



Southborough Valley

Distance: 2½ miles=4 km

easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 1-sep-2013

Author: Rambling Rose

Last update: 4-jul-2020

Refreshments: Southborough

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks & Tonbridge) *hopefully not needed*

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

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Meadows, bluebells, blackberries, woods, streams, historical features

In Brief



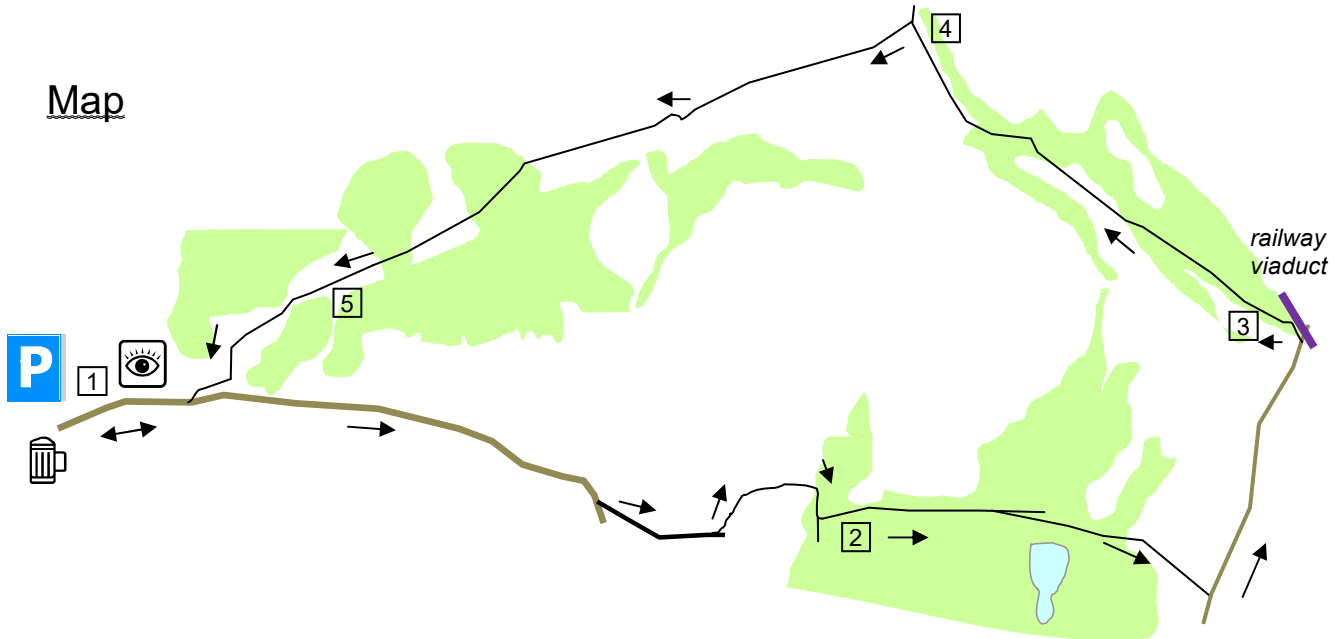
This is a traffic-free walk, easily accessible by public transport, through meadows and woods, with interesting historical features. There is a short steep hill (up) and a longer, less steep one (down). After prolonged rain there are a few muddy patches, making ankle boots the ideal footwear in these conditions. Otherwise, sturdy walking shoes are adequate. A couple of sections may be overgrown in summer, so long trousers are recommended. There are several stiles, some quite high, that might be a problem for a large dog.

The walk begins in the free car park at the start of Pennington Road, Southborough, near Tunbridge Wells, Kent, **postcode TN4 0SH**. If the car park is full, park by the roadside. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- 1 See map overleaf.** Walk 0.5 mile down Pennington Road, ignoring a footpath on your left and several side roads, eventually passing a high wall on your right and The Glen on your left. Just round the bend, turn **left** down a drive with a footpath sign, then just before the house, turn **left** again. Go down a few steps, then follow fenced path round to the right, past the bottom of a garden. Ignore an unofficial path downhill along a wire fence on your left and keep **right** beside a fence until, a few yards along, the fence briefly turns sharp left. Here take a **left** turn downhill, passing a stile on the left, inside the edge of Brokes Wood.

