



Chanctonbury and Steyning *A Ring with a View*

Distance 20 km=12½ miles moderate-to-easy walking
or 2 walks of 12½ km=8 miles and 8½ km=5 miles

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Washington, Steyning

Maps: Explorer 121 (Arundel) & 122 (Steyning)

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

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High hills, views, villages, country town, woodland

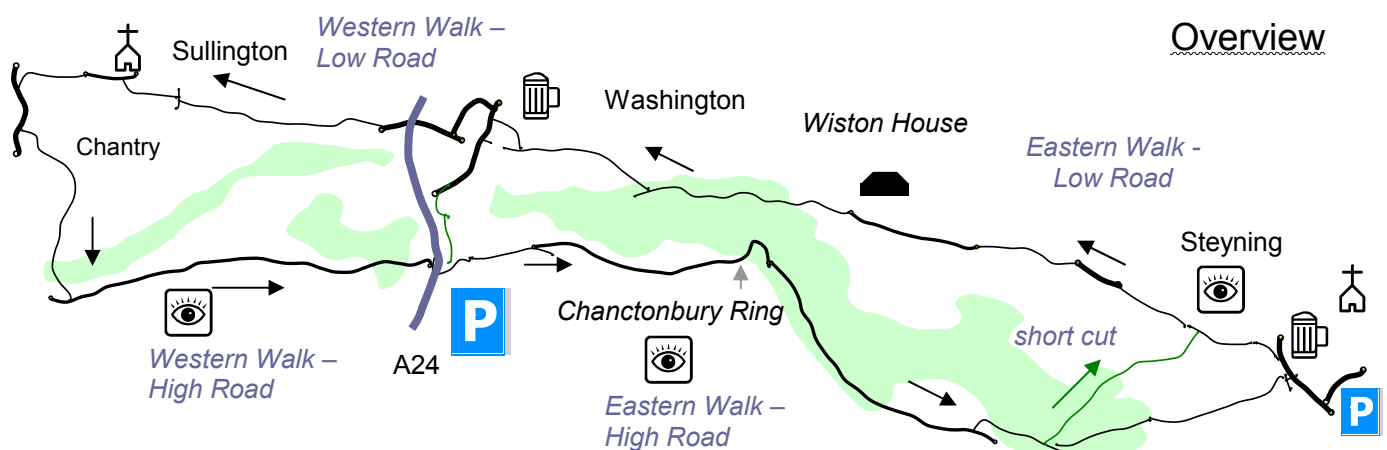
In Brief



This walk takes you along a stretch of the South Downs with fine views all round and, after a visit to a lovely small country town, along a lower route full of interest and back over the Downs again. The going is easy over the chalk downs but you may encounter mud on the lower paths in the wetter seasons, when ankle boots are recommended.

The walk may be split into two parts, the **Eastern Walk** and the **Western Walk**, both centered on **Washington, West Sussex**. The Eastern Walk can omit the visit to Steyning. Both routes have two parts: a **high road**, with fine views, and a contrasting **low road** with many beautiful points of interest.

