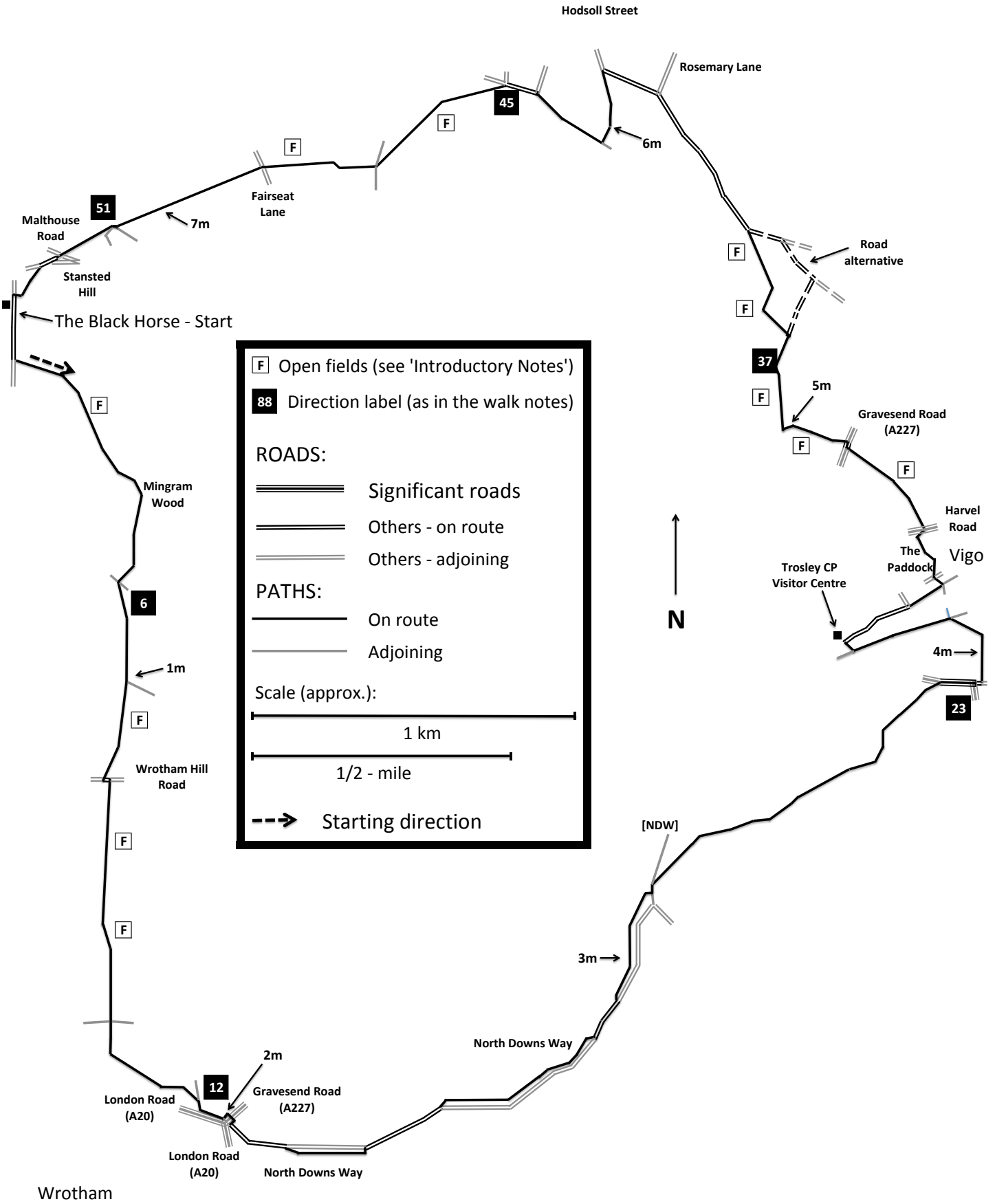


ASH CHURCH WALKS - NO. 2



ASH CHURCH WALKS - No.2 (6 May 2013)

(Stansted - Wrotham - North Downs Way - Trosley CP - Vigo - Hodsoll Street - Stansted)

Mostly easy walking, though there is some challenge in the climb up into Trosley Country Park. There are beautiful views across the Weald, and a splendid descent into Stansted at the end (not the same one as in Walk No.3!).

