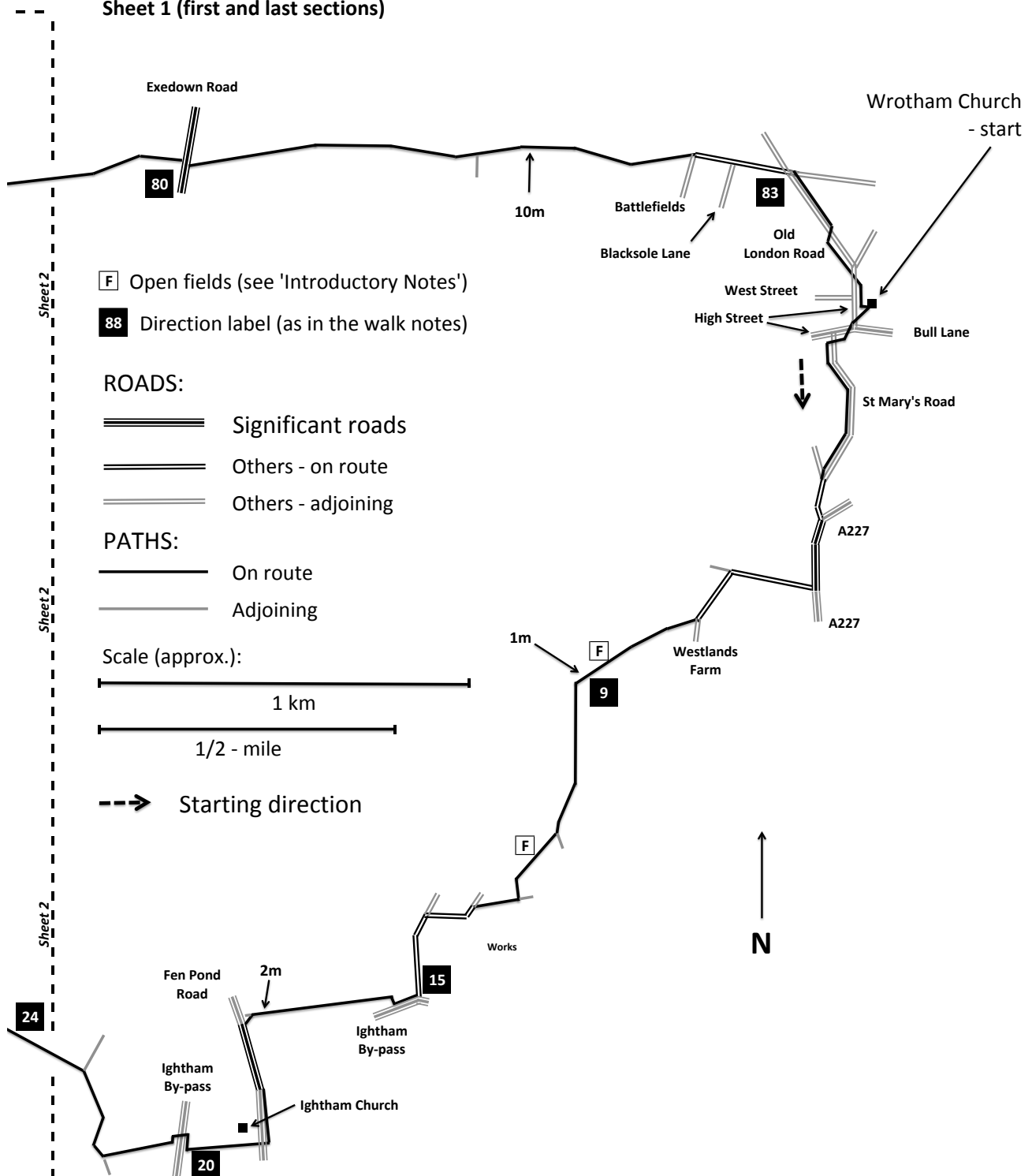
