

The Robert Athis 'Six Hills of Alton' Walk

Introduction

The 'Six Hills of Alton' was first proposed by local walk enthusiast Robert Athis in 2013, who sadly died before the walk was officially launched at the 2018 Alton Walking Festival.



This wonderful walk is a circular ramble around Alton in Hampshire taking in the magnificent views of the town and its surrounding countryside from each of the six hills surrounding Alton using established footpaths and rights of way.

The full circuit is circa 11 miles, however the walk can also be completed in two smaller circuits; west loop – 6 miles and east loop – 8 miles. The suggested starting point is from The Butts however as this is a circular walk it may be joined at any point along the route.

Alton as a gateway to the South Downs National Park boasts an extremely rich and diverse countryside with an extensive network of public footpaths enabling walkers to enjoy the great outdoors. The town is an accredited 'Walkers are Welcome' destination for more information on walking in Alton please visit www.walkalton.org.uk

Alton Town Council hosts an annual Walking Festival throughout the month of May, if you would like to join a guided 'Six Hills of Alton' walk, or for more information on other local walks please visit www.alton.gov.uk or Tel: (01420) 83986.

Useful Information

Public Transport

Traveline: www.traveline.info
Tel: 0871 200 22 33

Stagecoach: www.stagecoachbus.com
Tel: 0345 121 0190

Local Walking Organisations

Alton Ramblers: www.altonramblers.org.uk

Walk Alton: www.walkalton.org.uk

Walking for Health: www.walkingforhealth.org.uk

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This leaflet was produced by Alton Town Council, for more information on the 'Six Hills of Alton' Walk and further copies of this leaflet please contact:

Alton Town Council
Town Hall
Market Square
Alton
GU34 1HD

Website: www.alton.gov.uk
Tel: 01420 83986

This Six Hills of Alton Walk, the interpretation panels on route and this leaflet were produced thanks to Robert Athis and his family with assistance from Paul Ebbutt and the Alton Footpath Wardens.

Cover painting courtesy of Pam Pell.

Photographs by kind permission of Paul Ebbutt and Peter Hicks.
Route map designed by Crimson Graphics

Disclaimer: All information correct at time of print but may be subject to changes, please check for possible amendments to the route before embarking on the walk. Whilst every care has been taken in the preparation of this leaflet Alton Town Council cannot be held responsible for accident of loss resulting from the information in this leaflet.



Alton Town Council

18568 PRINTED BY HAMPSHIRE PRINTING SERVICES 01962 870099

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Alternative Route - Avoiding Crossing the A31

The recorded route has a couple of challenging crossings on the A31. To avoid crossing at the Holybourne roundabout there is an alternative route via Neatham Manor farm and Monk Wood that you can follow:

1. From the bottom of Lower Neatham Mill Lane take the subway under the A31 where you will encounter Neatham Mill and the river Wey.
2. Follow the road (a continuation of Lower Neatham Mill Lane) round to the left and up the incline.
3. At a left hand bend to the right you will find the entrance to Neatham Manor and Neatham Manor Farm.
4. Take the private road towards the farm and enter the farm yard through the wooden gate.
5. Walk through the farm yard with the large modern barns on your right and bear right then left to emerge in open fields with the imposing Monk Wood about 1 km south. Follow this path (FP3 a wide farm track) all the way to Monk Wood passing through a small wood on route.
6. At Monk Wood keep to the track on the east boundary of the wood until you cross a field to join the Hangers Way at FP31 adjacent to another small wood.
7. Turn West to follow the Hangers Way to pick up the Six Hills circular route at the way marker in the middle of the crop field. Note the view of Alton as you pass the south corner of Monk Wood and also note the magnificent man-made earthworks of the Iron Age fort as you pass this corner.
8. Should you wish to take in the view at the south end of Neatham Down you can take the footpath (FP32) North West up to the ridge from the way marker in the crop field. Then return back down to the Hangers Way.

Please Note: This route does not enable the full views available from Copt Hill and is 0.5km longer.

Using local paths

Many rights of way cross private land and we ask you to bear this in mind by keeping to the path and being responsible when using them. There are four types, please check which paths you are entitled to use (for example, cyclists cannot use footpaths). Wheelchairs, pushchairs and dogs are allowed on all types of right of way. Any permissive paths or areas marked are not rights of way, but the landowner has given permission for the public to use them.

