



## Cranleigh to the Church in the Woods

Distance 25 km=16 miles easy but lengthy walking

Region: Surrey, West Sussex

Written: 15/04/10

Author: Hautboy

Revised: 11/09/11

Refreshments: Rudgwick, Walliswood

Map: Explorer 134 (Horsham)

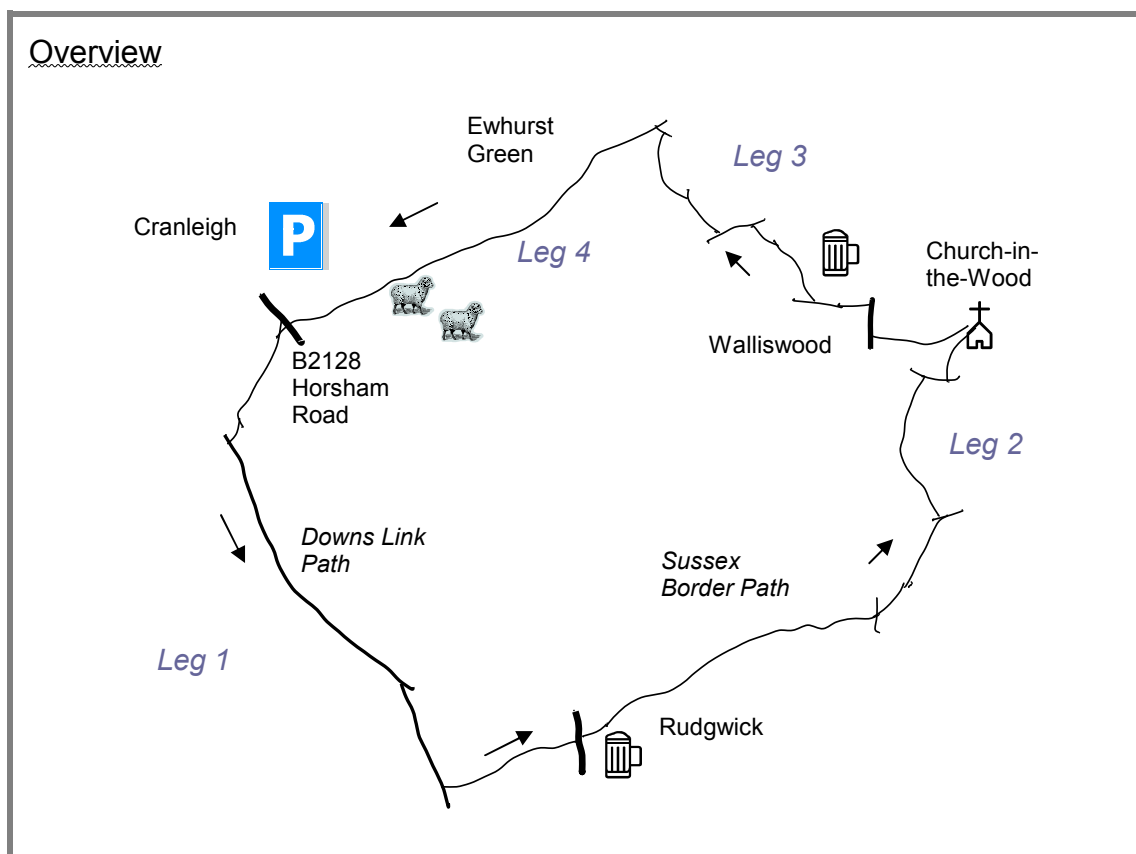
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*Green meadows, disused railway, hidden church*

### In Brief

This is a bracing circular walk, mainly in Surrey, with long easy stretches and a few shorter intricate sections. As always in this series, there are hardly any ploughed fields, just lovely grassy meadows separated by occasional woodland. At the half-way point, as if on a pilgrimage, you reach the Church-in-the-Woods at Oakwood.





