

History Walk

A walk through over 2000 years of local history and see some of the area's most magnificent scenic views.

This walk:

- is 4.8-6.5 kilometres (3-4 miles) long
- takes about 2.5-3.5 hours
- has no steep hills and is easy walking
- is unsuitable for a push chair
- has no stiles on the shorter route and two kissing gates on the longer route
- can be slippery when wet
- uses OS map 197
- has a café at the start and a pub and café with toilets half way round

When walking always follow the countryside code. www.countrysideaccess.gov.uk



A short background to Pulborough and its history:

The landscape features that have dominated the history and development of the Pulborough area are the river and floodplain, the greensand ridge that runs east-west through Pulborough village and the fertile area to the north of the greensand ridge.



From left: The Old Rectory; Cattle in brooks; Lower Street

This has generated the development of Pulborough Village as the heart of the area, the hamlets of Nutbourne, Mare Hill and Codmore Hill around the greensand ridge and isolated agricultural buildings to the north of the greensand ridge.

The Pulborough area closer to the river Arun has been inhabited since very early times due to the river providing fish and a waterway for trade and improving the fertility of the flood plain to the south.

Pulborough is a “linear village”, that is a long straggle of houses under the greensand ridge that were served by wells that drained out of the greensand at this level.

Stone age people inhabited the area 4-5000 years ago and their flint tools, which would have come from the South Downs, are still being found today.

In the bronze age, over 3000 years ago, it is known that the people of the area were part of the Wessex Culture– the finding in the area of a gold brooch from that period is the most recent evidence of this habitation. These people traded with mainland Europe as far north as Scandinavia and Greece in the south.

The Romans who arrived in the area in 43AD deemed the village important enough to build Stane Street to link it to the coast; at that time Pulborough was an important trading post. Later they stationed a garrison here when Stane Street was extended to London a long time later. Stane Street (now the A29) connected London to the harbour and palace at Fishbourne outside Chichester.

In Roman times there were major wharves in Pulborough and other important buildings in the area; at that time the Arun was known as the Tristantona. This is probably the most important Roman site in Sussex after Chichester. Some of the Roman objects found in Pulborough are shown below.

In the late 11th century the Domesday Book records significant dwellings here.



From left: Roman Coins; a lead cistern; bath house pot

During the Middle and late Middle ages, glassmaking developed in the Mare Hill area – you will still find evidence of waste glass and the quarries today. The greensand ridge provided the local building materials of sand and stone while the oak forests to the north and west provided building and boat-making timber. The river continued to provide the spur to much of the livelihood for the area with fishing and as a waterway with limeburning and other wharf-side activities taking place. During this period the road that is now the A283, became an important route from Winchester to Canterbury – Stopham bridge was built at this time – and Pulborough provided inns and other services to travellers and their horses. The wealth generated during this period allowed many of the listed buildings that still survive to be built; the most important are St Mary's Church and New Place – there are well over 100 listed buildings of historic or architectural interest in Pulborough.

In the late 1700's the building of the Wey and Arun Canal and the old Swan Bridge brought new wealth and opportunity to the area and a new set of historic houses were then built, many of which still survive; probably the most impressive being the Old Rectory.

The coming of the railway in the mid 1800's took over trade from the river barges and enabled the station area to become the centre of trade for the area with cattle markets, warehousing and distribution for the wider area.

