

*Walks in Salehurst
and Robertsbridge*

David Allen

First Published – 1993

Reprinted with minor revisions – 1994

Second Edition published – 2005

Third Edition published - 2013

Copyright © 1993; 1994; 2005; 2013 David Allen

Contents

Introduction	page 4
Walk 1 - High Street – Northbridge Street – Beech House Lane – Bourne Lane – Higham House – Salehurst 4 miles	page 8
Walk 2 – Bishop’s Lane – Glottenham – Mountfield Court – John’s Cross – Poppinghole Lane – Park Wood 4.5 miles	page 12
Walk 3 - Bishop’s Lane – Glottenham Manor – Mountfield Park Farm – Scaland’s Wood – Brightling Road – Scaland’s Farm– Darvell 4.5 miles	page 16
Walk 4 – Bishop’s Lane – Glottenham – A21 – Poppinghole Lane – Park Wood 3 miles	page 19
Walk 5 – Fair Lane – Salehurst – Higham House – Bourne Lane - Six Acre Wood – Salehurst 5.5 miles	page 21
Walk 6 – Bugsell Farm – Ockham House – Mill steam – ‘Montrose’ – Mill site – High Street (<i>plus Rother Valley Railway</i>) 2.5 or 4 miles	page 24
Walk 7 – Bugsell Farm – Squibb’s Farm – Mill stream – Mill site – High Street 4 miles	page 31
Walk 8 – Park Wood – Stone Cottage – Park Farm – Abbey – Fair Lane 4 miles	page 35

Introduction

The first edition of this book was published in 1993, reprinted in 1994 with minor revisions and fully revised in 2005. It has been out of print for some time but it is gratifying to find that readers have found it useful and have asked that I put it back into print once again. I was persuaded to do so by the offer from Anne Wells and Charlie Beeden to check the routes; they have walked (and re-walked!) all the paths and I am most grateful for their help; thankfully most of the walks remain the same with only minor changes. I hope you enjoy this new edition.

About the History.

Salehurst is mentioned in the Domesday Book of 1085 and is described as having "7 villagers and 8 cottagers, with 6 ploughs, a church and 16 acres", it is not much bigger now although I cannot comment on the number of villeins currently living there! Salehurst church was in existence at the time of Domesday and is well worth a visit: it dates in part from the 12th century with a 14th century tower. Inside is some fine medieval glass with birds on it, a 12th century font allegedly given by King Richard the Lionheart, as thanks to the Abbott for helping to raise his ransom when imprisoned in Germany, and some cast iron grave slabs, a reminder of the iron industry which once existed in the area.

Robertsbridge, on the contrary, is not mentioned in Domesday but is now the main business and residential centre of the parish. The reason for this is the river Rother, or rather the bridge over it. Sometime in the early 12th century a Cistercian Abbey, or chapel was founded within the parish of Salehurst; the exact location is not known, but is believed to be some-

where near the site of the present George Inn. At that time the normal method of crossing the river was probably by ford or ferry near to the church. Around the middle of the century, the then Abbott, one Robert, built a bridge over the river about a half-mile west of the church; this was roughly at the site of the present bridge known as The Clappers.

With most of the traffic by-passing the old village in order to use the new bridge, the centres of growth occurred around the northern and southern ends of the bridge and subsequently became the hamlets of Northbridge Street and Robertsbridge. The two hamlets spread along the length of the road and by the mid-16th century the basic lay-out of the village had evolved. This can be clearly seen in the wealth of timber-framed buildings lining both sides of the High Street, many of which date from the 15th and 16th century.

With the growth of the village, the Cistercian Abbey was moved to a site about 1 mile east of Robertsbridge and south of the river opposite the church at Salehurst. The remains of the Abbey are on private land and the Abbot's house dating from the 15th century is now incorporated into a private residence. However, they are occasionally open to the public and well worth a visit.

At various times in the past suggestions have been put forward, notably by Hillaire Belloc, that the name Robertsbridge is a corruption of Rother Bridge but two pieces of evidence seem to show conclusively that this is pure fancy. Firstly, the earliest mention of the name is on a document from the 13th century which refers to Pons Roberti, the Latin for Robert's Bridge and secondly, at that time the river was known as the Limm!

About the walks.

These walks, ranging in length from 2 to 5 miles, are chosen to cover much of the Parish of Salehurst & Robertsbridge and to give a good impression of the varied geography. For convenience, a common starting point has been chosen but, of course, they can be joined at any point. In order to make the walks circular some re-tracing of steps has been necessary on the return route, but this has been kept to a minimum. Inevitably, some parts of the walks overlap with others, particularly at the beginnings and end, but to make the book easier to use when walking I have repeated the instructions in each individual walk rather than refer to other pages.

All of the walks can be completed comfortably within 2 or 3 hours, but it is possible to link up walks to make a longer outing. For convenience, (mine mostly!) I have used the imperial system of yards and miles but if you are metrically minded then for practical purposes 100 yards is equal to 100 metres!

Salehurst and Robertsbridge are fortunate in that for some years there have been active footpath groups and as a result the paths and stiles etc. are fairly well maintained. However, even apart from seasonal problems such as mud and overgrown hedges, stiles do deteriorate and some land-owners still crop over paths and do not restore them as required by law. The price of our footpaths is constant vigilance! If you do find problems with a path either contact the Highway Authority, East Sussex County Council or contact the Parish Clerk (01580 882066 or e-mail: clerk@salehurst-pc.org.uk). If you do contact either, please give a reasonably accurate position of the problem (map reference and path number

if possible) and the date of your discovery. The Parish Council keeps large - scale maps showing the definitive footpaths, with numbers, in the parish and these can be consulted at the parish office during normal opening hours. Farmers do have a habit of keeping livestock in fields so do remember to keep your dog under close control and please remember to shut gates and generally observe the Country Code.

About the maps.

