

Map 7

Open Access at Firle Beacon

Making the most of open access



Open access land offers walkers an exciting opportunity to explore some of the spectacular South Downs National Park landscapes from a much closer perspective than ever before!

This map will help you get more from a visit to the **Firle escarpment** whilst enjoying it in harmony with the wildlife and its management. There is a detailed map overleaf that shows the sites, a self-guided walk and additional information that will help you better enjoy what is on offer. Please read the information on the back of this leaflet and most importantly, enjoy your visit!

The **Firle escarpment**, an extensive stretch of chalk grassland on the north facing slopes of the South Downs is a Site of Special Scientific Interest. The diverse flora includes several unusual plants and one that is nationally rare, the early spider orchid. Chalk grassland is restricted to the thin rendzina soils of the steep escarpment while deeper soils at the foot of the escarpment carry mature woodlands.

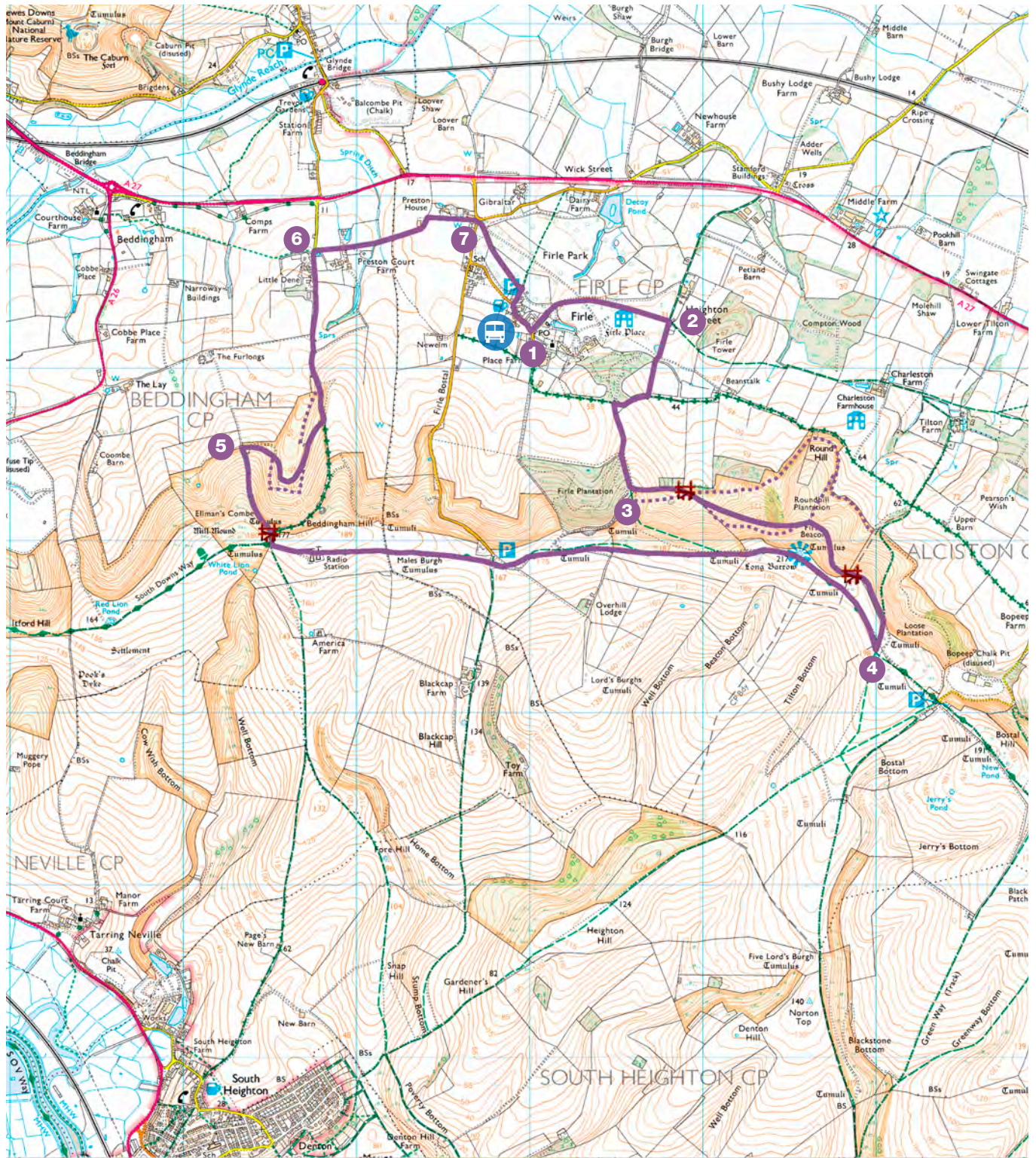
Climb to the summit of Firle Beacon where the prominent Neolithic long barrow looks out over Seaford, Newhaven and the Channel in one direction and across the Weald to Ashdown Forest in the other.



