

Rowlands Castle Circular			Rowlands Castle Circular (Long)		
1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check	1 st walk check	2 nd walk check	3 rd walk check
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Rowlands Castle Circular

Start: Rowlands Castle station

Finish: Rowlands Castle station

Rowlands Castle station, map reference SU 734 108, is 14 km west north west of Chichester, 14 km north east of Portsmouth, 38m above sea level and in **South East Hampshire**. The walk itself is in **West Sussex**.

Length: 25.6 km (15.9 mi), of which 4.2 km (2.6 mi) on tarmac or concrete.

Cumulative ascent/descent: 473m.

For a shorter walk or an extension, see below **Walk Options**.

Toughness: 7 out of 10

Time: 6 hours walking time.

For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.

Transport: Rowlands Castle station is on the Portsmouth Direct Line from London Waterloo to Portsmouth Harbour with an hourly service. Journey time is 83 minutes, with a change at Petersfield (Mon-Sat only), and 93 minutes on Sundays (direct).

Saturday Walkers' Club: Take the train closest to 9.00 hours for the full and the extended walk, and the train closest to 10.00 for the short walk.

OS Landranger Map: 197 (Chichester & the South Downs)

OS Explorer Map: OL8 (Chichester)

Walk Notes:

This West Sussex walk in the undulating western part of the South Downs is characterised initially by a mixture of park- and woodland, then steep lonely valleys and some far views to the main South Downs Ridge. Many of the woods feature large areas of bluebells and wild garlic in season.

It starts off towards Stansted House along a 1-mile-long beech avenue – one of the best in England according to Pevsner, and then heads north along the easterly edge of Stansted Forest and across fields via the hamlets of West, Up and East Marden to a very remote pub in Hooksway, with particularly nice views on the route between the hamlets, including up to the northern escarpment of the South Downs.

From lunch you climb back out of the secluded valley on a westerly route to Compton, from where another couple of hills need to be crossed to finish along the westerly edge of Stansted Forest back into Rowlands Castle, with its teashop and a choice of pubs.

A shorter route is rated 2/10.

An extension after lunch follows a lonely, narrow, wood-fringed valley to the main northerly escarpment of the South Downs and then follows one of the most undulating sections of the South Downs Way with unrivalled far views from Pen Hill and Beacon Hill, making this a real challenge.

All three routes share the start, up to West Marden, and the end, from Compton.

The walk (especially the extended version) features several sustained, steep climbs and descents.

Walk Options:

A **Shortcut** around lunch cuts 9.4 km and most of the ascent/descent (rated **2/10**).

An **Extension** after lunch adds 3.4 km and 162m ascent/descent. The extended walk is rated **8/10**.

An **Extension-within-the-Extension** adds 1.0 km and 34m ascent/descent.

Bus Service 54 (Petersfield – Chichester) runs through the walk area, serving West Marden (the early lunch stop) and Compton (the late lunch/early tea stop), 5 buses a day Mon-Sat, to late afternoon.

Lunch (details last updated 07/05/2024)

Victoria Inn Locksash Lane, West Marden, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9EN (02392 631 330, <https://victoriainnwestmarden.com/>). The Victoria Inn is located 6.3 km (3.9 mi) into the walk. Open all day every day. Food served all day.

The Royal Oak Hooksway, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9JZ (01243 535 257, <http://royaloakhooksway.co.uk/>). The Royal Oak is located 12.6 km (7.9 mi) into the full and the extended walk. Open 12.00-14.30 Wed-Fri, 12.00-15.00 Sat-Sun. Food served 12.00-14.00 Wed-Sun.

The Coach and Horses The Square, Compton, Chichester, West Sussex, PO18 9HA (02392 631 228). The Coach and Horses is located 8.7 km (5.4 mi) into the short walk and 7.4 km (4.6 mi) from the end of all walk options. **This pub is currently closed** after a takeover!

Tea (selected) (details last updated 12/08/2024)

The Village Shop & Tea Room The Square, Compton. PO18 9HA (02392 631 144). The Village Shop and Tea Room is located 8.7 km (5.4 mi) into the short walk and 7.4 km (4.6 mi) from the end of all walk options.

The Castle Inn 1 Finchdean Road, Rowlands Castle PO9 6DA (02392 412 494, <http://www.castleinnrowlandscastle.co.uk/>). A Fuller's Pub with a very comfy interior and a separate restaurant area. Located 2 minutes from the station. Open all day every day. Food served from 12.00-15.00 and 18.00-21.00 Mon-Sat and 12.00-18.00 Sun and Bank Holidays.

The Bumblebee Café 2 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6BN (02392 413 523, <https://www.thebumblebeecafe.co.uk/>). Located 2 minutes from the station. Open 09.00-16.00 Tue-Sun.

