

# Rotherfield Ramble

An exploration of the delightful High Weald south of Tunbridge Wells featuring woodland, streams and the hill village of Rotherfield, using the No 29 Metrobus.



Self-Guided Walks



Welcome to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty an unspoilt medieval landscape.

*Grateful acknowledgement to Travel Log Lewes (Chris Smith) for the loan of this walk.*

<b>Distance and duration</b>	7.5 miles - 12 km 3 - 4 hrs - Rolling countryside
<b>Level</b>	Moderate.
<b>Start point</b>	Start at Eridge Station bus stop. Finish at Bus stop in Eridge Road, Steel Cross, Crowborough. The 29 buses have indicators in the cabins showing the next stop. When the indicator shows "Eridge Station" ring the bell
<b>Map reference</b>	OS Explorer 135 Eridge St bus stop Map Ref TQ
<b>Other information</b>	Pub at Eridge Station. Shop and pubs in Rotherfield. Shop at Jarvis Brook by Crowborough Station.

## I-Spy - Things to look out for in the landscape

### A). The Spa Valley Railway

The Spa Valley Railway is a preserved railway running steam engines and old diesels. On weekends and in holiday periods it runs between Eridge and Tunbridge Wells.

You could combine this walk with a ride. Do study the timetable however. On some off peak days the trains only run between Tunbridge Wells and Groombridge and do not venture as far as Eridge.

### B) Old Lodge Warren

This is a narrow strip of land owned by the Woodland Trust bordering the railway between point 2 on the walk and just before Crowborough Station. It would be possible to walk this as an alternative to this walk between these points but to do this would be to miss some of the highlights of the walk. The route is perhaps better surveyed from the train. Although it is now wooded, much of the woodland has grown since 1945. In the 1939-45 war the land was part of a stop line, a series of defence lines set up to be easily defended in the event of a land invasion. So you can see a number wartime defences on the land.

### C). Rotherfield Village and Church

Rotherfield is a large and attractive parish. Most of this walk is in the parish. The village itself is an attractive hilltop place dating from Saxon times. There are the inevitable more modern estates on the outskirts. Although there are no doubt a lot of commuters the village appears to have an active life, including a sports ground, village school, shop and a number of village societies.

The parish council is rightly proud of its rights of way network and has been active in promoting it. Their

web site has a number of walks.

St Denys' Church is worth a visit and often open

D). The Ghyll, Crowborough

Crowborough is a sprawling conurbation on the edge of the Ashdown Forest. The rich folks live in big houses on the west side, near the forest. Ordinary people live in the east towards the station. Its most famous resident was Sir Arthur Conan-Doyle, although Wikipedia says that hip-hopper Jehst was also born there.

The conurbation contains a surprising number of green areas, including the Ghyll. The area was neglected until 2009, but subsequent work has resulted in a fascinating woodland area where, apart from the evidence of heavy use at the south end, you would think you were in deep countryside.

## Route Instruction

Cross the busy road carefully using the traffic island and walk down a concrete drive opposite, just in front of a bus stop

The surface of the drive changes and it bears right past an attractive old house, following the line of a large hedge. Notice a gate in the trees ahead, to the left of a shed. Go through the gate. Walk through some trees. You now find yourself in a field. Walk along the right hand side of the field to come to another gate which gives entry into the grounds of a large house. Follow the house drive past the house, keeping the house on the left. This bends round and follows the right hand edge of another field.

Look out for a bench by a tree on the left hand side of the drive, about 200 metres from the house. At this point you leave the drive and set off diagonally across the field aiming for the right hand side of a line of trees that you can see in the middle distance.

On reaching the line of trees head off very slightly to the right of the direction that you have been walking, aiming for a telegraph (or possibly electricity) pole. Pass the pole and walk through the undergrowth and through a kissing gate to reach a lane.

Turn left here. Pass the entrance to the Bowles outdoor centre and start to walk uphill past Sandhill Farm. Look out for a track going off to the right, which enters a field. Immediately after this is a gate in the hedge on the left, which is easy to miss if the hedge is overgrown.

Go through the gate.

*You are now on the Sussex Border Path. This path, as its name suggests, runs near the border of the county for the whole of its length, from Emsworth in the west to Rye in the east, with a link section which follows the boundary between east and west Sussex. The path was the initiative of two Ramblers Association members Ben Perkins and Aeneas Mackintosh. It makes a fascinating walk. Signing of the route is maintained largely by the Ramblers Association. This is an example of the work of the Ramblers in promoting walking in the area.*

Follow the path to a bridge and pass through a gate at the end of the bridge. Before you is a fairly scrubby field containing new trees, but you should be able to make out a path which bears slightly to the right. If in doubt follow the line of the edge of the field to your right. The path leads you to a metal gate. Go through this and pass through a short tunnel under the railway.

Now follow a path uphill through a field. Reach the field edge and follow the path round to the left. You will see a signpost ahead of you. Turn right here and then cross a stile to emerge at a track by Stiches Farm. Turn right here and follow the track gently downhill. This is a bridleway so can be muddy after periods of rain.

Towards the end of the bridleway you come to a gate across the path, in front of a house. Walk to the right of this to emerge at a road. Turn right past an attractive former mill. Walk passed the disused "Cuckoo line" railway.

