

NORTH DOWNS WAY

DOWNS LINK

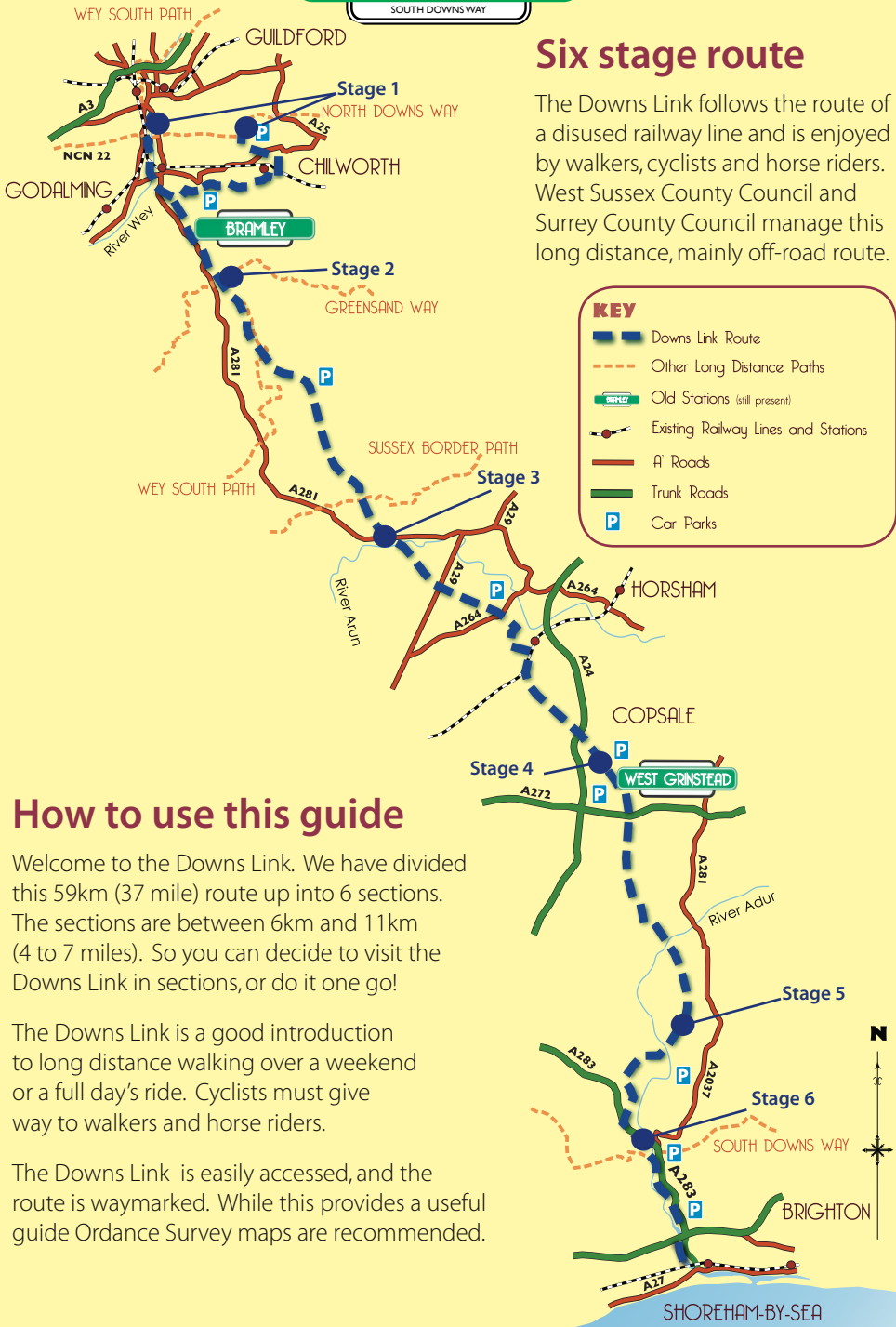
SOUTH DOWNS WAY



Six Stage Route Guide



DOWNS LINK



Six stage route

The Downs Link follows the route of a disused railway line and is enjoyed by walkers, cyclists and horse riders. West Sussex County Council and Surrey County Council manage this long distance, mainly off-road route.

