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Rowlands Castle Circular

Start and finish: Rowlands Castle station

Length: 15.5km (9.6 miles)

Time: 5 hours. For the whole outing, including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 9 hours.

Transport: Trains go from London Waterloo to Rowlands Castle, the journey time is one hour 36 minutes. (Catching a fast train to Haslemere or Petersfield and changing there can reduce your travel time by up to 20 minutes. Also it might be worth considering buying a return to Havant, one stop further down the line. If you miss the direct slow train back, then you can catch the outbound train and pick up a fast return train from Havant to London.)

OS Landranger Map: 197

OS Explorer Map: 120

Rowlands Castle, map reference SU 734108, is in Hampshire, 12km north east of Portsmouth.

Toughness: 3 out of 10

Walk Notes: This Hampshire walk in the western part of the South Downs starts off towards Stansted House along a 1-mile-long beech avenue – one of the best in England, according to Pevsner. It then heads north along the edge of Stansted Forest and across fields to the villages of West Marden and Compton, with particularly nice views from the downs on the short section between them. You can choose between the Victoria Inn in the first village and the Coach and Horses in the second for lunch. You return through more fields and woods, with a choice of pubs in Rowlands Castle for tea.

Walk Options:

a) Short cut You can trim 2.5km off the walk by following the main walk directions until [4], then follow the Short Cut directions to pick up the main walk directions at [*] just after [7] in the main text.

Saturday Walkers' Club: If stopping at the earlier lunch place at West Marden, take the train nearest to 10.00 am from Waterloo Station to Rowlands Castle, otherwise if stopping at the later lunch place at Compton take the train nearest to 9.30 am.

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] [~~Numbers refer to the map.~~]

Coming off the platform go over the footbridge to exit the station and turn left down the approach road. After 150 metres at a T-junction with the High Street, *turn left under the railway bridge* to pass by The Castle pub on your left after 20 metres.

In 120 metres (where the road curves to the left), *turn right to go through a gap in the brick wall opposite*, to go up a footpath to enter Stansted Forest, your direction 100 degrees. After 80 metres go over a cross paths, to follow the footpath more steeply up through a wooded area.

In 160 metres you emerge from the wooded area to go along a broad (50 metre) grass avenue leading towards Stansted House (visible in the distance), your direction 100 degrees.

After 1.6km cross over a road, passing by a Lodge on your left hand side, to enter Stansted Park along a tarmac road (bridleway) through a wooded area, your direction 70 degrees. In 400 metres (having emerged from the wooded area), at the end of some metal fencing on your left hand side, *turn left* through a wooden gate [2] onto a bridleway *along the eastern edge of a wood*, your initial direction 20 degrees.

In 1km (having ignored a stile off to your left and having gone through a gate along the way), follow a public bridleway signpost *left into the wood*, your direction 320 degrees.

After 50 metres at a cross paths [3] *turn right* to follow a car wide earth bridleway through the wood, your direction north. In 550 metres go over a cross paths to emerge from the wood, to continue up a car wide track across a field, your direction 20 degrees.

In 500 metres at the left-hand corner of the field, continue in a northerly direction along a car wide track through the buildings of Lodge Farm. After 90 metres, go to the left of a metal fieldgate to continue up an enclosed car wide track, your direction 30 degrees.

After 280 metres cross over a lane to continue along the left-hand side of a field, your direction 40 degrees. After 300 metres at the left-hand corner of the field, follow the footpath down through a wood. In 270 metres turn right over a stile, to turn half left down across a field, towards its left hand corner.

In 60 metres at the field corner cross over a stile [4] to *turn right down a lane*. [If taking the short cut, turn left here. See details at end of the text.] After 230 metres you reach **The Victoria Inn** on your left.

Coming out of the pub, turn left for 70 metres to go over a crossroads, and up Locksash Lane. In 380 metres *at the crest of the lane, turn left* up a car wide bridleway, your direction 20 degrees. *After 450 metres* (the car wide track having swung round to the right), you reach a bridleway junction. [5]

[If wishing to take a slight short cut, turn left here along this bridleway for 700 metres to [6]. (This short option is mainly enclosed in woodland and can also get quite muddy in winter.) The recommended and slightly longer route affords better views.]

Otherwise *ignore the bridleway to your left* to continue up the bridleway ahead, through a wooded boundary, your direction 110 degrees. *In 180 metres* at a bridleway junction, (marked by a bridleway path post on your right), *turn left up a car wide bridleway*, your initial direction 30 degrees. After 130 metres you go under an HV cable run, with an HV pylon pole off to your right.

In 600 metres *at a staggered cross paths* (marked by a 4 way path post to your right, and with a mini pylon pole plus grey transformer box directly ahead) *turn left*, into the corner of a field. Go down the right hand edge of this field and the next, your direction 290 degrees.

In 370 metres, at the right hand corner of the second field, go over a stile (to the right of a metal fieldgate) to *turn right down a bridleway*, your direction 340 degrees. [6] In 160 metres you come down to a road and after a further 120 metres you reach a T-junction with **The Coach and Horses** on your left-hand side and **The Village Tea Room** on your right.

At the T-junction, turn left down the main road, your direction 210 degrees. *After 170 metres* by the Old Post Office on your left, *cross the road to go up some steps into the corner of a field* to go down across it, your direction 240 degrees. After 200 metres at the edge of the field go through a lightly wooded field boundary into the next field to continue across it, your direction 230 degrees.

