



Warnham, Slinfold, Rowhook *A Triangle of Villages*

Distance: 13½ km=8½ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 11-jun-2011

Author: Hautboy

Date revised: 29-jul-2014

Refreshments: each village

Last update: 27-apr-2023

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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Villages, woodland, views, pubs with food, green meadows

In Brief

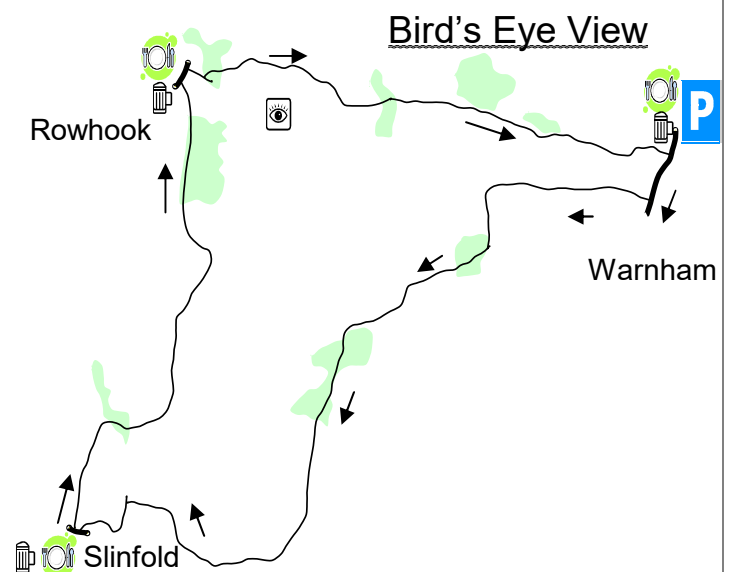
This walk is a magnificent gentle walk through the Sussex countryside, proving that you do not need to climb high to have wonderful views in all directions. The walk visits three very different villages with good opportunities for refreshment. Everywhere there are unexpected twists and turns with something new round each corner. If you would like to make a reservation at the *Chequers* gastropub in Rowhook, ring 01403-790480.



There are no nettles to speak of. Good sensible shoes or trainers should be fine in a dry season but in some weeks the fields may be ploughed up and some will be muddy, making boots advisable. This is not an obvious walk for a dog, but there is no good reason not to bring him, but expect to have him on the lead most of the time.

The walk begins in the centre of **Warnham village** (postcode **RH12 3QN**), where there is plenty of roadside parking opposite the Green or next to the church. There is also a designated parking area near the village hall, postcode **RH12 3RH**, www.w3w.co/fattening.just.melts, in Hollands Way. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

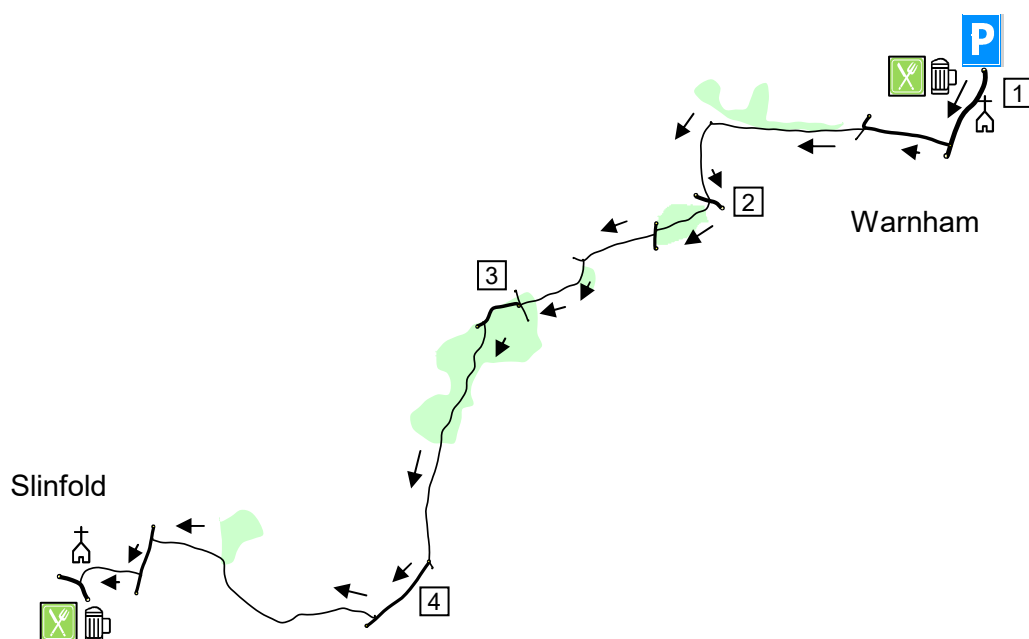
Note: in 2015-18 you may see some path closure notices near the start and along the way. But they are now out-of-date and affect *only side paths* which are **not used on this walk**. There are **no path closures** affecting this walk.