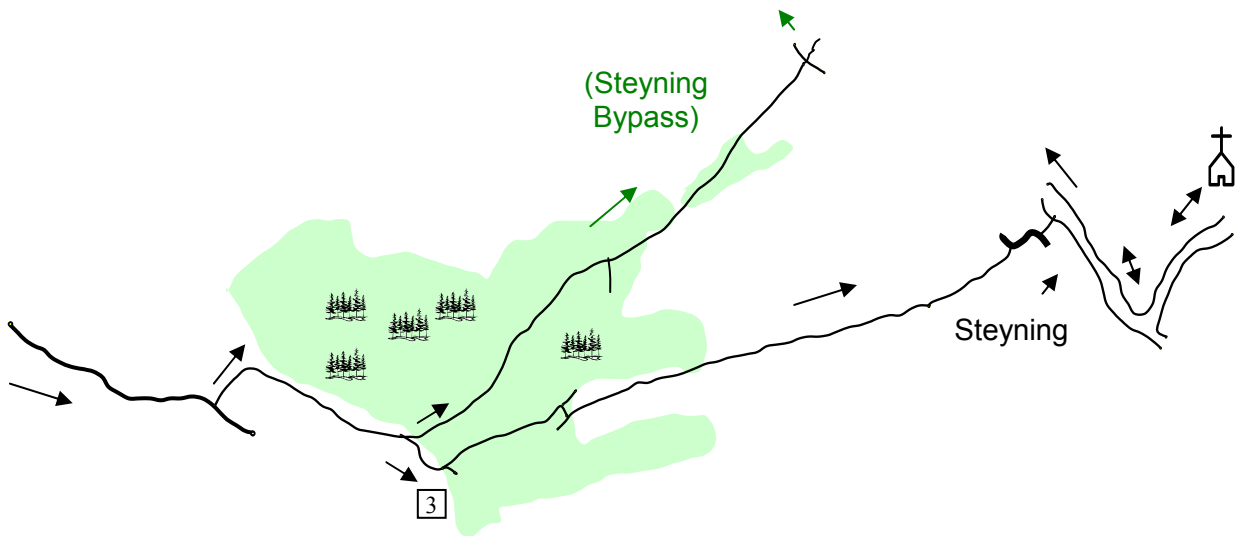
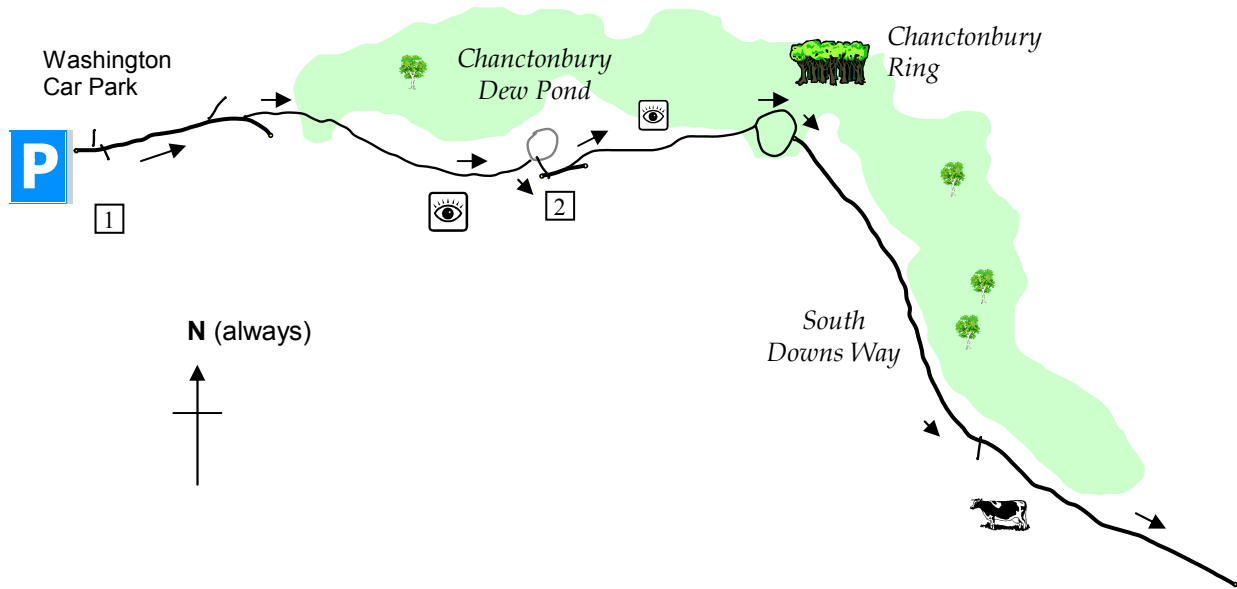
The walk begins at the **Washington car park**. The nearest **postcode** is **RH20 4AZ**, grid ref 120120. But careful ! It is best to ignore the satnav for the last mile as it might lead you to the wrong car park. For full details see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). An alternative start is **Steyning** (**postcode BN44 3YB**), where there is parking near the church.



