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LIPHOOK  
RAMBLERS



Midhurst  
Town Council

*footprints*  
of SUSSEX



Footprints of Sussex

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# New Lipchis Way



*“exploring West Sussex  
from head to toe in all its  
natural beauty”*

**A 39 mile waymarked walk  
from Liphook to East Head**

## Welcome to the New Lipchis Way


This delightful walking trail follows existing rights of way over its 39 mile/62.4 kilometre route from Liphook, on the Hampshire/West Sussex border, to East Head at the entrance to Chichester Harbour through the heart of the South Downs National Park..

Being aligned north-south, it crosses all the main geologies of West Sussex from the greensand ridges, through Wealden river valleys and heathlands, to the high chalk downland and the coastal plain. In so doing it offers a great variety of scenery, flora and fauna.

The trail logo reflects this by depicting the South Downs, the River Rother and Chichester Harbour.

It can be walked energetically in three days, bearing in mind that the total ‘climb’ is around 650 metres/2,000 feet. The maps divide it into six sections, which although unequal in distance, break the route into stages that allow the possible use of public transport.

There is a good choice of accommodation and restaurants in Liphook, Midhurst and Chichester, elsewhere there is a smattering of pubs and B&Bs – although the northern section is a little sparse in that respect.

You will need two Ordnance Survey Explorer maps to cover the route; numbers 120 & 133: the trail is clearly shown on both. In addition there are some written route notes where things become a little tricky – illustrated on our maps by the symbol: 

And to enjoy your journey to the full please do remember the Countryside Code :

- Be safe, plan ahead and follow any signs.
- Leave gates and property as you find them.
- Protect plants and animals and take your litter home.
- Keep dogs under close control.
- Consider other people.

Also:

- Take nothing away but photographs and memories.
- Leave nothing but your shallow footprints.



## Useful Contacts

Two great places to start for overall information about the area, maps, accommodation and transport are the Tourist Information Centres: Midhurst 01730 817322  
Chichester 01243 775888

There are railway stations at Liphook and Chichester. Details on: [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk) or call 08457 484950.

South of Midhurst buses are easier. There's a service between Chichester and West Wittering (not Itchenor) (details on [www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk](http://www.travelinesoutheast.org.uk) or call 08712 002233) and between Chichester and Midhurst (details on [www.stagecoachbus.com](http://www.stagecoachbus.com) or call 08451 210170). Both good services.

From Midhurst to the Hampshire border you will have to rely on local taxis, or make circular walks using the trail.

You can get the two O.S. Explorer Maps that you need from most Sussex bookshops or online direct from Ordnance Survey at: [www.ordsvy.gov.uk](http://www.ordsvy.gov.uk)

There's readily available accommodation in Liphook, Midhurst and Chichester and some B&Bs in between.

Try: [www.visitchichester.org](http://www.visitchichester.org)  
or: [www.visitmidhurst.com](http://www.visitmidhurst.com)  
or: [www.bedandbreakfast-directory.co.uk](http://www.bedandbreakfast-directory.co.uk)

The northern section down to Midhurst is pretty thin on hostelries, unless you go 'off-trail'. Further south it gets easier with good watering holes at Midhurst, Heyshott, Singleton, Lavant, Chichester, Itchenor and West Wittering.

The West Sussex County Council interactive website is good for this, go to: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/imap](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/imap).


It's always a good idea to take two minutes to look at the weather forecast before setting off on a full day's walk: [www.bbc.co.uk/weather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather) or call 0870 900 0100.

If you have difficulty with access to the paths on this trail please report it to:




West Sussex County Council Rights of Way at: [www.westsussex.gov.uk/prow](http://www.westsussex.gov.uk/prow) or call: 01243 777620.

Guide compiled and produced by  
**Footprints of Sussex**  
[www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk](http://www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk)



## Route Notes

The route is waymarked along its entire length. However, where this symbol  is shown on the map you should take extra care to ensure you are following the correct route. These notes, running from north to south, may help.



