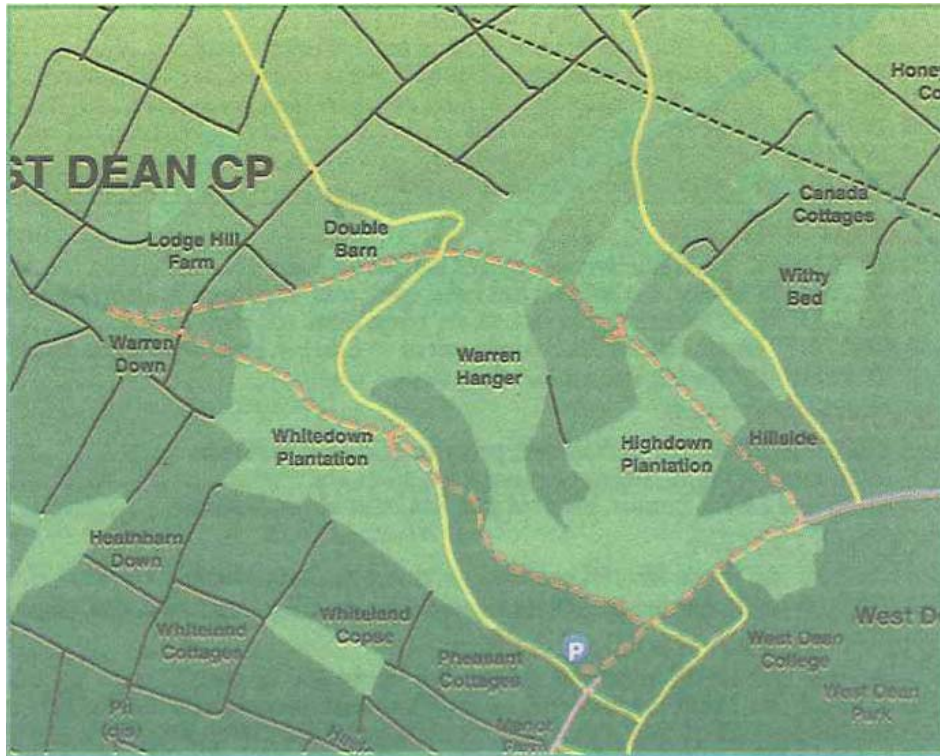


Warren Hanger, West Dean



This is like a mini-alpine woodland walk. Steep little hills and lots of broad-leaved trees. The going is hard underfoot and the distance is almost three miles (4kms). Park at Selsey Arms on the A286 for good ale and food, the walk a hundred yards up the pavement towards Singleton, finding Monarch's Way to the left along farm track. Quickly turn half-left again along a nicely terraced little path which appears to be courtesy of the railway builders of long ago over whose defunct tunnel you are now walking. This was the line from Chichester that served royalty to West Dean and race-goers to Goodwood and carved tunnel all the way to Midhurst.

The valleys in this area are usually called warrens because they were used as vast commercial rabbit warrens centuries ago, possibly starting with the Romans. Cross minor road into Whitedown plantation, climbing then descending into wet area where grow goodly clumps of pendulous sedge and the oaks benefit from wet clay by giving gunbarrel trunks. Uphill, noting a nice dead scots pine bored by woodpeckers and breasting the hill at an open field.

To the left, fine views of Bow Hill yew forest. Ahead appears Lodge Hill farmhouse. Look for hidden finger-post in bramble and elder bushes that points you across an open field. You will have to work your way through a belt of sweetcorn to find near the woodland edge, a yellow fingerpost taking you downhill into another coppice wood. Please keep your dog under tight control because people hereabouts make their living from the pheasant industry.

Cross over the footpath and down to Double Barn cottages, noting lurel once planted to hold game from Edward VII. Cross the road and climb steeply into Warren Hanger and eventually Highdown Plantation beyond. The chalk and flint track is eroded and slippery. Note some unusual hornbeam coppice on right; violet leaves along track especially near beech trees which tells you that the rare silver-washed fritillary butterfly breeds in this wood. You pass two of the sculptor Andy

Goldsworthy's chalk balls. Continue over forest crossrides going south-east back to West Dean. Note the high forest sycamores and ash which will eventually form a lovely mature, graceful canopy throughout this woodland, together with some ornamental species like plane trees put down by Edward James, the art philanthropist and landowner 30 years ago.

Steep downhill past the Scout adventure park and under another railway arch prettily-faced with knapped flints. It is a national treasure but in need of repair. Right at road along pavement back to historic Morris always in need of repair.

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