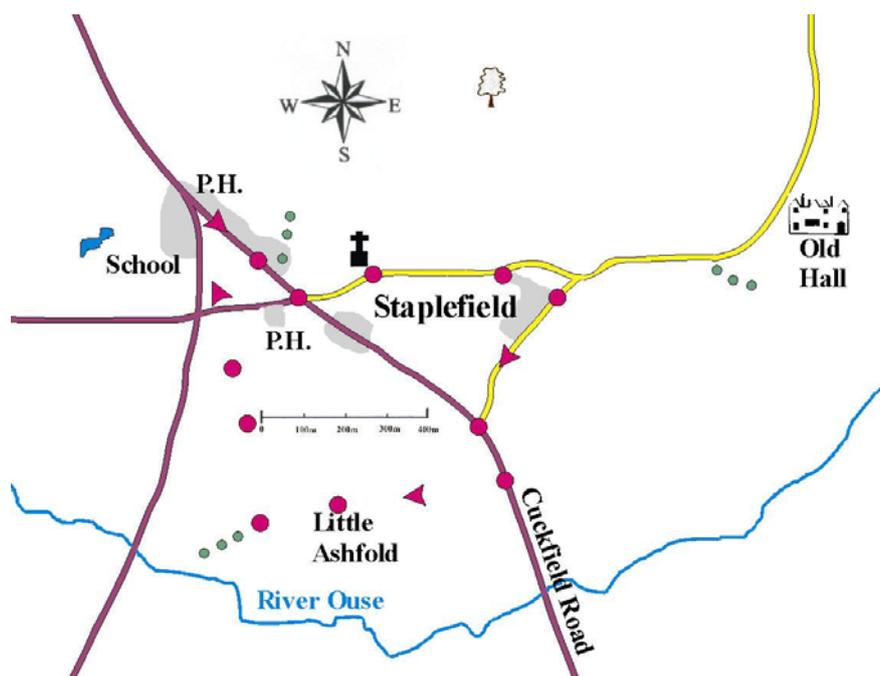


## STAPLEFIELD VILLAGE WALK

The large village green is perhaps one of the prettiest in the county and provides a delightful setting for a game of cricket on a summer's afternoon. Our stroll around the outskirts of the village should take no more than an hour or so and afterwards there are two good hostleries to refresh you before relaxing to that quintessentially English sound of leather on willow.

**Starting Point:** Our stroll starts from the car park of The Jolly Tanners pub – by kind permission of Chris & Sigrun. From the car park turn left in front of the pub and walk along the pavement on the left hand side of the road.

**Time:** 1 hour



In the early 1920's a May Day Pageant was organised here on the green each year by Mrs Maud Messel – whose home was at nearby Nymans. This tradition is continued on the Bank holiday Monday at the end of May when the 'Staplefield Fun Day' offers some old-fashioned entertainment.

Staplefield is also a great place to watch the annual London to Brighton veteran car run which traditionally takes place on the first Sunday in November with much celebration on the village green!

Continue ahead beneath the tall pine trees and pass the telephone kiosk. Just after the village sign turn left into Brantridge Lane and, keeping to the left, pass through the lychgate to enter the churchyard.

The parish church of St Mark was built in 1847 and is home to several nice wall paintings. The church is normally open on 'high days & holidays'; at other times arrangements can be made by calling 01444-400346. The open bellcote houses five bells and below this, on the western wall, the church clock was added in 1877 – allegedly to help local children get to school on time! As you walk along the southern side of the church look carefully at the rose bush climbing up the chancel wall. It is a most unusual Homere Tea Rose, which produces an intensely fragrant bloom of cream and rose-pink.

Leave the churchyard by the gate besides the village primary school and returning to the lane turn left. At the end of the pavement cross to the right side of the lane and as you approach the Z bend sign look to your right and admire the new 'hedge lane' – the work of the local conservation group. There is also now an attractive lily pond a little way ahead on the left. On reaching Heron & Jasmine Cottages fork right up the broad track to pass in front of the houses onto Rose Cottage Lane. Here turn right and follow the lane down to the main road.

**Staplefield is unusual for a small village in that it has two churches. The Roman Catholic church of Our Lady of Fatima was dedicated in 1966 having formerly been a Baptist Chapel. Fatima is, incidentally, a small village in Portugal where The Virgin Mary appeared several times to shepherd children in 1917. The church is a little way along the road to your right at this point.**

Our stroll, however, continues by crossing the main road carefully and turning left for about 50 metres to a concrete track leading off to the right to Little Ashfold Farm. There is a metal footpath sign confirming the right of way. Walk down the track to pass to the right of the farmhouse.

**This is a beautiful mid 15<sup>th</sup> century 'Hall House' although there is some speculation that there may have been an even earlier building on the site. It retains one of its bays and a section of the original great hall. The first floor was added in the early 1600's.**

Where the drive finally swings left continue ahead following the public footpath fingerpost on a broad grassy track between tall trees. After a delightful small pond on your left, pass through the kissing gate to your right and turn right to follow the hedgeline. Continue walking uphill back towards the village and at the top of the rise pass besides a stile onto a broad farm track, which leads to the village green.

**The Victory Inn sign, a few metres to your right, has an interesting history. In the early 1800's there were two cottages here, one of which was the village shop. The owner fought a legal battle to be granted a licence to sell intoxicating liquor. He won his case in 1848 and in celebration named his new pub after his legal 'victory'. The original inn sign was, accordingly, that of a judge in wig & gown.**

**It was also here that a game of quoits was played every Boxing Day in a challenge match against neighbouring villages. The engraved Challenge Cup is in the safe keeping of a local gentleman although sadly the game is no longer played.**

Turn half left to pass behind the cricket pavilion and then right to return to the welcoming sight of The Jolly Tanners where excellent food is served every lunchtime.

**This walk was researched and written for Mid Sussex District Council by Footprints of Sussex who lead local guided walks throughout the year. [www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk](http://www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk)**

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