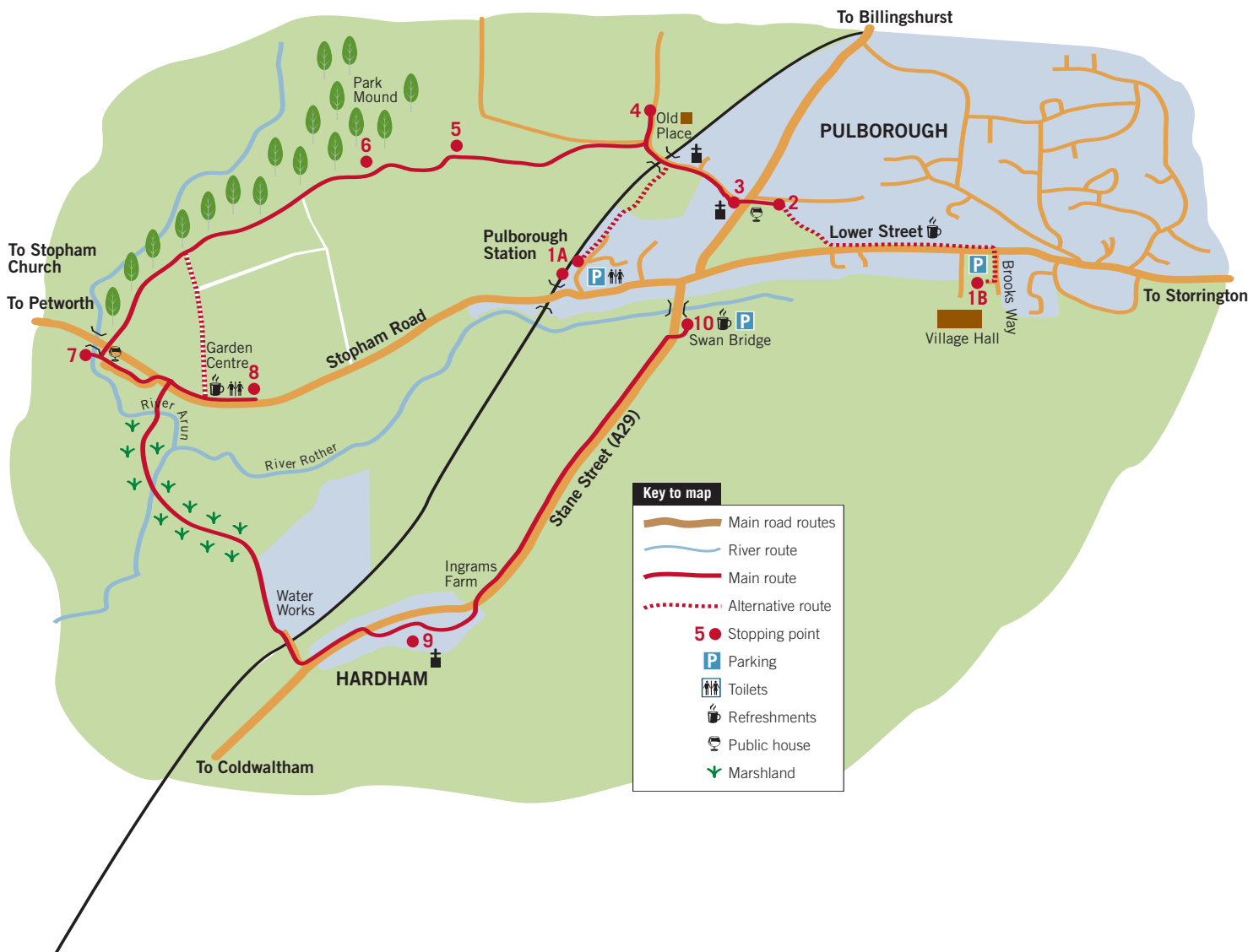
In the late 1800's and the 20th century the railway provided the commuting capability to the south and north as far as London which was the reason for much of the 20th century development and expansion of the Pulborough area.

The second half of the 20th century saw major changes in the lifestyles of the majority of the people in the area – employment moved from agriculture and industry to services. People's personal mobility grew with the growth in car ownership and the demand for leisure activities grew with the increasing levels of disposable income of many.



From left: Oddfellows Arms; Picnicking by the Arun; Lower Street

Overview map



The walk:

The walk is broken into short stages between numbered starting and stopping points. Each numbered point is shown on the overview map and also has its Ordnance Survey map reference.

1. Your start – there are two options:

a. Pulborough Railway Station (OS map reference TQ 043 186)

From the station turn left towards the industrial estate and on the left of the road leading into the industrial estate there is a pathway parallel to the railway going up a slope; follow this pathway for about 200 metres until you meet a lane when you turn right towards the medieval parish church. Follow this lane until you reach a main road; cross this and continue straight on past the Chequers hotel for about 50 metres to a kissing gate on your right, go through this and down the path to a viewpoint seat – this is **viewpoint number**



2. If you need refreshment before you start you could go to the Chequers Hotel.

b. The Car Park in Lower Street [A283] (OS map reference TQ 052 185)

