



# History Walks

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## **WALKING** **THE WEALD OF** **KENT CANAL**

1066 Harold's Way, History Walks or David Clarke do not accept any responsibility for any injuries or losses which may occur on this Weald of Kent Canal walk.

Walkers are advised to ensure that their personal insurance cover is adequate and to carry their own basic first aid kit. Even though this is a comparatively short walk, it is advisable to take regular stops for refreshment if only to admire the views.

At the time of writing, all routes follow public rights of way or permitted paths. However, diversions can be made at any time and permissions withdrawn – for which I cannot be held responsible – and care should be taken to abide by any local restrictions since the writing of this walk.

With public transport, changes to timetables can be made at any time and it is important to check that the service and schedules are still current before your walk.

Ensure that you and your group are properly prepared for the walk, be aware of hazards and walk safe along the roads and lanes encountered on this walk. Although this is a relatively easy walk, boots are recommended in all but dry weather, and sun protection and a hat for hot days with waterproofs for that hint of rain.

- be considerate to those living in, working in and enjoying the countryside
- leave gates and property as you find them
- be nice, say hello, share the space
- follow local signs and keep to marked paths unless wider access is available
- take your litter home – leave no trace of your visit
- always keep dogs under control and in sight
- dog poo – bag it and bin it – any public waste bin will do
- care for nature – do not cause damage or disturbance
- check your route and local conditions
- plan your adventure – know what to expect and what you can do
- enjoy your visit, have fun, make a memory

**Some helpful websites before you start:**

- Stagecoach [www.stagecoachbus.com/plan-a-journey](http://www.stagecoachbus.com/plan-a-journey)
- National Rail [www.nationalrail.co.uk](http://www.nationalrail.co.uk)
- Weather Forecast [www.bbc.co.uk/weather](http://www.bbc.co.uk/weather)
- WhatPub [www.whatpub.com](http://www.whatpub.com)

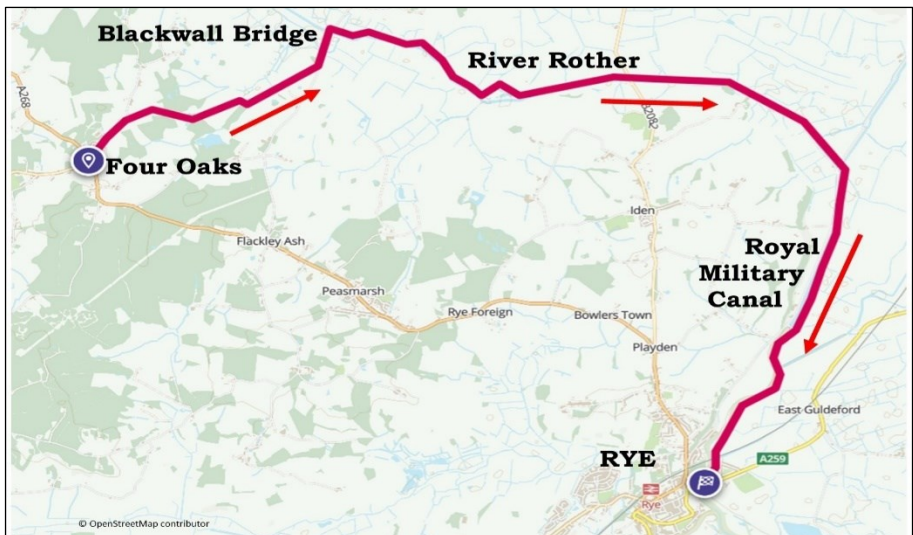
Until October 2023, the Environment Agency are undertaking work on the Royal Military Canal towards Rye and for the moment, the footpath is closed. For the last mile, I walked on the Royal Military Canal Road, past the Globe Inn, over the railway bridge and down to Landgate and up into Rye itself.

Regrettably, with the canal never built, there are no towpaths to walk and few in the way of public footpaths until the latter stages of both the proposed 1802 and 1809 canals.

On Sutherland's route, a footpath begins where the Otter Canal meets the River Rother close to Potman's Heath and in 1.70 miles joins the Sussex Border Path at Blackwall Bridge and the route of the canal can be followed to the Royal Military Canal and into Rye.

The main difficulty in planning the walk from Potman's Heath is that the start is remote from any public transport and using two cars is less than ideal. The solution would be to start the Sussex Border path from Beckley, which has a 2 hourly Stagecoach Bus Service 313 and the journey takes just 15 minutes from Rye.

