



Rudgwick and Rowhook

Distance: 9 km=6 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 29-jun-2020

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Refreshments: Rudgwick, Rowhook

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

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Villages, woodland trails, green meadows, water, views

In Brief

Here is a walk between two villages of contrasting size and character, one having a notable gastropub, but where you can just relax with a drink and bar snack if you like (ring 01403-790480 to enquire at the *Chequers Inn*). But the villages are only an excuse for a magical wander through some of the most varied and charming West Sussex scenery, with a succession of woodland paths and green meadows. Each twist (and there are many) seems to yield a surprise until finally you have a comfortable easy section on the Sussex Border Path taking you back to the 13th-century church and another notable pub in Rudgwick.



All the paths are clear and well-made with no evidence of nettles or scratchy undergrowth even in high summer. In winter, or wet conditions, boots are preferable. Your dog can certainly lead the way, since all the stiles seem to have a gap, either built-in or by accident.

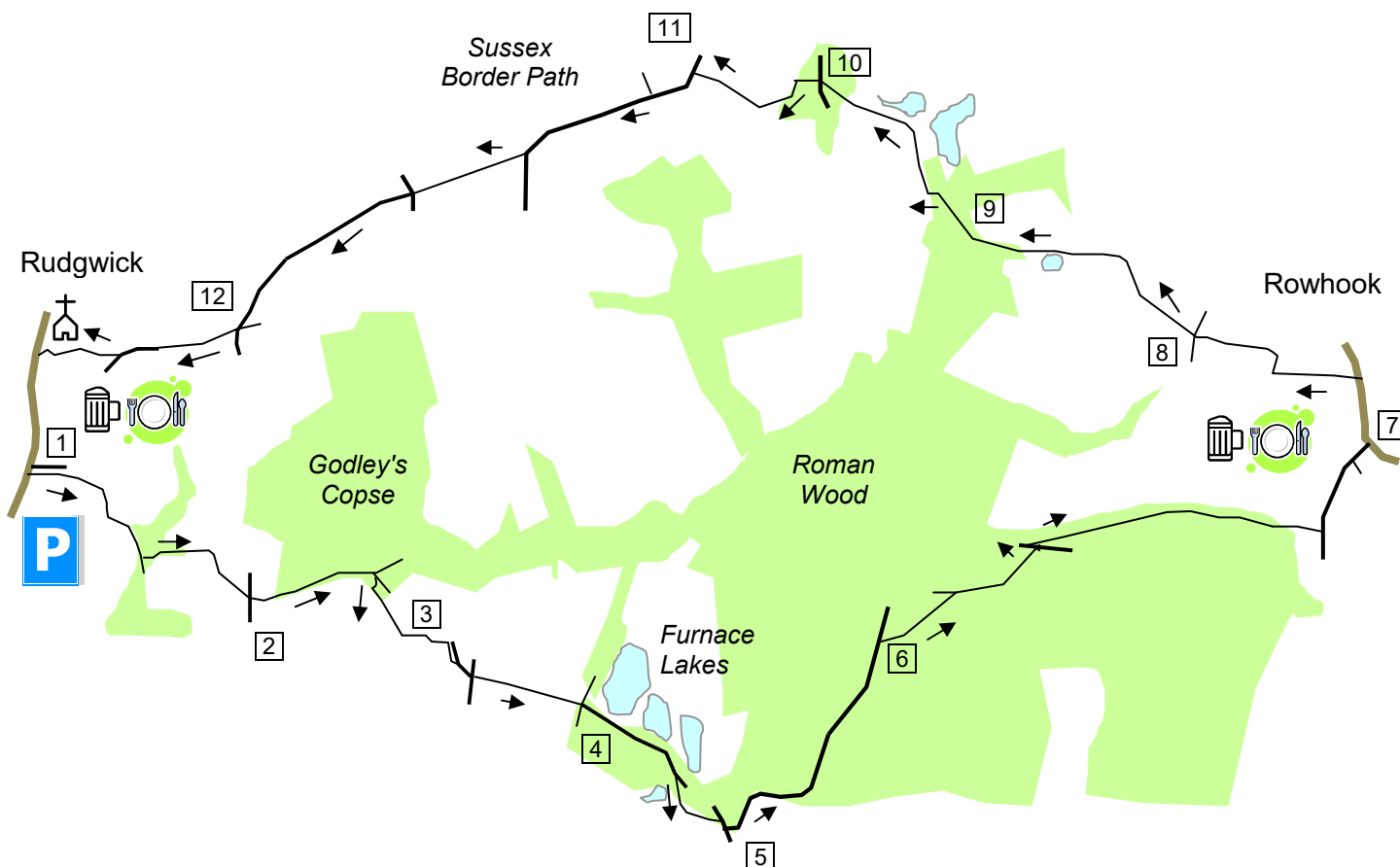
The walk begins in the village of **Rudgwick**, West Sussex, postcode **RH12 3EB**. There are some roadside spaces near the *King's Head* and in side roads such as Lynwick Street. The *King's Head* has a big car park but this walk is too long to be counted as a pub walk, especially if you don't eat and drink there. The best place to park is on an off-road strip just 100m south of the turn-off point of this walk, www.w3w.co/digit.resemble.pats, postcode **RH12 3HF**: with the pub on your left, drive along the main road another 400 yds to a side road called The Ridge; the parking strip starts here and your start for the walk is only a short distance back. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