To ensure that the countryside is protected for future generations be sure to:

- Be safe – wear suitable clothing and shoes and take care when crossing roads
- Plan ahead and follow any signs
- Leave gates and property as you find them and take your litter home
- Protect plants and animals
- Keep dogs under close control
- Consider other people

Rights of Way

Public rights of way are paths and tracks which you can use to cross private land, it is a criminal offence to prevent the public exercising these rights. Driving a motorised vehicle on a public right of way without lawful consent is also a criminal offence.

Hampshire County Council Responsibilities:

- Ensure that rights of way are not obstructed
- Maintain the surface in a fit condition for its intended use
- Maintain most bridges
- Signposts and waymarkers

- Authorise stiles and gates
- Keep the definitive map up-to-date

For information on rights of way and how to use them, to report a problem or to view the definitive rights of way map please contact:

Hampshire County Council
The Castle
Winchester
SO23 8UJ

Website: www.hants.gov.uk
Tel: 0300 555 1375

Landowners Responsibilities:

- Keep back the side growth and overhanging vegetation
- Reinstate paths across fields after ploughing or planting of crops
- Maintain most stiles and gates
- Should not obstruct paths or deter the use of them
- Should not plough paths at field edges
- Should not keep dangerous animals (including certain bulls) on paths



The Robert Athis 'Six Hills of Alton' Walk – Route Description (11 miles)

The suggested start is from the stone water trough on The Butts, Alton (GR 713 387) and a clockwise circuit is recommended as the safest route for crossing main roads.

- From the start point walk across The Butts (SW) towards the railway bridge and cross the A339 into Winchester Road heading (SW). At the end of the road do not take the subway instead continue (W) along the unmade road, Mounters Lane.
- Follow Mounters Lane passing under the railway bridge to Jubilee Playing Fields. Follow the perimeter path (NE) to the far corner, exit via the gap in the hedge on your right and take the small steep descent to Chawton Park Road, (GR 703 378).
- Carefully cross Chawton Park Road and take **FP1** and ascend the hill into Ackender Woods, at the high point join the path turning right (E) and follow the boundary pathway to the brow of the hill.

This is **HILL NUMBER 1 – ACKENDER HILL** with lovely views from the woodland path especially over the meadow at the crest of the hill.

- Continue along the path at the edge of Ackender Woods (N then E) until you descend onto the A339 and cross the road and proceed up a sloped footpath to Whitedown Lane.
- Cross Whitedown Lane and follow **FP17** (NE) after approx. 200m turn left (NW) along **FP15** joining Highridge and descend to meet the Basingstoke Road (B3349).
- Cross the B3349 onto Brick Kiln Lane, which turns into an un-made track, follow this track to its highest point.

This is **HILL NUMBER 2 - BRICK KILN LANE** with stunning views south and east over the town.

- Continue on Brick Kiln Lane up to Southwood Lane, turn right into Shalden Lane and descend 600m downhill to join New Odiham Road (B3349).
- Cross the road to the footpath signpost and follow (SE) on **FP23b** into a wooded area. Continue to the steel gate and take the narrow tree lined path for approx. 150m, go through another steel gate on the left and ascend.

This is **HILL NUMBER 3 – NORTHANGER HILL** where you will find a public open space and play area, with views South and West over Alton.

- Bearing left follow the path adjacent to the field boundary and continue uphill and into the next field through a steel gate, continue over the hill then down to another steel gate adjacent to the allotments.
- Join Hawthorns, follow left downhill then turn left into Southview Rise and proceed uphill to Old Odiham Road.
- Bear right onto Old Odiham Road then cross onto Gilbert White Way, follow the road (NE) passing the junction with Anstey Lane and then bear left (NE) and turn north to join Rawlings Lane.
- Follow the lane uphill until you reach a tight double bend, as the road bears left take **FP14** on the right and enter a field through a steel gate, continue along the path through the field adjacent to Anstey Copse to the view point at the summit.

This is **HILL NUMBER 4 - ANSTEY HILL** from here there are magnificent views and on a clear day the South Downs are visible beyond the hills of Selborne Hanger.