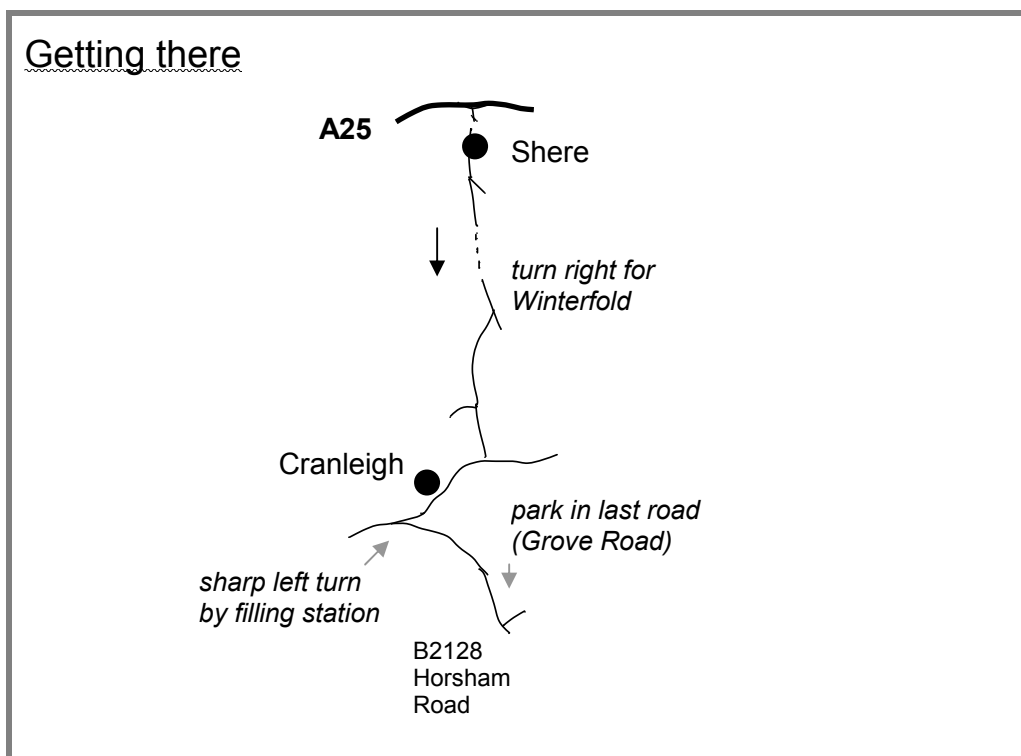
There are one or two patches of nettles on this walk. There are just a few muddy patches, so good boots are advisable. The stile count is low until Oakwood, when it becomes high, and some stiles are broken. This is probably not a good walk for a dog.

## Getting there

*By car:* the walk begins on the outskirts of Cranleigh, Surrey, just off the B2128 Horsham Road. Park considerably in Grove Road, postcode GU6 7LH. This is the last road on the left before the open countryside. It is opposite a bus stop and just before the imposing iron gates to the Vachery.

To get there from the London area, one scenic route is as follows: Take the A25 road and turn onto the B2127 through **Shere** (or bypass it via Albury Heath). At a road junction by a railway bridge, keep straight ahead for Ewhurst, avoiding the left turn to Peaslake. About 2½ miles (4km) further on, after an interesting drive through deep cuttings, turn **right** at a signpost for **Winterfold** (don't miss this turning!). Continue, avoiding all minor roads until you reach a T-junction in Cranleigh. Turn **right** into the town centre. Opposite an Esso station and by a war memorial, turn sharp left on the B2128. After 1.3km (0.8 mile), turn **left** into Grove Road and park here.

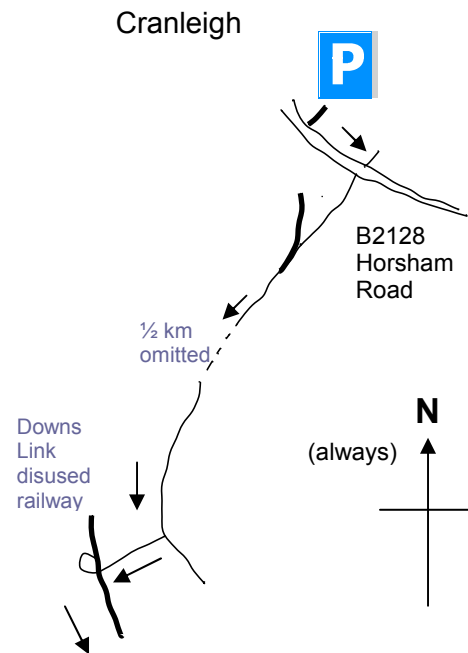
*By train and/or bus:* bus 24, 25 or several others from Guildford station.



