Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Clapham, Patching and the Monarch's Way

Distance: 12 km=7½ miles — easy walking

Region: West Sussex — Date written: 29-apr-2017

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Refreshments: Clapham tearoom, picnic, or several good nearby inns after the walk

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

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Villages, woodland, views, green meadows, good farm tracks

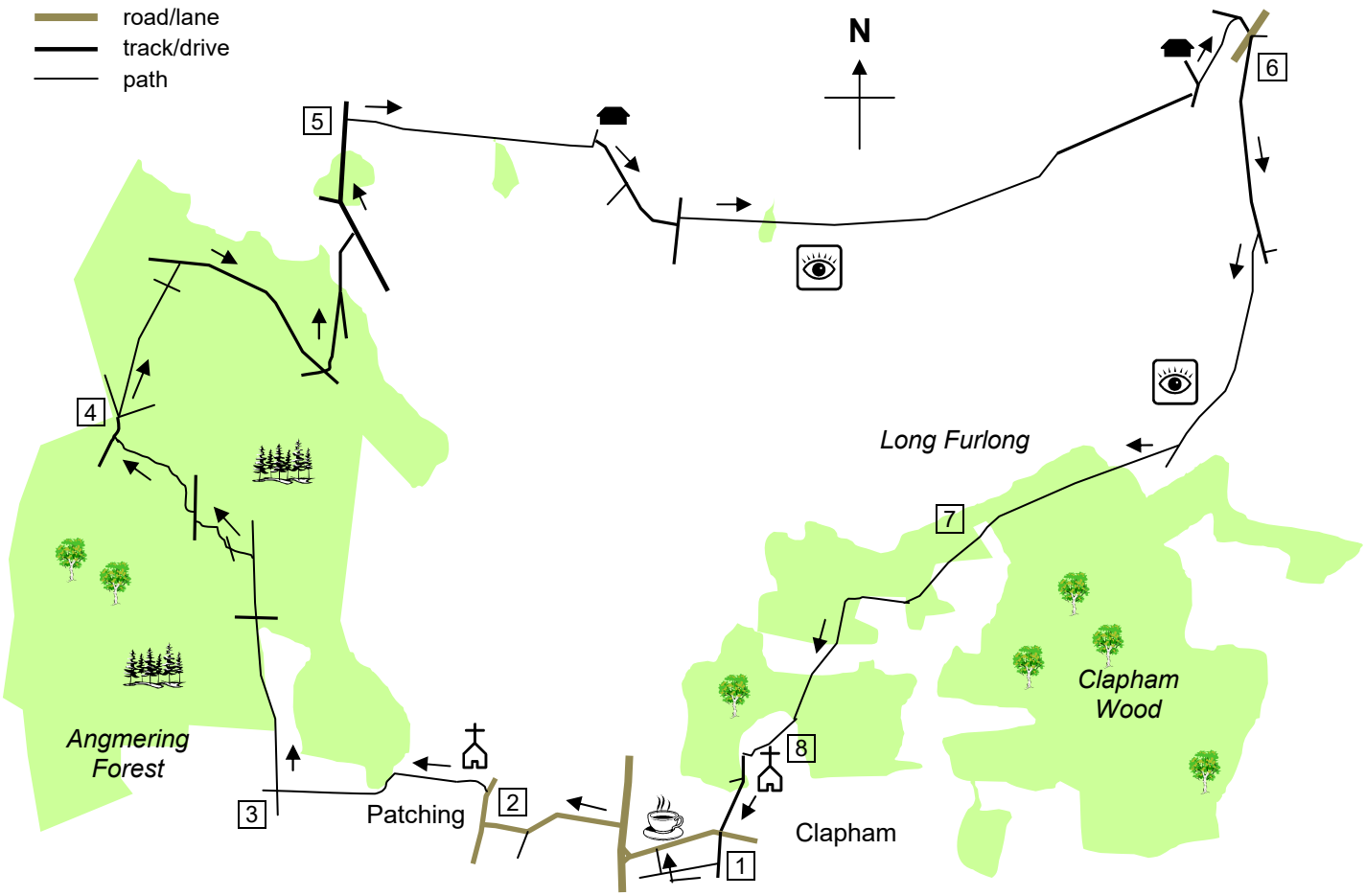
In Brief

Away from the frenzied bustle of the Sussex main highways, quietly hidden in the hills, by great swathes of oak forest, there are two tiny villages dating back to Saxon times. These villages made their living from the surrounding woodlands, which form a major part of this walk. The central part of the walk is along excellent farm tracks with terrific views of the long dry valleys and the South Downs.