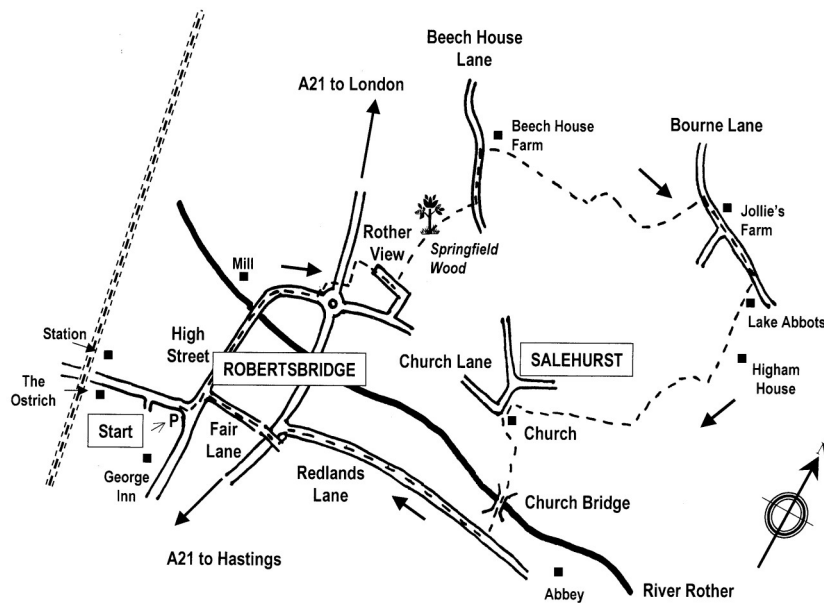
The sketch maps are not to scale and have been provided for orientation; together with the descriptions it should be easy to complete each walk without getting hopelessly lost! However, they are not a substitute for a good Ordnance Survey map, especially if you wish to find variations on the routes. The map for this area in the Pathfinder Series (1:25,000) is Sheet TQ 62/72.

The author and revisers of this booklet hope you enjoy the walks, the views, the countryside and the conversation that is usually a feature of a good walk.

David Allen, Anne Wells & Charlie Beeden 2013

**Walk 1 - High Street - Northbridge Street - Beech House Lane –
Bourne Lane - Higham House –Salehurst**

Distance - approximately 4 miles



Leave the Car Park, turn right to the High Street, turn left and continue to Northbridge Street, crossing the River Rother by the former mill. Continue through Northbridge Street to the bypass roundabout and cross the road, by the pedestrian crossing, into Church Lane. In 20 yards, turn left along a surfaced path, keeping the houses on your right. At the end of the path, turn right into Rother View and continue along to the access road to the garages on the left. Turn left then in a few yards pass through a kissing gate into Springfield Wood. This 12 acre wood was created by the Wood-

land Trust to mark the new Millennium and was made possible by donations from the parish council, Rother District Council and substantial fund raising efforts by the Robertsbridge Millennium Committee. Planting started on 14th February 1999 when many villagers including children started the planting of in excess of 20,000 trees. Continue steeply uphill, keeping the hedge on your right cross a stile into the next field and then continue on to the top of the hill. In the field to the right, (private land with no public footpath) is a concrete observation post dating from the Second World War with a commanding view of the Rother valley and of any incoming German airforce!

Cross over a stile into Beech House Lane and turn left past Beech House Farm to Oak Farm Oast and then take the narrow path to the right of the drive and in 50 yards go through a gate and continue down hill, keeping the hedge on your right. Cross a stile and continue downhill keeping close to the wood on your left. Near the bottom of the hill keep left along the sunken lane (this can be difficult to see if overgrown in summer) and in a few yards cross the bridge over a small stream and go left uphill.

Continue for about 100 yards and at a large oak tree turn right along the line of an old hedge, now mostly removed but the bank is clearly visible (keep the bank on your right). At the bottom of the field go left for a few yards then cross over a stile and stream and go straight ahead steeply uphill, then at the top turn left through an opening and along a track. Continue straight ahead past a small stone quarry on your left and several water-filled pits, which may be iron ore pits from the days of the Wealden iron industry in the 17th and 18th century. Notice also the depth of the

track, possibly created by the heavy iron ore wagons.

In 150 yards cross over two stiles and continue through a small coppice towards Jollie's Farm House, the footpath passes through part of the garden. Cross the stile to your left and walk towards the road keeping the house on your right. Continue ahead and cross a stile onto the road by the side of the house. Turn right and continue along, passing Jollie's Farm and the converted oast house and in 150 yards you will come to the junction of the road to Salehurst on your right. Keep straight ahead past the junction, passing Haiselman's Farm on your left and in 200 yards turn right through the drive of Lake Abbots. The footpath continues straight ahead through the garden but, of course, the path was here before the garden. On the left is a stone wall and a duck pond (was the lake anything to do with the abbey one wonders?). At the end of the garden, go through a gate onto a surfaced drive, turn right for a few yards and then left through a gate and continue straight ahead, keeping the metal fence on your left, towards Higham House.