The Walk

Decision Point. If you are doing only the **Western Walk**, you need to go first to the section **Car Park to Village** at the end of this text.

Eastern Walk: The High Road 6 km=4 miles



- 1 Go past the metal barrier at the end of the car park, signposted *South Downs Way*, on a flinty path uphill. *The South Down Way* is a 160 km=100 mile footpath and bridleway between *Eastbourne* and *Winchester*. At the top, at a fingerpost ignore a footpath left and, 20m later, ignore a cinder farm track right. Just after a gas relay station on your left, ignore a marked bridleway by a gate on the left and continue on the track. After 50m, leave the track by forking **left** on a signed path and going through a wooden gate, soon passing chalk earthworks on your right. Close by in the valley is *Washington* village. *Rock Mill* (now sailless) can be seen just to the right of a sand quarry. Keep straight ahead on a steep chalky path uphill and go through a wooden gate at the top. Keep in the same general direction up the grassy slope. You have a fine view to the left over the Weald to the North Downs. As you

ascend, the sea comes into view, near the big town of Worthing. At the other side, at the highest point on the grass, go over a low bank to the Dew Pond in its ring of hawthorn.

Chanctonbury Dew Pond, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, was constructed about 1870 by a master bricklayer from the Wiston Estate. To hold water for thirsty sheep, a pond had to be "puddled" which involved building a layer of flint and covering it in clay. This pond was restored by the Sussex Society of Downsmen in 1970. There is at least one other in the vicinity but the others are mainly hidden by overgrowth.

- 2 Turn **right** away from the pond and go through a wooden gate by an information tablet. Turn **left** on the track, beside a cattle grid, heading for the Chanctonbury Ring. [It is better to shift left up the grassy bank and walk on a parallel grassy ridge which has views on both sides, heading for the left-hand side of the Ring.](#) On reaching the Chanctonbury Ring, you can walk on a clockwise circular course to obtain an overall view of the ancient earthworks.

Chanctonbury Hill was originally a hill fort and its position is truly commanding with views north across the Weald and south to the sea. It was probably built in the Iron Age, 600-400 BCE, but some Bronze Age (i.e. earlier) pottery has also been found here. The hill is just one of many historical details that crowd this area, with Roman Stane Street nearby and a Roman temple on the site. Saxon coins were found in the nearby farm in 1866. Another Ring, Cissbury, is just a mile or two away. Chanctonbury Ring must be the best-known feature of the South Downs for anyone looking from the north. The trees were planted by Charles Goring who acquired the Wiston Estate in 1743. To ensure that the trees thrived, he regularly brought water up the hill. The hollow ring was formed because of the large Roman temple in the centre which prevented those trees from taking root.

Continue from the Ring on the wide track, part of the South Downs Way (SDW), heading past a cylindrical tank, then through a gate by a cattle grid. In ½ km, at a 4-way junction, keep straight ahead. In another ½ km or so, a track joins from the right. After 400m, at the end of a meadow on the left, at a 3-way fingerpost [\[2005: with the left-pointing finger broken off and attached to the fence\]](#), turn **left** on a path between wire fences, thus leaving the SDW. Your path turns right at the tree line. Follow this flinty path, walking beside a wood on your left. After 400m, you reach a fork by a post with blue arrows.