## The Walk

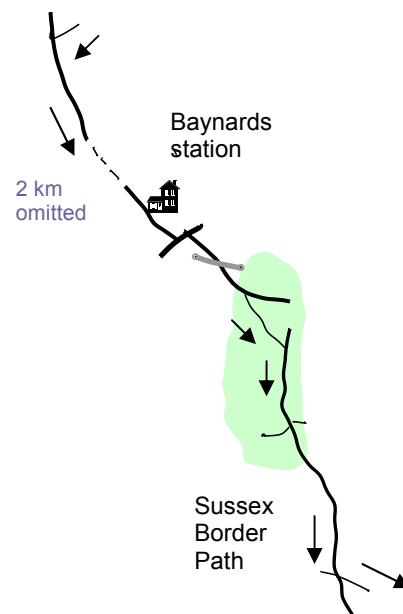
### Leg 1: Cranleigh to Rudgwick

- 1 Continue along the Horsham Road out of town, past the iron gates to the Vachery. After 50m, turn **right** on a bridleway. The bridleway crosses a concrete drive and later joins it. After some distance, the drive curves left by a fine row of tall pines. Turn **right** here at a 3-way fingerpost onto a narrow concrete drive. The drive takes you under the arch of the disused railway, now the Downs Link Path. Turn left onto this high path by turning sharp **right** after the arch and **right** again at the top.



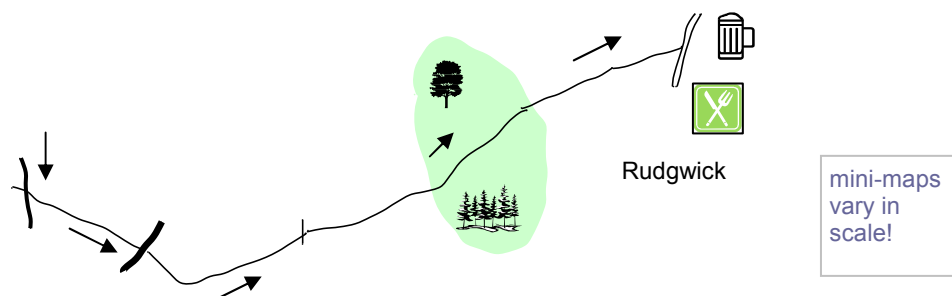
- 2 The Downs Link Path crosses the Cobblers Brook by a bridge, later another bridleway between green gates by a pond; later it passes a footpath on the right, then a crossing footpath and then passes houses on the right. Next comes Baynards Station with its station building, old advertising posters and information board.

*The Guildford-Horsham railway line was opened in 1865. Originally no station was planned at Baynards but the owner of Baynards Park, a Rev. Thurlow, engaged in some "horse-trading" to persuade the London & Brighton Couth Coast Railway Company to build one. The line was axed in 1965 by the Beeching review. The station is now a private residence.*



After Barnards, the route zig-zags **left** on the lane and quickly **right** before the gates of Thurlow Lodge. The path then goes under a road bridge and meets a junction with a bridleway left. Keep straight ahead here on a narrower path that crosses an open area, goes up steps and over two small bridges and comes to a T-junction. Turn **right** at the T-junction. *You are now on the Sussex Border Path (SBP), a long-distance path running from Rye in the east to Emsworth in the west.* In late spring, the woods here are thick with bluebells. At a seat, ignore a path right thus leaving the SBP. At the next junction with two unneeded stiles, also keep straight ahead. The path now meets the disused railway again as it emerges on the left from an old tunnel. After 300m you come to a crossing path. Turn **left** here.

- 3 The path goes across a meadow, slightly right, with the brickworks visible on the left, to a lane via a farm gate. Cross the lane, go over a stile opposite, along the left side of two meadows, through a belt of trees, and along the left side of the next meadow. Exit the meadow in the far left corner, follow the path leftwards through the wood, blue-carpeted in the bluebell season. The path goes over a 2-plank bridge, climbs some steps and ascends by a fence where it has paving stones and comes out into Rudgwick, West Sussex, opposite the *Kings Head* and the Holy Trinity church.

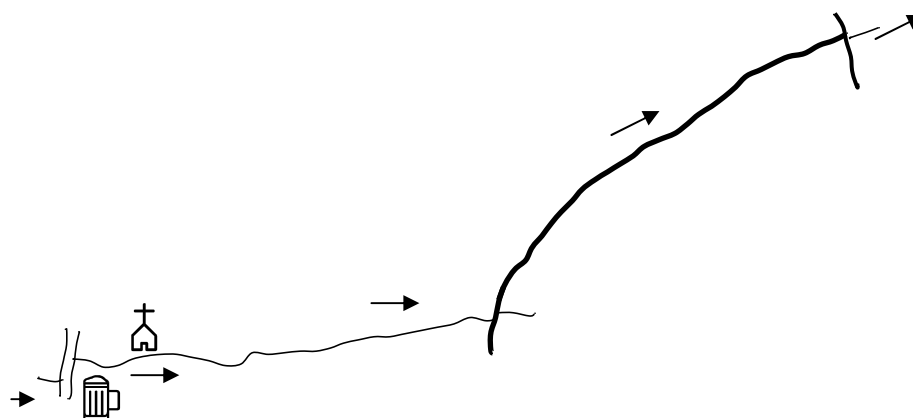


*The Kings Head specialises in "Italian and Continental Cuisine" and is a good place for a drink and a very satisfactory meal. But, remember, you have only done one of the four legs so far.*

