



Kingsfold: The Owl (pub walk)

Distance: 8 km=5 miles easy walking

Region: West Sussex, Surrey

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Refreshments: Kingsfold, Rusper

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Map: Explorer 134 (Horsham) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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

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Green meadows, streams and bridges, woodland, pubs

In Brief

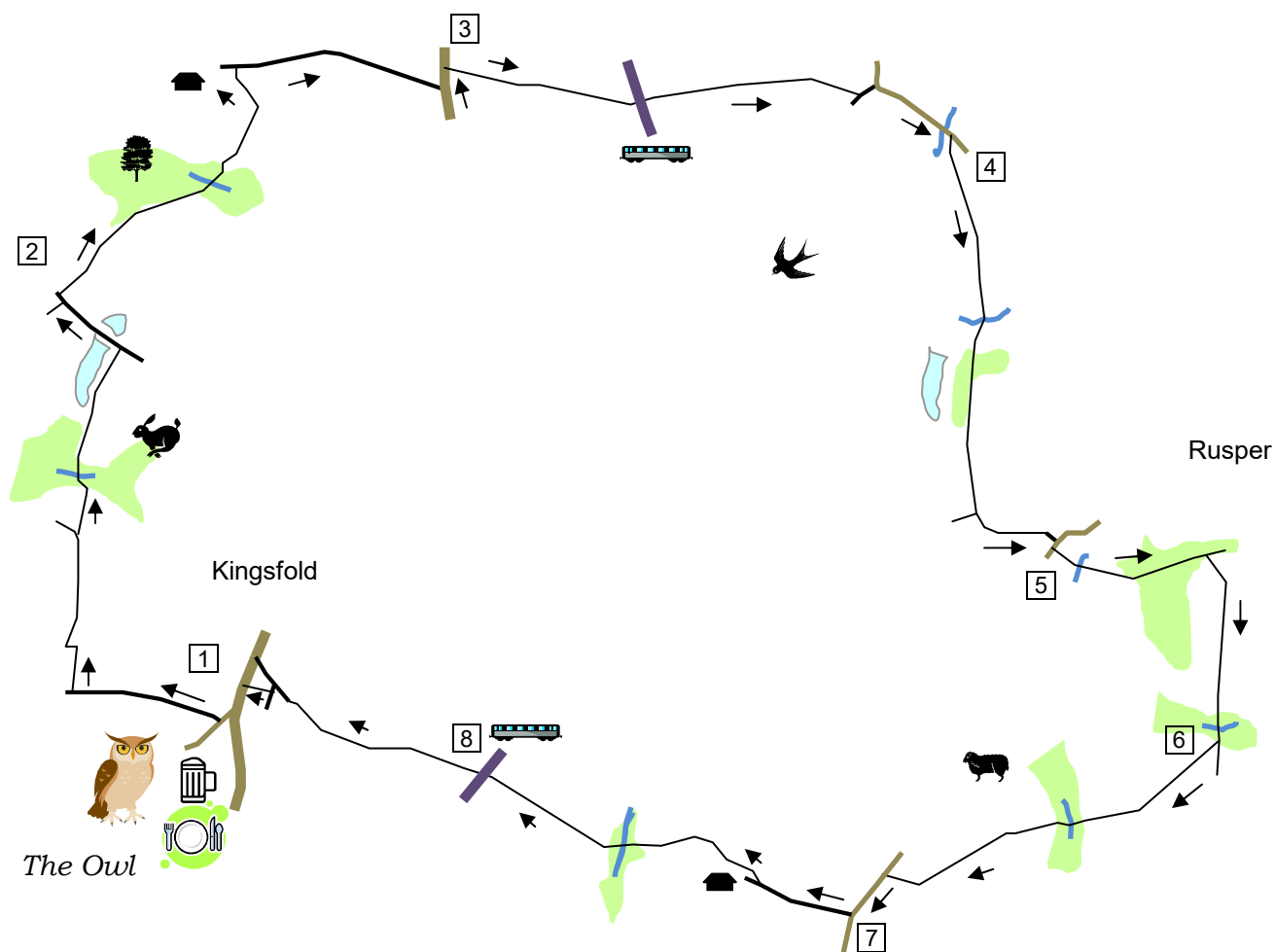
This is a gentle country walk peppered by numerous bridges over gurgling streams. The *Owl*, at the start and end of this walk, is an excellent roadhouse, a clean chalet-style freehouse, with a well-thought-out, if rather standard, menu and a good selection of drinks, ideal for all the family. It is open practically all the time.



