

## SELF-GUIDED WALK

### Selborne – Open Access

A figure of eight walk that can be taken as one or divided into its component parts. Enjoy an introduction to the three contrasting Open Access areas of Noar Hill, Selborne Common and the Long Lythe.

The area's extensive rights of way network gives lots of opportunities to explore the beautiful and varied landscape.

Distance - Whole walk: 6¾ miles, Noar Hill leg: 4¼ miles, Long Lythe leg: 2½ miles



Noar Hill Nature Reserve is a patchwork of sheltered hollows, formally medieval chalk workings, surrounded by a woodland margin with additional habitats of blackthorn scrub and rough ground. An ideal setting for the 35 species of butterflies found there including Duke Of Burgundy, Green Hairstreak and Dingy Skipper and some woodland species. Another major glory of Noar Hill derives from its orchids. In season at least eleven species can be found there among many other chalk loving plants.

The National Trust manages 267 acres of Access Land around Selborne. The largest area, Selborne Common, lies on the hill west of the village, while the valley meadows and woodlands of the Lythes lie to the east. Discover the magnificent beech woods and flower-filled meadows that inspired Gilbert White, a pioneering naturalist and ornithologist known as 'the father of ecology'. His studies and best-selling book 'The Natural History and Antiquities of Selborne' influenced Charles Darwin and changed the way we see the world.

## Route

From the bus stop outside The Selborne Arms follow the sign for Selborne Common. At the car park entrance bear left along a tarmac lane "Unsuitable for Motors".

- 1 At "Nuthatch" leave the lane to follow the Hangers Way slightly left. Upon reaching a 'wooden' cottage on your left, fork right to find a bridleway (blue waymark sign, Hangers Way) running to left of driveway. Follow this past a stable block on your right, over two stiles continuing along the Hangers Way beside a field edge, and through 3 squeeze gaps.
- 2 Turn left in front of a stile adjacent to a fingerpost and over a stile to cross a country lane (take care, blind bend). Follow lane opposite signed 'Noar Hill'. In 250m take bridleway on left (Hangers Way). At the wood ignore the first two gates on your right leading into the Noar Hill Nature Reserve (Hants & Isle of White Wildlife Trust) and continue until you reach a third. Go through and follow a broad grassy track up to an information board. Bear left and follow this well-defined path between long abandoned medieval chalk pits, keeping right emerge at a view point with a seat.
- 3 Reflect upon the distant South Downs above South Harting but look right to see the path you should now take. Walk gradually downhill for some 800m (½mile) to exit the Nature Reserve by a gate. Follow the track to reach the road. Turn left and then right.
- 4 Immediately after the road bends right past a more obvious opening look for a fingerpost buried in the hedge on your left. Go through this small gap and make your way diagonally across the field ahead of you. Find the gap in the hedge and cross the road to the bridleway opposite which climbs gradually uphill and through a gate onto Selborne Common (National Trust). Continue upwards ignoring the first set of fingerposts to the right and at the next set on your left, turn right along a wide grassy track for 1.2 km (about ¾ mile) before passing through a gate and reaching the top of the famous the Zig-Zag Path, cut into the hillside in the 1753 by Gilbert White and his brother John, to provide easier access to the Hanger and Common. Pause to admire the view over the village before descending. The 'golf balls' belong to Astrium Services and are part of a communication system involving a fleet of Skynet satellites and a legacy of NATO spacecraft. Go through the gate at the bottom and down the path to where you started the walk.

## Walk continuation or start of shorter stroll

- 5 Turn left on the main road and cross into Huckers Lane just before The Queens. At the end of the lane follow the by-way finger post to go past a gate/barrier into a wood. This route once linked Selborne Priory with the village and was known as the Monk's Way. To the left is the deeply incised valley of the Oakhanger Stream. Go through a gate at the end of the wood and along the field edge to leave by another gate to reach the access road to Priory Farm the site of an Augustinian Priory established in 1233 but which fell into disrepute and was dissolved in 1486. The land and possessions were given to Magdalen College, Oxford.
- 6 Turn left and keep left through the farmyard to ascend a rough track to a gate and footpath on your left. Walk parallel to the edge of Coombe Wood before reaching a stile into the wood. On crossing the stile at the end of the wood go through an attractive field with ponds rising gradually to a gate at the entrance to Long Lythe (National Trust) and the Hangers Way. As you pass the green 'railing' seat look up the valley slightly to your left at 11.00 o'clock to glimpse the Zig-Zag coming down the hillside, if the light is right. Follow this path until the wooden bridge over the stream.
- 7 Of the two grassy footpaths ahead take the right-hand one up the hill into the churchyard. The grave of famous naturalist Gilbert White lies behind the chancel (east end of church) and is clearly marked. On leaving the churchyard turn briefly left to look at an interesting, illustrated map. Cross the Plestor (old village meeting place) and turn left to return to the Selborne Arms.