Downs Link

This long distance bridleway was opened in 1984. It connects the North Downs Way and South Downs Way National Trails. You can also pick up other long distance routes such as the Wey-South Path, Sussex Border Path and National Cycle Network numbers 2 and 22. The Downs Link is important for wildlife, providing shelter, food and an important corridor for wildlife to migrate along. You can join the northern end of the route at St Martha's Hill, Guildford Surrey. For an alternative flatter route, join the Shalford Park cycle route from Guildford town centre, which is in easy reach of the train station. This will link up with the Downs Link at Broadford Road, Shalford. The southern end of the route can be found at Shoreham-by-Sea, West Sussex. There are also plenty of opportunities to join the Downs Link somewhere in between.

The Hundred Years Railway

The railway line was built in two sections. The Horsham and Guildford Direct Railway Company built the northern section, which opened in 1865. This went from Guildford to Christ's Hospital. The London, Brighton and South Coast Railway built the southern section from Itchingfield junction, near Christ's Hospital, to the Sussex coastal town of Shoreham-by-Sea. This was opened in 1861.

Local communities and industries such as Southwater Brickworks relied on this railway line, did people from the cities who wanted a trip to the coast.

But in 1966 the country lost around 4,000 thousand miles of railway line. These closures were recommended by Lord Beeching in his infamous Beeching Report.

100 years after the opening of this railway line, it was closed. Blue Circle Cement near Shoreham kept a short section open to move cement to Shoreham harbour until the 1980s.



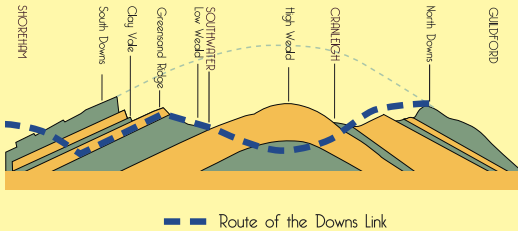
This train is an M7 tank, push pull set. It is running on the Brighton to Horsham line, adjacent to the A283 Old Shoreham Road and is approaching Shoreham toll bridge from the South.



Looking north from West Grinstead Station circa 1960

The Wealden Landscape

The Downs Link passes through a landscape that took shape around 25 million years ago when the great Wealden dome rose above the sea. The dome gradually eroded to form a basin, with the North and South Downs facing each other across the Weald. As you travel across the Weald, the scenery changes. This is because of the different layers of rock and soil types, which support different plants.



— — — Route of the Downs Link

St Martha's Hill is made of sandstone, part of the greensand ridge. It has acid sandy soils, so the woodland here is dominated by oak, with hazel, holly, hawthorn and bluebells in spring.

The sand and clay of the Wealden basin supports ash and oak, with hawthorn hedges. Once over the Tilling Bourne near Chilworth the soil becomes marshy in places so marsh-loving trees can be found, such as alder, poplar and willow.

Further south, the land gently rises and the Downs Link crosses the acid sandy soils of the Blackheath area. Here heather and gorse compete with birch, oak and pine.

Between the County border and Slinfold in West Sussex, the route crosses the Low Weald clays, which has pockets of hard sandstone known as 'Horsham Slab'. This used to be a popular material for roofing. You can still see it on some houses today. The woodland of the heavy clay soil is favoured by the green woodpecker and the great and lesser-spotted woodpeckers, with nightingales and many species of warbler using the scrubby undergrowth.

Christ's Hospital Station can be found a few miles south of Slinfold. This is the Arun Valley Line where you can pick up Southern operated railway services between Three Bridges and Ford.

South of this train station is Southwater village. The local community relied heavily on the brickwork industry until the clay pits closed in the 1980s. The clay pits were then transformed in to Southwater Country Park. In the centre of the village stands a sculpture of an Iguanodon, based on a dinosaur fossil found in the Southwater clay in the 1920s.

The Downs Link passes by the village of Henfield and the small country town of Steyning as it enters the River Adur flood plain. Both these communities sit on low bluffs or cliffs of upper greensand. The river cuts through the South Downs at Shoreham gap, a gap in the Downs near Botolphs. The arable fields and grasslands in this area are surrounded by 'rifles' or drainage ditches.