### Map 1

-  Turn L up the side of the valley, ignoring the unmarked track ahead.
-  The L turn is in a small clearing with a footpath going ahead. The fingerpost on the R is difficult to spot.
-  Just 400m after the last turn several tracks meet in these forest workings. Take the bridleway sign R.


### Map 2

-  Turn R off the broad track on a footpath going steeply downhill to join a lower track beside a stream. After 150m, at the entrance to Ash House, fork R off this track onto a well-hidden narrow footpath.
-  Keep straight ahead – as close to the riverbank as possible – on this permissive path.


### Map 3

-  900m after the old bridge leave the Serpent Trail following a bridleway fingerpost at an angle of about 30° L. At the four armed fingerpost ahead, turn L and in just 20m turn R being careful to follow the footpath fingerpost into the woods – not the broader unmarked track immediately before it!
-  If the footpath is ploughed over, walk around the right hand side of the field and turn L in the corner to rejoin the path heading towards Heyshott.

### Map 4

-  Cross the old railway bridge and double-back L to join the course of the old railway heading south.

### Map 5

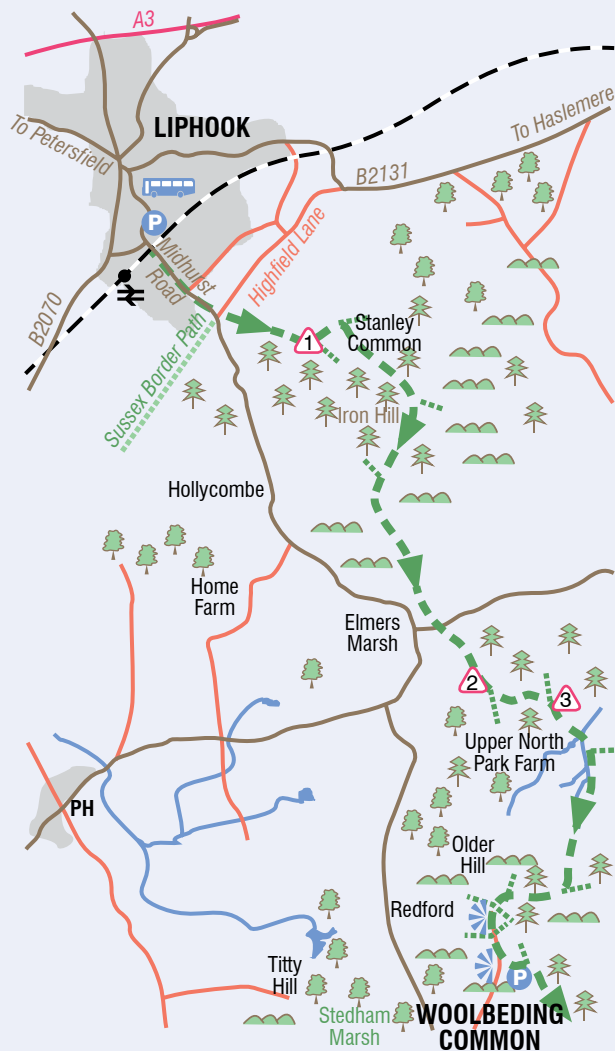
-  After crossing Salterns Lock keep R on a narrow path to Birdham Pool marina and shipyard.

### Map 6

There is an option at the end of this section to continue to and around East Head or to turn L into West Wittering.

