

Rudgwick Walks 1

Twixt Rudgwick and Loxwood

The Mucky Duck to Gibbons Mill and Pephurst

Access *Parking in the lane, adjacent to The Mucky Duck, in Tisman's Common, Rudgwick. Alternatively, park in the lay-by at Pephurst Corner, Loxwood (7), and begin the walk from there. Pub info @ 01403 822300.*

Length and suitability *4¼ miles (7 km), about 2 hours*
No major roads to cross; mainly off-road, through fields in the south, and on tracks and country lanes; can be muddy north of Pephurst.

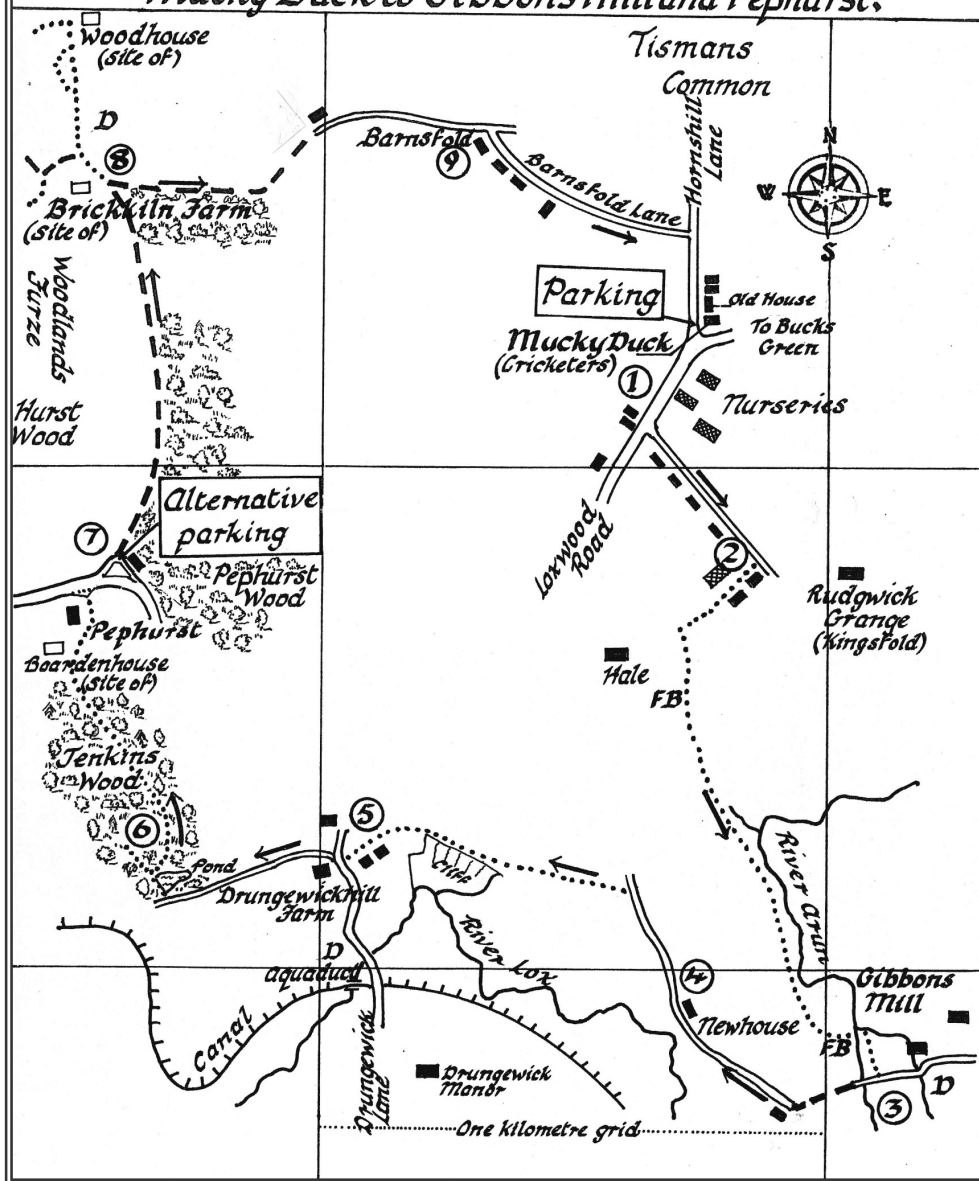
1. From the pub, take the road towards **Loxwood** (signposted). Almost immediately, after passing Barnsfold Nurseries, turn left onto tarmac Arundene Lane, at the sign to Sunnyside Nurseries. Go ahead past several properties, until you come to a finger post after passing Sunnyside.

