

# Wadhurst to Tunbridge Wells walk

Plenty of fine views on this short High Weald walk to the spa town of Royal Tunbridge Wells

<b>Length</b>	<p><b>Main Walk:</b> 13¾ km (8.5 miles). Three hours 30 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.</p> <p><b>Short Walk, finishing in Frant:</b> 11 km (6.8 miles). Two hours 50 minutes walking time.</p>
<b>OS Map</b>	<p>Explorer 136. Wadhurst, map reference TQ621330, is in East Sussex, 7 km SE of Tunbridge Wells, which is in Kent.</p>
<b>Toughness</b>	<p>5 out of 10 (4 for the Short Walk).</p>
<b>Features</b>	<p>This short walk near the border of East Sussex and Kent takes in similar territory to the Wealden walks from Book 2, with the first 1 km being the same as the <a href="#">Wadhurst Circular walk</a> (2–18). The first part of the walk is along the <a href="#">Sussex Border Path</a>, a long-distance east-west route which here includes open ridges with fine views, interspersed with short sections across streams in wooded valleys. The latter provided the water power for the Wealden iron industry, Britain's 'first industrial revolution'; in the 16<sup>th</sup> &amp; 17<sup>th</sup>C this would have been a busy industrial area but today only traces remain in names like Furnace Wood.</p> <p>On the other side of the A267 the scene changes to the landscaped parkland of the Nevill Estate's <a href="#">Eridge Old Park</a>, where the colours on the mature beech trees are particularly attractive in late autumn. A permissive path along its eastern boundary takes you to a lunch stop in the elegant hill-top village of <b>Frant</b>, dominated by its large triangular green.</p>

On the short afternoon section you soon reach the outskirts of **Tunbridge Wells**, where a relatively traffic-free route along back streets and quiet alleys takes you down to its High Street. This spa town developed in the 17<sup>th</sup>C after an influential nobleman staying nearby became convinced that the iron-rich water from its **chalybeate spring** had curative properties. Its popularity waned in the 18<sup>th</sup>C when sea bathing became more fashionable than 'taking the waters', but revived after regular visits from Queen Victoria and Prince Albert. The town's popularity with the royal family led to it being granted the "Royal" prefix in 1909.

*The permissive path along the edge of Eridge Old Park was provided under a DEFRA conservation scheme and is managed by Natural England. It can be boggy in winter and overgrown in summer. Access is not guaranteed after March 2020 and unless a permanent right of way is established this walk will probably have to be abandoned, since there is no convenient alternative route.*

### Walk Options

For a shorter route after lunch you can finish at Frant station, which is actually in the neighbouring village of Bells Yew Green (the 254 bus is another option: see below). This is the reverse of a (now discarded) route from Frant in the **Tunbridge Wells Circular walk** (#19) and should be used with caution: although it includes a ridge walk with fine views and a pleasant descent through a wood, the final ten minutes are along a busy road with no pavement.

### Transport

There is a half-hourly service from Charing Cross to Wadhurst, two stops down the line from Tunbridge Wells, taking just over an hour. Tunbridge Wells has up to four trains an hour; fewer on Sundays and in the evenings. If you finish at Frant station (the one in between), it only has an hourly off-peak service. Buy a **return to Wadhurst**.

If you want to finish the walk after lunch in Frant, an alternative to walking to its (distant) station is to take one of the regular buses from outside the Abergavenny Arms to Tunbridge Wells; the 254 would also take you (in the other direction) back to Wadhurst station.

If driving, Wadhurst station car park costs £4.90 off-peak, £3.40 Sat, £1 Sun (2018). You could instead try parking at the end of the walk in Tunbridge Wells, but parking anywhere near the centre of the town is difficult and/or relatively expensive.

### Suggested Train

Take the train nearest to **09:45** from **Charing Cross to Wadhurst**.

### Lunch

The suggested lunchtime pub is the popular **George Inn** (01892-750350) in Frant village, after 8¼ km; it has a beer garden and serves excellent home-made food, up to 2.30pm daily. If this is too busy there is a good alternative on the main road through the village: the **Abergavenny Arms** (01892-750233) serves food all day.