1

## Liphook to Woolbeding Common

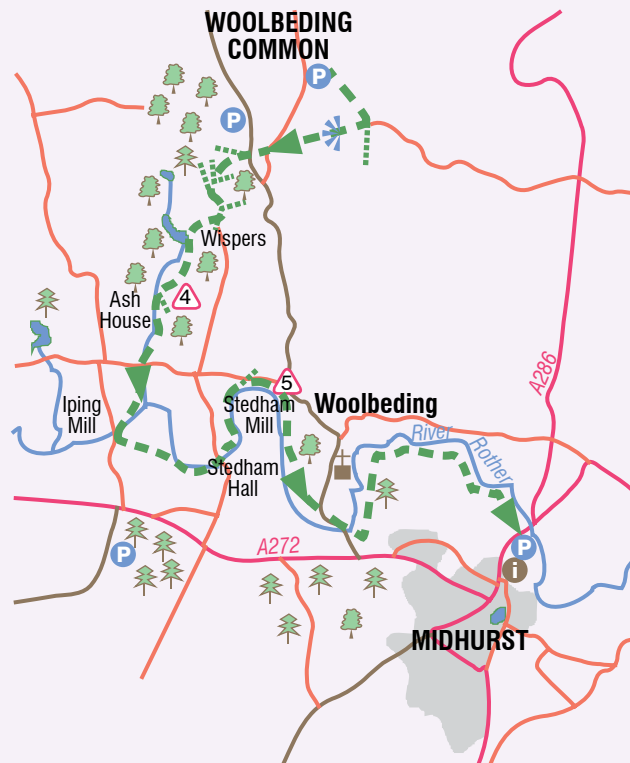


Length 8.5 km/5.3 miles – climb 205 m/673 ft

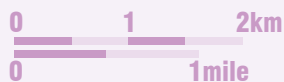


2

## Woolbeding Common to Midhurst

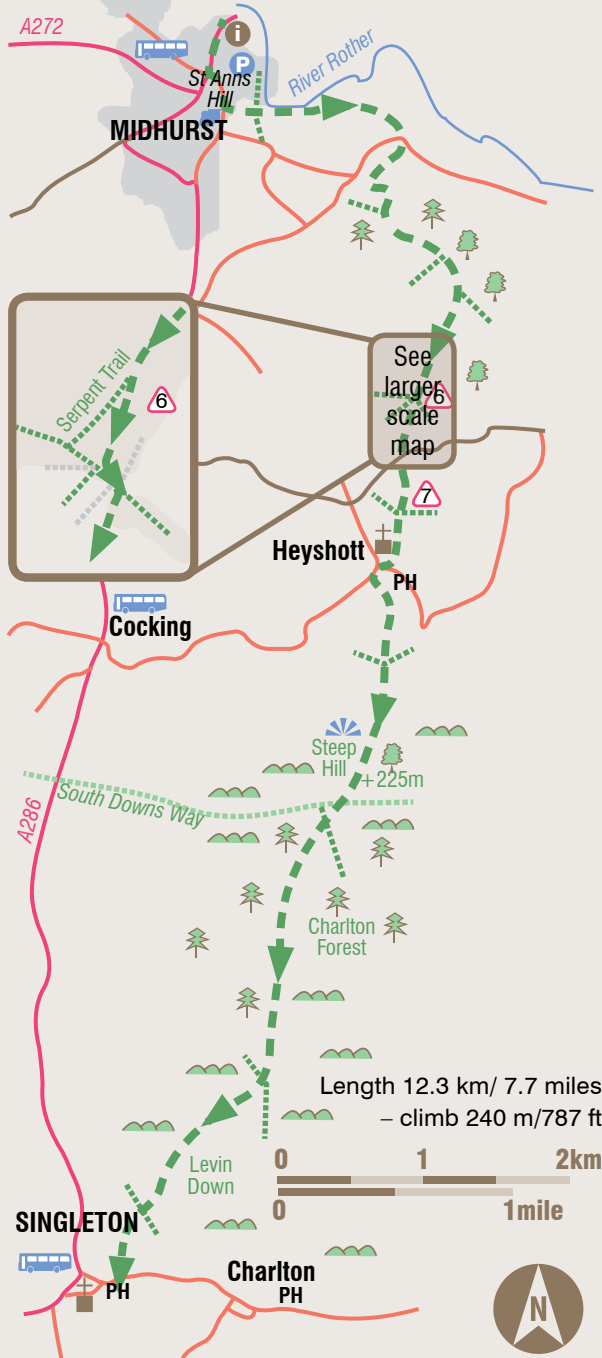


Length 12.5 km/7.8 miles – climb 45 m/148 ft



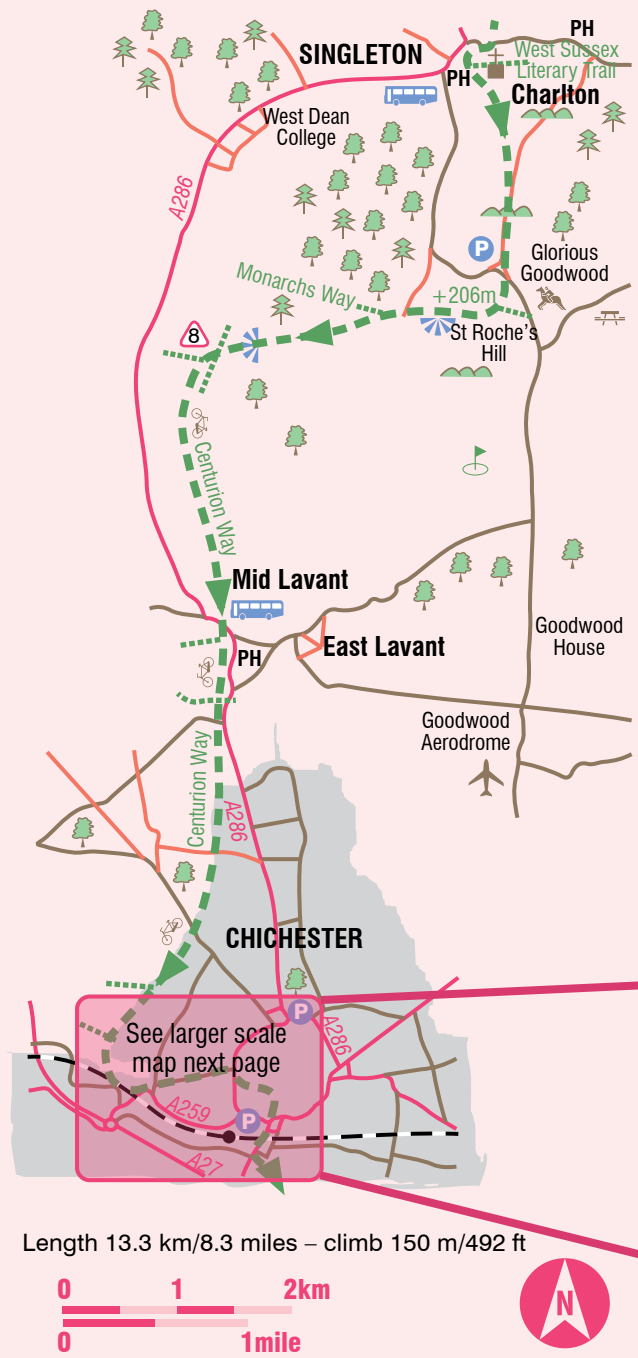
3

## Midhurst to Singleton



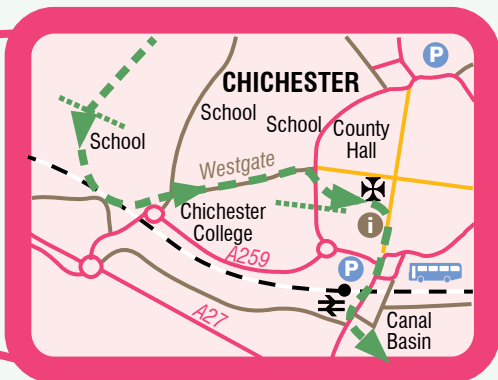
4

## Singleton to Chichester



5

## Chichester to West Itchenor



6

## West Itchenor to West Wittering



Length 5.4 km/3.4 miles. Total climb <5 m/16.5 ft  
(add 2 km/1.3 miles for East Head)



### Key to map symbols

- Tourist Information Centre
- Car park
- Viewpoint
- Church
- Cathedral
- Rail station
- Public house
- Bus stop
- Hills

## Liphook to Woolbeding Common

Our route crosses several areas of lowland heath, or common land. These developed on poor soils during the Stone Age as trees were removed and prevented from re-growing by grazing and burning. Long thin parishes evolved with each village having access to downland, meadow, arable land, heath and woodland. Commoners' rights to the heathland were very important – for grazing and as a source of a wide range of raw materials. Such constant use kept the heaths open, providing an important and diverse habitat for many plants and wildlife.