Farriers, a house with outbuildings on the right of Loxwood Road opposite Arundene Lane, was once a smithy. The **nurseries** at **Barnsfold** and **Sunnyside** are a longstanding part of the Tisman's scene and Barnsfield provides plants for the well-known retail garden centre, Newbridge Nurseries Ltd, in Broadbridge Heath. Julie Walters, the actress, used to live in a house on Arundene Lane.

2. Take the footpath, right, through the trees. At a small gate, turn left into the paddock and go ahead crossing several horse paddocks and stiles towards **Hale Farm**, following the field edge and stream, with the farm to your right. Immediately after the gate to the farm, in the 4th paddock, cross a railway sleeper over the stream, then over a stile set in a gate.

Continue in the same direction as before on the other bank. Cross five more fields, through a metal gate into the third (you will have seen a metal stile, left, to the banks of the **River Arun** but this is not your route). Keep walking ahead, on an ill-defined path with the river on your left, passing through a thick hedge with a footbridge and stile into the fourth field (which lies very wet among rushes) keeping half left to a wooden gate into the 5th field. Veer left again down to a gap in the riverbank bushes, listening for the sound of water at the sluice bridge, which you cross.

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Hale Farm was a late Saxon farm accessed from the river, later part of the manor of Drungewick. It gave the surname of de la Hale in Rudgwick from 1256.

When the trees on your left are in full leaf, the **River Arun** is not easily seen. The farm, high on the right, is the rear of **Newhouse Farm** (see below). The river sluice at the bottom of the garden of **Gibbons Mill** controls flow into the millstream which is the channel to your left after the weir. Notice the fish pass under gratings. The millstream provided a head of water to drive the millwheel.

Be careful now. Legally, you may remain on the 'path', which follows the bank of the millstream for a short way across the attractive private garden of Gibbons Mill, to reach the lane, which comes down past the mill, but to respect the owner's privacy; it is recommended you turn right. Follow the river bank at the bottom of the garden, further from the house, to the lane.

***Diversion:** at the lane, walk left, keeping to the bridleway, to see the mill pond and buildings, and then return.*

The handsome large square **Mill House**, built in 1766, on land above the floodplain, seen from the field before the sluice, was not called by that name originally. Mystery surrounds the omission of the mill itself on the coloured map surveyed in 1767 when Richard West built this house, so perhaps the mill was re-built subsequently.

There have probably been water mills here (and at Wanford, Bucks Green) since at least 1341. The present **Gibbons Mill** was operative in 1807, but it ceased to grind corn when it was converted to a hydro-electric use in 1901, having already been supplemented by a steam engine c1880. It may have been named after Richard Gibbon, a C17th Rudgwick JP.

The pretty **Miller's House**, a C15th open hall, nestles behind the **mill**, which itself is now converted to a house, retaining the millpond and its water flow.

The lane, now a bridleway, crossing the river, is clearly shown as a road from the early C19th 1st ed. OS map (about 1800), but was never adopted for public use. However it seems not to have been a through road from here to Loxwood before the C19th. The river is a good place to spot birds such as wagtails, and maybe a kingfisher.

