

South Downs Way Challenge...Virtually

Week 8 of the Virtual South Downs Way –Ditchling Beacon to Itford Hill. - 11.4 miles

We rejoin our Walk of the South Downs Way at the top of Ditchling Beacon, the site of an old Iron Age fort. Used as a beacon site for centuries it was used to warn Queen Elizabeth I of the Spanish Armada lumbering east along the English Channel.

Now follow this elevated path past many tumuli for a couple of miles.



To the South you will catch glimpses of the new Brighton and Hove Albion stadium nestled in the folds of the hillside.

The South Downs Way bridlepath then turns south, and the next mile or so descends to almost sea level.

To the east, towards Lewes, imagine the scene at Offham Hill in 1264, when Sir Simon de Montfort positioned his men high above the Royalist army of Henry III, achieving strategic advantage and surprise, and winning the Battle of Lewes in 1264.



Cross the A27 via a small bridge, then under the railway line between Brighton and Lewes. Then begins a steep ascent once more to almost 200 metres, and the walker is rewarded with broad views in all directions.



The steep escarpment to the left overhangs the village of Kingston with Lewes beyond.

The long walk along the ridge again passes a succession of tumuli (otherwise known as Barrows) which are neolithic or Bronze Age burial mounds of stones and earth raised over graves. These high areas were settled 8000 years ago affording some safety and security from the lower lying wet lands below.

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Tumuli are usually found outside of settlements and villages, either side of a these ancient paths or tracks.



We can now enjoy the long easy descent back to sea level and Southease. Pause for a moment to admire the rather beautiful 11 century church with its round tower topped with a conical steeple.

Then cross the River Ouse .

When the meandering Ouse was canalised in the 18 Century it was necessary to build a bridge . 100 years later the wooden bridge was replaced by the present wrought iron swing bridge to enable high masted ocean going vessels to reach Lewes. The bridge is now Grade II listed.

And so we reach the end of this section of the South Downs Way at the foot of Itford Hill.

We have today covered a further 11.4 miles and have less than 20 miles of the South Downs Way to travel.

Keep up your daily steps and join us for the next leg next week...

Ditchling , the flat(ish) route passes Tumuli and Dew ponds and eventually reaches Ditchling Beacon the site of an old fort and journey's end.
