



River Arun and Canal

Distance: 5 km=3 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 6-jul-2020

Author: Sackboot

Last update: 13-jun-2024

Refreshments: picnic, or later in Billingshurst

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

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Green meadows, lake, streams, canal remains, woodland, river path

In Brief

This beguiling little walk became an instant personal favourite when it was first done, and the author vowed to repeat it every year. Judging by the number of people coming in the other direction, this is one of the routes published in a certain book of West Sussex Walks. But the clockwise direction used here gives you a final memorable stroll close to the River Arun.

This walk was originally a pub walk based on the *Limeburners* inn which is now sadly closed. But the closure makes absolutely no difference to this beautiful walk.

*June 2024: this walk is now quite dry, in contrast to earlier in the year when the lake had swelled and flooded the entire area. So this walk could be labelled a *summer walk*. There is a notice by the lake about *algae blooms*, which does not affect this walk.*

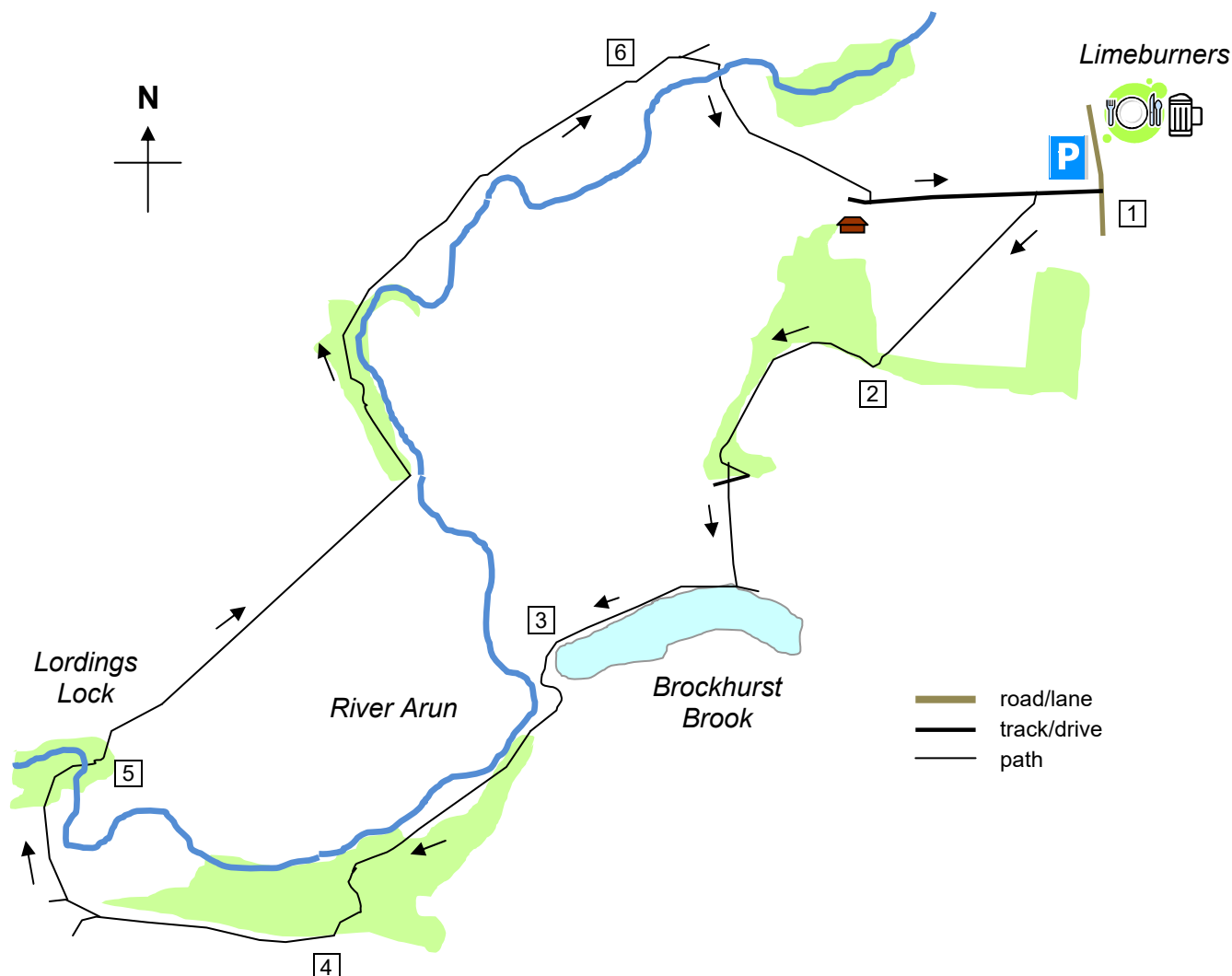
The River Arun meanders a lot in this landscape and there is no “river path” – just a few good stretches where the river makes a visit, revealing its spectacular wild-flower banks, before veering away. The Canal was cut in a previous century but all that remains now is a dry lock and some sections swallowed up in the woods. There are several other surprises on this eventful walk.



