Fancy Free Walks *point your feet on a new path*

Lamberhurst, Kilndown and Scotney Castle

Distance: 8 km=5 miles — easy walking

Region: Kent — Date written: 6-aug-2012

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Refreshments: Kilndown, Scotney Castle, Lamberhurst

Map: Explorer 136 (The Weald) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Villages, woodland, nature trails, views, romantic castle ruins

In Brief

This walk starts in one of Kent's most attractive villages, goes over the clear hills, through deep woodland and back via a romantic castle with rest and refreshments.

There are no nettles to speak of on this walk but the undergrowth can be quite high in the summer. There are only a few patches of mud in the woods, quite easy to skip around, but easier in dry weather, so any sensible clothing and footwear should be fine. Your dog can come too as the stiles have been replaced by gates.

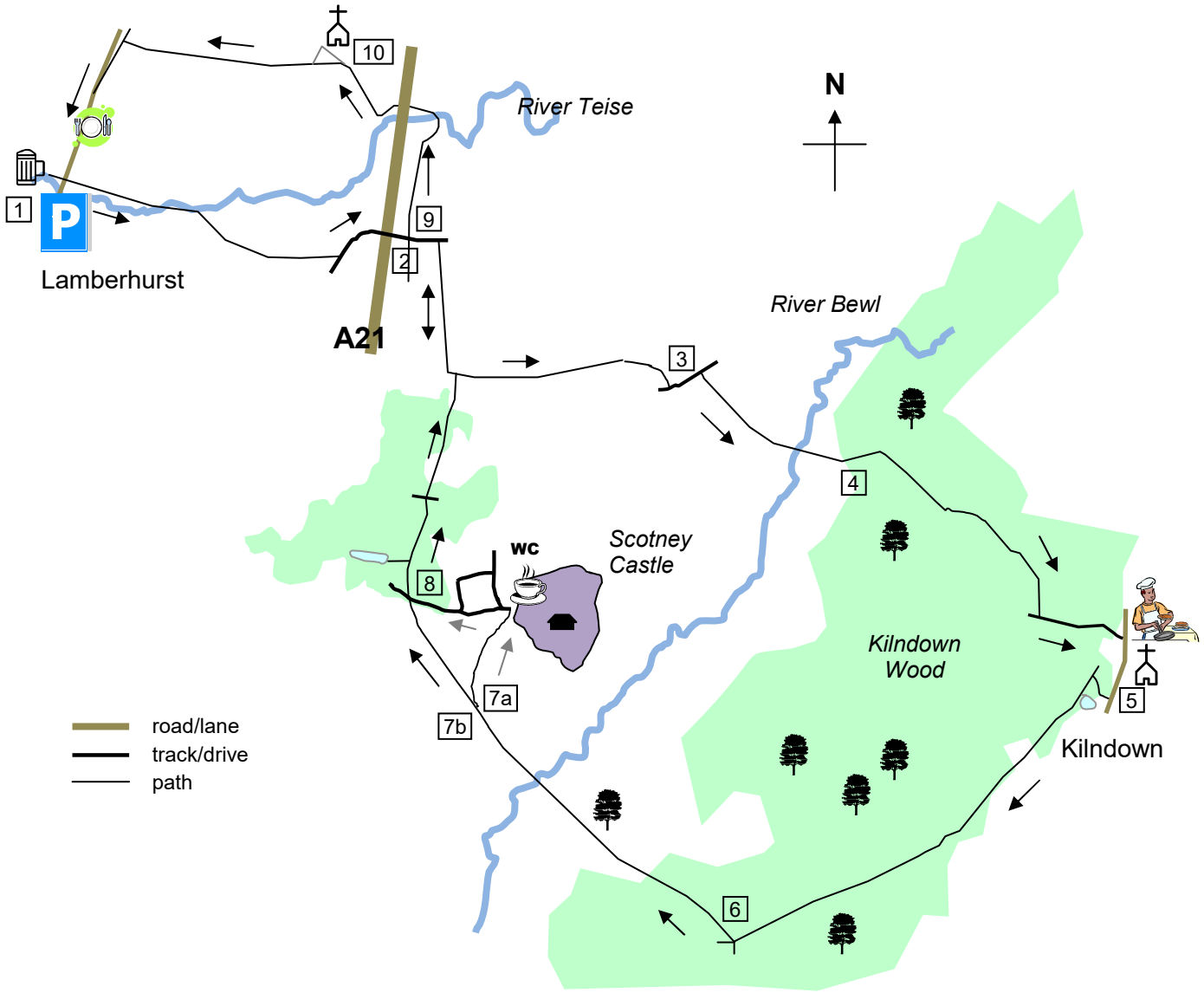
WC

The walk begins in **Lamberhurst, Kent**, w3w:spring.sandpaper.hurt, post-code **TN3 8DB**. This is once again a "free public car park" (which also has a WC), after belonging exclusively to the *Chequers Inn*, from 2021 to 2024. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Leg 1: Lunch at Kilndown 3 km=2 miles