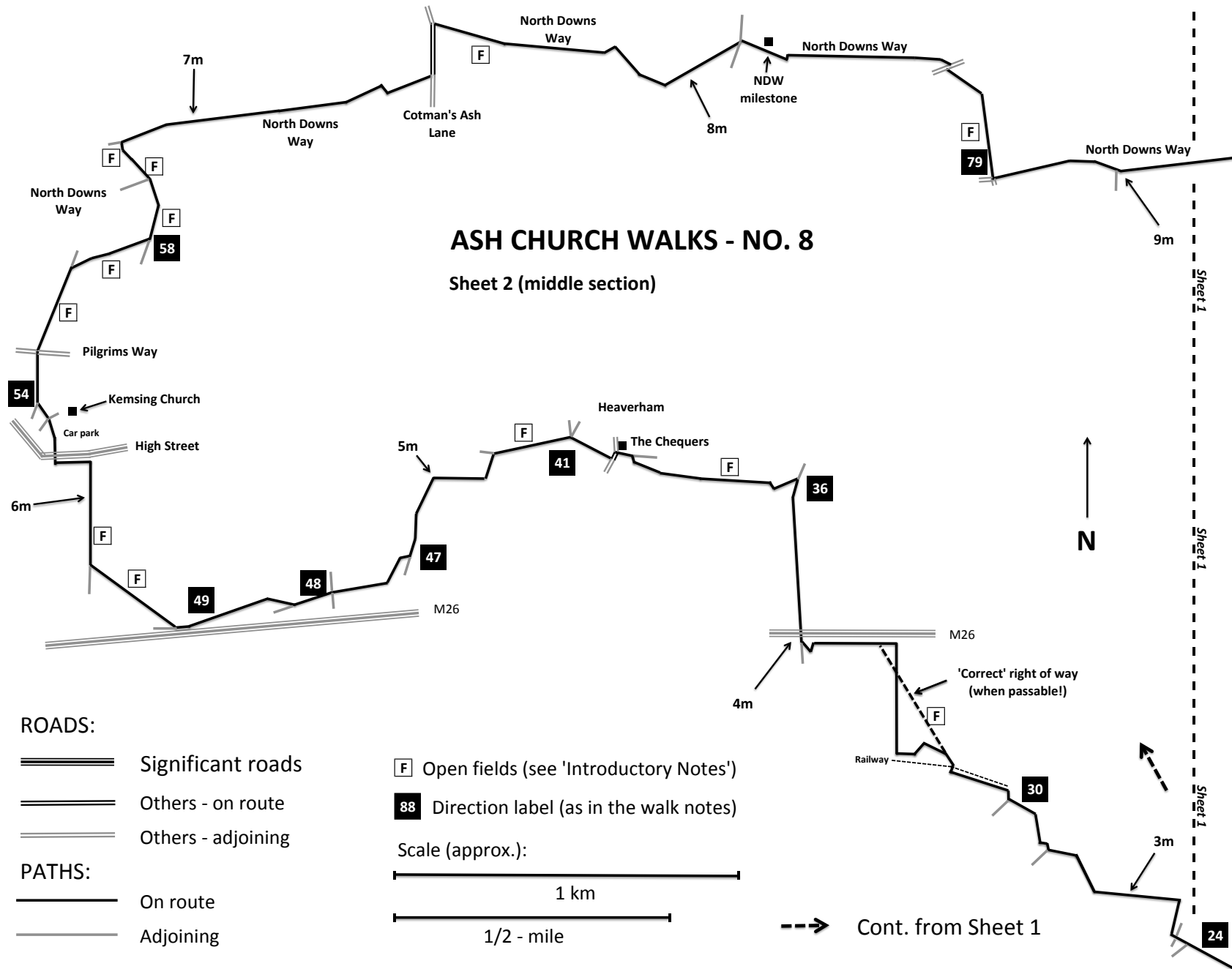