The Robin Hood Inn 26 The Green, Rowlands Castle, PO9 6AB (02392 412 268, <http://www.robinhoodinn-rowlandscastle.co.uk/>). Located 3 minutes from the station. Open 11.00-22.00 daily. Food served 12.00-14.30 and 18.00-21.00 Mon-Fri, all day Sat-Sun.

Taste of India on the Green 34 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6AB (02393 072 783). Located 4 minutes from the station.

The Fountain Inn 34 The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6AB (02392 413 721). Located 4 minutes from the station. Open all day every day. **This pub is currently closed!**

Notes:

Rowlands Castle

...(or Rowland's Castle, the apostrophe is disputed) is known for its large village green and neighbouring Stansted House and Park. The village lies in the area of the former Forest of Bere, a great forest that stretched all the way across the Southeast of Hampshire as far as Winchester. There was a motte-and-bailey castle, the remains of which are situated to the south west of the walk route. It was probably built in the early 12th century but fell into disuse by the 14th century and thereafter fell into ruins.

It is not known for sure where Rowlands Castle gets its name. It is possible that the castle gave the village its name although it has been suggested that Rowlands Castle may be a corruption of Celtic words.

Nowadays Rowlands is popular with walkers and cyclists as a jumping off point for the South Downs National Park and the neighbouring Stansted Estate. Four long distance footpaths cross the village: Monarch's Way, Sussex Border Path, Staunton Way, Shipwrights Way.

Former Van Morrison guitarist Herbie Armstrong once operated *The Fountain Inn* in the centre of the village next to the Village Green. His weekly live music evenings attracted music lovers from across the region, and have been known to include some famous names, amongst them Mick Hucknall.

Stansted House and Park

Stansted is a Grade II listed Edwardian country house set on a 7.1 km² (710-hectare) estate of parkland and ancient forest within the South Downs National Park. The house began as a hunting lodge in the 11th century, but was developed over many hundreds of years. The original house burnt down in 1900, and was rebuilt on the exact footprint of the previous building in 1903. Stansted House has Carolean revival decor and is listed Grade II*. <http://www.stanstedpark.co.uk/>

Monarch's Way

The Monarch's Way is a waymarked linear 990 km (615 mi) long-distance footpath in England that approximates the escape route taken by King Charles II in 1651 after being defeated in the Battle of Worcester. It runs from Worcester via Bristol and Yeovil to Brighton. The waymark is yellow and shows a picture of the ship *The Surprise* above the Prince of Wales's three-point feathered crown which is superimposed on a Royal Oak tree (which is at Boscobel House) in black.

Uppark House

Uppark, set high on the South Downs, is a 17th century house owned by the National Trust. The house was built for Ford Grey (1655-1701), later the first Earl of Tankerville, ca. 1690 and was sold in 1747 to Sir Matthew Fetherstonehaugh and his wife Sarah. They redecorated the house extensively from 1750 to 1760 and introduced most of the existing collection of household items, much of it collected on their Grand Tour. In the 19th century stables and kitchens were added as separate buildings, connected to the main building by tunnels. Uppark was one of the least altered country houses in England - a fine window on to how the upper classes lived in the Victorian era.

But on 30 August 1989 the building was devastated by a fire caused by a workman's blowtorch whilst repairing lead flashing on the roof, just two days before the work was due to be completed. The fire broke out during opening hours. Many works of art and pieces of furniture were carried out of the burning building by members of the Meade-Fetherstonehaugh family, National Trust staff and members of the public. Although the garret and first floors collapsed onto the lower floors and the garret and first floor contents were lost completely, the floors largely fell clear of the ground floor walls and much of the panelling and decoration survived. Much of the contents of the ground floor was crushed but not burned; metalwork was able to be straightened and cleaned, crystal chandeliers were able to be reassembled, and even the elaborate tassels on the chandelier ropes were able to be conserved.

The decision to restore the house came after it was determined that restoration would be a cheaper insurance settlement than complete payout for a total loss.

Most of the pictures and furniture in the house were saved. The building has since been completely restored with many lost crafts relearned in the restoration process, and it re-opened its doors in 1995.

The estate's name distinguishes it from Down Park near Tullecombe down in the Rother Valley north of Harting, both of which were in the possession of Henry Hussey.

H.G. Wells spent part of his boyhood at Uppark, where his mother was housekeeper.

St. Michael and All Angels, Up Marden

A church was in existence by 1121. The present church building is of Norman style construction and the church has remained almost unchanged. Described by Nikolaus Pevsner as having one of the loveliest interiors in England the church is all of 13th century construction. Captain Herbert Westmacott, MC (1952-1980), a British Army officer who became the first person to be awarded a posthumous Military Cross, is buried in the churchyard.

Beacon Hill

...is home to a hillfort from the late Bronze Age/early Iron Age, built around 500 BC as an animal enclosure and refuge. In addition, a cross ridge dyke built around the same time, may have been used to control movement of people and animals along the ridgeway.

