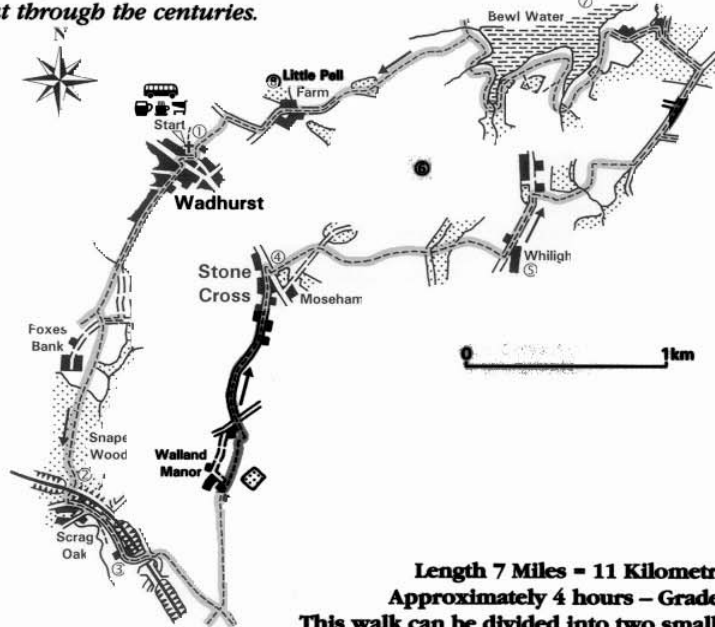




"A grave state of AFFAIRS"

Memorial inscriptions forged by illiterate craftsmen on iron grave-stones line the floor of Wadhurst Church. The network of footpaths linking the many hamlets of the parish provides a further memorial to the former inhabitants, who trod them out through the centuries.



Length 7 Miles = 11 Kilometres
Approximately 4 hours – Grade 3
This walk can be divided into two smaller

walks each of 4 miles = 6 kilometres by using the pavement of the B2099

START – Wadhurst church (O.S. Explorer 136 – NGR 641318)

ACCESS – Car – Car parks in Wadhurst village
 Bus – 254, 256 and postbus

Train – Wadhurst Station (1 mile)

PUBLIC TOILETS – Wadhurst village hall

REFRESHMENTS – Pubs at Wadhurst and Cousley Wood (1 mile off route)
 Cafés at Wadhurst
 Village shops at Wadhurst

CAUTION – One level crossing of Hastings to Tonbridge railway.

7
Miles



"A grave state of AFFAIRS"

1 On entering Wadhurst church the eye is drawn to over 30 iron graveslabs lining the floor. These were produced by carving a block of wood with a pattern, pressing it into a bed of sand to leave a mould and pouring in molten iron to form the slab. Since the makers were often illiterate words may be wrongly-spelt, letters reversed or words split in half to fit the pattern.

2 Snape house was built by David Barham in the 16th century. The Barhams were the chief ironmaster family of Wadhurst. No less than 8 of the slabs in the church commemorate this family, many showing the bear motif that formed their coat of arms. It is appropriate, therefore, that the last attempt to revive the Wealden iron industry took place in Snape Wood. In 1857 an ironstone mine was established in the wood with the ore being sent to Staffordshire by rail. It was hopelessly uneconomic and closed within a year. The Miners Arms pub, now a private house, preserves the memory of this transient enterprise.

3 The Barham family also owned Scrag Oak, a tall house with an excellent chimney, on the north of the road. In the steep-sided valley to the south was one of the ironworks which made the family fortune. Its date of construction is unknown but it was able to supply raw iron to as many as four local forges (also owned by the Barhams). It just survived the Civil War, being in working order in 1653, but ruined by 1664.

4 The Luck family of Stone Cross are commemorated by two double slabs in the church. These overlie, respectively, Mary and Elizabeth Luck, who both died in their early twenties in the early 18th century, and John and Ann, who died later

in that century. Further monuments line the church porch and include the family arms of three chevrons.

5 Whiligh was formerly the home of the Courthope family. Most of the extensive estate straddling Wadhurst and Ticehurst parishes was used for timber production. In a remarkable feat of continuity oaks from the estate were used, both to build the roof of the Hall of the Palace of Westminster in the 14th century, and to rebuild it again after bombing raids during World War II.

6 To the north of Whiligh is Foxholes, once home to the Dunmoll family. Their coat of arms is a strange one showing a pelican deliberately wounding itself. In ecclesiastical terms this is taken to symbolise the Eucharist with the mother wounding herself to nourish her young with her blood. Why such a coat of arms should apply to the Dunmoll family remains unknown.

7 Across Bewl Water can be seen the white-topped, double oast houses of Little Butts Farm, once home to the Bengé family. Ann Bengé (died 1653) has her slab in the church. The oast houses were used to dry hops for beer making, the industry which superseded iron. Hop growing continues today and may be seen from the walk – look for the tall frames supporting the growing plants.

8 The house occupied by the Legas family of Little Pell still survives – a medieval house with a Tudor chimney. This is more than can be said for John Legas' coat of arms in the church, which has been carefully erased. Cannon from the Gloucester Furnace (Wadhurst) works of John Legas were used both by the British navy and also smuggled to the coast and sold to the French for use on the other side of the same battle. It appears that someone may have taken a hammer to his coat of arms in retaliation.

7
Miles