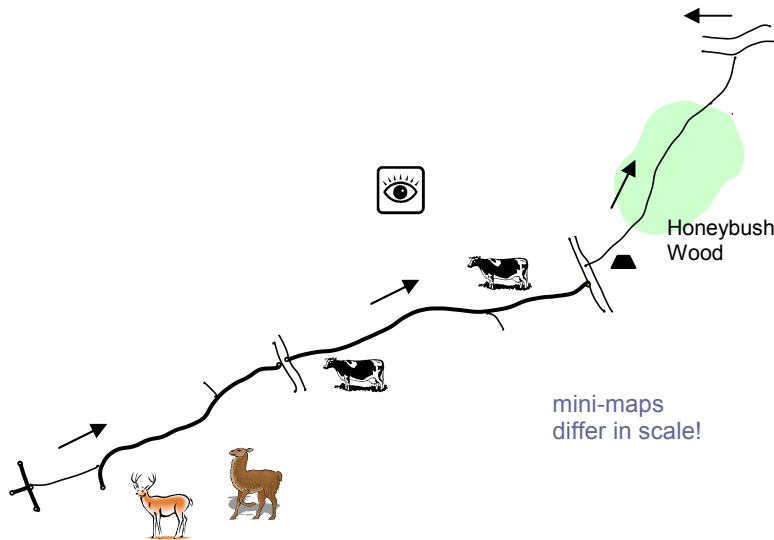
*The name "Rudgwick", originally "Regwick", means "farm on the ridge". Rudgwick was a poor Wealden community living off pig droving. The Holy Trinity church was built around 1260. The parish has no less than 90 timber-framed buildings. Millions of years ago this area lay on the shore of a huge lake and the clay that subsequently formed is now excavated by the brickworks. In 1985, they dug up some bones of a unique dinosaur named Polacanthus Rudgwickensis.*

### Leg 2: Cranleigh to the Church-in-the-Wood

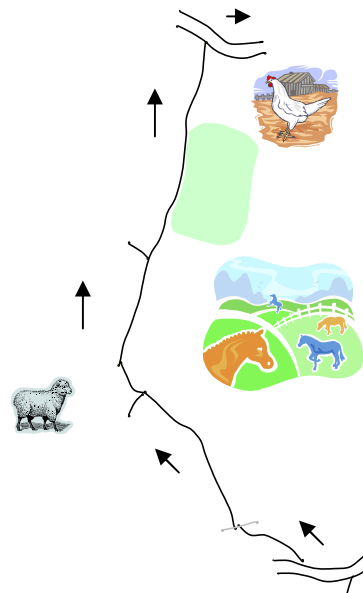
- 1 With the *Kings Head* on your right, go through a gate up to the church and go past it on your left, to a swing gate marked *Sussex Border Path* which you have rejoined. Follow the path through more gates to a narrow lane and turn **left** on it. Continue ahead on a track and go over a stile to a well-surfaced track. Turn **left** on the track. (The SBP goes straight ahead but on a rather roundabout route with little gain.) Follow the track as it curves right and comes to a junction with a 3-way fingerpost. Avoiding the avenue driveway on your right, rejoin the SBP by going straight ahead over a stile and along the right-hand side of a large meadow.