Because of its elevation Beacon Hill hosted a station in the shutter telegraph chain, from 1796 to 1816, which connected the Admiralty in London to its naval ships in Portsmouth and Plymouth. This was replaced in 1822 by a semaphore station which operated on a slightly different route until 1847.

Bertrand Russell and his wife Dora founded the experimental Beacon Hill School at nearby Telegraph House.

Thatched Well, East Marden

The well has an unusual square wheel and was the sole source of drinking water until 1924. The depth to the current water level is estimated at 30 meters.

St. Mary's Church, North Marden

North Marden is one of the smallest, out-of-the-way parishes in Sussex. St. Mary's is believed to have been founded in the late 12th century. The chancel has an apsidal, i.e. semi-circular, end which is fairly rare. It is thought that churches were built in this style because of the absence of good quality local stone - flint rubble was the most suitable building material.

The principle feature is the elaborate Norman south doorway. It is made of Caen stone, was probably shipped across the Channel to Chichester harbour, and then transported by packhorse to North Marden.

Staunton Way

The Staunton Way is a 34.0 km (21.1 mi) waymarked linear walk in Hampshire that connects Queen Elizabeth Country Park near Petersfield to Staunton Country Park. At QE Country Park the walk connects to the South Downs Way and Hangers Way. It is waymarked with the picture of a roe deer and a green arrow.

South Downs Way

The South Downs Way is a 161.4 km (100.3 mi) waymarked linear long distance footpath and bridleway. This National Trail (one of 15 in England and Wales) follows the northern escarpment of the chalk Downs from Winchester to Eastbourne. It offers extensive views across the Weald to the north and over the rounded hills and dry valleys to the sea in the south.

People have been using the paths and tracks that have been linked to form the South Downs Way for approximately 8000 years. They were a safer and dryer alternative to those in the wetter lowlands throughout the mesolithic era. Early occupation in the area began 2000 years after that in the neolithic era. There are several steep ascents when crossing the valleys of the Rivers Cuckmere at Alfriston, Ouse at Southease, Adur south of Bramber and Arun at Amberley. It visits Jevington and passes Iron Age hillforts and barrows. The waymark is the National Trail Acorn.

Harting Down

Harting Down is a 2.2 km² (220-hectare) common owned by the National Trust and part of the Sussex Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty. Rising to 229 metres, it offers panoramic views over the Weald to the north and to the Channel and the Isle of Wight to the south.

Archaeological evidence has suggested that Harting Down was first occupied around 5,000 years ago. A large portion of the down has never been used for modern intensive farming and is thus an important site representing the chalk grassland that once covered the downs.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Coming off the train in **Rowlands Castle** on platform 2, go over the footbridge to exit the station and *turn left* down the approach road. After 120m *turn left* along **Bowes Hill** and in 70m, at a T-junction with the **High Street** and with **The Bumblebee Café** on your right and the village store opposite, *turn left* along the pavement under the railway bridge to pass by **The Castle Inn** on your left after 40m. In 120m (where the road – now called **Finchdean Road** – curves to the left), *turn right* to go through a gap in the brick wall opposite, to go up a footpath into **Stansted Forest** (100°). In 15m ignore a signposted footpath joining from the left over a railed footbridge (this is the afternoon return route) and in 60m go over a cross paths to follow the footpath more steeply up through a wooded area. In 160m you emerge from the wooded area to go along a very broad grass avenue towards **Stansted House**, with the wooded **Walderton Down** rising behind it. In 570m a footpath joins from the right (the **Monarch's Way**), where there is a **memorial cross** on the right.

After 1.0 km leave the grassy area in its left corner through a metal kissing gate and follow a bridleway signpost to cross over a road, passing by **Middle Lodge** on your left-hand side, to enter **Stansted Park** along a tarmac road through a wooded area (70°). In 400m (having emerged from the wooded area), **you have a choice:**

- **Either** (slightly longer, but recommended after a wet period and in Bluebell season) *turn left* through a metal kissing gate 40m away on the left (to the left of a wooden field gate), in 40m go over a stile to the right of a wooden field gate along **Lady's Walk** (a wide grassy path through a wood with Permissive Access), in 530m *turn up right* at a crosspaths, and in 130m, by a three-way footpath/bridleway-signpost, *turn left* at a T-junction of paths along the fringe of the wood;
- **Or** continue along the lane and in 70m *turn left* through a wooden gate onto a bridleway along a fenced path at the eastern edge of **North Coopers Wood** (initially 20°), leaving the Monarch's Way. In 500m a footpath joins from the left by a three-way footpath/bridleway-signpost.

