



Wadhurst and Tidebrook

Distance: 11½ km=7¼ miles, reducible

easy walking

Region: East Sussex

Date written: 1-jul-2019

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Refreshments: Wadhurst

Map: Explorer 136 (The Weald) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Village, meadows, woodland, views

In Brief

This walk takes you from one of the oldest villages of the Sussex Weald through sheep meadows and the darkest forest into the bright daylight in the environs of Wadhurst Park, returning through gently undulating country back to the village.

The village has two excellent pubs* and other eateries, with good picnic opportunities by the lake. (* For enquiries at the *Greyhound*, ring 01892-783224; for the *White Hart*, it's 01892-782850.)

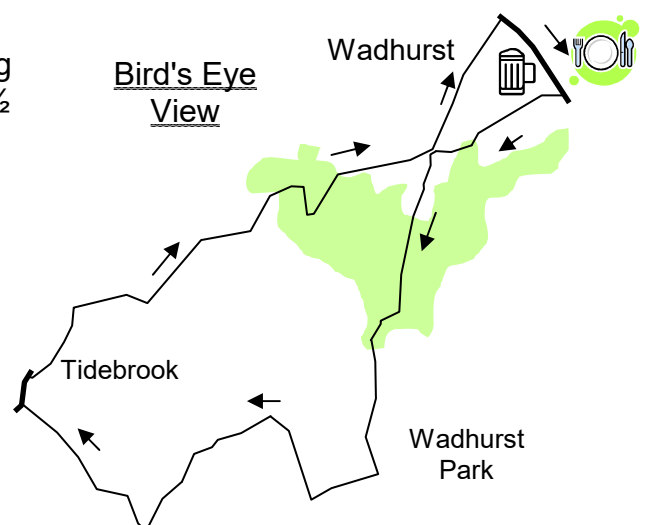


Although the walk is generally on clear wide paths, there are a few brambly or nettly section, ruling out shorts. The terrain was quite dry when this walk was researched but because of the woodland, there will be some muddy sections in winter time, making boots a better choice of footwear. This walk should be fine for your dog too.



This walk can be “zipped up” with the adjoining Mayfield walk, giving you a very satisfying 22½ km=14 mile “big zipper” walk. Look for the “zipper” symbols.

The walk begins in the village of Wadhurst, E.Sussex, postcode **TN5 6AP**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

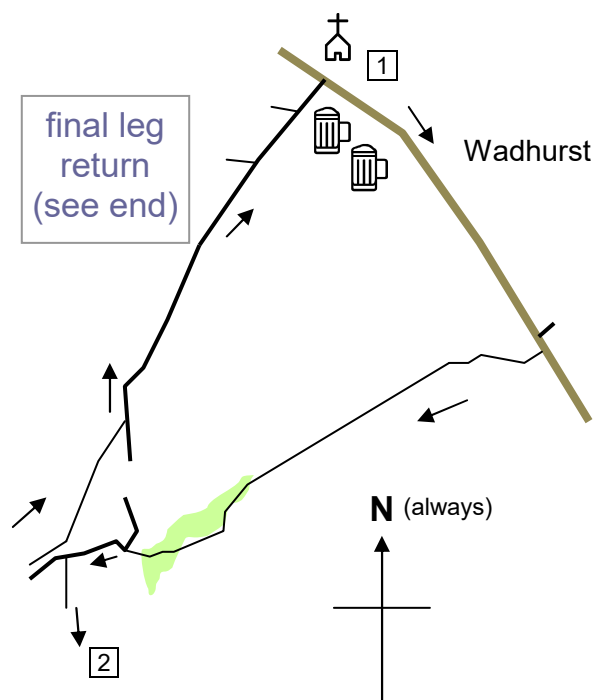
Welcome to industrial Sussex! We think of the county by images of sheep and rolling hills. But the wealth of all the past history came from iron – that is to say, before the industry moved to the North in the 1700s where they had coal and steam rather than forest charcoal and millponds. No better evidence than in the church of St Peter and St Paul where there are **thirty** iron slab memorials. The families recorded here left their legacy in the large houses and estates that you pass on this walk (and on the adjoining walk to Bewl Water). The Barnhams, who built Snape House (on your route today), were the iron masters. The unlucky Luck family of Stone Cross who all died young. The Courthope family whose house Whiligh you see on the Bewl Water walk. The Legas family of Little Pell. The Dunmoil family who owned Foxholes, their coat of arms showing a pelican who pecks at her own flesh to draw blood to feed her children (haven't we **all**?).

