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## Rowhook: *The Chequers Inn* (pub walk)

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Distance: 6½ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 11-jun-2011

Author: Hautboy

Last update: 25-nov-2017

Refreshments: *The Chequers Inn*

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

*Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: [feedback@fancyfreewalks.org](mailto:feedback@fancyfreewalks.org)*

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*Meadows, woodland, views, gastropub*

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### In Brief

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You will always find one or two locals in front of the *Chequers Inn* at Rowhook, near Horsham, in West Sussex supping the two or three ales (Arundel, Doombar etc.), or lounging in the garden just like any other quiet pub. Children and dogs are welcome. But the majority of customers come for the food which is top-notch and has practically taken over the premises, so that you almost fall over diners when going from the small bar to the very attractive garden. Chef and proprietor Tim Neal moved here from nearby South Lodge and hooked up with local farmers to source some of his fresh meat produce. He offers a wood pigeon starter with homemade black pudding and a calves' liver main course, a rare treat nowadays. If you would like to reserve a table at the end of the walk, ring 01403 790480, or call in before you go.

2016-17: part of this walk is **closed** due to an "unsafe" bridge, allegedly undergoing repair. (Please read section [4](#).) Let us know of any developments.

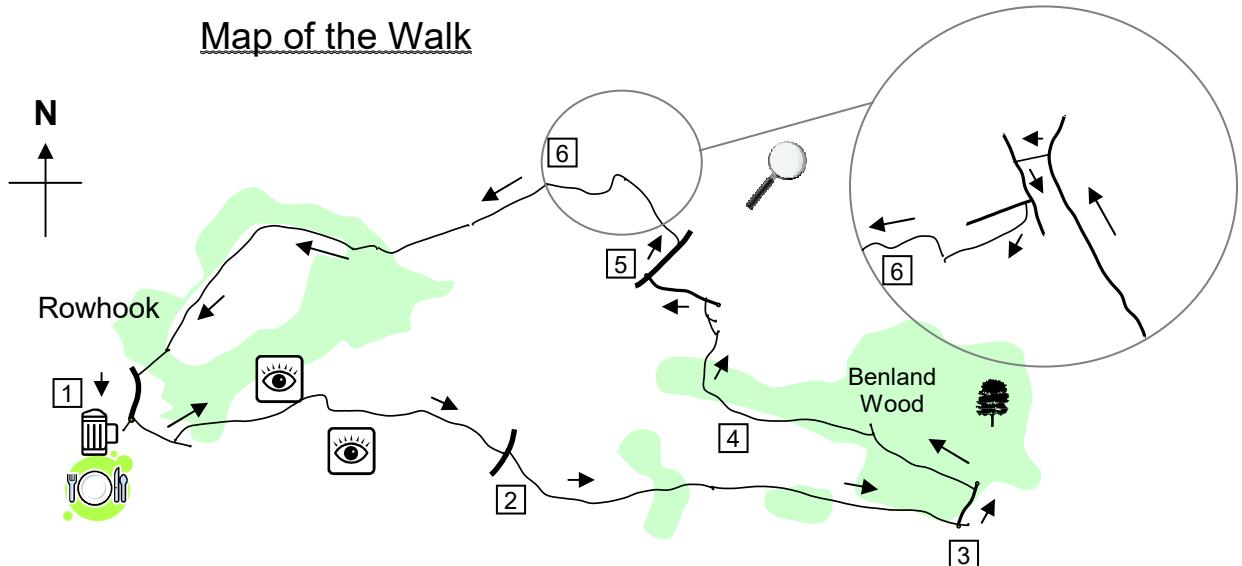
This peaceful walk takes you across grassy meadows with great views (but without climbing), on an unmapped secret path through the woods and through green pastures.



There are no nettles to speak of on this walk. In the drier seasons, any good sensible shoes or trainers should be fine – otherwise boots. There is a 150m stretch on a main road. A large dog will have difficulty with some of the stiles. Dogs will need to be kept on a tight lead through the farm premises and on that main road.

The walk begins at either of the two car parks at the *Chequers Inn* in Rowhook (**postcode RH12 3PY** grid ref TQ123342). You must be a patron (before or after the walk) to use the car park. (Otherwise, park on the road side.) For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

