



PETWORTH TOWN

THE JOYS OF BROWN PAINT

Petworth town may seem too small to have the capacity for surprises; it tends to be somewhere to escape into the opulent aristocratic surrounds of Petworth House and its vast Capability Brown landscaped park. The house is the reason the town is there: this is an estate-owned town on an imposing scale, yet the house itself – rather like the majority of visitors here – turns its back on Petworth, which is tactfully kept out of view. Yet a wander round this extraordinarily preserved place reveals all sorts of goodies once you dip into the quieter back streets away from the traffic. Wander from the central Market Square along cobbled Lombard Street, you emerge opposite the church of St Mary; somewhat stealing the show is an engagingly over-twiddly lamppost (aka obelisk), erected as a thanksgiving to Lord Leconfield who brought the town its gas lighting. Just by here, Bartons Lane leads down to a gorgeously rural viewpoint at the top of the Shimmings valley.

The Petworth hallmark is brown paint, loads of it, on every front door of the 400-odd houses around town that belong to the Leconfield Estate (as the Petworth House estate is known), with a house numbering system to test postmen's patience, ordered not by where each house is but according to when it first appeared on the rent records. Do seek out 346 High Street, the gaslit Petworth Cottage Museum recreating domestic interiors of around 1910 within the former home of a servant who worked at the big house. *Tim Locke*

More details of this and other Slow pleasures in Tim's Slow Sussex, Guide Book of the Year Finalist in the British Press Awards (£14.99 from Skylark, Lewes TIC and Barbican House). Visit facebook.com/slowsussex for details of walks he's doing.