



Rudgwick, the Canal and a Watermill

Distance: 21 km=13 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 14-sep-2011

Author: Hautboy, Moussehaine

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Refreshments: Rudgwick, Alfold Bars, Loxwood

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

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

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Canal, villages, watermill, woodland, hilly meadows

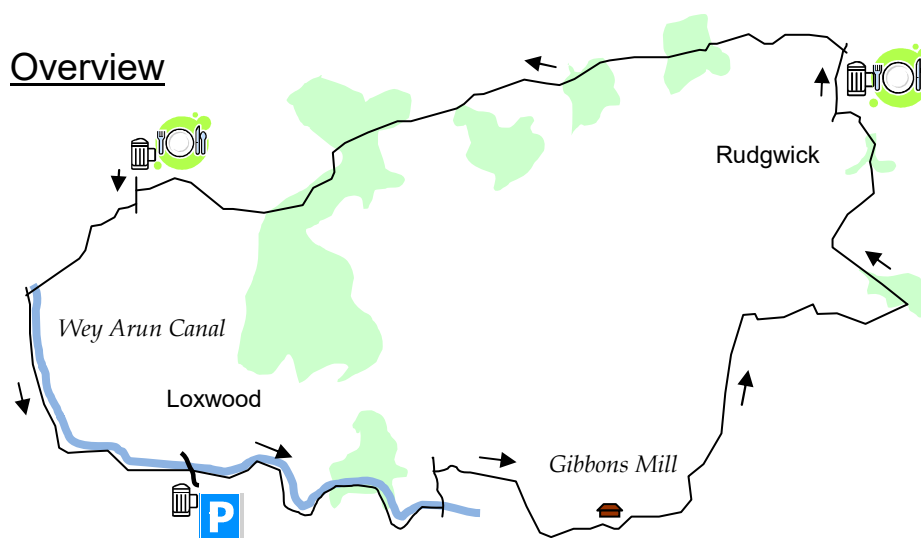
In Brief

This is a stimulating circular walk in Sussex on the border with Surrey, with long easy stretches along the Wey-Arun canal and a few shorter sections of woodland and grassy meadows.



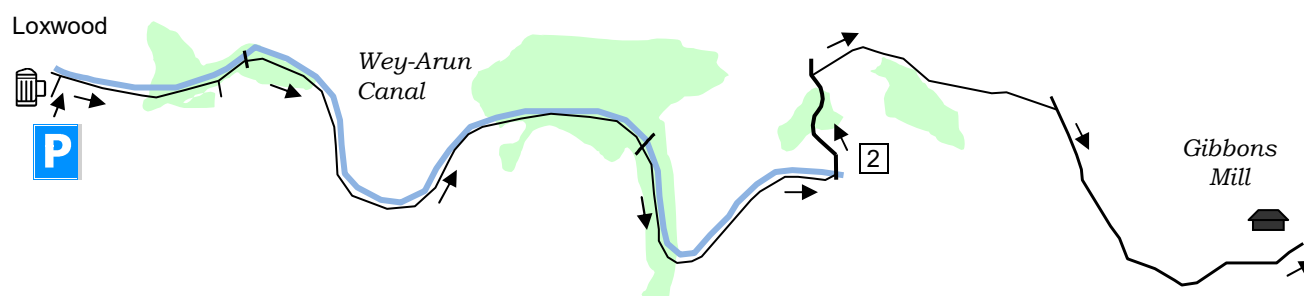
There are a few sections with nettles and, especially in high summer, one or two patches with dense undergrowth, plus one or two tricky stiles. So covered legs and good ankle boots are usually necessary. The walk seems fine with a dog.