After the wealth of iron, the much poorer yields of agriculture caused disaffection among land workers in the so-called Swing riots in 1830. They were forcibly put down by the army and several local workers were imprisoned or transported. As a diversion, the people turned to 'sport' and, in 1863, the last great bare-fisted prize fight in England took place in Wadhurst. The combatants were Tom King and a giant American, John Heenan who weighed in at 15st 7lbs. The lighter King made use of his youthful agility but the fight lasted a gruelling 36 rounds, with King victorious. From 1914 the village was changed for ever with nearly 150 of its men killed in WWI. A particularly black day was 9th May 1915 when 24 local men died at the Battle of Aubers Ridge.

The name 'Wadhurst' discloses the Saxon founder Wada, the hilly wooded setting providing scant protection from the Danes. The old Saxon church was a place of refuge, and its size and importance grew as you see in the church spire, at 38 metres, resulting in six lightning strikes over the years. The oldest part, as usual, in the Norman west tower. It is a **must-visit**, its dimensions and its many clear-glass windows making it light and welcoming.

Leg 1: Wadhurst to Wadhurst Park 3¾ km=2¼ miles

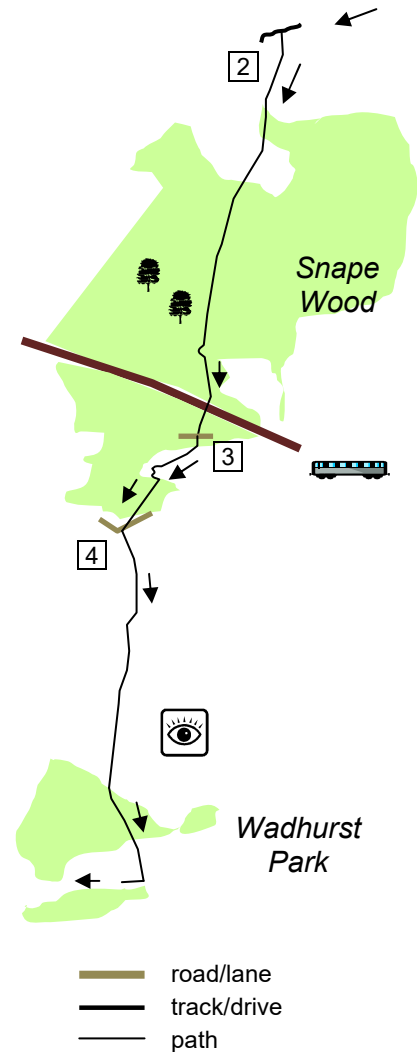
- 1 With the pubs on your right and the church on your left, walk along the High Street for about 500m until you pass some newly-built homes on your left. Just after Oakwood Way, cross the road carefully to a gap in the hedge (easily missed!) where there is a stone marker indicating a footpath. Go over an (avoidable) stile and down a path next to a wire fence on your right. A stile takes you into the open with two sheep fields ahead, one on each side of a line of trees. Keep straight on along the **left**-hand sheep meadow so that the line of trees is on your right. Continue into a second even larger sheep pasture. At the end, go over a stile on a narrow path beside a water treatment plant on your left. You come through a woodland grove to a wide track coming from the plant. Turn **right** on the track to meet tarmac Washwell Lane at a bend.