The latter provides a fitting climax. On the other hand, for easier parking, a group might prefer to start and finish the circuit at the Trosley CP Visitor Centre (27) - parking currently £1.50, or £2 at weekends and on bank holidays.

Roads and hindrances:

The A227 needs to be crossed twice, but the first time it is with the help of an island, the second with good sightlines.

The North Downs Way involves an extended stretch of road walking, but the road is very quiet, and there are also opportunities at some points to walk on parallel tracks instead.

The Hodsoll Street road is a little busier, but not distressingly so.

The descent through the woods towards the A20 (Direction 11) is steep and awkward enough to command some respect.

The 'field' at Direction 38 used to be very wild and badly looked after, but ignore any references to this in previous versions. Someone has worked hard to put this right.

Notes taken: April and May 2013; amended May 2015 to recognise the improvement in Direction 38!

The start and finish is at the **Black Horse, Stansted** (TN15 7PR).

[The walk could also be started from **Wrotham** or **Vigo**:

From Wrotham Church walk northwards up High Street, fork right alongside the toilets, and, after passing the cricket ground on the right, turn right at the signpost to join the North Downs Way. Cross the A20 and go to the left over the M20 bridge, then turn right along Pilgrim's Way, joining the walk in Direction 13 (2.06 miles into the walk from Stansted). From the church to the start of Pilgrim's Way is 0.27 miles (about 6 mins.).

To start from Vigo join the walk at The Paddock (Direction 31).]

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
1		The start (and finish) is at the Black Horse in Stansted, near the bottom of Tumblefield Road. With your back to the Black Horse, turn right and go uphill along the road.	607 621	
2	2	At the end of the houses on the left, turn left along the signposted footpath, and go ahead through the MKG and along the top right-hand edge of a sloping field.	607 619	
3	5	Go ahead after a MKG slightly to the right down a short winding path, with steps, through trees.		