There are some nettles and brambles on this walk, chiefly clogging the stiles, especially in summer when the undergrowth proliferates, so bare legs may be a problem. As always, boots are much better than walking shoes in wintry or damp conditions. The one or two awkward stiles make this walk all right only for a *small* dog and older children.

The walk begins at the *Owl* inn on the main A24 Dorking-Worthing road, not far from Horsham, W.Sussex, **postcode RH12 3SA**. It seems ok to use the large car park provided that you are a patron of the pub (consuming food and/or drink) and do not over-monopolise the space on a busy day. An alternative start, placing the pub at the centre, is in **Friday St., Rusper**, postcode **RH12 4QA**, near the site of the *ex-Royal Oak* pub, where there is plenty of roadside parking. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1** Near the back entrance to *The Owl* at the junction with the main road and a side road, Marches Road, by a car repair business, take a signed footpath going past a gate for Tickfold Farm. Follow this long tarmac drive until, about 30m before the ancient farmhouse, you meet a fingerpost. Turn **right** here to go along the left-hand side of a field next to a barn. *Note the unusual windvane on the farm building.* Just after the first corner follow the signs **left**, over a bridge and **right** along the right-hand edge of a field. At the next corner, at a 3-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead into a smaller field and follow the right-hand edge under oak trees. Just to the left of the next corner, go through a new swing-gate, over a 2-plank bridge and down over another bridge across the Tickfold Gill, with wild garlic growing in abundance. Continue up into a large grassy meadow and keep ahead beside a wire fence on your right. Soon you pass a large pond on your left. At the end, go through a large metal gate and turn **left** on a concrete track uphill between two ponds, towards Wattlehurst Farmhouse. *You are now in Surrey for a short stretch.*
- 2** Before the farm, at the top of the track you reach a fingerposted junction. *Note the sign warning of kangaroos.* Turn immediately **right** here through a small metal gate (possibly open like others on the day you walk) on a bridleway which is also part of the Sussex Border Path (SBP). The bridleway (which must be hard for horses to navigate) quickly takes you through another metal gate and along the left-hand side of a pasture for sheep, guarded by an alpaca. At the far side, another metal gate takes you

into the woodland of Grove Copse, passing a small pond on your right. Go through a new metal gate into a long thin meadow uphill under wires. At the top, through a (broken) wooden gate, by a (rather drunken) 3-way fingerpost, turn **left** through a double metal gate, along a short path and, ignoring metal gates left and right, through another metal gate into a farmyard. The historic *Bonnetts*, a timber-framed house from around 1600, can be seen on your left. Go straight across, a fraction right, to a fingerpost and here go through a double wooden gate to turn **right** on a concrete drive. *The Surrey Greensand hills, with Leith Hill Tower, are visible on your left.* At the end of the track, through a metal gate, where you reach the main A24 road, cross this busy road carefully and turn **left**.