2 Turn **left** on the lane. In 100m, there are footpath signs on both sides. Go over the stile on the **left** into a meadow of tall grass. Keep to the path along the **left**-hand edge, elbowing right, with blackberries aplenty in late summer. Your path leads down into woodland, through a large metal gate which is usually open, making this stile superfluous. Go over a stile (or through a very unsteady field gate) into a wild meadow. Go straight ahead, staying near the right-hand edge. You come down, through a wooden swing-gate, over a flat bridge across a stream which runs in a deep wooded gulch. Cross a forestry track to a path on the other side. This path leads through the vast Snape Wood. In about 400m, ignore a path on your right and keep straight ahead, as the yellow arrow. A stout stile leads you over a railway crossing (*care!*) and another stile, continuing a further 100m to meet a tarmac lane.

3 Cross the lane, down four steps, through a wooden swing-gate, into a small wild meadow. Walk the length of this meadow and, at the far end, go **left** through a large metal gate, over a wooden bridge, to meet a wooden fence and a small wooden gate. **Ignore** the wooden gate and turn **right**, to follow a brambly path on the edge of a wood on your right. After 100m or so, you come to a stile (avoidable if you divert through a large wooden gate), to reach a tarmac lane at a bend.

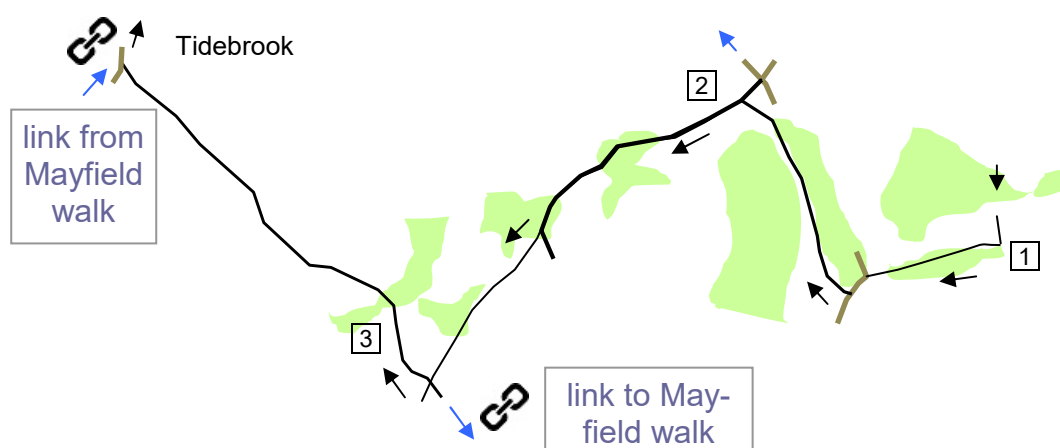
4 Cross straight over the lane to a track. Just after the first attractive property (*Wenbans*), look for a large metal gate on your **right**. Go through a small wooden gate beside it, onto a wide woodland path. The path takes you past a pond on your right and through a tall wooden gate (held closed by a weighted string in a pipe) into a magnificent area of parkland adjoining Wadhurst Park. Follow the right-hand edge, down a dip and up again (glancing back at the view). At the top, continue straight ahead through the grass along a mown strip. At the end of this wonderful scenery, suddenly you enter deep forest. On emerging once again, proceed up through more grassland to reach a large closed metal gate.



Leg 2: Wadhurst Park to Tidebrook 3¼ km=2 miles

1 **See map overleaf.** Turn **right** through a matching tall wooden gate and walk along the top left-hand edge of a hay meadow, using a wild flower fringe which continues as a mown grass strip. *Invisible, but close on your left, is the huge mansion of Wadhurst Park, known as the "Wilderness", home to Britain's richest man (see the "Mayfield" walk for details).* Keep close to the fence on your **left** as the hay meadow sweeps away to your right and exit in the corner by a marker post to meet a junction of tarmac drives. Turn **left** on a drive, passing the red-tiled orb-columned façade of *Combe House*. Immediately after the house's garden, turn **right** on a track. Follow this

easy wide track, with open views, soon ash-shaded. The track ends at a T-junction with a private unmade road, at the corner of the exquisite timbered *Combehurst*.



