

CUT OUT  
& KEEP

Photo: Mick Heywood

# A walk through time

How humans have shaped the landscape of the South Downs in Amberley

WORDS: Mick Heywood, walks coordinator, Friends of The South Downs



Photo: Ian Lancaster

Mick Heywood

‘Sometimes it is good to take the path less travelled, and this walk explores frequently overlooked paths and takes in some of the beautiful views of

the Arun Valley – the water meadow, archetypal Sussex villages, Arundel Castle and, of course, the South Downs themselves.

‘Amberley sits at the foot of the Downs and is known for its pretty thatched cottages, though ‘The Thatched House’ is one of the village’s non-thatched buildings.

‘The route takes in the man-made features that have in the past, and which continue to shape the South Downs, such as Bronze Age cross dykes, burial mounds, dew ponds and vineyards, all set against a backdrop of sea and Weald.

‘There’s plenty of bird and wildlife *en route* too including red kites, kestrels, the occasional hare, and perhaps even little owls, which were introduced into Britain in the late 1800s. The walk is very dog-

friendly and thanks to the South Downs National Park’s Miles Without Stiles initiative, (which is supported by The Friends of the South Downs), free of stiles and other barriers to access.

‘Afterwards, refreshments are available at The Riverside Café or The Bridge Inn.’ ▶



Illustration: Graham Jeffrey

So much better than  
walking in kilometres

## Brought to you by Friends of The South Downs

Membership starts from £2.50 per month and grants access to a comprehensive programme of guided walks and strolls. Non-members can take part in taster sessions.

01798 875073  
(Monday to Wednesday  
9am to 1pm).  
[friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk](http://friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk)





**COMPASS POINTS**

**Location:** Downland near Amberley, West Sussex.

**Distance:** Six miles (10km).

**Terrain:** Mostly wide chalk tracks. Several steep climbs.

**Ascent:** 920ft (280m).

**Where to park:** Amberley Station.

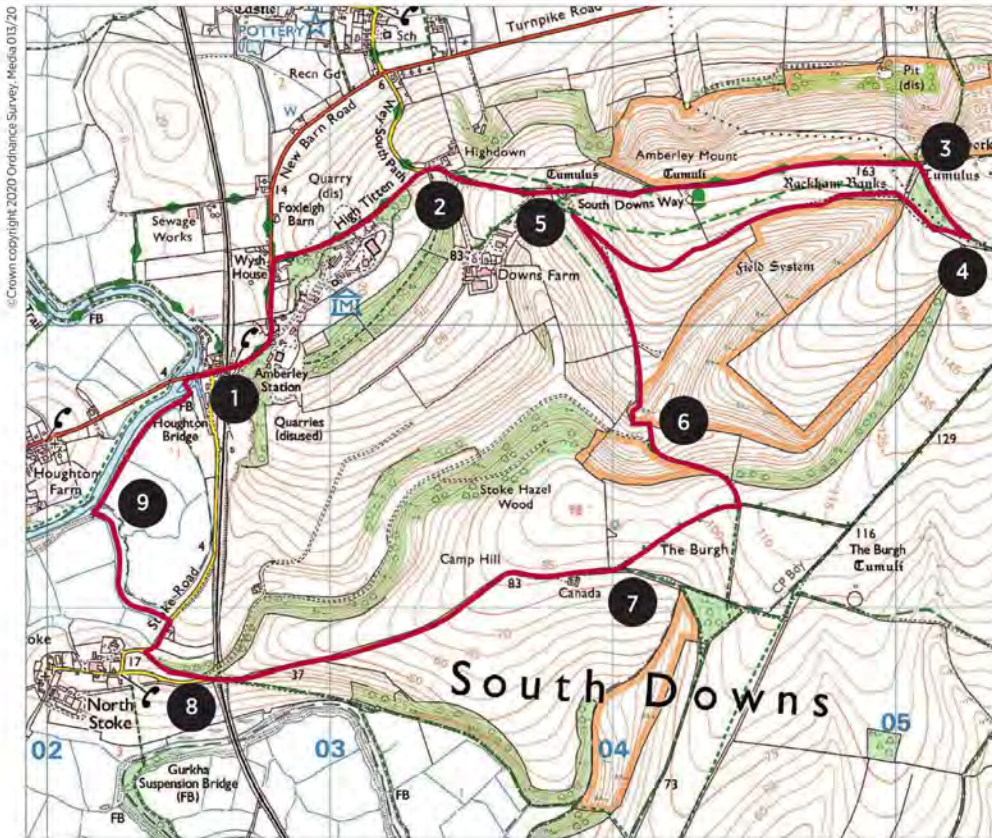
**Grid reference:** TQ 026118, or High Titten  
GR: TQ 033125.

**Sat nav:** BN18 9LR.

**What3Words:** ///steam.stroke.ranged.

**Map:** OS Explorer OL10, Arundel & Pulborough.

**Dog-friendly:** Yes.



**THE WALK**

**1** From Amberley Station, cross the road and turn right. After 400m turn right up High Titten. As you go further uphill look over the wall on your right for a bird's eye view of Amberley Museum, an interesting place to visit. It featured in the James Bond film *A View to a Kill*.

**2** Mill Lane joins from the left (alternative parking here) and just after passing a large house, take the bridleway on the left to continue along the South Downs Way. After passing a farm to your right, keep ahead to join a wide track to climb steeply up Amberley Mount. Take a breather by a gate at the top to admire the view. You will often be accompanied by red kites, as well as gliders from the flying club at Storrington.

**3** Around 900m after the gate, look out for a junction of paths by Rackham Banks, thought to be man-made structures from the Bronze Age and a place to enjoy the views north. Turn sharp right, taking the path leading downhill away from the escarpment. After 120m at the next junction is another good place to stop – waiting a few minutes will reward you with some fantastic aerial displays

from the buzzards and kestrels that float on the thermals rising from the valley below.

**4** Turn right here and follow the track down the hill. You can see how the land is changing as human use changes. This area used to be sheep and cattle grazing, now a local wine maker has planted vines on the south-facing hills.

**5** Nearing the farm you passed earlier, you will see a track to your left that passes through the vineyard. Take this path and follow it all the way to the bottom of the valley. There is a dew pond at the bottom. This man-made 18th century feature to water livestock, is found all over the chalk downs. Although many have fallen into disrepair, they are important habitats for mammals, amphibians, and flowers.

**6** Follow the path up the hill on the other side. In late spring and early summer this bank is yellow with cowslips and alive with butterflies. At the top of the hill, turn right at the junction along a broad chalky track.

**7** Just 500m later the track joins another from the left. Walk along it for about a mile. As it steadily descends

towards North Stoke it becomes an asphalt road. Just after crossing one end of a railway tunnel look out for a footpath on the right.

**8** Follow it until reaching a road. Turn right and in 100m as you approach a house, you'll see a signed footpath on your left. If the weather has been inclement, continue the road back to Amberley, otherwise take this path to walk across the wetlands to the river Arun.

**9** On reaching the river, turn right along the river bank to Houghton Bridge. There is no dedicated footpath across the lovely old bridge so beware of traffic. Approaching the railway bridge and the station beyond, the tea room is to the left and the pub is on the right. ♦

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