ASH CHURCH WALKS - NO. 8

Sheet 1 (first and last sections)





ASH CHURCH WALKS - No.8 (25 August 2014 **)

(Wrotham - Ightham - Heaverham - Kemsing - North Downs Way - Wrotham)

** In fact, though planned, not walked on this day. Instead, in bad weather, we simply walked the second leg (Directions 53-85) in reverse. We plan to do the full walk, as described here, in August 2015.

The outward leg is a mixture: industrial sand-pit and recurring proximity of motorway interspersed with attractive countryside and woodlands. The return involves a steep climb on to the downs, rewarded by one of the finest sections of the North Downs Way.

Refreshment is available at the Chequers in Heaverham (though opening hours are currently rather limited) and at the Bell in Kemsing. The climb out of Kemsing passes three benches at different stages, all with increasingly fine views and suitable for a picnic. If, as is likely on a good day, they are occupied, there is a large grassy expanse around that area to sit on.

Roads and hindrances:

There are short stretches on, or mostly alongside, quiet roads (in Wrotham and Ightham, and a couple of very short ones on the North Downs Way): not an issue really.

The climb out of Kemsing on to the downs demands respect, though there is nothing difficult about it if taken slowly enough.

There is a railway crossing, protected by stiles (Direction 31): nothing more than ordinary common sense, and an appreciation of the speed of trains, required.

Around Ightham and Heaverham the state of the undergrowth and vegetation, including nettles and brambles, can amount to a hindrance of sorts at some times of year.

A cavalier attitude by farmers to rights of way (see Direction 31) dictated only a short detour.

Notes taken: May and August 2014

The start and finish is at **Wrotham Church** (TN15 7AH).

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
1		From the forecourt of Wrotham Church, at the foot of the steps, you see St George's House immediately to your right and Perry's Chartered Accountants on the corner ahead to the right. Go across to Perry's corner, cross again to the bus stop, and turn right down this continuation of High Street.	612 592	
2	1	Turn left down St Mary's Road. Go down the right-hand side, along the walkway, raised at first.		
3	6	At the end turn left. Cross the road next to the '40' speed limit sign and go on to the major road ahead.		
4	8	Turn right along this road (the A227) and go along the walkway on the right-hand side, over the bridge across the motorway.		
5	10	Turn right, away from the road, through the entrance to Westlands Farm. (There is a small pedestrian gate to the right of the locked vehicle gate.)		

* "Mins." is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
6	12	Swing left with the metalled roadway.		0.68
7	14	Turn right off the roadway through a metal gate on to a waymarked track (which becomes concrete after about 60 yds.). Go along the right-hand side of the field.		
8	15	!!F!! Straight ahead through the big gate. Beyond the solitary tree ahead there is a MKG across the field. Head for this.		
9	18	[Map point] Go through the MKG, over a little footbridge, then immediately turn left along a rough path between a hedge on the left and a barbed-wire fence on the right.		
10	25	After gently swinging to the right, the path makes a clear turn to the left. Instead of following it, turn off it to go through a metal gate straight ahead. !!F!! Then go up diagonally to the left to a gate next to an abandoned red-brick building.	604 578	
11	27	Go through this second gate, then ahead for about 30 yds. across rough ground. Then turn right, as waymarked, down an equally rough track towards a rusty gate at the bottom.		1.37
12	29	Go through the gap to the left of the gate, to merge leftwards into an industrial access road.		
13	30	Turn left on to another road.		
14	32	Go through the wooden kissing gate next to the main exit gate, and on towards the roundabout visible ahead.		
15	34	[Map point] At the roundabout, turn right alongside the road. After about 20 yds. (and 20 yds. before the first lamp-post) turn right, across the undergrowth. (The track may be just visible.) When you reach the other side of this rough parcel of land – in effect a T-junction – turn left along a track which is at first equally obscure.	600 573	
16	35	The track soon improves, after a pair of turns, right and left. Continue ahead as it winds from side to side, always between the road on the left and the railway on the right.		
17	40	Just before the end of the track, fork left to cut off the corner, and turn left along the road. It may be best to criss-cross the road – not that it is more than moderately busy. Judge for yourself. There is a continuous path or safe verge on the left-hand side (only) from number 35 onwards.		
18	45	On the right of the road, hidden behind a hedge and grass verge, is Ightham Church. Go past this frontage, then beyond it turn up to the right to go along the left-hand side of the churchyard, keeping the boundary wall on your left.		
19	46	At the far corner use the stepping-stone to reach the start of a narrow downhill track.		2.33
20	47	[Map point] At the bottom do not cross the footbridge ahead but turn right before it to go uphill towards the road.		

* “Mins.” is *very approximate!* See ‘Introductory Notes’ for an explanation of how this column is used.