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

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
4	6	!!!F!!! Emerge from the trees at another MKG, and go through diagonally to the right to the valley floor, then up again in the same direction.		
5	11	At the top of the climb go through a MKG and swing gently right into the trees (not sharp right towards the nearby gate). Follow the path through two more MKGs (ignoring another one on the right).		
6	16	[Map point] Cross a stile next to a gate and continue ahead, past a large tudor-style house on the left.		
7	20	As you emerge from the trees the track swings decisively to the left, but instead !!!F!!! go straight ahead across the field towards a gate in the middle distance.	610 609	1.00
8	22	Go through this gate, and ahead through two more to reach a road.		
9	24	!!!F!!! Turn very briefly left along the road, then, after a few yards, right, up steps, to follow a path across a large field. The line itself is unsurprising but not always visible. It is more less parallel to the red-brick building which is over to the left. At some times of year there is a gap visible in the hedge on the far side of the field, and this is what to aim at. Or, among the trees in the distance, a group of slightly taller, slightly lighter ones. After a few minutes two buildings - one white, one dark red - appear in the middle distance: aim slightly to the left of the white one and, for now, straight towards the dark one.		
10	31	!!!F!!! At the gap in the hedge, go through and slightly to the left, aiming now to the left of the dark building. At the far side of the field go past the remnants of a stile and along a narrow path between fences into trees.		
11	35	At a cross-paths continue ahead, downhill. The path winds back and forth, but mainly to the left, to go, finally, parallel to the A20 on the right below. It is quite steep at some points, but at its steepest has the benefit of steps and a handrail.		
12	41	[Map point] Merge right into another path at the bottom, then soon turn left, to go again alongside the road. Go ahead to the roundabout.		
13	43	At the roundabout, follow the walkway round to the left for the first few yards of the A227 Gravesend Road. Then use the island to cross it. Go a few yards down to the right, then turn left along Pilgrim's Way. This is the start of a stretch shared with the North Downs Way. In principle you are following the tranquil metalled road, but at some points there are parallel off-road tracks. <i>From here until the fork in Direction 21 the route follows the NDW signposts and waymarks.</i>		1.99
14	45	There is a parallel path to the right.		
15	48	At a stile the path leads back to 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
16	51	As the road swings to the right, follow the signposted alternative to the left, up steps and through a MKG; then on, roughly parallel to the road.		
17	57	Come close to the road at a couple of MKGs, but continue off-road, as waymarked. Do not stray too far to the left, but stay alongside the fence, quite close to the line of the road.		
18	59	Return to the road through a MKG and down some steps.		
19	61	Leave the road again, as indicated, to the left; but continue to follow, roughly, its direction.		
20	64	Go through a MKG.		
21	66	Go down steps and turn left along the track (the continuation of the road, which has disappeared meanwhile). Very soon you reach a fork: here abandon the North Downs Way as it goes up to the left, and keep to the right (and to the right of the gate) going very slightly downhill to start with. Follow this broad track for a good half-mile until you reach a road.		3.07
22	81	Turn right along the road and follow it for 100 yds. or so. You need to cross it at some point, and because of its right-hand bend ahead it is probably best to cross sooner rather than later, and, exceptionally, walk along the left-hand side.		3.81
23	82	[Map point] When this major road swings right, instead continue ahead briefly along Pilgrim's Way. But after a few yards turn left up a steep path.		
24	83	As you climb, there are two parallel tracks, and it is simplest to move across to the right-hand one, where there are steps and it is clear where to go.		
25	86	Near the top, swing left with the path, then soon afterwards to the right, uphill.		
26	88	At the top turn left along the broad path. (This is the North Downs Way in reverse - westbound! - briefly.)	636 611	
27	92	Opposite the information table, turn right, up towards the nearby Visitor Centre.		
28		At the Visitor Centre turn right to go along the roadway (at the sign for 'Trosley Trail (EA)' and 'Woodland Walk'), and pass, on the left, the ladder walk at the start of the 'Trim Trail'.		4.27
29	95	When the road swings left, go straight on instead, past the chin-ups exercise.		
30	96	About 100 yds. later turn left off the main track along a narrow path. (This is about 100 yds. before a vehicle barrier. There is a 'Public Footpath' stone marker on the ground.)	635 612	
31	97	Cross the road ahead, and carry on along the left-hand side of The Paddock - now at the western end of Vigo - all the way into the small group of trees beyond number 4 on your left. Then follow the path as it swings to the right towards the road.		4.47
32	99	Cross the road and go through the tight wooden kissing gate opposite. Start your progress through a succession of fields by following the rough left-hand edge of the first one.		