In 180m go through a wooden gate and in 430m follow a bridleway signpost left into the wood (315°). After 50m, at a signposted staggered crosspaths, *veer slightly right* along a bridleway through the wood (due N) [i.e.: ignore the footpath straight ahead and the one turning hard right]. In 550m cross a signposted footpath at the fringes of the wood and continue up a car wide track across a field (20°). In 500m, continue in the same direction through the buildings of **Lodge Farm**. After 100m go to the left of a metal field gate to continue up an enclosed car wide track (30°). After 270m you go through a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate and cross over a lane to continue with a footpath signpost along the left-hand grassy verge of a field (40°).

After 280m at the left-hand corner of the field, follow the footpath down through a wood (**Westmarden Copse**). In 270m *turn right* over a stile, to *turn half left* down across a field, towards its lower left-hand corner. In 60m – at the field corner – you go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a wooden field gate and *turn right down a lane*. After 230m you pass the (early) lunch stop **The Victoria Inn** on your left and continue for 70m to go over a crossroads, and up **Locksash Lane** (with occasional views of **Uppark House** far away on the left).

In 350m, at the crest of the lane, **you have a choice:**

For the Shortcut, *turn left* up a car wide bridleway (15°) and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Shortcut**.

For the Main Walk, continue in the same direction along the tarmac lane. In 400m you ignore a tarmac driveway to **The Red House** on the right and in 50m you *turn left* with

the lane, ignoring a private road on the right. In 100m ignore a bridleway joining from the left along a car wide gravel lane to continue with the tarmac lane and in 80m continue in the same direction, where another tarmac lane turns down to the right. In 20m you walk through a double metal field gate into the grounds of **Locksash Farm**. Walk to the left of a long corrugated iron barn and in 70m continue in the same direction, to the left of a second, higher barn, where the concrete drive turns right. In 40m you *veer left* with a gravel car wide lane, in 20m passing a high marker post. Enter some trees and in 60m – by a fork in the car wide track – ignore a left veering car wide track, but 10m further along follow a signposted narrow footpath in the same direction, leaving the right turning car wide track.

The path soon descends steeply through **Dolly's Hanger**. In 90m walk past a redundant stile and a concrete marker stone initialled 'HJR' and in 30m emerge from the trees to *continue in the same direction* across an arable field through a dip, aiming towards an indistinct gap in the opposite boundary growth 240m away on the brow of the field (110°). Enter **Grevitts Copse** past a footpath marker post and in 80m *turn up to the left* with a two-way signpost at a junction with a car wide track; in another 80m ignore a left turning car wide grassy track and in 150m (where the path levels out) continue in the same direction with a two-way signpost at a four-way junction of tracks by a clearing on the right. In 130m (at a signposted three-way footpath junction, where the main track turns right steeply down through the wood), **[!]** continue in the same direction along a narrow path through trees. In 40m you leave the wood past a redundant stile into a large arable field.

Turn down to the right along the right-hand field boundary through a dip and in 200m *turn left* with the boundary. Follow the boundary (which turns right then left) and in 320m leave the field through a gap to *turn up to the right* along a car wide gravel bridleway. In 100m – at the far corner of the **Up Marden Cart Shed** on the right (see the info panel inside) – an unmarked footpath joins from the right from out of the churchyard of **St. Michael and All Angels, Up Marden** (which is well worth a visit). Continue in the same direction along the gravel track into the hamlet of **Up Marden** and in 100m *turn left* along a tarmac lane. In 90m *turn right* along a car wide farm track with a footpath signpost and in 50m *veer left* with a marker post to walk to the left of a line of trees along a right-hand field boundary (70°). The ridge on the left is a section of **the South Downs northerly escarpment and the route of the Extension** of this walk (centred on **Beacon Hill**). In 160m – in the field corner – you continue in the same direction into trees and start a **precipitously steep descent** (which will be slippery after rain) through a hanging wood (**Battines Hill Wood**).

In 100m cross a footpath in the woods and in another 50m leave the wood through a gap into an arable field's corner and continue along its right-hand boundary through a small dip. In 170m leave the field in its right corner and *turn right* with a footpath signpost in another field along its boundary. In 60m *turn left* with the boundary and another signpost, continue to the left of remnants of a fence line (with **Faraway Cottage** down in the valley on the right) and in 340m *turn right* through a mkg to cross a pasture diagonally to the left of a solitary tree (70°). In 200m leave the field through a metal kissing gate onto a tarmac lane and *turn down right* into **East Marden**. In 70m you reach a triangular green by a **Thatched Well**, at a T-junction of lanes and with **St. Peter's Church, East Marden** up on the left (it has been described as "the most modest and least ecclesiastical looking church in the world").

