
Saturday 30th August 2008

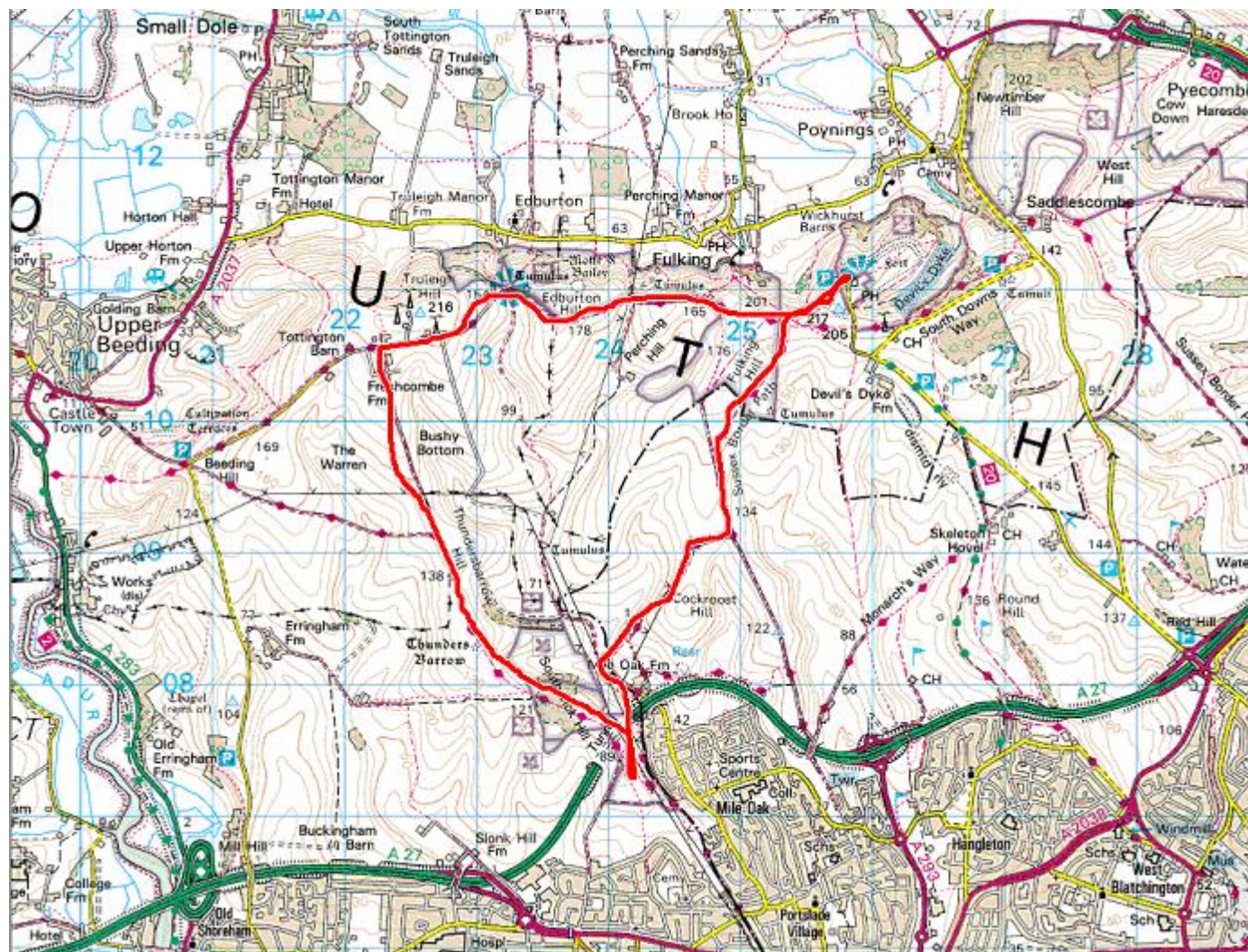
Devil's Dyke - Fulking Hill - Truleigh Hill - Southwick Hill - Devil's Dyke

8.2 miles

After days of overcast and drizzly weather, the sun finally came out today with vengeance. I'd worked all morning and so when I got home at midday we just grabbed our stuff and went where many other people go on a sunny day, Devils Dyke. Although the view from up here is one of the best in Sussex and according to John Constable one of the best in the British Isles, it does get a little too crowded for shy, retiring, misanthropic types like ourselves. We still have to stop for a while to take it all in though, and quite often there are hang gliders taking off from here, which makes it even more picturesque. Pretty soon we're off though, this time west towards the large antenna top of Truleigh Hill through the throngs of day trippers. However, we usually find that most of the visitors have an exploration radius of just over half a mile, so after 15 minutes of walking we're by ourselves again. As we were using the highway of the Downs, "The South Downs Way", we were still passed by many a puffing, beetroot-faced cyclist. We always feel that the novices to this sport that crawl past us must be finding out the hard way that whoever named these hills the "Downs" in fact being ironic. The small sense of isolation and peace that we had attained at this point was about to last. Shoreham Air Show was on today, so we were treated to some amazing spectacles above the Downs. There were WWII bombers, fighter jets, acrobatic displays but best of all, a squadron of Spitfires (they looked like Spitfires to us, but we don't know what the hell we're going on about!) that circled around us and then flew low over the top of the Downs (and us) to come belting down over Shoreham aerodrome below. We think we got the best view out of anyone, and we didn't even pay!

The rest of the walk itself was a little bit of a let-down. There are so many electricity pylons, antennae, large roads and nearby towns, that we didn't get much peace and quiet or have many uncluttered views.

Harvesting was still going on everywhere and the air smelt of hay all day, even on the ride home. From the vantage of the hills we could see combine harvesters in every direction throwing up large billows of dust around them. The downland plants and trees are all either in berry, fruit or seed. The atmosphere is peppered with flying bits of fluff. We nibbled on blackberries and elderberries as we walked and found some woody nightshade berries too (we didn't eat them). Some of the sheep have been shawned recently and we found an area in a field where it had been done. There were large tufts of wool scattered everywhere, enough to make half a dozen jumpers, with white dandelion and thistle seeds strewn between and Small White Butterflies fluttering around us. So white it was christmassy! A very hot day though with very little cloud and lots of haze fading out the distant



From up on top of Devil's Dyke looking past Truleigh Hill towards Chanctonbury Ring



Undulations. mmm!



Common Blue Butterfly. It's a butterfly, it's blue and it's very common!



The underneath of the Common Blue Butterfly



The Small White Butterfly. It's small, it's white....you get the idea.



Hawthorn in berry. The berries are edible and can be used to make jams and jellies.



Harvesting in the evening below Fulking Hill (what a great name)
