

Walk 1



Alfriston Village Walk

Time (Approx)	30 Minutes
Distance (Approx)	1 Mile (0.8km)
Stiles	0
Terrain	Pavement and sloping paths

Start

The walk begins at The Star: this medieval building is believed to date back to the 14th Century. It was built originally by the Abbot of Battle Abbey, as a hostel for monks and pilgrims travelling between the Abbey at Battle and Chichester Cathedral and the shrine of St Richard. This original patronage explains the presence of the ecclesiastical carvings on the front of the building. Inside the Inn is a 'Sanctuary Post' defined from the other supporting posts by the presence of a shield inscribed with the holy letters 'IHS'. Legend states that fugitives from the law could seek sanctuary within the walls of The Star by touching this post. On the northern corner of the Inn is a ship's figurehead – this is believed to have come from a Dutch Warship sunk in the Battle of Beachy Head in the 17th Century, and washed up at Cuckmere Haven some 100 years later when it was brought to the village by the notorious 'Alfriston Gang' of Smugglers and until 2002 was situated on the southern corner of the Inn. Following extensive restoration by the talented local craftsman (and Rector!) the Rev Frank Fox-Wilson, the lion was repositioned on the northern corner for his own safety!

From The Star turn right and walk along the High Street in a southerly direction, the next building of note that is passed is Steamer Cottages. This was once one of the three hostelries serving the village, but is now home to two award winning shops well worth a browse – Steamer Trading who first started business here in Alfriston and have won many awards over the years as well as expanding across the South East of England and Much Ado Books who started life in Marblehead near Boston USA and relocated to Alfriston 4 years ago scooping the Independent Bookshop of The Year award (a Nibby!) in 2007.

Continue along the High Street to Wingrove House, this house and the adjacent cottages belonged to Horatio Batho the disgraced MP who maintained the properties as his stables.

Once past Wingrove turn to your left, this road leads to The Tye (or village green). To the right of the Tye is The Clergy House, this is the first property bought by the National Trust, a purchase that cost them £10! The Clergy House is preserved as an excellent example of a Wealden Hall House although it is not clear whether it was originally occupied by Clergy or leased to a third party.

Next to The Clergy House stands the magnificent church of St Andrews, also known, due to its impressive proportions for a relatively small village, as The Cathedral of the Downs. Unusually St Andrews was not built under the patronage of a private individual nor has it been significantly altered since. The Church is open daily and a detour to view this superb church is recommended.

Head across The Tye towards the village. On the edge of The Tye is mounted a World War 2 Mine, this floated in from the English Channel and up the Cuckmere River. Had it exploded before being defused the village would look very different today! Also on the edge of The Tye is the village sign, which was commissioned as one of the village's millennium projects. Designed by local artist Penny Ellis, it was carved by Rev Frank Fox-Wilson. To the right of the village sign and mine is the United Reformed Church Hall: this is known locally as The Gun Room, as during the Napoleonic Wars it was used to store a large gun or cannon.

Walk 1

600 years of history

Now head up the Twitten (Sussex Narrow Alley) past the United Reformed Church. At the turn of the 19th Century many of the villagers from Alfriston and the surrounding areas were ardent Non-Conformists. Inspired by a travelling preacher they raised the funds for and constructed a Chapel in less than 8 months. Numbers rapidly increased and during the 1830s a gallery was added – supported on reclaimed ships' masts. The Church is usually open daily and its interior is a classic example of an unspoilt Non-Conformist Chapel of the period.

Returning to the High Street, turn right past Chapel Cottages to The George Inn. The George was again one of the original hostelries serving the local community and a sign on the external wall proudly records the date of the first transfer of licence.

Next to The George is The Tudor House, this has been a tearoom for many years now but early in the 20th Century was one of two grocers in the village.

There are some interesting shops and other properties on this side of the street before reaching the Market Square. The Market Cross is one of only two left in Sussex, topped with a Shepherds Cap, the other being found in Chichester. Alfriston's Market Cross is shorter than it once was as it was damaged in a collision with a Canadian Army Truck in the 1940's. Next to the Market Cross is a young Oak Tree; this was planted in 2006 to replace a Horse Chestnut Tree that is believed to have been planted to celebrate the Diamond Jubilee of Queen Victoria.

Sitting back on the right hand side of the square are two shops: Stones – which was previously a Glovers workshop and The Old Bank - Bats Wing Apothecary. This was previously the home of the local branch of Barclays and it is claimed that it was the smallest bank in England!

If you continue to the northern edge of the village you will find a green tin hut (currently vacant), this retail unit previously served its time as a Rest Hut for London Taxi Drivers! Also on the northern edge of the village in the smaller of the two car parks you will find a conical tower – known locally as 'The Thing!' Exactly what this was is unclear but explanations include a tower used for storing rifles, a cooling tower used in the production of lead shot, a lock-up and a miniature windmill!

Returning to the Market Square will bring you to a row of diverse shops; in the centre of these is an arch that leads to Waterloo Square, a name commonly given (incorrectly) to the Market Square itself. Cottages border Waterloo Square on three sides with access to both Waterloo Square and North Street, Market Square and West Street respectively. The name Waterloo Square is another link to Alfriston's connections with the Napoleonic Wars and it is believed that these cottages would have been used as barracks for soldiers stationed in the village.

Ye Old Smugglers Inn (or Market House) was the home of Stanton Collins, leader of the 'Alfriston Gang' of smugglers. The house is said to have 16 staircases and a number of hidey-holes which, presumably, the members of Collins gang would have used when trying to evade the law. Stanton Collins himself was eventually deported to Australia, but for stealing a sheep and not his notorious nocturnal activities!

Next to The Smugglers Inn is the Village Stores, its bow windows and old fashioned Counter is certainly something of a bygone age! Rope Walk – so called because ropes were laid out along these long narrow alleyways to dry out – lies between the Village Stores and an Antique Shop which previously saw life as the Manse (home of the Non-Conformist Minister) and the Police House! And so we return to The Star!

Finish