The walk begins at the **Onslow Arms, Loxwood, West Sussex (postcode RH14 0RD, grid ref TQ041312)**. Park in the **rear** car park. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Loxwood to Gibbons Mill 4½ km=2¾ miles

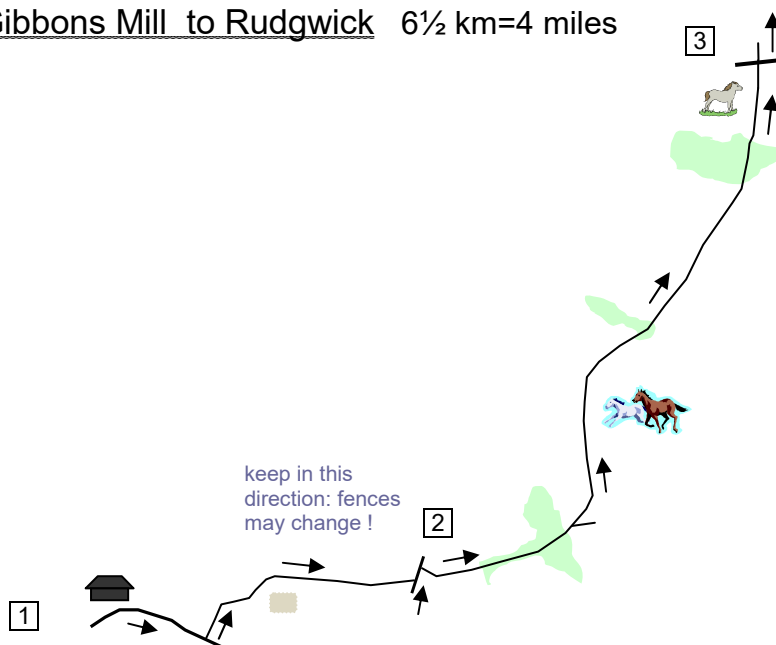


- [1] From beside the pub, go past the car park along the wide canal path, part of the Wey-South path which runs from Guildford to Amberley. (For a shorter walk at this location, see the *Loxwood Pub Walk* in this series.) *In the 1800s this canal made it possible to travel by boat from London to Littlehampton on the south coast. Much of it has now been restored by The Wey & Arun Canal Trust and you may notice boat trippers on this large navigable section.* In a short while you pass Brewhurst Lock. In 1997 this lock was restored to its original size, a huge undertaking. *This is a most unusual lock in that the large “lower” gates are much higher than the small “upper” gates. This is because the section of the canal you were just walking on had to be lowered to run under the main road.* Continue along the canal and cross a drive near a smart brick humpback bridge. (As a quick diversion, the ancient Brewhurst Mill and hamlet can be reached on the right.) Continue on the other side through a wooden gate. The original River Lox (a tributary of the Arun) winds its serpentine way on your right as the path runs under tall ash trees and you pass a milestone, one of several giving you the distances between the two rivers. Next is Baldwin’s Knob Lock, the first to be restored. After tall poplars on your right you pass another brick bridge opposite a metal bridge: keep straight on through more tall poplars. The canal bends sharp left while the river curves away to the right. You pass Drungewick Winding Hole (a widened section for turning boats) and Slipway, followed by a removable heavy vehicle crossing, after which the canal continues along the Drungewick Aqueduct. Here, leave the canalside, up through a wooden gate to a lane. Turn **left** on Drungewick Lane, thus leaving the Wey-South path.
- [2] In 150m, at a bend, pass an entrance to *Hedgecocks* and continue uphill. 100m further, on coming out into the open at the top of the rise, ignore the first driveway on the right but turn **right** immediately on a second, parallel, driveway, beside a meadow on your left. At the end of the drive, keep straight ahead on an enclosed path to the left of a gate. Your path goes through a small metal gate into a meadow. Go diagonally across the meadow, cutting the right-hand corner. At the other side, go through a metal swing-gate and along an enclosed path. At the end, go over a stile and turn **right** on a tarmac drive. The drive curves right and passes some converted barns. On the right, a steep valley shields the River Arun. Stay on the track, avoiding a gate that forks right. The track becomes a path, bends left and crosses the River Lox by a concrete bridge. Soon after, the lovely Gibbons Mill comes into view on your left.

