



Lavington Common, Burton Park, Duncton

Distance: 8 km=5 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Duncton

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

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Heath, woodland, parkland, church, pub, green meadows

In Brief

This walk is like a four-course picnic with four types of terrain which advertise all that's best of the Sussex landscape. First and last: a heath of silver birch, pines and purple heather. Next: a vast shady wood of tall oaks and beeches. Then open parkland giving wide views of the South Downs. Finally, after a perfect country inn, rolling green meadows. Each type of terrain reveals a new character in winter, making this walk ideal throughout the year.

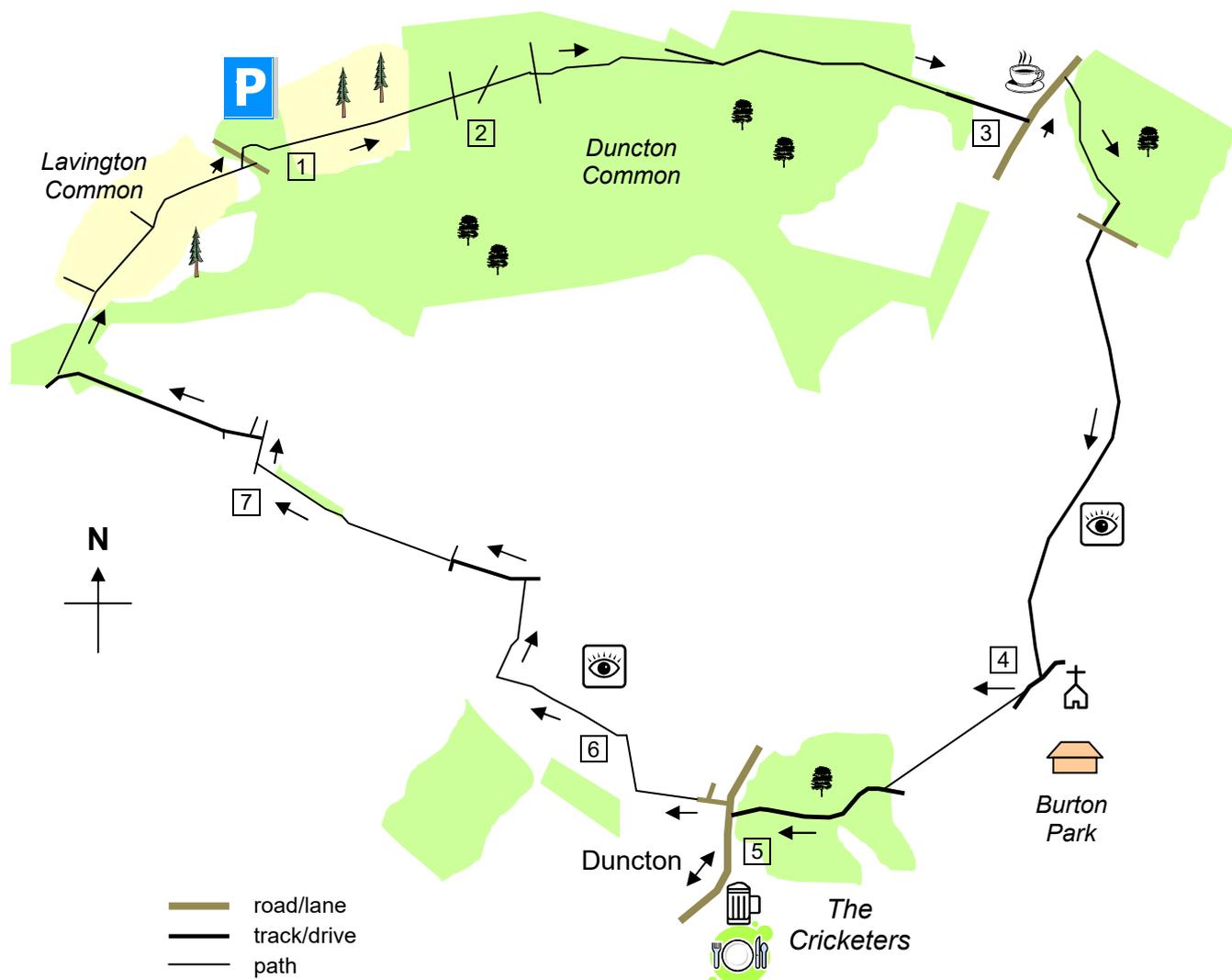
The *Cricketers* is a popular historic roadside inn and it is advisable to book (ring 01798-342473 for information).



