



Amberley, South Downs, Parham

Distance: 19 km=12 miles or 15 km=9½ miles easy-to-moderate walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 9-jul-2012

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Refreshments: Storrington, Amberley

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

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

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High views, river, village, woodland, parkland

In Brief

This is a walk of great variety with something new at every turn. The southern part is an exhilarating walk along the South Downs. In the west is the magical village of Amberley. In the north is the deerpark of Parham and in the east the small town of Storrington with many interesting features. A short cut is provided to omit the river and castle.



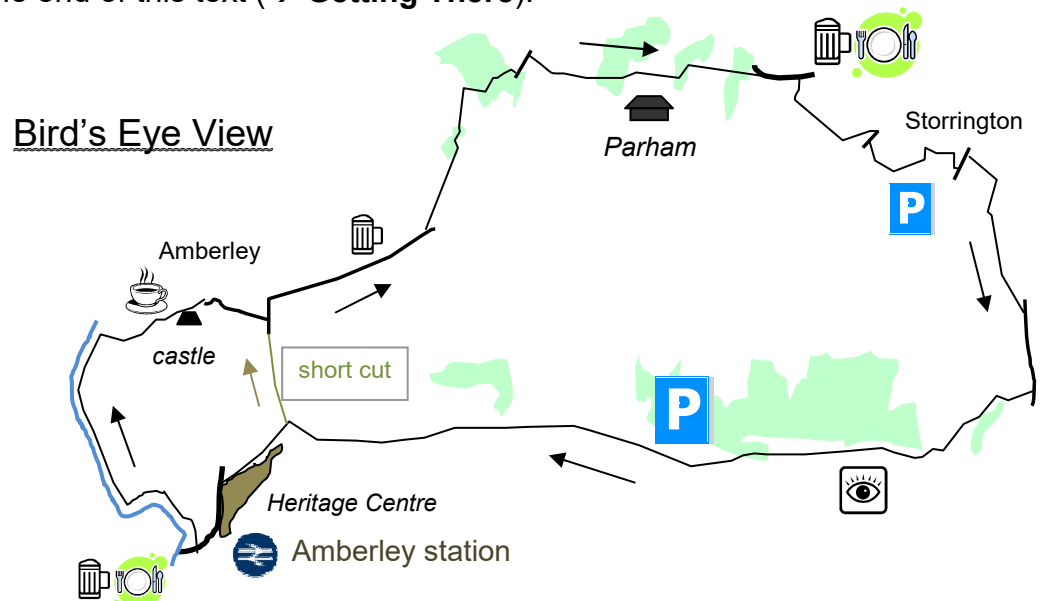
There are just a few patches of nettles and brambles, easy to skip around.



Boots are essential because of the long walk on the high path and the marshy area near the river. This walk should be fine with your dog too.

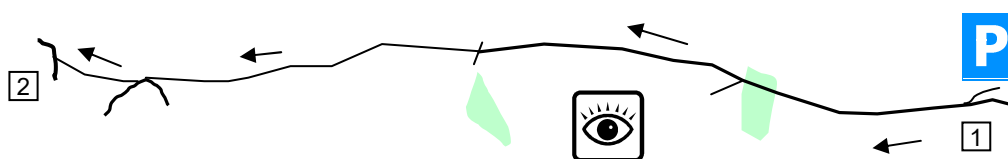


The walk begins at **Amberley Train Station** or at the **Kithurst Hill** car park, just south of the B2139 road between Amberley and Storrington, grid ref TQ070125, *approximate* **postcode RH20 4HW**. You can also park in Storrington, **postcode RH20 4LN**, closer to final refreshment. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Kithurst Hill to Amberley 8½ km=5 miles (reducible)



- 1 Beginning at the car park on Kithurst Hill, go westwards (i.e. to the **right** when facing the sea) through the car park and exit via a narrow path to join the wide chalky track, part of the South Downs Way (SDW). In about 700m, the track goes through a wide band of trees. Immediately ignore a left fork and stay on the SDW. *On your right soon is an extensive tract of the Downs belonging to the Springhead Estate and this is usually open access land. If you like, you can go through the gate and walk along the green spaces parallel to the track, with enhanced views north, exiting later by a metal gate back to the track.* Arundel and its castle are visible to your left. Soon you have views of the Arun Valley ahead, with Amberley and Bury church visible below. At a 4-way crossing, keep straight ahead. Eventually your path reaches a small wooden gate and begins to descend. You are soon joined by a farm track from the left and your path takes you through a small wooden gate. At a fingerpost, avoid a byway that forks left through the farm buildings and keep ahead on a fenced path. This takes you down between small fields to a wooden gate. Continue down to a tarmac lane. Turn **right** on the lane.