!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See ‘Open Fields’ in ‘Introductory Notes’ for some thoughts about dealing with this.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
21	48	Cross the road. It can be busy, but the sightlines are excellent. On the other side, and slightly to the right, go down the driveway to Church View Farm. When this entrance road swings to the right, instead go straight on at first, but a few yards later, instead of going through the wooden gate, turn right, by a MKG, up a narrow track. Follow this to the top, ignoring turnings to right and left.		
22	52	At the T-junction of paths at the top, turn right, and follow this winding path through the trees, always keeping in sight of the boundary fence on the right.		
23	55	When you emerge from the trees turn left on a broad track along the right-hand side of a field, downhill first, then up.	591 571	
24	59	[Map point] At the top the track goes away to the left, but instead go straight ahead, as waymarked, between a few trees; and then ahead over a crossing path to reach the side of a big field. Turn right down its right-hand edge.		2.86
25	61	At the bottom right-hand corner, turn left along the field-edge.		
26	64	When you reach the corner of this field, go ahead between trees for about 30 yds., then turn right along the right-hand edge of the next field.		
27	65	Once again swing left at the far right-hand corner.		
28	67	When the field-edge swings away to the left, do not follow it but turn briefly to the right, then 20 yds. later left over a wooden footbridge, and right along the edge of another field.		
29	68	Turn left along edge of the cultivated area of this field.		
30	69	[Map point] At the point where the right-hand hedge converges, the field-edge ahead goes away to the left. Instead of following it, turn right, as waymarked, through a gap in the hedge on the right. This track drops briefly, then goes to the left alongside the railway.		
31	73	<p>Turn right to cross the railway and the pair of stiles which guard it. Once across go slightly left, and stay, to start with, alongside the left-hand field-edge.</p> <p>[!!F!!] <i>At this point there should be (and sometimes is) a right-of-way track across the fields, diagonally to the left, more or less all the way to the motorway footbridge at Direction 35. But in August 2014, for the Ash Church Walk, there is simply an impassable expanse of ploughed field. So what follows is a non-right-of-way variant. The 'correct' way would be to follow the currently non-existent diagonal path, cross into the next field (at the point of Direction 33) and continue in the same direction; and then turn left to go alongside the motorway not long before Direction 35. I have at other times been able to do this.</i></p> <p>The variant involves following the left-hand field-edge all the way round a clump of trees – an anti-clockwise arc amounting to about a semi-circle – and then turning right to go for about 100 yds. alongside the railway.</p>	581 577	3.49

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!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See 'Open Fields' in 'Introductory Notes' for some thoughts about dealing with this.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
32	76	Turn right along a track which separates the fields, heading northwards towards the motorway, visible in the middle distance.		
33	79	The variant crosses the diagonal right of way (waymarked but currently impassable) but ignores it and goes ahead all the way to the motorway.		
34	80	At the T-junction, turn left and go alongside the motorway.		
35	83	Go up the mound ahead, then turn right to cross the motorway footbridge, and continue ahead.	577 581	3.98
36	89	[Map point] When confronted by a 'Private Road' sign, turn left as waymarked along a grassy path.		
37	90	Turn right through a gap in the hedge, down steps and over a footbridge. [!!F!!] Then continue slightly leftwards towards trees in the middle distance.		
38	92	Go straight on, keeping to the left of a huge tree and the hedge beyond it.		
39	95	Go over a footbridge and beyond it swing a little to the left to go along the left-hand edge of a field, with a hedge to your left. Go ahead to meet the road.		
40	97	Cross the road alongside the Chequers (Heaverham), and continue along the footpath almost directly opposite. Go ahead, as closely as possible parallel to the hedge on the right.	572 586	4.67
41	99	[Map point] For the last 10 yds. or so this hedge becomes a fence, at the end of which there is a junction with a couple of waymarked tracks to the right. [!!F!!] Ignore these, and instead go straight ahead across the next field. (The direction is more or less parallel to the road visible over to the right.)		
42	101	Go ahead at the first waymark.		
43	102	At the far right-hand corner of the field, turn left, to keep the boundary hedge on your right. <i>[If you have gone on to reach a stile you have, as things stand, gone a few yards too far (despite the waymark at the stile which suggests that the left turn is only at that point). Whatever the rights and wrongs, this does not work with the fences as they are currently arranged.]</i>	568 587	
44	104	Follow the right-hand hedge as it turns decisively right.		
45	105	Follow the track as it turns left.		
46	106	Carry on through a few trees and then go ahead along the right-hand edge of the field.		
47	109	[Map point] Cross a pair of stiles to the right, and continue in the waymarked direction over the grass, converging towards the left-hand fence, then continuing alongside it and the motorway it conceals.		5.20