1 **See map overleaf.** Starting in the car park next to the *Chequers*, go through a wooden gate at the back, straight ahead across the grass of the recreation area and between two football pitches. After those, go through the far **right** corner and cross a stream to go through a metal kissing-gate and onto a golf course. Going straight and keeping to the **left** side of a short hedge, cross the fairway. Aim for some orange waymarkers and a gap in the trees where there is a small bridge. Now walk straight ahead to the left-hand side of a line of trees and cross another fairway, heading for a gap in the hedge ahead. After the gap, cross a narrow crop field to reach a tarmac drive. Turn **left** on the drive which soon bends right and takes you over the A21 bypass road.



2 Just before some gates leading into a house, turn **right** and go along the top left-hand side of a field. At the top, go through an opening into a meadow that belongs to the National Trust Scotney Castle estate which you will visit properly on the return leg. Follow the signs for the Parkland Trail (blue), diagonally across the field, to a swing gate, then along the **left**-hand side of the second field, down the hill, with views of Kilndown Wood ahead, eventually going through a swing-gate to reach a tarmac lane.

3 Turn **left** on the lane and, in 100m, at another blue-topped post and fingerpost, go **right** through a swing-gate, still on the *Parkland Trail* (and leaving the intriguing *Hop Trail*). Keep on, down the left-hand side, through a swing-gate and across a meadow. A long bridge takes you over the River Bewl. At a fingerpost, keep straight ahead in the direction of Kilndown, thus leaving the *Parkland Trail*. Go straight across a strip of parkland to a gate taking you into woodland. A red-topped post indicates the National Trust *Woodland Trail*.

4 In 20m, at a 3-way signpost, go straight ahead. Keep following the red-topped posts, especially where the path soon veers right. Keep to the same long route through the woods, gradually uphill. Finally, at the top, you meet a track by a convenient bench. Veer **left** on the track, soon leaving the woodland via a swing-gate leading to the road at Kilndown. Your route now continues **right** on the road. However, for a gourmet lunch, just to your **left**, you will find the *Small Holding* restaurant.

The "Small Holding" is a newly-run (2018) renaissance of the old "Globe and Rainbow" gastropub. It is now (2022) a Michelin green-starred restaurant It offers an inventive 7-course tasting menu at £65, which is partly foraged in the Nordic style. This is serious eating and you need to book (01892-890-105). The "Small Holding" is open for lunch Thur-Sun only.

On your right is the *Quarry Centre*, historically a wooden reading room built in 1880 for the men of the village*, now a shop with tasty treats for walkers (and sometimes hot drinks) open Sat 9am-12 noon, offering a chance to rest*. Ignore a footpath on the right and continue to the church.

Kilndown is an early Victorian village, established by Viscount Beresford in 1840 as an extension to his Bedgebury Estate. For more information on the unusual church, see the walk "Bewl Water and Bedgebury Forest". The Bedgebury Panels, by the way, show four Disciples beside the image of "Ecclesia" and four Old Testament leaders beside the blindfolded "Synagoga" (supposedly failing to "see" the new Messiah).

Leg 2: Tea at Scotney Castle 2 km=1½ miles

5 Only 20m after the front entrance to the church, turn **right** by a wooden barrier, down some steps to the pond (careful ! may be slippery when wet), a well-hidden secret. Follow a path that skirts the pond. Half way round, go **left** up steps and **left** again on a wide track. Your route is basically straight ahead now for 1km. Follow the path past a notice board, through a wooden barrier and past a residents' parking area. Continue straight ahead, passing houses on your right and a large, usually open, metal gate. Ignore the wide turn downhill on your right and continue ahead through trees and past a line of massive beeches. Your path joins a wider path coming in from the left. You soon pass a small house and a post with arrows and continue downhill. At the bottom of this gentle slope, at a 3-way junction, keep ahead, skirting round a partly broken large wooden gate and avoiding a path on the right. Where another path soon joins from the left, again keep ahead. You come to another junction with a red-topped post. Turn **right** here as indicated by the yellow and red arrows, avoiding the track left and the grassy path ahead.

6 Avoid turnings off to go through a gate into parkland, back on the Scotney Castle estate. Your path is shaded by some fine trees including turkey oaks. Keep ahead to go through another gate beside a wooden gate and over the River Bewl. Scotney Castle is now visible up to the right. Your path runs through a swing-gate, between fences, and over a dry bridge. Only 10m after the bridge, your path forks, giving you a choice. On the left is the official footpath. On the right, the Parkland Walk curves up to a gate by the main Scotney Castle facilities.