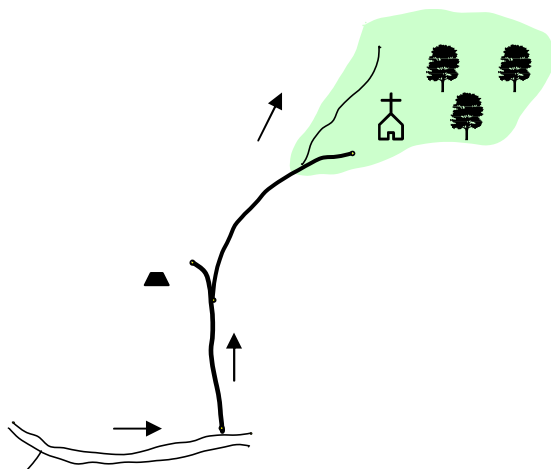
- 2 On meeting a concrete track from the right, keep ahead. Later, in the next meadow, ignore a footpath left. *There are fine views left to the North Downs.* You eventually reach a lane by a large farmhouse. *On the grass opposite is a handy picnic table, apparently available to wayfarers.* Go straight across through a concrete farmyard between farm sheds and continue along a tree-lined concrete drive. After some distance, the drive runs through farm buildings. Ignore a footpath right here and continue along the drive to a road opposite Honeywood House, a care home. Go **left** on the road for just 20m and then **right** beside the building, soon passing the arched back entrance. Continue through the fine Honeybush Wood of tall oaks lined with rhododendrons. The woodland walk ends at the North Lodge and a road. Turn **left** on the road.



- 3 In 80m, go **right** over a stile next to a fieldgate into a meadow. Follow the path diagonally left across the meadow, over two makeshift stiles and along the right-hand side of the next meadow. The next stile is just to the left of the corner. After this, you cross a stream and the corner of the next meadow. The next stile is rather tall and you cross the right-hand side of the next small meadow to a ribbon fence. You can cross the fence by carefully stepping down on a wide section but make sure it springs up undamaged. At the time of writing, a humorous sign says *the fence is not switched on! (but please don't tell the horses)*, as you later discover. The path now runs beside a wood on the right. Ignore a path left at a 3-way fingerpost. Finally, you pass through Rosehill Farm, with its many totally free-range hens, and come out to a road. Turn **right** on the road.



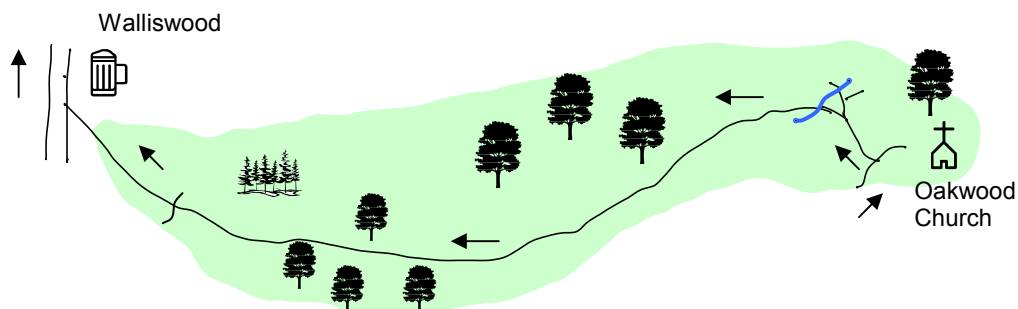
- 4 In about 100m, before a sign announcing Oakwoodhill, turn **left** on a drive for Chapel House Farm. *There are more fine views of the North Downs with Leith Hill Tower visible half-right.* Continue straight ahead at all times, after passing a house and barns and where the fence bends right. This path leads to Oakwood Church-in-the-Wood.



*'A gem in a perfect setting', but Oakwood church was not always hidden away in a forest of oak, beech and hazel. It was once on a major high-way near Stane Street (the old Roman road). It is only in recent years with new main roads taking the traffic away that it has become one of the most isolated churches in the South East. It was built about 1220, reputedly on the site of a Roman villa where earlier a Druidic temple had stood. In 1431 a local man Edward de la Hale endowed the church generously. Legend has it that once, on a boar hunt with his son, the lad fell from his horse and was about to be gored by an enraged boar when, as if from Heaven, an arrow whizzed through the air and slew the animal. In 1547, the church was wrongly classified as a chantry chapel, i.e. one that says occasional masses for the dead rather than a proper church, and was seized along with the monasteries during the reign of Henry VIII. Restored by petition and decree, it later became a full parish church in 1853. Inside are many items of interest, including the de la Hale Brass showing a man-at-arms with the badge of the House of Lancaster, some wall paintings – survivors from a much larger set – and some ancient glass in the lancet windows.*