### Tea

At the end of the walk there are many refreshment places in **Tunbridge Wells**. The main walk route takes you into the High Street with its many cafés, delicatessens and coffee shops, such as **Juliets** at #54 (01892-522931; open Tue–Sun to 5pm). If you prefer to avoid the town centre you can take an alternative route via Calverley Grounds; its **Tea House** café has outdoor seating. There are also plenty of pubs in the town, with the most unusual being the **Opera House**, a splendid building which more recently was a cinema and bingo hall and is now a JD Wetherspoon pub; it is a five-minute walk up Mount Pleasant Road from the station.

If you finish at **Frant** station and have to wait for a train, the nearby convenience store serves hot drinks. Just up the road in the centre of Bells Yew Green, the **Brecknock Arms** (01892-750237) is normally open all day (but from 4pm Mon & Tue).

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**Photos**

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**By Car**

**Start** TN5 6RZ **Finish** TN1 1BT

**Help**

National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline SE (bus times): 0871 200 2233 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

**Version**

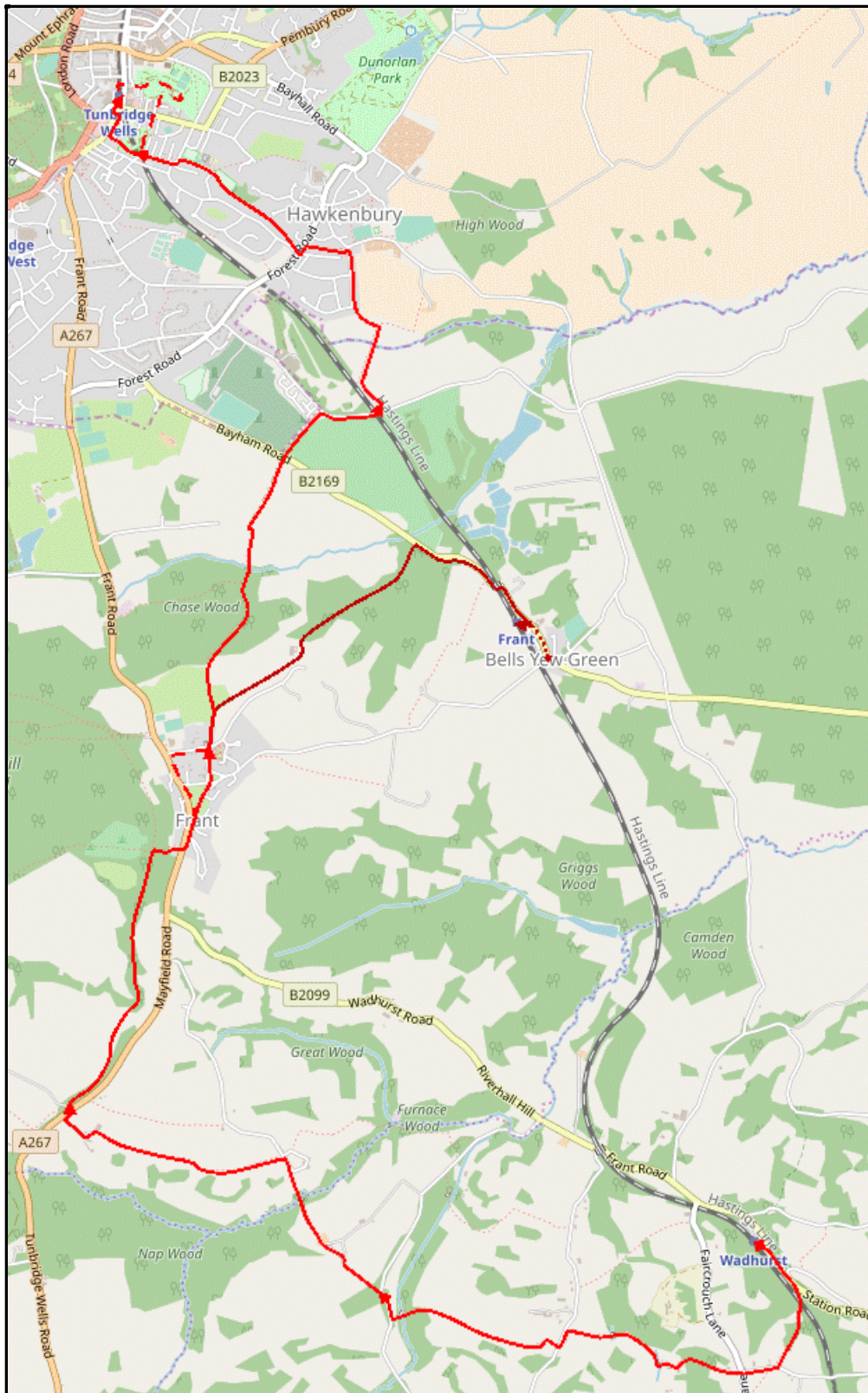
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## Walk Directions