There are no nettles on this walk and just one short section through bracken, not enough to rule out shorts. In summer the walk was completely dry but the field at the start is clumpy. In the winter the ground gets much wetter and you *must* consider boots. With no roads and just one high stile (at the end), this walk is excellent for your dog - but keep him out of the lake because the algae can be poisonous.

The walk begins on the road near the remains of the *Limeburners* pub on the outskirts of Billingshurst, West Sussex, postcode **RH14 9JA**, www.w3w.co/rosier.crabmeat.barmaid. Park on the roadside. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk



- 1 Walk along the road for about 50m and turn **right** on a driveway marked as a public footpath. In less than 100m, at a hidden fingerpost, go **left** through a wooden swing-gate. *Don't miss this unexpected turn!* You are immediately faced with three possible paths. Take the middle path, passing a black-on-yellow arrow, through a small wooden gate, into a sloping meadow. Follow the wooden fence on your right and keep straight on where the fence curves away. At the far end of this rather clumpy meadow, go through a small wooden gate, across a band of trees and through a large wooden gate (lift the hook).
- 2 The path immediately turns right and leads you on a long curve between mature hedgerows. *The occasional dragonfly is evidence that you are not far from water.* You come over a small bridge-with-rail across a stream bed. Keep ahead, soon crossing over a second wide wooden bridge. Continue ahead with farm buildings to your left, soon passing a fingerpost, on a

grass path. In 150m, suddenly you reach the bank of the Brockhurst Brook beside a small boathouse, always a startling surprise, even if you know this locality. *The brook has been allowed to swell to fill the narrow valley, making a very scenic lake.* Turn **right** along the lakeside path.

3 At the end of the lake your path bends left over a concrete bridge, taking you through the smaller of two wooden gates into a meadow. Keep **right** in the meadow and continue on a wide grassy path, passing a 2-arm fingerpost and very quickly meeting the River Arun briefly on your right. *The Church of St Peter Ad Vincula in can be seen on your right (see the "Wisborough Green" walk in this series).* After the shade of trees, the green space opens out again. At the far end, go through a spacious wooden swing-gate and continue ahead, past a marker-post and soon up a rising path through bracken. A flight of steps leads into an oak wood where your path continues to climb. After a few more steps you emerge into a long green meadow.

4 Turn **right** along the edge of this pleasant grass space, enjoying the distant views. After 300m, at the end of the meadow, keep **right** on a sandy path and, at a 3-way fingerpost, keep **right** again, passing over a flat bridge. Avoid the wide space on your right and keep straight on without changing direction, soon meeting a thick hedge on your right, beyond which River Arun runs, unseen for the present. At the far end, go through a wooden swing-gate over a long bridge across the Arun. *This exquisite spot is worthy of a pause and a picture to take home or keep in the memory.* At once you are on the banks of the Lordings Lock, now (2022) undergoing renovation and excavation, revealing the lock sides. Here too is part of the Wey-Arun Canal which is now swallowed up by the trees and which you will glimpse occasionally on your left.

