Fancy Free Walks

*point your feet on a new path*

# Burton Mill and Sutton Common

Distance: 14 km=9 miles — easy walking with one short uphill scramble

Region: West Sussex — Date written: 11-jun-2012

Author: Hautboy — Date revised: 18-jun-2015

Refreshments: Sutton — Last update: 20-jun-2026

Map: Explorer 121 (Arundel) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

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

**Public rights are restricted to printing, copying or distributing this document exactly as seen here, complete and without any cutting or editing. See *Principles* on main webpage.**

*Lake, heath, woodland, views, village, parkland, churches, nature reserve*

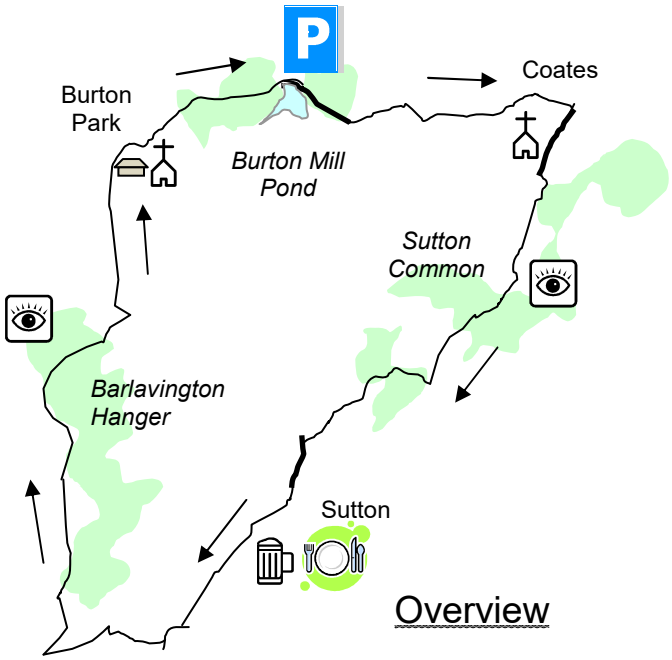
## In Brief

This is a walk of huge variety, full of surprises. It includes some of the most delightful, contrasting but unknown areas of pure West Sussex nature: the wild heath of Sutton Common, the hangers of Barlavington and Newpiece Moor nature reserve. Like its sister walk *Bignor and the South Downs*, it takes you to some high points with tremendous views.

At the middle of the walk there is a village inn with a genuinely original and fresh lunch menu. To enquire or book at the *White Horse* in Sutton, use their website (www.whitehorseinn-sutton.co.uk). The pub has re-opened after a splendid refurb by a lady of the village.

There is only one small section with nettles but In high summer the crops and under-growth may be high and scratchy, making shorts inadvisable. After a long dry spell, apart from during Leg 1, the sandy paths will be free of mud, but boots or even wellies are recommended at other times. Your dog will enjoy this walk too as all the stiles have a dog gate.