Decision point. [For a shorter walk, postponing your visit to the delightful small town of Steyning to another day, jump to the Steyning Bypass near the end of this text.](#)

- 3 Take the **right**-hand fork, slightly uphill. The path goes between concrete posts by a field on the right and enters woodland. Just 15m into the woodland, fork **left** on a long path downhill through the wood, avoiding bike paths on your left. After 250m, the path comes to a junction where you can see over to your right a waymarker post and a wooden swing gate. Turn **right** to the gate and go **left** through it. The path leads down and emerges from the woods by a large metal gate with your first view of Steyning below. After 250m of open hillside, your path goes through a wooden swing gate into woods. Keep right on a narrow but straight path. It takes you through a small wooden gate on a straight path between hedges and later an unneeded wooden gate leading onto a track by some allotments. On reaching a road, keep straight ahead and, just after it bends right, turn **left** through a barrier down to the main street of Steyning, opposite the Dolls House Shop. *At the time of writing this shop also does "psychic readings on*

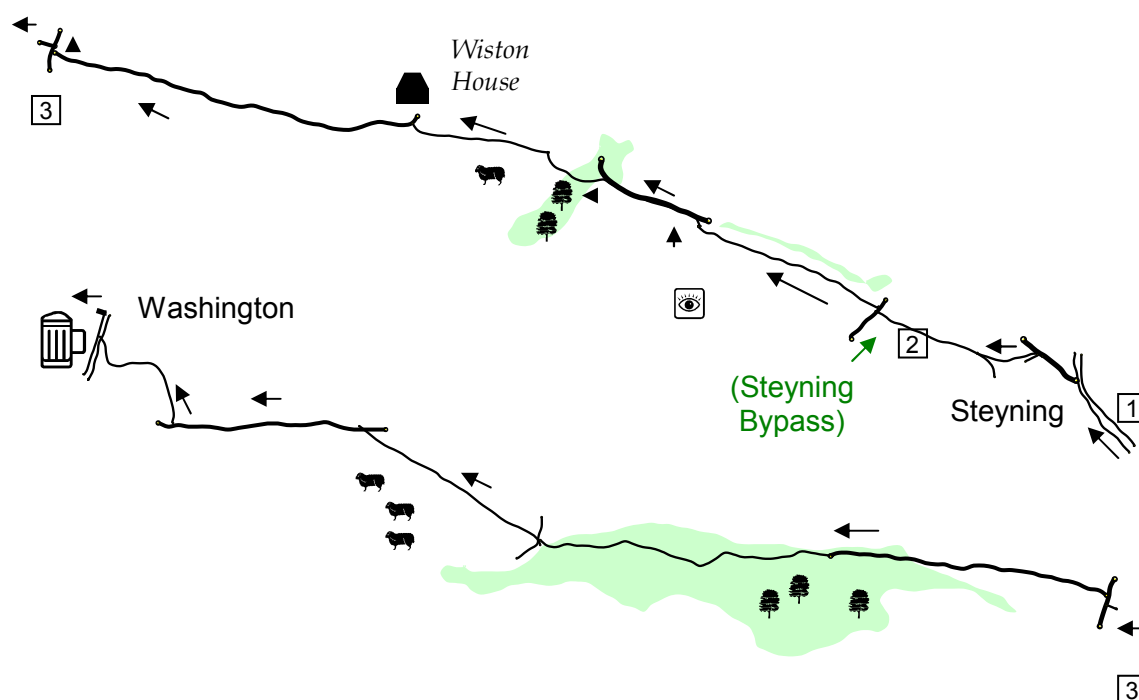
Fridays". The walk will continue **left** from here, but you cannot come without first seeing some of the town.

On entering the Saxon town of Steyning (pronounced "Stenning"), you immediately know that you are in a special place. If you turn right along the main street you will notice that the usual big chain store names are missing (except for the Co-op) and instead there are family grocers, bakers, butchers and some other interesting specialist shops. The vegetable shop (Sussex Produce Company) has an excellent restaurant at the back. Also on the left is the Cobblestone Walk leading to a charming miniature shopping village with food, clothes, knick-knacks and objets d'art. At the end of the street is the old town, on the left down Church Street with the 15th-century half-timbered Brotherhood Hall on the right and the Norfolk Arms on the left. At the small green by "Saxon Cottage" is the site where the last person in England was burned at the stake.