## Walk Map



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## Walk Options

- M. Main Walk (13¾ km)
- a. Short Walk, finishing at Frant station (11 km)

## Walk Directions

### 1. Wadhurst Station to Partridges Lane (3¼ km)

Outside the station turn right, go through its car park and continue uphill on the B2099 for 150m. Opposite a small development called "The Keys" **veer right** off the road onto a signposted public footpath, joining the **Sussex Border Path<sup>1</sup>** (SBP). Go down a slope towards the railway and cross the tracks carefully.

On the other side follow the footpath waymarkers to head **S** across a field, then through a small wood. Go through a wooden gate onto an enclosed path past farm buildings and out along its drive. At the end turn right onto a lane, soon ignoring a footpath off to the left (the route of Walk 2–18) to reach a T-junction with a minor road.

Go straight across this road onto a driveway to the right of a garage. Follow this past a few houses and downhill through a wood, curving left around a pond at the bottom. As the drive approaches the buildings of Ravensdale Farm **turn right** as indicated through a wooden gate and follow a grassy path down the left-hand side of a field, heading **NW**.

Halfway down the field **veer left**, following the path into the trees. Cross a stream on a wooden footbridge and go up a potentially muddy sunken path, through a gate and along the right-hand edge of two fields. After curving round to the left in the second field, follow the path down into the trees on your right.

At the bottom cross a stream on a wooden footbridge and follow the path up and round to the left. Go through a metal kissing gate into a large field and make your way up to its top left-hand corner, where you will be able to see an imposing building on the hill behind you, **The Mount<sup>2</sup>**. Go through a metal side gate and turn left onto a lane.

Go along the lane for 100m, passing the entrance to "Woodcote" on your left, then **turn right** onto a car-wide track; this is a public footpath and the continuation of the SBP, although not well signposted. Go along the grassy track between wire fences, turning half-left in front of a wooden fieldgate. At the end go through another wooden side gate in a belt of trees and **bear right** to go alongside them.

Continue along the right-hand edge of two large fields for 600m, with fine views off to your left. At the end of the second field go through a kissing gate on the right and **turn left** as indicated. Go along the left-hand edge of this field and through a kissing gate in the bottom corner. Follow a path going steeply downhill through a wood, crossing a stream at the bottom. At the end of the path go over a stile onto a minor road (Partridges Lane).

## 2. Partridges Lane to the A267 (2½ km)

Turn right and go along the lane for 175m, curving round to the left at the entrance to Bramdene Farm and then going across a semi-cleared valley. As the lane swings back to the right **turn left** onto a signposted footpath going steeply up the wooded valley. At the end of the trees go through a wooden gate and continue up the right-hand edge of a large field.

In the corner go through a metal fieldgate onto a farm track, passing a converted oast house on your left. At a T-junction **turn left** onto a track towards the buildings of Earlye Farm. After passing the farmhouse follow the yellow waymarkers (slightly to the left) between barns and sheds to a wooden gate leading into a field.

Go straight across the field, roughly parallel to the hedge on your left; as the ground dips away towards a wooded valley you will see a wooden gate near the bottom left-hand corner. Go through this and down an awkward slope (with a helpful handrail), then across a stream on a wooden footbridge. Go up to a wooden gate leading into another field and climb steeply up its right-hand edge.

In the top corner go through a gap and bear right across the next field to a gate in the far right-hand corner, which takes you onto a narrow path between hedges. This comes out onto the driveway to "Lightlands" by a four-way footpath signpost where you **turn left** (still on the SBP). Go through a gate and follow a faint grassy path straight ahead across a meadow.

On the far side go through a metal fieldgate and continue along the right-hand edge of the next field. In the corner a small metal gate takes you into another field. Ignore a gate ahead and **follow the hedge round to the right**, uphill. At the top go through a metal

fieldgate on the left into another field.

On the OS map the right of way appears to go directly across this field to another gate on the far side, but it is easier to follow the broad grassy margin around the top of the field. Go through the fieldgate on the far side (not one in the corner) and continue along the right-hand edge of more fields towards some large barns 400m away; across the valley on your left you might be able to see the top of **Saxonbury Hill Tower**<sup>3</sup> poking out above the trees of Nap Wood.