- Continue (NE) to join **FP33**, turning right (SE) as you emerge from the woods and proceed downhill where you can take in further views to the east of Alton above the village of Holybourne and over to the Surrey Hills.
- Continue downhill passing properties on the Manor Estate until you reach a crossway of paths, take the left hand steep short path that descends from **FP33** into open playing fields known locally as 'Diggers' crossing diagonally to the far eastern corner where you will join **FP29b**.
- Turn left and follow the **FP29b** along the boundary of Eggar's School and past Treloar School until you reach Howards Lane, on the edge of the village of Holybourne.

- Turn left into Howards Lane and follow the road (E) towards Holybourne Church.

Note: Here you may wish to enter the Churchyard for a well-earned break at the delightful village pond.)

- At the end of Howards Lane cross over Church Lane and take **FP32** (NE) adjacent to a gravel drive opposite the junction.
- After approx. 50m take **FP33** bearing right across fields emerging onto a private drive, passing a courtyard on the right and a couple of houses on the left proceed through a wooden gate into a field. Continue on the path passing through other gates until you emerge onto London Road in Holybourne Village.

(Note: Here is an opportunity to purchase refreshments from the local village store to the right or a little further is the White Hart Public House.)

- Bear left along London Road and cross over into Lower Neatham Mill Lane, follow (SE) towards the A31 dual carriageway. Head through a steel gate adjacent to the subway onto **FP37b**.

(Note: The recorded route has a couple of challenging crossings of the A31. To avoid crossing the A31 at the Holybourne roundabout there is an alternative route via Neatham Manor farm and Monk Wood. However this is at least half a km longer and does not enable the full views available on Hill 5, see overleaf for this option.)

- From the bottom of Lower Neatham Mill Lane take the track right (W) and follow through gates until you cross a small stream via a timber footbridge, follow the path adjacent to the River Wey until you reach Upper Neatham Mill Lane.

(Note: There is often livestock roaming at Mill Farm.)

- Turn left into Upper Neatham Mill Farm and follow the drive (S) crossing the River Wey then turn right along a grass path between the farm house grounds and bed & breakfast barn.
- After approx. 50m take the path (**FP1**) off to the left into a grass field and follow (SE) until you reach a hedgerow, where the path descends to the A31 roundabout below. Cross the A31 to the east of the roundabout, you are aiming for a point diagonally opposite, taking care to cross each slip road and follow the roundabout verge clockwise.

- At the south east point of the roundabout verge (adjacent to the road heading to Winchester) you will find a short corridor through the bushes to a stile accessing a field and the continuation of **FP1**. Bear left in the field and follow the edge uphill (SE) to the summit at Copt Hill.

This is **HILL NUMBER 5 - COPT HILL AND NEATHAM DOWN** from the summit at Copt Hill follow the wide farm track (S) taking in the wonderful views on both sides, with glimpses of the town to the right and the mysterious Monk Wood (Iron Age Fort) to the left. The path emerges through a wide hedgerow opening onto a view point (GR 738 393) above a crop field with magnificent views to the south and west of Alton.

- From the view point take **FP32** descending (SE) across the fields, turn right at the way marker post onto the Hangers Way **FP31** and follow (W) joining **FP70** crossing the fields to the A31.

- Carefully cross the busy A31 dual carriageway, from the eastbound verge take the path down through a small wood and follow **FP40** to Wilsom Road (B3004).

- Cross the road and turn left, follow the pavement downhill then turn onto Windmill Hill.

- Ascend Windmill Hill, be aware of traffic on this bendy narrow road. When you near the top of the hill take the gravel track on the left and continue (W) along **FP54** after approx. 100m you will emerge into the Windmill Hill public open space.

This is **HILL NUMBER 6 - WINDMILL HILL** (the final viewpoint) Walk to the copse at the top of the hill at the northeast corner you can see all six of the hills you have walked. Walk around the copse to the west taking in wonderful views of Alton to the north and the views beyond Alton towards the South Downs National Park.

- Exit Windmill Hill at the (SW) corner and enter a field onto **FP53** and follow (W) to Borovere Farm. Exit the crop field onto Borovere Lane, turn right and follow until it joins the Ridgeway.

- Turn left and follow the pavement along the Ridgeway, descending the hill to meet Butts Road. Use the pedestrian crossing to return to the start point on The Butts.

Congratulations you have completed the Six Hills Walk of Alton.

Six Hills of Alton Walk

- Ackender Hill
- Brick Kiln Lane Hill
- Northanger Hill
- Anstey Hill
- Copt Hill & Neatham Down
- Windmill Hill

— Walk Route