Turn left along the tarmac lane past the church (signposted Chilgrove, Midhurst, Chichester), in 100m ignore a footpath joining from the right along a gravel lane, and in 50m (just after the last house on the left) **[!]** *turn left* with a footpath signpost along a narrow path between trees and hedgerows. Enter a pasture through a metal kissing gate and *turn right* through it towards another metal kissing gate 90m away. Cross a

farm track and continue in the same direction along a left-hand side wide grassy field boundary, with a hedge on the left and an undulating field on the right, gently ascending. In 400m the hedge on the left discontinues and in 200m you cross **Long Lane (Track)** [signposted as a 'Public Way'], with some trees on either side, to cross an arable field in the same direction along a usually well-cleared path. In 300m leave it through a gap in trees and in 10m go over a stile to *veer right* in a pasture with a marker post to a footpath signpost by a stile to the right of a metal field gate.

In 130m go over the stile and *turn left* along the grassy verge of the **B2141**. In 230m you *turn right* to cross the road and walk down a tarmac lane, signposted **Hooksway ¼**. In 30m a footpath joins from the right over a stile and in 100m – over the hedge and fence on the right – you can just about see a pointed top with two transmission masts on it, 8 km away (130°). This is **St. Roche's Hill ('The Trundle')**, near the Goodwood Race Course, whose (white) grandstand can be seen to the left of the top (SWC Walk 239 Halnaker to Chichester). Ignore a signposted restricted byway turning left (this is the post-lunch continuation of the main walk) and in 250m reach **The Royal Oak** in a very secluded spot at the bottom of this valley.

After lunch you have a choice:

For the Extension (with the pub in your back), *turn left* along the fence and in 20m *immediately left again* at the fence corner through the car park. Pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension**.

For the Main Walk (with the pub in your back), *turn right* back up the lane and in 250m *turn right* along a signposted restricted byway. In 540m the track *turns left* and in 80m you *turn left* along a signposted footpath between trees, where the byway turns right. In 460m cross the **B2141** and continue along a fenced in path along a field boundary with a signpost. In 70m you *turn right*, and walk along a tarmac lane through the hamlet of **North Marden**. In 90m *turn left* along a gravel lane at a T-junction, a signposted footpath also signed for **St. Mary's Church**. In 50m *fork right* and in 80m pass the entrance to the churchyard on your right. You continue in the same direction along an (initially) car wide track between fences, with fields on either side. In 300m – in the bottom-right corner of the field – continue in the same direction between fences and in 60m *turn left* with a signpost, still between fences. In 90m *turn right* with a signpost into fields and continue to the right of a line of trees (due W).

In 250m – at the top-left corner of this field – continue in the same direction through some trees and then through a grassy strip and in 40m enter some more trees by a marker post (ignore a footpath turning left along a field boundary). In 180m emerge from the trees into a corner of three fields and continue in the same direction through a wood. In another 180m you emerge into a field corner at a signposted four-way footpath junction by **Edgar Plantation** on the right (on the OS map). Continue in the same direction across an arable field's corner towards the left-hand corner of a wood 130m away (**Handle Down**, 250°). At the corner of the wood *turn left* with a signpost along a right-hand field boundary, in 180m *turn right* over a stile with a signpost to continue along a right-hand grassy field boundary. In 280m – in the far-right field corner – continue in the same direction over a stile and along a right-hand field boundary with a signpost, now with a wood on your right (**Fernbeds Down**). In 250m you go through a gap (a missing stile) onto a car wide grassy boundary (a bridleway) on the fringe of a scenic valley. The path from the right is the **Extension**. *Turn left* and continue along the trees on your left.

***)** In 360m walk past a redundant metal field gate to continue in the same direction along a farm track and in 50m cross a tarmac lane (**Long Lane** on the OS map) to *fork down right* at a signposted three-way bridleway junction – with trees on your right –

ignoring the car wide gravel track ahead up **Telegraph Hill**. In 180m you walk between trees, with a steep hanging wood on your left (**East Hanger**). Ignore a couple of unmarked right turns out into fields, but **[!]** in 800m *turn right* at a three-way footpath signpost into an arable field and cross it on a usually clear path to its bottom left hand corner. From the field, on the right-hand side, you can see **Uppark House** near the top of the South Downs Ridge. In 180m walk through a concrete farmyard and in 30m through a metal kissing gate to continue along a left-hand field boundary towards the houses of **Compton**. In 90m walk through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal field gate to continue along a farm track and in 60m *turn down right* along a tarmac lane into the village. In 70m you reach a square in the village by an old well, just before a T-junction with a main road, with **The Coach and Horses** on your left and the **Village Shop & Tea Room** on your right.

