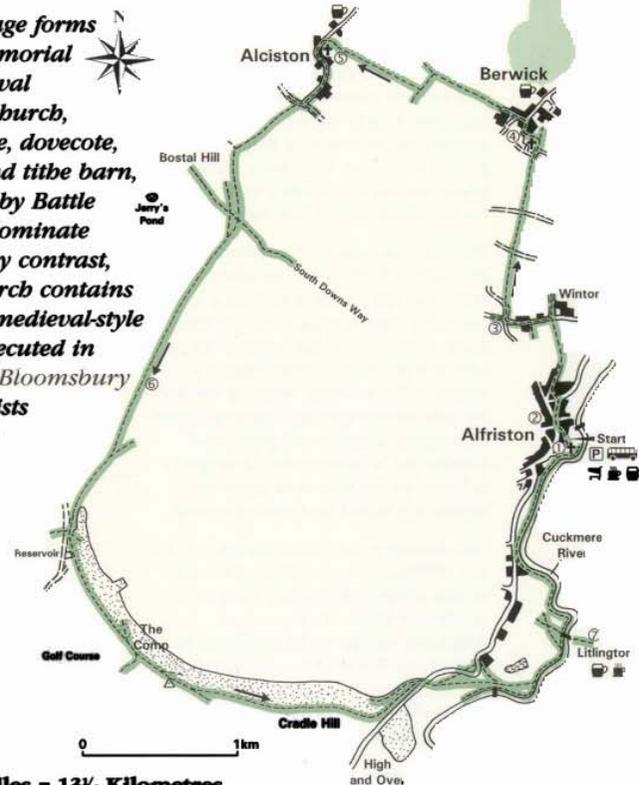




"Abbots and ARTISTS"

Alciston village forms a lasting memorial to the medieval village. The church, manor house, dovecote, fish stews and tithe barn, once owned by Battle Abbey, still dominate the village. By contrast, Berwick church contains a full set of medieval-style paintings executed in 1942 by the Bloomsbury group of artists from nearby Charleston.



Length 8½ Miles - 13½ Kilometres

Approximately 5 hours - Grade 3

START - Alfriston Church. (O.S. Explorer 16 - NGR 522030)

ACCESS - Car - "The Furlongs" and "The Dene" car parks - Alfriston
 Bus - 125, 126 and Cuckmere Valley Ramblerbus
 Train - Berwick Station (2 miles)

PUBLIC TOILETS - "The Furlongs" and "The Dene" car parks - Alfriston

REFRESHMENTS - Pubs at Alfriston, Berwick, Alciston, Litlington
 Tea Rooms at Alfriston and Litlington
 Restaurants at Alfriston
 Village shop at Alfriston

8½
Miles



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- 1 St Andrews Church is known as the "Cathedral of the Downs". It is said its location, on the side of the green called The Tye, was determined by the sight of four oxen lying in the shape of a cross. Just outside the churchyard is the original priest's house, the Old Clergy House, which was the first building to be saved by the fledgling National Trust back in 1896.
- 2 Markets have been held in Alfriston since the reign of Richard the Lionheart and the main road still broadens to form a market place. The market cross in the centre was snapped off in 1780, but restored 50 years later and still stands today. There is a wealth of fine buildings including the Star Inn with its strange, pagan carvings, including dragons, serpents and green men. Strange that is because the inn originally belonged to the Abbots of Battle and served as a hostel for travelling monks.
- 3 The discovery of a Saxon cemetery at the top of Winton Street reflects the early origins of Alfriston. Typically sited on a gentle spur below the Downs, its inhabitants had yet to be converted to Christianity. For their journey to Valhalla the men were buried clutching swords and spears whilst the women had jewellery and household objects.
- 4 Berwick church stands proud on a reused prehistoric mound, visible for many miles. Unfortunately this made it an easy target for bombs in World War II, leading to the destruction of much of the stained glass

and its replacement with plain glass. Seeking some advantage from this event Bishop Bell invited the

nearby "Bloomsbury" group of artists from Charleston to paint the interior of the church in 1942/3. The result is a unique series of medieval-style wall paintings done in a contemporary manner and incorporating local people and views.

- 5 At Alciston the manor was owned by Battle Abbey who operated it as a self contained grange or farm providing wealth to be ploughed back into the Abbey. To do this they invested in a manor house, a dovecote and fishponds (to provide food throughout the winter), a church and a huge barn some 170 feet long to store the produce of their labours. All these are still in existence today forming a unique tribute to the strength of their original design and construction.
- 6 The Greenway track, along which the walk proceeds, originated as a link between the Battle Abbey owned properties of Alciston and East Blatchington near Seaford.
- 7 A visit to Litlington can be made by crossing the river. The church of about 1150 features both sun and mass dials, a stained glass memorial to three children and a bell called John. The mill, now vanished, was once owned by the Abbot of Dunsfold in Surrey, something of an interloper in this region of Battle Abbey dominance.

8½
Miles