You can revisit the mill in Walk 7.

3. Turn right across the bridge. Continue ahead uphill on the winding hedged lane, bend right past a smallholding, and then pass in front of **Newhouse Farm**.

Newhouse Farm (right), known as South Hale up to the early C19th, is sited on the ridge between the Arun and Lox rivers. Built early in the C18th, it is a late timber-framed house hung with fish-scale tiles. It has a high front elevation above which can be seen two parallel ranges in the hipped roof - a 'double-pile' house. This 'new' house may have replaced Hedgecock's, which you will see shortly. The well-preserved converted barn is contemporary with the house. The cow hovels are also converted. The whole farm is a very attractive redevelopment.

The ground slopes down to the west where the **River Lox** can be seen beyond a duck pond, with the **Wey and Arun Canal** out of sight across the valley, beyond which lies the historic Drungewick Manor. The Lox, which joins the Arun near here, is the boundary between Rudgwick and Loxwood.

Notice the 'staddle stones' by the lane (from the base of a granary).



4. Continue on the lane. Soon, look for a finger post at a dip in the lane. Turn left over a high stile onto a fenced path by conifers alongside the garden of **White Gables Farm**. Go ahead, uphill, over a second stile, across a field, then, keeping the copse on your left, continue ahead through a little gate onto another narrow fenced path that keeps to the right of cottages, emerging on a gravel drive leading to **Drungewick Lane**.

In the high field there are views to the Downs, and towards Rikkyo School. Notice how the path then follows the wooded Lox river cliff with a steep drop to your left.

After **Hedgecock's** (in Rudgwick), you pass **Weavers Cottage** (in Loxwood). Across Drungewick Lane, **Drungewickhill Farm** is internationally well-known for its fine herd of pedigree Charolais cattle.

Diversion: turn left down the hill on Drungewick Lane to see the impressive canal aqueduct, completed in 2003, and return.

5. Cross Drungewick Lane to enter the right hand side of the farmyard, and go ahead between **Drungewickhill Farm** barns and a modern farm cottage. At first on a concrete track, you pass a field, then the edge of a wood on the right. Navigate with care through the wood. Turn right at the finger post after an attractive pond (there is a track at the start of the wood, which you do not take).

6. Once over the pond dam, turn right again, then left, into a mixed plantation, now on a track. The path soon bends right away from the track into a copse. You eventually meet the Loxwood Road after going ahead through the corner of a field next to **Pephurst Farm**. Cross the road into the large lay-by.

This lay-by is the alternative parking and starting point

The restored attractive pond is on the fringe of **Jenkins Wood**. At first mature oaks give an open aspect as the ground storey has been cleared. The less interesting conifer/birch plantation contrasts with the attractive oak/hazel copse with bluebells and wood anemones approaching the farms.

As you approach the Grade II listed timber-framed **Pephurst Farm**, catch a glimpse of the only remaining building (a converted barn) of its close neighbour Boardinghouse Farm (now **Boardenhouse**) which once stood here. Notice also the big old oaks both on the roadside and on the green lane ahead. The lay-bys here show how traffic once had to negotiate a severe S-bend.

7. Proceed into a green lane from the apex of the curving lay-by, to the left of the house, and walk ahead along the wooded 'green lane' for ½ mile towards the site of **Brickkiln Farm**. Pause here to consider its past geography, before turning right.

Caution: there is an **unprotected well** off the path at the site of Brickkiln.

The untidy and pitted area on the right as you enter **Pephurst Wood** was once a brick works and kiln. A forestry company now operates in managed woods to the right. In 2007, a tornado touched ground not far away, destroying a swathe through their trees.

'Green lanes' are the byways that escaped being metalled as the modern road network evolved. This green lane joins another from Loxwood, called Hook Street, continuing to the A281 in Surrey. It is notable for the long-abandoned farms along its way. Over time, farmers cleared land of trees by piecemeal enclosure of the 'mens', i.e. common woodland, belonging to the manor of Drungewick (see Tisman's Common below).