Leave your car here observing the parking arrangements and go back to Lower Street [A283], turn left and walk on the right hand side of the road about 320 metres where you will find some steps leading to a sloping pathway across a field; follow this to the viewpoint seat near the top of the field – this is **viewpoint number 2**. If you need refreshment



before you start, there is a Tea Shop that you will pass as you walk along Lower Street, or the Oddfellows Arms public house just as you get to Lower Street

2. Viewpoint of Pulborough Brooks (OS map reference TQ 053 184)

If you look downhill to the south to the hills on the horizon, the South Downs, you are looking at much of the landscape that is the foundation of the economic development of Pulborough. You are standing on a greensand ridge that provided sand for building and glassmaking in the area as well as much of the ironstone, out of which many of the old houses in the area are built.

The field you are in is a glebe field (known locally as the East Glebe Field as there is also a West one!). “Glebe” means that in times past it was owned by the Rector of the parish; in those times the Pulborough parish was wealthy and, as evidence of this, behind you to your right, next to the Chequers Hotel, is the beautiful old Georgian rectory – now privately owned – which used to have extensive landscaped gardens with fish ponds – now built on.



Viewpoint number 2: Brooks and South Downs



Viewpoint number 2: The Old Rectory

As you continue to look south to the hills on the horizon you can see the river Arun. In Roman times this was an important waterway and Pulborough had wharfs for loading and unloading from the flat bottomed boats that traded up to this point and a little beyond. To the right of the river you can see the A29 road which at this point follows the course of the Roman road, Stane Street, which went from the Chichester harbour area to London – many parts of the old Roman road are still visible where it is not covered by the modern road. To the left of the river the large flat area was water-meadows which until the late 20th century were allowed to flood to fertilise the ground to improve the grazing – today parts are still flooded by the RSPB to encourage many rare species of migrating water birds such as the Bewick swans which come here from Siberia. The river transport was improved with a canal in some parts during the late 18th century to provide a secure inland waterway from Portsmouth to London – we will see more of this later. The river was also fished for eels for which Pulborough was famous in the 18th and 19th centuries. In the distance you see the South Downs on which sheep still graze and their organic meat is sold in the local butchers. The Downs, which is a chalk ridge, was heavily mined for flint in the stone age and for chalk until quite recently. The chalk was brought up the river to Pulborough and beyond, for lime burning to make lime for building mortar and improving the soil for crops. Today one of the largest chalk quarries at Amberley, just four miles away, is an industrial museum showing much of the industrial history of rural West Sussex – well worth a visit.

Now walk up the hill to the kissing gate where there is a plaque which tells you more about the hill on which you are standing and also the Chequers Hotel. What it does not tell you is that the old Chequers Hotel burned down on November the 5th!

Now walk to your left and cross the main road by the Chequers Hotel and walk up the steps up to the lych gate – **this is viewpoint 3**.

3. **Viewpoint from the lych gate of St Mary's Parish Church (OS map reference TQ 047 187)**

The A29 main road that you have just crossed is the Roman road, Stane Street – this Roman road like most others was completely straight between its start and end – in practice between Chichester (Noviomagus Regnorum) and London (Londinium) Bridge. Modern instrumentation shows that it never deviated by more than 100 metres from a perfectly straight line.

Between the lych gate and the road is the war memorial to the 68 people of Pulborough who died for their country in the first world war – many of the names are those of families who still live in the village.

Many were just 19 years old but others died leaving wives and children – very few people in Pulborough, which was a much

smaller community at that time, were untouched by the death of a close relative – a full list and the details of those who died can be found on Ministry of Defence and British Legion website www.roll-of-honour.com/Sussex/Pulborough.



**Viewpoint number 3:
Lychgate at St Mary's Church**



Viewpoint number 3: St Mary's Church

St Mary's Church may be open and you are always very welcome to visit and look around. The church has been a place of Christian worship since it was built in the 12th century, the nave being built in the 15th century. The font is at least 11th century or earlier. There are a number of interesting features within the church which reflect its history and that of some of the people of Pulborough. An illustrated history booklet is on sale in the church. For more information see www.stmaryspulborough.org.uk. On a quick visit you should see the brasses that were on the floor and were remounted on the wall in 1765 – one is of Canon Thomas Harlyng who died in 1423, two others of Edmund and Matilde Mille are from 1452 and one other of Richard Mille of 1576. Also, on the wall beside the Lady Chapel, is a plaque to commemorate the children who were evacuated to Pulborough in WWII and by the door by which you entered is a list of the Rectors back to 1402.