Go through a gate and continue through the orchard past the house and turn right through a gate onto the drive and continue downhill on the surfaced path. Ignore the gate and path to the right and leave the surfaced path straight ahead, over a stile and continue downhill along the line of the fence and at the bottom, turn right over a stile. Continue downhill to the bottom of the wood turning left and continuing for 200 yards to emerge from the wood into a field. Turn right and follow the path around the field with the trees on your right. In about 300 yards, at the end of the spinney, there is a nice view of Salehurst church. Turn right and continue to a sur-

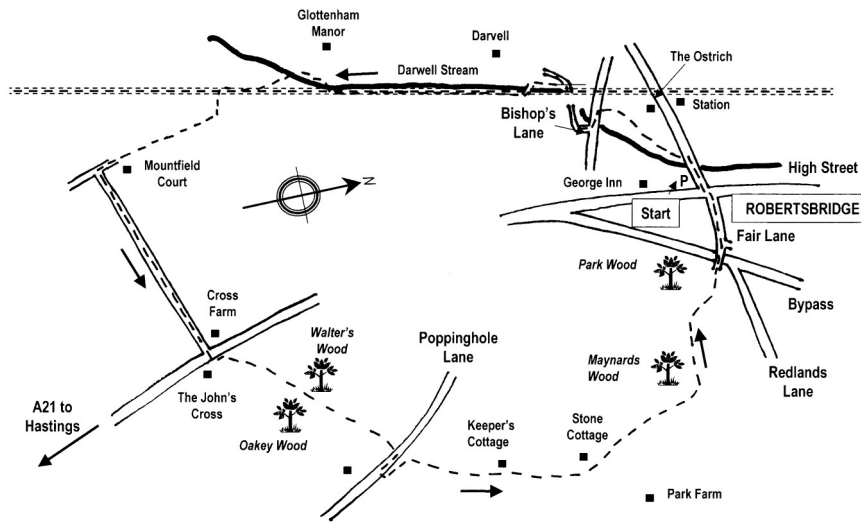
faced farm road. Cross the road and go through a (usually open) gate into a field. Continue straight ahead climbing a slight hill keeping the hedge on your right. Bear left past the rear of Parsonage Farm and in a few yards turn right into the churchyard. The path to the right of the church leads past some table tombs with terracotta plaques by Jonathan Harmer (1762-1849).

Through the churchyard gates, turn sharp left and follow the path between the churchyard and the houses. Continue straight ahead, crossing the old line of the Kent & East Sussex Railway and in a few yards cross Church Bridge over the River Rother. Follow the path to join Redlands Lane (formerly Fair Lane before the bypass cut it in half!) and turn right. Keep straight ahead and in about half-mile cross the footbridge over the bypass and continue down Fair Lane to the High Street and return to the starting point.



**Walk 2 - Bishop's Lane - Glottenham - Mountfield Court - John's Cross -
Poppinghole Lane – Park Wood**

Distance - approximately 4.5 miles



From the car park, turn left towards the station and in a few yards turn into Willow Bank and immediately right to cross Piper's Meadow, go through the gate and then straight across the field with allotments to your left. Go over the stile and continue to cross another stile keeping the post and rail fence on your right until crossing a third stile to turn left to walk by the railway line. Turn left along the line of the railway and in a few yards you will enter Bishop's Lane by the railway bridge.

Turn left and in 100 yards turn right along the drive to Glottenham and continue under the railway bridge. A few yards on cross over the stile on

your left, turning right following the edge of the Darwell Stream and in a 100 yards cross over the footbridge. Behind you and across the valley lie the buildings of Darvell Hall. Originally built as a Sanatorium for the treatment of tuberculosis, these buildings now form the home of the religious community known as the Darvell Bruderhof.

Across the bridge, bear right and follow the line of the railway, cross another bridge by the two telegraph poles then over another bridge and stile and continue along between railway and stream to the bridge on your right. Cross the bridge, then over the stile turning immediately left and follow the path along the edge of the field (this used to be a hop garden and you can still see evidence in the field margins). Continue along the line of the railway, passing through a field gate. In 300 yards, turn left over a footbridge by the line of poplars and across the field into Cleans Wood. The path continues clearly through the wood and then emerges to continue right along the line of the railway again (the path follows roughly the line of overhead cables) to go over a footbridge and after 50 yards turn left under the railway bridge.

In a short distance, cross another footbridge over Bottom Hole Brook and then continue diagonally right through Mountfield Park which looks as if it was landscaped at sometime. Keep straight ahead as you climb the hill keeping to the right of the copse of trees and pond to the gate.

Stop for a few moments and take in the view over to the North West. Follow the track straight ahead to Mountfield Court. The house dates from the late 18th Century and has attractive gardens, which are sometimes open to the public.

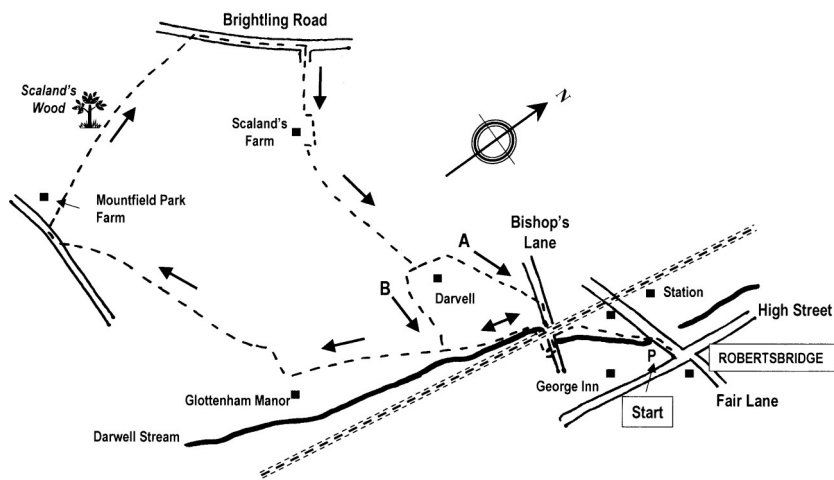
Continue ahead past the house and turn left along the surfaced road, with good views of the house and gardens to the left. The path continues straight ahead along the road through an avenue of old trees, passes Cross Farm and then joins the A21 opposite the John's Cross public house. Cross the road, turn left and in about 50 yards you will find two footpaths, take the left hand path through a kissing gate and cross the field diagonally left beside a gap in the hedge under the overhead cables then cross a stile to the left hand corner of Oakey Wood. Cross the field between Oakey Wood and Walter's Wood and go over a stile to the right of a large pond at the far end. Bear slightly right across the field to another stile about 300 yards away in the corner of the field, then straight ahead across the field to arrive at Poppinghole Lane to the left of the pair of cottages.

