

TRAVEL LOG LEWES WALKS, WITH THE RAMBLERS IN ARLINGTON

Summary:

The walk starts and ends at Berwick railway station, a 10 minute journey from Lewes. An idyllic ramble through tranquil, quiet and gently undulating countryside with fine views of the downs and weald, highlighting the footpath work of the Ramblers. Lots of opportunities for refreshment, but quite a few stiles.

Getting there

Start location:

Berwick Railway Station Sussex TQ527067

Getting there:

Berwick Railway Station is served by trains between Brighton, Lewes, Polegate, Eastbourne and Hastings. Trains call once an hour throughout the week. If coming from London, it may be quicker to go to Brighton and change there, rather than changing at Lewes.

Time Required: 3 – 4 hours plus any stops or diversions

Length: 7.63miles / 12.28km

Difficulty: Leisurely

Directions:

This route is designed to give you a great walk in tranquil and peaceful countryside, but it also highlights the work of the Ramblers in protecting our footpath network. You will walk on paths which have been re-opened as a result of pressure by the Ramblers, and also see some sites where there is still work to do. If you come across a problem please report it to East Sussex Council by post at Rights of Way and Countryside Management team, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex BN7 1UE or on line at

www.eastsussex.gov.uk/leisureandtourism/countryside/rightsofway/default.htm

There are a significant number of stiles on this walk.

1) Leave Berwick station by the main road which crosses the tracks. Head left (north) for about 30 metres and then turn right down the side of a driveway (footpath sign) On emerging from the houses

you will see two paths ahead of you. Take the one that is slightly to the left of the other. Cross a bridge and then follow a route to the north of the fence, to reach a track at Chilverbridge House.

2) On reaching the track turn right and walk down the track for about 10 metres. Then turn left through a gate and a garden. *This path was closed for many years. It was reopened after the Ramblers served a statutory notice on the council. After re-opening a sign was placed on the north side of the track. Someone kept moving it so it pointed up the track rather than the footpath. So now the council have mounted the sign on the other side of the track. Please let them know if it is moved or removed.*

3) At the end of the garden you will find a stile. Climb this and turn right.

4) Reach the road and cross carefully. Ahead of you is a parking area and, to the left of this, a path goes north east through trees. *This was impassible for many years, forcing walkers to walk in the road round a blind bend. The Ramblers pressed for its clearance. The council said that, if it were re-opened no one would use it. It is open now. Judge for yourself whether or not they were right.*

5) At the end of the path cross the road again and turn right, walking along a wide pavement. Then turn left on a track, signposted for the Wealdway, a long distance path between Gravesend and Eastbourne. Follow the Wealdway travelling north north east. At a stile, the track becomes a path.

6) After the next stile turn sharp right, leaving the Wealdway. Follow a path on the north side of a fence.



7) The path passes between a house and a hedge to reach the road. The right of way is straight ahead on the other side of the road, through an unmarked gate to the right of a garage. It is usually locked. However, if you walk left (north east) down the road you will find a waymarked path. Turn right down this. Walk about 70 metres to the point at which the path turns left. Read the sign on fence to your right. A previous owner made an

informal diversion and, as the sign says, left the legal route open encouraging people to use the diversion. As you can see, the route is now impassible. This represents the sort of dilemma that footpath workers sometimes face. On the one hand, the diversion is a minor one. On the other hand, the route on the ground now diverges from the route shown on maps and quite a lot of people here. Consider what you might have done if you did not have route guide. If you feel that this is a problem report it to the council. They say they will take action if enough people complain. If, however, you think that the problem is minor, let it go.



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8) Having turned left cross a stile and enter a large field. The path may be ploughed up and planted with crops. If it is you have the option of walking through the crops. You are heading east north east, aiming for the right hand opposite corner of the field. If you prefer you can walk round the edge of the field, but this is considerably longer. If you want to do this turn right and continue walking.

Ploughing up paths and growing crops over them is one of the biggest footpath problems in this part of the low weald. The Ramblers and East Sussex County Council wage a continual battle to keep paths clear. If the path is grown over PLEASE report it to the council. Please also report any other cases you come across. The more people report problems the more likely the path is to be kept clear. If you walk through crops on a right of way the usual advice is to walk in single file. This is because it marks the path out more clearly for other walkers.

At the mid point of the field you can make a diversion to the left to the pub in Arlington village, which does lunch and has a garden.

9) Having reached the far corner of the field cross a stile and walk down a neatly manicured alley with hedges on either side, an odd contrast to what has gone before and will come again. Cross the road and find another possibly ploughed field. Have a look at the map to see how many paths there are in this field. How many of them exist on the ground? Just to your right you are likely to find a cleared route across the field. It is not on any right of way, but is the easiest way across the field.

At point 9 you can make a diversion. Turn right and walk for about 400 metres down the road to Arlington tea gardens. Having taken tea turn left out of the tea gardens and walk along the road for about 70 metres. Then turn left along a signed path to meet the main route in the middle of the field I've mentioned above.

Having reached the end of the field you now have an easier walk through green fields to Bates Green Farm.

10) On reaching the road at Bates Green Farm turn right along the road for about 100 metres and then turn left over a stile. Walk back at 45 degrees to the route you came on until you reach an overgrown hedge.

The route has been diverted here. It originally went through the farm buildings. The landowner opens the farm for bluebell walks for payment (to a charity) in the spring. So this used to be the only right of way with a pay turnstile in Sussex!

If you want to visit the pub ahead stay on this side of the hedge/tree line and follow the path to the pub, which serves food at lunchtime and has outdoor seating. Otherwise cross a stile and turn right, walking on the north west side of the hedge/trees.