Upper North Park Farm

Since 1800 more than 80% of heathland habitat in West Sussex has been lost, some permanently. This may be due to industrialisation and the move away from a subsistence agrarian economy, changing agricultural practices or land being taken for housing and other development. In other areas, lack of appropriate management has been a problem – trees and shrubs quickly re-grow and destroy the heathland habitats.

In recent years, careful management and grazing has led to a revival of these habitats. Stanley Common is part of land bought by The Lynchmere Society in 1998 through public appeal and a Heritage Lottery Fund grant. One of the conditions of the grant was that the lowland heathland should be restored. Woolbeding is managed by the National Trust and Heyshott by the Cowdray Estate.



Titty Hill

Many wildflowers and birds are returning to these areas, including the rare Nightjar, Woodlark and Dartford Warbler. Woolbeding and Heyshott Commons are Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI). Stanley Common lost this status due to its over-grown state. Although the habitat has now been restored, regaining SSSI status is not easy.

The grazing of cattle is an important part of heathland management. Traditional, rare breeds are used as they are well able to survive in a hostile environment. Shetland cattle may be seen on Stanley Common. The 1912 Herd Book describes them: '*They are extraordinarily hardy, the weaklings having died out long ago*'.



© SDJC

Shetland Cattle

The stone-faced banks by the path on Woolbeding Common are believed to date from the medieval period and were used to mark the boundary between the common and enclosed farm land.

# 2

## Woolbeding Common to Midhurst

The River Rother was an important source of power and transport, not obvious from its modern size and appearance. Iping Mill was valued at 13s 4d in the Domesday Book. It has completely disappeared but was large during the 18th and 19th centuries. At the time of Domesday there were three mills in Stedham valued at 30s in total. The site of one is long lost; the second was on the Hammer stream at Ash House and had gone by 1845. One still remains as a mill house east of the village. Over the years these mills switched between fulling cloth, milling grain, making paper (including blotting paper) and processing timber. These water mills were rather prone to fire and burnt down on several occasions!



Stedham Hall

Stedham Hall is largely the result of 19th and 20th century rebuilding, although Pevsner describes it as 'A formidable fairy-castle effect from the river side'. The estate was owned at one time by John Stoveld (1797-1870). He was a banker in Petworth and the first to issue Bank of England notes rather than those of his own bank.



Woolbeding Common

The Way crosses three of the charming old Rother bridges which have escaped the fate commented on by the Rev. A. A. Evans in 1936: *'There were many ancient bridges in Sussex, ... but in later years they have been swept away by cold-eyed and impatient public authorities, and in most cases have been replaced by bridges which, whatever their utility, are dull and uninspiring.'*

Across the river is a view of Woolbeding House, which has a long history, an 18th century façade now hiding an older building. It is owned by the National Trust and the fine 20th century gardens are open to the public. Charlotte Smith, a largely forgotten Victorian poet and novelist, lived some years in the village. Her husband was a gambler, a drunk and could be violent and his father left most of his property to his grandchildren. However, the will was disputed and a Chancery suit lasted almost 40 years; Charlotte and her children received little money. Dickens novel 'Bleak House' is said to be based on this.



Woolbeding House



## Midhurst to Singleton

Midhurst (meaning 'middle wood') grew from a Saxon trading centre on a hill, where the tracks leading to Chichester and Winchester crossed.