There is a footpath which goes close to the Mill, although it is not on your route. To spare the owners' privacy, perhaps this is not a good idea for larger groups and sightseeing should be discreet. Look for a fingerpost and turn left just before it along a grassy path, staying quite close to the river and mill house. On the other side, you reach a bridge and weir. You need to retrace your steps to rejoin the walk.



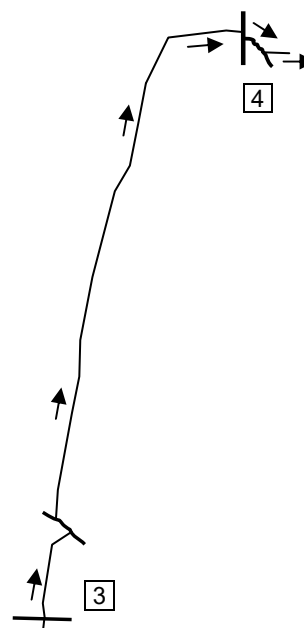
Leg 2: Gibbons Mill to Rudgwick 6½ km=4 miles



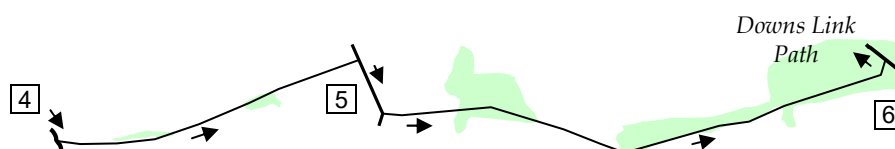
- 1 Continue on the gravel and concrete drive, ignoring a footpath on your right. After some more houses, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a track. In 40m, turn **right** through a wooden swing-gate and go along the left-hand side of a meadow. In 50m you reach a stile ahead. The official footpath turns right before the stile. However, at the time of writing it is best to go over the crumbling stile and **then** immediately turn **right**. Your route is across the pasture, to the left of a raised area, to a track on the other side, about 100m to the left of the farm buildings. The fences and the livestock are often moved around and you may need to improvise to avoid the livestock, which is always possible (the farmer has promised). You will need to duck under, or hop over, one or two temporary string fences if there are no handles. As you approach the track on the other side, you will find a removable hook-and-handle in the fence about 20m to the right of a junction of paths. Turn **left** on the track to the junction, then **right** through another fence with a hook-and-handle onto a sandy track.
- 2 The track takes you through a belt of trees, into a meadow with a house and farmstead *Garlands* visible ahead. Veer **left** to a stile in the hedge and go over two stiles here (possibly unhooking a rope) into a horse pasture. Cross it along the right-hand side, go through a large wooden gate and across another small meadow. In the corner, at indicated by a fingerpost, go **right** through a swing-gate (possibly after unhooking a rope), **left** over a stile and along the right-hand side of a meadow. In the next corner, go over a stile, over a stream via a bridge in a belt of trees, through a large metal gate and along the right-hand side of a pasture usually grazed by alpacas. The path goes next through a large metal gate and across a wider belt of

woodland where there is a bridge over a stream. Another wooden gate takes you into a wide strip of grass between pastures used by horses and alpacas. This strip of grass is used as grazing for shetland ponies. A wooden gate on the other side, followed by a stile, takes you to a tarmac drive.

- 3 Cross straight over the tarmac drive, over a stile ahead and along the left-hand side of a pasture. On the other side, cross a stile which is 40m to the right of the corner. Turn **left** on a track and, in 30m, go **right** over a stile of unusual design at a fingerpost. Continue along the left-hand side of the meadow where you may see more small breeds of horse. At the other end, go over a 2-plank bridge and continue along the left-hand edge. On the far side, 20m from the corner, go over another stile and 2-plank bridge. Cross a drive to a farm by stiles on each side and keep straight on. (In case the stiles are getting wearisome, it is possible to use two metal gates in the fences not far from the stiles.) As you cross the next meadow, go over another stile and reach a line of young poplars forming the field boundary. Do *not* go over the stile ahead (thankfully!) but turn **right**, staying in the meadow. Go through a swing-gate and, via a drive, out to a main road near a junction with houses.