There are no nettles or brambles to discourage wearers of shorts. In the dry April of 2017, the terrain was bone-dry but it is well-known that Angmering Woods, so popular with horse riders, have muddy patches, which can usually be skirted since there is no fencing. Boots are therefore recommended, especially in a wet winter when the ground can be quite squishy. This walk would be fine for an athletic dog.

The walk begins in the village of Clapham, West Sussex, just northwest of Worthing, w3w:hunt.fortified.player, postcode **BN13 3UY**. There is always parking space along the long village street, but please be patient and considerate. There is also space at the church, but not on a Sunday please! Patching village also has roadside space. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



1 The walk starts a little way up the street in the village, where there's a side turning with a sign for Clapham church. This will be your return route. If you are parked nearer the start of the village, simply walk back to the main road. The little loop used here can be omitted anyway if you prefer to walk down the village street.
Take a narrow driveway on the *other* side of the street from the track to the church, marked as Rectory Lane. (There is a fingerpost with a yellow arrow pointing that way.) In 80m, turn **right** through a wooden barrier next to a large wooden gate by a sign *Footpath Only*. This is a charming route between back gardens and their extensions. 180m from the start of the path, go **right** up a bank into a public open space. On your right is a children's play area, followed by the little village shop *(threatened with closure in 2017 much to the consternation of the villagers)* and tearoom (a real gem, worth noting for your return, generally open at least between 12-2pm daily). Go out through a wooden gate and turn **left** on the village street, continuing to the main road.

2 Turn **right** on the other side of the busy main road, preferably using the crossing on your left, and, in 100m, turn **left** onto Cold Harbour Lane signposted to *Patching Village*. Follow the lane uphill *(once morbidly named "Deadmans Hill", it is now called "Coldharbour Hill")* and continue through the village, ignoring a footpath on your left. At a T-junction, turn **right**.
However, it is worth spending a while viewing both ends of this village viewing the charming flint-stone houses and thatches.

Patching once had Bronze and Iron Age inhabitants and a Roman villa, but its name come from Paecci, a Saxon chief. The Saxon church was replaced in the 1200s by the Church of St John the Divine. But records show a number of inhabitants who defied Henry VIII and refused to attend its services, well beyond the reign of his daughter Elizabeth I. These Papal loyalists, known as "recusants" ran the risk of imprisonment, or much worse. The village made a good living from hurdle-making and other wood trades and the most famous family, the Pottens, seemed to make up almost half of the entire population of 200. The most notable of them, Dicky Potten (1858-1940), had a strong Sussex accent and a way of mixing his words, making it hard even for the locals. Asked whether two carts had been needed to carry a load to Worthing, he replied "Yep, tha's right, 'arf of it went by rail, the rest by train".

Continue up the village street. *Note the collection of colourful scarecrows in the garden of "The Forge" on your right.* Fork **left**, as directed by a 1-arm finger-post, passing a sign for *Church Farm Close*. The church is visible ahead, but your route is a **left** fork, a wide concrete track. But it is worth first keeping straight on to visit the churchyard (lifting a heavy latch on the lichgate). Go through farm buildings to a fingerpost at the edge of a crop field. Cross the centre of the field on a narrow path and go over a stile into woodland (part of Patching Copse). You emerge, via a metal gate, into a large field. Go straight ahead through the centre of the field on a narrow but clear path. (The path cuts across vehicle tracks at a sharp angle and you need to take care not to be hoodwinked.) Half-way across, at the start of a hedge, you meet a fingerpost. Turn abruptly **right** here at an exact rightangle and walk across the field towards the woodland. In spring and summer you might be following a wider path across a cereal field. In winter there is no path across the ploughed field.