"Rudgwick" means "farm on the ridge". This was once a poor Wealden community living off pig droving. The Holy Trinity church was built around 1260. The parish has no less than **ninety** timber-framed buildings. Millions of 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, they dug up some bones of a polacanthus dinosaur (a quadrupedal spiky species from the early Cretaceous). It turned out to be unique and now bears the name "Polacanthus Rudgwickensis" ("many prickles from Rudgwick").



The "Kings Head" specialises in "Italian and Continental Cuisine" and is a good place for a drink and a very satisfactory meal.



- 1 With the *King's Head* pub on your left, walk down the main road for 300m until you reach Rudgwick Chapel on your right. (Or, if you parked on the off-road strip, walk back 100m.) Between two cul-de-sacs, *Windacres Farm Lane* and *Summerfold*, turn **left** at a small signpost (that's **right** if you parked on the off-road strip) on a footpath which runs parallel to a tarmac drive on your left. This path soon bends right and left between wild meadows and enters woodland. It turns left again to take you over a bridge with a rail to meet a 3-way fingerpost. Ignore the stile here and keep **left**. Your path winds its way up through a band of trees. You come over a stile into a large grassy meadow. Keep ahead along the short side to go over a stile to meet a crossing bridleway and a 4-way fingerpost.
- 2 Cross straight over the bridleway and go through a wide gap in the fence, passing a pictorial *No Horses* sign to enter Godley's Copse. This is a charming wood with many tempting paths – but your route is straight

ahead, along the right-hand edge. In 300m you approach a 3-way fingerpost, just before a lighter area. Turn **right** here, leaving the wood, on the start of a wide path, but immediately abandon the path by keeping **right** through a wooden swing-gate into a meadow. Keep to the **left**-hand side of the meadow and, in the far corner, turn **left** through a wooden swing-gate. Keep to the **left** of a small round copse which conceals a pond and go through a wooden swing-gate next to a horse exercise arena.