At this point the Downs Link heads on to Shoreham-by-Sea. Amazingly, the surrounding meadows and farm land were once part of the Adur estuary until the 14th Century. Today, they are home to a wide variety of plants and animals. These tidal waters rise and fall from 0.4 metres mid lunar cycle, to as much as 6.7 metres with the spring tides! This creates rich feeding grounds for birds, mammals and insects.



Nightingale

Maps and Distances

Ordnance Survey Maps

These maps cover the Downs Link route:

Landranger Series 1:50,000

Sheet Numbers: 186, 187, 198

Explorer Series 1:25,000

Sheet Numbers: 122, 134, 145

Conversion 1 kilometre = 0.63 mile: 1 mile = 1.6 kilometres

Kilometres	St. Marthas	Chinthurst Hill	Bramley	Run Common	Cranleigh	Baynards	Rudgwick	Slinfold	Christ's Hospital	Southwater	Copsale	West Grinstead	Partridge Green	Henfield	Bramber	Botolphs	Shoreham
St. Marthas	4.6	6.6	10.4	14.4	19.2	21.1	24.8	29.9	33.1	34.6	37.3	40.8	44.5	52.2	53.6	58.7	
Chinthurst Hill	4.6	2.0	5.8	9.8	14.6	16.5	20.2	25.3	28.5	50	32.7	36.2	39.9	47.6	49	54.1	
Bramley	6.6	2.0	3.8	7.8	12.6	14.5	18.2	23.3	26.5	28	30.7	34.2	37.9	45.6	47	52.1	
Run Common	10.4	5.8	3.8	4	8.8	10.7	14.4	19.5	22.7	24.2	26.9	30.4	34.1	41.8	43.2	48.3	
Cranleigh	14.4	9.8	7.8	4	4.8	6.7	10.4	15.5	18.7	20.2	22.9	26.4	30.1	37.8	39.2	44.3	
Baynards	19.2	14.6	12.6	8.8	4.8	1.9	5.6	10.7	13.9	15.4	18.1	21.6	25.3	33	34.4	39.5	
Rudgwick	21.1	16.5	14.5	10.7	6.7	1.9	3.7	8.8	12	13.5	16.2	19.7	23.4	31.1	32.5	37.6	
Slinfold	24.8	20.2	18.2	14.4	10.4	5.6	3.7	5.1	8.3	9.8	12.5	16	19.7	27.4	28.8	33.9	
Christ's Hospital	29.9	25.3	23.3	19.5	15.5	10.7	8.8	5.1	3.2	4.7	7.4	10.9	14.6	22.3	23.7	28.8	
Southwater	33.1	28.5	26.5	22.7	18.7	13.9	12	8.3	3.2	1.5	4.2	7.7	11.4	19.1	20.5	25.6	
Copsale	34.6	30	28	24.2	20.2	15.4	13.5	9.8	4.7	1.5	2.7	6.2	9.9	17.6	19	24.1	
West Grinstead	37.3	32.7	30.7	26.9	22.9	18.1	16.2	12.5	7.4	4.2	2.7	3.5	7.2	14.9	16.3	21.4	
Partridge Green	40.8	36.2	34.2	30.4	26.4	21.6	19.7	16	10.9	7.7	6.2	3.5	3.7	11.4	12.8	17.9	
Henfield	44.5	39.9	37.9	34.1	30.1	25.3	23.4	19.7	14.6	11.4	9.9	7.2	3.7	7.7	9.1	14.2	
Bramber	52.2	47.6	45.6	41.8	37.8	33	31.1	27.4	22.3	19.1	17.6	14.9	11.4	7.7	1.4	6.5	
Botolphs	53.6	49	47	43.2	39.2	34.4	32.5	28.8	23.7	20.5	19	16.3	12.8	9.1	1.4	5.1	
Shoreham	58.7	54.1	52.1	48.3	44.3	39.5	37.6	33.9	28.8	25.6	24.1	21.4	17.9	14.2	6.5	5.1	

For further information about the Downs Link, the countryside, or how to become a Volunteer Ranger please contact:

Surrey County Council,
County Hall, Penryhn Road,
Kingston-upon-Thames,
Surrey
KT1 2DN
Tel: 03456 009009

**West Sussex
County Council**
Countryside Services,
1st Floor, Northleigh,
County Hall,
Chichester
PO19 1RH

Downs Link - Stage 1

Grid Ref: TQ 032 484 to TQ 031 420

St Martha's Hill – Bramley – Run Common – 10.5km (6.5 miles)

St Martha's Hill

near Guildford is 175m above sea level. It is named after the original Norman Parish Church built on this site.