3 At the top corner, go between wooden posts (with the remains of a disused stile on your right) onto a wide woodland path. In 50m, cross straight over a wide bridleway and shortly ignore a footpath on your right. After nearly 200m, you will see on your left a brand-new marker post *(don't miss this turning!)*. **Leave** the wide horse path here by forking **left** on a narrow woodland path. There are quicker ways of getting through Angmering Woods (such as staying on the horse track) but this route shows you some of the best parts and, in late spring, a spectacular sea of bluebells. In 30m, a path joins you from the left and you cross a track, passing another marker post. In 150m, at a T-junction, turn **right** on a track. In 50m, turn **left** at a black-on-yellow arrow and, in 15m, wheel **right** by a another arrow. In 300m, you come to a fingerpost at a T-junction with a wide forestry track. Turn **right** on the track. In less than 100m, your path enters woodland by another fingerpost, with three paths ahead.

4 Take the **middle** path, the one that goes through the centre of the wood. In 400m, at a signed 4-way crossing, go straight over regardless. In another 100m, you reach a T-junction with a very wide track, part of the Monarch's Way ("MW").

The English Civil War, from 1642 to1651, was in fact a series of smaller wars. The last ended in the Battle of Worcester which thwarted the future Charles II's attempt to take up the crown after his father's execution. Charles then became the first long-distance walker (or rider) along the Monarch's Way, hiding in an oak tree (hence the "Royal Oak" pub name) and embarking to safety across the Channel at Shoreham-on-Sea.

Turn **right** on the MW. (Care! there is another path on the right just before the correct route: be sure that you are on the wide waymarked **MW**.) You will be

following the MW for nearly 5 km total. The track gradually curves right for about 600m. You come to a 4-way fingerpost. Turn **left** here on a wide path, curving downhill. (The high path along the bank is easier to tread.) In 250m, you are joined, at a 3-arm fingerpost, by a path from the right. Suddenly, your path curves right into a field and continues to a tarmac lane. Veer **left** on the lane and keep **right** at a fork to avoid a private drive. *You are in the estate of Michelgrove as once one of the largest houses in the county, the home of the poet Shelley's family from the late 1400s to 1800, shortly after which it was demolished.* You pass a walled horse pasture and buildings of the estate and, in 200m or so, you come through a small metal gate beside a large automatic gate. Only 25m after the gate, you reach a junction on your right, opposite a 3-way fingerpost.

5 Turn **right** at the junction, still on the MW, a wide stony track. Soon you have terrific views in all directions, including Church Hill, your next destination.

Follow the track downhill between fields, through bushes and up again. Your path descends into the yard of Myrtle Grove Farm. Turn **left** and **right** between the buildings, as indicated by two fingerposts, and keep **right** on a tarmac lane. Ignore a stile and footpath on your right and continue to a T-junction where the lane bends right. Turn **left** here and, in only 10m, go **right** through a small metal gate. Your path goes down the right-hand side of a field, then up the centre of the next field. You have a view of the sea on your right. After a metal gate, continue straight ahead on a chalky farm track between fences. In nearly ½ km, you reach a junction near Tolmare Farm by some metal gates. Veer **left** towards the farm but immediately fork **right** on an uphill track, following a marker post, going through the smaller of two metal gates. At the top, you meet a track coming from the farm. Veer **right** on it and immediately turn **right** along a wide dusty farm drive used as an improvised parking area, taking you out to the main A280 Long Furlong road with Church Hill ahead.

6 Cross the busy road, a fraction **right**, to a wide track opposite, going through a small metal gate and obliquely uphill. In 600m, you meet a fingerpost where a narrower bridleway splits off from the byway. Fork **right** here, going through a small metal gate and onto a bridleway. (Don't miss this turning! If you meet a wide track on the left, you have overshot by 40m.)

