

Withyham Walks 2011

Walk no. 1 10 miles – 4½ hrs

Village halls Centenary walk: Kings' Hall to King Edward Institute via Buckhurst, Summersales Hill, Penns-in-the Rocks, and return via Burrswood, Hale Court, Summerford & Hewkins Bridge.

Start/Finish at the Kings' Hall, Withyham, OS grid ref. TQ495357.
Ordnance Survey Explorer map no. 135 – 'Ashdown Forest' is recommended.

Go up the drive to Buckhurst Park, to the right of the Dorset Arms car park. Go past the cricket field, through the park, and uphill to turn sharp left, to follow a rough track alongside a tree plantation on your left.

At the end of the track, turn right across a stile into a field. Aim for the far end of the wood on your left. At the top of the hill bear right across the field past 2 oak trees and a cattle trough to a stile with a house on the left.

Cross and continue downhill toward another stile. Cross on to a sunken track and turn right down to a road (B2188), with Whitehouse Lane in front. Follow this lane until it turns right. Here, turn left and cross a stile, and follow the path uphill through woods to a gate. Go through to a fenced-in path across a field. At the other side turn left on a paved drive to the road opposite Summersales Farm.

Cross and turn left down the road, taking care as it can be busy. After 150m turn right through a close-boarded gate onto a path skirting an extensive garden on your right. Continue to a stile on the left into a field. Cross this, and another shortly after, and aim for a field gate to the right. Go through & turn left, and continue gently downhill along the edge of 2 fields.

Go through the squeeze stile (a Sussex speciality) and carry straight on along a line of trees, aiming to right of the rocky outcrop in front. Just past this, cross a stile in front into the wood. Continue down the well-defined path to another stile. You are now in the grounds of Penns-in the Rocks. Note the lake and mock-Grecian temple on your left.

Go downhill across the field to another stile. Penns-in the Rocks house can be seen in its picturesque setting on your right. Cross into another wood, over a footbridge, then turn right and cross a paved drive and follow the path straight ahead, keeping the stream on your right.

Cross a footbridge into a field, and turn left along the stream. At the end of the field cross another bridge with stiles, then go straight up hill to another stile onto a lane. Turn right & almost immediately left onto another path. Go uphill into a field & carry straight on, aiming for a pair of brick houses ahead. When you reach the track in front of them, turn right to Sherlocks Farm. Follow the yellow waymarks through the farm into a field. Go down the right side, and aim for the cattle arch under the railway. Go through, and cross the footbridge and then the stile onto Corseley Rd. Turn left and stay on the road all the way into Groombridge. Corseley Rd ends opposite King Edward Institute.

At this point one can turn right up Station Rd. to seek refreshment from the Village Stores, Bakery or a little further on, the Junction Inn and Tea Room.

To continue the walk, cross the car park behind the King Edward Institute, and cross into the playing field. Walk along the left-hand edge to a gate into the grounds of Groombridge Place. Take the fenced-in path down the field edge then right, to cross the drive & stream. Bear left away from the house to the lake, bear right, cross another drive then head left across the field to the B2110 opposite the Crown. Take care crossing, then take the lane across the green to Burrswood drive. Burrswood is a private Christian-run hospital in what was a house owned by wealthy Victorian business man, Lord Mayor of London & philanthropist David Salomans. The drive is not a public footpath but the owners kindly allow the public to walk there. Please take care of traffic, and if you have the time, enjoy refreshments at the delightfully-situated tearoom looking out over the gardens. Lunches and teas are served daily.

Follow the paved drive past the hospital and car park, and into more open country, with fields to your left. Just before the drive ends at a private house, turn right on a well-surfaced track into woods. After 100m a public path crosses the track. Turn left and drop down a steep path through trees to a stream. Cross into a field and go gently uphill to a stile. Cross into another field and go straight in, keeping the fence on your left. Follow the fence around a left corner, and go under railway bridge. Bear left across field to a footbridge. Cross this and bear right across field to Ham Farm track. Turn right over river and along track towards Hale Court Farm. When track reaches hedge turn left (signpost Weald Way). Follow this well-signed path to Beech Green lane at Summerford Farm.

Cross the road and follow the well-signed path through what was the farmyard, and along the drive to Summerford Barn. Follow the path to the right around the barn, through a gate in the hedge on your left, and on into a wood. Turn left down a steep bank, and over a stile to the river. Bear right across the field to a footbridge over the R. Medway, cross this and then the Forest Way soon after. Continue across two fields to the B2110. Turn left on the road, taking care of the traffic on the narrow bridge. Follow the road for 200m to the start point at the Kings' Hall. Hopefully the Dorset Arms will be open for a well-earned drink.