

Weekend Walk: West Tisted – Bramdean Common and the Church in the Wood (4.5 miles)

The manor of West Tisted goes back to Anglosaxon times when a charter of 941 from King Edmund granted the 'mansea of Ticcestede' to his thegn Aethelgeard. After the arrival of the Normans, it became the property (like most of this part of Hampshire) of the Bishop of Winchester. The village is known as the birthplace of Sir Benjamin Tichborne, ancestor the notorious 'Tichborne Claimant'. Sir Ben had fought with the Royalists in the Civil War and, after being roundly defeated by the Roundheads, he supposedly hid in an oak tree, known as the 'Tichborne Oak', which is about 200 yds from the church. In 1644 a Parliamentarian soldier was accidentally shot in the kitchen of the Manor House. A groom was accused of the misdeed, but rumour had it that Sir Ben himself fired the shot. In recent times, the village is dominated by a huge grain storage and processing plant. The church of St Mary Magdalene stands in the grounds of the original manor. It is early Norman, with Saxon influences, as witness the thick walls. The west end window dates from the 1300s. The chancel (at the east side) is a Victorian rebuild, with stained glass by C.E.Kempe. The altar is 17th-century oak.

1. Continuing in the direction you probably arrived (the A32), walk through West Tisted village, passing houses on both sides. Shortly, you will see a wooden sign pointing left, saying twelfth century church. Before or after the walk, do not miss the chance to visit this delightful little village church, which is reached down a narrow path and over a bridge. Continue till the end of the farm buildings on the left and turn left on a tarmac by-way [2018: the fingerpost is broken]

leading down the side of the farm buildings. Still on the by-way, go downhill to reach a cottage, St Christophers, on your left. Here the track swings right. Follow it straight ahead ignoring any turn-offs till you reach a metal gate into a wood. This is Bramdean Common. Continue straight ahead through this beautiful wood, ignoring all turn-offs. On reaching a major crossing of paths in 400m by some timber stacks, take the smaller path straight ahead and continue for 400m until you see the Church in the Wood. As you pass the church on your left, your path veers right to meet a T-junction with a wide path. Your route is right on this path, but first you will want to go left to have a look at this little church.



This little iron church was built in 1883 at the instigation of the author of 'Country Sermons', the Rev. Alfred Caesar Bishop (he's misspelt on the plaque), so that the charcoal burners and gypsies could attend church. His widow set up an endowment on her death for the

maintenance of the church.

2. Having turned right on the excellent wide path, continue straight ahead for about 1 km ignoring any turn-offs. In 600m, at a junction of paths, ignore the muddy bridleway that forks left by a blue arrow and keep ahead. The track is now grass. In 100m, in a clearing, ignore another blue arrow that indicates a bridleway on the right. In 150m, you reach a T junction. Turn left and continue 80m to a junction of paths with a fingerpost by some wooden railings on your right. Turn right at the fingerpost and follow the path between trees and fields and under power lines. In 300m you reach another junction of paths with coloured arrows on a marker post on your right. Here, select the by-way on the far right, as indicated by the orange arrow.

3. After 300m, as you approach a field on your right, ignore a bridleway on your right but, in another 50m, leave the by-way by turning left by a fingerpost on a bridleway into a field. Follow the left edge of the field. After the first field, continue similarly beside the next field. At the end, go through a small wooden gate in a hedge and continue between a hedge and a wire fence, with sheep fields on the right, through another small (open) wooden gate, past a house and garden, to reach a tarmac lane. Turn right here. If you heard a whistling sound during your travels, this comes from the Watercress Line a heritage railway in nearby Alresford.

4. Follow the road uphill until it swings right. You now have a terrific view back across the country you have covered. Here there is a fingerpost pointing left to a blue metal gate with a smaller blue gate beside it. Turn left through the gate and follow a track across the centre of the field for 300m until you see a footpath on your right. Here fork right up a slope towards a large metal gate and keep right on a rather overgrown path uphill with a wire fence on your left. Near the top of the hill you pass a pond on your right. Where the path emerges into a field, keep left and continue to the next corner. Turn right here on a wide gravel farm track.

5. The track immediately bends left and later turns sharp right. Leave it here to continue straight ahead along the right hand side of a field to reach a stile at the next corner. Cross the stile, ignore the yellow arrow which points firmly left and walk straight ahead down the right-hand side of the field on your left. Finally cross a stile to join the road. Turn right on the road. This will lead you into West Tisted again, by the same road you probably drove in on, where the walk began.

DISTANCE: 4.5 miles

MAP: Explorer 132 (Winchester)

*START: West Tisted, Hampshire, approximate postcode S024 0HL.
Park by village hall or on verge.*