You have a commanding view of the road running along the dry valley below, later obscured by shrubbery. After 700m on a shallow right curve, you see the woodland 200m ahead. Look here for a marker post with yellow and blue arrows. Fork **right** here, through the smaller of two metal gates, following the yellow arrow, on a grassy path. Soon your path enters Richardson's Wood through another small metal gate. A delightful succession of woodland and oak-flecked meadows lies ahead.

7 After the first large metal gate turn left up the meadow and, in 50m, turn **right** through another large metal gate by a marker post with a yellow arrow. You will now be following the yellow arrows for around 450m going through several metal gates and kissing gates as you proceed. Finally, you come out, via a small metal gate, into a horse pasture. Head for Clapham Church, just to your right. Another small metal gate takes you into the churchyard. Go past the church on your left. The church is normally open and definitely worth visiting.

The name "Clapham" probably means "village on the hill". It became prosperous from the surrounding woods, a sample of which you have just come through. The Church of the Blessed Virgin Mary was built in the 1100s and is rare in its shape since the chancel is not in line with the nave, as though depicting in stone the inclination of Christ's head on the Cross (compare the church in Horsted Keynes). There used to be a spire but it was taken down in 1790. There are three bells in the tower and they can all be rung by a single person (one rope in each hand and one on a foot.) The church was restored by Sir George Gilbert Scott (architect of St Pancras station).

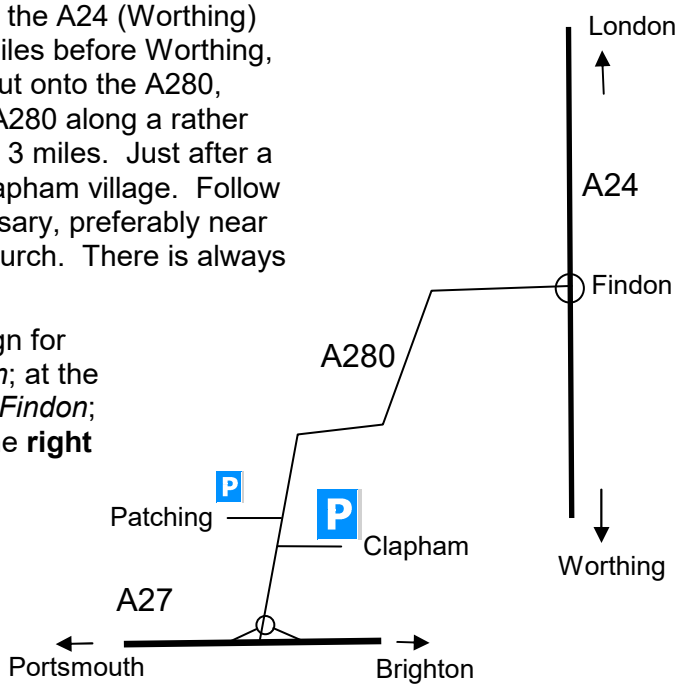
Go out through the lichgate and turn **left** on a track, ignoring a footpath on your right. Continue on a gravel drive towards the houses of Clapham, ending in the village where the walk began. Tea awaits you in the *The Junction*, the Clapham tearoom!

For end-of-walk refreshments, there are some of the best Sussex hostelries within a short drive. The *Coach and Horses* (postcode **BN13 3UA**) is off the A27 road, as is the *Worlds End* (postcode **BN13 3UQ**). But, a little further west along the road there is the iconic thatched country inn, the *Woodman Arms* in Hammerpot (postcode **BN16 4EU**).

Getting there

By car: If coming from the M25 area, take the A24 (Worthing) Road. As you enter Findon, about 5 miles before Worthing, filter right and turn **right** at a roundabout onto the A280, signposted *Littlehampton*. Follow the A280 along a rather exhilarating bendy valley route for over 3 miles. Just after a right turn for Patching, turn **left** into Clapham village. Follow the long narrow street, as far as necessary, preferably near (or on) a driveway on the left for the church. There is always plenty of space hereabouts.

If coming from the A27, turn off at a sign for *Clapham, Patching, Angmering, Findon*; at the roundabout, follow signs for *Clapham, Findon*; the turning for Clapham is ½ mile on the **right** (then as above).



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