Map



- 2 Continue downhill, keeping **right** by a fence at a fork, eventually passing just to the left of the large Brokes Wood Pond. Go uphill, then bear **right** along a fenced path. At the end, cross stile and turn **left** down Powdermill Lane.

On your right you will see Forge Farm, named after a 16th century forge (and under development in 2020). At the bottom is the site of the gunpowder mill, destroyed in an explosion with great loss of life.

The lane passes the *Mill House* and crosses the Southborough Bourne. When you are almost at the railway viaduct, turn **left** down a signed footpath, almost under the viaduct.



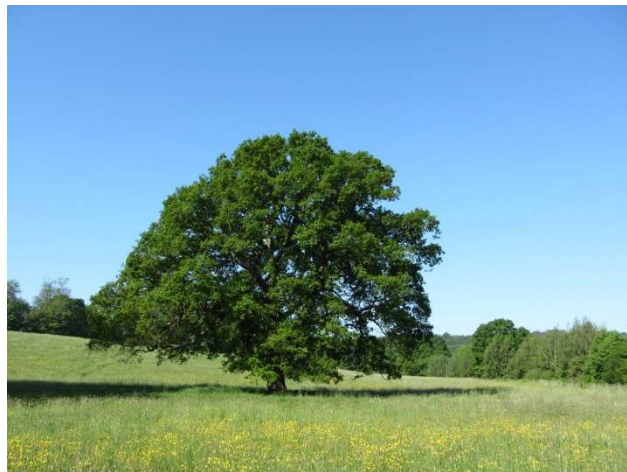
- 3 Cross a massive stile and continue on what is part of the High Weald Walk.

You are now passing through old iron workings and will notice banks and watercourses and a (possibly dry) triangular hammer pond on the right.

Shortly after this, turn **left** to cross two bridges, then cross a stile on your **right**, and continue in this direction through a meadow, with the stream on your right, passing through a small wood and crossing a footbridge over a tributary, through a small metal gate. Continue, with the stream on your right, to the far corner of the field.



- 4 Here your *official* route is over a stile and immediately **left** behind wire fencing, ignoring a path and footbridge straight ahead. *However, this path has become completely overgrown due to disuse (still so in 2020).* So, just like all other walkers, you should ignore the stile and turn **left** in the field. Near the end is a field gate. Go **right** through it, immediately **left** over a stile, then strike uphill, veering right, to reach a stile. Cross the stile, pass straight through a belt of woodland, cross another stile, then continue on towards a gap at the opposite side of the field.



If you look carefully, you will see that this field has old ridge and furrow cultivation, although overgrazing by horses in muddy conditions has made this less obvious.

- 5 Pass through the gap, or divert round the left hand side if impassable, and continue through the next meadow to a stile. Cross the stile and continue forward through a path which may have tall vegetation on either side. The path soon bears **left** steeply uphill (but you can use a parallel path with steps to ease the gradient and give a better grip). At the top turn **right** to a bench seat. *From here (summer foliage permitting) you can admire the view across to the North Downs.* Exit via a kissing gate to return to Pennington Road. Turn **right** to reach the main road where the walk began.



Refreshments:



There is a convenience store on the main road, a pub on the corner of Pennington Road. Further along the main road, London Road, in the direction of Tunbridge Wells, in the parade of shops beyond "Osborn's", is a Thai restaurant, a pizza shop and a fish shop. Going the other way, towards Tonbridge, opposite the cricket ground on Southborough Common – oldest cricket square in the UK – there is another pub/hotel, "The Hand & Sceptre".



Getting there

By car: If coming from the London area or the south, take the A21 and come off at a sign for *Tunbridge Wells*. Follow the A26 signposted *Tunbridge Wells* for 1.5 miles until you have a park on both sides; turn **left** at the corner of the *Imperial* pub onto Pennington Road.

By bus: Take any bus running between Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells via Southborough. Do not take a bus that goes via the hospital – check with the driver. If coming from Tonbridge, alight at Southborough Fountain and walk forward to Pennington Road. If coming from Tunbridge Wells, alight at the Catholic church, use the crossing and turn left to Pennington Road.

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