There is one thin (2m) patch of undergrowth, not enough to prohibit shorts. The walk was completely dry in summer, when boots should be optional, but in winter boots are essential with some very deep mud, especially after rain, in the fields. Your dog is welcome on this walk.

The walk begins at the **Lavington Common National Trust** car park, nearest **postcode GU28 0QL**, www.w3w.co/quote.beans.firewall, grid ref SU 948 188, south west of Petworth, West Sussex. **Warning! isolated car park: leave car visibly empty - see Guidelines. (Sep 2024: thefts reported; this car park is screened from the road giving temptation to opportunists looking for bags that might contain cards etc.. A notice is available from Sussex police that you can display in your car. Others may decide to park elsewhere along the route.)** Some walkers begin and end by *The Cricketers* (postcode **GU28 0LB**). For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Starting at the Lavington Common car park, with your back to the road, walk to the far **right**-hand corner where there is a short wooden barrier and a sign for the *Circular Woodland Walk*. Take this footpath, shortly coming out onto the gleaming heath of Lavington Common. Your path runs along a bank under a stand of tall Scots pines and, after 400m, you come past a wooden barrier and enter the dark and impenetrable treescape of Duncton Common. Keep straight ahead, following a black-on-yellow arrow, on a path through pines and rhododendrons. *Note that you are on part of the Serpent Trail (ST), a snaking long-distance path running from Haslemere to Petersfield; as well as the shape, the name comes from the several species of (harmless) snake you may see along the way.*
- 2 In 300m you go over a crossing path and, 150m later, over a diagonal crossing path. The next crossing has a 4-way fingerpost: as always, keep straight on. In a further 150m, a bridleway joins from your left. A deep-set stream meets you on the left and departs to wind away through the woodland. Your path elbows right and rises. In $\frac{1}{2}$ km you pass a junction on your left and a large metal gate. *Soon, glancing on your left into the garden Fernworthy you can see several sculptures made out of wood bark, of a horse, a giraffe and a scary heraldic beast.* The path becomes a dusty drive and passes houses, finally coming out to the main (A285) road.

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On this side of the road, on the left, is the **Heath End Hut**, a good stopping point for coffee, snacks and provisions. Cross the road and turn **left** on the narrow footway. In 150m, between two stone walls, turn **right** on a bridleway, still on the ST. This dark sheltered path runs under laurels and, in 350m, ends at a tarmac drive. Veer **right** on the drive to come out to Burton Park Road. Cross straight over the road onto a wide semi-tarmac drive. Ignore a footpath on the right shortly and stay on the drive. *In contrast to the dark forest, you now have terrific views across the horse pastures to the South Downs with Bignor Hill and soon the manor house of Burton Park, your next destination, comes into view.* After 700m or so, ignore a signed footpath on your left, thus leaving the ST. At a large wooden gate, go through the smaller gate and continue to a T-junction with the house on view across the grass.



You are standing in an Anglo-Saxon village. Burton was recorded in the Domesday Book as "Bothechitone". Now only the little Norman church remains. It was rebuilt in 1291 and (partly) in 1636. The first Burton Park was founded in 1242, probably for hunting. The original mansion house, enclosed by a deer park, was built around 1500. The present neo-classical house was begun in 1828. After numerous developments, the estate was purchased in 1919 by the Courtauld family 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.

Nearby Burton Mill is visited by another walk in this series which also passes through the radiant Sutton Common and Barlavington Hanger.