- 4 Cross straight over the road and go along a residential road, Naldretts Lane, on the other side. In 40m, at a fingerpost, turn **left** on a track. Go over a low stile beside a metal gate onto a narrow enclosed path, past a redundant stile and onwards. Where the path ends, continue straight ahead through a gap ignoring a now-redundant pair of stiles. Cross the centre of the meadow and, via another stile, reach a T-junction with a narrow path between hedges. Turn **right** on this path.



- 5 In 100m, leave the path by turning **left** over a stile [2015:now gone?] onto a footpath that runs between hedges, over a stile, a 2-plank bridge and swing-gate combination, then between woodland on your left and another pasture on your right. Go through a gap in the hawthorns and straight ahead over a two-plank bridge with a handrail and a metal gate at each side. Go straight ahead to the corner of a hawthorn wood. Continue ahead uphill with the wood on your left and a pasture on your right. In the next corner, after a stile, the official footpath zigzags right, over another stile. (The "short cut" straight on through the wood is private.) At the other side, after going up a bank, you find yourself on a wide raised path. Turn **left** on

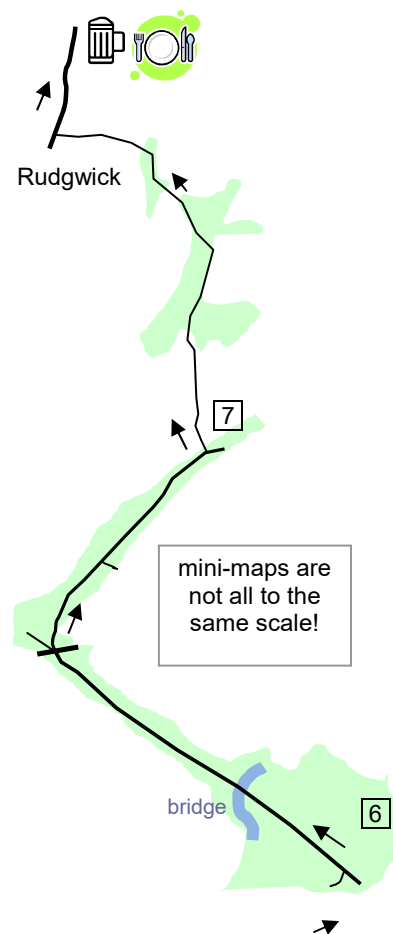
this beautiful straight tree-lined highway, the Downs Link Path (DLP), the route of a dismantled railway. *The railway was built in 1861 from Christ's Hospital to Shoreham and closed in 1963 after the Beeching report.*

6 Your path runs high above the surrounding land and soon crosses an iron bridge over the River Arun. *It is pleasant to pause here and look down on the wide river far below. In fact this bridge is a double bridge, the iron girder bridge having been built on top of the brick one to reduce the gradient.* Finally you come out through a metal gate to the main road, the A281. Cross the road carefully to a signpost on the other side. Take the **right** fork, a bridleway, thus leaving the DLP. In nearly 400m, the bridleway joins a cinder track coming from Swains Farm and passes a white sign for Gravatts Farm. In 100m, you reach a fingerpost at a junction with a track to a farm straight ahead, a bridleway forking right and a footpath on the left. Take the footpath on the **left**.

7 Your path runs along the right-hand side of a meadow with great views left to the South Downs. Just after a redundant stile, there is a stone memorial bench thoughtfully placed for you to admire the view. On the other side, go through a metal gate on the right (or over a stile), on a broad path through a wide belt of woodland, through another metal gate and along the left-hand side of a small meadow. Stay close to the beech trees on the **left** to go over a stile. After the stile, keep **left** over a 2-plank bridge. Keep **right** up a bank and turn **right** on an enclosed path. Your path bears right at a fingerpost and then left at another. It now runs beside a drive and comes out to the main road in Rudgwick. Turn **right** along the grass verge. You pass, on the left, the 1600-vintage *Eames House* and soon reach the church and the *Kings Head* pub.



mini-maps are not all to the same scale!