Many paths cross here so look closely for the Downs Link signs.

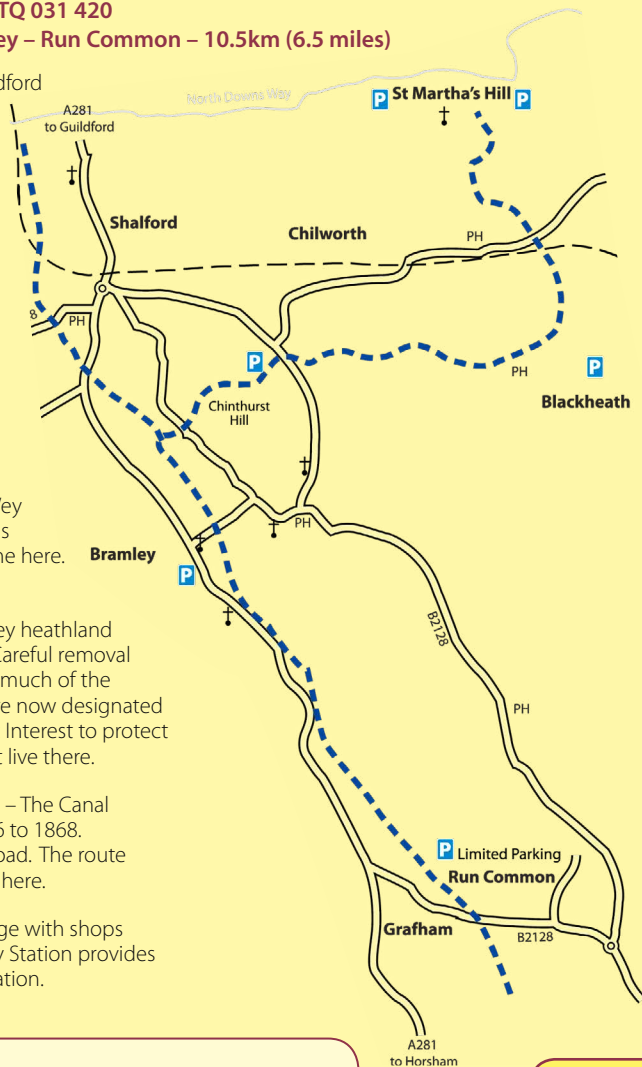
Chinthurst Hill has a folly, which can be visited by the public.

In Tannery Lane the modern bridge was built over the railway, on top of a bridge that crosses the Wey and Arun Canal. The Downs Link joins the old railway line here.

Blackheath – 85% of Surrey heathland has been lost since 1762. Careful removal of some trees has restored much of the heather. Parts of the area are now designated as Sites of Special Scientific Interest to protect the animals and plants that live there.

The Wey and Arun Canal – The Canal was in operation from 1816 to 1868. Traffic moved to rail then road. The route shares the Wey South Path here.

Bramley – A pleasant village with shops and buses. The Old Railway Station provides parking and tourist information.



Getting Started

By Rail – the nearest railway station to St Martha's is Chilworth. You can check train times with National Rail Enquiries: 08457 484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – From Guildford or Horsham follow the A281 to Shalford, then follow the A248. Then 1.5 km after Chilworth Railway Station, turn left into the narrow Guildford