A little further down, you reach the huge 12th-century Norman church of St Andrew. Inside, the high double sweep of its Norman arches show its venerable origins. The church is also dedicated to St Cuthman who, legend has it, settled here after pushing his mother in a wheelbarrow and founded the town's first wooden church around 800, and whose shrine drew many pilgrims.

Steyning was once a busy port but in the 1300s the sea receded. It was always an important market town and the wooden rails at the junction of Church Street and the High Street are where cattle used to be tethered on market days.

Eastern Walk: The Low Road 6 km=3½ miles



- 1 After your visit, return westwards along the High Street, past the Dolls House Shop on your right. Where the street bends right, leave it by keeping straight ahead on Mouse Lane, a name that seems so appropriate for the small cottages that occupy the lane. In only 100m, just past the last thatched cottage, go diagonally **left** on a track and, in 10m, fork **right** on a hidden narrow footpath, going over a stile and into a meadow of wild grass. (Or, if overgrown, continue on the track and turn **right** after a metal gate.) The path meets another path from the left and continues beside a ribbon fence. At the end, go over a stile and fork **left** on a narrow footpath, ignoring the wide stony track right. The path goes down steps and meets a crossing track. Continue straight over.

Here the **Steyning Bypass** short cut meets the longer walk.

- 2 Go up steps and along the right-hand side of a field. *The Chanctonbury Ring is visible ahead to the left.* In 500m, at the end of the field, turn **right** through a metal gate and **left** on the lane. (Some walkers stay in the field on an unofficial path.) Where the lane starts to curve right under trees, turn **left** at a fingerpost and **right** along the field edge again. Go left at the field corner and, in 30m, turn **right** through trees, over a stream, over a stile and into a cereal field. Keep to the path as it curves right and left over a stile onto a wide enclosed path. *On your right, foliage permitting, Wiston House with its grey clad walls and fine conservatory comes into view.*

Wiston House is a 16th-century manor house, set in this spectacular secluded spot at the foot of the South Downs. It was home to the Goring family that moulded their influence so profoundly on the surrounding countryside and especially on the Downs above the house. Since 1950, it has been the home of Wilton Park, a centre for the discussion of international policy, an institution created in 1946 by Winston Churchill to re-establish peace and democracy in Europe.

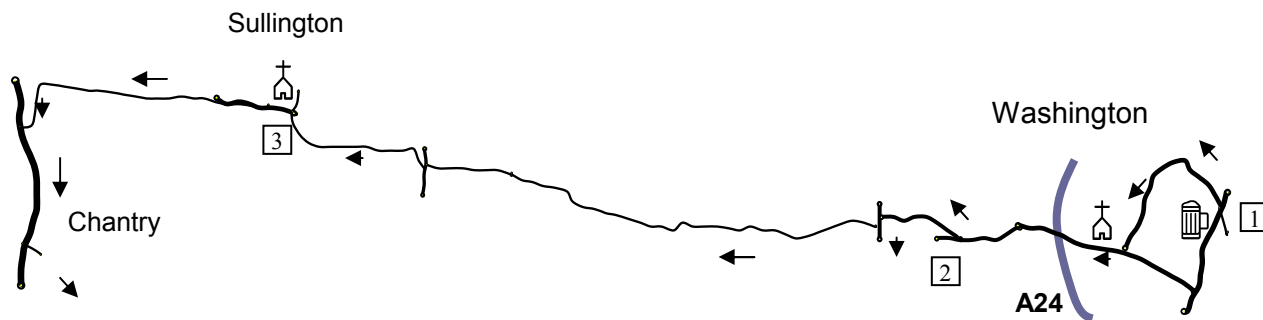
The route continues to a tarmac drive where it turns **left** and under a fancy steel bridge linking some grounds of the House. Where the drive bends right, keep straight on over a metal stile by a metal gate. After 500m, continue through the farmyard of Great Barn Farm, soon passing some tumbledown sheds. *An old Brighton tramcar can be seen here, and later a shooting wagon, both in need of restoration.* At a T-junction with a track, turn **right** and immediately **left** on another track.

