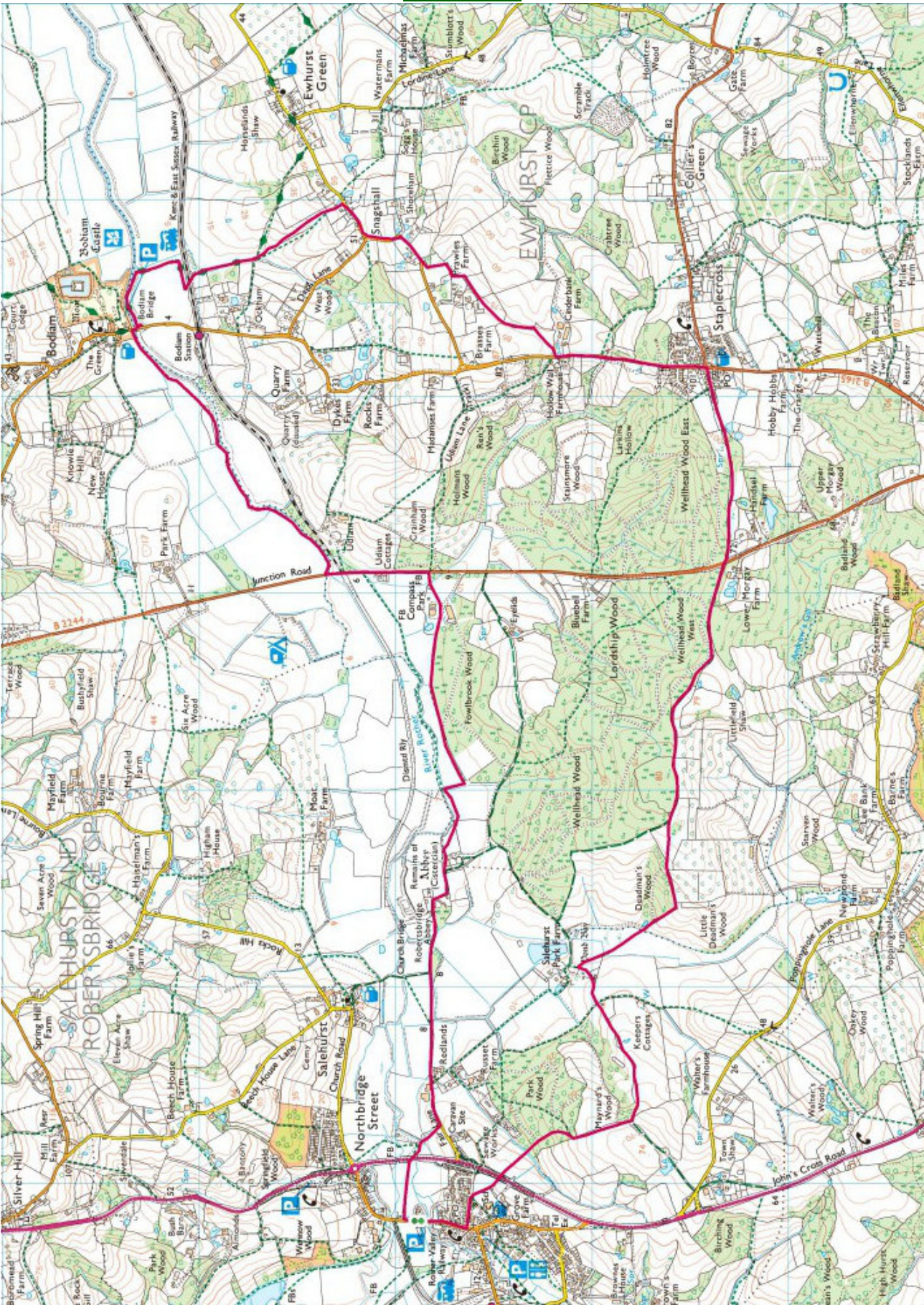# Robertsbridge to Bodiam circular

Welcome to the High Weald Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty, an unspoilt medieval Landscape. A walk from historic Robertsbridge which is thought to date back to 1176. Look out for wall plaques with historic information about the buildings. Using a mixture of woodland paths, fields and roads you will pass through Staplecross to Bodiam and the ruined castle. On the way back following the River Rother. This walk was kindly provided by Perry Puddefoot a member of Rother Ramblers

Distance and duration	9.5 miles / 15 kilometres - 5 hours
Level	Moderate
Start point / Post code	Clappers Rec Ground car park. TN32 5NY
OS map reference / what3words	TQ737238 https://w3w.co/attending.assume.takeovers
Other information	Free car park Find GPX at: https://www.highwealdwalks.org/ HWWF-PP.gpx

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

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highwealdwalks.org

Robertsbridge

Robertsbridge is an old settlement probably founded about 1176, when the only Cistercian Abbey in Sussex was built on the site of the current War Memorial. Remnants of the old chapel cellar from the monastery can still be seen in the basement of one of the houses in the High Street .

The village remained when the abbey was moved about one mile to the east, to the village of Salehurst in 1210.

It is believed that the name of the village was derived from the bridge built by the first abbot - Robert de St Martin, abbey records show it as 'Pons Roberti' which translates from the Latin to The Bridge of Robert.