KEY

--- Downs Link Route

— Roads

P Car Park

† Church

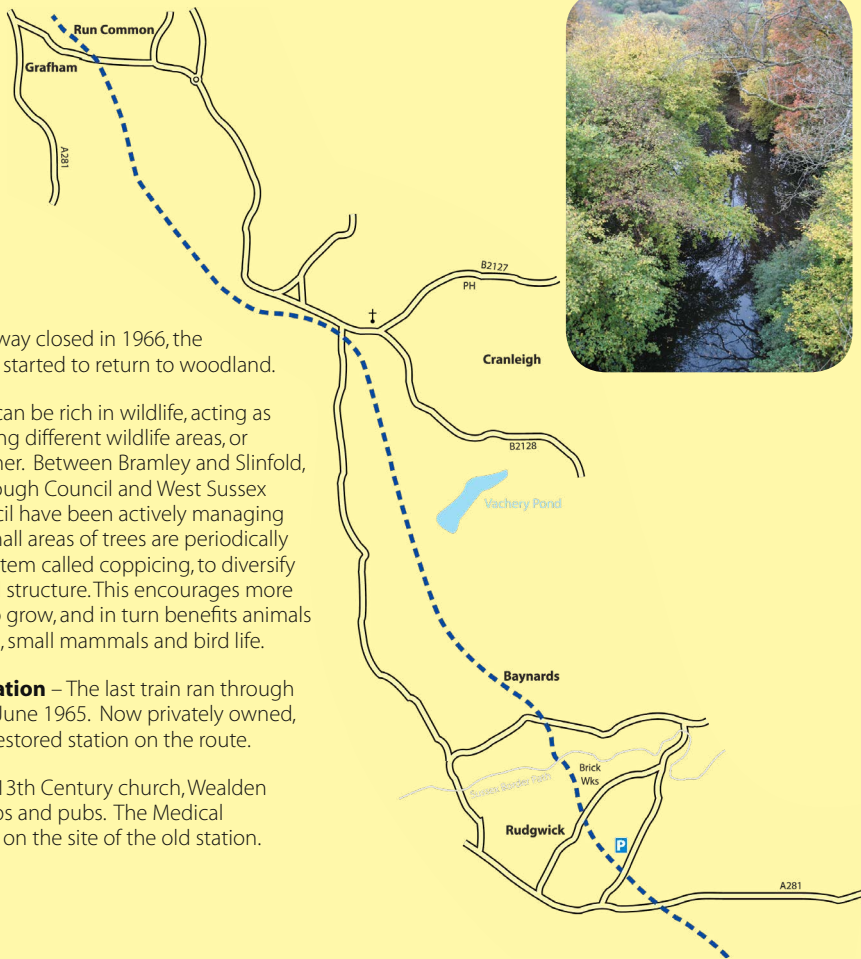
Castle

PH Pub

Downs Link - Stage 2

Grid Ref: TQ 031 420 to TQ 087 333

Run Common – Cranleigh – Baynards – Rudgwick 10.8km (6.7 miles)



When the railway closed in 1966, the cleared banks started to return to woodland.

Railway lines can be rich in wildlife, acting as corridors linking different wildlife areas, or habitat together. Between Bramley and Slinfold, Waverley Borough Council and West Sussex County Council have been actively managing the banks. Small areas of trees are periodically cut back, a system called coppicing, to diversify the woodland structure. This encourages more wildflowers to grow, and in turn benefits animals like butterflies, small mammals and bird life.

Baynards Station – The last train ran through here on 14th June 1965. Now privately owned, it is the only restored station on the route.

Rudgwick – 13th Century church, Wealden cottages, shops and pubs. The Medical Centre stands on the site of the old station.

Getting Started

By Rail – There are railway stations at Guildford, Shalford and Christ's Hospital: 0845 7484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – From Guildford or Horsham take the A281 to the turn-off between Grafham and Birtley Green to Rowly and Cranleigh. After 1.2km park in the lay-by just after the bridge over the Downs Link.

KEY

Downs Link Route

Roads

Car Park

Church

Castle

Pub

Downs Link - Stage 3

Grid Ref: TQ 087 333 to TQ 161 259

Rudgwick – Slinfold – Christ's Hospital – Southwater 12km (7.5 miles)



Shortly after leaving Rudgwick the trail crosses the busy A281 (please take care). 500m after this road crossing you will reach the **Double Bridge**, the emblem of the Downs Link.

There is a **view point** on the east side of the path. The bridge was built in 1865 to take the trains across the River Arun. The upper span was added because the Board of Trade decided the gradient was too steep to reach Rudgwick station. The embankments were raised and the iron girder bridge was built over the brick arch.