The Cuckoo line ran from a junction just north of here, south to Polegate and Eastbourne. The southern half has been turned into a cycle trail and there are hopes that in future the northern half will be similarly converted.

Pass under a railway bridge. This is the Uckfield to Oxted line, which is still in use. Turn left at the junction which is straight after the bridge. Walk uphill.

Where the road bears right you will see a track on the left, with a footpath sign. Turn left down the track and then follow the track to the right. Shortly, the track turns left under the railway.

2). Once under the railway you find a junction. To the right is a track which traverses the strip of land owned by the Woodland Trust (see below) But your path continues straight ahead through the woods, across a substantial bridge. Pass an old sewage works on your left.

You are now in Hornhurst Wood. This is a wonderful woodland area, but it has a number of tracks and paths in it, so it is quite possible to get lost. But your route is well signposted and has small "Paths for Prosperity" signs on the signposts as well as the rights of way signs.

At the first junction turn right. Come to a Bridleway sign on right. Follow the rights of way sign up a track to the left of this. At a junction follow the right of way sign to the right.

Come to a seat, by a junction where a track forks to the right. Continue straight on. Immediately after this there is a junction. A footpath goes off to the left, climbing steeply. Do not go up this but continue ahead on the track.

After about 250 metres you can see a junction of tracks. Just before this the right of way dives off to the left into the bracken. But you will find it easier to walk up to the junction and turn left. The track turns left and begins to climb slightly. Just before it turns right again you will find a footpath sign that points both left into the bracken and also right. Turn right and follow a clear path to the edge of the wood.

Just before the edge of the wood you come to a track that crosses the path.(*A fallen tree obscures the route at present*) Keep straight ahead to emerge into a field. In contrast to the expansive woodland behind you, you are now imprisoned between two barbed wire fences as you cross a field. The fence turns sharp right in the middle of the field, but you carry straight on, crossing the fence on a stile. Carry on in the open field in the same direction. There is an overgrown hedge ahead of you. Near to the corner of the field you will find a stile to climb.

You now find yourself in another field. There is a line of trees and a fence on the right hand side. Walk down the edge of this fence. About half way down the field you will find a stile which leads onto a track. Turn left on the track.

Almost immediately another track joins your route from the right. Then pass an entrance to a house on the right. Follow the track ahead to reach a road.

Turn right here. You are now entering Rotherfield. Shortly you come to a pavement that you can walk on. Pass the recreation ground on your right. There is a cricket pitch with a marvellous view and seat from which you can watch the match, if there is one on.

Continue straight ahead to reach the road junction which is the centre of the village of Rotherfield. The shop and the church are to your right. The pubs are straight ahead.

3). To continue on the route keep straight ahead at the junction. Take the next road to the right opposite The King's Arms, Court Meadow, to the left of an old petrol pump and enter an estate of new "executive style" homes. Pass Court Meadow Close on your left. Court Meadow then bears right. At this point there is a footpath between numbers 4 & 5. The f/p finger is on the lamppost on the opposite side of the road. Follow this and quickly return to the countryside and follow past houses on left.

Emerge in a clearing. Bear right here and follow f/p in a twitten through a field i, cross a bridge and enter a golf course.

Follow the direction of the waymarks and wooden posts across the course. At first you go slightly right across fairways. You then come to a junction with a bridleway. Turn right here. The route appears to go straight up the fairway. But head for the end of a line of trees/bushes, slightly to your left. When you reach this you will see a sign that directs you 90 degrees left across another fairway, to the edge of the course.

When you reach the edge of the course turn right along a fenced way. The bridleway mercifully leaves the course and winds pleasantly through trees, descending gently. Ignore paths left and right.

Cross a farm drive and then emerge at a road. Your way is along the lane on the other side of the road, slightly to the right, but you need to negotiate a crash barrier, either by climbing over it, or turning left and crossing the road at its end.

Walk along the lane. Come to a ford, which you can traverse either by walking through it, or by using a footbridge to the right.

Reach a bridge over the railway. Immediately before the bridge there is a path to the left. Follow this. Come to a junction. Bear right, keeping as close to the railway as possible. Follow this path alongside the railway to emerge at a main road. Turn right under the railway bridge. Crowborough station is now on the left.

To follow the route to the bus stop, continue on the right hand side of the road. Pass the entrance to an industrial estate. The second turning on the right is signposted to a car park bt BLM Building Supplies. Follow this and walk into the car park. On your left you will see a path that leads diagonally through a park. Take this path and follow it to the other end of the park.

Cross the road and walk through the car park of the Ghyll. *Note The route now followed is not a Public Right of Way.* Enter the Ghyll and take the path to the right which descends to a bridge. Cross the bridge and then turn left. For the next kilometre or so your aim is to follow the stream as closely as possible, keeping it on your left. This normally means following the main path which is quite clear, but if in doubt keep left without crossing the Ghyll (unless the path to the left is very faint).

Emerge at an open area. Bear left here, following the line of the trees. Come to a children's play area. Pass this on your left and keep straight ahead to come to a wooden gate. Pass to the right of this and come to road.

Turn right along the road, which has pavements on both sides. Cross where it is safe to do so and continue in the same direction. Pass a turning on the right.

4). You now come to a junction with a mini roundabout. Eridge Road goes off to your left. The bus stop for Tunbridge Wells is straight ahead. The stop for Lewes and Brighton is on the left, about 10 metres down Eridge Road.

