

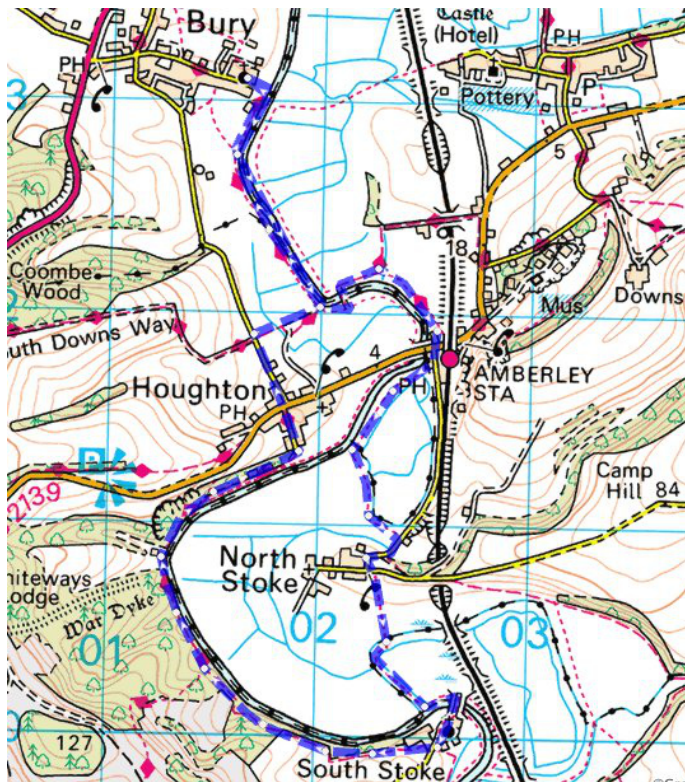
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# Favourite Nature Rambles Around Chichester

## by David & Lynda Thornley

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### Bury to Amberley, Stoke and Houghton



The Arun valley is a wonderful place to walk, right in the heart of the South Downs and this walk

covers a particularly attractive area surrounding Amberley. It's six miles that's predominantly flat passing through a variety of different habitats with outstanding views.

The start is just north of Amberley at Bury where there is a short lane that goes down to the pretty church and river; there's just about space to park a couple of cars even though it's quite narrow in places.



At the end of the lane is the rather grandly named Bury wharf which clearly has had busier times and was where a ferry operated. The path heads south along the Arun on the west bank where the river is lined with reeds and surrounded by meadows. At this time, in



May, the buttercups are out in abundance and the reed buntings and warblers are very much in evidence with their distinctive calls. This section of the Arun is tidal and the river flows back and forth with surprising strength although this doesn't seem to upset the ducks which are present in considerable numbers.

After a short stretch there is a bridge to cross over the Arun and enable us to walk on the east side leading to the hot spots of Amberley, especially the tea shop. It could be really attractive but a rather out of place mobile home site and a very busy road takes the edge of it. Crossing over the first section of the bridge to reach the footpath on the other side is a risky process, especially at weekends.



After a short stretch beside the river the path goes south, inland, to the little hamlet of North Stoke. Here the habitat changes as it passes through a wooded area that's clearly

attractive to song birds; they can be heard but it's difficult to see them now that the leaves are out. We heard Blackbirds, Tits and Thrushes, I'm sure there were more but my recollection of Geoff Sample's excellent recordings and ability to identify them is limited.

Between North and South Stoke the path has to cross a meander of the Arun; apparently a tree fell on the original bridge but fortunately it was rebuilt in 2009 in the form of a magnificent suspension bridge by the Royal Gurkha Engineers. It's now known as the Gurkha Bridge, in a small gesture of thanks for a welcome crossing that benefits us all.



South Stoke is only a bit larger than North Stoke but it does have a particularly attractive church and a few more houses; shame it hasn't been able to support a pub which would make an ideal stopping