Slinfold Village has a pub and a shop which can be reached by turning left along Spring Lane (400m beyond the A29 road bridge). To avoid back tracking rejoin the trail via Hayes Lane.

2km south of Hayes Lane the route passes under the A264 road. Leave the old railway at the next bridge. The trail first heads right, over the bridge, and then left on to the road (take care as there is a sharp bend here). After Weston's Farm Shop take the next left along Christ's Hospital Road. On crossing the working railway line turn immediately right towards Christ's Hospital School. Before you reach the gates turn right so you are parallel to the working train line. At the end of the playing field look for a sign to the right, to bring you back on to the route.

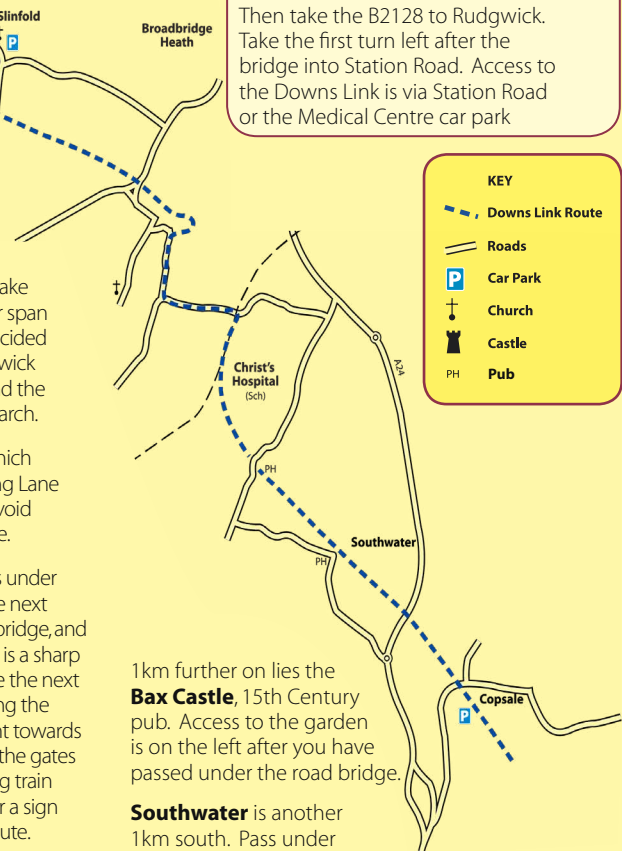
Christ's Hospital School – The 'Bluecoat' school came to West Sussex in 1902. The school provides education for children from all walks of life. Parents pay according to means. The buildings were designed by Aston Webb and Ingress Bell. This school also has a theatre, which has frequent performances of music and drama.

Getting Started

By Rail – Railway stations are at Horsham and Christ's Hospital 08457 484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – Follow the A281 from Guildford or Horsham to Bucks Green. Then take the first turn left after the bridge into Station Road. Access to the Downs Link is via Station Road or the Medical Centre car park



1km further on lies the **Bax Castle**, 15th Century pub. Access to the garden is on the left after you have passed under the road bridge.

Southwater is another 1km south. Pass under the road bridge and turn right for the bus stop in Worthing Road or go straight over the crossing towards the shops.

In 2006, Southwater village underwent a £25 million redevelopment. It now has more shops and facilities to serve the local community and its visitors.

Downs Link - Stage 4

Grid Ref: TQ 161 259 to TQ 206 162

Southwater – Partridge Green – Henfield 11.4km (7.1 miles)

Southwater Country

Park covers 36 hectares (90 acres) and was opened in 1985. The land was farmed until 1889 when the underlying clay was used to make bricks. When the clay pit was exhausted, Horsham District Council developed the park to provide a range of amenities.

The visitor centre has information, displays, changing rooms and toilet facilities. There is also a café, which is open at weekends, school holidays and at limited times in the winter. Please take care crossing Cripplegate Lane (road southeast of Southwater Country Park). Cars go deceptively fast.

Join the Downs Link at Stakers Lane. The route to West Grinstead passes under the A24, and through Copsale.