* "Mins." is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See 'Open Fields' in 'Introductory Notes' for some thoughts about dealing with this.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
48	112	[Map point] Go straight ahead at a cross-paths and over a stile (or through the gate if it is open). A short narrow section then opens out into a large grassy expanse, across which, in the middle distance, is a ditch which will need crossing. You need eventually to finish up at the distant left-hand corner, and it would be possible simply to stay close to the left-hand edge where there is a crossing of the ditch. But, if only to put a peaceful distance between you and the adjacent motorway, it seems preferable to engage in a little dog-leg by way of another ditch-crossing about 100 yds. to the right.	564 583	
49	118	[Map point] At the far left-hand corner, go through a pair of wooden gates (which seem to be permanently open, but have adjacent stiles as alternatives), after which once again this narrower section opens out into a large grassy field. [!!F!!] Go diagonally to the right, aiming towards the right-hand group of rooftops, and the left-hand end of a line of trees.		5.66
50	123	[!!F!!] Next to the end of these trees, go down to a stile and cross it. Then go ahead in the direction of the houses and the church which they partly conceal. (These are the older-looking houses, not the more modern ones over to the left.)	556 583	
51	126	Go through a wooden kissing gate, and ahead along a path between a fence on the left and the hedge of St Edith's Farm Cottage on the right.		
52	128	Reach the main road in Kemsing, and turn left alongside it.		
53	129	Cross the road and turn right into the car park. (Toilets available, and usually open.) In the car park walk slightly to the left and go through the pedestrian exit there (next to the left-hand of the two lamp-posts). Go straight ahead, over the crossing path, and alongside, but not into, a small grassy area on the right.	555 587	6.13
54	131	[Map point] When faced with a brick wall, turn right uphill. This is the start of the serious climb!		
55	135	Cross the road and continue uphill, by way of a few steps slightly to the left, followed by a couple of gates.		
56	136	[!!F!!] Go steeply uphill across a wide open area of grass. There are two benches visible a little to the right, one halfway up, the other near the top. Aim towards the upper one, and having passed it swing a little further to the right to reach, by a third bench which has now come into view, a panorama board at the highest point you can reach (as defined by the boundary fence above to the left).		
57	144	[!!F!!] From the panorama board continue parallel to the upper boundary fence, slightly downhill now.	557 593	6.62
58	146	[Map point] [!!F!!] When the opportunity presents itself go uphill to the left. You achieve this by going through a wooden kissing gate, which leads, by a left turn, to a brief steep rise up a grassy bank. Having climbed this causeway, follow it ahead – still uphill but less steep now – swinging slightly right then, near the top, slightly left.		

* "Mins." is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.

!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See 'Open Fields' in 'Introductory Notes' for some thoughts about dealing with this.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
59	149	<i>At this point you join the North Downs Way, which is excellently waymarked and which you will follow all the way back to Wrotham.</i> !!!F!!! Go down a little to the right to cross a stile, then head across the next field to another stile in the middle distance.	558 594	
60	151	!!!F!!! Cross this stile and go ahead.		
61	152	Pass a redundant stile and turn right along the track, going across to keep the central fence on your right.		
62	153	Cross a stile and continue along the right-hand side of a field.		
63	155	Go through a small gate and continue along the right-hand side of a further field.		
64	158	Go through a small gate and ahead through the trees.		
65	160	And through a wooden gate, and along the right-hand edge of a field.		
66	163	Go down to the right through a wooden gate, followed by steps and a left turn which returns you to the original direction.		
67	165	Next to a gate turn left along the road, uphill.		7.43
68	167	As the road bends left, instead turn right along the footpath, and go through the spring gate. At first keep to the right between the wire fences.		
69	170	!!!F!!! Go through a wooden kissing gate, and turn slightly leftwards (past a post in the middle of the field) to merge with the left-hand fence in the far left-hand corner.		
70	172	Go through the gap at that corner, and along the left-hand edge of a field.		
71	175	In the far left-hand corner go through a wooden kissing gate. Follow the track as it goes left, then immediately back to the right.		
72	177	After a slight left swing in the trees, go through a gap into the open, and along the top, left-hand edge of a field.		
73	181	Go straight ahead at the cross-paths and continue along the top, left-hand edge of another field.		8.11
74	183	Go up to the left, then immediately right, as waymarked. Soon after this continue ahead along the bottom right-hand edge of a field.		
75	186	Go straight ahead into woods.		
76	190	After a sharp right swing you reach a road. Turn right along it, then sharp left down the steps of the signposted footpath.		
77	191	Emergence from the trees at a MKG and enjoy the view. !!!F!!! Then carry on down the steep hill to another MKG.		
78	193	!!!F!!! Go through the MKG and slightly to the right towards the road in the middle distance.		8.60
79	197	[Map point] Turn left immediately after the green gate at the road, along the broad signposted track between hedges.	583 594	
80	211	[Map point] After a good while, cross the next road, and slightly to the right continue along the signposted track between a hedge on the right and a barbed-wire fence on the left. Carry straight on all the way to the outskirts of Wrotham.	593 596	9.43
81	229	And straight on, up the hill, when the metalled roadway merges from the right.		10.31