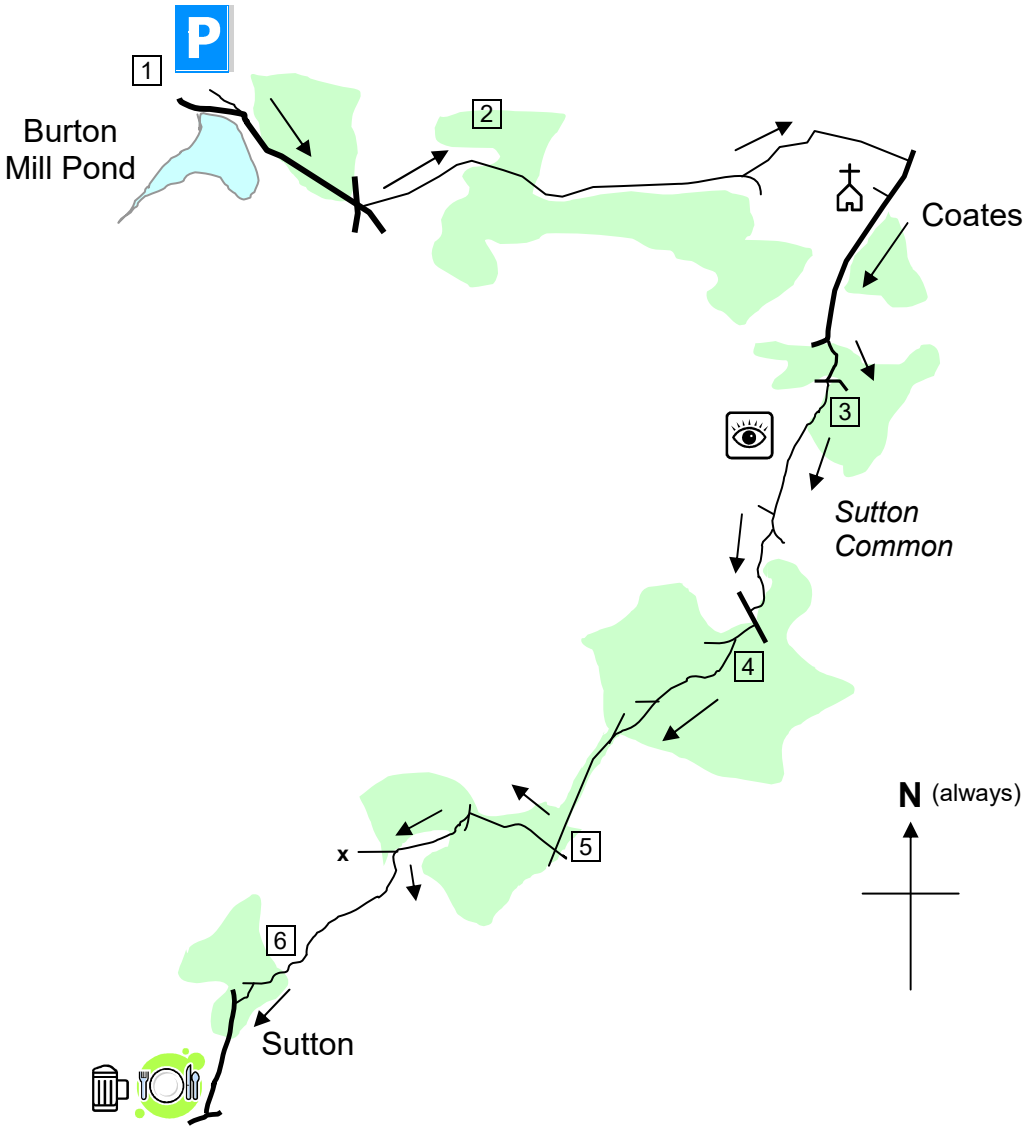
The walk begins at **Burton Mill Pond** car park, near Duncton, West Sussex, gridref SU978180, postcode **GU28 0JR**, w3w:avoid.bulldozer.collision. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).




Overview

## The Walk

Leg 1: Burton Mill to Sutton  6 km=4 miles




1 With the road on your right, walk through the car park and continue on a tarmac drive, going over a stream past Burton Water Mill which still has some of the old mechanism on view. Keep **right** on the tarmac drive up to the road in front of Burton Mill Pond itself. Turn **left** on the road, ignoring a footpath soon on the left. Follow the road and continue past a road junction. Just 10m after the junction, go **left** through a swing-gate and across the centre of a meadow on a grassy path. Your path joins a farm track coming from the right and passes some old livestock sheds on the left. As your path curves left towards a stile and a large gate, leave it by turning **right** on a grassy path, passing a water trough on your right, leading down to woodland. Go past an old redundant stile and through an open metal gate into the woods.

2 Your path rises to cross a track at a 2-arm fingerpost and continues on a wide path between bracken. At a junction of tracks, avoid a track curving up right which leads to *Coates Castle*, an early-1800s castellated mansion (not on the route). Instead, keep straight on into a large field. On your left is a stone barn and to your right is a low hill with a large oak at its base. Your route is a narrow level path, or vehicle tracks, across the field, heading just to

the **left** of the low hill. Your path skirts the low hill, curving right as it does so, and leads you to a marker post at the start of a line of tall oaks that separate two fields. Keep to the **left** of the line of oaks, along a wide grassy path between the oaks and the smaller field. The path joins a track and comes out beside the splendid Elizabethan *Coates Manor* to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane, soon passing, on your right, St Agatha's Church. This tiny downland church is definitely worth a visit.

> *No one is certain when this church was built, although it was before 1100, and why it has the rare dedication to St Agatha. The roof is supported by six massive beams. Unusual features are the square font and the priest's chair or "sedile".*

Continue further along the lane for another 400m and, just before it curves right, leave it to continue straight ahead on a track, signposted to *Mansby House*. When you shortly meet a crossing track, go straight over, through a small wooden gate ahead, into Sutton Common, part of the county's "Open Access Land".