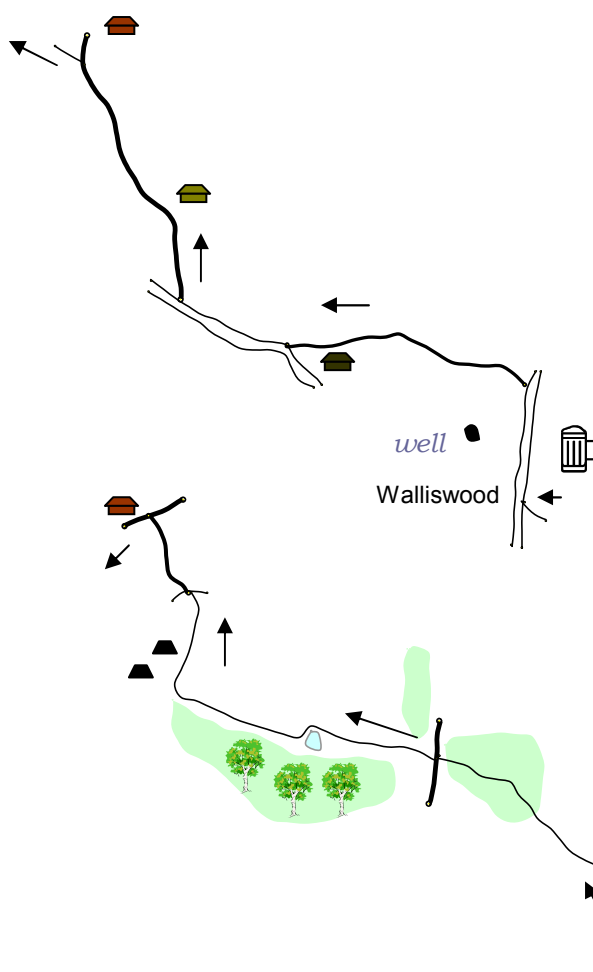
### Leg 3: The Church-in-the-Wood to Ewhurst Green

- From the main west entrance to the church, go down a flagstone path through a gate and over a bridge. Avoid a bridge on the right and veer **left** over a bridge ahead through Kiln Copse following a path through the dark wood. When the path approaches a meadow ahead, veer **right** to stay in the wood. Keep ahead soon with houses on the left and straight ahead at a 4-way signposted junction. Exit to a road via a wooden gate at Walliswood and turn **right**.



*The Scarlett Arms (Hall and Woodhouse), immediately on the right, is a picturesque secluded pub with three interconnecting small rooms, flagstone floors, oak beams, wooden benches and a large fireplace. It is named after Sir James Scarlett, first Baron of Abinger, and was built as two cottages in 1620, becoming a pub in 1907.*

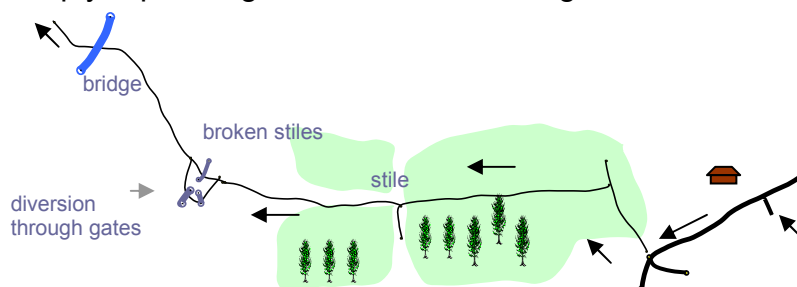
- Cross the road to the old village well, preserved by a protecting roof. Just after the well, turn **left** on a driveway. After passing buildings on the right, the path goes through a swing gate and runs beside a fence. It then runs close by the house and converted barn of Walliswood Farm and emerges onto a lane, via a stile next to the drive. Turn **right** on the lane. Ignore a footpath on the left and, just by Alvaston, turn **right** on a fingerpost footpath. Go past *Farthings* but, just before the gates to *Northlands*, go **left** over a stile (don't miss this) into an enclosed footpath.



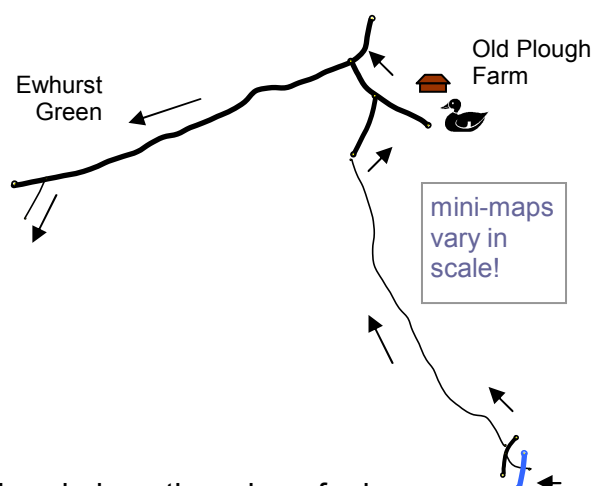
- The path goes over a stile, half left across a meadow and over another stile into woods. Then, via another stile, it reaches a wide woodland crossing track and a fingerpost. Cross straight over the track and over a 2-plank bridge. The path runs along the left-hand side of the meadow and skirts round a little pond. On nearing the end of the

meadow, turn **right** in front of some rather shabby buildings to join a drive leading to a fine old house. On reaching the house, turn sharp **left** in front of it.