Leave the church and join the lane (Church Place) that runs along side it; here turn left and walk between the buildings that were part of the commercial centre of Pulborough before the coming of the railway in the 1840's. Here, opposite the Catholic Church was a shoe and boot maker which is why the Catholic Church is dedicated to the patron saint of shoemakers.

Follow along the road and shortly after crossing the railway bridge there is a track-way to your right, walk down this for about 70 metres to the lake which is **viewpoint 4**.



Viewpoint number 4: Watermill and Old Place Manor House

4. Viewpoint of the Watermill and Old Place Manor House (OS map reference TQ 049 191)

The lake by which you are standing is fed from springs that also used to feed the fish ponds in the old rectory grounds, which you saw at viewpoint 2, and then the stream goes under the A29 to feed this mill and fish pond. On the far side of the pond you can see the imposing house known as Old Place Manor which was built around 1450, it has a large medieval hall and the mill pond was also used as a fish pond as a source of fresh fish.

On the other side of the track-way to the mill pond is the mill which is now converted to a house. The short flight of stone steps up to the front of the cottage is where the corn would have been off loaded from a wagon at this height and the mill wheel was immediately below. When facing the cottage on the right hand side you can still see some pieces of the mill wheels and pulleys and way down below is the stream that was the outflow of the mill.

If you go a little further up the track-way you will see the overflow and sluice gates that bypassed the mill when the water was not needed to power the mill; this then joins the mill stream below the old mill.

You should now return to the lane that you left and note on your way the house on the left with various old windows and stonework that has been taken from a former building and included within this interesting building (confusingly this is also called “Old Place”). On reaching the lane turn right and walk about 170 metres past an example of “hedge laying” on your right, (for more information on hedge laying see – www.hedgelaying.org.uk) until you come to a footpath sign on your left; take this footpath along the edge of the field to the top of the hill where there is a gun emplacement – this is **viewpoint 5**.



Viewpoint number 4: Old Place Manor House

5. Viewpoint from in front of WWII Gun Emplacement (OS map reference TQ 039 189)

This gun emplacement would have probably have housed a six pounder Hotchkiss anti-tank gun – see <http://www.antitank.co.uk/25mm.htm> for information on some of the Hotchkiss anti-tank guns. The gun emplacement is one of two in this immediate area, the other you can see in the field adjacent to the churchyard.

These gun emplacements are well preserved examples of many such structures that were the anti-invasion defences erected from 1941 to defend sensitive strategic locations from invasion by an enemy that would have landed on the south coast.

General Sir Edmund Ironside, Commander in Chief of the Home Forces, decided upon a policy of layered defence. Coastal fortifications were designed to break up and funnel attacks inland so that limited reserves of troops could be effectively used to counter any breakthrough. Inland he created several lines of defence to slow down the German advance, using natural features, where possible.

The Pulborough gun emplacements were part of a defensive line along the Rivers Arun and Rother, a natural tank barrier; one was situated to protect the railway line plus Swan Bridge and this one, the crossing of the River Arun and Rother at Stopham. They supplemented the defence lines of pill boxes and anti-tank traps that were erected in the summer and autumn of 1940.



Viewpoint number 5: WWII Gun Emplacement

Each Gun emplacement is built of concrete over 1 metre thick and is roofed so that the total height is about 3 metres. The gun aperture is about 2 metres wide to permit the gun to track any enemy and the side walls are spayed and open to the back.

This viewpoint, which was excellent for defensive reasons, is also a great place to see the vista of the river valley as it meanders its way to the gap in the South Downs at Arundel and Chanctonbury Ring – a large ring of trees on the top of the Downs way over to your left. The trees were planted in the 19th century on the site of a 300 BC iron age hill fort and later Roman temple; the Ring has gained something of a reputation in connection with witchcraft, UFO's, ghosts and strange forces – for more information see – www.mysteriousbritain.co.uk/majorsites/aa/chanctonbury.

From this point you can see the railway which was built in the 1840's that superseded the river and canal as the main means of transport from the coast to London.

At Pulborough the line branched to Midhurst but this branch line was closed in the 1950's – the path of this old railway line can still be seen and is close to a Roman garrison station just the other side of the River Arun.

