



Fittleworth Pub Walk A Swan and Two Commons

Distance: 4 km=2½ miles easy walking with one short steep ascent

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 27-jun-2016

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Last update: 1-nov-2023

Refreshments: Lower Fittleworth, Village Stores Café

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

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Historic pub, heath, views, woodland, majestic trees

In Brief

This energetic little walk takes you over the best parts of two wild pieces of dramatic woodland either side of the village of Fittleworth, before taking well-earned refreshment at an historic country pub.



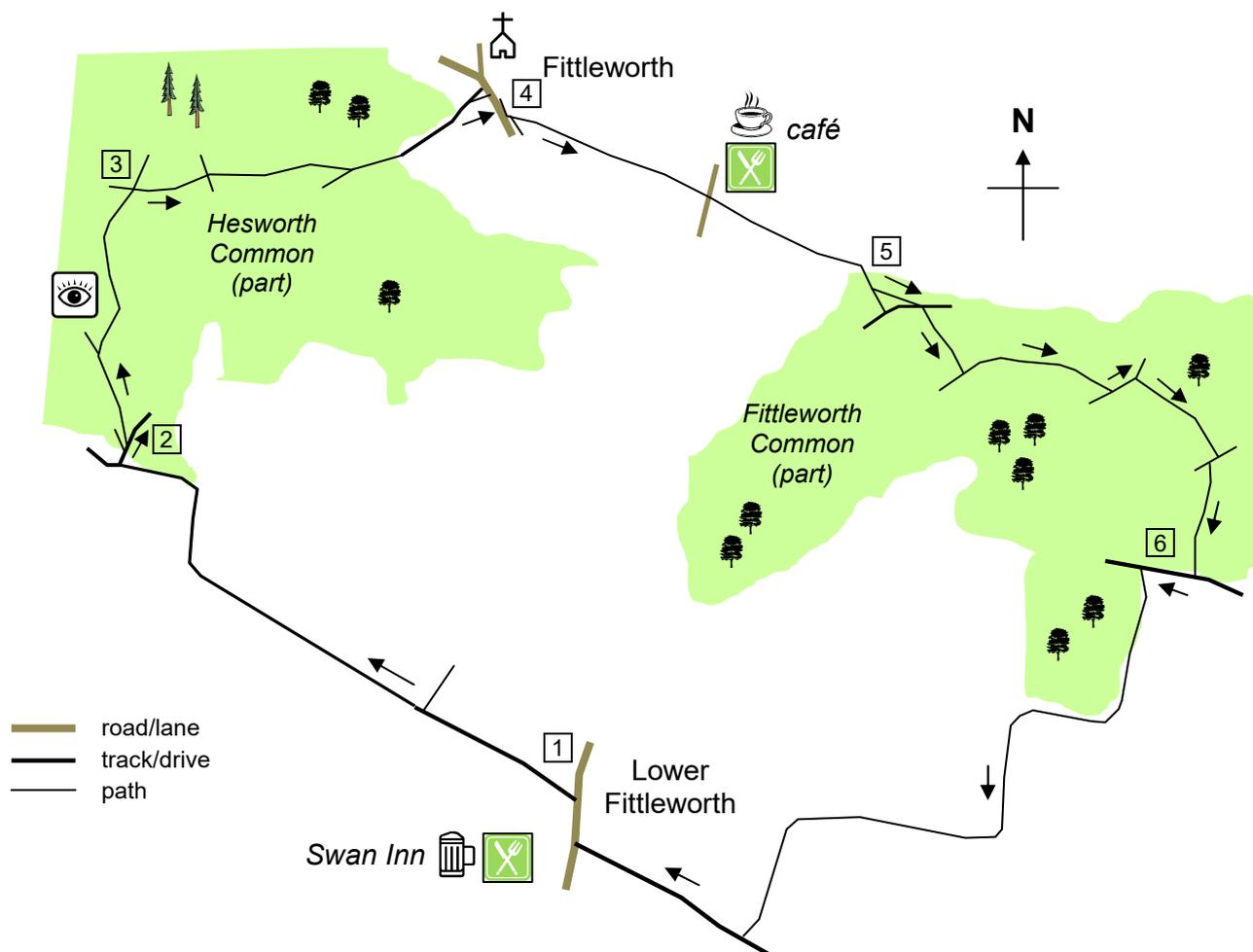
The Swan Inn was sold to Sussex man Angus Davies in 2022 and, after renovation, will certainly re-open, with luck, in late 2024. Meantime, there is a pop-up refreshment bar at the back through the arch. The inn is so proud of its location it even has a sign over the road, as if any passing driver would fail to notice it. For this must be a perfect place to find an old friendly coaching inn (dating back to 1382). It was a resting place for horses of the royal couriers before the long climb up the South Downs at Bury Hill. A plaque records that in 1925 one of the first meetings of the Ancient Order of Froth Blowers was held here; the Swan is still called "Vat No.0". There is a good garden to enjoy the inventive menu and drink al fresco. The Swan is (was?) also a hotel, boasting four-posters in some rooms. It also serves as the village tuck shop.