Turn right along Poppinghole Lane and in a few yards at the top of the hill, turn left over a stile and follow the path straight ahead across the field to cross the stile, Keeper's Cottage can just be seen amongst the trees in the valley below. The path goes steeply down hill straight across the field, over three stiles all close together to the cottages and continues past them on a track to Stone Cottage on your left. At this point, where the track turns right to Park Farm, continue straight ahead along the edge of the field and in 200 yards you will come to a track leading to the farm, turn left along the track and in a few yards cross the bridge on your right and continue along the edge of Park Wood. In 600 yards at the field boundary turn left into the wood and continue straight ahead, ignoring paths to left and right, to emerge from the wood by the sewage treatment plant; take the path between the two parts of the plant and continue straight ahead

uphill. To the right is a fine view of Salehurst and the church. Follow the path to the left around the edge of the old Redlands gravel pit works to arrive at the footbridge over the by-pass; cross the bridge and continue along Fair Lane to the High Street and return to the starting point.

Walk 3 - Bishop's Lane - Glottenham Manor - Mountfield Park Farm - Scaland's Wood – Brightling Road - Scaland's Farm – Darvell

Distance - approximately 4.5 miles



From the car park, turn left towards the station and in a few yards turn left into Willow Bank; at the end of the flood defence wall turn right and cross Piper's Meadow bearing left. Go through the gate and then straight across the field and over the stile. Keeping the post and rail fence on your right, cross over another stile and continue to the third stile by the railway line. Turn left along the line of the railway and in a few yards you will enter Bishop's Lane by the railway bridge. Turn left and in 100 yards turn right along the drive to Glottenham and continue under the railway bridge and straight ahead along the drive. In $\frac{3}{4}$ mile pass, on the left, the entrance to

Glottenham Manor, now a nursing home, and bear right, the path is marked, taking the track ahead keeping the barns to your left and the houses to your right. Continue straight ahead, passing a small copse on the right; this is the site of Glottenham Castle which dates from the 14th century, but nothing is visible now except the remains of the moat. Cross the stile and the path continues straight ahead across open fields, cross over a stile and through a small copse just to the right of the pond. Follow along the side of the hedge and in a few yards go left over a stile into another field. Ahead there are good views of Darvell reservoir which was constructed in 1955 to provide water for Hastings. Continue straight ahead, keeping to the right of a low area which was where clay was extracted to build the dam for the reservoir. Pass through a metal gate, which is framed by two large oak trees, onto a road. Turn right along the road for 250 field gate and follow the hedge which will be on your right. Continue to Darvell drive which you will cross and then continue across to Bishop's Meadow to Bishop's Lane near the railway bridge. Turn left and re-trace the route back to the car park. Route B - Turn right and follow the path around and downhill to join the Glottenham drive. Turn left and re-trace the route yards and then turn right down Mountfield Park farm drive. At the bottom of the drive, just past Mountfield Park on the left, turn right over a stile and footbridge and go diagonally left across the field to another stile. Follow the path for a few yards between hedge and fence and then cross another stile and go diagonally left to the corner of the field. Go through the gate and then straight ahead, keeping the fence on your right.

Continue along the line of the fence for 500 yards, then cross a stile into

Scaland's Wood. Continue straight ahead for 500 yards along a well-defined path to join Brightling Road. Turn right along the road and in 500 yards pass the entrance to Scaland's House. This was once the home of Barbara Bodichon, an advocate for women's rights and a friend of the pre-Raphaelite group, many of whom, including Dante Gabriel Rossetti, stayed here.

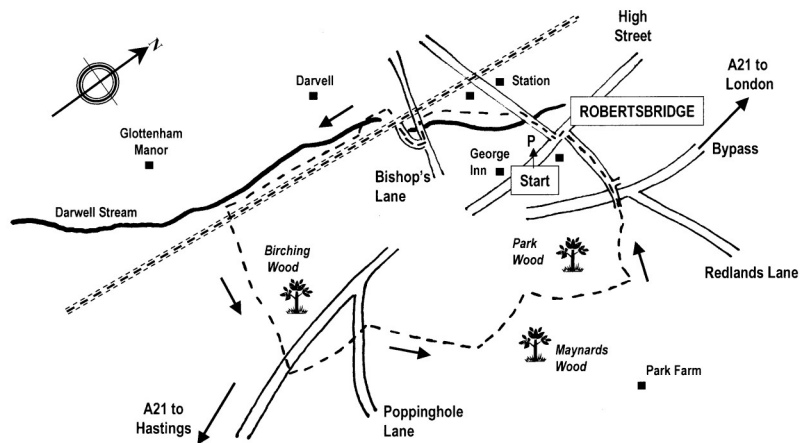
A few yards past the entrance, turn right along Scaland's Farm drive and then in about 700 yards go through the metal kissing gate on your left, following the diversion signs around the farmhouse garden. Cross the track via the two metal kissing gates and, keeping the hedge to your right, you will pass through another metal kissing gate after which you turn left. The path continues straight ahead, keeping the boundary hedge to the left for 600 yards, passing through a gap in the hedge and then through a metal kissing-gate into the ground of the Darvell Community. In 300 yards the path divides giving a choice of return routes.

Route A - Straight ahead, the path skirts to the left of the main buildings and through farm buildings after which you will see a bridge on your left leading to a track. Cross the bridge and then in 25 yards turn right through the field gate and follow the hedge which will be on your right. Continue to Darvell drive which you will cross and then continue across to Bishop's Meadow to Bishop's Lane near the railway bridge. Turn left and re-trace the route back to the car park.

Route B - Turn right and follow the path around and downhill to join the Glottenham drive. Turn left and re-trace the route back to the car park.