Just 20m before a road junction there is a stile on the left which you should **avoid**. It leads, by way of a stile, 30m on the right, to a beautiful long forest walk, abruptly cut off at the end by the *Amberley Heritage Centre*. The only exit is down a steep slope, over a wooden gate, round the edge of a field and through a barbed-wired fence into the Centre. Should you attempt this, despite this warning, you *must* proffer the full entrance fee on the way out.

At the road junction, you reach a fork.

Decision point. You can shorten the walk at this point by 3½ km by taking the **Amberley Cheat** shortcut near the end of this text. You will however miss the River, a pub and restaurants and Amberley Castle.

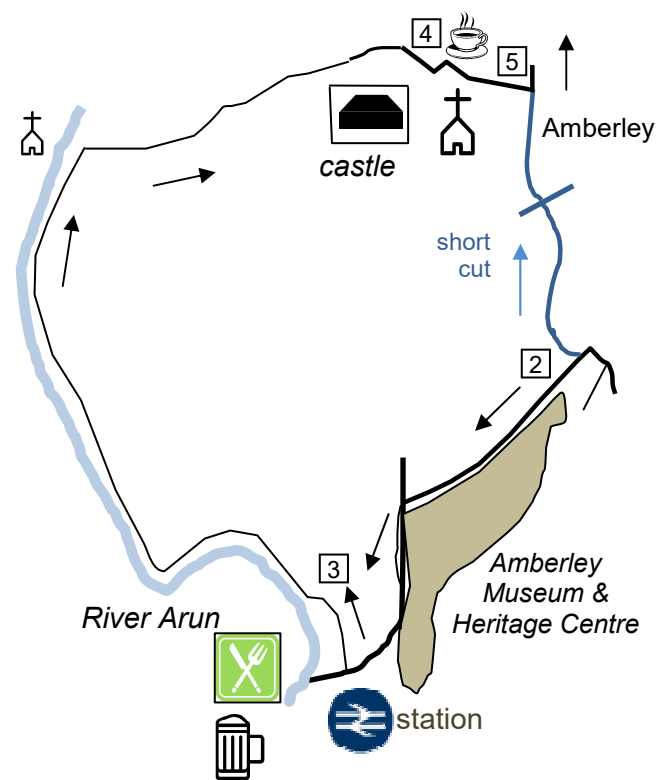
- 2 **See mini-map overleaf.** Take the **left** fork, a chalky lane known as High Titten. On your left soon are some of the buildings of the Heritage Centre. You pass houses and reach the B2139 road. Cross the road, turn **left** and shortly take a sheltered footpath running parallel to the road. Soon Amberley Station is on your left (an alternative starting point) together with the Heritage Centre.

The Amberley Museum and Heritage Centre is a fascinating complex, so huge that a bus or railway will take you round the site. It is home to nostalgic crafts, such as a stained glass maker, a blacksmith and potter, plus many old vehicles, railway equipment and a good restaurant.



Continue under the railway bridge. The route is immediately **right** at a signpost on a wide shingle path. However, a little further you will find, on your left, the *Bridge Inn*, a pub with basic food and, on your right, the *Riverside* restaurant which has tables by the River Arun.

3 Having taken the shingle path, veer **left** alongside a fence with the River Arun on your left. You pass a bridleway on the right and soon a footbridge on the left, disregarding both. Your path goes over a stile or through a metal gate. The river gradually bends right and you will be aware of the rich bird life in this peaceful location. Eventually, after nearly 2km of riverside walking, you are on the opposite bank from the village of Bury and its distinctive church. Turn **right** here at a fingerpost on a narrow path, a fraction left, heading for a large metal gate. The terrain here is marshy but easily manageable, thanks to the large tufts of grass. Go over a stile beside the gate, then over another stile or through a metal gate. (A glance back here will give you a final view of Bury village and the church.) Another stile by a metal gate takes you on a path across the levels. Cross the railway line carefully, via a stile on each side.