- 3 The track runs beside some cottages by a large metal gate and in 250m becomes a woodland track [2015: going round a fallen tree]. In 400m, you pass through a (open) metal gate, passing an old rusty shed. The path narrows and zig-zags left-right through some deep woods, going through one more gate and passing lesser side paths. Follow the main path gradually downhill through handsome beechwoods and finally through a large metal gate at the corner of a sheep meadow. Go **right** through a wooden gate and cross the crop field diagonally, aiming for a stile visible in a fence on the left of a line of trees ahead. Once over the stile, continue in the same direction to the edge of a large pasture and bear **left** on a track along the perimeter. Go through a gate in the corner and keep ahead similarly. Half way along this second pasture, turn **right** over a stile. (If you want to reduce the number of stiles, you can simply continue straight on to the road and turn right.) Traverse a small meadow, go over a stile and bear **left**. Go over another stile, across a drive to an enclosed, rather overgrown, path, over a stile and a wooden bridge across a stream. Finally go across a small meadow and over the last stile to the road opposite the *Frankland Arms* in Washington.

The Frankland Arms is a 200-year old coaching inn. Originally called the "Washington Inn", it was renamed, maybe as a toadying gesture, in honour of William Frankland a nearby landowner. The family's crest on the wall bears the motto "Franke Lande, Franke Mynde" meaning "free country (makes for a) free spirit". For a detailed anecdotal account of the pub's hilarious history, go to www.franklandarms.co.uk/about.htm.

Decision point. If you are doing just the **Eastern Walk**, you now return straight to the car park by following the **Village to Car Park** walk at the end of this text.

Western Walk: The Low Road 4 km=2½ miles



- 1** Turn **left** just after the Frankland Arms into School Lane. Ignore a road junction left and follow the lane round past a school. Eventually, turn **right** on the main street at a T-junction, going past St Mary's Church.

The name 'Washington' means the 'homestead of Wassa's folk' and it has no special link to that other Washington (the one in County Durham). As far back as 946, the manor was granted to Ethelwold by King Edred. Many of the buildings are Grade 11 listed, especially Weaver's Cottage, Rose Cottage and Old Cottage. Rock Mill which appears on the town's shield was built in 1823 and was lived in by the composer John Ireland. St Mary's Church was almost totally rebuilt in 1866 but the tower (an early Tudor bell tower with a Norman lean-to) is original.

Avoid a footpath right and continue on the lane going over the busy A24, ignoring another footpath left. Soon after, at a fork, take the **right** fork. Just by a house on the right, turn **left** at a fingerpost, in the direction of the South Downs Way (SDW).