Walk 4 - Bishops Lane - Glottenham - A21 - Poppinghole Lane - Park Wood

Distance - approximately 3 miles



From the car park, turn left towards the station and in a few yards turn left into Willow Bank, at the end of the flood defence wall turn right and cross Piper's Meadow bearing left. Go through the gate and then straight across the field and over the stile. Keeping the post and rail fence on your right, cross over three stiles and continue to the last stile by the railway line. Turn left along the line of the railway and in a few yards you will enter Bishop's Lane by the railway bridge. Turn left and in 100 yards turn right along the drive to Glottenham and continue under the railway bridge. A few yards on, cross over the stile to the left, turn right along the edge of the Darwell Stream and in a few yards cross over the footbridge. Across the bridge, bear right and follow the line of the railway, cross over

another stile and continue along between railway and stream to the bridge. Turn left steeply uphill to the railway and STOP, LOOK and LISTEN, this is a busy line. Cross the line, go steeply downhill across a stile – it can be very boggy at this point! Go straight ahead across two fields and through an opening in the left hand corner.

In 50 yards turn left, through the gate towards the wood and at the corner of the wood turn right uphill keeping the wood on your left. Behind you are some fine views. Turn right at the hedge and in 50 yards turn left through a gate in the hedge by a large oak tree and continue uphill to join the A21. Cross the road, turn right and in 50 yards, take the narrow track in the left hand corner of the lay-by between the hedge and the spinney. This is said to be the old road from Salehurst. Continue straight ahead, passing a bungalow on your left and some farm cottages and buildings to your right, to Poppinghole Lane. Cross the lane and take the track straight ahead. In 500 yards, ignore the bridle path to the right, bear left and in 100 yards where the track turns sharp right, turn left across a stile, in 50 yards cross another stile and keeping the fence close on your left cross the field, go over another stile and in a few yards turn right into the wood. Continue downhill; in 500 yards where four paths meet, take the left hand one and continue ahead to the sewage treatment plant. Take the path between the two parts of the plant and continue straight ahead uphill.

Follow the path to the left round the edge of the old Redlands gravel pit works to the footbridge over the by-pass; cross the bridge and continue along Fair Lane to the High Street and return to the starting point.

ther the left or right path round the church, (sheep often graze the churchyard so close the gates) through the churchyard to the rear towards the metal kissing gate between two large oak trees. The view to the right takes in the remains of Robertsbridge Abbey. Turn left and, in a few yards, right and follow the path straight ahead through these two fields and keeping the hedge on your left, both of these fields were formerly hop gardens. Go through a (usually open) gate, cross the surfaced farm road turning left by marker through gap into field. Continue straight ahead along the edge of the field keeping the hedge on your left.

In 150 yards the path bears left, keep the spinney and deep gulley close on your left continue ahead for approx 300 yards until reaching the boundary fence of Higham House. Turn right along the line of the fence and in 300 yards you will find a stile, cross it and turn immediately left into the grounds of Higham House. Follow the path keeping the fence to your left then over another stile and along the drive for a short distance. Just before the tall gates go left through a gate and follow the path around into an orchard then through a gate into a field, keeping the hedge on your right for 150 yards to a gate onto the driveway again. Turn right for 10 yards and then left through a small iron gate to the left of a pond; this is the rear garden of Lake Abbots and the right of way continues straight ahead through the garden to the left of the house and then through a gate to arrive at Bourne Lane.

Turn right and continue along Bourne Lane, follow the road around to the left ignoring first two gates on the right and a few yards past the corner, turn right over a stile and continue straight ahead keeping the spinney on

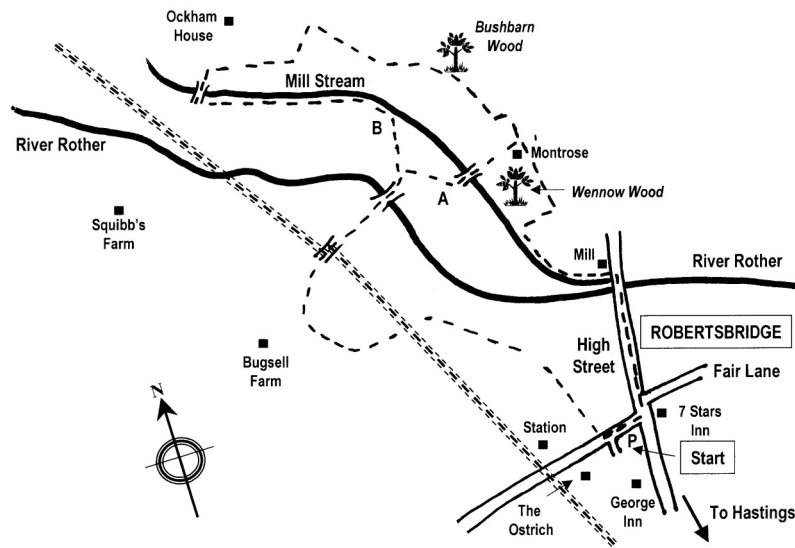
your right. In 200 yards go through another gate and continue straight ahead towards the centre of the hedge opposite on the far side of the field. Cross a stile and turn right.

Continue along the edge of the field keeping the wood (Six Acre Wood) on your right. The parish boundary runs along here and the ditch at the edge of the wood may be the original medieval boundary ditch. In 500 yards turn right, then over a footbridge into a narrow strip of woodland and continue straight ahead through the wood. In 200 yards the path turns left and then crosses a stile into a field. Over the stile, turn left and continue ahead along the side of the wood and cross another stile to enter the orchard of Moat farm. On the far edge of the first orchard, turn right for 100 yards then left over the ditch into another orchard and straight ahead following the white marker posts. On the far edge of this orchard turn left for 75 yards and then right through a small spinney, over another stile and here there are good views of Salehurst church slightly to the left. Straight ahead across the field and here we rejoin the path we took on our outward journey.