****)** **Bus stops for services to Chichester or Petersfield** are close-by to the right along the road. *Turn left* down the main road (210°). After 180m by the **Old Post Office** on your left, cross the road to go up some steps by a footpath signpost into a field corner to go down across it along a usually well-cleared path (240°). After 200m – at the edge of the field – you go through a narrow pine woodland into the next field to continue across it along a usually clear path (230°). In 210m at the top of the field follow the footpath up to go through a high kissing gate, to continue up the path through **West Hanger** wood (used for pheasant breeding, 250°). After 160m go through another high kissing gate to emerge from the lightly wooded area into a field, to continue up across it in the same direction, aiming towards the middle of two HV pylon poles ahead. In 280m at the corner of a field, pass a four-way footpath signpost and continue down a car wide track.

In 100m at the bottom of the car wide track, go through a metal kissing gate by a three-way footpath signpost into the bottom corner of a steep pasture, to *turn half left up* across it (210°). In 180m at the top corner, *veer left*, initially with a wooded area on your right (160°). In 75m (by a two-way footpath signpost and with a fence corner away on the right), *veer slightly right*, further up the pasture. You get wonderful **back views** from here towards the route of the Extended Walk, incl. **Beacon Hill**, and also of **Uppark House**. In 180m at the right-hand corner of the field, you *turn right* through a metal kissing gate (to the right of a metal field gate), to go along a car wide track (footpath) with a wood on your right-hand side (260°). In 130m, at a three-way path junction (with a signpost on your right), you *turn left* down a car wide bridleway (200°). **[!]** After 110m at a path junction (with a three-way signpost on your left-hand side) *turn right* to go (initially) up a car wide track bordered by hedgerows (240°). You cross over a couple of gravel driveways to Horsley Farm to in 70m continue along a right-hand field boundary, in a westerly direction.

You now follow the footpath for the next 2 km to **South Holt Farm**. **In more detail:** After 500m, at the corner of the field follow a car wide track into a wood, continuing in a westerly direction. In 60m you cross a car wide forest track to continue in the same direction with a marker post. In 250m you emerge from the wood, into the corner of a field to continue down a narrow enclosed footpath with the wood on your right. From here you have views of the higher buildings in **Portsmouth** a little to the left. You have a wood on the right, and a field on the left, then walk through a wooded strip, then have a wood on the left and a field on the right. After 630m you emerge in a field, where you continue a little to the left across it along a wide grassy strip (250°). On a clear day you can see the **Isle of Wight** from this stretch. After 180m, *veer to the right of a tree* to join a car wide track bordered by hedgerows, and after 350m you arrive at a signposted three-way junction of footpaths at the centre of **South Holt Farm**.

Turn left along a car wide track bordered by hedgerows (130°). In 500m you pass by some buildings on your left-hand side to cross a signposted Public Way and continue up

through a wood (initially 160°). After 160m, you go through a wooden kissing gate (to the right of a metal field gate) to continue in the same direction up across a field along an electricity line (with a **Staunton Way** marker). After 110m at the upper side of the field, go through a wooden kissing gate to go along a fenced in footpath. After 80m, *turn left* down a gravel driveway and in 35m – at a T-junction with a busy road – *turn right* down the road taking care of fast-moving traffic. In 150m change to the left side of the road – just before a right bend, and in 30m *turn left* through a hedge gap into the top of a field, to go down across it with a signpost and along a usually well-cleared path. In 130m go through a metal kissing gate (to the left of a metal field gate), and *turn half right* slicing the corner of a field to go through a metal kissing gate after 30m, to follow the footpath into a wood. Follow a narrow path (soon turning right) through the wood, always with a larger hanging wood on the left across a field (**Stansted Forest**).

After 300m, walk through a metal kissing gate to emerge from the wood, to *veer up right* slicing the corner of a field, and after 30m, go through another metal kissing gate to continue along a path through a grassy area. Continue in a south westerly direction for 1.6 km back to **Rowlands Castle**. **In more detail:** along the way ignore a right turning footpath and walk through a small wooded area (where you follow the signposted Staunton Way, ignoring a left fork uphill). Eventually leave the grassy area in the far bottom right-hand corner through a wooden kissing gate into a wood. *Fork right* with a signpost to follow a narrow path and in 90m cross an occasional stream [which can be more than boot-deep with water though, after heavy rainfall: in which case *turn left* along the stream for 60m and *turn right* across a bridge and *right* again along a wide forest track] and in 65m go over a railed bridge over a ditch to *turn right* at a four-way footpath junction along a wide forest track to then leave the wood through the gap in the brick wall where you came in in the morning.

Turn left along **Finchdean Road**, in 120m pass the recommended **The Castle Inn** on your right, to then go under a railway bridge. By **The Bumblebee Café** *turn right* and *right* again to reach **Rowlands Castle** station after 150m.

Further tea options can be reached as follows: by The Bumblebee Café continue in the same direction along **The Green** and in 50m *fork right* to the right of an info panel and to the right of the green. In 20m there is a memorial stone for the beginning of the long-distance path **The Shipwrights Way** on the green. In 55m pass the **Robin Hood Inn** on the right, in 40m the **Taste of India on the Green** and – just next door – **The Fountain Inn**.