From Beckley to Blackwall Bridge is 2 miles and a further 6.30 miles to the Monk Bretton Bridge over the River Rother at Rye. Walk instructions and mapping can be downloaded by scanning the QR Codes (for mapping, you may need a subscription to Ordnance Survey Maps)



## Weald of Kent Canal (WoK): Four Oaks to Rye

OS Map

### Walk Instructions

Distance: 8.50 miles

Bus Services: Stagecoach Service 313

Rye to Four Oaks

Refreshments: Nothing until Rye

Profile: After the descent from Four Oaks, and as you can imagine a river walk to be, the route is largely flat. There are stiles!

Geography: On the edge of the High Weald above the former Appledore Estuary, that great inland sea that stretched from Rye to Bodiam in the west and to Smallhythe in the north. It is now the valley of the River Rother that flows into the Royal Military Canal, past Rye and into the Channel.

From the bus stop on the B2088, walk back to the crossroads and bear left, cross the road and then bear right into Hobbs Lane and walk for almost half a mile.

After Hobb's Farm, look for the waymarked fingerpost and stile (for the Sussex Border Path) on the right and follow the edge of field on the left to the bottom corner.

Climb the stile and walk towards and through the second gate and turn right to follow right field edge.

Walk straight ahead along fenced woodland path through Barber's Wood, over the stile, leaving the wood bearing slightly to the right across next field to a second stile.

Follow the path through the trees, bearing very slightly left across the meadow and over the stile to walk along the left field edge to the end of the hedge.

Bear half right and walk to the top right hand corner (there should be a clearly marked path through the crops).



Cross stile and footbridge and turn right over humped brick bridge and, with the hedge on left, walk for around 50 metres and look for the stile on the left through the hedge and head towards the barn.

Continue on the same heading diagonally across the field, over the stile (gate) and through copse and turn left at the road towards the River Rother and cross the river over the Blackwall Bridge.

Turn immediately right at the waymarked bridleway and start the four mile walk along the river bank to the Royal Military Canal (RMC) at Iden Lock.

**- check walk as map suggests a detour around the lakes/ponds**

Cross the B2082 Wittersham Road and continue along the river bank to within touching distance of the Royal Military Road where the path bears left around, right **what cottage** through trees to exit on to the Military Road and turn right.

**Take care along the road. The Military Road is reasonable straight and traffic often speeds between the corners.**

After Lock Cottage on the left, and before the road bridge over the Rother, turn left along the track and cross the bridge over the junction of the Royal Military Canal and the River Rother.

It was here that the Commissioners of the RMC finally agreed to widen the basin to enable the 40ft barges to enter the lock. Iden Lock remains a lasting memorial to those dreams of Sir William Geary, Earl Camden and Earl Romney and the surveyors Sutherland and Rennie.

Turn right and follow the Sussex Border Path, the Saxon Shore Way and the Royal Military Canal Path along southern bank of the canalised River Rother for another 2½ miles to Rye.

A bridge takes the path over the Union Channel and closer to Rye, walk under the cast iron railway bridge and remember to duck!

At the A259, turn right and cross and over the Monk Bretton Bridge, opened on 25 April 1893 that replaced the ferry over the river that was previously the only connection to Rye from Romney Marsh. Across the road was the terminus of the Rye and Camber Tramway that opened in 1895 (*History Walks Book 12: More Walks around Rye*).

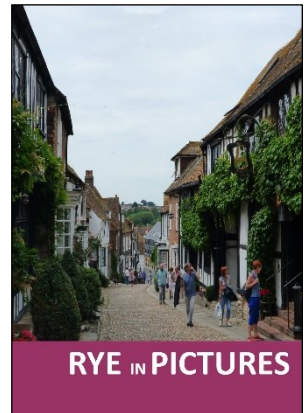
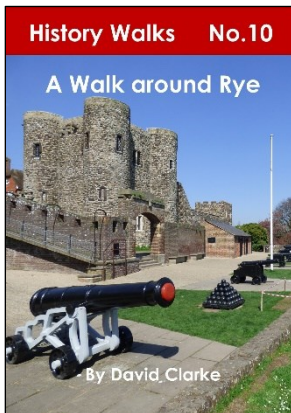
At the other side of the bridge, cross the road towards the beginning of the Fish Quay.

This was the beginning of Rye's bustling harbour that stretched all the way round to the Strand. Boats would be moored on the banks of the Rivers Brede and Tillingham, warehouses were built on the Strand and there would be ship and boat builders lining the riverside. Rye was once the premier port on the south coast between the Thames and the Solent but by the beginning of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the port had lost its pre-eminence and it would later move further downstream to Rye Harbour as the ships grew bigger and needed more depth.

From the Fish Quay, walk diagonally across the Town Salts towards the toilet block in the corner of the car park and up to and across the A259 at the Pelican crossing.

Follow the path up the steps towards the 'Landgate' and turn left up Hilder's Hill to Rye's High Street for shops and refreshments.

Continue along the High Street, past the George Hotel and turn right down Market Road towards the bus stops and the station.



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