Retrace your steps to Salehurst church and then either return via church bridge and Redlands Lane or continue straight along Church Lane to Northbridge Street and back through the High Street.

**Walk 6 – Bugsell Farm – Ockham House – Mill steam – ‘Melrose’ –
Mill site – High Street**

Distance - approximately 2.5 or 4 miles



From the car park turn left along Station Road and in 200 yards right and go through the Grey-Nicolls cricket bat factory yard. Cricket bats have been made in Robertsbridge since the mid-19th century and are used all over the world where cricket is played; in the fields around the raw material can be seen growing.

The path crosses an earth bund, which is part of the flood defences constructed after the severe flooding of the village, which occurred in October 2000. Keep straight ahead going through the kiss-gate and under the railway viaduct of the Kent & East Sussex Railway (see below).

Continue straight ahead across the next field, keeping the stream on your right, then diagonally left to a wooden walkway with gate to pass under the railway viaduct of the main London - Hastings line. Go through metal gate, turn sharp right over a timber bridge then sharp left and continue along straight ahead through a narrow field. Through a gap in the hedge at the end, turn right uphill keeping the hedge on your right. Follow finger post to continue between two mesh fences keeping hedge on your right for 250 yards, through metal gate, then immediately left for a few yards where a fingerpost directs you diagonally across to the left hand corner of the field to arrive at a bridge back over the mainline railway. Go straight ahead across the field to the River Rother and cross by the wooden foot-bridge. The bridge over the river at this point was removed in 1940 by the army as part of the preparations for possible German invasion and it was not replaced until 1989!

Over the bridge, turn left, bear slightly right to the gateway about 100 yards away and here there is a choice of two routes home, a shorter (ROUTE A) and a slightly longer one (ROUTE B).

ROUTE A - Go over the stile on the right and bear right along the side of the pond. This is low lying land and has always been fairly marshy but some years ago the area was scraped out creating the pool, which has now become a home for many waterfowl. Swans, geese, ducks and snipe nest here, herons can often be seen and, in the reeds, are buntings and warblers. Continue around the edge of the pond on your left until the gap at the end of the fence which give you access to the footpath. Turn right along the footpath and in 150 yards turn left to cross a squeeze stile and the stone

bridge over the millstream. In a few yards turn right through another squeeze stile into Wennow Wood which was created in the 1990's by the Woodland Trust; continue straight ahead and at the edge of the wood turn right through two gate posts and follow the path around to the right along the edge of the mill stream and to the mill. There has been a mill on this site since the 13th century but the present brick building dates from the 19th. The mill was operational until 2004 but has since has been closed awaiting development. Follow the path to the main road and turn right along the High Street and return to the car park.

ROUTE B - This extension will add about 30 minutes to the walk but is well worth the effort.

Ignore the gate and cross the stile to the left and then, keeping the hedge on your left, continue straight ahead to the millstream and turn left over the stile. The millstream served Bugsell Mill in Etchingam and Roberts-bridge mill and as these have been in existence since at least the 13th century it is reasonable to assume that the stream dates from a similar period. Continue along the millstream and in 600 yards turn right over the stile by the stone bridge and cross it; to the right is a pill box dating from the 2nd World War. After crossing the stone bridge go straight ahead up hill through the avenue of trees towards Ockham House. In about 150 yards you will see a footpath on your right, take it and keep the hedge on your right. At the bottom of the hill to your right is the millstream that you have just walked along. At the top of the hill is Ockham House which is Edwardian and of no special architectural merit but it stands on the site of a much earlier house. The name Ockham is very common in this area and

is derived from the de Ocham family who owned the land in the 14th century and possibly earlier.

On the far side of the field, turn left and continue ahead for 150 yards, through a gap in the hedge and just before the gate turn right over a stile and then turn sharp right through a gap in the hedge. Through the gap, turn left and go steeply uphill keeping close to the spinney on your left. There are good views to the right.

At the top of the hill, go over a stile and continue straight ahead through the next field; over another stile and bear slightly right and continue along with the hedge on your left and in 300 yards turn left over a stile onto the surfaced drive. Turn right along the drive and in 100 yards you arrive at the bungalow called 'Melrose' (formerly Wennowayes) and continue over a stile to the left of the bungalow and straight ahead through a field and over a stile into Wennow Wood created by the Woodland Trust in the 1990's on land donated by the former owners of Wennowayes. Continue straight ahead for 100 yards and at the edge of the wood turn right downhill along the sunken track and then left through a gate and follow the path around to the right along the edge of the mill stream back to the High Street.

Footpath Walks in relation to the Rother Valley Railway

Regular steam trains travelling between Robertsbridge and Tenterden have not been seen since 1954 when the line closed to passenger traffic. The abandoned railway embankment between the main line station and Northbridge Street became overgrown with trees and the line towards Salehurst was ploughed back to grassland.

Now that the missing link of the Kent & East Sussex Railway is being restored as a separate scheme by the Rother Valley Railway, there are interesting developments for people who want to walk the route, view progress and appreciate the line's history.

A suggested walk starts at Robertsbridge Junction Station which is a completely new building under construction including water tower, carriage shed and locomotive shed. This is to be found to the East of the Network Rail main line station. Building work and the track layout started in the summer of 2012.

Proceed down Station Road towards the village centre. Within 200 metres turn left at Grey Nichols, the cricket bat factory and take the footpath northwards. Within 300 metres the first railway bridge can be found which passes over the footpath. This particular structure is interesting in that it is the only one at Robertsbridge which has been retained because of its historical significance. It is original to the construction of the railway and dates back to about 1898. Due to subsidence, the bridge was strengthened in 1946 under Kent & East Sussex Railway ownership and completed in 1947 by the then nationalised British Railways. It has since then, been restored by the Rother Valley Railway by considerably strengthening the abutments both behind and underneath where the stream flows. A new deck completes the restoration.

