



## WALK 2 WEST LAVANT

Distance: 2 km

Rating: EASY



This circular route follows the pre- and post-industrial history of Mid and West Lavant, passing through the Lavant House estate. There is an option to extend this walk to take in the 'Amphitheatre', and enjoy its stunning wild flower meadow.

## HISTORY

- A** The **Earl of March pub** dates back to the early 18th century and served as a coaching inn on the Chichester to Midhurst road. It is said that in 1803 the breathtaking view from here inspired artist and poet William Blake to write the words to his poem "Jerusalem".
- B** The **Centurion Way** was created in 1995 from part of the route of the Chichester to Midhurst railway, and now goes as far as West Dean. It is named after the Roman road from Chichester to Silchester that is believed to have passed nearby.
- C** **Lavant Railway Station** (now private housing) served the Chichester to Midhurst line, which opened in 1881 but was never profitable. Passenger traffic ceased in 1935, but the Lavant to Chichester section continued to be used for transporting sugar beet and gravel until 1993.
- D** **St Nicholas' Church** was built mainly in the 12th and 13th centuries, but it is believed that a church existed on the site in Saxon times. The church was restored and enlarged considerably in the 19th century. Inside is the marble reclining figure of Lady Mary May of Raughmere House, carved in 1676 by John Bushnell, who later studied in Italy under Bernini.
- E** **Lavant House** (c. 1720) was built for Sir John Miller. In 1791 the Duke of Richmond bought it for his niece and her husband (Lord Bathurst). William Blake taught their children drawing there. From 1952 – 2016 Lavant House was an independent girls' school.
- F** The **West Lavant Horse Show** ran from 1947 until 1963. Attracting up to 5000 visitors, in 1956 it was used as an equestrian trial for the Olympic Games.
- G** The **Chichester Entrenchments**, known as the '**Devil's Ditch**', are Iron Age banks and ditches that probably marked the tribal boundary of Chichester 2,000 years ago.
- H** The '**Amphitheatre**', designed by artist Justin Marshall, was created in 1995 from a former quarry. It is one of several works designed to enhance the Centurion Way cycle route, and was planted as a wild flower meadow. It is overlooked by the "**Chichester Road Gang**," created by David Kemp in 1993. Resembling road workers carrying tools, the sculpture was made out of metal gas canisters.

## NATURE

The woods, hedges and field margins of West Lavant provide a wide range of natural habitats.

The Centurion Way is lined with colourful hedgerow flowers such as the deep-blue **meadow crane's-bill**.

**Cuckooflowers** are among the many flowering plants that grow in St. Nicholas' churchyard, which is also graced by **yew** and **walnut** trees.

The north wall of Lavant House is edged by a range of tree species including **goat willow**, with its spring flowers resembling cat's paws; and **wild service tree**, with its brown autumn fruits.

The perimeters of the fields of the riding school are home to plants such as **red dead-nettle** and **fat hen** – once used for fattening up poultry.

The banks of the "Devil's Ditch" are crowned with great **oaks**, which provide food and shelter for many birds, animals and insects. **Grey squirrels** gather the acorns, while **green woodpeckers** can often be seen – or heard drilling into the bark for grubs.

Visits to the "Amphitheatre" throughout the year will reward the visitor with a succession of wildflower species. First to appear in the spring are **cowslips**, which adorn the grassy rings with gold.

Summer brings a huge diversity of flowers: white **oxeye daisies**, bushes of pink **sainfoin**, and purple stars of **salsify**. A careful search might discover a **bee orchid** – resembling a bumble bee.

The meadow attracts butterflies like the **marbled white**, both for feeding and laying their eggs. In autumn, the seed heads of **Teasels** provide food for the many birds nesting in the hedgerows.



Meadow crane's-bill



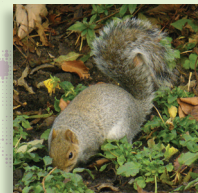
Cuckooflower



Goat willow



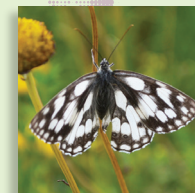
Fat Hen



Grey Squirrel



Cowslips



Marbled White



Bee Orchid



Salsify