The main business of the village was as a stopping and resting place for travellers from Hastings to London. The large numbers of late 14th and 15th Century Wealden Hall Houses show a period of wealth possibly due to the weekly market that was granted the village by Henry III in 1254.

In 1541 a forge was built by the Churchill family on the old Abbey grounds at Salehurst, this was supplemented by a furnace in 1754. The manufactured goods were dispatched from Bodiam bridge, the furthest navigable point up the river Rother.

In the late 1800's cricket bats and equipment were manufactured by Gray Nichols, whose factory is still in the village.

Finally, the very first Cub Scout Pack was started in Robertsbridge by Baden Powell, who at the time lived nearby.

Bodiam

In Roman times, Bodiam in East Sussex was a main crossing point for the road leading from Beauport near Hastings to the North Kent coast. It was also used as a port from which to ship the iron ingots produced in nearby Sedlescombe, Staplecross and Stonegate. Bodiam's main claim to fame is its great medieval military fortress, the last to have been built in England. This moated fairy tale castle was built by Sir Edward Dalyngrigge between 1385 and 1390 as a protection to the Rother valley from the French. Sir Edward Dalyngrigge and his wife were buried at Robertsbridge Abbey.

The castle was only attacked twice, once in 1484 by Richard III who captured it, and in 1645 by the Roundheads led by Sir William Waller, who left it in a partially ruined state. From 1754 until the early 1800's, guns and cannons manufactured at Robertsbridge were shipped from Bodiam to Woolwich Arsenal, and other destinations.

In 1828 it was purchased by John Fuller "Mad Jack" of Brightling from a firm of Hastings builders, who were demolishing it to use as building materials.

Mad Jack spent a lot of time and money repairing the building, and replacing the main gates. In 1917 it was acquired by Lord Curzon, who carried out further restoration and repairs. On his death in 1925 the castle was bequeathed to the National Trust, and can be visited, and explored to the present day.

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The area was a main hop growing area, and in the early parts of this century, a large number of Londoners would come down via the railway to the Guiness hop farms to pick the crop. The village used to be on the Robertsbridge to Headcorn railway line, which was axed during the 1960's by Dr Beeching. However the steam enthusiasts from the Kent and East Sussex Railway based in Rolvenden, have restored the line from Tenterden to Bodiam.

The Walk
Exit car park, turn R on to the High Street, then 2nd L into Fair Lane. Take signed footpath on R keeping L around school grounds.

Go over stile and then take path across field to stile.

Cross A21 (busy road caution). Go over stile and follow clearly defined path across field to enter woods. Follow path through woods, cross field L path bordering Maynards Wood.

At cross path go straight ahead taking gravel track.

At 1.4 miles R path not clear but look to right you will see 2 gates in hedge line. Head towards 2nd gate from R. This gate is overgrown and you may have to climb over.

Keeping left follow tree line up the field and cross broken stile and then second stile also broken.

You will enter a field. Path shows straight ahead but land owner has placed a fence across the field. Head to top right hand corner. Fence broken and crossable.

Go diagonally across field passing between edge of Wellhead Wood and small treed area. Gate in fence line, enter gate and turn R. Follow path.

At 2.9 miles path should cross B2244 but bank eroded, follow bridle path to left.

As path joins the road look to the right where you will see steps on the other side of the road. Cross road taking footpath to top of bank turn L.

Follow path to Staplecross.

At 3.55 miles turn L along Bodiam Road towards Bodiam.

Pass school on L. Footpath runs out, road walking, take 2nd footpath on R clearly marked with post.

Follow path, crossing stiles and staying to clearly marked path. Keep hedge on left through gate following path to new gate.

Turn R on to Shoreham Lane. Road walking entering Ewhurst Green.

Take footpath on L between large metal gate and Romney Lodge. Stile to path across field.

At this point path should go through gate to left but very well secured, take mown path across field to meet Sussex Border path.

Through gate turn R go over bridge and follow Border Path.

Cross railway line and follow path R around field.

At the road turn R. Bodiam castle National Trust café, toilets and pub opposite.

At 6 miles take footpath on L after bridge running alongside River Rother.

At 7 miles L on to road (B2244). Cross and walk facing traffic crossing 2 narrow road bridges, verge wide enough to walk along.

First footpath on R closed at the time recce undertaken. Take 2nd which enters bushes.

This path was over grown in places but passable. Keep buildings, then tree line on L footpath finger post straight ahead. Path turns sharp R then L joining River Rother path.

Follow path, over stile on to narrow path lined by fence on L.

Over stile across field crossing stile to concrete road.

At 8.4 miles follow concrete road passing Cistercian Abbey ruins on R. Ignore any paths on L or R passing through Redlands Farm on to road (Fair Lane).

At 9.2 take path to R over stile, waterworks road to gate.

Cross stile on L and follow path under road (ignore path to footbridge on R).

Under road follow path across field to rusty gate in distance.

Over grown stile to road turn L. Car park short distance on R. 9.6 miles.

At all times please follow the Countryside Code

Respect everyone
• be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
• leave gates and property as you find them
• do not block access to gateways or driveways when parking
• be nice, say hello, share the space
• follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available

Protect the environment
• take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit
• do not light fires and only have barbeques where signs say you can
• always keep dogs under control and in sight
• dog poo – bag it and bin it – any public waste bin will do
• care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance

Enjoy the outdoors
• check your route and local conditions
• plan your adventure – know what to expect and what you can do
• enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory

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