There is one section, near the end, where nettles can be a problem, making bare legs inadvisable and a stick or pole useful. The terrain is either firm tracks or sandy paths, so sturdy walking shoes or trainers are adequate provided the weather has been dry. In winter or in wet conditions, boots are recommended. This walk is fine with your dog. There are *no compulsory stiles*.

The walk begins in **Lower Fittleworth** near the *Swan Inn*, postcode **RH20 1EN**, www.w3w.co/already.foresight.walks. There are parking spaces in the little square, on the edge of the side road or just off the main road. At a pinch, there are spaces further down the main road, near the bridge. Another good starting place is in the village, to give you a better chance to look around the historic cottages and gardens. Park in the lane beside the church (Church Lane), www.w3w.co/screaming.ships.cheaper, postcode **RH20 1HL**, where there is always bags of room. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 From outside the *Swan Inn*, walk away from the main road along the quiet tarmac lane, passing various houses, including *The Grange*. Shortly after, **ignore** a signed footpath on the right and carry on straight ahead on what is now a wide grassy track between fields. After 400m, the track suddenly bends right and, in 80m, left. Just before a garage belonging to the large house ahead, *Hesworth Grange*, turn **right** into the woods of Hesworth Common on a signposted footpath, also marked as part of the *Serpent Trail*, a long-distance path.
- 2 In 15m, at a marker post [Oct 2023: gone?], **avoid** the left fork and stay on the semi-tarmac for just another 10m. Now turn **left** on a peaty path which runs gently uphill through bracken. In 100m, you reach a high point offering a good view to your left. At this point, avoid a sandy path that runs ahead downhill and instead turn **right** on the wide ascending path. In 50m, at a marker post, keep straight ahead uphill, avoiding a narrow path on your right. The path veers a little to the right and finally brings you to the top of the hill. Here you have a bench seat from which to admire the view of Bignor Hill (*see that walk in this series*) and the South Downs. After a breather, continue another 20m or so to a 4-way fingerpost. [There is much to explore of Hesworth Common some other time: for now, the introduction is too brief.](#)

3 At the fingerpost, turn **right** on a path steeply downhill. Your path goes over a crossing path by a marker post and continues ahead at another marker post. Keep to the main path, avoiding the horseshoe symbols which keep the horses off your route. The terrain changes from silver birch to holly as you pass a 3-way fingerpost, keeping straight on. Continue past a bungalow and follow the tarmac drive. Just after the last (white) house, fork **right** on a tarmac footpath leading to a wooden barrier and the main road. Cross carefully straight over to a footway on the other side. However, if you parked in the village, Church Lane is on your left. [In any case, you should not miss the chance to see the village with its church and historic thatched and timbered houses.](#)

4 Turn **right** on the footway and fork **left** through a wooden barrier on a signposted footpath. Immediately take the **left** fork. You are on a good sunken path beside back gardens. At a minor road, cross over* to a footpath opposite, on the *Serpent Trail* again. (* But if you turn **left** long the lane for about 100m you will find the *Village Stores and Café* on the right, just past the village school, where they serve excellent light lunches and drinks.) The path leads over a stream, past a kitchen garden and elbows right-left between more fences, delivering you into the wonderful depths of Fittleworth Common.

