WOODLAND TRAILS

This five mile walk takes you between the two small villages of Clapham and Findon in West Sussex. **Natalie Leal** enjoys downland views, misty autumn woodland and medieval country churches on this figure-of-eight route

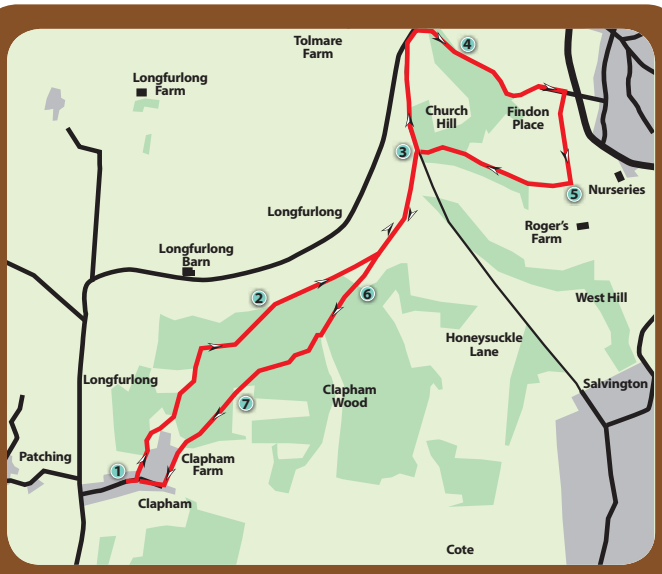
1 Park by the roadside on The Street in Clapham. Walking away from the main road take the first turning on the left into Church Close and follow the signposted drive to the Church of St Mary the Virgin. Pass through the gates into the churchyard and take the path to the left of the 12th century building and into the field behind. Cross the field and pass over a stile into the woods.
After approximately 100 yards the path crosses another stile and passes through a pasture with scattered trees. Climb another stile and follow the broad path into the woods. After around 200 yards the woods open out on the right as the path follows the edge of a field before briefly heading back into the trees and then crossing another grassy field.

2 Once you cross this field the path goes through another short section of woodland. Climb over a stile and walk along the edge of the field and back into the woods on a broad path. The hill starts to slope away sharply on the left of this path. After around 200 yards you come out of the woods onto a more open area of downland with good views over to your left. Follow the footpath straight on which soon joins a bridleway. Continue straight ahead along the bridleway as it mirrors the path of the Long Furlong road in the valley below. This section can get quite muddy after periods of wet weather.

3 The bridleway soon reaches an area of scrub where it joins a second bridleway on a broad track. Turn left and follow it downhill. Just before the bridleway reaches the road there is a metal gate – here a track leads to the right. Follow this up a slope to the edge of a field. Take the footpath as it goes across the bottom corner of this field into an area of scrubby woodland. Here there are views over Findon cricket ground and the Downs beyond. Follow the path downhill and then take the right-hand fork which follows the contours of the hill and leads away from the cricket pavilion. Past the cricket ground the path goes by a small campsite and over a stile.

4 Once over the stile follow the path along the edge of fields and woods as it leads you towards The church of St John the Baptist. Straight ahead of you are fine views of Cissbury hill fort. Pass through the old metal kissing gates and follow the path past the 11th century church towards the driveway (although this fine old church is well worth a detour). Continue along the drive passing Findon Place and take the footpath to the right after the high flint wall (approximately 50 yards before the drive gets to the road). Follow this path beside the flint wall and then the edge of a field for around 400 yards until you reach a gate. Pass through the gate and then after the cottage turn right taking the bridleway uphill.

5 Continue along the bridleway as it climbs steadily back into the hills. At the top of the hill the woods open out once again giving you far-reaching views. You quickly reach a T-junction – turn right here and then take the next left about 30 yards further on. This takes you back onto a stretch of bridleway used on the outward journey. Continue along the bridleway as it heads along the top of the hill towards



THE ESSENTIALS

DISTANCE/TIME: A figure-of-eight walk of five miles, taking around three hours.

PUBLIC TRANSPORT: The closest rail stations are Angmering and Goring-by-Sea however these are some distance away. There is a limited weekday bus service to the village of Clapham. Travel details at travelinesoutheast.org.uk, phone 0871 200 2233.

CAR: The nearest large town is Worthing. Drive west out of Worthing along the A27 and then take the A280 to the right. The Street in Clapham is the second turning on the right off the A280. There is plenty of roadside parking available on The Street as well as a small car park by the church. Postcode: BN13 3UU. Grid Ref: TQ 09430 06360.

UNDERFOOT: A few hills including a couple of reasonable climbs. A mixture of paths and bridleways through woods and open downland. Can become boggy in places, especially some of the wooded sections. A number of stiles to climb.

THIRSTY WORK: Although no pubs in Clapham village, the Worlds End pub is a short drive from the starting point of the walk. At the midway point of the walk, the Black Horse pub can be reached by taking a short detour from Findon church, across the A24.

MAPS: OS Explorer map 121, plus a compass for general direction.

the woods. When after approximately 400 yards, you reach the point where it is joined by a footpath, continue straight ahead along the bridleway.

6 Once into the woods remain on the bridleway as it leads steadily downhill. After around another 400 yards there is a grassy field on your left, opposite this a footpath heads off to the right. Take this path as it winds through the woods. After 200 yards the path leaves the woods and leads straight ahead along the edge of a field containing a scattering of large trees. At the end of this field the path joins a broad track. Continue straight ahead taking the left hand fork. Here there are views across Worthing to the sea.

7 Stay on the broad track as it goes downhill and back to Clapham. When you reach a barn pass this and head towards the metal gate around 150 yards further down the track. From here turn right which takes you back onto The Street and return to your starting point.

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