If you are returning to Wadhurst and are feeling the pace and would like to sacrifice $2\frac{3}{4}$ km = $1\frac{3}{4}$ miles of scenic walking, do as follows (see blue arrow in map). Turn **right** on the road for just 80m to a 4-way junction. Turn **left** on (unlabelled) Riseden Road and follow this quiet lane for $1\frac{1}{4}$ km, under trees and out in the open, ignoring a junction on your right. Look for the entrance to *Snape House* on your right, go a further 30m and turn **right** over a stile, re-joining the main walk at Leg 3 section **3**. Otherwise ...

- 2** Turn **left** on the private road (“private” to cars only). This nice-and-easy tarmac lane goes past a farm and through woodland, passing a converted oast or two at Lodge Hill Farm and going downhill. Ignore a tempting path into Butcher Wood on your right. After 750m, the lane bends left past a large brown corrugated shed. **Leave** the lane here by keeping straight on through a small wooden gate on a footpath. After some wooden fencing, you come through a small wooden gate on a fine-looking woodland path. A stile, a crossing farm track, a small bridge and a small metal gate lead to a 4-way crossing of paths, 350m after leaving the lane.



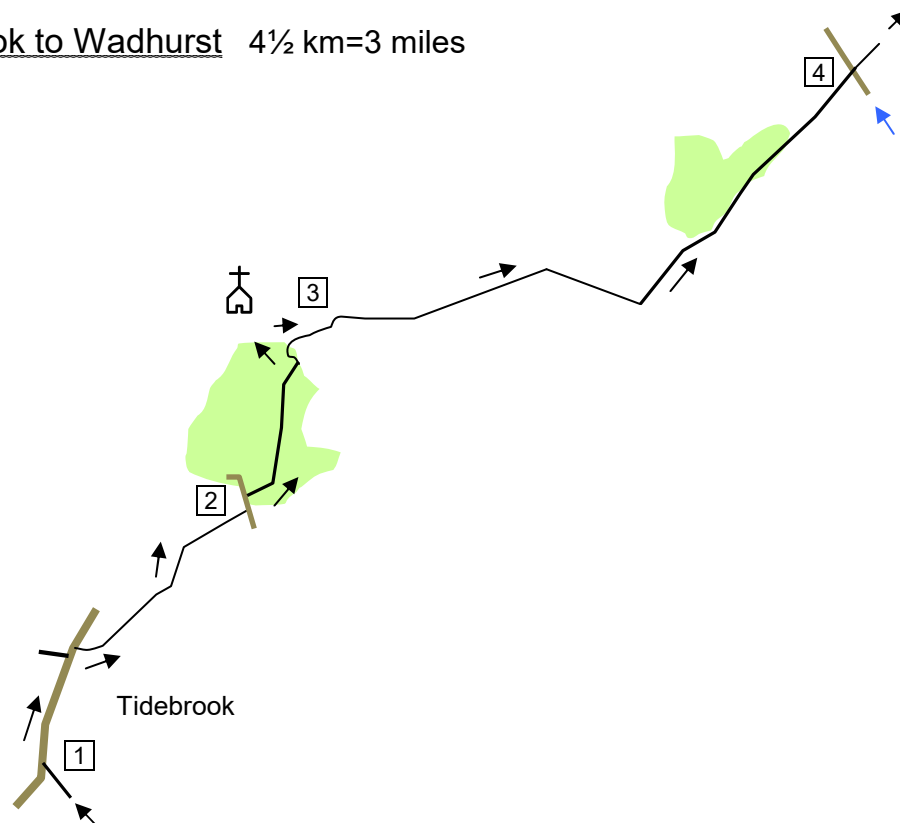
Zip point. If you are doing “big zipper” walk, onwards to Mayfield, turn **left** at the crossing and switch to the other walk from section **8**. Otherwise ...