In the 1920s W H Hudson wrote: *'I went to Midhurst, ... to find myself in a small, old, extremely picturesque town, which, in its rough-paved, crooked, uneven streets, ancient timbered houses, its curfew bell, and darkness and silence at night, seemed to have suddenly carried me back into mediaeval times.'* The town retains some of this old charm. It has over 100 listed buildings and the curfew bell is still rung at 8 o'clock every evening.

The Way passes through the old centre of Midhurst. Knockhundred Row is thought to mean the hill leading to where the Hundred court sat. Knock or Cnoc is an old word for hill and a Hundred was an administrative division introduced by

the Saxons. The parish church of St. Mary Magdalene and St Denys was once the only permanent building in the Old Market Square. Very little remains of its original structure following extensive restoration over the centuries. The Old Market House was built in 1551 and is now a coffee shop. Narrow, twisting streets around this area contain many old and interesting buildings, which have evolved and developed over the centuries.

E V Lucas wrote: *'Charlton was of old a southern Melton Mowbray, the very centre of the aristocratic hunting county'*. The Duke of Monmouth (illegitimate son of Charles II) loved hunting here so much that he is said to have commented:

*'when I become King of England I will come and keep my court at Charlton'.*

Chalk heath is very rare – once downland is damaged, for example by ploughing, it is lost forever. Levin Down is the largest area of chalk heath in Sussex. Sheep

graze here for much of the year, playing an important role in its maintenance. The Down contains a range of habitats providing homes for many species of bird, flower and insect. In summer months, the distinctive blue flower of the round-headed rampion – the Pride of Sussex – can be seen. Levin Down is a Site of Special Scientific Interest, managed by the Sussex Wildlife Trust. (For further information go to: [www.sussexwt.org.uk](http://www.sussexwt.org.uk).) The name is derived from 'Leave-Along Hill' – the land was too steep for much agricultural use and the reason why Levin Down is such an important site.



Levin Down



Midhurst Church



Heyshott Church

## Singleton to Chichester

In 1823 William Cobbett rode along the Lavant valley into Singleton and wrote: '... , valley winds and twists about amongst hills, some higher and some lower, forming cross dells, inlets and ground in such a variety of shapes that it is impossible to describe; and the whole of the ground, hill as well as dell, is fine, most beautiful, corn land, or is covered with trees or underwood'. He preferred to travel on side roads rather than the main turnpikes, so that he could see more of the countryside and its people.

The Lavant (a Celtic river-name meaning 'gliding one'), which The Way crosses in Singleton and then runs parallel to, is a winterbourne – a stream that flows only or mostly in winter, following heavy rain. The seasonal definition is now perhaps less relevant than its relationship to the weather.



Bishop's Palace Garden



Centurion Way

Archaeological evidence shows that St Roche's Hill was occupied in Palaeolithic times. It was later a Neolithic 'causewayed camp' and most famously an Iron Age hill fort – the Trundle (from the Old English for 'circle'). In 1645, the hill was used as a military base by 'The Clubmen'. They fought both Royalists and Parliamentarians who came to plunder the lands of ordinary people.

St Roche, who was born in 1295, worked with plague sufferers and is the patron saint of healing. He is one of the most popular saints in France, Spain and Italy. There was a chapel dedicated to him on the top of the hill, although it was a ruin by 1570. Every year on 16th August (his saints day) a service takes place on the chapel site, including the laying on of hands as part of the ministry of healing.

The route follows the Centurion Way into Chichester. This was originally part of the Midhurst/Chichester

railway line which opened in 1881. Despite its proximity to Goodwood, the expected volume of passengers never materialised and it closed to passenger traffic in 1935. Sugar beet and gravel were transported between Lavant and Chichester until 1991. It is now a cycle and pedestrian route, named because it crosses the course of a Roman road. Sculptures relating to local history can be seen at various points.



Sculptures on Centurion Way

## Chichester to West Itchenor

W H Hudson, in the 1920s, was less than complimentary about Chichester: ‘... *not itself sacred, nor pleasant, nor fragrant to the nostrils*’. He went on to comment on the number of public houses: ‘*To keep all these houses open,*

*..., there must be an immense quantity of liquor consumed*’.

