised to find a timber-framed rear, and a big Village Bar. Nutbourne has its own vineyard, owned and run by the Gladwin family since 1991, on the west side of Gay Street (which you pass in Section 12) and they provide a self-guided trail.

1 With the pub and the quaint houses (*Long and High Platt*) on your left, walk up the narrow lane through Nutbourne Village. At the first junction, turn **right** on a side road, a continuation of *The Street*. Shortly, at a fork, take the **right** fork, keeping **left** on the tarmac to avoid a driveway leading to *Nutbourne Manor*. Note the "fox" windvane on the tower. The tarmac turns to shingle as you pass the head of the Millpond on your left. Immediately after the pond, turn **left** on a signed woodland path.

2 This atmospheric path takes you through the deep shade of tall oaks and birch, with the gradually deepening stream valley down on your left. On your right, you catch occasional glimpses of one of the many vineyards that you will see today. The path gradually rises. In late spring, the banks reveal an amazing show of bluebells. After 500m your path forks. Here, **leave** the official footpath, which runs up a slope on the right, and instead keep **left** through more bluebell glades on a narrow path which descends rather haphazardly to meet a path coming down from your right. Turn **left** on this path, soon crossing a long wooden bridge-with-rails and a short muddy patch. Your path runs between two field gates and curves to the right, giving you fine views down to your right to a large pond in the forest.



 You path soon curves to the left and meets a T-junction with a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a another high tree-shaded footpath. You have a steep drop on your right. Very soon you come out into the open with sudden terrific views ahead to the terrain you will soon be walking. This high path runs along the left-hand edge of a meadow and finally ends on a patch of concrete by a farm shed.

3 Cross straight over to a path opposite, going over a stile and walking along the left-hand side of a small meadow. On the far side, your path takes you over a stile and through a gap by means of a small wooden gate into a sloping meadow by a fingerpost. Take a path diagonally **left** up the slope, in the direction of a large house. As you near the house, head for a large wooden gate. But, just *before* you reach the gate, turn sharp **right**, staying in the meadow, on a level path, with the house and its outbuildings close by on your left. As you pass the last building, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **left** up steps and **right** over a stile, following the signs, curving round the side of the buildings on a narrow path through some dense shrubbery.

4 You come out to a driveway near a large closed gate belonging to the vineyard. Cross straight over to continue on a very narrow path through undergrowth. After another short section, passing through two tall wooden gates, your path leads out into a large vineyard. Keep directly ahead along the grass, with the vines on your left, for only 20m. Turn **left** now at a footpath sign on a path through the vines. But, in less than 10m, at a makeshift wooden sign, turn **right** on an excellent long path which runs diagonally through the vines. At the far side, turn **left** and immediately **right** on a wide grass margin.


5 After a large metal gate and a stile, continue along the top of a meadow, following a footpath sign, on a narrow path that passes two wooden rails on your right and goes through woodland towards another house. You have terrific views here to your right over the South Downs. After another stile, signs direct you **left** and **right** in the corner as you go round the orchard and lawn of the house. Follow the narrow path past the garden wall until you see a pair of wooden gates straight ahead. Here your path forks **left** to avoid the private gates and runs down through more trees for about 50m. The path



ends abruptly at a small metal gate. Go **left** through this gate into a large pasture. Take a path down the right-hand side of the pasture (now fenced off to make a paddock for some lively horses) heading for a large metal gate on the far side. At the bottom, go over a stile beside the gate and turn **right** on a tarmac lane, immediately arriving at the hamlet of Gay Street.

6 (One walker with a dog found cattle in one of the “flowery meadows” below; at another time, a walker met some lively horses; if either of these might worry you, there is an alternative route just north of Gay Street along **bridleways, marked on the mini-map above as a dotted line.**) Ignore the junction on the left and turn **right** with the road, but for only 20m. Go **left** now onto a signed footpath, over a stile, and along the left-hand side of a large flowery meadow. At the other side go by a redundant stile, over a 2-plank bridge, onto a woodland path. At a marker post, cross a grassy track and a bridges-and-stile combination into another large crop field. Continue straight ahead aiming for a finger-post on the far side. A clever stile made from cut-down tree trunks leads you into yet another large florid meadow. Follow a faint path along the left-hand edge. Go over a stiles-and-bridge combination to walk along the left-hand edge of another meadow. A stile in the corner leads into another meadow. But this time your direction is across the centre, a fraction right, as directed by a marker post, heading for a large metal gate. When you reach it, go through a modern kissing-gate.

7 Ignore a bridleway sharp left and go through a large metal gate into Woodshill bluebell wood, a renowned beauty spot almost unknown outside this area. *Note that you are walking on part of the West Sussex Literary Trail: this is a 55-mile route from Horsham to Chichester along which you meet Shelley, Galsworthy, Belloc, Blake and Keats.* In 20m, at a signpost, fork **right** onto a footpath which takes you through the densest area of bluebells. At the top, turn **right** to re-join the bridleway. In 50m, at a fingerpost, **leave** the bridleway by going **left** up some coarse steps, over a stile, into a meadow.

8 (To avoid stiles and nettles, you can stay on the bridleway and take a bridleway **left** a little further along, passing through Woodshill Farm; it is marked with a dotted line on the map.)  Cross a stile and walk along the **left**-hand edge, with great views left across the Weald as far as the North Downs. Continue beside the hedge on your left to go over the next stile. Continue ahead and, in the corner, go over a stile-bridge-stile combination. (In a recent summer this last detail was overgrown and impassable but in winter 2024 it was clear: should a problem arise again, you can climb over the farm gate 20m to the right). Keep to the left-hand edge near a new farm construction on your right. In the first corner, go **left** down a slope, down steps, over a stile and diagonally **right** across a sloping meadow to a stile in the wire fence. Cross straight over a gravel drive and descend a flight of steps to a narrow tarmac lane. Turn **left** in the lane. In 200m, turn **right** at a footpath sign on a farm track to High Copse.