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Your route is **right** at the T-junction. *But first on no account miss the chance to turn **left** across the grass and through the 14th-century doorway to visit the little Church of St Richard which is nearly always open (see the generous description on the "Sussex Parish Churches" website).* Having turned **right** on the drive, go only 40m and fork **right** onto a signed footpath along a grass path. *You are walking part of the West Sussex Literary Trail, a 55-mile route from Horsham to Chichester; along which you meet Shelley, Galsworthy, Belloc, Blake and Keats.* Your path runs between wire fences and wild meadows and finally enters trees to meet a tarmac drive. Turn **right** on the drive, eventually coming out through ornate metal gates to the main road in Duncton.

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Your walk continues **right** and **left**, crossing the main road, onto a residential road, Willet Close, opposite. However, one of Sussex's best historic pubs is only 200m away, on this side, **left** along the grass verge.

The Cricketers used to be called "The Swan". That was until after John Wisden bought it in 1867. He was the founder of the eponymous annual "Wisden Almanack" of cricket, known simply as "Wisden". Only 5'4" tall weighing 7 stone, he was the best roundarm bowler of his day, at a time when overarm bowling was not permitted.

A detailed and personal history of Duncton can be viewed on the website created by the Bald Explorer (Richard Vobe), where you can see videos about the old and new churches, the oldest working bell, the water mill and the game of stoolball.

If you visited the pub, continue the walk by crossing the road carefully and turning **right** on the footway, back to the point where you arrived. Continue a short distance and turn **left** on a residential road. Follow the road to the end, next to a school, and go over a stile onto a wide grass strip. In the corner, go **right** and keep to the left-hand edge of the meadow as it curves round to the right uphill towards a large metal gate where you find a sign-post. *The spire of the "new" Duncton Church can be seen on your right.* Go over



a stile here into a large meadow with great views, including Bexleyhill (with the transmitter). *The fingerpost is the first of several bearing the words "to the pub" tempting you to go back for another pint.*

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Keep **left** along the edge of the meadow, curving right as you go, with a view ahead of Ridlington Farm, which you will shortly pass. Just before the end of the meadow, you meet a fingerpost. Turn squarely **right**, as directed, along the bottom edge and follow the path past another field until, after 250m, you reach a gravel farm drive. Turn **left** on the drive, passing barns on your left. Where the drive ends, go straight ahead up a bank and take a narrow but clear path across a cereal field. At the other side, go over a 3-plank bridge into a short belt of undergrowth. A large wooden gate (lift the hook) leads to a beautiful path in an avenue of tall oaks, coming out at the end, with a great view of the South Downs, past a sheep pasture, towards the building of Westerlands Stud.



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Turn **right** before the buildings, as directed, past a garden. *There is now (2025) a renovated horse box here now with seating outside which serves nice coffee, pastries and snacks on Saturdays and Sundays all year round.* Turn immediately **left** at a waymarker on a tarmac drive. A campsite is on your right and shortly you enter the shade of oak trees. You pass on your right a house with garden (sometimes with sculpture). Just after the drive curves left to enter the settlement of Lower Barn, turn sharp **right** at a fingerpost, passing an alpine-style bungalow on your left, followed by more houses. Keep straight on through a swing-gate into the National Trust's Lavington Common. Your route is always straight on across the heath of pines, birch and heather. You pass three fingerposts along the way and after a spectacular ½ km you approach the road. Just before a large gate, fork **left** through a small wooden gate and cross the road to the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: If coming from the north through Petworth, continue south on the A285, signposted *Chichester*. Pass the *Badgers Inn*, a filling station and ignore a left turn to *Bignor*. 300m=320 yds later, turn **right** at a sign for *Selham, Graffham*. The car park is nearly 2 km=1¼ miles on the right, just after a left bend.

By bus: bus 99 runs between Petworth and Chichester, two-hourly, stopping at Duncton, not Sundays. Check the timetables.

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