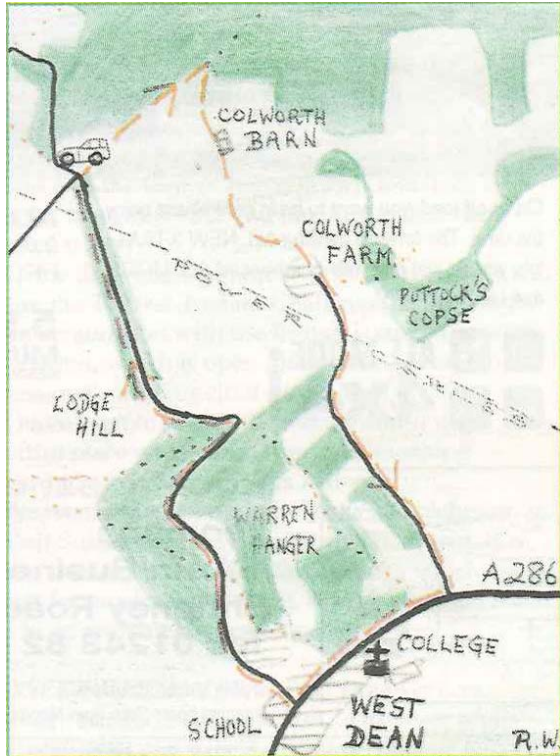


Colworth Down



A farm and forest walk of 7.5 kms (4.8 miles) mainly along country lanes to avoid, this week, any problems with possible foot and mouth.

Bits of this walk have been done before in my other walks. Bus stop in West Dean village on A286, or limited parking roadside at SU846147 on road junction.

If by car, now walk northeast with forest on left and wonderful open farm fields to right along the cinder track, so called because cinders from Wales brought here in Edwardian times to make road fit for Royal shooting parties. After 750 metres right onto BR down to Colworth barn, now a private house. Colworth means the Saxon settlement of Cula.

Note the fine field maples in the hedge. Hunting ground in winter for the occasional hen harrier hereabouts, and kites all year. Stubbles fine place to see flocks of finches in winter too.

Climb out to Colworth Farm to join the road running southwards to West Dean village. This is a deep, quiet road more like those of the weald. In spring is alive with birdsong from around 30 species. In autumn note often large parties of titmice of five species banding together. Pass under the old railway arch which carried the line from Chichester to Midhurst arriving on A286 opposite the driveway into West Dean College. Buses stop here from both directions.

Turn right along pavement. Opposite Selsey Arms pub (lunches and dinners) turn right at the school, crossing again under the old railway. Turning left here would take you to a very friendly village store and post office. Walk northwest now, following the road. This part of West Dean is often known as the Warren, due to ancient rabbit warren enclosure where rabbits were farmed.

The woods are plantations over old hazel coppice with oak and beech. Climbing to Lodge Hill through sharp bends, the view once more expands wonderfully. Also a good place quite often for wintering brambling and chaffinch flocks. The long straight downwards is flanked by a young linear beech strip, very colourful in autumn.

Note Andy Goldsworthy chalk ball sculpture, one of many on a local trail, some bigger but not so well-shaped as ancient Morris Minors and not so useful.

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).

Written by Richard Williamson