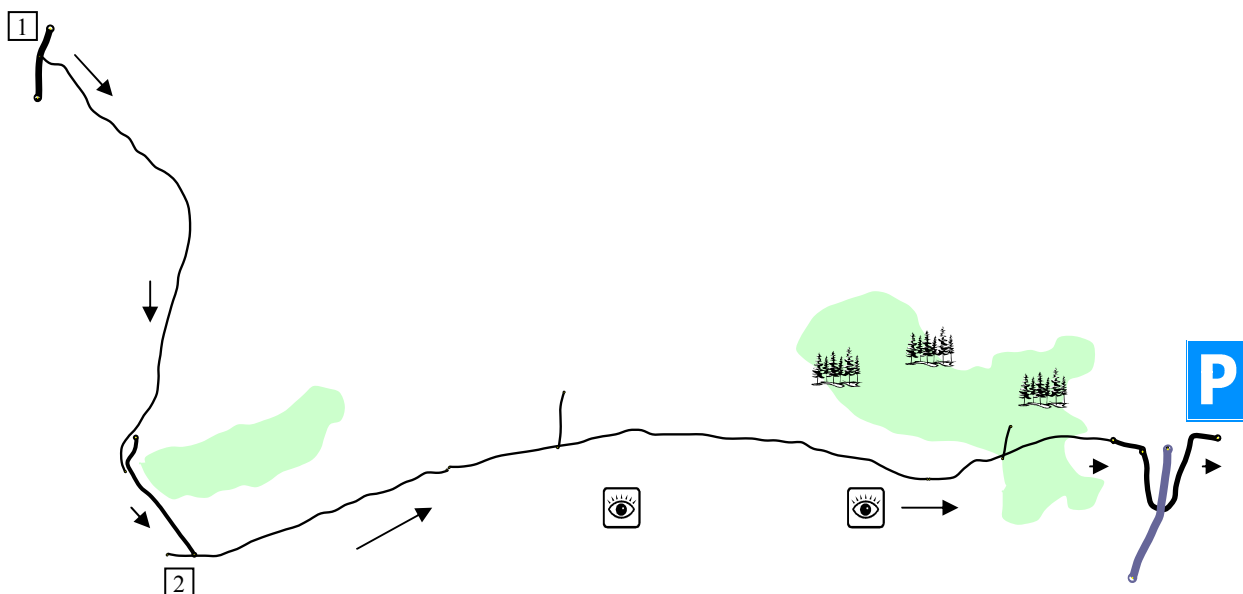
- 2** In just 10m, turn **right** on a bridleway, thus leaving the SDW. The path zig-zags and runs between fields, then through a wooden gate on a sandy path. Go **right** with the path and then, at a 3-way fingerpost, go **left** again on a path darkened by low trees. At the end, cross over a horse track and through a gate on the **right**. Turn **left** round the edge of a field. At the end, go through a farm gate and turn **right** to the church of St Mary, Sullington.

The little church of St Mary, Sullington has stood here for nearly 1000 years. It is set within a yew grove that is even older. The tower and nave are Saxon, dating from 1050, but they were altered by the Normans over the next 200 years. At the entrance is a marble effigy of a 13th-century knight in chain mail, believed to be a de Couvert, Lord of the Manor and a Crusader. In the churchyard there is one remaining 1200-year old yew tree.

Tiny Sullington ("homestead of Sulla's folk") is like a lost village consisting of a few houses and a farm with a massive, weather-boarded, tiled barn and a fine tie-beam roof, dated 1685. The area has been inhabited since Neolithic times, as witnessed by several burial jars, and has seen Celtic, Roman and Saxon occupants. A hoard of Saxon silver was found nearby at Upper Chancton Farm.

- 3** Continue in your original direction, with the church on your right, on a concrete drive and along the right-hand side of a meadow. At the end, go through a (usually open) metal gate on a path that wheels **left** down to a small wooden gate, then **right** again to reach a lane. Turn **left** on the lane. *Immediately on your left is a stream and a little waterfall, products of the natural spring that feeds this valley.* Soon you pass on your left a large house with a stone bridge and waterfowl and on your right *The Chantry* with its portico and large windows. Immediately after *The Chantry*, turn **left** on a signposted footpath uphill into woodland.

Western Walk: The High Road 4 km=2½ miles



- 1 The path comes out onto a hillside and continues uphill on a path between banks. After some distance, the path goes through a metal gate and continues upwards, still between banks. At a marker post, veer **right** onto a path that has been gradually joining from the left. Keep straight ahead on a grassy path, always climbing gently, heading roughly for a barn visible on the hilltop. After another marker post, avoid a metal gate on the right and gradually wheel **left**. At the last moment, merge with a path that has coming up from the left in the valley. Go through a metal gate and finally, at the top of the Downs, go through an unneeded gate and turn **left** on the path at the top.