9 In 100m you enter a rather untidy yard. Steer a course almost straight through the yard, veering a fraction left and a fraction right, to go past a large double wooden gate, and out into a cereal field. Now take a narrow but well-marked path straight ahead through the field. In 130m, at the other side of the field, your path crosses a ditch via a 4-plank bridge-with-rail. Continue ahead on the path, across a large grassy meadow. In 150m you come to a 4-way crossing by a fingerpost. Immediately after the crossing, turn **right** along the right-hand edge of a large field.

- 10 At the top, walk straight into woods via a 2-plank-bridge-with-rail. Your path exits the wood via a tall wooden gate, leading into a vineyard, part of Nyetimber Manor, one of the best-known producers of English sparkling wine.

The valley of Nyetimber is named in the Domesday Book of 1086 as 'Nitimbrea'. It was part of the dowry of Anne of Cleves when she married Henry VIII. But the first wine stocks were planted on a small scale by the Sangers in 1981. The Nyetimber estate began large-scale production of sparkling wines from the "holy trinity" of grapes, Chardonnay, Pinot Noir and Pinot Meunier in 1988. The Dutch-born Eric Heerema is the present owner who had the deep pockets and confidence in 2006 to raise the estate to its full potential. The Nyetimber Manor Vineyard has open days with 2-hour tours and there is a shop. The Manor and the "White Barn" are a little way from this walk and you would need to drive up Gay Street afterwards to visit. (Ring 01798-813989.)

Keep straight ahead along the right-hand edge of the vineyard. At the other side, go through another tall wooden gate. Your path passes a house and bends right to a drive. Turn **left** here, passing two semi-detached houses on the left, to keep direction, straight ahead on a wide grassy path between fields of vines. At the far side, go round an electricity pole through a tall wooden gate and a small metal gate. Follow a path straight on beside a meadow on your right. A modern kissing-gate leads to a fenced path, through a wooden swing-gate and down to a lane in West Chiltington. Turn **right** on the lane, passing some attractive houses, into the village to the crossroads and the 17th-century village inn, the *Queens Head*.



At the time of writing, the inn was closed: the web said *Temporarily*; in 2024 the inn is still seeking a tenant. For such an essential institution in the high street, surely the villagers will see that it continues to thrive.

West Chiltington was first recorded as "Cilletone". The village is split into the old picturesque part, around the church, and the new village to the south. West Chiltington has its own small vineyard, Friars. The most famous people in the village, by far, are the village band, formed in 1908 and known as the Silver Band because of the quantity of silverware they have won. The big smock mill is just outside the village, but the sails are missing and it is now a private dwelling.



*The remarkable Norman St Mary's Church is **left** at the crossroads but well worth a brief there-and-back trip. Most of it dates from the 1100s but some parts are even a century earlier. Its porch is said to be the oldest in Sussex. But visitors come to see one of the largest collections of wall paintings, depicting the life of Christ, dating from the building of the church itself.*

- 11 Continue straight ahead after the crossroads. After Church Grove on your left, ignore a footpath on your left but, 20m after that, turn **right** on a tarmac drive, a bridleway, signed to *Kings and Princes*. The drive changes to concrete and becomes a woodland path. You meet a 3-way fingerpost, 130m from the road. Turn **left** here on a bridleway. After 230m, at a junction, ignore a path left and keep straight on, through a wide wooden gate into a vineyard. Your path is an avenue of young trees with vines on each side. In 150m, at a 3-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead. After the vines, a leafy path takes you through a small wooden gate, right-left across a bridge-with-rail, beside an orchard. At the first corner, go **left** down steps to a tarmac lane.

- 12 Cross straight over the lane on a shingle drive signed *Stile Farm Cottage*. Pass the cottage on your right, going through a small weighted metal gate into a flowery meadow. Go through another small metal gate, along a path with a meadow on your left, and through yet another small metal gate with a vineyard on your right. A small wooden gate leads straight ahead on a track between more vineyards. The path curves right and takes you down to the *Mill House*, familiar from your outward journey. You can of course retrace your outward route, but the next section gives you an alternative route back to the village.
- 13 Turn **left** immediately next to the *Mill House*, beside its brown fence, following a *Sussex Literary Trail* sign. The path turns left and right by a fence and leads you past a big lily pond on your left. These are private lawns but there is a stone seat where you can pause. Just before a large wooden gate, turn right, up steps, over a stile into a meadow. Keep straight ahead with a wire fence on your right. At the other side, go over a stile onto a path which immediately bends right between hedges, then left, past a redundant stile, to a lane in the village of Nutbourne. Turn **right**, back to the centre of the village and the pub, near where the walk began.



For final refreshments, it is worth stopping at Kinsbrook Vineyard, Restaurant & Farm Shop which is on the West Chilmington Road at the corner of the Coolham Road (the B2139) (www.w3w.co/widely.reacting.cubed). This is a lovely place to stop and get some food and drink, with some great views across the vineyard; they often have live music outside.

Getting there

By car: Nutbourne is near Pulborough off the Roman Road of Stane Street, otherwise known as the A29. You can reach it by turning east on Gay Street Lane off the A29, 2 miles south of Billingshurst, where your navigator may direct you – but beware, the lane is very narrow in places. The best route is through Pulborough, turning east on the A283, from where, after 1½ miles, you will see a left fork for Nutbourne.

By bus/train: buses from Pulborough Station to Nutbourne and West Chilmington. Check the timetables.

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