Shortcut

(cut 9.4 km, 307m of ascent/descent and 1.9 km tarmac around lunch)

Lunch is in West Marden or Compton

After 420m with occasional fine views up the valley to the main South Downs Ridge (the car wide track having swung round to the right), you reach a signposted three-way bridleway junction. Continue in the same direction through a wooded boundary (110°). In 180m – at another signposted three-way bridleway junction – you *turn left* up a car wide track (initially 30°). After 120m you go under an HV cable run, with an HV pylon pole off to your right. Continue for 600m – mostly with views on both sides – along this flat ridge (**Telegraph Hill**). At a staggered cross paths – with a four-way signpost to your right (three bridleways and one footpath) and with a mini pylon pole plus grey transformer box directly ahead – **[!]** *turn left* with the footpath into an arable field.

You have views to the Isle of Wight on the left, as you go down the right-hand edge of this field (290°). In 170m go through a boundary gap into a steeply dropping overgrown field and continue along its right-hand side. Leave it in 140m through some trees and onto a staggered five-way junction of paths. By a metal field gate and a four-way signpost (three bridleways and one footpath), *turn right* along a bridleway (340°). In 140m you continue along **School Lane** and in 110m reach a T-junction with **The Coach and Horses** on your left-hand side and **The Village Shop & Tea Room** on your right.

Pick up the directions in the main walk text at the double asterisk **).

Extension

(add 3.4 km and 162m ascent/descent, cut 325m tarmac)

Follow a narrow grassy valley up to the northerly South Downs escarpment and continue along one of the most undulating stretches of the South Downs Way, with unrivalled far views from Pen Hill and Beacon Hill

In 40m you pass a blue marker post by a redundant gate and follow a car wide grassy track between fences up a narrow valley, with two hanging woods on either side: **Germanleith Copse** on the left and **Bushy Copse** on the right. In 370m you pass a bridleway marker post on the left, where the path curves left with the valley bottom. In 300m go through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden field gate into a wider U-shaped valley with an arable field at the bottom, a rounded hill ahead and **Buriton Hanger** curving away on the right. *Curve a little to the right* across the field, towards the right-hand bottom corner of the hill ahead, and head for a wooden gate to the left of a double metal field gate 300m away by a distinct chalky car wide farm track leading to a wood.

Having gone through another wooden gate en route, you go through the gate and continue in the same direction along the chalky farm track towards a wood. In 70m *fork left* by a three-way signpost along a – initially car wide – Restricted Byway with a fence on the left, leaving the chalky farm track. In 80m the track narrows to continue between high earth banks and in 130m the hedge on your right discontinues to open views to the east along **Buriton Hanger**. In another 150m – where the path temporarily levels out – you can see **Pen Hill** a little to the left and the – higher – **Beacon Hill** to the left of it, as well as the **Rother Valley** on the right and the prominent transponder mast on **Bexleyhill**, near **Henley**, with the distinctly shaped **Black Down** in the distance.

Follow the path, with **Buriton Farm** down in the valley below, for 1 km, first through a dip, but then steadily up all the way to **Mount Sinai** on the **South Downs Ridge**

(crossing a farm track along the way). 80m after the path has levelled out you go through a wooden gate onto a left-to-right car wide track amongst trees, with a path (a Restricted Byway) descending down a wood opposite. The car wide track is the **South Downs Way** (a signpost is visible 20m away to the right). *Turn up to the left*. In 110m *turn further up left* with the car wide track and in 15m *turn left* with the signposted South Downs Way, ignoring a footpath turning down right. In 35m *turn right* up the steep **Pen Hill** along a fenced field boundary with a South Downs Way marker post.

In 200m continue to the right of a barbed wire fence line and in 150m reach the summit of **Pen Hill** at a wooden gate to the left of a cattle grid. Views to the south go along **Millpond Bottom** towards the narrow wooded valley walked through post-lunch and the **Channel** beyond it, near **The Witterings**. On a bearing of 140° you can just about spot **The Trundle** (St. Roche's Hill) again (through a dip in the tree line on a ridge). Continue in the same direction and in 40m ignore a metal gate on the left (now with good views on the right into the **Upper Rother Valley**) and follow a track downhill to the saddle between Pen Hill and Beacon Hill. In 160m *continue in the same direction* at a signposted four-way path junction at the bottom of the drop, *steeply uphill* – in 30m passing **[!]** *to the right* of a **National Trust Harting Down** sign – i.e.: ignoring brideways off sharp right and half left (the South Downs Way).