Continue straight ahead for approximately 250 metres and turn right over a stream where an attractive stone bridge is to be found. Please note that the section between the stone bridge and the railway bridge number 2 is not a public right of way. Head south east towards the railway and this is

where bridge no. 2 is to be found. This was constructed some ten years ago by Southern Water as mitigation for breaching the track bed because of their need to place a large water pipe beneath the railway. The deck is new having been replaced in 2012.

After passing beneath bridge no. 2, turn left and continue on the footpath which runs along the edge of the sports field and parallel with the railway. There the walker will find bridge No's 3, 4 and 5, all newly constructed in 2012. These structures are vital to allow for the movement of water when the River Rother periodically floods. This path brings the walker on to Northbridge Street at which point a level crossing will be built to take the railway on towards Tenterden.

Some historic facts of interest.

- The Rother Valley Railway won a top award for excellence for the construction of the five new and restored bridges referred to above. This was given by the Institute of Civil Engineering for the South East of England and awarded on the 7th June 2013.
- The steel bridge spans on bridges 2, 3, 4 and 5 were purchased second hand from Network Rail from the boat train route between Headcorn and Staplehurst. The line was being upgraded to allow for Eurostar trains which now have their own route to London known as High Speed One. They date back to 1904 and were sited at the very place where Charles Dickens was involved in a serious train crash which left 10 passengers killed. He was highly traumatised by the experience and died exactly five years to the day in 1870.

It's strange to imagine two crossings, fully operational until complete closure 1961, so close together on what was then the A21 main road between Hastings and London.

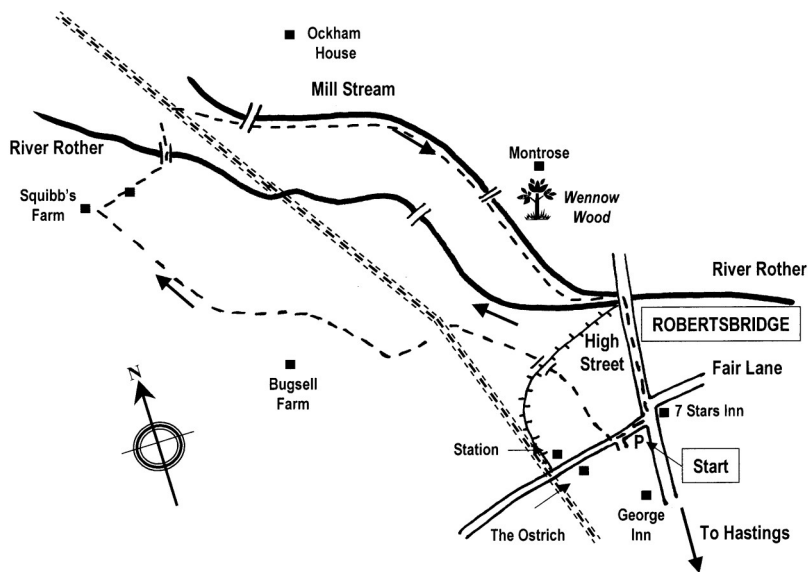
For further reading and information on the Rother Valley and Kent & East Sussex Railways, contact:

The Rother Valley Railway
Robertsbridge Junction Station
Station Road
Robertsbridge

East Sussex TN32 5DG Tel: 01580 881833 email: reception@rvr.org.uk
www.rvr.org.uk

Walk 7 – Bugsell Farm – Squibb’s Farm – Millstream – Mill site – High Street

Distance – approximately 4 miles



From the car park turn left along Station Road and in 100 yards right by the side of the Grey-Nicolls cricket bat factory. Keep straight ahead; go over the flood defence bund, through the kiss-gate and under the railway viaduct of the former Kent & East Sussex Railway. Continue straight ahead across the next field with the stream to your right then diagonally left to go over a wooden walkway with gate to pass under the railway viaduct of the main London - Hastings line. Go through metal gate, under viaduct, turn sharp right over a timber bridge then sharp left and continue

along straight ahead through a narrow field. Through a gap in the hedge at the end, turn right uphill keeping the hedge on your right. In 250 yards pass through a metal gate on your right, then immediately left. Follow alongside the hedge and in 200 yards go through gap in the hedge in the corner to cross another stile.

Go straight across the farm track and take a narrow track between two fences downhill and at the bottom cross a small drainage ditch, go over a stile and go steeply up the bank straight ahead; note the size of the old oak tree at this point and others around the edge of the field.

Continue uphill diagonally left and from the crest of the hill a stone farm bridge can be seen at the bottom of the hill; head towards this, cross over and continue ahead across the next field keeping the hedge on your left. At the end go through a gap in the hedge on your left over a dip then immediate right over a small stream and continue straight ahead uphill and in about 300 yards follow the track left through a gap in the hedge into the next field. Continue uphill towards the buildings of Squibb's Farm, keeping the hedge on the left. At the top of the field, go through the gate, turn right and in a few yards arrive at a cross- roads of farm tracks; take the right hand track along a sunken lane. The origin of the name Squibb's is uncertain but, like most farms around, is probably a family name or a distortion of one.

Continue straight ahead downhill and bear right along by the river and in a few yards turn left over a farm bridge over the River Rother. Across the bridge bear right towards the railway and follow the edge of the field along the line of the railway and in 200 yards cross the stiles to go over

the railway track. STOP, LOOK and LISTEN this is a busy line! On the other side of the track, turn right and continue straight ahead through a field, crossing a stile and in 3/4 mile arrive at a stone bridge over the mill-stream, visible to your left. At this point you have two alternatives, much the same distance but Route B will take you onto higher (and drier) ground.

ROUTE A

Keeping straight ahead, with the mill stream on your left, the route now runs for 1/2 mile along the side of the mill stream and arrives at the site of the former mill and the High Street; turn right and walk through the High Street to return to the starting point.