It is close to here that the dispirited Charles II, when fleeing from Cromwell's men in 1651, is reputed to have felt ennobled by the magnificent panorama and rose up in his stirrups and cried "This is a country worth fighting for!" – see www.sussexhistory.com/charles_ii for more information.

It was also near here that there was a skirmish at Coldwaltham, the next village downstream from Pulborough, between the Roundheads and Cavaliers – the bodies of some of the soldiers killed in this skirmish have been found immured in the walls of the church at Coldwaltham!

Now turning and looking north away from the river you have another magnificent view over the gallops of the Harwood estate and just out of sight over the hill, the Toat Hill monument. The gallops has 160 acres of training area and three five furlong training gallops – it is a large establishment with its own vet and a number of apprentice jockeys – their most notable winner was To-Agori-Mou in the 2000 Guineas. You may be lucky enough to see race horses taking part in a practice race. The Harwood family owned a munitions factory in Pulborough during WWII where many of the women of the village worked – you can hear reminiscences of two of the employees on www.pulborough.org/reminiscences/daisy and www.pulborough.org/reminiscences/mary. [THESE ARE TO BE ADDED!]

The Toat Hill monument, a tall tower beyond the gallops, was built in 1827 in memory of Samuel Drinkald who fell from his horse and died at that spot in 1823 – it is on private land and not accessible to the public. We continue our walk across a small track-way, up the hill, with a bungalow to our right, and through a gate at the top and into the woods. There we turn left and follow the path for about 150 metres to **viewpoint 6**.



Viewpoint number 6: Park Mound

6. **Viewpoint of Pulborough Castle (also known as Park Mound)** (OS map reference TQ 037 189)

Pulborough castle is the earthwork motte and bailey fortress to your right, standing on the highest point of the ridge, overlooking the River Arun down a steep slope on the other side. Today the top of the castle is covered in pine trees. Built around 300AD the castle provided a strong defensive site for the area with its commanding views to the south towards the south downs. The low land before the downs would have been heavily wooded. Looking along the ridge to the east from the castle you can see beyond Chanctonbury Ring and to the west as far as the settlement at Butser Hill near Petersfield. To the north you can see the river valley and the Sussex weald.

For more information see: www.castleuk.net_lists_south/197/pulboroughcastle

Continue your walk following the sandy path down the hill. Where the path turns right look into the field on your left to see the huge rabbit warren – this is also an excellent point from which to view the South Downs as it stretches eastward to Eastbourne. Now continue along the path until you reach the main road – the A283 – which you cross and walk down a narrow pathway to the right of the pub opposite; you are now on the old road and at **viewpoint 7**. Here you may



wish to stop for refreshment at the pub before proceeding.



The White Hart Pub

7. Viewpoint of Old Stopham Bridge (OS map reference TQ 030 183)

This medieval bridge was built in 1309 in the reign of Henry II to provide a secure crossing of the river for the important road from Winchester to Canterbury. The bridge ceased to be used by road traffic in the late 20th century – up until then it had traffic lights at each end to allow its use by a single line of traffic; these lights were reputed to be the first in West Sussex.



Viewpoint number 7: Stopham Bridge

With the development of the Wey and Arun Canal, linking Portsmouth to London via Weybridge in the late 1700's, the river, which formed part of the canal at this point, became well used and became an important waterway. In 1822 the central arch was raised to accommodate the more heavily laden barges.

For a period of thirty years the canal was much used, but was never a commercial success; with the coming of the railway in the 1840's it went into rapid decline and was closed in 1888. During its use it carried some surprising cargoes – on one occasion it carried 72 tons of gold in two barges with redcoats on board to protect the cargo from robbers. More mundanely it carried large quantities of chalk for lime-burning and manure for fertiliser. A plaque beside the bridge will tell you some more about the history of the canal and its restoration. You can find more information in the book by P. A. L. Vine 'London's lost route to the sea' and on www.weyandarun.co.uk.



Viewpoint number 7: Stopham Bridge

Just down stream from here the canal route turned into the River Rother and then entered a tunnel to rejoin the River Arun about three kilometres downstream – this avoided the flooded area of the Brooks which was often impassable for the horse towed barges.