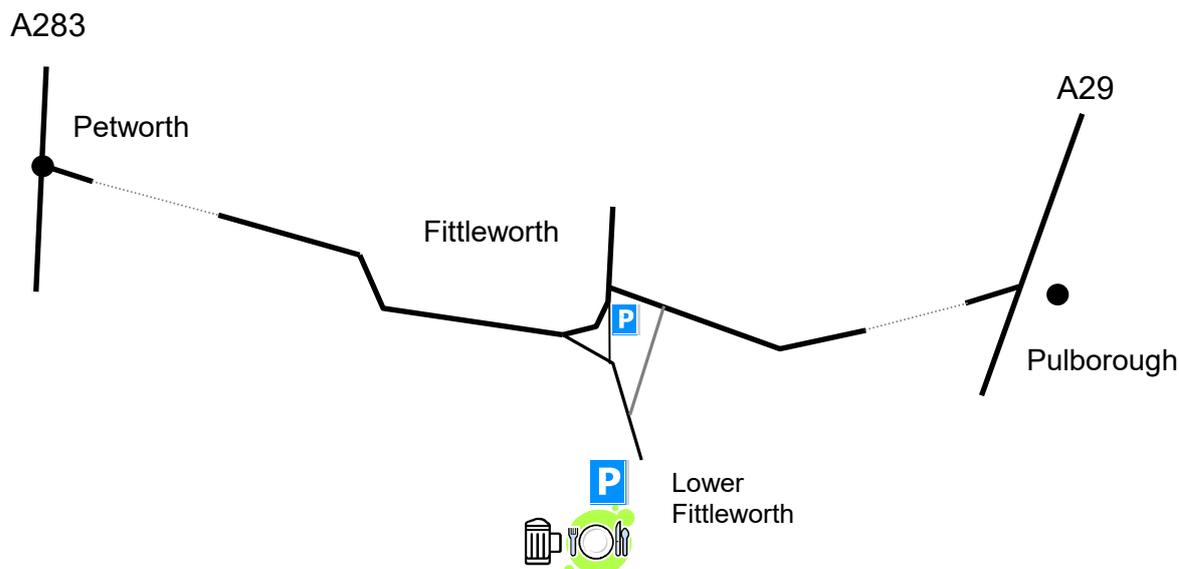


5 Keep ahead under chestnut trees (a remnant of an old coppice) for around 120m, avoiding a left fork beside the fence, until you reach a wide crossing path at a marker post. [Now comes the only tough section on this walk; this really is the best way as either a left or a right turn on the crossing path would take you on a wide and less interesting loop.](#) Cross straight over the crossing path onto a narrow, steeply rising path. [\[Care! Some walkers missed this path.\]](#) The climb is only for 50m but it seems longer. At the top, you meet a level crossing path. Turn **left** on this very gnarly path, running under some of the best tree specimens in the common: tall chestnuts, oaks, then pines, birch, rowan. After about 150m on this path, you will see a marker post on your right. Ignore the junction here and continue ahead, immediately veering left up a bank onto a small raised area. Walk across the raised area, about 5m, to the fringe of bracken and turn **right** on a path. Keep straight on at all times on this pleasant peaty path. You pass some exotic conifers, large and small. After about 120m, you come to a T-junction with another good path. Turn **right** here, immediately reaching a fingerpost [\[Oct 2023: broken and propped up against a tree: thanks Adrian!\]](#). Turn **left** at the fingerpost on a downhill path, covered in part with small stones. In 120m you reach a tarmac drive at the bottom.

6 Turn **right** on the tarmac drive. In 50m, turn **left** at a fingerpost, over a 2-plank bridge (not need when dry). The path leads down the right-hand side of a large meadow with great views of the South Downs in the distance. You come past two redundant stiles into a crop field. Your path now goes on a zigzag course: **right** along the edge, **left** in the corner of the same field, **right** in the corner, **left** round the corner. In the next corner, your path takes you through a new metal kissing-gate and down steps to a wide dusty track. Turn **right** on the track, to come to the main road in 200m. Turn **right** on the road, immediately reaching the *Swan Inn* where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Fittleworth lies on the A283 road between Petworth and Pulborough.



If you are coming via Guildford - Milford - Chiddingfold - Northchapel on the A283, go through Petworth and, in the middle of the town, turn **left** in the direction *Pulborough Fittleworth A283*. Fork **right** just before Fittleworth in the direction *Bury Arundel* with a brown tourist sign for the *Swan*.

If you are coming via Dorking - Ockley - Billingshurst on the A29, go through the outskirts of Pulborough to a double mini roundabout, turn **right** in the direction *Petworth A283*. When you reach Fittleworth, follow the road round to the left in the village centre, stay on the main road for $\frac{1}{4}$ km (300 yards) and turn **very sharp left** at a sign for *Bury Arundel* with a brown tourist sign for the *Swan*. (There is also a short cut along School Lane just before the village or, immediately after the village, a one-way short cut past the church.)

By bus/train: bus no. 1 from Pulborough Station to Fittleworth. Check the timetables.

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