The Walk

The name "Warnham" probably means "Werna's Place", after an Anglo-Saxon chief, although it was probably just an isolated forest settlement of iron smelters and swineherds since it is not listed in the Domesday Book. About 200 years after the Normans came, Warnham finally grew to manorial size under William de Say in the time of Henry III (1216-72), and the 15th-century Old Manor House still stands. The church of St Margaret dates at least from the 1100s and was rebuilt in the 1300s. It has a high wooden vaulted roof, recently restored, some fine Victorian stained glass, especially in the west window, and hanging candle pendants. The Tithe Stone in the churchyard is presumably where tithes – a tenth of the harvest etc. – were deposited. Warnham Court and Warnham Park, the other important places in the parish, came much later: mid-1800s. The most famous son of Warnham was the poet Shelley whose family owned nearby Field Place. Today, the village is still a close community with its two pubs and village stores with a butcher and baker.


Leg 1: Warnham to Slinfold 6 km=4 miles



- 1 Go south along the main road through Warnham, going past the *Sussex Oak* on your right and the church on your left. Continue past some attractive houses until you reach a mini-roundabout. Turn **right** onto Friday Street, signposted *Clemsfold*. This residential road passes several cottages with fragrant names and the *Greets Inn*. The "*Greets Inn*" is a lively pub claiming continuity from the 1200s, at least as good as the "*Sussex Oak*". The original landlady had twelve children and sold beer at a penny a pint. It is rumoured to have a ghost who sits in the fireplace. At a T-junction, bear **left** on Byfleets Lane. In 30m, turn **right** on a rather hidden footpath by a fence and, at a fingerpost, cross a drive and take the tarmac drive ahead. In just 20m, just before the sign for *Warnham Manor only*, fork **left** on a grassy path which runs parallel to the drive. As you go, ignore all side footpaths, on the left or right, until you reach the gates of the Manor. Keep straight ahead beside the gates, avoiding a bridleway right and pass the Manor entrance on your right. At the end of the fence, turn **left** on a bridleway and go straight ahead at a 4-way fingerpost with a high bank and field on your left. Continue through a wood of tall horsechestnuts and oaks until, in 300m, you join a drive and reach a lane.

2 Cross the lane, a fraction right, to a bridleway opposite. The path goes over a drive and continues through Rowland Wood where rhododendrons abound. At a T-junction, turn **left** and in 10m **right** again on a path which, 700m later, curves past a pond on the left. Keep **left** over an avoidable stile near the large gym building belonging to Farlington School, an independent girls' day and boarding school. Veer **left** to a markerpost by the corner of a wire fence and veer **right**, going past the original school building on your right. *You must have noticed that you are walking part of the West Sussex Literary Trail. This is a 55 mile route from Horsham to Chichester along which you meet Shelley, Galsworthy, Belloc, Blake and Keats.* The path narrows a little and goes through woodland to a main road, the A281.

3 Carefully cross the main road to a tarmac bridleway opposite, marked as Nowhurst Lane. Follow the lane as it bends left. Opposite a house, at a fingerpost, turn **left** on a track. After 350m, ignore a footpath on the left to pass on your right a children's farm with a pond. Ignore footpaths left and right and go through a wooden gate alongside a meadow on your right.

 The fence ends at another wooden gate and suddenly you are in a large meadow with extensive views ahead. Continue through two large (possibly open) wooden gates and over a stream. Here, ignore a footpath left and follow the grassy path as it curves right and joins a concrete track. Go through a gate by a cattle grid into Theale Farm.

