



Rowhook: *The Chequers Inn* (pub walk)

Distance: 6½ km=4 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 11-jun-2011

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Date revised: 4-oct-2018

Refreshments: *The Chequers Inn*

Last update: 10-dec-2020

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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Meadows, woodland, views, gastropub

In Brief

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.

2018: the bridge which was closed pending repair is now open. This walk is therefore also fully open!

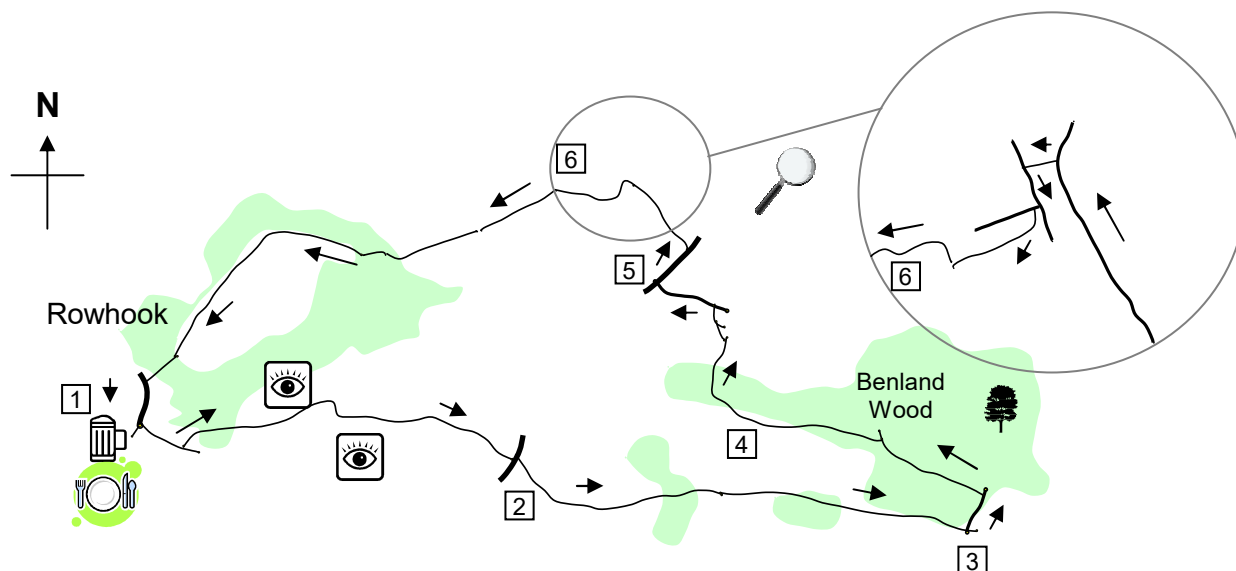
This peaceful walk takes you across grassy meadows with great views (but without climbing), on an unmapped secret path through the woods and through green pastures.



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**).



The Walk

- 1** With your back to the *Chequers Inn* in the village of Rowhook, cross over the cul-de-sac Waterlands Lane and turn **right** on the busy main road. Walk carefully for 150m and, just after a row of cottages, turn **left** at a fingerpost on a footpath, down the left-hand side of a field. In 50m, the path turns **right** across the field and takes you over a makeshift stile, through a wide belt of trees. Continue under a (liftable) plastic wire and over another scruffy stile, under more trees. The path shifts right-left at a fingerpost and continues over the next meadow with fine views to the right, heading for a break in the wire fence where there are two posts and a low wooden bar. *Leith Hill Tower is visible on your left.* Go through a wide gap into the next meadow and head for a makeshift stile in the far left corner. Keep to the left-hand side of the next pasture and over a good stile leading to a handsome private garden. Veer **right** 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 private gateway on your left. 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. (2018: if you see a warning notice, it is out of date and should be ignored.) The path leads you, a fraction right, across the centre of the field. (In case the path is not clear, you should be heading to a gap just to the right of a continuous line of trees, to the left of two single trees. If the field is muddy or ploughed up and clumpy, you can go round the right-hand side, eventually reaching the third gap in the mature hedge.) The route goes along the right-hand side of the next field; then across the centre again. Follow the curve all the way to a line of trees. Your path goes over a metal bridge across a wide calm stream, after which, all around, giant hogweed and Himalayan balsam have 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, heading for another gap. 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. Turn **right** with the farm track and immediately **left** in the next field (this bypasses a redundant overgrown stile) and continue along the left-hand side, with fine views developing on your 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. [2020: there may be brushwood across the entrance, not a real obstacle but you may miss the path: if you come to a stream, you have gone too far!] This is the first clear path on the left but less clear now (2018) because of forest debris. It comes 40m after the path begins to descend towards a dip. Eventually the path 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 path through hollies. The path runs near a field, visible on your left, with a steep wooded slope down on your right [2014-18: round 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 In the far corner of the field, go over a two-plank bridge past a fingerpost 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 cross a deep stream via a new bridge. 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 into 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** carefully on the main road, using the grass verge where possible, for just under 150m and go **left** onto a drive at signs for *Charmans* and *Oakleigh House*. At a white gate for *Charmans*, continue ahead through the gate, along an avenue of horse chestnuts, to 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, almost doubling back. 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 keeping close to the boundary hedge or fence on your right. On the last visit, the author found a beautiful herd of quiet pedigree cattle in the field and simply diverted round to the left in this very large field.
- 6 Your destination is a stile into woodland at the far end of the boundary fence that you have been following. 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 field. Keep **right** along the edge. After a while, the path curves **left** with the edge of the field 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

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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