South Downs Society
Protecting the Beauty of the Downs

**SOUTH DOWNS
NATIONAL PARK**





Open Access

- Bridleway
- Public Footpath
- South Downs Way
- Well used path in Access Land
- Open Access
- Currently inaccessible Access Land
- Gate
- Stile

Public Interest

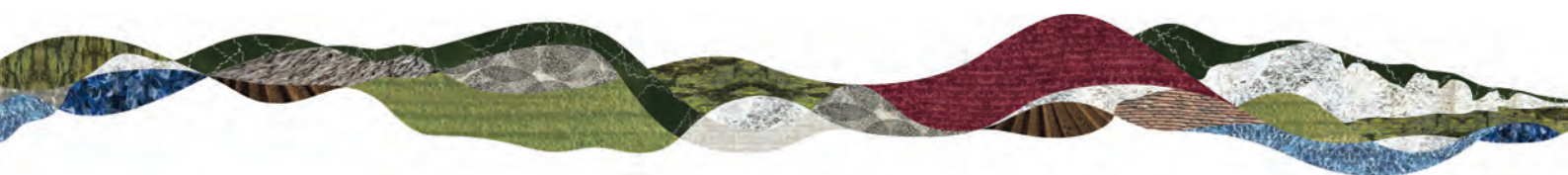
- Horse riding
- Nature Reserve
- Phone
- Public house/s
- Fishing
- Walk Route
- Alternative Routes

- Bus Stop
- Church



0 250 500 Metres

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Route instructions



A circular walk from Firle, designed to explore a route traversing the steep scarp slope of the Downs below Firle Beacon, crossing open access land, steep and uneven in places. The walk starts and finishes through Firle Park and includes one of the finest stretches of the South Downs Way over the summit of Firle Beacon.

Distance: 11.5 km/7 miles

Time: 3 to 4hrs

Total ascent: 315m/1033 ft

Highest point: 211m/693 ft

Map: OS Explorer 123

Start: Firle village. Grid Ref: TQ 470072 or BN8 6NY

How to get there: Limited weekday Compass Bus Service 125 to Firle from Lewes & limited Cuckmere Buses 25 on Sundays and Bank Holidays in summer. Firle village car park at northern end of village.

Refreshments and toilets: Ram Inn at Firle near start/finish. No public toilets in village.

