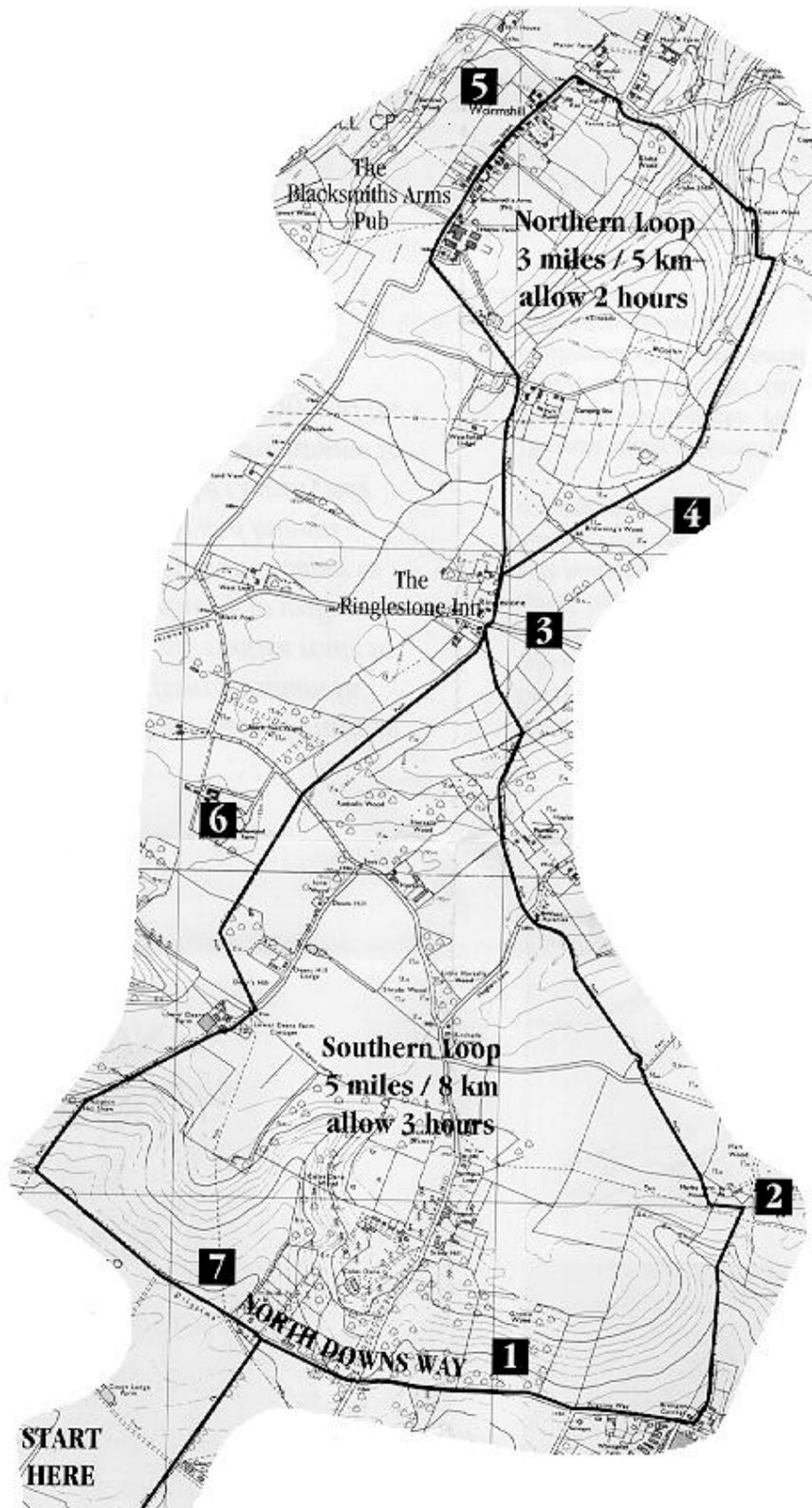


# NORTH DOWN WAY WALKS

## *Harrietsham, Ringlestone and Wormshill*



*The walk begins at Harrietsham Railway Station. If necessary cross to the north side of the railway lines by way of the bridge, turn right and follow the path to a stile. Proceed across a field and along an avenue of beech trees. Turn right onto the North Downs Way.*

### **Stede Court Estate**

1. The land north of the North Downs Way, part of the Stede Court Estate, is managed by the landowner under a combination of the Countryside Stewardship and Community Forest scheme. The schemes have helped the landowner to recreate an area of chalk grassland and to undertake extensive tree planting, creating new woodland areas and replacing many trees lost in the 1987 storm. Public access has also been improved.

