

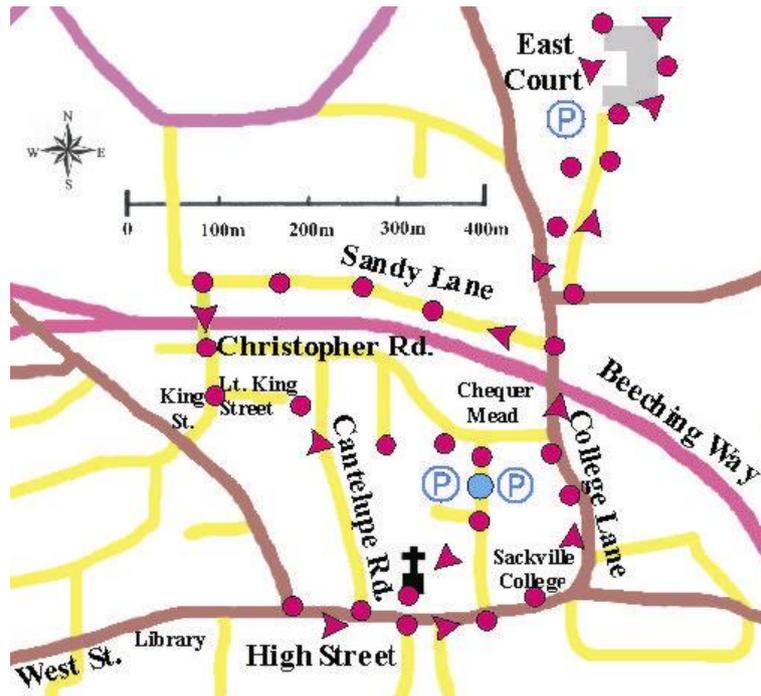
## EAST GRINSTEAD 'VILLAGE'

East Grinstead is, of course, a town but its centre is so attractive that it makes a fine and fitting end to this series of six 'Village Explorations'

**Time:** We suggest you allow 1½ to 2 hours for your visit.

**Starting Point:** Our stroll starts from the car park behind St Swithun's Church. From the High Street turn up Church Lane and park in either of the two long term car parks towards the end of the lane. Charges apply every day except Sundays and Bank Holidays.

From the car parks walk back down Church Lane heading south and after passing Sackville College on your left, enter the churchyard through the lychgate to your right.



The present church was built in 1789 after the tower of the earlier 14<sup>th</sup> century church collapsed – having been poorly rebuilt following a lightning strike. It is constructed from sandstone in the Gothic style and the magnificent tower, completed in 1812, houses the largest peal of bells in West Sussex. There are several brasses and stained glass windows – including work by Charles Kempe whose house features in our Lindfield Walk.

Leave the churchyard down the passage opposite the porch. Walk down to the High Street and turn right.

Most of the buildings on this side of the High Street have modern frontages and at first glance it is difficult to appreciate their antiquity. Several of the buildings do, however, date back to the 1600's. The timber framing in the pizza restaurant can be seen through the windows and the name of the house next door alludes to the earlier Crown Hotel, which occupied this site for nearly 500 years!

Cross Cantelupe Road, where the house on the corner was the 19<sup>th</sup> century 'Lewes Old Bank', and walk ahead past Barclays to Lloyds Bank. Here cross the High Street carefully using the traffic island and walk to the right of the large, rather formidable 'Constitutional Building' opposite, towards Clarendon House.

This beautiful building, built around 1500 in classic Wealden style, once housed the George Inn and the Old Stone House to its right was a later extension, having been built as recently as 1630.

Turn left now to walk back along the south side of the High Street.

**The passageway besides the island site of the Constitutional Building is known as Judges Terrace. Roads across Sussex were notoriously bad and the judges from London were not keen to venture any further south to attend court. This was where the Assize Judges would lodge during sessions in East Grinstead.**

Continue along this most attractive street, shaded by its pollarded lime trees, and in 50m pass the Victorian Jubilee Drinking Fountain heading towards Middle Row.

**Just after the fountain you will pass Tudor House, which has a small sign above the main door. This dates back to the 1400's, but look up to see the extraordinary cork bark cladding on the first floor frontage – a strange addition some 400 years later.**

Now enter Middle Row and at the end cross Hermitage Lane to walk past the Dorset Arms Inn. There follows a series of splendid houses, the earliest of which date back to about 1340. After passing Porch House cross the road carefully to walk beneath a magnificent plane tree to the entrance to Sackville College.

**This is not a college in the academic sense - the Latin word 'collegium' simply means company or society. It was founded in 1609 and, like the Oxbridge colleges, it is set around a grassy quadrangle - but it caters for the other end of the age scale. It was founded by the Earl of Dorset as a home for the elderly on low incomes and continues as such to this day. In a study adjoining the chapel Revd John Mason Neale wrote the hymn 'Good King Wenceslas'. There are guided tours during the summer months.**

Walk now past the mellowed sandstone front of the building to College Lane and turn left. Cross the road carefully when you can and, at the top of the rise, walk over the deep cut of the road below to reach Estcots Drive. Cross over to the tarmac path opposite and follow this into the grounds of East Court. At the sign for the 'War Memorial Gardens' turn right down a narrow path.

**The path opens out onto a delightful terrace with spectacular views of Ashdown Forest and the High Weald to the east. There is a plaque in the ground here marking the line of the Greenwich Meridian allowing you momentarily to stand with one foot in either hemisphere. This universally accepted longitudinal datum line is an eternal tribute to our maritime explorers and horologists who fought hard against a French move to have it based on Paris!**

Walk now across the front of East Court to the Millennium Stone, which you are invited to touch, and turn left to rejoin the path back to the main road. There are toilet facilities here.

**East Court, built in 1769 as a private house, is now home to the Town Council and the Toy Library.**

On reaching College Lane again cross carefully by the red letterbox, before the Beeching cutting, and turn left down the narrow tarmac lane. This is Sandy Lane, at the end of which turn left over the footbridge into Christopher Road.

**The cutting below was the line of an east-west railway from Three Bridges through East Grinstead to Tunbridge Wells. Dr Beeching, who was a local resident, axed it in 1967. A few years earlier the north-south line to Lewes had also been closed. Now, thanks to an enormous effort started by three schoolboys, the final northern section of the "Bluebell Line" may soon re-connect with East Grinstead. What a glorious day that will be!**

After the footbridge walk ahead to the public road and turn left and then immediately right besides the car park. At the corner with the Atrium Cinema turn left into Little King Street. At the end of this short road turn right up a flight of three steps into a tarmac passageway known as Institute Walk – one of the Sussex 'twittens' that run through many of our towns and villages. At the T-Junction

ahead turn left and at the next public road cross straight over to the right of No.30. This will lead back towards the car parks in Church Lane.

**The most fitting end to your visit to this most delightful of all our Mid Sussex towns is a visit to the Chequer Mead Community Arts Centre, just a little way ahead of you to the left, which is normally open Monday to Saturday. In the licensed bar and cafeteria there is a splendid display of 'millennium history panels' around the walls, which depict the thousand year history of the town in colourful detail whilst you relax over some well earned refreshment.**

There are many excellent and more detailed leaflets about all aspects of the town available from the Tourist Point in East Grinstead Library, West Street. Tel: 01342410121

**Open Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri : 9:30am to 7:30pm & Wed, Sat : 9:30am to 5pm.**

**This walk was researched and written for Mid Sussex District Council by Footprints of Sussex who lead local guided walks throughout the year. [www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk](http://www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk)**

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