4 On your right now is the wall of Amberley Castle, probably showing its white doves that flutter in and out of the putlog holes.

Amberley Castle was built in the 1100s as a manor house, but fortified for the bishops of Chichester in 1377 and was owned and extended by the church until the Duke of Norfolk bought it in 1893. It is now a luxury hotel and wedding centre. The castle is completely enclosed by a high curtain wall and accessed via a twin-tower gatehouse complete with a two-tonne oak portcullis which is lowered at midnight each night.

Continue past St Michael's church into the enchanted village. The more modern houses here date from the 1600s, with *Amberley House* on your left, and the Pottery on your right. Most houses are thatched and many sprout merry sticks of hollyhocks. Avoid a junction left and continue slowly through the village to turn **left** at a T-junction.

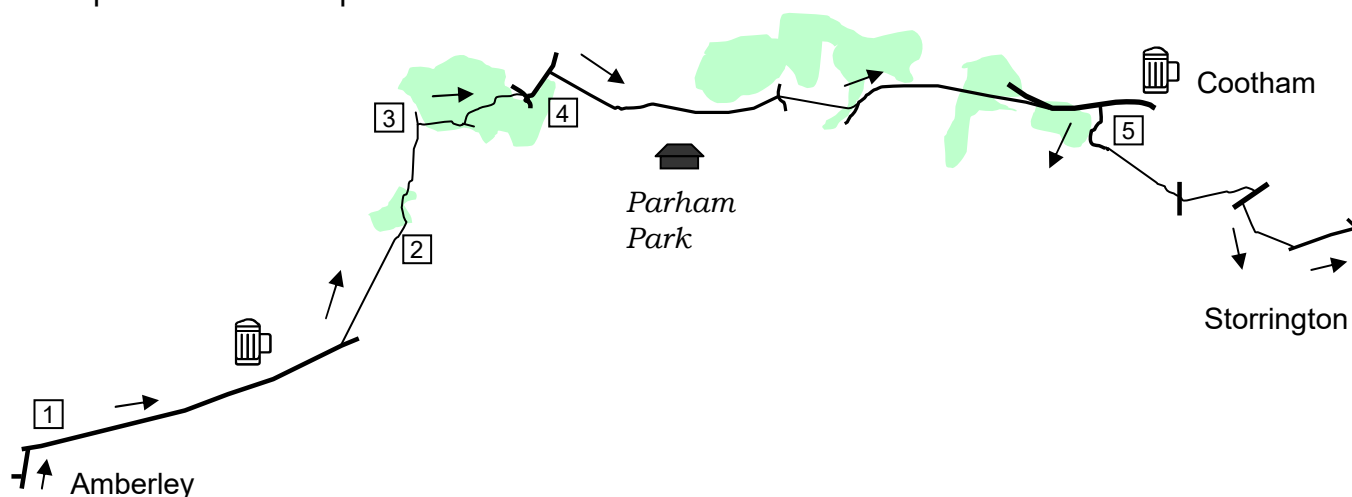
The **Amberley Cheat** short cut re-joins the walk here. If you took it, be sure to explore the village, via the road on the left.

5  Opposite you are the Amberley Village Tea Rooms, in a small courtyard, with a pretty interior, serving cream teas and an excellent homemade elderflower cordial. There is a general store in a courtyard on the right, open Sundays too. The *Black Horse* pub is due to re-open in Nov 2018.

The hills around Amberley are full of Neolithic remains, burial places, cultivated terraces and tracks so the village's history must go back at least 4000 years. Circular huts of 3000 year vintage were recently excavated near here. Amberley was an important centre in Roman times. After the Norman invasion, the castle (manor) was taken over by the Bishops of Chichester. Amberley was joined to the village of Bury by a ferry which ceased operating in 1965. By the mid-1800s, Amberley was even larger than it is now and boasted eight beer houses or inns, nine farms and twelve shops – butchers, bakers, tailors, shoemakers and, in what is now Old Postings, a fancy goods merchant who made extra income by making coffins.