West Grinstead Station yard is now a car park and picnic site. Original railway houses remain, but the bridge carrying the A272 has been replaced. The railway carriage information centre is open some Sundays. There is an orchard to the south west of the car park where you will also find The Orchard Family Restaurant.

At **Partridge Green** the trail joins the B2135. Turn left for the pub and shops or right to continue. Follow the B2135 for 500m before turning left past Stan's Bike Shack Cafe, who also do bike repairs. After 100m turn right to rejoin the track.

The Downs Link moves on to **Henfield** across the open plains. Chanctonbury Ring can be seen to the southwest and there are good views of the South Downs. The route leaves the track by the Cat and Canary pub. To reach the village turn left on to Upper Station Road which becomes Church Street. After 900m you will reach the High Street. The Downs Link however, continues south from the car park down Station Road. Turn right at the bottom of the hill into Hollands Lane and then left on to the Downs Link.

Getting Started

By Rail – Railway stations are at Christ's Hospital or Horsham 08457 484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – From Horsham or Worthing via A24. Follow the signs for Southwater Country Park. Access to the country park car park is from Station Road South.



Downs Link - Stage 5

Grid Ref: TQ 206 162 to TQ 185 105

Henfield – Steyning – Bramber 7.7km (4.8 miles)

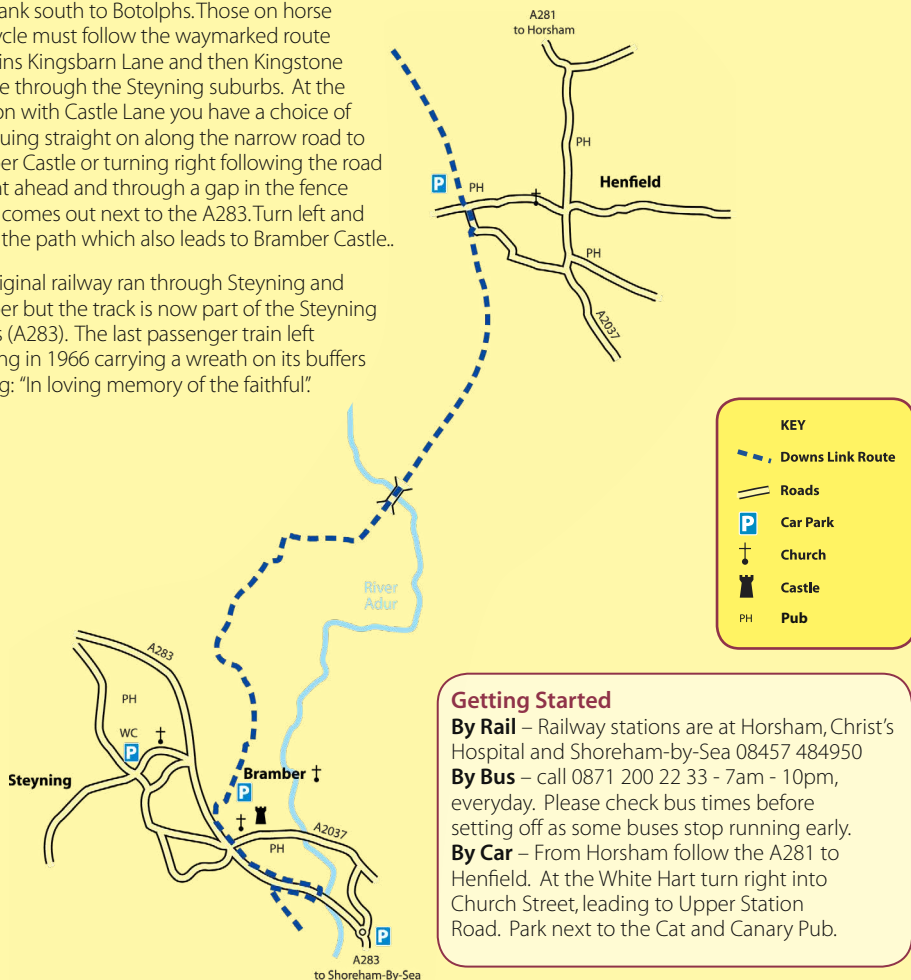
The Cat and Canary Pub was once the Henfield Station Hotel. Just south of here the station site is now a small housing estate known as 'Beechings', an ironic reference to Dr Beeching the (Minister responsible for closing 4,000 miles of railway in 1966).