- 1** Start the walk along a track which leaves the village street to the right of the post office/stores. Enter Firle Park¹ and follow the unfenced track ahead, soon curving right. Head east across the park, cross the main drive to Firle Place, in view over to your right, and then diverge gradually to the right of the gravel track to pick up and follow a series of wooden posts indicating the line of the footpath.
- 2** Leave the park through a bridle gate and turn right. Ignore a track to the left and, at a T-junction with a rutted track, the Old Coach Road, turn right. After about 200 metres, turn left and head for the Downs.
- 3** Nearing the foot of the steep escarpment, enter open access land through a bridle gate and turn left, walking parallel to a left-hand fence across rough grassland. Go through a dip and climb to a stile in a crossing fence. Over this stile, turn right for about 100 metres beside the fence and then go left to climb obliquely up the scarp slope, aiming to pass above a belt of trees rising up from the foot of the Downs. Beyond the trees, contour along the slope, where you have a choice of parallel animal tracks. Join and follow a more substantial path coming up from the left and follow it up to a gate (padlocked), almost at the top of the hill. Go over a stile a few yards to the left of this gate and follow a right hand fence. Go through a bridle gate and bear right along a track up to join the South Downs Way.
- 4** Turn right to follow the South Downs Way² for over 3 kms, passing over the summit of Firle Beacon with its extensive views south to the English Channel. You may see paragliders in action if the wind is favourable. Legend tells that the Firle Beacon giant slew the giant on nearby Wilmington Hill and whose fallen body is marked by the famous Long Man. Carry on to the car park at the top of Firle Bostal³ and finally passing to the right of the twin radio masts on Beddingham Hill. About 300 metres past the masts, turn right along a metalled access road, signed as a byway. After about 40 metres, where the road begins to bend right, fork left along an indistinct grassy path which, after another 5 metres, joins a clear terraced path which you can follow steadily downhill along the side of acombe.
- 5** Towards the bottom of the slope, just short of a gate, turn right, walking parallel to the fence on your left. Where this fence turns away to the left, veer right, dropping obliquely down into thecombe. Cross the valley and double back left up the opposite slope to rejoin the track you left at the top of the hill. Turn left.
- 6** After about 1 km, on reaching a post box on your left, turn right along the drive to Preston Court Farm. After passing between a house and a barn, go left over a stile and cross a field, diverging gradually from the right edge. Go through a gateway, joining a hedge on your right. In the field corner, go through a bridle gate and, unfenced, across a field with a good view of the two areas of open access escarpment explored earlier on the walk.. Join a track which curves left past a barn to a junction where you should turn right and follow it out to a road.
- 7** Cross the road and enter Firle Park through the main entrance. Immediately inside the park, fork right across grass to a swing gate and in the same direction across parkland to find another swing gate to the left of a tennis court. Turn right to reach Firle Village car park. Turn left through the car park out to the village street next to the Ram Inn. Turn left back to the start.

¹For more information about Firle, Firle Place and estate see www.firle.com

²You can learn much more about this long distance trail and what it has to offer at www.nationaltrail.co.uk/south-downs-way

³From a Saxon word meaning a narrow steep track.

Open access

Open access land gives you the right to explore interesting features within that parcel of land – you can choose your own route and you don't have to stick to the path!



What you can do:

- Walk
- Sightsee
- Picnic
- Bird watch
- Run
- Fly a kite

Please remember that with these rights come responsibilities. You have the legal right to explore access land but please remember that most of the areas are privately owned; they are also the home and place of work for many people. A number of sites are also nationally important because of some of the plants and animals found there. If rights of way (like footpaths or bridleways) cross the land, the legal rights still apply.

Access Land is good for dog walkers too but the South Downs landscape is also important for ground nesting birds and many important conservation grazing projects. Unless otherwise stated, dogs must be kept on a fixed lead (2 metres or less) when livestock are present and on all access land sites between March 1st and July 31st.

What you can't do:

- Cycle or horse ride (unless on an appropriate right of way)
- Drive a vehicle (unless on an appropriate right of way)
- Camp
- Light a fire
- Hang-glide or paraglide
- Use a metal detector

Please follow the Countryside Code at all times:

- Be safe plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people.

Use the following link to find out more.

www.naturalengland.org.uk/ourwork/access/openaccess

*Walk devised and surveyed by volunteers from the **South Downs Society***

Getting there via public transport



Firle. The Firle escarpment can be reached by a short walk from Firle village using the limited weekday Compass Bus Service 125 from Lewes or the limited Cuckmere Buses 25 on Sundays and Bank Holidays in summer

Please visit www.traveline.info or call Traveline on 0871 200 22 33

Find out more about visiting the South Downs
www.southdowns.gov.uk/gettingaround

Sussex Ramblers kindly sponsored the production of this leaflet