In 250m **veer right** through a metal fieldgate in a large gap in the hedge and go past the left-hand side of these barns. Bear left across a yard onto a farm track going downhill. At the bottom **turn right** in front of the buildings of Pococksgate Farm and follow its driveway out to the A267.

### 3. The A267 to Frant village (2½ km)

Turn right briefly onto the main road, **crossing over with great care** at some point. Ignore a footpath signpost pointing to a narrow path through the bracken (the continuation of the SBP) but shortly afterwards **turn left** onto a car-wide track, a private entrance into **Eridge Old Park**<sup>4</sup>.

*For some far-reaching views across the parkland you would have to sneak up to the deer fence and cattle grid ahead, but this is not a right of way. The mansion (Eridge Park) is nearly 3 km away, to the north-west.*

To continue the walk **turn right almost immediately** off the track onto a grassy path into the undergrowth, where there is an information panel about permissive access to the Nevill Estate. Follow the path through the trees and bracken, gradually moving away from the noisy main road. In 400m the path comes to the unsurfaced driveway to a large house off to the left.

Do not continue through the trees ahead but **turn left** briefly onto the drive, then **immediately veer right** onto a faint grassy path along the edge of a long narrow field, with the wood on your right. In 200m follow the path back into the trees and **bear left** to resume your previous direction, as indicated by a waymarker on a tree trunk.

For a while the route is not clearly defined. After going down a short slope you need to make your way across a small stream. On the other side follow the path uphill to a T-junction and **turn left** (avoiding paths into a field on your right which would take you back to the A267). From this point on the route is mostly along a broad grassy path; there are a few stretches through bracken where it can be tricky to follow but you are never too far away from a high wire deer fence on your left.

In 250m you go past a (locked) metal gate on the left leading into the park, with **Saxonbury House**<sup>5</sup> off to the right. In the remaining 400m of this permissive path you will probably have to negotiate some boggy patches where it dips down across seasonal streams. Eventually you come to a pedestrian gate in the deer fence with waymarkers on a footpath signpost for both the **High Weald Landscape Trail**<sup>6</sup> (HWLT) and the **Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk**<sup>7</sup> (TWCW).

*For the next 3½ km you will be following these two trails as well as (in reverse) the route of Walk #19.*

Do not go through the gate but in 20m **turn right** at another signpost to go uphill on a broad path between wire fences. This zig-zags left and right, narrows and comes out between buildings onto the A267. Carefully cross over this main road and turn left to come to the bottom of Frant's large triangular green. Carry on along the grass, crossing two driveways and then a side road (The Green) onto the main part of the village green.

*The main route takes you past the suggested lunch pub on the village's High Street, but follow the directions in §3b if you want to visit the alternative pub on the A267.*

#### a. Main route

Bear right to take the path between the cricket pitch and The Green, aiming for a small building with a pyramidal tiled roof (an old well). In the top corner of the main green cross a side road (The Green again) onto Frant's High Street, passing the

well and heading towards the church. At the far end of this picturesque little street you come to the suggested lunchtime stop, the **George Inn**, opposite the **Old School**<sup>8</sup>.

**b. Alternative route (+200m)**

For the alternative pub carry on along the bottom of the main green. At the end cross a side road (The Green again) and continue along the main road to find the **Abergavenny Arms** on the right.

To resume the walk turn right out of the pub to continue along the A267 for a further 100m, then **turn right** into Church Lane. Follow this narrow lane uphill for 200m to its junction with the High Street.

*If you are doing the Short Walk and finishing at Frant station, go to §7.*

**4. Frant village to Windmill Farm (2½ km)**

At the northern end of the High Street go through the lychgate and up to the church of **St Alban**<sup>9</sup>, which is worth visiting. Follow the path round to the right of the church and all the way to the far corner of the churchyard. Make your way into the top of a large field and continue in the same direction, with a hedge on your right. In 100m there is a three-way footpath signpost by a gap in the hedge.

For the **Main Walk**, continue alongside the hedge. In the corner of the field go through a gap in the hedge and bear right to go along another field edge. Cross over a track and go down to the bottom corner of the field. Go through a wicket gate and follow a path on a long steady descent through Chase Wood.

Towards the bottom stay on the main path as it curves round to the left. Immediately after crossing a small stream **fork right** as indicated, then keep right at the next path junction. After crossing a footbridge over another stream at the edge of the wood, ignore a stile leading into a field on the right and continue on a tree-lined path between fields, heading N.

