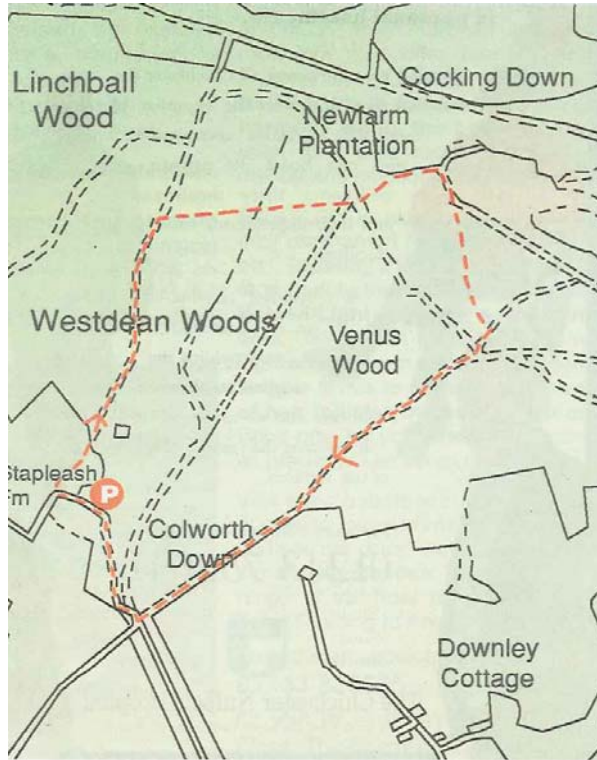


A Daffodil Walk in West Dean Woods



This is the wild daffodil walk in West Dean woods, with more than a million flowers in good years visible from the bridleway from mid-March.

Park roadside under tall beech trees between West Dean and Chilgrove. Walk 200 yards north-west along road to find sunken BR on corner.

Turn right along rue, finally entering woodland. Sussex Wildlife Trust nature reserve on right displays well-managed ancient hazel coppice system with oak standards.

Forty species of woodland birds breed here; I have monitored populations for 30 years. Marsh tit, great spotted woodpecker, nuthatch, buzzard, mistlethrush are some. BR

crosses 5,000-year-old Celtic field boundaries still visible.

Pass notice: 'Working Woodland for Wildlife'. Two Turkey oaks here. Muddy path where woodcock feed. Come to wild daffodil colony. Two mighty larch trees in reserve. At Andy Goldsworthy chalk ball, many prefer to retrace steps back to car. We go straight onwards passing splendid West Dean Estate-managed forest crops. At next bigger ball enter Cowdray boundary with older Norway Spruce plantations, also well managed.

Turn half right, east-north-east, into cathedral-like lofty woodland interior following blue arrows. Britain's smallest fir, the firecrest, lives in these spruce trees. Pass deer hides. Down dip, cross ride, straight on, cross another, and then come to multiple six-crossway.

Go left following blue arrows, track curves right, around an open field and come to a third chalk ball where turn right back into wood following blue arrows south-south-east for 900 yards.

The sign posts on this section are collapsing and some blue arrows are dirty so you will have to keep your cool.

Second left at five-crossway, when hopefully you will arrive at seven-cross way and sawn timber stacks. Straight over, curving right onto bearing south-west, downhill with beech on left, spruce on right. Stony track goes past the charcoal burners' camp and eventually out onto Colworth Down and open fields to left and view of Kingley Vale ahead.

Follow long straight track south-west past wood piles. This is the cinder track, when thousands of tons of Welsh coaltip dust was brought here by train trucks and horse and cart in Edwardian days. Ends at road where right back to spam tin.

Total distance 3 ½ miles (6kms).

Don't forget there is free entry to the West Dean Gardens shop, WC's and restaurant, which serves hot meals and snacks from 12pm until 2pm and afternoon tea and cakes throughout the day.

Open daily: November – February 10.30am until 4.00pm & March – October 10.30am until 5.00pm (Closed January 2011).