The name "Rudgwick", originally "Regwick", means "farm on the ridge". The parish has no less than 90 timber-framed buildings, several dating from the 1300s (e.g. Snoxalls, Hoglands and Swains Cottage). Rather surprisingly, this is a measure of the poverty of the parish. Rudgwick has no great manor, was largely overlooked by royal patronage (it does not appear in the Domesday Book) and lived grimly from pig droving. The inhabitants simply lacked the money to rebuild. Rudgwick became more prosperous in the 1700s and with the wealth came many new trades, especially tailoring. The railway, built in 1865 and closed 100 years later, brought new possibilities to the village by removing the forced isolation caused by the winter mud. The church was built around 1260, named after the fair held on the day of Holy Trinity.

About 100 million 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, some bones were dug up of a unique dinosaur subsequently named "Polacanthus Rudgwickensis" (meaning "many-spiked from Rudgwick").

The "Kings Head" is itself a Grade 2 listed building from the 1200s, formally a coaching inn. It specialises in "Italian and Continental Cuisine" and is a good place for a drink and a satisfactory meal, including pizza from its own pizza oven. The "King" in the pubsign appears to be Charles II, the merry monarch. The pub is open all day except Tuesday pm. For booking or info, ring 01403-822200.



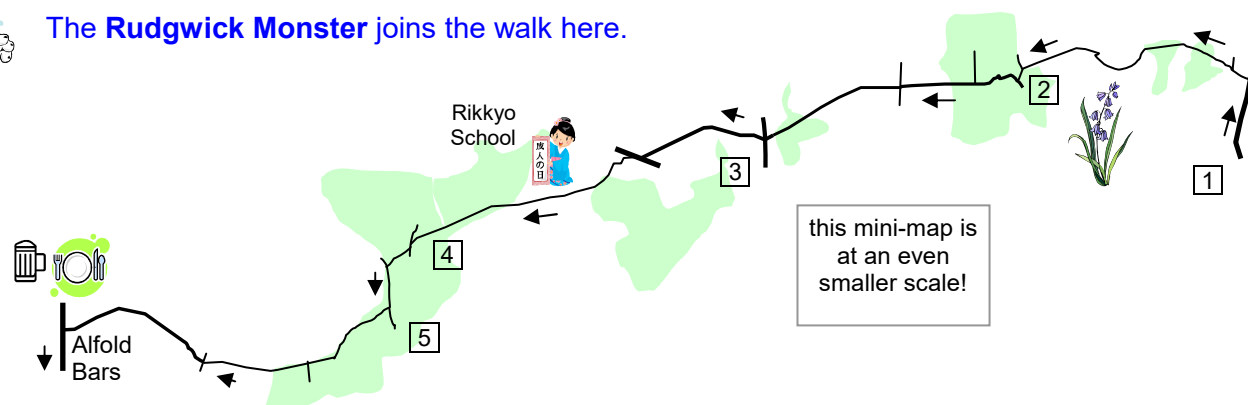
The **Rudgwick Monster** turns **right** into the church now, thus leaving this text.

Leg 3: Rudgwick to Alfold Bars 6½ km=4 miles

- 1 Continue along the main road soon passing a welcome sign for Cox Green. Only 20m after this, go **left** at a rather hidden fingerpost, just before a house called *Delmore*, onto a narrow footpath. Avoid a stile on the right, staying on the enclosed footpath. Soon after, ignore another stile on the right and go **left** through a small wooden gate. Cross a beautiful little meadow diagonally to another small wooden gate. Note that you are on part of the Sussex Border Path (SBP). Follow the path through a long stretch of woodland, beside a fence and over a stile into a meadow. The path runs along the left-hand side of the meadow and curves right at the edge, now with good views of the North Downs ahead. Go over a stile into another meadow, then straight ahead on a path, a fraction left and slightly downhill, aiming for the jutting corner of some woodland. In the corner, enter the woods by an unneeded stile at a junction. Ignore a footpath right, pass a redundant stile and a fingerpost, and veer **right** uphill, still on the SBP. (You have also rejoined the Downs Link Path which is the path on the left at the junction.) In 100m, ignore a track on the right, thus taking your final leave of the DLP but staying on the SBP.