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

	Mins.*		OS	Miles
33	100	Go straight ahead through a second kissing gate, and then a small metal gate. [!!F!!] Then cross the next field diagonally to the right to a stile in its right-hand fence.		
34	102	[!!F!!] Go over the stile (if necessary – it seems to be permanently broken!) and go on to another stile (about 40 yds. to the right of a fenced enclosure), which leads on to the main A227 road.		
35	103	Cross this stile, and walk a few yards to the right along the walkway, then cross the road (quite busy, but good sightlines) and go over a slightly hidden stile, which leads into rough land beyond. <i>The next few minutes are simple enough in outline, going ahead (away from the A227), then a few minutes later turning right towards a small wood. But the detail is a little tricky. There are paths but they are feebly defined and disappear from time to time.</i> [!!F!!] Walk away from the road and look at the overhead power lines alongside to your right, which are gradually converging on your walking direction. Note the supporting poles: counting the one at the road as number '1', number '3' is next to a dilapidated white structure, and number '4' is the point at which you converge.		4.79
36	107	[!!F!!] At that 'pole 4' turn right, heading towards trees, going more or less at right-angles to the cables you are leaving behind. The path, such as it is, winds left and right and left and right, but always in the general direction of the trees.	630 617	
37	109	[Map point] Go into the trees over a low stile.	63049 61858	
38	111	You soon emerge from them, and immediately turn left through a MKG, opposite the entrance drive to a house. [!!F!!] Go diagonally to the right across this parcel of land. (May 2015: Ignore any previous versions of these directions which referred to this 'field' being impossibly overgrown. A splendid job has been done to clear the ground, even to the extent of getting the path to follow the mapped diagonal – previously impermeable!)		
39	114	In that distant corner, cross the inadequate stile and go through a MKG immediately beyond; and then [!!F!!] diagonally right, gently down across an open field to a MKG in its far right-hand corner.		
40	117	Continue in roughly the same direction along the road.	629 623	
41	123	Continue ahead, passing Rosemary Lane on your right.		5.73
42	125	As the road swings right, turn left instead along the signposted byway.	625 628	
43	128	After ignoring big gates to right and left, go through the one straight ahead (in front of buildings), immediately turn right, and go ahead between hedges along the concrete path.	625 626	
44	131	At the far end go through the gate and ahead along a brief stretch of 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
45	132	[Map point] When the road swings right and a grand driveway goes straight ahead, !!!F!!! instead go half-left through a gap in the hedge and a MKG, and cross the field at an angle, towards another gate.		6.22
46	135	!!!F!!! Go across the stile beside this gate, then turn a little to the left, and go down across the grass to the corner of the woodland at the bottom.		
47	139	Go a little to the right, uphill, alongside these fenced-off trees.		
48	140	At the top cross a big solid stile, then go a little to the right towards another much smaller stile.		
49	141	!!!F!!! Cross this stile, and go across the middle of the field to a MKG in the middle distance.		
50	142	Cross the road and a (currently damaged but adequate) stile and go ahead along the footpath between barbed-wire fences.		6.75
51	148	[Map point] At the end of the field go slightly left into trees - but only slightly left, along the narrower, upper of the two possible tracks, keeping the fence immediately on your right. This leads very soon to a stile, and then into the open for the descent to the war memorial at Stansted, visible ahead.		
52	152	At the bottom go over a stile next to a wooden gate, and then ahead up the road opposite towards Stansted Church .		
53	153	Go up the little pathway branching up to the left into the churchyard. Swing left with the path to approach the church: then turn right to pass it and go towards the wooden gate leading out of the churchyard.		
54	154	Go out through the wooden gate and turn left up the road.		
55	155	Almost immediately, reach the starting point at the Black Horse.	607 621	7.33

* *"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.

FOR THOSE WHO WALK WITH THEIR DOGS

See footnote on next page.

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 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.2	Direction numbers	% of walk
Busy road	13a, 22	2
Quiet road \$\$	1, 13b, 15, 18, 23, 28, 40-41, 44, 52, 54b	17
Open field with livestock	33-36, 39, 46	10
Edge of field with livestock	16-17, 19, 32, 47	8
Field (or edge) without livestock **	2, 4, 7, 9-10a, 45, 48-49	16
Path (hedged, or otherwise forced)	5- 6, 8, 10b-12, 14, 21, 29-31, 38, 42-43, 50, 53, 54a	38
Woods	3, 20, 24-27, 37, 51	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 (13) - Details noted in April and May 2015, but **subject to frequent change:**

The stiles in Direction **6, 15, 33, 35 (both), 37** and **39** have easy gaps.

Those in **46, 48** and **49** all have dog gates. (The one in 49 has become stiff, but works If persuaded.)

50 and **51** are wired to ground and are quite tall, but in each good gaps have been burrowed out to one side. **52** could be tricky: quite high (2 ft. climb, then 1 ft.), but a 6-in. gap under the gate to the side might be helpful.