*After the junction with a road on the right go diagonally across the field on the left, following signs. Turn left again after crossing a stile near the small paddock.*

### **Sunken Track**

2. The track, like many such sunken paths and lanes, is probably an ancient route which may have been used by travellers for hundreds or even thousands of years. The grassland area is grazed in the traditional manner which encourages a rich diversity of grasses and flowers which are in turn attractive to butterflies and other insects.

*Continue walking northwards, bear left of the barn and go through the small paddock and across a large field. At the road go directly across. Keep to the left of the field and follow the line of old oaks heading downhill. Cross another road, go through a small caravan site and an area of woodland into a field. Follow the fence on your right and head for the middle one of three telegraph poles, emerging close to the Ringlestone public house.*

### **The Ringlestone**

3. The Ringlestone was built in 1533 and was originally used by travelling monks. It became an ale house in the early 17<sup>th</sup> century. The interior retains many original features such as an old brick floor, inglenooks and impressive oak beams.

*Take the track almost opposite the pub, then bear right and enter Brownings Wood.*

### **Brownings Wood**

4. The copse has been managed by the traditional method known as coppicing (from the French 'couper' – to cut), This involves felling the trees on a regular basis, usually on a 10-15 years rotation, to produce timber with a small diameter used in fencing, gates, stiles and beanpoles. The trees then resprout from the stumps, or 'stools'. By this method a tree can continue to produce timber for hundreds of years. However, coppicing has become uneconomic in many areas in recent years and the practice has declined.

*On leaving the wood keep to the left of the field and follow the hedgerow. Cross two stiles and turn left in Copse Wood. Follow the path through the wood then cross the field keeping to the right of a mature hawthorn hedge. At the road bear left through Wormshill village.*

### **Wormshill**

5. The Church of St Giles dates back in parts to the 13<sup>th</sup> century with much of the present building having been built in the 15<sup>th</sup> century. Extensive restoration took place in 1879 and again in 1900. As you follow the road through the village you pass a pub on the left, The Blacksmith's Arms.

*Turn left after Yew Tree Farm and cross the field heading for the gap between two lines of woodland. Continue through the woodland and cross a stile onto the road. Proceed straight across and return to the Ringlestone. Cross the stile and keep to the right hand side of the field, following the waymarks. On meeting the road cross directly over.*

### **Poplars**

6. This newly planted line of poplar trees will, as it matures, provide a wind break for growing crops. Such lines of trees do not stop the wind but provide a shelter by "filtering" it through their leaves. A special feature of many poplars is the oval shape of the leaf stem which allows the leaf to flex in even the strongest winds, as well as to tremble in a light breeze. This is suggested by the scientific name of one species of poplar, the aspen, which is called *Populus tremula*.

*The route through Lower Deans Farm is between two large barns (look for arrows on the buildings). Take care as both machinery and farm animals may be encountered. After leaving the buildings follow the path between the hedgerows. Continue along the field edge and on reaching the corner of a copse go directly south to rejoin the North Downs Way. Turn left.*

### **Burial Mound**

7. Close to Dutch House an Anglo-Saxon burial mound was discovered containing skeletons, glass beads and a bronze armilla or bracelet. Many such archaeological sites have been discovered along the route of the National Trail. In many places it follows the route of the Pilgrims Way, an ancient trackway which has probably been used by travellers for thousands of years. It may sometimes have been used by pilgrims travelling to centres of worship, although the title 'Pilgrims Way' is an early 19<sup>th</sup> century invention.

*At the beech avenue turn right and return to Harrietsham Railway Station.*

**Remember to wear appropriate clothing and footwear and please follow the Country Code**

**This walk can be found on OS Explorer 148 starting at Harrietsham Station GR 867529**