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!!!F!! : Field crossing might be unmarked. See 'Open Fields' in 'Introductory Notes' for some thoughts about dealing with this.

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
82	231	Ignore Blacksole Lane on the right.		
83	232	[Map point] When you reach the crossing of the main road, turn right along it, abandoning the North Downs Way. Go down along the pavement on the left-hand side. After a pavement appears on the other side, cross back when convenient.	610 595	
84	236	Follow the road round to the right at the junction. Then cross to the left-hand pavement to return to the church.		
85	238	Reach the starting point at Wrotham Church.	612 592	10.73

* *"Mins." is very approximate! See 'Introductory Notes' for an explanation of how this column is used.*

FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH THEIR DOGS

I do not venture to give advice about walking with your dog. As well as the joys, you will be well aware of the issues involved, and particularly that relationships between dogs and other countryside animals potentially involve mutual suspicion, or worse.

But what this footnote does try to do, in response to requests, is to give some indication of the nature of the walk from a dog's point of view, to enable you to decide whether it is suitable.

The percentage distances on the right (on the next page) should be self-explanatory.

The information in the middle column may look a bit cluttered, but 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.

The risk in all this is that **things change so quickly** in the agricultural working world; and what I describe might become misleading after subsequent changes. I have done my best, but there is no guarantee that you will find the information up to date!

ASH CHURCH WALKS - No.8	Direction numbers	% of walk
Busy road	1, 4, 15, 52	3
Quiet road \$\$	2-3, 5-6, 12-14, 17, 35, 67, 81-84	17
Open field with livestock	8, 47a, 48b, 49b-50, 59, 69	8
Edge of field with livestock	7, 62-63, 70	4
Field (or edge) without livestock **	9-11, 15, 23-29, 31-34, 36-46, 56-58, 65, 71, 73-74, 77-78	34
Path (hedged, or otherwise forced)	18-19, 21, 30, 48a, 51, 53-55, 60-61, 68, 79-80	24
Woods	16, 20, 22, 47b, 49a, 64, 66, 72, 75-76	10

** 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.

STILES (11) - Details noted in May 2015, but **subject to frequent change:**

There are two double stiles, both wired down to the ground, protecting the railway crossing in Direction **31**: climbs of 6 ins., 1.5 ft. and 1.5 ft. (with 6 in. gaps between); and 1 ft., 6 ins. and 2 ft., with, currently, a conveniently big hole at the bottom!

There are a further two in quick succession in Direction **47**. The first is wired down, with climbs of 1 ft. and 1.5 ft. (and could possibly be avoided by keeping to the right after the trees in Direction 46, though that side of the fence can get rather overgrown). The second is a double stile (6 ins., 6 ins. and 1.5 ft.).

The three stiles in 48 and 49 can usually be by-passed through open gates alongside; but details, in case necessary, are: **48** - a double stile with climbs of 6 ins., 1 ft. and 1.5 ft., wired down; **49** - the first one has easy gaps; and the second is a double stile - wired down but with a 6 in. gap below the top - with climbs of 1 ft., 6 ins. and 1 ft.

In **50** there is a double stile, wired down, with climbs of 6 ins., 1 ft. and 1 ft.

Those in **59**, **60** and **62** have dog gates (and the one mentioned in 61 does not count, as you can walk round it!).