Leg 2: Amberley to Storrington 6½ km=4 miles

- 1 At a T-junction on the north side, turn **right** by the exquisite timbered *Kennards*. Leave the village along this lane, Rackham Road, which in early spring is lined with daffodils. Soon you reach a line of houses known as Crossgates and pass the *Sportsman Inn*. *The Sportsman (now re-opened in 2018) is an outgoing and welcoming place, well frequented by locals and visitors, serving food as well as real ales and other refreshments, including teas.* Continue along the lane a little further. *The wooden house Wild-hanger has replaced its hedge with an amazing bank of wild flowers.* After the last house, just before an end-of-30-mph sign, go **left** on a diagonal path across a crop field.



- 2 At the other side, go over a 2-plank bridge in the hedgerow, closely followed by another. Cross a small meadow and go over a stile in the far left corner, immediately followed by another 2-plank bridge. Keep straight ahead through shrubs, going over a stile and another long 2-plank bridge. Your path now goes through woodland and veers right. It goes over a stile into a meadow and zigzags left-right where you have good views left across the levels to the hills beyond. Go over a stile, along a grassy path and over a fine wooden bridge with railings, taking you to a junction and a 3-way fingerpost.
- 3 Turn **right** at the fingerpost, on a pleasant brick path. Immediately after a house on your right, turn **left** at a marker post on a path that goes up through a forest of oak, holly and birch. *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.* The path gradually rises between mossy and ferny banks and comes out to a lane by a bungalow. Turn **right** on the lane and, at a junction, turn **left** in the direction of Wiggonholt. In 100m, you reach the gate houses and the large white gate of Parham. Go through the tall swing-gate into the park.
- 4 Follow the drive across the park, soon passing the lake on your right. Behind a stone wall soon is the landscaped garden with the formal gardens and the house behind the next wall. In the distance is the 17th-century dovecote.

Parham (meaning "peartree homestead") was originally a village and an ecclesiastical retreat. After the dissolution of the monasteries, the present huge Elizabethan house was begun in 1577. The old village gradually disappeared,

leaving only the church, and became another of Sussex's "lost villages". The house passed through the hands of various Palmers, Bysshopps and Zouches until in the 1900s Mr and Mrs Pearson stocked it with beautiful furniture and remodelled the garden. It was a home to evacuees in 1939 and then to Canadian soldiers. Parham claims to be the original home of the orange pippin apple. The house and garden are open to the public from April to September 3-5 days a week.

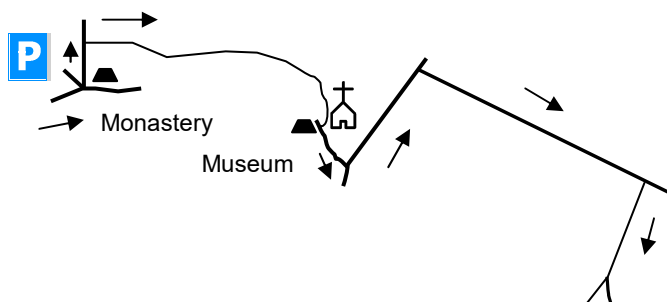
At a T-junction at the end of the drive, go straight over at a fingerpost on a path across the grass. As you near a driveway on your right, veer **left** a bit to join it and follow it through some of the veteran oaks for which this park is famous. White gates by the elegant stone gatehouse are followed by another section of the drive and more white gates, leading out to the A283 road. Continue straight ahead along the road. Ignore a road junction on the right but, just after a chapel (now the village hall), turn **right** on a drive. However, for refreshments, the *Crown Inn* in Cootham is only a short distance on the left. *The "Crown Inn" serves good food at fairly reasonable prices and is remarkable for its traditional pudding desserts.*

- 5 Having turned right on the drive, Chapel Lane, stay on it as it zigzags and curves left. At the end, go through a gap in the hedge, through a small wooden gate and across the centre of a crop field. At the other side, go through a wooden gate, over a long bridge across a stream and between fences to reach a residential road. Cross straight over to a footpath opposite between fences. On reaching a main road, turn **right**. In 70m, turn **left** on a narrow signposted footpath between fences, *very well hidden* in the trees (*don't miss! if you reach Kithurst Park on the left you have gone 80m too far*). At the end, go up steps, over a drive and onwards between more fences. You emerge at a junction of drives. Turn left, following the lane ahead. The lane leads down to a road junction by *Storrington Monastery*.