## Map of the Walk



### The Walk

- 1** Turn **right** carefully on the road at Rowhook. In 150m, just after a row of cottages, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a footpath. The path turns right and takes you over a makeshift stile, through a wide belt of trees, under a yellow plastic protection for the wire, under more trees where the path shifts right-left at a fingerpost, continues over the next meadow with fine views to the right, heading for a break in the wire fence at two posts and a low wooden bar. The next obstacle is a makeshift stile in the far left corner. Keep to the left-hand side of the next pasture and over a stile. Keep **left** past the shorter end of a tennis court, through a gap in the hedge by a rose terrace and along the left-hand side of a small green pasture, avoiding a gateway on your left leading to a handsome private garden. Finally, go through a small wooden gate beside a larger one to a main road.
- 2** Cross the main road carefully to a gap beside a metal gate and a footpath on the other side. The path leads you, a fraction right, across the centre of the field. (If the field is muddy or recently ploughed, most walkers go round the right-hand side, eventually reaching the third gap in the mature hedge.) The route next goes fraction left, along the right-hand side of the next field; then across the centre again. The path goes over a metal bridge across a wide calm stream, after which, all around, giant hogweed has sprouted (*prodigiously in summer: don't touch!!*), and along the right-hand side of the next field. Go through a gap into the next field and keep straight ahead on a path that cuts across the centre of the field. At the far end of the field, ignore a footpath sharp left. Continue through a gap and along the right-hand side of the next field with woodland on your right. Where the farm track turns right, keep straight ahead to another (leaning) stile. (This stile is still unsafe (2016) and the fence is down (2017). Walkers have stepped over the wire fence on the right. It is best to zigzag right-left 20m before the stile, bypassing it completely.) Go along the left-hand side of the next field, with fine views right. At the next corner, go over a stile, down steps (or, avoiding the stile, down a slope) into woods.

- 3 Turn **left** by a 4-way fingerpost on a wide path through Benland Wood. Typical of the walks in this series, you now follow some unmapped paths through terrain that you would not normally see on a published walk. In just over 100m, turn **left** on a clear straight but unmarked path. This is the first clear path on the left. Eventually the path [Apr 2015: goes round a fallen conifer,] passes the remains of a wire fence and a small path on the left and curves right. Just 30m after the fence, before the path curves right again, turn **left** on a narrow woodland path. The path runs near a field, visible on your left, with a steep wooded slope down on your right [2014: over or under a fallen tree trunk]. The path finally emerges through a broken metal gate into the corner of a field. Veer **right** along the right-hand side of the field.
- 4 Mar 2015-Aug 2017: This entire section of the walk is now **closed** and is retained as a **historical record only**. Walkers must either backtrack or use the OS map to make a diversion. The council has posted up a footpath closure notice for the narrow iron bridge, which has become "unsafe". The period of closure is "six months" (June 2016: now well exceeded). (2017: the Council has put up a notice asking for anyone who can supply contact information for the owner of the woodland, to contact them, so they can gain access to do the repair.) It's clear why it had to close: the wooden battens which support the sleepers are rotten and the first three sleepers are loose and sag alarmingly. But the strong tubular steel structure is anchored well at both ends. If the arch beneath the bridge is unsafe, the bridge should not be compromised as it is buttressed by a large tree! In the far corner of the field, go over a two-plank bridge and along the right-hand side of the next field. About 20m from the end, the footpath takes you **right** through a V-stile into another part of Benland Wood, especially rich in orchids. Keep straight ahead, ignoring a path branching left to reach a narrow iron bridge. (The original author avoided the closed bridge by simply hopping over the stream below. However, we have been asked to remind walkers of the *Principles* page on our website regarding respect for private land.) Go over a stile, across some grass and through a modern kissing gate. The footpath now crosses a donkey pasture by a paddock in Westbrook Lea Farm, noted for its colourful displays of bric-à-brac and its gypsy caravan, and through a metal gate. Go immediately **left** through another metal gate and a little donkey grazing area. Keep **right** by the sheds, go through a modern kissing gate, down a drive, through a large metal (possibly open) gate, **left** on another drive, then **left** again on the main drive. The big white house on the left is *Westbrook Hall*. Go over an industrial-strength Bailey bridge that crosses Betchett's Gill. *This and other Bailey bridges were installed by the army in WW2*. Soon after, you reach the main A29 Bognor Road.
- 5 Turn **right** on the main road for just under 150m and **left** onto a drive at signs for *Charmans* and *Oakleigh House*. At a white gate for *Charmans*, continue ahead and pass the mock Tudor *Old Charmans* on your right. Where the drive turns right, go over a partly hidden stile in the left-hand corner and turn sharp **left** on a track in the farm. In 25m, you come to a track on the right by a large barn. Do not turn right on the track but go through a metal gate on the other side of the track. Go up a bank and turn **right** so that you are walking parallel to, and above, the track. Go over a stile in the fence, at a fingerpost, into a large meadow. Keep straight ahead.
- 6 Your destination is a stile in the boundary fence. The stile cannot be seen until you traverse the crest of the hill and may be difficult to spot. It is 20m to the left of a metal gate. Go over the stile into the woodland of White's

Copse, over a wooden bar, turn **left** up a bank to a fingerpost and through a large metal gate into a large meadow. Keep **right** along the edge. After a while, the path curves **left** with the edge of the meadow and, after some further distance, leads you over a stile by a metal gate, along a track, then a drive, and finally out to a road. Turn **left** on the road, using the smooth mown grass verge, and shortly reach the *Chequers Inn* where the walk began.

## Getting there

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By car: if coming from the London area, take the A29 through Dorking and Ockley: Rowhook is signposted from the A29. From Guildford, take the A281: Rowhook is just north of the junction with the A29. From Horsham or the A24, take the A281 Guildford Road and turn right for 300m (350 yds) on the A29.

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