- 3** Turn **right** at the crossing through a large metal gate and along the left-hand side of a meadow of tall grass. Your path veers right away from the hedge to go through a large metal gate and over a broad bridge onto a wide green path between hedges. Soon your path becomes concrete and then gravel as it passes houses, beginning with a red-tiled house and a white-board house. Finally you reach a road in the hamlet of Tidebrook, named after the nearby stream, a tributary of the River Rother. Turn **right** on the road.



The “big zipper” walk from Mayfield joins this walk at this point.

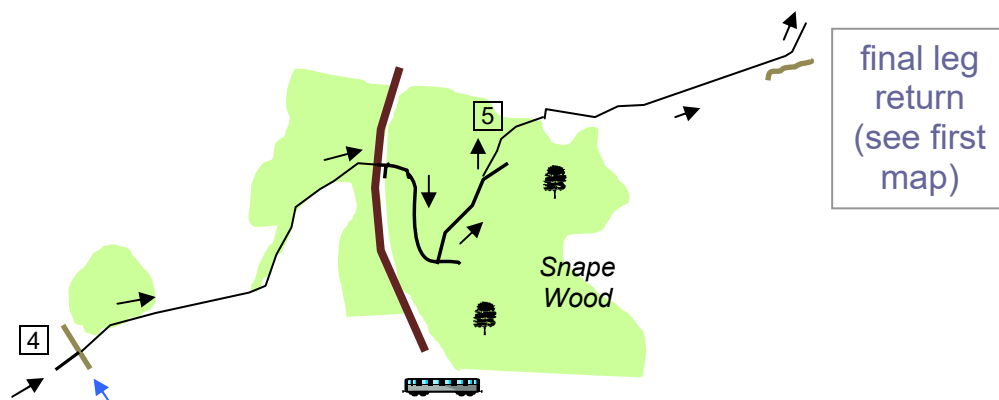
Leg 3: Tidebrook to Wadhurst 4½ km=3 miles



- 1 In 150m, you pass an irrelevant wide driveway on your left leading to houses, beginning with a whiteboard house. Go only another **10m**, no further, along the main road to find a stone footpath marker on your right. *Don't miss this turning – it is difficult to see!* Go up 14 steps and over a stile into a sheep meadow. Continue diagonally **left** on a faint path along the bottom of a pasture to enter trees on the other side, passing a redundant stile. Now fork **left** down through a band of trees and up into another grass meadow. Go straight across the centre of the meadow, heading for a large wooden gate. (In 2019, as a visual guide, the route passed close to two circular feeders.) The gate leads onto a narrow tarmac lane.
- 2 Turn **left** on the lane and immediately **right** on a tarmac drive uphill. Ignore a small wooden gate on your right and follow the drive to the top, to find a large wooden gate at the start of a tarmac drive for *Barrack Manor Cottages*. Go straight on along the drive, using a small wooden gate if the main one is closed. After some white cottages, keep straight ahead through a small wooden gate to reach a private garden. Turn **left** here in front of a private gate and turn **right** in the corner, keeping close to the garden, along the top of the lawn, looking down to your left to admire the early Victorian greystone church of Tidebrook and its lancet windows. Keep straight on at a 3-way fingerpost and go over a stile (avoidable on your right) in a fence on the other side.
- 3 Your path climbs a bank, taking you over a stile and up into a meadow. Keep **left** to avoid a right fork that only leads to a small private wooden gate and continue up into a crop field. A good clear path takes you across the centre of the field. At the top, go through a large metal gate [Jul 2019: the gate was awkward to close properly as it was held in position by a stick]. Go through a small metal gate and along a path between meadows with a wire fence on your right. At the other side you meet a farm track: cross straight

over the track, scaling a stile and turning immediately **left**. You are now walking next to the farm track but on the other side of the brambly hedge, yielding a tempting crop of blackberries in late summer. You reach a pair of large new metal gates where your route shifts quickly right-left, joining a farm track. Follow this track, under trees, past hedgerows, all the way to meet a tarmac lane, Riseden Road. Cross the lane directly, over a stile.