Storrington Monastery was founded by canons escaping the anti-clerical government of France in the 1880s. They were Norbertines, an offshoot of the Augustinians. The Monastery is now a catholic church.

Leg 3: Storrington to Kithurst Hill 4½ km=3 miles

Storrington means "stork-place". It is remarkable for the men that have chosen to settle in the surrounding hills and hamlets, to name but a few: composer Arnold Bax, illustrator Arthur Rackham, novelist A.J. Cronin, actress Maggie Smith and African statesman Jomo Kenyatta. There are two more pubs in the town (turn left after the church).



- 1 Turn **left** in front of the church on Monastery Lane but in just 30m, turn **right**, going behind the church on a track. Keep right by a wall and go through a wooden swing-gate, followed by another, going through the cemetery of Storrington church. Veer **right** at a fingerpost towards the

- 4 The left fork continues the chalky route but the right fork is grassy between slopes with only a few foot prints. Take this **right** fork. It leads to a space containing the Sullington burial mounds. Keep ahead on the main path between two on the right and one on the left, aiming for a wooden gate visible ahead. As your path runs along a ridge, veer **right** across the slope heading for the wooden gate. Go through the gate and join a high path with views all around. After a good distance on this clear wide route, your path goes through some undergrowth. At a 4-way crossing with a fingerpost, keep straight ahead. You come to an oval track used by horse transports and cross another track. (If you did *not* begin the walk here, you may turn left and right to join the South Downs Way, avoiding the car park.) Immediately you arrive back at the Kithurst Hill car park where the walk began.

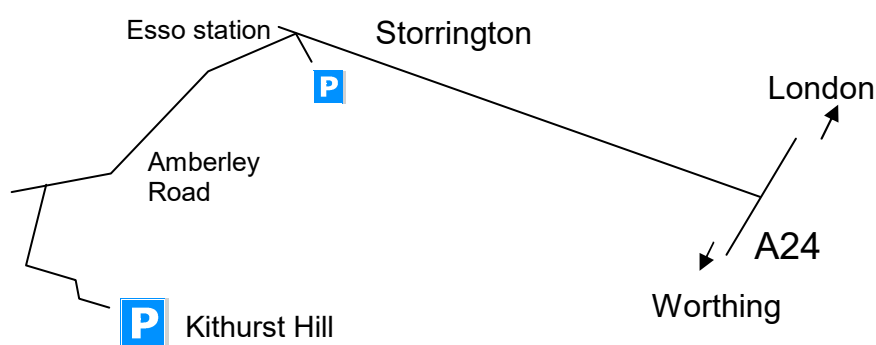
The Amberley Cheat 700m=750 yds

Take this short cut if you want to shorten the walk from the bottom of the Downs into Amberley village, omitting the riverside walk and Amberley Castle.

Take the tarmac **right** fork, Mill Lane. Follow this lane downhill between fields and between banks to a crossroads. Cross straight over to School Lane in Amberley. Keep ahead, soon arriving at a junction in the centre of the village. Continue now from **Leg 1 section 5**, not forgetting to spend some time exploring the village.

Getting there

By car: Storrington is signed off the A24 (London-Worthing) road. If parking in Storrington, coming from the east, go through the town to the Esso filling station and turn very sharp left on Monastery Lane. (NB the car park on the right here is free on Sundays (as 2012).) At the junction, turn sharp right and park in Fern Road. For the Kithurst Hill car park, take the B2139 after Storrington, signposted *Amberley*, and in about 1½ miles, turn left on a narrow lane. (There is only a small wooden sign indicating the Car Park.) Follow the lane up to the top of the Downs, ending at the Car Park.



By bus or train:

Begin at **Amberley Station** (Arun Valley Line), connections from Horsham, Crawley etc.

Bus 100 between Pulborough and Burgess Hill stations stops in Storrington (not Sunday) . Check the timetables.

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