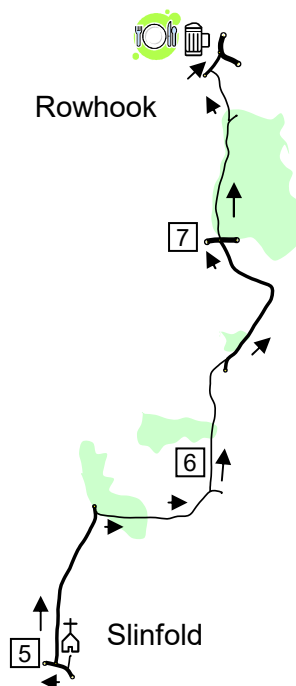
4 Keep straight ahead on the track and go through a metal gate. Ignore a turning right which is private. In around 100m ignore a fingerposted footpath left. Later you arrive at a second fingerpost on a high bank (sometimes hidden in vegetation) by a 3-way junction. Take the **right** fork. In 20m, keep to the **left** beside a field, avoiding a private drive into a house. Keep ahead along the right-hand edge of the field, then through trees and over two stone slab bridges. The footpath now takes you to the right along the right-hand side of a wild meadow. Go **left** in the corner by a fingerpost on a path between fields. In 300m or so, on reaching a tarmac drive, turn **left**. Soon, you reach some white brick buildings used as small industrial plots. Turn **right** before the buildings (2023 - with new houses under construction), on an excellent new path, through a small wooden gate, along the right-hand side of a meadow and on a pavement past a cemetery. Fork **left** to go past the church at Slinfold and out to the road near the *Red Lyon*.



Slinfold is a smaller parish with one shop (closed Sundays and pm Saturdays), a church and one pub. The church of St Peter was completely rebuilt in the mid-1800s. Then around 1900 it lost its steeple. In the porch there is a reminder of the older church: a stone effigy of an unknown reclining lady and high up a wooden effigy of a woman at prayer. The "Red Lyon" pub (with a "y") is not a gastropub but it puts an emphasis on food and all the comments are very good: a worthy place to stop for a meal or a pint; there is also a good-sized garden.

Leg 2: Slinfold to Rowhook 3½ km=2 miles

- 5 Turn **right** on the road in Slinfold and **right** again on Clapgate Lane with the church on your immediate right. Keep ahead at a fingerpost and avoid a footpath left just after a white house. The tarmac drive passes *Hill House*, the most prominent residence in Slinfold. At the next fingerpost, go **right**. You have a steep valley on your left as the path goes gently downhill through woodland on a wide smooth path. The path now runs along the left-hand side of a large wild meadow, perfect for nesting larks, beside a stream on your left. Keep straight ahead, avoiding a path uphill on the right. The path goes over a bridge across a stream. Immediately after this, fork **left** on a path that follows a line of trees between two meadows.



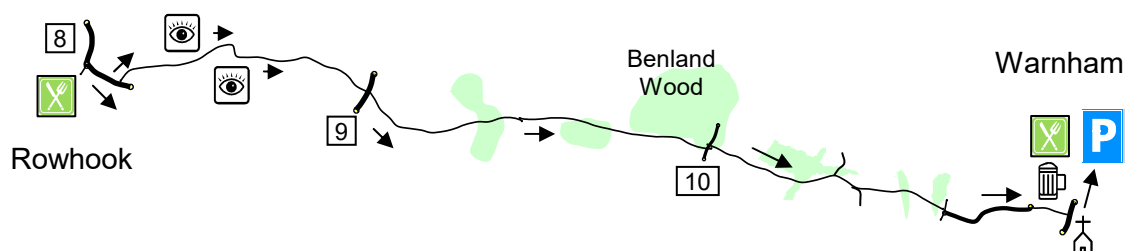
- 6 The path goes over a wide bridge across the North River, through a belt of tall poplars and along the right-hand side of a large meadow with a very spaced-out line of trees on your right (**revealing a stunning display of blue-bells if you come in late spring**). Keep straight ahead with the garden of *Townhouse Farmhouse* on your right. Turn **right** at the corner and **left** at the next corner near the house. In 30m, turn **right** on a track and **left** on a drive coming from the farmhouse. The drive winds its way past a dark pond, bends left and eventually reaches the A29 main road.

- 7 Cross carefully to a footpath opposite which winds through woodland and then runs straight, gently uphill, briefly admits the light in a gap in the trees and then runs up through more forest, near a fence on your left. You eventually pass through a tall metal gate as you continue uphill. At the top, by a fingerpost, ignore a footbridge on your right and continue through another tall metal gate with a house on your left. Follow the clear path across the centre of a meadow. *Behind you to the left, beyond the house, is a wonderful view of the South Downs, showing the Chanctonbury Ring (see that walk in this series)*. On the other side, follow a narrow enclosed path down steps to a lane. Turn **right** on the lane, to a road by the *Chequers Inn* in Rowhook.



