

Walking with dogs:

Again, a bit of an abdication from me on this one (having never owned a dog in my life)! In my experience, owners who have brought their dogs with them have unfailingly been responsible, had good control and been well aware that relationships between dogs and other countryside animals potentially involve mutual suspicion, or worse. To put it bluntly, only take your dog if you know what you're doing!

But what I am starting to do, in response to requests, is to give in the write-ups some indication of the nature of particular walks from a dog's point of view, to enable you to decide whether they are suitable. I shall be going back over existing walks to add this feature in due course - work in progress! Perhaps it's simplest to show here the prototype as an example. I've not done any for Ash Church Walks yet, so it's from one of the Local Circuits in the Rochester Church Circles section. (The detail of the walk doesn't matter, but the example will give an idea of the kind information I'll be adding.)

I think it reaches the limits of what I can usefully say - or perhaps I shall add something about current location and condition of stiles. The problem with all this (land-use and stiles) is that things change so quickly in the agricultural working world; and there is a danger that what I describe might become misleading after subsequent changes.

EXAMPLE:

LOCAL CIRCUIT FA1	Direction numbers	% of walk
Busy road	22	8
Quiet road \$\$	3, 6, 9-12, 15, 17-18	25
Open field with livestock		0
Edge of field with livestock	4, 23b	4
Field (or edge) without livestock **	2, 8, 23a, 24	13
Confined path (e.g. between hedges)	1, 7, 13, 16, 19-21	41
Woods	5, 14	8

** This is not a promise, just a statement of fact - that, having walked these sections perhaps two or three times, I have found no animals or any sign of them.

\$\$ Again, not a promise that there will be no traffic to worry about. Just a personal judgement of conditions as I have found them.

I hope the table is simple enough to use.

The percentages will help you decide whether the particular walk is of interest to you at all.

And although the information in the middle column looks a bit cluttered I think it should enable you (if the detail is of interest) to mark up within a few minutes a print-out of the walk notes, so that you have some idea what might be round the next corner.