Chichester is now an attractive and historic city. The Way passes through the Bishop’s Palace Garden which contains some fine trees, including maidenhair (ginkgo biloba), sweet buckeye, giant sequoia, Indian bean tree, holm oak (an evergreen) and dawn redwood.



*Birdham Pool Marina*

It was first proposed that Chichester should be linked to the harbour by canal in 1585. The idea was revived in 1801, and construction began in 1818 – the final link in a water route from London to Portsmouth, with a branch to Chichester. There were delays and contractual problems, including the project running over budget. The last part opened in 1823 to great celebrations. In the words of a



*Canal Basin*



*Chichester Ship Canal*

local diarist: ‘... *a large concourse of people was attracted, it being celebrated with music playing, colours flying and guns firing, the whole concluding with a public dinner*’.

In 1824, the 116 mile journey from Portsmouth to London took four days. One regular cargo was bullion for the Bank of England which was accompanied by armed Redcoats. The volume of freight was never as great as expected, partly due to the expansion of the railways. By 1853 the Ford to Hunston section had closed and as soon as 1868 could hardly be seen. The remaining sections are important havens for wildlife and popular with anglers, walkers and cyclists.

The spire of Chichester Cathedral can be seen for miles around. J M W Turner made a famous painting of the view from Poyntz bridge, near the south end of the Chichester branch of the canal. It is now part of the Tate collection.

In 1895, the Selsey Tramway opened, crossing the canal on a drawbridge. This was opened by two winchmen winding at exactly the same speed to avoid it jamming – which it frequently did. The process was very slow leading to complaints from bargees. The tramway did however last until 1935.



*Chichester Marina*

# 6

## West Itchenor to West Wittering

East Itchenor disappeared in the 15th century, but the remaining village retains the 'West'. The name comes from Icca, a Saxon chieftain who settled in the district after the Romans left.



East Head (east side)

Chichester Harbour is of international importance for nature conservation and its landscape is of national importance. It is designated as an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, a Site of Special Scientific Interest, a Special Protection Area for wild birds, Wetland of International Importance and a Special Area of Conservation. The rich range of habitats, including the deepwater channel, mudflats, shingle banks, saltmarsh, grazing marsh, sand dunes and ancient woodland cater for a wide variety of flora and fauna. Over 50,000 birds live or visit each year, and the harbour is internationally important for five species of waterfowl.



East Head (west side)



At the same time it is a major area for recreation and leisure and is commercially important in terms of agriculture, fishing, boatyards and tourism. Over 10,000 boats use the harbour annually. There are more than 3,000 moorings and another 2,000 berths in the six marinas and 17 sailing clubs. In 2010 incidents involving the harbour patrol included 50 vessels requiring a tow, 10 vessels sinking or sunk, and 21 vessels running aground!

The combination of landscape, conservation, leisure and economic roles provide a management challenge for all those involved. To find out more go to [www.conservancy.co.uk](http://www.conservancy.co.uk) or call in at The Conservancy Office in West Itchenor to pick up one of their many publications.

East Head is owned by the National Trust. It is the fastest moving sand spit in the UK – *'the sand dune which thinks it's a race horse'*. Centuries ago it lay due west across the harbour mouth. Movement has slowed down in recent years, but it can move 30 metres in a night. The original public footpath disappeared into the sea during the 1950s, and there is now a permissive path around the head. It is a valuable site for rare wildlife – including the Ringed Plover and Silver Spiny Digger Wasp. (For further information go to: [www.nationaltrust.org.uk](http://www.nationaltrust.org.uk).)

West Wittering was the last pagan outpost in England, the population being won over to Christianity following the arrival of an exiled Bishop of York in 683AD. In the 1950s, the Church Commissioners, who owned the foreshore, were in discussion with Butlins and the National Union of Mineworkers with plans to sell the land for a holiday complex. Fortunately a group of local people managed to raise the £20,546 14s 9d to buy the foreshore and it continues to be protected from development.