- 3 Cross straight across the next meadow to the boundary fence and turn **right** to meet a swing-gate. (Many walkers simply cross the meadow diagonally heading for a group of yew trees.) Go through the swing-gate and turn **right** on a drive, passing through the smaller of two wooden gates. Keep straight ahead, crossing another drive and a short patch of grass to a fingerpost and stile under a large oak (*note the tree house*). Cross the next small meadow to go over a (rather high) stile. Follow the right-hand side of a large meadow and negotiate a pair of stiles (possible without touching the ground) into the precincts of Furnace Lakes. *This is a complex of six lakes stocked with carp, catfish and several other species; you will see other lakes and ponds on this walk – definitely angler's country.*
- 4 Ignore a private drive right and an angler's path left and keep straight ahead on a wide gravel drive. You are joined by a stream on your left. The large banked-up pond is on your left and you pass two small ponds on your right. Keep **right** after the ponds, passing more reedy ponds on your right. At a junction of tracks, fork **right** across the grass to go over a long bridge across a stream, leading up to a modern kissing-gate. Continue up the left-hand side of a large sheep pasture towards the beautifully restored *Furnace Barn*. A kissing-gate and hedged path lead out to a tarmac drive.
- 5 Keep **right** on the drive and immediately turn **left** on a gravel drive. The drive leads you through a large metal gate (or over the adjoining stile) and enters the vast Roman Woods which will be your haunt for the next 2 km. Stay on this very wide drive, ignoring a wide junction on your right after 350m. You pass a picnic and camp site on your right. 200m after the previous junction you approach another private junction on the right. Just *before* the junction, turn **right** at a marker post on a narrow path into the woods. *Don't miss this unexpected turn!*
- 6 This little path crosses a wide drive next to a large wooden gate and continues on its narrow course, next to ranch fencing on your right. In 150m or so, you meet an oblique T-junction. Veer **right** here on a wider forest path. This path elbows left after 120m beside a wooden gate. In another 150m, you reach a T-junction with a large wooden gate and a forestry yard close by on your right. Ignore the gate and instead turn **left** (important!) and immediately **right** at a 3-way fingerpost onto a bridleway. Follow this comfortable woodland path, ignoring a footpath on the left after 350m. Your path enters a darker beech wood and emerges from the forest, passing the pretty timbered *Burnt House*. Keep straight on and turn **left** at a T-junction onto a tarmac drive (a section of Stane Street, a Roman Road). Ignore a footpath and steps on your right and continue to come out to the road in Rowhook next to the *Chequers Inn*.



The "Chequers Inn" is both a picturesque village inn where you can simply sup a few ales with the locals, and also a notable gastropub thanks to its celebrated chef Tim Neal. Tim hooked up with local farmers to source some of his fresh produce. As a starter there is the house speciality of "bacon roly poly with fried

quails egg”; as a main there is calves’ liver, a rare treat nowadays. Food can be served in the very attractive garden.