Rowhook consists of a gastropub, a Roman road, a cluster of houses and little else. The Roman road is Stane Street, the same as runs through Ockley and Bignor Hill (see the other walks in this series). The Chequers Inn offers one or two local ales plus Doombar. 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.

Leg 3: Rowhook to Warnham 4 km=2½ miles



- 8** Turn **right** carefully on the road at Rowhook. In 150m, just after a row of cottages, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a footpath and immediately go through a small gate ahead. Follow the path downhill. In about 30m it turns right and takes you over a makeshift stile, through a wide belt of trees, over another broken stile and then on a path just to the right of a beautiful flowery sloping meadow where you have fine views ahead. Go through a wire fence, by lifting the handle, and straight ahead under trees. Shortly, the path shifts right-left into another meadow where you have more views, this time on the right. Take a well-worn path across the meadow, roughly 30m from the left-hand edge. (If the path is not visible, simply keep to the left-hand side of the meadow and turn right in the corner for 30m.) Cross into the next meadow, staying the same distance from the left-hand edge, going over a wire fence with a hook and through a gap into the next meadow. 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 the smaller of two wooden gates to the main A29 road.
- 9** 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. [2017: this field is occasionally ploughed over; if this is the case, turn **right** and follow the field edge, turning **left** and **left** again still in same field, and then go through a gap on the right into the next field to re-join the route.] It then veers a 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. Follow the farm track as it turns right into the next field and go along the **left**-hand side of this field, with fine views right. At the next corner, go over a stile, down steps into woods.
- 10** Turn **left** on a wide path and immediately **right**, then along the left-hand side of a field. At a fingerpost, ignore a footpath right and shortly ignore one on the left similarly, always staying on the left-hand side of the field. As you enter the next field, at a fingerpost, veer **right** diagonally across the field. [Jul 2018: there were crops across the path here; you can go round two sides, or walk through the crops, or keep straight on and through woodland.] Go through a gap in the hedge and across the centre of the another field. The

path leads you through a strip of brambles, past the first house of Warnham and through woodland to a road. Cross the road to Lucas Road opposite. Ignore Hollands Way on the right and continue on the road to the entrance to a new school building. Keep ahead here on a concrete path and follow it to the main road in Warnham, opposite the church. The *Sussex Oak* and the Green are **left** on the road, where the walk began.

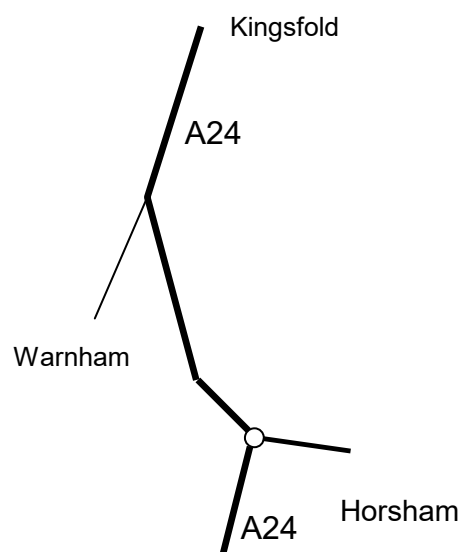


*The “Sussex Oak” draws satisfied visitors from far beyond the village. The fare is extensive and fairly standard, including such delights as a “trio of Warnham sausages”. For a £1 reduction, it offers, rather condescendingly, smaller portions for “senior citizens”. A selection of real ales is available, not the local micro-brews but pretty “decent” according to walkers. Best of all, the Sussex Oak has a wonderful garden and the pub **never closes** whilst the birds (or owls) are singing.*

Getting there

By car: from Horsham or Crawley, take the A24 (west Horsham bypass) or the A264 (north Horsham bypass) from where there are signs to Warnham from the Rusper Road roundabout. If coming from the London direction, or from the south, take the A24, from where Warnham is signposted, just north of Horsham. Park prettily on the roadside.

By bus or train: Warnham station is about 1.3 km from the village. Buses 63 and 100 run from Horsham to Slinfold. Bus 93 runs between Horsham and Dorking, stopping a Warnham. Check the timetables.



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