ROUTE B

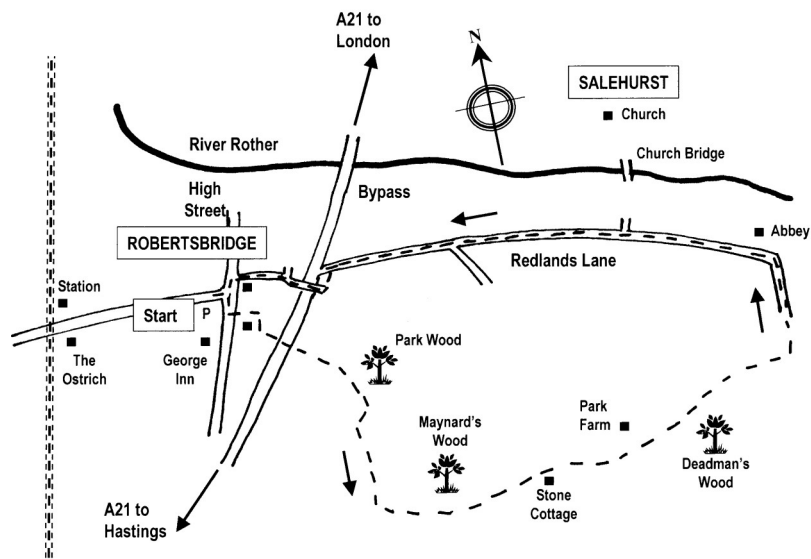
After crossing the gated stone bridge using a stile beside it go straight ahead uphill through the avenue of trees towards Ockham House. In about 150 yards you will see a footpath on your right, take it and keep the hedge on your right. At the bottom of the hill to your right is the millstream that you have just walked along. At the top of the hill is Ockham House which is Edwardian and of no special architectural merit but it stands on the site of a much earlier house. The name Ockham is very common in this area and is derived from the de Ocham family who owned the land in the 14th century and possibly earlier.

On the far side of the field, turn left and continue ahead for 150 yards, through a gap in the hedge and just before the gate turn right over a stile and then turn sharp right through a small gap in the hedge. Look out for

the yellow way-markers. Through the gap, turn left and go steeply uphill keeping close to the spinney on your left. There are good views to the right. At the top of the hill, go over a stile and continue straight ahead through the next field; over another stile and bear slightly right and continue along with the hedge on your left and in 300 yards turn left over a stile onto the surfaced drive. Turn right along the drive and in 100 yards you arrive at the bungalow called 'Melrose' (formerly Wennowayes). Continue over a stile to the left of the bungalow and straight ahead through a field and over a stile into Wennow Wood created by the Woodland Trust in the 1990's on land donated by the former owners of Wennowayes. Continue straight ahead for 100 yards and at the edge of the wood turn right downhill along the sunken track and then left through a gate and follow the path around to the right along the edge of the mill stream back to the High Street.

Walk 8 - Park Wood -Stone Cottage -Park -Farm -Abbey -Fair Lane

Distance - approximately 4 -miles



From the car park turn right along the High Street; turn right to the village sign, cross the road and take the twitten between the youth club and the book shop. Follow the path behind the school playing fields, cross the stile and turn left and cross the field to the bypass. Cross a stile, go over the bypass, taking care! and cross another stile on the opposite side of the road. Go straight ahead across the field to Park Wood. If you aim to the right of the electricity pole in the centre of the field you will see the way into the wood below you when you reach the crest of the field.

Cross the small stream and enter the wood and follow the path straight ahead through the wood; in the Spring this is filled with Wood Anemones and Bluebells. In 200 yards, the path goes off to the right and can be difficult to see if overgrown but there are plenty of yellow markers. Follow the track through the wood using the yellow markers until you reach a main track which crosses from right to left; turn right at the markers and you will arrive at the edge of the wood. Turn left and in a few yards cross over a stile to the left, turn right and keep the fence close on your right between the two fields and at the edge of the field go over another stile and joining a wide farm track, go over the next stile. In 100 yards where the path divides turn left down a bridle path through a small spinney; at the edge of the trees, turn left again and follow the wide path bearing slightly right. In 800 yards the path arrives at another small spinney and turns left through it to Stone Cottage where it joins a surfaced farm track.

Turn left along the track, passing Lordship Cottage on the right. The house on your left Park Cottage, was once owned by 'the sage of Roberts-bridge', Malcolm Muggeridge. In 200 yards where the track bears left to pass Park Farm, turn right and, keeping the lake on your left, continue to Pipes Cottage. Go through a gate and continue straight ahead towards Deadmans Wood and through another gate and along a track by the side of the wood. There are superb views to the left and behind from here.

In 600 yards the path continues just inside the wood along a deep track, which can be very muddy! and then in a further 200 yards the track joins a farm road. Turn left and in 100 yards the path leaves the track by a marker to pass behind a farmhouse and farm buildings and then shortly rejoins the

track; turn left and shortly pass the remains of Robertsbridge Abbey on the right. The abbey was founded in 1198 originally on a site closer to Robertsbridge (possibly near the present village sign) but moved to this site in the 14th century. It was founded by Cistercian monks and although the complement of monks was probably no more than 30, the abbey site was quite extensive and the abbey often played a significant role in the political life of the country. Not much is now visible above ground, but aerial photographs of crop markings show clearly the extent of the buildings. What remains above ground are mostly the Abbot's House and parts of the refectory which now form part of a private house; the remains are occasionally open to the public and are well worth a visit.

In the 12th century the then abbot, Robert, built a new bridge across the river some distance to the west of the original crossing at Salehurst and brought about the development of Northbridge Street and Robertsbridge. Follow the road past the abbey, which is Fair Lane, and continue along for 1½ miles, over the bypass and back to the High Street and the start of the walk

Published by David Allen 2013
Printed by Berfrofts, Hastings, East Sussex TN35 4NR