The Rudgwick Monster joins the walk here.



- 2 The Sussex Border Path takes you out of the woodland, over a stile and into a meadow with great views south and ahead to Blackdown. Go over another stile (or lift a hook in the fence) and continue in the same direction. Another stile takes you to a concrete track. Cross straight over the track, thereby avoiding a footpath left, and go through a tall gate ahead. On the other side of the field, go through another tall metal swing-gate ahead, avoiding a farmer's path to your right. *The great timbered house on your right is "Inholms"*. Continue beside a metal fence on your left, beyond which is an occasional deer farm, down over a 2-plank bridge and up again. Go through another tall wooden swing-gate and over a 2-plank bridge to a lane.
- 3 Cross straight over the lane (Cooks Hill) to continue along a lane ahead, Hillhouse Lane. You are *just* in Surrey, but the houses on your left are in West Sussex. When you reach the main road, the A281, turn **right** for just 30m, cross it carefully and turn **left** on a signed bridleway by a wooden house that seems to have been transplanted from the US, going immediately **right** through a small wooden gate. Turn **left** as indicated by the fingerpost and follow a pleasant grassy path by young birches and rowans soon with a sports pitch on your right. Ignore a footpath on your left, go through a large wooden gate and continue ahead on grass under horse-chestnuts with a hedge on your left. *This part of the walk is also described by a pubwalk in this series (the "Mucky Duck")*. The school is the Rikkyo School, a co-educational school for Japanese children from 10 to 18 years. As well as

GCSE courses, they also follow the Japanese curriculum and learn in both languages. *Ganbatte!!* You now have school buildings on both sides. Finally, you go through a wooden gate into woodland.

- 4 In 500m, you reach a junction with a gravel forester's track at a curve. Jiggling left and right to continue in the same direction, go straight on along a gravel track for about 150m, until a pond comes into sight. Turn **left** just before the pond onto a new path surface with the pond on your right. In 100m, immediately after going between wooden and steel posts in a wire fence, take the **right** fork, so that very soon you have a meadow in view on your right.
- 5 After a while, ignore a footpath on your left and soon pass a small house and barn, continuing through a wooden gate on a drive ahead. At a 4-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead on a very quiet quality tarmac drive. (Some walkers turned left here, using the map, directly back to Loxwood, missing the pub and the canal.) Soon the drive becomes a lane, passes *Little Sheaves* and other houses and reaches the main B2133 road at Alfold Bars. Cross the road to the *Sir Roger Tichborne* inn opposite.

The "Sir Roger Tichborne" is a recently (2009) renovated pub named after a notorious and tragic case of the mid-1800s. Sir Roger was born in 1829 into a prominent catholic family but lived in Paris with his French mother until the age of 15. He returned to England and joined the Dragoon Guards but felt ostracised because of his French accent and so sought a new life in South America. In 1854, he was inexplicably lost at sea. His mother advertised world-wide hoping to find news of him. In 1865 a butcher from Wagga Wagga in Australia named Arthur Orton claimed to be her long-lost son, probably with an eye on the (considerable) family fortune. The distraught mother did not seem worried that Orton could not speak French, was overweight, had the wrong hair colour and was not accepted by other members of the family. Orton was finally tried and imprisoned for perjury.