Continue your walk on the old road walking away from the bridge with the White Hart pub on your left. Where the old road meets the new road cross and turn right walking on the verge towards Pulborough village, in front of Wyevale Nursery, to where a small loop of old road now acts as a poorly maintained lay-by – about half way round this loop of road is **viewpoint 8**.

8. Viewpoint of memorial to shot Rector (OS map reference TQ 033 182)

In the bank under the chain link fencing around Wyevale Nursery there is a plaque commemorating the death of the Rector of Stopham and Hardham, Reverend Masefield, who was out cycling here on the 4th October 1940 when he was shot at and killed by a marauding German fighter pilot.



Before you continue the walk you may wish to use the toilets and have some refreshment at the café in Wyevale Nursery.



From here we take one of two routes depending on the weather and your willingness to walk a little further.

The longer, and preferred route, is only possible if the ground is dry! This route crosses back over the main road to near where the old road joined the new road; here, a little to your left, is a kissing gate which you go through and follow the path to the bridge over the river. From here you continue nearly straight ahead to the water works and the weir, where again there is another kissing gate. Before you cross the river you can see the weir to your left on which is mounted a camera which is used to count the sea trout coming up the weir to spawn in the River Rother. You cross the weir and follow the roadway past the waterworks on your left, over the level crossing and up to the main road (the A29). Here you turn left and follow the pavement until you see a loop road opposite with a small sign to the church; cross the road and walk to the church which is **viewpoint 9**.

This “shorter route” is only safe for adults as you now continue to walk along the grass verge towards Pulborough village, passing under the railway bridge and on to the pavement, past the road up to the station and on to the mini-roundabouts; here turn right and cross the road to the old bridge in front of the Corn Stores – this is **viewpoint 10**.



**Viewpoint number 8:
Memorial to Reverend Masefield**



Sea trout camera

For an alternative “shorter route”, if you have children, you can walk through Wyevale Nursery following the footpath signs, close to the entrance, and rejoin the path you came down from Pulborough Castle. Here you need to retrace your route past view points 6, 5 and 3. Then turn right past the war memorial and down the hill to the mini roundabouts. Cross the road and walk down to the river to the old bridge in front of the Corn Stores – this is **viewpoint 10**.



Viewpoint number 9: St Botolph's Church, Hardham

9. **Viewpoint of St Botolph's Church, Hardham** **(OS map reference TQ 039 175)**

The church you see today was mainly built around 1050AD but is Saxon in origin incorporating Roman bricks of the many Roman buildings in the Pulborough area; St Botolph in fact is a Saxon Saint. The Church is normally open – it is unique in having the earliest nearly complete series of wall paintings in the whole country – the paintings date from shortly after 1100AD and are painted in the stylised Byzantine style. Inside there are very helpful descriptions of what the paintings depict and an inexpensive leaflets on the paintings, the church and the nearby priory. When looking at the paintings one needs to try to look at them through the eyes of the illiterate worshipping congregation who probably had never been more than ten miles from this area.



Viewpoint number 9: St Botolph's Church, Hardham

We resume our walk by crossing the main road, turning right and following the footpath again towards Pulborough village. When you reach the river cross the road again to the old bridge which is **viewpoint 10**.

10. Viewpoint of the old Swan Bridge (OS map reference TQ 043 183)

The old bridge across the river is known as Swan Bridge after the Swan Hotel and Public House that stood opposite for hundreds of years until the start of the 21st century.

This stone bridge was built in 1785 to replace a wooden bridge that was a little downstream. The old Swan Bridge itself was superseded in 1936 by the new bridge.

This area is subject to regular flooding and even the road going south towards the coast has been known to flood. At these times you may see wind surfers sailing across the expanse of water over the fields and rabbits huddled together on any high points of the new flood embankments!

This is the end of your walk and you return to your starting point by going to the mini roundabout and, if you started from the station, turn left for a five minute walk back to the station. Or, if you started in the car park, turn right for a ten minute walk back to the car park in the village.



If you are in need of refreshment before you go there is a tea shop in the Corn Stores by the bridge.



Viewpoint number 10: Swan Bridge

We hope you enjoyed your walk and will, on a future occasion, do another of the fascinating walks around Pulborough's beautiful countryside.

The History Walk

has been possible with the assistance of the following organisations.



Local Heritage *initiative*