- 3 In only 30m, turn **right** through a large metal gate into a wide sloping pasture, ignore a green painted metal gate on your left and keep ahead along the left-hand side. At the far left-hand side, a wide path takes you over the railway. Go through a small metal gate and along the left-hand side of the next meadow heading for Ridge Farm. The farm is approached via a small metal gate and a track. After a small wooden gate, turn **left** on a domestic drive to a lane, with the fine timbered *Ridge Farmhouse* visible on your right. Turn **right** on the lane and, in nearly 200m, just after the lane crosses the Fylls Brook, turn **right** over a stile into a pasture used by donkeys (when motorbike scramble races are not in progress!), still on the SBP.
- 4 Veer **left** up the meadow beside a wire fence on your right. A small metal gate leads you straight across the next meadow to another small metal gate. *You are back in W.Sussex.* Cross a track with a 2-plank bridge on each side, and a stile [2014: like the next few, rather overgrown, so take care!], into a sheep meadow, keeping ahead along the short right-hand side. Go over two stiles with a 2-plank bridge in between and keep ahead along the right-hand side of a large meadow. On your left is a large copse and on your right some anglers' ponds. A small metal gate leads you through a band of trees and straight across the next meadow. As you near the far edge, avoid a path through a gate on your right and keep **left** along the right-hand edge which curves left and leads you through a gap into another meadow. Keep ahead beside a large wooden gate near houses and veer **right** on a stony driveway to a lane.
- 5 Cross the lane through a small gate opposite, going through a small garden beside a brook. Cross a wooden bridge with rails (careful ! some planks are rotten) over the Boldings Brook and go through a small wooden gate onto a path between fences. You are soon in an oak woodland with plentiful bluebells in late spring. As you go through another small wooden gate you are in a magnificent large meadow dominated by lines of trees. In 30m, turn **right**, in the direction of a new fingerpost, and follow a line of large oaks. *The white building to your left is part of Rusper Nunnery, so called as it stands on the site of Rusper Priory, a Benedictine establishment dating from the 1200s, dissolved by – you guessed it – Henry VIII.* The footpath leads you down into trees, across a bridge over a stream and up steps ascending a steep bank. A rickety stile takes you into a meadow with a 4-way fingerpost.
- 6 Take the **right** fork, going diagonally across the meadow on a faint path. In the far corner, go through a swing-gate and straight across the meadow to find a marker post and stile on the other side. Veer **left** to cross this bluebell wood, including a stream using a 2-plank bridge with rails. An

avoidable stile and 2-plank bridge takes you into a crop field. Go straight across the field, cross a stile and plank bridge in the hedge. [July 2014: this stile had a notice on it directing you to a metal 5-bar gate (which is secured with rope); it seems the field has been bisected by a new fence so you need to go through the metal gate in the middle of the fence and then veer **left** towards the small wooden gate in the corner mentioned below.] Veer diagonally **left** across the meadow. In the corner, go through a small wooden gate and along the left-hand side of a horse pasture. Another [2014: very overgrown] stile next to a fingerpost takes you onto a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane.

7 In 100m, just before a house, go **right** on a tarmac drive marked as a footpath. At the start of a wire fence on your right, go over a stile into an orchard leading towards a house, *Blackfriars*. Keep to the **left**-hand side, aiming to the right of the house. Here you will find a rather rickety stile. Immediately after this, turn **left** over another stile on a narrow, rather overgrown, path running beside a stream and the garden of the house on your left. *The house has two very friendly dogs who may accompany the visitor all the way back to Kingsfold: you may need to wait for another rambler coming the other way to give the dog a new mission.* A bridge takes you over the wide Boldings Brook and a small woodland redolent of wild garlic leads you into a sandy crop field [2014: caution! trip hazard, a broken wire fence]. Follow the path straight across the field, over a sturdy stile to the railway.

8 Cross the line carefully, going over a similar stile, and continue ahead up the left-hand side of a large field. At the top, by a fingerpost, go over a stile in a band of trees into a small meadow. Keep ahead towards a house and take a path at the end leading to a residential road with modern houses. Just after the first two houses, turn **left** on a side road and immediately **right** on a narrow but rather brambly path leading out to the main road. Turn **left** on the busy main A24 road, crossing carefully back to the Owl where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: The Owl is unmistakable on the A24 main London-Worthing road. If coming from the London area, it is close to the Surrey border, just over 2 miles = 3½ km after the roundabout at the end of the dual carriageway.

By bus/train: Metrobus 93 runs between Horsham and Dorking, stopping at the Owl, including two-hourly on Sundays. Check the timetable.

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