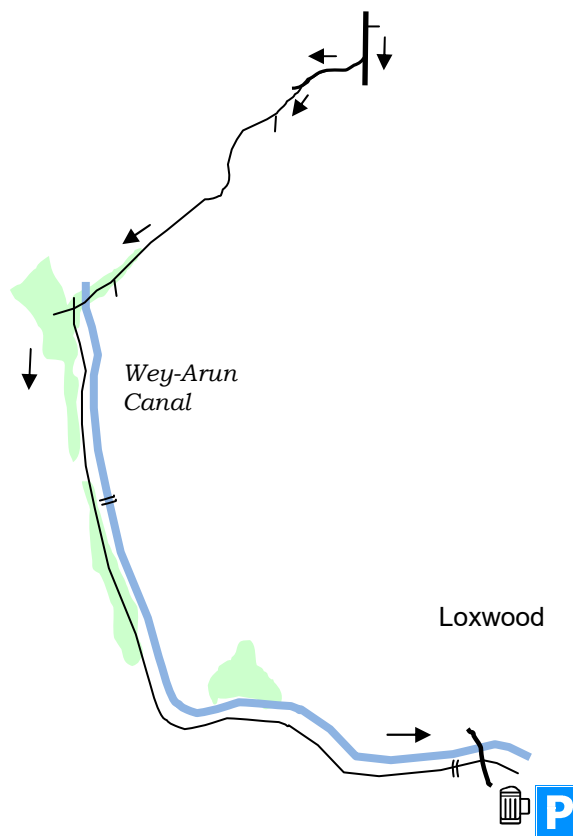
The pub is open all day every day and is a useful watering hole, with Youngs and four local ales. In fact, the sign over the door says "Ales". There is a fine new dining terrace and a good lunchtime menu; a list of fare on the blackboard suggests that not all dishes are pre-cooked. If you arrive between lunch and the evening service, you may still be lucky as they now proclaim food all day.

Leg 4: Alfold Bars to Loxwood 3½ km=2 miles

- 1 **See map overleaf.** Turn **left** on the main road and, in 100m, turn **right** on the tarmac of Oakhurst Lane, still the SBP, and follow this quiet lane for about 400m. *Alfold church is visible behind on your right.* A footpath joins from the right. As the lane bends left before a house visible ahead (part of Oakhurst Farm), at a fingerpost, leave the lane by going **left** through a wooden gate beside a larger metal gate. Keep ahead along a cinder track. At a fingerpost, avoid a grassy footpath on your left and turn **right** to stay on the cinder track. Keep ahead on this wide enclosed path with a hedge on your right. Soon after, in a wood, you reach a signed 4-way junction. Keep straight ahead on a pleasant wide path running within a strip of woodland. After a short distance under tall oaks, part of Gennets Furze, ignore a footpath left and, soon after, cross the old canal, now partly dry and overgrown, at a spot known as Barberry Bridge. Immediately, at another 4-way fingerpost, turn **left** on a bridleway alongside the old canal, thus leaving the SBP and incidentally rejoining the Wey-South path.

The canal and its locks were built around 1813 and dismantled in 1871. Southland Lock is being restored (summer 2011). When the locks are water-tight, and the section between Southlands and Devil's Hole fully dredged, the canal will once more carry water traffic. You will notice how the old canal basin has become a haven for wildlife. Consequently, the canal restoration has not been universally welcomed, especially by local farmers.

- 2 Your route is now beside the old canal all the way to the *Onslow Arms*. Soon the path goes through a metal gate, then a small wooden gate. Ignore a bridleway right and continue by a fence. Soon you pass Southlands Lock. The path gradually bends left and, as you go, you will see increasing signs of canal restoration. A footpath joins from the right. The next lock is Devil's Hole and its bridge. You pass another footpath on the left and soon reach Loxwood Lock, just before the road bridge. Fork **left** to go under the road to reach the *Onslow Arms*.



Perfectly situated next to the canal, the "*Onslow Arms*" offers *Badger* (plus one or two guest) ales and a pleasant seating area. Food is more than adequate and sometimes imaginative. They also do cream teas. The new *Wey & Arun Canal Information Centre* is being constructed just beyond the pub to tempt you perhaps to come again for a canal cruise.

Getting there

By car: the *Onslow Arms* is just south of Loxwood on the B2133. If coming from the London area, one route is the A281 from Guildford and fork right at Alfold Crossways. Another route is via Dorking and the A29 / A281, forking left at Bucks Green onto the Loxwood Road.

By bus/train: route 63 or 64 from Horsham, not Sunday. Check the timetables.

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