

Farthing Downs, Downlands Circular walk

Start
COULSDON SOUTH STA
(Southern, from London Bridge)

	bridleway
	footpath
	Farthing Down & Happy Valley 7 km
	Downland circular walk 14 km
	Coulsdon South to Fox pub 4 km
	woodland
	grassland
	incline, pointing uphill
	steep steps
	bus stop

1 kilometre

404 bus every 30 min takes about 25 min to Coulsdon South station

NOTES FOR DOWNLANDS WALK STILL TO BE ADDED

- 1** This walk starts by following the London LOOP. On leaving Downs Road follow the wide grassy path up to the Folly, a group of trees. Continue on to the carpark and cross over left.
- 2** Walk down in front of the cottages to intercept a significant pathway and turn right, following it through the wood and into a large open field.
- 3** Here, if you want to go directly to the Fox pub, you can follow the LOOP diagonally across the field and up a steep incline with a signpost near its top. Alternatively, to continue the walk, follow the path along the edge of the wood and into the next field.
- 4** At the end of the second field you can turn left to choose the shorter walk or take the path right, signed public footpath to Chaldon church on the longer, Downland Circular walk.
- 5** After visiting the church continue the circular walk or take the short cut indicated.
- 6** A little while after the bridle path and walk combine, look for the DCW way marker left, indicating a diagonal climb back up to Farthing Downs.
- 7** Attaining the top, enter the enclosure via pedestrian gate and follow the boundary back to the start.

walk notes

This group of walks starts along Farthing Downs before diverging and finally returning along the down. There are a myriad paths and bridleways to explore and the terrain is hilly.

Farthing Downs

It has remains of neolithic burial mounds, Iron Age farms, Saxon field systems and WWII anti-aircraft ditches.

the site had a long and interesting history of human activity with several nationally important archaeological features. Past excavations have revealed fragments of Neolithic pottery and an Iron Age pit giving a glimpse of those who used the site.

The Downs were farmed up to the 2nd century CE. The ridges, or lynchets, which can be seen crossing the Downs, were created by the ancient farmers whose ploughing methods moved the soil outwards and downhill. The lynchets on Farthing Downs which divided the ancient field system date from the early Saxon period. In mid winter, when the grasses are laid bare, you can see the visible outlines of these field systems still.

By Anglo Saxon times the light chalk soil had become impoverished and from then on the chalk downland was used for grazing.

The City of London bought Farthing Downs from Coulsdon's Squire Edmund Byron in 1883 as Common Land, shortly before the arrival of the railway. The purchase was enabled by both the Epping Forest and the Open Spaces Acts dating from the 1870s which allowed the City to purchase land around London for public use.

The Acts recognised the objectives for both the care of the landscape and its importance as a recreational environment for people.

It received Scheduled Monument status in 1948 following detailed excavations by the archaeologist Brian Hope-Taylor and is now managed by the City of London to protect these features long into their future.

In Victorian times, Farthing Downs had many of the features expected of a Victorian pleasure ground with swing boats, a tea house and horse and carriage rides. Today these features are gone but the site remains popular with families, hikers and those wishing to escape into nature. Trenches were dug across the Downs in WWII to stop it being used as a landing strip should the axis forces choose to invade. You can still see these trenches today running parallel across the downs and Ditches Lane.

Happy Valley

When it was purchased under the Green Belt Scheme in 1937, Happy Valley was described as 'One of the most beautiful valleys in the whole neighbourhood'. Under this scheme, a total of 860 acres of Green Belt Land were brought by the old Urban District Council of Coulsdon and Purley and the cost shared equally by the London County Council, Surrey County Council and the UDC.

In addition to Happy Valley, the areas purchased included Foxley Wood, Kingswood and Coulsdon Court among others, the idea being to keep an area of unspoilt countryside within the easy reach of Londoners, and to link areas owned and managed by the City of London - Farthing Downs and Coulsdon Common.

For centuries the natural regeneration of woodland and shrubs on both Farthing Downs and Happy Valley was held back by sheep and rabbit grazing, but in 1937 systematic grazing was discontinued and rabbit numbers were greatly reduced by Myxomatosis.

Between 1956 and 1966 much of the area was leased to a local farmer for hay crops, which were not taken, and during these years scrub invaded many of the fields that had previously been open land. When the lease on the land was terminated, the Surrey Wildlife Trust gave advice on the clearance of some of the scrub, and in 1968 and 1969 large areas of the south facing slopes were cleared, creating a wealth of new downland flora and fauna. Some dense areas of scrub were left for nesting birds and as cover for foxes and badgers.

Chaldon Church

The Church of Saints Peter and Paul at Chaldon, Surrey, is a Church of England parish church in the Diocese of Southwark. The building was begun before 1086 and is Grade I listed. It is notable for containing a large and striking mural dating from around 1170, depicting images of the Last Judgement and purgatory.