3 Even if you know the area, this landscape always comes as a wonderful surprise, with its terrific views of the South Downs and the pine trees that grace the high points and the valley down on the right. It never features on standard walks, being "off the footpath map". Keep straight ahead on a high level path which veers left between some pines and then veers right towards another group of pines. It goes over a crossing path and continues past oaks and pines with ever improving and widening views. As the path begins to descend, you reach a fork. Take the **left** fork, the more level option. In 20m, take the **right** fork, the narrower option, immediately going over a crossing path. This narrow knobbly path runs level, then descends gently through bracken. At the bottom, it veers left towards trees, veers right before some conifers along a bank and veers right again to a wooden swing-gate. Go through the gate to a lane and turn **left**.

4 In just 20m, go **right** through a metal gate onto a bridleway through the Bignor Park Estate. In 70m, at a fingerpost, keep to the main track, avoiding a right fork. Your route passes through a mixed woodland of conifers, every imaginable kind of broadleaf and rhododendrons. 250m from the previous junction, at a post with a faded blue arrow, keep **left**, thus leaving the wide track. In about 200m, ignore a junction on the right by a fingerpost. Your path now runs along a strip of trees between fields under tall oaks. In another 400m, just before some wooden railings on the right, you come to a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here on a wide path which quickly narrows.

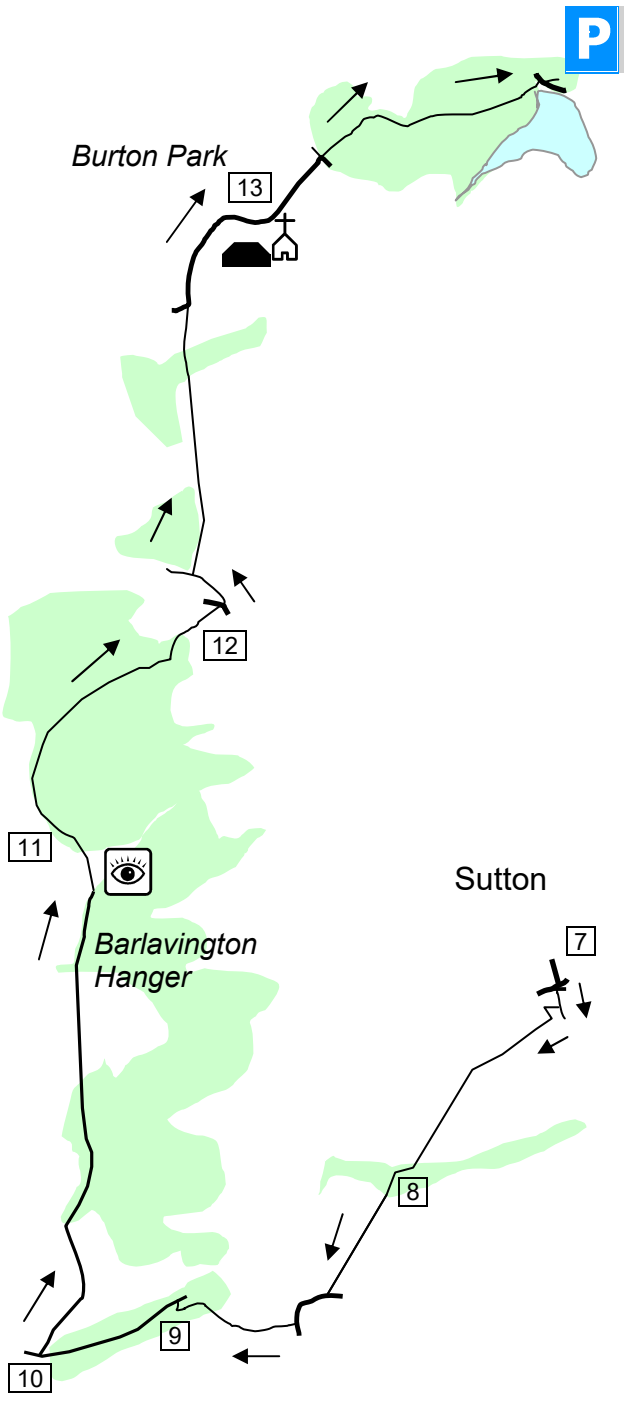
5 This section follows some more interesting and varied minor footpaths, opening up some exquisite landscapes. If there is a little mud at first, it will quickly disappear. Your path runs through a lighter area of shrubs and, in 120m, reaches a junction of paths. Veer left, as indicated by the fingerpost. At a T-junction , turn **right**. Now follow this wide track through woodland. The path veers right under oaks and ash and, at an old fingerpost, takes you leftwards downhill, over a wooden bridge and through a wooden swing-gate [Jun 2026: completely collapsed]. Ahead of you is a magnificent long tree-fringed meadow which, in season, is full of wildflowers. Keep **left** at a vague Y-junction on a path beside a new wire fence on your left. Your (overgrown) path zigzags round the edge and reaches a 3-arm fingerpost and a swing-gate. Do ***not*** go through the swing-gate but turn very sharp **left** and follow the **right**-hand side of the meadow. At the next marker post, your path turns right and runs along the right-hand side of the next meadow. *You*