In 220 metres at the top of the field follow the footpath up to go through a deer protective kissing gate, to continue up the path through a lightly wooded area, your direction 260 degrees. After 180 metres go

through another deer protective kissing gate to emerge from the lightly wooded area into a field, to continue up across it in the same direction, aiming to the right of an HV pylon pole ahead.

In 300 metres at the corner of a field, exit through a double metal fieldgate to reach a footpath junction, (marked by a 4 armed footpath signpost on your left). Continue ahead down a car wide track, your direction west. In 100 metres *at the bottom of the car wide track, go* (through a car wide entrance) *into the bottom corner of a field, to turn half left up across it,* your direction 210 degrees.

In 200 metres at the top corner of the field, veer left along the footpath, initially with a wooded area on your right hand side, your direction 160 degrees. In 80 metres (by an adjacent field corner fence on your right hand side), veer slightly right, up across the field.

In 180 metres at the right hand corner of the field, cross a stile (to the right of a metal fieldgate), to go along a car wide track (footpath) with a wood on your right hand side, your direction 260 degrees. In 150 metres, *at a 3 way path junction* (marked by a footpath post on your right), *turn left down a car wide bridleway,* your direction 200 degrees.

[!] *After 120 metres at a path junction [7]* (with a footpath signpost on your left hand side), *turn right to go* (initially) up a car wide track bordered by hedgerows, your direction 240 degrees. [*] After 30 metres cross over a shingle driveway to continue along a narrow footpath through a lightly wooded area. In 50 metres you emerge into the corner of a field, to continue along its right hand side in a westerly direction.

You now follow the footpath for the next 2 km to the cross paths at South Holt Farm [8].

In more detail:

After 550 metres, at the corner of the field follow a car wide track into a wood, continuing in a westerly direction. In 50 metres at a staggered cross paths, veer left and then right to continue down a car wide track in the same direction (westerly). In 250 metres you emerge from the wood, into the corner of a field to continue down a narrow enclosed footpath with the wood on your right

After 500 metres follow the footpath up into the wood, to emerge after 70 metres into the corner of a field, with the wood on your left. In 80 metres at the corner of the wood on your left, continue across the

field, your direction 250 degrees. After 180 metres, veer to the right of a tree to join a car wide track bordered by hedgerows. After 350 metres you arrive at a footpath cross paths at the centre of South Holt Farm [8].

At the cross paths, *turn left along a car wide track* bordered by hedgerows, your direction 130 degrees. In 500 metres you pass by some buildings on your left hand side to go over a cross paths, and up a footpath through a wood, your initial direction 160 degrees. After 180 metres, cross a stile (to the right of a metal fieldgate) to continue up across a field, your direction 200 degrees. After 100 metres at the upper side of the field, cross a stile to go along a fenced in footpath.

After 90 metres, turn left down a shingle driveway and in 35 metres *at a T-junction with a main road,* *turn right* down the road taking care of fast moving traffic.

In 180 metres turn left through a wooden gate into the top of a field, to go down across it. In 140 metres cross a stile (to the left of a metal fieldgate), and turn half right slicing the corner of a field to go over a stile after 30 metres, to follow the footpath into a wood.

After 300 metres, cross a stile to emerge from the wood, to turn half right slicing the corner of a field, and after 25 metres, cross another stile to continue along a path through a lightly wooded area.

In 40 metres you emerge from the lightly wooded area, to continue in a south easterly direction along a footpath (with a wood on your left hand side and fields down to your right), back to Rowlands Castle.

In more detail: Follow the footpath for 1.6 km (ignoring turn offs and crossing 3 stiles along the way) to exit through the gap in the brick wall (where you came in), to turn left along the road. In 120 metres you pass by **The Castle Inn** on your right, to then go under a railway bridge. If not stopping for tea, turn right to reach the station after 150 metres.

Short Cut

[For lunch at The Victoria Inn, West Marden you need to go down Locksah Lane for 230 metres before backtracking.]

The directions below have not been surveyed.

At [4], turn left up the lane. In 50 metres, where the lane swings to the left, fork right up a bridleway, your

initial direction north west. After 300 metres at a
bridleway T-junction turn right, your direction north
west. In 200 metres at a path junction (with a footpath
signpost on your right hand side), turn left to go
(initially) up a car wide track bordered by hedgerows,
your direction 240 degrees. Resume the main walk
directions at the asterisk [*] just after [7] in the main
text.

Lunch and Tea places:

Castle Inn *Finchdean Road, Rowlands Castle PO9
6DA (023 9241 2494)*

The Coach and Horses *Compton, PO18 9HA (023
9263 1228)* Located 8.3 km from the start of the
walk.

Fountain *The Green, Rowlands Castle PO9 6AB
(023 9241 2494)*

Robin Hood *The Green, Rowland's Castle, PO9 6AB
(023 9241 2291)*

Victoria Inn *Locksash Lane, West Marden PO18
9EN (023 9263 1330)* Serves lunch, 12 noon – 2pm
Tue - Sat. 12 noon – 4pm Sun (Closed on Mondays.)
Located 6 km from the start of the walk.

The Village Shop and Tea Room, *The Square,
Compton. PO18 9HA (023 9263 1144)* Located 8.3
km from the start of the walk.