The South Downs are a vast area of chalk downland in southern England (the others being the North Downs, Salisbury Plain and the Isle of Wight). They stretch from part of Hampshire through Sussex, ending in the cliffs at Beachy Head (see another walk in this series "Seven Sisters, Beachy Head, Eastbourne"). The South Downs are now a National Park (since 2010).

- 2 Continue on the South Downs Way (SDW). After some pasture, the SDW goes through a wooden gate and between fields. At a fingerpost, go straight ahead in the direction of *South Downs Way A24 Crossing (the NDW can be done on horseback with small diversions)*. This fine scenic route gradually approaches the dip in the Downs ahead marking your final destination, passing crop fields and horse meadows and beginning to descend. It goes through a gate into woodland where you ignore a footpath left. As you pass some houses, you will notice on the right a drinking fountain, one of several placed at widely spaced intervals along the SDW. The tarmac drive bends right to meet the A24, which you cross carefully, and continues on the other side, leading within a few metres to the Washington car park.

Steyning Bypass

This short cut shortens the **Eastern Walk** by 1.3 km=0.8 mile, postponing your visit to the wonderful town of Steyning to another time.

For map: see Eastern Walk: The High Road. Take the **left**-hand fork, downhill through woodland. In 500m, join a bridleway coming from the right and stay on the path until it emerges from the woodland and runs as a track between meadows with views all around. Just a few metres from a tarmac lane and metal gate visible ahead, you come to a crossing path with steps each side. Turn **left** here. Now re-join the Eastern Walk, The Low Road at stage **2**.

Car Park to Village

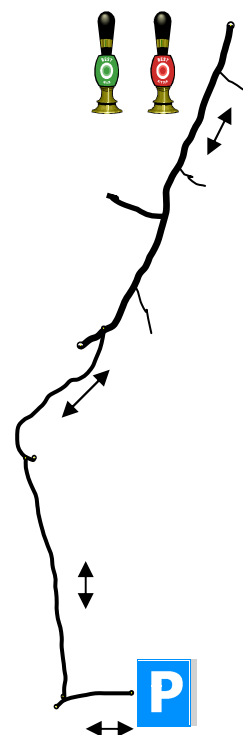
Take this short cut at the start if you're doing the **Western Walk**.

Go back to the entrance to the car park and turn **right** on a drive that runs parallel to the main road on your left. As the drive curves right towards houses, look out for a marker and turn sharp **left** as indicated. The path curves downhill and wheels right, gradually descending through a metal barrier to join the minor road that skirts the village. Turn **right** on the road. You can turn left on The Street, direct to the church, or follow the route described here by continuing to the Frankland Arms. Continue now with the **Western Walk: The Low Road**.

Village to Car Park

Take this short cut at the end if you've done the **Eastern Walk**.

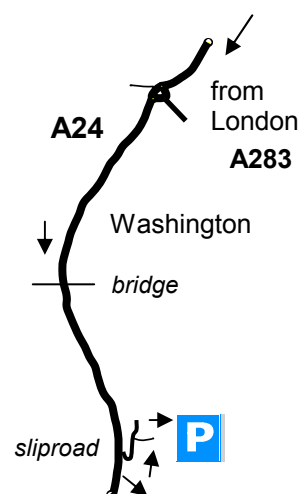
Turn **left** on the road. Continue past The Street on your right and ignore footpaths on the left. Just after *Meadowlea*, fork **left** on a concrete drive which winds gently uphill and eventually bends left. Turn sharp **right** at a marker post on another drive. Follow the drive to the end, where the car park is on the **left**.



Getting there

By car: the car park is just off the **A24** road. If coming from the north, about 10 miles=16 km from Worthing, you reach the **Washington roundabout**. Continue *straight ahead*, ignoring the left turn to Washington. 1 mile further, turn **left** on a sliproad, doubling back. The car park, which is unsigned, is immediately up a chalky track on the right.

By bus: No. 2A from Brighton station to Steyning. Bus 23 from Worthing or Horsham to Washington. Others available. Check the timetables.



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