Where this walk turns east, there was a house (on the left, in a fenced off rough patch of trees, broken ground, and bricks) called **Brickkiln Farm**. Brickkiln, formerly called Woodlands, was at one time the brickmakers house, with another brick pit nearby. It became part of the Pallinghurst Estate, until well into the C20th. Such homes, off the modern road network (the present A281 to Alfold is an 1809 turnpike), lacked basic services and were unable to survive the C20th. It certainly feels off the beaten track today. At the break-up of the Estate, the house became derelict, and the building materials salvaged.

Diversion: for the adventurous, follow the footpath due north of the site of Brickkiln to the pond, and search for the site of **Woodhouse Farm**, NE of the large pond (grid ref 054329). A former occupant of Brickkiln informed me that Woodhouse was dismantled and re-erected in America. There are further abandoned sites at Monckton Hook ½ mile further north on the Surrey border, but that is probably too far for this walk.

Vera Jones lived at **Brickkiln**, and wrote that the house “*had two staircases, [it] had been two cottages at one time...but when we moved there only one half was habitable. Our living quarters had three huge bedrooms. Each could take two double beds....*

Downstairs the front door opened directly into a huge living room and a large scullery.... The living room had an inglenook fireplace, which contained a range for cooking. In the centre of the room was a large kitchen table.... Hanging above the table from one of the beams was a big brass oil lamp. Also hanging from the beams by leather straps were Dad’s guns.

In the winter we would have to have curtains up to reduce the size of the living room in order to keep the heat in and the draughts from the front and the scullery doors out. Off a corner of the living room was a walk-in larder with its own window.... There was a huge scullery which was used as a kitchen. It had a small cement sink and an old copper in the corner where Mum did her washing. Beside the copper was an old disused bread oven.

The stairs to the bedrooms were between the scullery and the big living room. There were steps down from the scullery into a smallish cellar where Dad kept his cider.”

This evocative description would probably describe many of the local small farmhouses 75 years ago.

8. To return to the Mucky Duck, be sure you take the right turn at the junction of lanes at the Brickkiln site. Then go ahead to the edge of the wood, where you go half left leading to the beginning of a surfaced road on passing a cottage, **Lower Barnsfold**. Continue ahead to a road junction.

Emerging from the woods you are back in Rudgwick parish. This was the old Alfold Road across Tisman’s Common. The isolated cottage, **Lower Barnsfold**, seems as though it is a welcome return to civilisation, as from here there is a paved road back to the pub.

Note the gate on the left, to **Tisman’s Park**. There used to be point-to-point races here. The enclosure of this part of the common was by John Napper of Tisman’s. He created the road and field hedges you walk past by about 1840. The lord of the manor of Drungewick, Denzil Onslow, enclosed the remainder of the common, east of the Mucky Duck and along Loxwood Road, in the 1850s.



9. At the road junction, turn right into Barnsfold Lane. At the end, turn right again (Pig Lane). The Mucky Duck (pictured below) is in view, ahead.

Barnsfold Lane and **Pig Lane** cross former common land. Several interesting old houses on Barnsfold Lane, e.g., **Barnsfold** (pictured left), built c1680/1700, and **Barnsfold Cottage**, c1550, and **Hedgerow Cottage** are shown on a 1795 map of Sussex, facing onto the common, not onto a road and fields as today. Look carefully at Barnsfold Cottage. Although it looks all the same age the oldest part is on the right. The stream in front of Hedgerow Cottage flooded severely a few years ago, but now its water is partially diverted.

The 1850s **Mucky Duck Inn**, once 'The Cricketers' is next to 'The Old House', once the Pig Inn (up to the 1840s). Pig Lane is an old name for the continuation of Hornshill Lane. There was a 'cricket field' at Tisman's Farm in 1844.