The landowner wanted to close one of the paths that runs either side of the trees here on the grounds that they were just duplicates. The Ramblers successfully argued that this should not happen on the grounds that their characters were very different. On the south eastern side you get extensive views over the downs, but on the north east side there are very different vistas over the high weald.

12) If you have visited the pub turn left at the end of your visit and walk down the road until you meet a farm drive on your left. Turn down this and then immediately right to rejoin the main route.

On the other side of the road is an entrance to Abbots Wood. This extensive forest has open access and can make an interesting diversion on your walk.

If following the main route follow the path straight ahead from Bates Green Farm until you reach a second farmyard. Walk through this (pub diversion joins from the right) and then bear left at the end, following a track.

13) At point 13 leave the track and make a head right to a gate in a corner of the field. Then follow the path ahead. Turn left and then immediately right on reaching a wood and then follow a path on the east side of a field next to the wood to a road.

14) Turn left along the road and pass [Michelham Priory](#) which you may wish to visit.

15) Shortly after the priory turn right on a path heading north and then north west. Cross the cricket pitch which St Bedes School have thoughtfully placed right over the path. (You may wish to walk round the pitch if a match is on) Occasionally the school places nets over the path. Do let the council know if this happens. Walk through an alley to emerge right next to [Dicker stores and cafe](#). This establishment survives on patronage from the School but will also appreciate your custom.

16) The official route runs down an alley ahead of the stores, but you may find it easier to walk down the lane or across the green.

17) Either way, you are heading for the road about 100 metres in front of the stores. Turn left here and walk down the main road, across the cross roads and past the St Bedes school. A little further on, on your right, is yet another pub with food and a garden.

The older part of the school was originally the home of one of the early 20th century's more colourful characters, the MP and fraudster [Horatio Bottomley](#). Although he was a crook, we arguably owe him a debt, because he was influential enough to persuade the railway company to open Berwick Station so his mates could visit him.

18) Turn left here down a tunnel of foliage. Notice the efforts the landowner has gone to to avoid you intruding on their privacy. What are they hiding?

19) Turn right across the St Bedes golf course, following the Wealdway signs.

Notice how the school has built a green right across the right of way. Nasty people have been known to comment that St Bedes is a school for students who are sporty but none too bright. The way they have treated their rights of way seems to suggest that this may apply to the school too.

The route follows the Wealdway for about two kilometres

We are again following the Wealdway. This path, which runs from Gravesend to Eastbourne, was the initiative of the Kent area of the Ramblers, with support from Sussex area. For years members worked away at the problems in creating this route. It is almost all on rights of way, but many of them, especially in Sussex, were obstructed or difficult to walk for other reasons. After years of work and negotiation, the route is now fully signposted and easy to walk. It is a classic walk for southern England. More details [here](#)

20) Enter a large field, heading in broadly the same direction as before.

21) Here a path joins your route coming in from the right. If you cannot see it on the ground because it is planted over or ploughed please [tell the council](#). The route now runs along the banks of the Cuckmere river for a short time. This is a good point for a picnic.

22) Cross a track to join a path in the field ahead of you (Do not cross the bridge over the river) Head broadly west across a field, heading for a stile in the hedge ahead at point 23. Then head in broadly the same direction in the next field aiming for a point along the hedgerow/row of trees to your right in the far corner of the field. *If the paths between points 22 and 24 are ploughed up you can walk round the right hand edge of the fields, but please [tell the council](#).*

24) On reaching the edge of the field turn left along along a bridleway the edge and cross a bridge.

25) Shortly after this turn right on a bridleway. *Until recently this route was completely obstructed. At every point where you cross a hedge between here and the next road, there was no way through. There were no bridges on the route. The landowner had completely suppressed the path. The Ramblers served a statutory notice on the council to get them to force the landowner to open the path and to build new structures.*



26) Enter a large field. You should head in a broadly north westerly direction across this field. *In the past the council has had to enter the land here, clear crops from the path and bill the landowner. If this needs to be done again please [tell the council](#).*

27) Cross the bridge and imagine what getting across this stream without it was like! If the path ahead of you is ploughed up you can walk along the edge of the field but as usual please [tell the council](#).

Picture- path clearance by East Sussex Council.

28) Turn left along the road. Initially there is a large grass verge you can walk on but this ceases after the entrance to Lower Claverham Farm. *The route to the right (which you do not take) is a bridleway. The council keep erecting bridleway signs but someone keeps removing them.* Continue straight ahead taking great care. This is the busiest road on the walk.

29) Turn right on a footpath here, heading towards the impressive farm building of May's Farm, which shortly comes into view. Cross a lane at point 30 and head in the same direction at point 31 until the farm house is reached. at point 32. Here turn 45 degrees to the left.

You are now on the [Vanguard Way](#), a long distance path from Croydon to Newhaven promoted by the Vanguard Rambling Club.

33) Leave the field and cross a stile. There are two routes across the next field. Take the one to the left, aiming for a stile in the hedge ahead of you.

34) Cross the garden, aiming for the main drive gateway. Then follow the drive to the next gateway.

35) Now turn right along the Vanguard Way. This path will take you back to the station. You emerge on the northern side of the station. *Notice the plaque on the north side of the station building commemorating the formal opening of the Vanguard Way by Kate Ashbrook, a prominent Ramblers member.*

If you are already a member of the Ramblers I hope this walk has given you some idea of what you pay your subscription for. If you would like to become involved in helping to protect rights of way follow [this link](#)

If you are not yet a member, find out how to join [here](#)

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