*must have noticed that you are walking 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.* As you pass a 2-way fingerpost, ignore a gap on your right and continue along the right-hand side of the next meadow. At the top, the path swings left to the far corner and leads you through a wooden swing-gate.

6 Your path goes up the left-hand side of a small meadow through tall grass to an unneeded stile. It then follows a low garden wall. When you reach a driveway by a house, follow the drive ahead to reach the road by the *Old School House*. (Or, if you are not wearing shorts, zigzag **left-right** onto a narrow path leading up steps to the road next to *Hopkins*.) Turn **left** on the road (unless you would first like to visit Sutton church which is on the right). Continue through the village of Sutton, finally reaching the *White Horse*, an excellent stopping place for all kinds of food and drink, especially for their high-quality fresh and innovative lunch menu.

*For an account of this pub's interesting history, see the other walk in this series "Bignor and the South Downs".*

## Leg 2: Sutton to Burton Mill 8 km=5 miles




7 Passing the front of the *White Horse*, turn **right** on a minor road for just 10m, **left** on a drive and immediately **right** up a slope on a signposted footpath and along a boardwalk. On reaching a field, turn sharp **right** along the edge, ignoring a path ahead across the centre. Your path goes left-right round a corner and passes a farmyard with very free-range chickens. Go over a stile into a horse pasture and cross it diagonally. Go over another stile and turn **right** beside a large wheatfield, ignoring the wooden gates that lead into the back gardens of several houses. Your path continues across the centre of a field and across a wide green strip, in the direction of the aerial masts on the top of Cross Dyke in the distance and with all the hangers (wooded hills) around.

8 At the other side, go over a stile and steeply down to the right. Keep **right** in a small meadow for 20m and then veer **left** to cross a concrete bridge over a stream and continue ahead, still in the direction of the masts. Your path takes you over another stile. Follow the path across the centre of a field, full in late summer of glorious sunflowers. (In high summer, it may be uncomfortable crossing the crop, especially if it is damp. Later, the harvested crop may have obscured the path. In such cases, turn sharp **right**, follow the edge of the field round and turn **left** in the corner on what is a perfectly pleasant

wildflower verge.) At the end, veer **right** by a fingerpost to a tarmac lane, Glatting Lane, and turn **left*** [see below] on it, passing the ancient barns of Glatting Farm (now tasteful refurbed and re-thatched). Immediately after a barn, turn **right** at a fingerpost. Follow the direction of the finger religiously diagonally **right** across the field. At the other side go through a small wooden gate by a marker post with a yellow arrow. Continue through a band of trees, over a stream and through another small wooden gate. Cross another smaller field. When you reach the edge of the field go through a third small wooden gate. Continue straight ahead on a narrow path uphill into the woods, following the black-on-yellow arrow.

(* A walker suggests an alternative easier route to the "wide path" at the top of the steep hanger in the next section, marked [*]. Instead of left, turn sharp **right** on sunken Glatting Lane, uphill. After 400m, in a patch of woodland, turn sharp **left** on the intended path, re-joining the route after 600m.)

9 You will now need to concentrate for a while. After 20m or so, your path bends left on a slightly easier gradient. You now need to look out for a point where your path turns abruptly **right** up a steep bank. This occurs 100m after entering the wood. [Jun 2026 : some tree branches have fallen across the track, and you may have to improvise; just scramble aiming for the top, to arrive at the T-junction mentioned below.] Your path ascends quite steeply with roots acting as natural steps, curves right and rises to a 2-arm finger-post at a T-junction. Turn **left** on a wide path [*]. After 400m, you approach a junction with a field visible ahead. At a 3-arm fingerpost, turn sharp **right**, almost doubling back, on a wide path running close to a field on your left (where overgrown, you can walk along the edge of the field itself).