In 200m the path comes out in front of Brickhouse Farm. Turn left briefly onto a farm track, then in 25m **turn right** into its farmyard. Go along its left-hand side and continue on the farm's long driveway to reach a road (the B2169). Cross over carefully and go through a wicket gate opposite (slightly to the left) onto a corner of Nevill Golf Course.

The right of way is alongside the brick wall on your left. At the top of a practice area continue through a small car park, then keep left of the club house. After a final section alongside the main car park you come out onto a lane (Benhall Mill Road) by the Golf Club entrance, with the **Nevill Crest**<sup>10</sup> on top of its brick pillars.

**Turn right**, temporarily heading away from Tunbridge Wells, and go along this quiet lane for 350m. On the other side of a high brick bridge over the railway **turn left** into the entrance to Windmill Farm, then **immediately veer left** onto a path between hedges, to the left of a fieldgate for Windmill Farm Cottage.

**5. Windmill Farm to The Grove (2½ km)**

Follow the path alongside the railway. It later broadens into a grassy strip which swings right and goes down to the top corner of a field. **Keep right** to stay on the public footpath (there is a fenced permissive path around its perimeter but the exit gate at the bottom might be locked). In the bottom corner cross a stream and follow the path into a wood.

*Just inside the wood a path on the left is used by locals as a short cut, but the route described below follows the right of way.*

Follow the main path through the wood, climbing gently. In 125m **turn left** at a clear but unsignposted path crossing, finally leaving the HWLT and TWCW. Soon there is a more open area of rough grassland and young trees on your left (the short cut goes through this area). Keep right to come to a fenced path leading out into a residential area.

Fork right and go all the way up Maryland Road. At the top turn left briefly onto Hawkenbury Road, then immediately **veer left** into an alley (Westbrook Terrace) to the left of the first house. Ignore side paths and follow this out to Forest Road (with the

Spread Eagle pub on your right).

Turn left onto this busy road (crossing over at a traffic island) and **turn right** into Farmcombe Road. In 50m bear right at a footpath signpost to continue on a tarmac path, which soon becomes a long alleyway between houses. Later there is an open area on the right and eventually you come out onto a lane opposite Claremont Primary School.

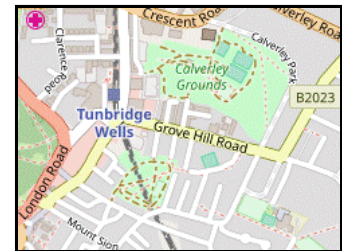
Take the alley to the left of the school entrance and go past its playing fields to Claremont Road. Turn left and follow this residential road round a right-hand bend. In 150m, where the road bears left, **keep ahead** into the top of a small open space, The Grove.

## 6. The Grove to Tunbridge Wells Station (½ or ¾ km)

*The main route takes you down to the High Street, with a choice of tea places. You can avoid the town centre by taking the alternative route in §6b via Calverley Grounds, where there is a café.*

### a. Main route (½ km)

For the main route go straight ahead down the left-hand side of The Grove, soon passing a panel "About the Grove" describing the area's history. At the bottom continue downhill on a cul-de-sac (Grove Avenue) and then South Grove to reach the High Street. The station is 250m off to the right, with several tea places in this direction; alternatively turn left to find **Juliet's** on the other side of the main road, 50m away.



*More tea places can be found in **The Pantiles**, but this would require a longer detour away from the station; the start of this colonnaded walkway is 300m away to the left, on the other side of the A267.*

On the way to the station there is a branch of **Caffè Nero** on the left, opposite a coffee shop inside Christ Church. The High Street leads into Vale Road with the Station Approach road on the other side, just off to your left. If you do not want to dodge the traffic on this busy main road you can reach the alternative entrance in Mount Pleasant Road (straight ahead) via two sets of pedestrian traffic lights; there are more cafés in this area too.

### b. Route via Calverley Grounds (¾ km)

For the alternative route **turn right** to go along the top of The Grove, passing a children's playground on your left. Ignore an exit on the right and keep ahead into Meadow Hill Road. At the end turn right into Grove Hill Road, cross over and turn left into Mountfield Gardens. This leads into **Calverley Grounds**<sup>11</sup>, with its **Tea House**<sup>12</sup> directly ahead. A nice route is to follow the path as it curves round to the right, then go down steps on the left to double back through the ornamental **Italian Garden** to the café.