7a To visit the shop, café and entrance, keep **right** on the main path that curves uphill towards a fence at the top. When you reach it, go over a stile beside a white gate. Turn **left** and immediately fork **right** into the main compound. On the right is the café, shop and WCs. You do not need to buy an entrance ticket to use them. However visiting the Castle, garden and moat is an unforgettable experience.

WC

Scotney is two buildings: the Victorian mansion, built around 1840, which is now open to the public, and the medieval castle, partially ruined, set in the middle of a moat and the most perfect photographic subject. Scotney began in the 1100s as a fortified manor house, founded by a certain Lambert de Scoteni. The old castle was built in 1378 by Roger de Ashburnham. It passed to the catholic Darrell family in the 1500s, who rebuilt much of it. In the 1800s, the castle became a deliberate romantic ruin – a kind of dramatic garden feature. The gardens are superb, with pines, azaleas, wisteria and roses. Scotney belongs to the National Trust.

After your visit, go back the way you came in, keeping to the **right** and following the main exit drive used by visitors' cars. After about 100m or more, look out for some steps on the right opposite a gate on the left. Turn **right** here up the steps into woodland.

7b If you do *not* want to visit the Castle today, take the footpath, which forks slightly **left**. Almost immediately, at a fork, take the **right**-hand option onto the much clearer tracked route. Continue uphill towards a small gate in the fence ahead. Turn **left** onto the tarmac drive passing the visitors' car park on your right. In around 100m, turn **right** up some steps and onto a path into woodland.

Leg 3: A Drink at Lamberhurst 2½ km=1½ miles

8 Keep straight ahead through the woodland. (A path on the left leads to a bench overlooking a dark pond.) When the woodland ends, cross a track and go through a gate into more parkland. Keep ahead across the centre and, at a corner by a blue-topped marker post, maintain your direction along the left-hand side. In the far corner, at a fingerpost, turn **left** on a path that will be familiar to you. Go through a gate, turn **right** and go along the right-hand sides of two fields. At the bottom, turn **left** on a concrete track. In 70m, which is about 10m before a bridge, turn **right**, stepping over a low metal barrier, by a marker post.

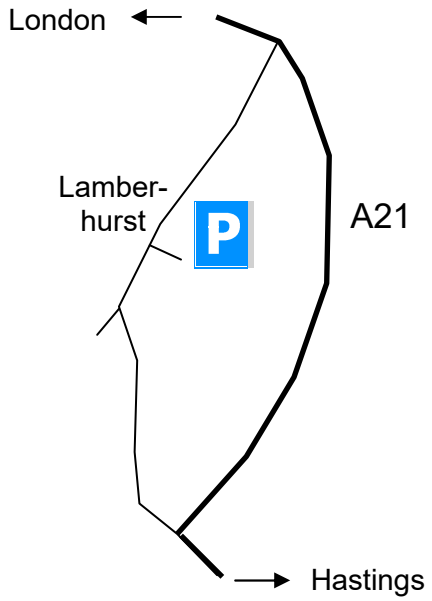
9 Go along the left-hand side of a large field, parallel to the A21 trunk road, soon meeting a path coming from the right. When you reach the far corner, take a narrow path on the **left**, across a bridge over the River Teise. Turn immediately **left** under the A21 road beside the river. As you approach a crop field, fork **right** and take a path that goes across the centre of the field, heading for the spire of St Mary's church. At the other side, continue into

the churchyard. The route is maintained by keeping **left** through the churchyard. However, to make a very worthwhile visit to this medieval church, you can bear right to the entrance porch and bear left again afterwards to get back on route.

10 Keep ahead on a straight shingle path with the celebrated golf course on your left. Finally your path joins a tarmac drive coming from *Court Lodge*. Just before the main road, turn **left** on a footpath that runs parallel to the road. Pass the old turreted School House, dating from 1877, several attractive tile-hung and weatherboard cottages, the three timbered charity cottages, the sublime *Coggers Hall*, an Italian restaurant, the Teise bridge and finally the *Chequers Inn*. *The Chequers Inn is an unpretentious Shepherd Neame pub with a worthy selection of real ales, a relaxing place for walkers, where muddy boots are welcome.* After final refreshments, turn **left** to the car park, where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Lamberhurst is signposted just off the A21 London-Hastings road (in fact the A21 used to go through it before the bypass was built). The *Chequers Inn* is on the left if you are coming from the London direction, clearly marked with a P sign, but see the cautionary note on the front page.



By bus/train: bus 255 and 293 from Tunbridge Wells station to Lamberhurst. Bus 266 to Kilndown. Check the timetables.

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