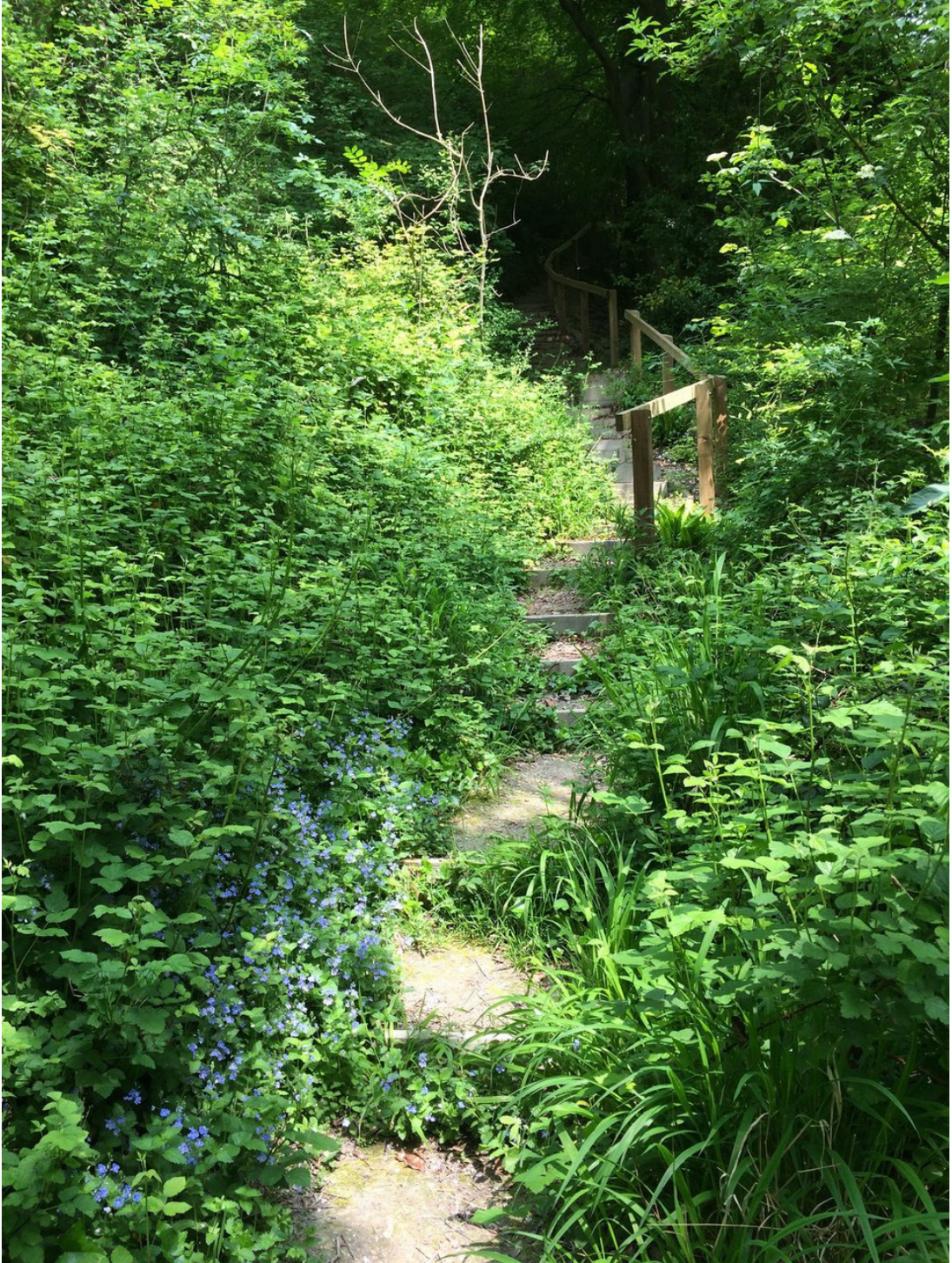
point just about half way round. It does have a bridge however so you can make your way over to the other side, around the farm and onto the path leading north close to the river.

Once more the going changes as the path rises along the edge of the Arundel Park into the woods. The river glints through the trees down below as you make your way through a mixture of what seems to be specimen trees from days



past. The air is full of garlic from the extensive beds of wild garlic that grows along the path even though it's well past its prime in late May.

For much of the way there's a fine flint wall surrounding the park close by, how much effort that took to make is not easy to contemplate but a sad reflection on the cost of labour in past times. There is a gate through the wall leading down to Swinbourn Lake and Arundel, the path being part of the Monarchs Way.



The escapement here attracts raptors not only Buzzards but also Peregrine falcons which are a delight to see even if their call is a bit raucous; probably from Chichester where they breed.

A bit further along there is particularly attractive set of steps leading up towards Houghton, the next hamlet. Don't be tempted to take them as they lead up to the main road and it's a nightmare to walk down it to get back on track.



Continue on the path which leads into Houghton which has got a pub; the George and Dragon is just off the path and only a short distance from the end of the walk, a good place for refreshment!

After crossing the road, just north of the hamlet, you rejoin the South Downs Way for a very short stretch leading back to the river bank; it's then a pleasant stroll back along the path we started on to Bury thorough the meadows towards the pretty church which is just in view through the trees. It's a good walk any time of the year but can get a bit muddy if there's been a lot of rain beforehand.