To reach the station, turn right out of the café and follow the path as it curves down to the main entrance. Keep ahead along a short street to reach Mount Pleasant Road. One of the station entrances is about 50m off to the left; alternatively a path opposite (slightly to the right) behind Bus Stop B will take you over the railway and down to the main entrance and booking office.

*Through trains to London leave from Platform 1 by the booking office, but trains starting from here occasionally leave from the one opposite. There is an overhead walkway linking the two platforms.*

## 7. Frant village to Frant station (2¾ km)

At the northern end of the High Street go through the lychgate and up to the church of **St Alban**<sup>9</sup>, which is worth visiting. Follow the path round to the right of the church and all the way to the far corner of the churchyard. Make your way into the top of a large field and continue in the same direction, with a hedge on your right. In 100m there is a three-way footpath signpost by a gap in the hedge.



For the **Short Walk** to Frant station, *turn right* through this gap. Follow a faint grassy path along a ridge for 500m, roughly parallel to a track below and with fine views off to the left. At the end of the field you come to a cluster of houses at Ely Grange.

Go through a wicket gate and bear left across a driveway as indicated. Go alongside a short hedge and over a stile to the right of some imposing entrance gates. Keep ahead on a track between tall hedges and follow it round to the left, passing a paddock and some stables on your right. Go over a stile and follow the broad path round to the right, heading **NE** on the edge of a wood with a field on your right.

Where the path splits *fork left* for preference (the right fork rejoins near the entrance to a water treatment plant, a wooden fieldgate with a prominent "Keep Out" notice). Continue on a narrow path a little way to the left of this gate and follow it gently downhill through the wood for 500m, with the aid of an occasional yellow waymarker. The path stays fairly close to the left-hand edge of the wood and eventually comes out abruptly onto a busy road, the B2169.

Turn right onto this road, *taking great care as there is no pavement*. You have to negotiate this awkward stretch of road for 800m, with a particularly tricky spot two-thirds of the way along where it bends left and right under a railway bridge, with limited visibility. As you reach the small village of **Bells Yew Green**<sup>13</sup> the entrance to Frant station is on your right; you need to cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

*If you have time to wait before one of the hourly trains, there is a convenience store (serving hot drinks) just past the station entrance and a pub in the village centre, 250m further along the road.*

## Walk Notes

1. The **Sussex Border Path** runs for 240 km along the length of West & East Sussex, from Thorney Island on the Hampshire border to Rye.
2. **The Mount** was originally a Victorian monastery. Since 1970 it has been **The Mount Camphill Community**, a residential centre for students with learning difficulties.
3. **Saxonbury Hill Tower** is a gothic folly on the Eridge Park estate, built in 1828.
4. The spacious parkland of **Eridge Old Park** was landscaped in the late 18<sup>th</sup>C by Henry Nevill, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Earl of Abergavenny. He built Eridge Castle in Strawberry Hill Gothic style but this was replaced in the 1930s by a Georgian style mansion, **Eridge Park**.
5. Although it looks like an authentic Queen Anne house, **Saxonbury House** was built in the 1950s.
6. The **High Weald Landscape Trail** runs for 145 km across the length of the High Weald, mostly near its northern edge, from Horsham in West Sussex to Rye.
7. The 44 km **Tunbridge Wells Circular Walk** (formerly the High Weald Walk) was established by the Borough Council as one of its centenary events in 1989.
8. The inscription on the front of Frant's **Old School** "Train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it" is from **Proverbs 22:6**.
9. **St Alban, Frant** was almost completely rebuilt in 1822 when the medieval church became uneconomic to repair. It has a particularly fine August Gern organ.
10. The **Nevill Crest** is a bull with a crown around its neck. The family motto *Ne vile Velis* ('never have evil thoughts') incorporates their name, then spelt Nevile.
11. **Calverley Grounds** were originally the pleasure grounds of Mount Pleasant House, later the Calverley Hotel. They were purchased for the town in 1920. Near the main entrance there is a memorial to Lord Dowding, the commander of RAF Fighter Command during the Battle of Britain (1940).
12. The present **Tea House** is a replica of one which burnt down in 1997. A concert pavilion and bandstand on the site were destroyed by an air raid in 1940.
13. The unusual name **Bells Yew Green** is derived from the medieval French *Bels Lieux* (the 'beautiful place' being the nearby Bayham Abbey).

» *Last updated: August 24, 2018*

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