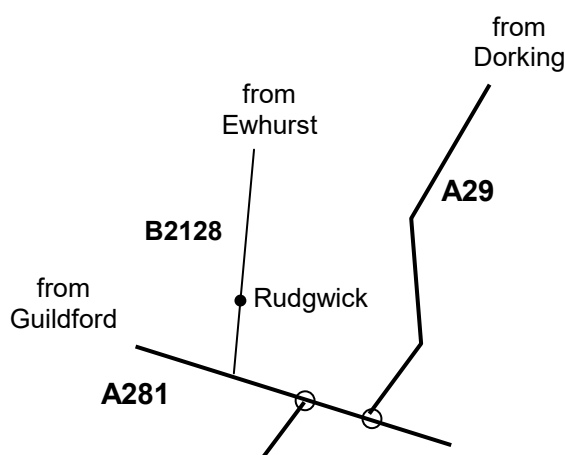
- 7 After your sojourn at the inn, turn **left** on the road, using the grass verge on the other side, passing *Rowhook Farm*. Ignore a footpath on your right (see the “*Rowhook Pub Walk*” in this series) but immediately turn **left** at a signpost, up a bank, over a stile [May 2022: now broken, you have to surmount a small metal gate - careful!] into a meadow. Follow the left-hand edge and, in 200m, at the far corner, turn **right** following a line of oaks on your left. In 50m or so, keep ahead to bear a small fraction left through a wide gap in the hawthorns to enter a new meadow. Turn **left** alongside a very mature hedgerow on your left. The author saw past evidence of cattle who roam free-range over this vast area: you’d be unlikely to pass them and they have all this space to avoid you. In the far corner, go through a band of trees to meet an irregular 4-way fingerpost [Mar 2022: grounded].
- 8 Veer a little to the **right** to cross the next meadow diagonally, aiming a good 50m to the **left** of a low house. Head for the corner of a jutting wood with a marker post where the meadow suddenly opens out. Here your route veers just a fraction to the right, going diagonally across the grass to a wide gap in the trees on the other side. The Greensand Hills are revealed in glorious outline to your right, including Leith Hill Tower. Go through the gap into a new meadow. Keep to the **left**-hand side and, in the corner, go through a band of trees, by a droopy wooden signpost [Mar 2022: grounded], into another meadow which contains a pond which in 2020 was in process of significant enlargement. Keep to the **right** of the pond and head for a close-by protruding line of trees. Keep to the **right** of the trees and follow them into the corner. (In fact the trees conceal a sheer wooded gulch.) Go over a stile [careful! wobbly] in the corner into this deep woodland realm.
- 9 The terrain has changed dramatically. Keep on the narrow path amidst the dense forest backdrop, going over a bridge-with-rails [Mar 2022: tread very lightly! some slats broken: don’t add to the damage!], after which the path veers left up a steep bank and continues to climb. At the top, veer **left** over a bank and a stile* into a field. (* It is easier to turn left over a bank just before the overgrown stile, thanks to a gap in the grounded wire fence.) Turn **right** along the edge of the field. As the edge curves left, suddenly on your right is an angler’s pond (with another pond hidden to its right). Stay on this agreeable green margin, soon passing a lily pond, overwept by a large willow. You reach a 4-way fingerpost beside a tarmac drive.
- 10 Cross straight over the tarmac onto a wide footpath opposite. It leads out shortly into an attractive sloping meadow sporting a lily pond. Turn immediately **left** along the edge. Your path rises, circling the edge. At the top keep right, as signed, on a wider path. In 150m you reach a T-junction with a concrete drive. You have reached the Sussex Border Path (SBP). Turn **left** on the SBP. You now have an assured and easy return to Rudgwick.
- 11 In 100m, ignore a footpath on your right and continue on the concrete. In 400m, where the concrete elbows left, go **right** at a signpost, still on the SBP, on a wide grassy path beside a hayfield. At the top there is a rustic bench under an ash tree where it is pleasant to sit and admire another view of the Greensand Hills. Continue past an unneeded stile and cross straight over a tarmac drive, thus temporarily leaving the SBP. Follow this easy

semi-tarmac track between fields. After ½ km, you will notice a stile on your right. Ignore it but continue 30m further to meet a 4-way fingerpost.

- 12 Turn **right** at the fingerpost, re-joining the SBP, going past an unneeded stile onto a narrow path between a fence and a hedge. The path becomes a tarmac drive. Where the drive curves left, at a signpost, leave the drive by turning right on a grass path under a line of large oaks. You pass through a modern kissing-gate into the churchyard of Rudgwick Church. Follow the path past the church on your right and go right-left down a flagstone path to the road, next to the *King's Head*, where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Rudgwick lies on the B2128 road from Shere and Ewhurst, but that picturesque route is too slow. If coming from the London area, or the M25, the simplest way to Rudgwick is on the A29 (Bognor) road, via Dorking and Ockley. When you reach the roundabout and T-junction, turn **right** as for *A29 Bognor*, but in ¾ mile, at the next roundabout, **ignore** the left turn for *A29 Bognor* and keep straight on, as for *Guildford*. In nearly 2½ miles, turn **right** for *Rudgwick*. (If you come this way, from the south, the parking strip is on your *right*, 300 yds before the centre of the village.) You can also reach Rudgwick from Guildford on the A281. Rudgwick is also near Horsham and Crawley.



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

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