

CUT OUT
& KEEP

Photos: Malinka van der Gaauw

A bench with a spectacular view overlooking Kingley Vale

Ancient trees of Kingley Vale

Stroll past the famous devil's humps and through the yew forest with trees that are 2,000 years old – some of the oldest in Britain

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



This is a walk through an area with a rich and diverse heritage. You'll visit the remains of a Roman temple at Bow Hill, an Iron Age settlement, and the famous 'Devil's Humps' – round barrows dating from the Bronze Age. The chalk grassland at the top of Kingley Vale is home to many flowers and herbs as well as 39 species of butterfly.

However, the area is most renowned for its ancient yew forest. Some trees, at up to 2,000 years old, are thought to be some of the oldest living organisms in Britain. They survive despite the felling of most yew trees to make longbows after 1472, when the English government enacted a 'yew tax' of four bowstaves for every cask of wine unloaded at an English harbour. This sparked a rush for ancient yew trees across



Illustrator: Graham Jeffrey

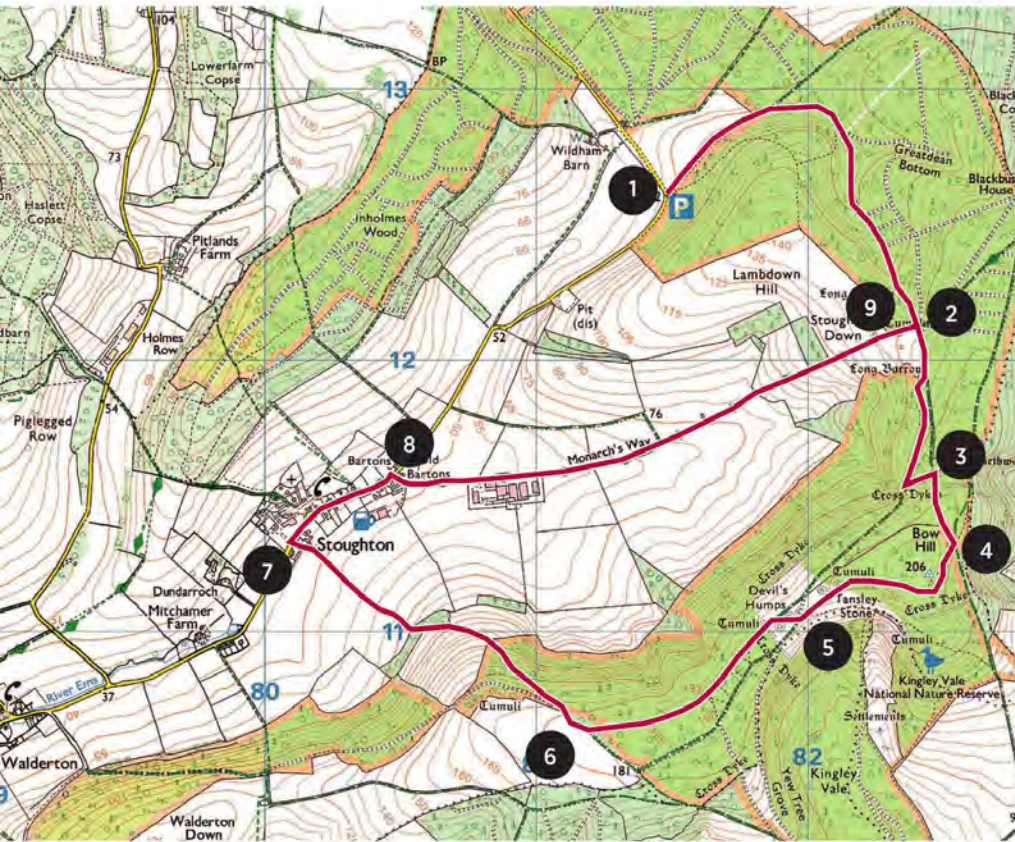
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Europe, decimating the forests. Kingley Vale is one of the few major stands remaining since most yews elsewhere are solitary trees or on small islands. ♦

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





COMPASS POINTS

Location: Stoughton and Kingley Vale, northeast of Chichester.

Distance: Six miles (9km).

Terrain: Well-made footpaths; one steep descent.

Ascent: 845ft.

Where to park: Stoughton Down car park (no charge).

Grid reference: SU 815126

Sat nav: PO18 9JG

What3Words: ///train.loitering.ranked

Map: OS Explorer OLB, Chichester, South Harting.

Dog-friendly: Yes, but cattle and sheep may be grazing.

Refreshments: Pub (Hare & Hounds) in Stoughton.

THE WALK

1 From the car park, follow the wide path with the metal barrier at the edge of the woods. At the fingerpost, after 500m choose the right fork, then right again at the next signpost, climbing through the trees.

2 At the crest of the hill, where there is a magnificent view down the valley to Stoughton, continue straight ahead. The wide path goes through a yew grove. As it crests and bends to the right there is a fingerpost. Turn left onto the narrow path and climb until you reach a T-junction with another track.

3 Turn right and continue until reaching a clearing at the top of the hill with a bench, nature reserve information board, and another fabulous view – this time to the south over Chichester Harbour.

4 There are multiple paths here; take the one on the right. This goes along the edge of the hill, past the Bow Hill trig point to the ‘Devil’s Humps’.

These are four Bronze Age barrows. On a clear day the white cliffs of Bembridge on the Isle of Wight can be seen. Also, the Spinnaker Tower at Portsmouth, Chichester Cathedral and harbour, and north across the Downs as far as Blackdown.

5 The route now follows the path to the right of the barrows. After a short distance the path widens into what is almost a clearing. Continue straight ahead to fields and a T-junction.

6 Turn right here and follow the wide path down through a steep, chalky avenue of beech trees (walking poles would be useful here). As the path flattens out go past a memorial to a World War II Polish fighter pilot who died during the Battle of Britain.

7 At the road turn right into Stoughton and walk through the village past the pub – stopping if you need refreshment!

8 Towards the end of the village there is a fingerpost off to

the right beside Old Bartons. The path goes through a farmyard and is signed ‘Monarch’s Way’. This is a long-distance footpath, charting the flight of the future King Charles II after his defeat by Cromwell in the last battle of the English Civil War. There is a long, gradual climb to the top but a well-positioned bench allows you to catch your breath and admire the view.

9 The junction at the top is one that was passed earlier in the walk (2). Take the first path on the left and descend, keeping to the main track all the way back to the car park.

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