10 You will be following this major route for about 2½ km. The path runs between fields for some distance. It then goes through a wooden gate and on a wide rising path under tall beeches. The wide chalky path runs round the side of a hill. *In early summer, pink orchids adorn the field fringes.* At the top, go through a wooden gate and into a field. *This is a fabulous high point at the top of Barlavington Hanger with views all round.* Follow the path across the centre of the field. At the far side, at a 4-way fingerpost, cross straight over a byway. In 20m, ignore a footpath on the right and, at the next fingerpost, ignore a bridleway to the right, always staying near the edge of the field on your left. Your path soon emerges from the fringe of trees and runs between wide meadows climbing up to the highest point on this walk at 192m. *Orchids are also in evidence!*

11 Stay on the clear path (with the large field still on your left) for around 200m. Now fork **right** and head for a track that soon leads you into the woodland on your right. (This path is easily missed. If you arrive at a marker post with a blue arrow, you have gone too far. However, you can turn **right** at the marker post onto a path which will lead you down to the fingerpost* mentioned below.) This wide straight track leads you downhill. At a fingerpost*, ignore a bridleway on the left. Your path now descends through some superb woodland. Cross over a forestry track. In around a further 100m, you reach a junction by a large beech. Your path veers **right** here to run between banks and in a short distance passes a 2-arm fingerpost. The path soon meets a barbed wire fence and follows it downhill beside the meadow on your left. *Barlavington Church is visible on your right.* Finally, the path goes through the smaller of two metal gates to a lane.

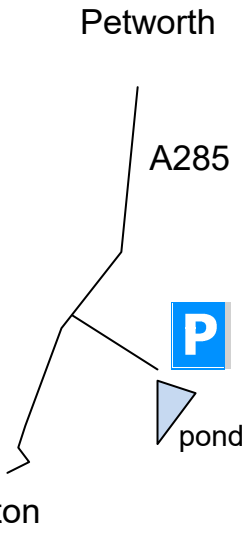
12 Cross the lane and turn **left** by some metal gates on a wide grassy path between fields beside a wire fence on your right. Just before a wood, turn **right** at the corner of a fence and follow a path which continues to run beside the meadow on your right. Soon, after another metal gate, a strip of meadow opens on your left too. Your path enters woodland via another metal gate and goes over a weir with a rushing stream discharging from the pond. It goes through an ornate metal gate into the parkland of Burton Park, a sudden surprise if you are not familiar with this area. Keep ahead in a meadow, full of wild flowers in season, soon to join a tarmac drive coming from the left. Stay on this drive as it bends **right**, ignoring all footpath signs on the left. As you go, you obtain an excellent view of the main house of Burton Park and pass the little Burton Church, which is worth a visit.

*The lost Anglo-Saxon village of Burton is recorded in the Domesday Book as "Bothechitone". Only the church remains, dating from around 1075, rebuilt in 1291 and (partly) in 1636. Burton Park may have been founded by Sir William Dawtry in 1242, probably for hunting. The first mansion house was built around 1500 and the deer park was enclosed some 70 years later. The present neo-classical house was started in 1828 from a design by Henry Bassett. After numerous developments, the estate was purchased in 1919 by the Courtaulds who added terraces, water gardens and much else. During the war, the estate was requisitioned by the army. It then became a school and was sold for development in 1993. It is now an arrangement of luxury apartments.*

13 Continue past the church and follow the main fenced drive away from the house. When you reach the start of woodland, at a 4-way fingerpost, under a massive chestnut tree, where the drive bends right, leave the drive by continuing straight ahead through a wooden gate into woodland known as Newpiece Moor. *This is a memorable end to the walk on a comfortable path through a luminous mixed woodland highlighted by pines and birches.* A large wooden gate takes you into a part of the wood that is now a Nature Reserve, managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust. Continue on the main path through this bio-rich landscape on a semi-tarmac path. Finally a small wooden gate takes you onto a path by gardens and out to a road. Turn **right** on the road, immediately arriving at the Burton Mill Pond car park where the walk began.

## Getting there

By car: Burton Mill is on Burton Park Road, nearly a mile from the A285, south of Petworth, West Sussex. If coming from the London area, go through Petworth and keep going south on the A285, signposted *Chichester*. Burton Park Road is 2 miles south of Petworth and is signposted on the **left** to *Bignor, Sutton, Coates, Burton Mill*. As soon as you reach the start of the great Mill Pond, turn **left** into the free car park. If coming from the south, the turning off the A285 is 1 mile north of Duncton, on the **right**.




By bus: bus 99 runs between Chichester and Petworth, stopping in Sutton. Check the timetables. Start from Leg 2.

*fancy **more** free walks?* www.fancyfreewalks.org