



Explore the stunning landscape around us

This area is blessed with some amazing countryside. You can explore it while visiting some of our most picturesque churches

THERE are some amazing walks around our diocese – and some incredible churches that you can visit. Plan carefully and you could do both at the same time!

The landscape of south-east Hampshire is typical English countryside, with the rolling South Downs, green farmland and picture-perfect villages.

Then there are the beaches across the south coast, with an ever-changing view of ferries, yachts and boats on the horizon. And each harbour has its own distinct character, with marine and birdlife prominent.

And the Isle of Wight has so much to offer holiday-makers, ramblers and cyclists that it sustains an entire tourist industry. There are miles of sandy beaches, plus historic villages, vertical cliffs and verdant chines. When combined with a mild micro-climate, it's a great place to

get out in the fresh air.

And many of our historic church buildings remain open during the day, so that walkers and hikers can pop in. Whether it's shelter from heavy rain or blazing sunshine, or just a good place to eat a packed lunch, our churches are fascinating places to have a break.

Sandy beaches, historic villages, vertical cliffs and verdant chines

We've put together a few of our favourite church walks in the diocese, but there are many more. One of the most exciting places to be is right at the western tip of the Isle of Wight, taking in a view of the three near-vertical stacks of chalk called the Needles. You can reach them via an exhilarating tramp across Tennyson Down, which is part

of the chalk downland that forms the backbone of the island – or you can take a breath-taking trip in a chairlift down to the multi-coloured sands of Alum Bay and visit them by boat.

Either way, your visit might also include seeing the only church with a thatched roof on the island – **St Agnes in Freshwater Bay**. The Victorian poet Alfred, Lord Tennyson lived at nearby Farringford, and it was his son Hallam who donated land for this new church in 1908. The church nestles beneath Tennyson Down, named after the poet, and it's on a cycle route around the Isle of Wight.

Similarly exhilarating is the walk along the entire stretch of Sandown Bay on the eastern side of the island. It's part of the Isle of Wight Coastal Walk, and you can take in all five miles of its sandy beach, or walk along the sandstone cliff-top. You can visit the seaside resorts of

Discover this idyllic village scene

FANCY a forest walk that takes in this idyllic village scene of historic church and quiet duckpond? You can include St Mary's Church, Buriton, in a walk from the Queen Elizabeth Country Park.

The vast country park is ideal for ramblers and cyclists, and has several pitches where groups can host barbecues. But it doesn't take too long to get away from the crowds and enjoy the seclusion of the forest itself.

Why not park in the car park for the Queen Elizabeth Country Park (1), and head south, passing the café and a children's play area. A tarmac path will swing you to the east (2) – an alternative is to take a parallel footpath just to the south of the tarmacked road. Follow the South Downs Way, which takes you off the tarmacked road and onto a bridleway, heading slightly upwards.

After a path joins you from the right, you'll face a fork in the path (3). Continue along the South Downs Way, then take a right fork, which takes you out of the forest and swings you round into Halls Hill car park. Near the intersection with Kilns Lane, you take a dirt track through a small wooded area that is full of quarry holes (4).

Go under a railway bridge and you'll emerge next to the pond in Buriton (5). It's a great place to eat lunch, as you watch the ducks. There are also some excellent pubs nearby.

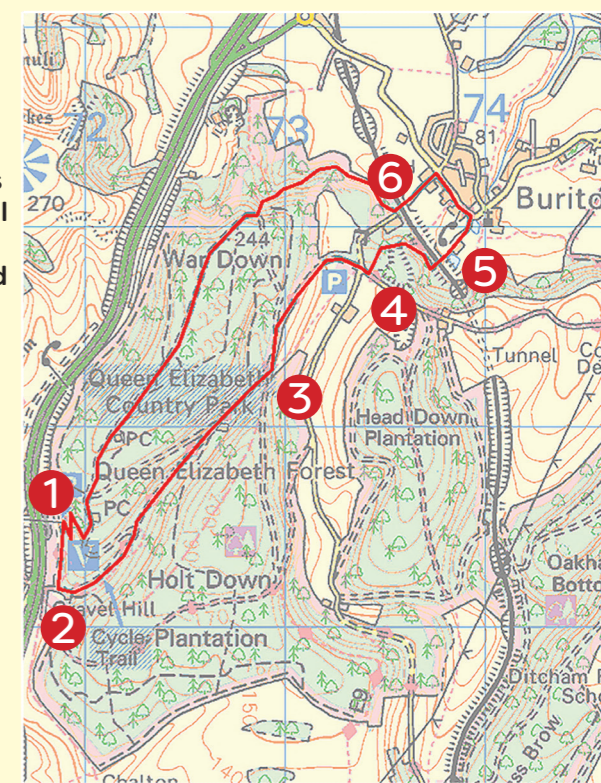


The pond in the centre of Buriton with St Mary's Church beyond

Beyond the pond is the historic St Mary's church. The original building there dates from 1086, but this church was built in Norman times and until 1886 was the mother church for the whole of the Petersfield area. Take a few moments to appreciate its 12th century nave and 18th century tower.

You can retrace your steps, or you can complete a circular walk. Walk past the Five Bells pub and turn left at the Nest Hotel up Kiln Lane. Turn right just after the railway bridge, back into the forest (6).

You'll soon hit the signposted routes inside the Queen Elizabeth Country park and be able to make your way back to its café – there are a few routes to choose from.



Sandown and Shanklin, perhaps visiting **St Saviour-on-the-Cliff Church** as you head towards Shanklin Chine or the picturesque heart of the old village.

Shanklin Chine is a wooded coastal ravine, which includes a stream running through it and a number of waterfalls. Originally popular in the

Victorian era, it's now open day and night – with the stunning lighting a particular interest.

Emerge at the other end, and it's only a short walk to **St Blasius Church, Shanklin**. It's a historic church which may have been originally built in the 12th century, but much of what remains dates

from a restoration in 1852.

Walking around or across the island is something that is already inked into popular consciousness. One annual event, Walk the Wight, raises hundreds of thousands of pounds each year to help Earl Mountbatten Hospice, thanks to the efforts of hundreds of walkers.