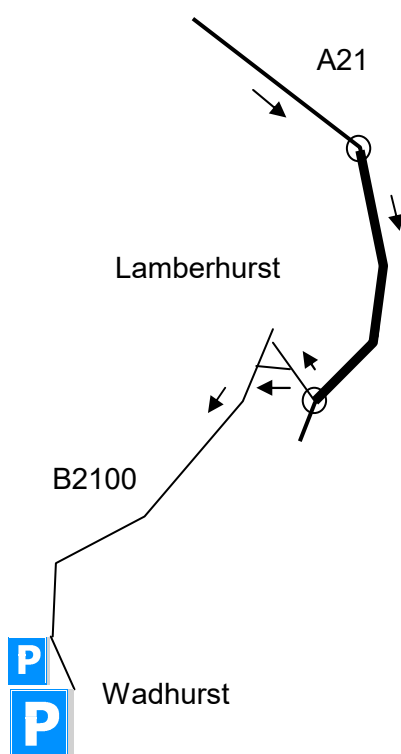
The short cut from *Combehurst* re-joins the walk here.



- 4 Immediately keep **left** in the field to avoid a signed right fork. Follow this wide farm track with crops on your right, finally going over a robust stile into a sloping meadow with views ahead. Keep to the left-hand edge, staying close to the trees on your left. In the far left-hand corner, go through a large wooden gate (preferable to the rickety stile). Follow a path through bracken, taking you down steps into the great leafy domain of Snape Wood. Your path goes right and left on a bridge over a stream and leads you up steps to cross the railway (*care!*). [Jul 2019: if you see a “gate closed” notice relating to “unsafe stairs”, you can ignore it as this notice no longer applies.] Cross the line carefully and bear **left** to join a wide forestry track which curves right through the dense woodland. After 250m, the track swings left to meet a T-junction. Turn **left** here on another wide forestry track. After 250m on this track, just as it starts to curve right uphill, **leave** the track by forking **left** on a narrower path.
- 5 After 130m on this path, at a waymarker, go **left**, shortly over a stile and **right** on a path running between fences, beside a field on your left. You come over another stile now with Wadhurst in clear view on the hill. Continue alongside a third field as you come ever nearer to a tarmac lane on your right: Washwell Lane, familiar from your outward journey. Spurning the lane, turn **left** over a stile into a large sloping meadow. Head diagonally up in the direction of the church spire. Your path goes down between thorn trees, close to the right-hand edge. Just before the corner, go **right** over a stile and turn **left** on the lane. The lane runs gradually uphill for a rather trying 500m or so before passing houses and finally coming out by a tearoom, an “Indian” restaurant and the pubs in the village centre where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Wadhurst is easily reached from the A21 and Lamberhurst. If coming from the north on the A21, after the narrow section, at a roundabout, ignore the right turn for Lamberhurst and continue on the A21 dual-carriageway and under the "land bridge". Now turn **right** at the roundabout signposted *Wadhurst* and follow signs to the village, involving a left fork and a left turn onto the B2100. This road will take you into Wadhurst in 4 miles. Wadhurst is the last settlement of a long string of villages, after the main road makes a left turn. Park in the large free car park on the right behind the *Greyhound* pub, in a "23 hour" bay. There is a similar but smaller car park behind the *White Hart* pub.



By bus/train: Wadhurst station is one mile from the village and from the walk. There is an hourly bus service into the centre, e.g. bus 254. Check the timetables. On Sundays you may need a taxi (e.g. Chris on 07946-310662).

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