

# A VISIT TO THE SHEPHERDS' CHURCH

(Where we cycle through some delightfully-named villages along the foot of the South Downs)

## Fact File.....

**Starting Point:** This ride starts from The Country Inn near Bepton at Point A on the map.

**Alternative Parking and Start Point:** An ideal alternative starting point is from the car park at Stedham Common.

**Distance:** Allow 2 hours for this ride, the distance is 12 miles (19.3km).

**Surface and Nature of Route:** This ride takes place on very quiet and narrow country lanes.

**Classification:** 'Gentle' - This ride is generally flat as it meanders around the valley of the Rother at the foot of the South Downs.

**Safety and Comfort:** A 0.4 mile (0.6km) section of the ride is on the fast and busy A272. Fortunately, there is a truck intended for pedestrians set back a few feet from the road that you can utilise as you wish.

**Maps:** Ordnance Survey Landranger 1:50 000 Series - Sheet 197.

Map reference of start and finish - N1 871205.

**Local Cycle Hire:** Sensible Bikes Company, 71 Station Road, Liss, Hants (Tel: 01730 894 84) ([www.sensiblebike.co.uk](http://www.sensiblebike.co.uk)).

**Other Refreshments on the Ride:** There is the Elsted Inn at Lower Elsted at 5.5 miles (8.8km) and also a pub in Stedham at 2 miles (3.2 km).

**Travel by Car:** The Country Inn lies about 1 mile (1.6km) south west of Midhurst.

## Background.....

This ride starts at the Country Inn at Bepton and meanders around the Rother Valley before it returns in an easterly direction in the shadow of the beautiful South Downs. Although most of the ride is within sight of this most attractive stretch of downs, you get the benefit of the view without the pain. This is because the Rother Valley is how you would expect a river valley to be: flat and ideal cycling country, with many delightfully quiet and narrow country lanes. This is also one of those parts of the world where even the place-names seem picturesque. Trotton, Treyford, Didling and Dumpford - they have a character all of their own and seem to

roll off the tongue and match the setting of these villages perfectly.

## *The St Christopher signpost at Treyford*



### Places to explore around the route .....

*The Shepherds' Church:* This little gem can be found after about 7 miles (11.2km), close to Point M on the ride. It is definitely worth the small deviation and if ever we are walking or cycling in these parts we usually stop and sit on the memorial bench and enjoy a snack under the centuries-old yew tree. The church is consecrated to St Andrew, but it has been known as the Shepherds' Church for as long as people can remember, and no doubt it was named as such due to its use by the many shepherds who tended their flocks on the nearby downs. The Laudian altar rails are also interesting. These date from around 1640 and are an example of the beautiful woodwork of the period. They are known as Laudian altar rails because they were introduced by an Archbishop of Canterbury known as William Laud. At that time, it was perfectly normal for shepherds or other owners of dogs to bring them into church. Of course, the dogs were not always church-trained, and the balusters were designed to be sufficiently close to prevent even puppies from getting through.

*The Saint Christopher Signpost:* In Treyford you will see at the side of the road a very attractive and colourful waymarker, of a type most unusual in England, and more commonly found in southern Germany. It was thought to have been designed by Graily Hewitt, a distinguished calligrapher who lived nearby at Brook Cottage. It shows St Christopher carrying the baby Jesus and points in the direction of Harting. The signpost disappeared in the 1950s when a subsequent owner of the cottage moved away, and it was found in a dilapidated state in Essex. It has now been restored and returned to Treyford.

### Cycle Ride Directions .....

A. 0.0 (0.0): Starting with your back to the Country Inn, turn right to cycle away from the junction.

B. 0.8 (0.8): At the main road (A272) turn right. You may wish to use the track on the right hand side of the road, as this is a fast and busy road.

C. 0.4 (1.2): Turn left off the main road (A272), in the direction of Woolbeding, Redford and Liphook. Take great care when crossing this road.

D. 0.7 (1.9): At the junction by one of the Woolbeding Farms, bear left as directed to "Liphook, Lymington and St Cuthman" (although at the time of riding this signpost was decrepit and not reliable). The road is marked as a single-track road with passing places.

E. 0.5 (2.4): Take the left turning, signposted "Stedham" - be careful as this is easy to miss.

F. 0.4 (2.8): Take the second turning right (to Iping), after the turning to St Cuthman's School).

G. 0.3 (3.1): Ignore the "no through road" to the right and continue downhill.

H. 0.3 (4.4): By Hammerwood House continue downhill to the left of the cross triangle junction and continue left at the next junction to Midhurst and Elsted, (the signpost was missing the last time that we checked this route).

I. 0.9 (4.3): Crailings marking the stream, as directed "Didling 1, Cocking 4".

Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs. Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs. Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs. Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs. Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs. Family Days in the Countryside around Portsmouth and the South Downs.

An Ordnance Survey map of the route is normally placed here.

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*Pub File.....*

The Country Inn. Cyclists are welcome and you can get your book 'pubbe stamped' here. Opening times are 11am to 4pm and 6pm to 11pm every day of the week. An extensive range of bar food is available and there is a 'Specials' board on Sundays. Food is available from midday to 2pm and 7pm to 9.30pm. The pub serves real ale. Children are welcome and are allowed into at least one area of the premises. Dogs are permitted if kept on a lead. The licensee is happy for cyclists to park their cars in the car park providing they patronise the pub before or after their ride. (Tel: 01730 813466).