In 200m you pass a two-way signpost, *veer left* and after 90m reach a toposcope and a trigpoint at the summit of **Beacon Hill** (242m above sea level, a **late Bronze Age/early Iron Age hillfort** site). From here you can see the **Isle of Wight**. Continue in the same direction to the right of a solitary bush 40m away and in 150m go through a wooden gate to the right of a metal field gate to descend – very steeply indeed – to a five-way signpost in a large flint-and-concrete base at the bottom of the saddle between **Beacon Hill** and **Round Down Hill**, which you reach in 280m.

Here you have a choice:

For an extension within the extension you continue in the same direction uphill – following the South Downs Way – and pick up the directions at the end of this text under **Extension within the Extension**.

For the Extension, *turn left* along the bottom of this shallow U-shaped valley (**Bramshott Bottom**), with a hanging wood on **Round Down Hill** on the right [i.e.: ignoring the South Downs Way (joins from hard left along the flank of Beacon Hill, continues straight ahead) and the right turning bridleway along a holloway (signposted East Harting 1)]. In about 1 km walk through redundant metal gates just before **Whitcombe Bottom** joins from the right and a fenced round pond on the right, where the path curves gently to the left. At a signposted four-way junction you continue in the same direction with the bridleway (down from the left from **Little Round Down**). In 160m enter some trees by a tall bridleway marker post and *turn up to the right* steeply into the wood. In 210m walk through a double wooden field gate and *turn right* with a car wide track, now with a pasture behind a fence on the right and a wood on the left (**North Marden Down**). In 100m you continue through a dip. In another 100m you have **Kill Devil Copse** on your right and in 150m you *turn right* to go through a wooden gate and *turn left* immediately along a path and in 10m cross the **B2141** to *turn left* on the other side with a bridleway signpost along an earthen path parallel to the road, to the right of a line of trees (i.e.: ignore a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate).

***)** In 50m you *turn right* along a broad drive with tall trees on the right and a wood on the left (**Fenced-in-Piece** on the OS map). In 100m continue along the track to the left of a metal gate leading to a house and in 20m walk through a gap to the right of a metal barrier into an arable field. Continue in the same direction along its right hand boundary with a tall hedge on the right. In 75m the path *turns left* with the boundary,

now as a distinct path with occasional trees on the left. In 200m you can see a hilltop church on the left (in **North Marden**, along the Main Walk route) and in 30m – at the corner of the wood on your right – you *veer right* at a three-way signpost with the bridleway, ignoring the footpath continuing in the same direction along a tree line. The bridleway *veers left* immediately and continues as a broad grassy track between low hedges, with occasional horse jumps along it (230°).

From here you can see two notable hills: a little to the right is **Compton Down** (with **Jubilee Clump** on its top, planted to celebrate Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee in 1897), and on the right, further away, is **Windmill Hill**, on the other side of the valley, and beyond the railway line. In 280m you *veer right* with a signpost, to stay to the right of a line of trees. In 360m – by a gap in the growth on your left – you pass the corner of a wood on your left (**Fernbeds Down**). 90m further along you have the best views of **Uppark House** high up on the ridge back on the right. In 200m – at the far corner of the wood on your left and by a three-way signpost – a footpath joins from the left through a gap to the side of a stile. This is the Main Walk.

Continue in the same direction along the grassy path, with trees on your left, and pick up the directions at the asterisk *) in the main text.

Extension within the Extension (add 1.0 km and 34m ascent/descent)

Up Round Down Hill with more views to the Hog's Back Ridge and the North Downs, then south through woodland, here afflicted by some road noise

In 90m you walk through a metal gate to the left of a wide fence gap (a missing double metal field gate) and climb up **Round Down Hill** on a wide chalky path between bushes. In 380m you emerge from the bushes and trees on a plateau – steeply dropping off to the right – with views all around to continue broadly in the same direction towards a fenced clump of trees. Pass a redundant metal gate by a South Downs Way marker post along the way and in 480m reach the clump, where a footpath joins from the right through a high wooden gate (35m along the footpath you will find a **bench with superb views** across the Upper Rother Valley and South and East Harting villages towards the Hog's Back Ridge and the North Downs).

Continue in the same direction, soon again with the steep drop on your right along a clear chalky path and in 280m – just before a wooden gate by a two-way South Downs Way signpost – *turn up to the left* along a narrow chalky path to another wooden gate to the left of wooden field gate. In 50m you walk through the gate to *turn left* along a left hand grassy field boundary with a bridleway signpost. In 100m enter a wood, in 50m pass a bridleway marker post (a path joins from the right) and in 80m cross a footpath by a four-way signpost to continue along the meandering path through the wood on **Harting Hill** for 900m, ignoring all ways off. Emerge from the trees and continue in the same direction along a fenced path with a pasture on the left. In 210m the path *turns right* with a signpost and in 30m you cross the road to *turn left* on the other side with a bridleway signpost along an earthen path parallel to the road, to the right of a line of trees, ignoring a metal gate to the left of a metal field gate.

Pick up the directions at the asterisk *) in the **Extension** text.