- 4 At the end of the garden on the right, by a quaint little hut and opposite a drive on the left, turn **right** on a narrow footpath that has woods on the left and the garden on the right. Soon, at the next fingerpost, turn **left** as indicated. You now have a coppice on the right and a field of mature trees on the left. At the next field, ignore the path curving left and go over a stile ahead into another field with mature trees. At the next corner, there is a small bridge with a stile at each side of it. At the time of writing, however, the second stile is broken, so, instead of using the stiles, simply slip through the two metal farm gates over on the left.



- 5 Continue along the right-hand side of the meadow. Just before its end, veer **left** to cross Cobblers Brook via a sturdy hand-railed bridge. [Sep 2011: this bridge may be blocked with brambles and nettles on the other side; if you cannot get through, go through the open gate in the **right-hand** corner of the meadow and turn sharp **left** then **right**.]

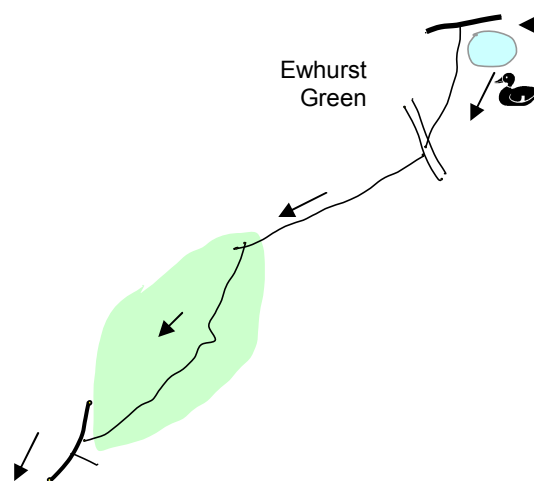


Cross a farm track and continue ahead along the edge of a large sports meadow with the brook just on the right. Exit beside a metal gate in the far corner. The track goes over the brook and out via a driveway to the wonderfully picturesque *Old Plough Farm* with its fine duckpond. Turn **left** on the lane. Shortly, at a T-junction, turn **left** on Plough Lane, crossing the brook again and eventually reaching the start of Ewhurst Green.

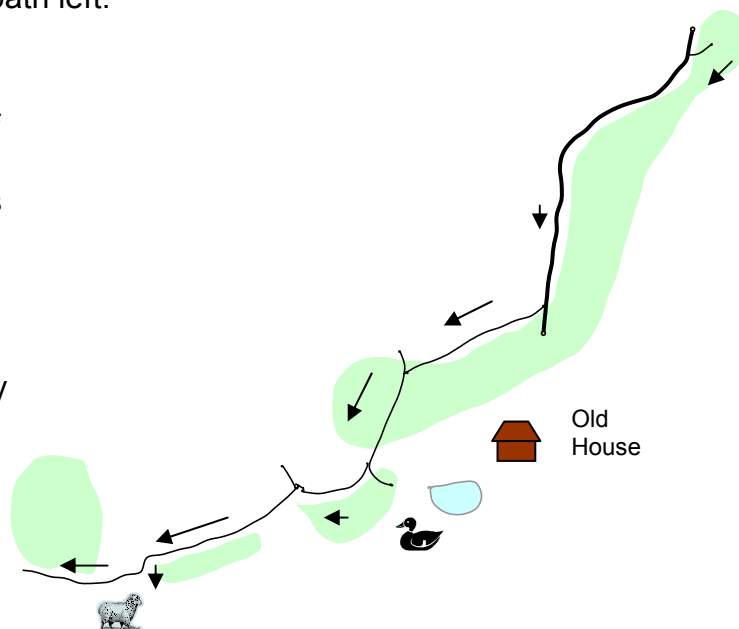
*Ewhurst Green is the hamlet just south of Ewhurst itself. Another of these walks goes through Ewhurst: see [Greensand Hills from the South](http://www.fancyfreewalks.org).*

