
How to get there

Buriton lies east of the A3 two miles south of Petersfield.
Follow the signs from the A3.

The suggested start is from the village pond by the church.

Drive carefully through the village and park so as not to inconvenience others.

Places to Visit

Queen Elizabeth Country Park 4 miles south of Petersfield on the A3.

St Mary's Church, Buriton

Refreshments

A range of snacks to full meals in the two village centre pubs. There is also the village shop.



This leaflet was written by Mike Wearing for East Hampshire District Council, 1991. East Hampshire District Council acknowledge the permission granted by the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds to use previously unpublished material and photograph.

Literary walks in East Hampshire



W H Hudson photographed in the New Forest in his sixties

W H Hudson

A walk around Buriton

“The South Downs, in their cultivated parts are seen at their best in July and August, when the unreaped corn turns from green to red gold”.

(Nature in Downland 1900)

W H Hudson was born in the Argentine in 1841, came to England in 1874 and died in London in 1922.

Points of literary interest

W H Hudson was an accomplished, self taught field naturalist. Before coming to England, he had written many letters on aspects of South American natural history to both the United States and the United Kingdom. His first book was published in 1885 and his twenty-third a year after his death in 1922.

After exploring the Sussex Downs and the publication of *Nature in Downland* in 1900, he transferred his attention to Hampshire. 1903 saw the publication of his *Hampshire Days*.

It was Easter 1900 when he discovered Buriton.

In an unpublished letter he wrote to Mrs Hubbard from Petersfield:

“All day yesterday we were on our feet. First we went to Buriton a small old village with a very beautiful church set deep down in a hollow among the downs. Buriton was Gibbon’s birth place, and where he did some of his work.

The old Gibbonian Manor is now a farm house, and is just by the church. The vicar, Mr Martell talked to us and showed us the old farm. It is a very handsome old building. Then we walked to South Harting where we got refreshments, and ‘did’ the place then walked on to Rogate, then back to Petersfield.

Today we went again to Buriton, and rambled about the woods on the down above the village. But the wind was still strong and cold, and we listened in vain for the song of the spring birds. Not one have I heard yet - not even Peggy whitethroat nor the willow wren; and the aspect of the country is still wintery for April.

Tomorrow we think of walking to Horndean by the Portsmouth Road, and then getting somehow to Havant.” He must have reached Havant for he wrote from there to his friend Morley Roberts, the letter titled, ‘Havant (a beastly hole) Hants.’

How much has changed since Hudson explored here in 1900? Gone are the Hop Gardens that once surrounded the village. Hudson was fascinated by the smell of brewing when he first landed at Southampton in 1874. Gone is the smoke and chalk dust from the lime kilns in the pits where the chalk was then dug and burnt.

He always explored country churchyards but he would not have seen the collared doves nesting in the yews. They only arrived in Britain in 1955.

As a founder member of the Royal Society for the Protection of Birds, he would have approved of the nature reserve, but would have been uncomfortable in a countryside where so many now come to take air and exercise. He was a solitary man who saw beauty in many things and was able, through his writing to reveal this beauty to others.

Inscribed on the kerb of his grave in Worthing’s Broadwater Cemetery are the words -

He loved birds and green places and the wind on the heath, and saw brightness of the skirts of God.

Route

- 1 Starting at Buriton Pond, cross the stile in the south east corner and head east across the field following the field boundary to your left. On your left you will see the old manor house, once the home of Edward Gibbon, the author of “The Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire”
- 2 Coming to the gateway, climb the stile and follow Milky Way, an ancient trackway, uphill through the woods. The woodland here is also ancient, containing many of the plants missing in a modern forest and so is of immense conservation value.
- 3 When you reach the tarmac road, turn right. A little way along the road you will find a narrow bridle path running south away from the road. If you walk a short way along it you will find a grassy area shaded by beech trees. From here you can look into the fenced area of the Coulters Dean Nature reserve. Although you must not climb the fence, you can enjoy from the path the display of wild flowers that grow in high summer. This small area is the most easterly of the reserves managed by the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Naturalists’ Trust.
- 4 Walk back to the road and continue westwards along it. You are now on The South Downs Way, a long distance bridleway that follows the line of the downs from Eastbourne to Winchester. As you pass the lone house, the road becomes a track; continue along it.
- 5 Eventually at Dean Barn you join another tarmac road. Just past the cottages a footpath sign points to the right. If you choose this route, the path winds down through the Hanger, over the railway tunnel and into the field above the pond where you started. The work on the railway began in 1853, the first turf being cut by John Bonham Carter who then lived at Buriton Manor.
- 6 If you choose to extend your walk, stay on the road until you reach its junction with another road opposite the Forestry Commission car park. Here another bridlepath to the right leads you through the woods that clothe the disused chalk pit. Around you can still be seen the raised banks that once carried the tracks along which ran the trucks loaded with chalk.
- 7 Passing under the railway by way of a fine brick built bridge, you join a road that leads you down hill past Toad Alley and back to the pond. Before mechanisation, horses were brought each evening to the pond. A crowd of horses, shed of their equipment, drinking as they waded in the cooling water. The outfall, under the road, fed the sheep wash, the traces of which can still be seen. The pond was very much part of the working life of the village.

Map