The Wey-Arun Canal enabled goods to be shipped directly between London and the coast near Littlehampton (see the "Climping Beach" walk in this series). The heyday was the first half of the 1800s, before the Guildford-Horsham railway line was built. Both rivers were navigable up to a point and the canal was built to join them. There were two sections and you are standing roughly at the join. The first was the Arun Navigation which gave access to Newbridge Wharf, just near here. The second was the Wey and Arun Junction Canal built with the backing of the Earl of Egremont of Petworth House which extended the navigation from here up to Stonebridge Wharf on the River Wey near Guildford. Under competition from the railway, the canal's fortunes declined and it ceased to be of practical use shortly after 1900. You can see more substantial parts of the canal on the "Chiddingfold-Afold" walk and on the "Rudgwick" and "Loxwood" walks, where the canal has been renovated for leisure use.

5 You come over a sluice and past the waterwheel where there is a board with a diagram of the wheel and information about the river path. The path leads over a stile and turns **left** and **right** into a long narrow pasture. Soon you are walking along the left-hand edge of a large pasture. The path goes over a shallow bank by a water trough. **There is evidence of cattle in this large space but the author saw none: they would be very used to people on this popular walk.** At the far end, go over a stile to remake your acquaintance with the River Arun. **This stretch is remarkable for its dense display of every kind of wild flower, on both sides of the river.** The next section is a jungle of oak and ash trees on a twisty path where you have to avoid several leaning branches. You come down and up a few natural steps and over a stile to resume on the left-hand side of a new wide green space where the

river departs, only to meet you again briefly in one of its tight reedy meanders.

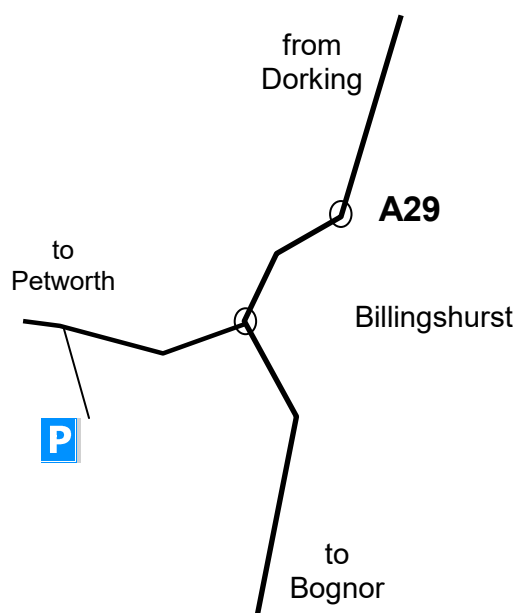
- 6 At the far end of this long pasture, go over a long bridge-with-bars to arrive at a fork. Take the **right** fork, heading for a large wooden gate. Turn **right** here over a wide bridge across the river. Now follow a waymarker arrow straight across the meadow and up a slope. After a wooden swing-gate, go a fraction left up a wide mown path, over the grass hilltop. *On your right is the historic Guildenhurst Manor.* After a small wooden gate, go diagonally across a sheep pasture and over a stile in the hedge. Turn **left** on the driveway, soon arriving back at the road, where the walk began.



In the 1800s, the now closed Limeburners Arms (as it was then called) was a canalside pub where the bargees would drop in before continuing on to the next stretch. After the canal closed, the pub took over one of a row of 17th-century cottages.

Getting there

By car: The start of the walk is just off the A29 trunk road on the outskirts of Billingshurst. If coming from the London or M25 area, take the Billingshurst bypass, by following signs for A29, *Bognor* but, half way round the bypass, at a large roundabout, turn **right** (that is, west) in the direction A272 *Midhurst, Petworth*. In 1 km=0.6 mile, turn sharp **left** at a "Camping" sign.



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