#### Leg 4: Ewhurst Green to Cranleigh

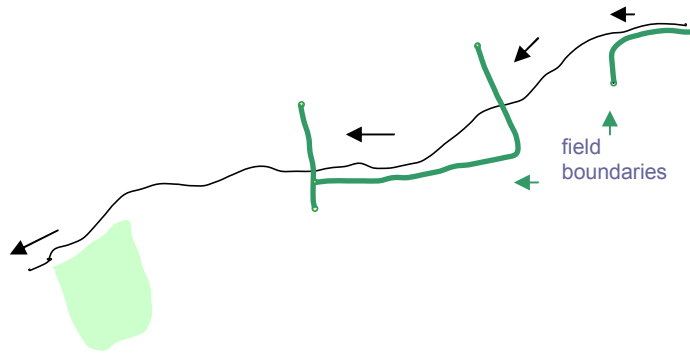
- 1 At the start of the Green on your left, just after the pond, take a path diagonally **left** across the Green to the main road ahead. Cross the main road to a fingerpost and go over a stile. The path goes along the left-hand side of a meadow and then over a stile into a holly wood. You need to keep the same direction through this little wood. However, at the time of writing, there is a large fallen tree across the path and you need to veer left and find another path that curves round it and resumes the original direction. On the other side, go over a stile onto an imposing drive and keep straight ahead on the drive, ignoring a footpath left.



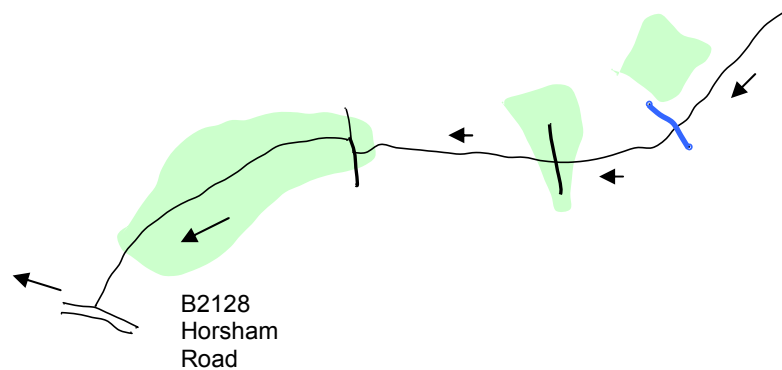
- 2 Just before a cattle grid, turn **right** through a gate, as indicated, and continue along the left-hand side of the parkland. On reaching a fence, go **left** over a stile. The track leads to a duck pond. The house *Old House* is on the left. Turn **right** before the duck pond and exit through a gate into a sheep meadow. [Sep 2011: the pond may be overgrown and invisible – just turn **right** at the T-junction. The “sheep meadow” is now ploughed up.] Continue straight ahead beside the hedge, ignoring a footpath on the right. Just before the end of the meadow, the signs direct you **left** through a metal gate and **right** through a [Sep 2011: broken] wooden gate into woodland leading into another meadow.



- 3 **See mini-map overleaf.** Keep the same direction along the left-hand side and at the corner continue straight on across the centre of the small meadow. (The stile on the left does not seem to have any function now.) Aim for a fingerpost in the hedge ahead. Go over a stile in the hedge followed by a narrow kissing gate. Go diagonally **left** across the next small meadow to the far left-hand corner. Next come two more stiles, although at the time of writing they are badly damaged by munching horses and it may be safer to scramble under the fences. Next comes another narrow kissing gate. Continue straight on aiming for the corner of the wood, later with some pigsties on your left, before going through a third narrow kissing gate. Stay by the edge of the wood and exit, via a tall metal gate, into a ploughed field [Sep 2011: changed from grass].



- 4 Keep ahead in the field with the fence on your right and go past some more woodland, this time on your right. At the end, go over a wide bridge with a small gate on each side. Go straight across the centre of the field and over a stile into woodland. The path crosses a bridleway and enters more woodland, then goes over a stile into another meadow. Cross the ploughed field [Sep 2011: changed from grass], slightly **right**, go over a stile, along a short path and through a swing gate. Next, go over a track coming from the buildings of *New Park* on the right, turn immediately **right** and shortly **left**, before the large shed, ignoring a footpath straight ahead, on a woodland path. Follow this path, avoiding all side turnings, until eventually you reach a garden fence on the right. Continue between fences, eventually coming out to the Horsham Road where the walk began. Grove Road is to the **right**.



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