The route rolls out onto the flood plains of the **River Adur**, with more fine views of the South Downs. After crossing the Adur near Stratham Manor, walkers have the option of following the river bank south to Botolphs. Those on horse or bicycle must follow the waymarked route as it joins Kingsbarn Lane and then Kingstone Avenue through the Steyning suburbs. At the junction with Castle Lane you have a choice of continuing straight on along the narrow road to Bramber Castle or turning right following the road straight ahead and through a gap in the fence which comes out next to the A283. Turn left and follow the path which also leads to Bramber Castle..

The original railway ran through Steyning and Bramber but the track is now part of the Steyning Bypass (A283). The last passenger train left Steyning in 1966 carrying a wreath on its buffers reading: "In loving memory of the faithful!"

Steyning is a delightful country town nestling beneath the South Downs. Its Norman Church, timber framed 15th Century houses, shops, pubs and museum are well worth a visit. It is 1km from the Downs Link.

Bramber Castle is the ruins of a Norman Fortress built around year 1070 by William De Braose to protect an important port on the River Adur. It is thought to have been destroyed during the Civil War.



Getting Started

By Rail – Railway stations are at Horsham, Christ's Hospital and Shoreham-by-Sea 08457 484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – From Horsham follow the A281 to Henfield. At the White Hart turn right into Church Street, leading to Upper Station Road. Park next to the Cat and Canary Pub.

Downs Link - Stage 6

Grid Ref: TQ 185 105 to TQ 208 060

Bramber – Botolphs – Shoreham-by-Sea 6.6km (4.1 miles)

Follow the trail south along the River Adur valley as it cuts through the South Downs. You will be greeted by the smell of the sea. To avoid crossing the busy A283, take the alternative route which takes you under the A283.

In Saxon times the estuary was navigable as far as Steyning, where there was a busy port and ship building industry. During the 14th Century the river began to silt up, the port moved south to Botolphs and then Shoreham. The church at Botolphs shows Saxon work and is worth a visit.

The trains crossed the Adur at **Coombes**. The railway company had to display a light at night on the bridge for ships. The penalty for not doing so was £10 per night! This section of the railway was used by the cement works to carry freight to Shoreham and was not closed until 1981.

Lancing College Chapel dominates the landscape to the west. The college was founded in 1848 by the Revd Nathaniel Woodard. In 1978 the Rose Window was installed in the chapel. It spans 9.75m with 30,000 pieces of stained glass. The land to the south, once salt marsh, is now the site of **Shoreham Airport**.

Botolphs is the meeting point of the South Downs Way and the Downs Link. Cross the bridge to complete the journey to Shoreham. King Charles II escaped to France from Shoreham in 1642 aboard the "Surprise" after his defeat at Worcester. He was just 21 years old.

Shoreham Airport was built in 1910, the very first civil airport in the world!

The Old Toll Bridge was originally built in 1781 to replace the ferry, which was a flat raft! Then in 1847 a new toll bridge was built to carry trains. It even became the A27 and had double deckers driving across until it was closed to traffic in 1968. In 2001, The Old Shoreham Community Trust was set up in partnership with West Sussex County Council to help raise money to renovate the bridge. It was officially re-opened on 23rd October 2008 by the Duke of York.

Carry on past the toll bridge until you reach the end of the Downs Link, which also brings you out at Shoreham High Street, from where you can pick up the **National Cycle Network number 2**. East leads to Brighton and West to Worthing. For more information go to www.sustrans.org.uk

Getting Started

By Rail – the nearest railway station to Bramber is Shoreham-by-Sea 08457 484950

By Bus – call 0871 200 22 33 - 7am - 10pm, everyday. Please check bus times before setting off as some buses stop running early.

By Car – From Horsham follow the A281 to Henfield, the A2037 and A283 to Steyning and Bramber. Turn right into Bramberand park opposite the Castle Hotel. There is also some parking at Bramber Castle. Walk back to the roundabout to pick up the Downs Link

