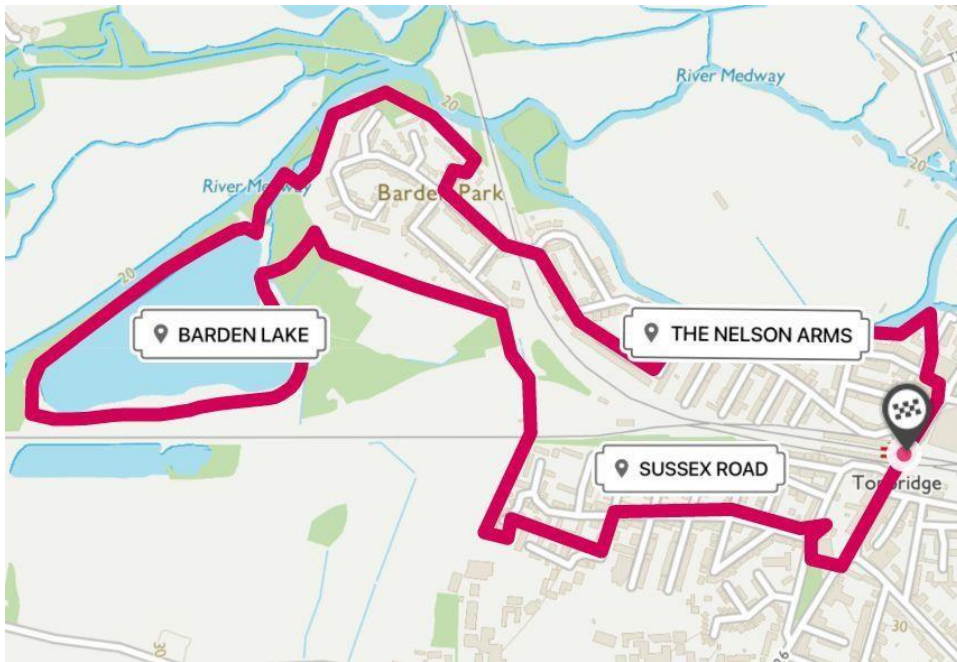


Walk 24 – Train Spotting

www.walktonbridge.co.uk



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Description: A hybrid walk that combines the history and architecture of suburban Tonbridge with the splendours of Haysden Country Park.

Length: 3.33 miles /5.33 km (approximately 1-2 hours)

Grade: Not too tough

Good for: Local history

1. Begin your walk at Tonbridge Station. Turn right, crossing over the junction of Waterloo Road with care, then continue past the parade of shops.
2. Walk on, continuing past Salford Terrace. Nestled between a tattoo parlour and a chemist you will see a townhouse with a blue front door. This was once the office of Colonel Stephens, a cult figure among rail enthusiasts, and the Godfather of British light railways.
3. Continue along Salford Terrace and just after the last shop in the parade you will come to a sculpture honouring local resident and former olympian, Kelly Holmes. Built to commemorate her double olympic gold medal haul, the abstract work was designed and created in 2017 by another Tonbridge resident and former Hugh Christie pupil, sculptor Guy Portelli.

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4. Continue past the sculpture and then take an immediate right as you follow the brick paved path through the grounds of St Stephens church. Either side of the entrance to the church you will see a collection of little tombstones, marking the Punnet family vaults. The Punnets built many houses in South Tonbridge and this church. St Stephen was the patron Saint of bricklayers.
5. Walk through the church yard and then turn right, following the white railings down Waterloo Road. The community centre on your right is an old Victorian school. Walk down the set of steps and then cross Waterloo Road with care before doubling back on yourself and turning right into Douglas Road.
6. Continue along Douglas Road and you will see the Hope Church on your right. Built in 1910, this was originally known as the Evangelical Free church. It was built as a permanent home for a congregation of seceders that had parted ways with the town's baptist church. It is one of many non-conformist churches that sprung up in Tonbridge during the Victorian/Edwardian era.
7. Turn left into Sussex Road and you will see Sussex Road Primary, the first council run school in Tonbridge. Cross over Sussex Road and continue down the alleyway opposite the school. The estate on your left was built on the site of an old school and the estate on your right was an old printworks.
8. Follow the alleyway past the playing fields and then eventually you will come to a steep flight of stairs. Climb these and cross over the footbridge, a 110 metre catwalk that offers up panoramic aerial views of the railway lines and sidings that form Tonbridge West yard. Walk on across the footbridge and then descend the staircase.
9. Follow the footpath for around 100 metres until you come to a second railway footbridge, but do not cross this one. At this point continue round to the left and then follow the path for another 50 metres onto Clare Avenue before branching off to the left and taking the path that runs between the allotments and the backs of the houses. This is the largest of the seven council owned allotments in Tonbridge.
10. Continue straight on until you reach a fork in the path. At this point take the left hand trail and then follow this through the little wood. At the end of the path cross the wooden bridge and you will emerge onto Barden Lake, a former gravel pit. Continue your journey around the lake, following the path clockwise, as you begin to double back on yourself.
11. As the path begins to curve round to the right, you will see a narrower path on your left branching off into the woods (just after the wooden grasshopper). Follow this up the steps and through the trees.
12. When you reach the concrete path, turn right and then walk across the small concrete bridge, following the path until you come to a car park. At the end of the paved path you will come to a car park (another entrance for Haysden). Turn slightly to the left and you will see a well-trodden path running between the river and a sloping embankment.

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13. Follow this path along the riverbank and over the top of the embankment you will just be able to make out the roofs of the bungalows that sit here. These replaced a grand mansion and gardens called Barden Park.

14. Keep to the path as it continues round and then there will be a short sharp climb uphill as you begin to draw level with the back gardens of the bungalows. Walk onwards and then follow the path round to the right and through the squeeze gate. You'll find yourself in a tiny cul-de-sac. Turn right and then turn left, walking for 30 metres until you come to the junction of Ives Road and Audley Avenue.

15. Turn left and as you walk along Audley Avenue, take the time to observe the brick built and pastel rendered houses that make up the majority of Barden Park. These were the first council owned houses to be built in Tonbridge and were part of the 'Homes for Heroes' movement, a government policy that sought to raise living standards for all.

16. Walk along Audley Avenue, then cross over the railway bridge. Turn right into Nelson Avenue and then follow this to the end of the street. At the end of Nelson Avenue you will come to the Nelson Arms, a glorious old Victorian boozer, which boasts a huge selection of cask ales and one of the best Sunday roasts in town.

17. Upon leaving the Nelson, turn left down Cromer Road. At the end of the street turn right past Barden Stores, another institution whose current owners have been serving the community here for over 25 years. The shop itself has been here much longer though, going all the way back to when the estate was constructed in Victorian times. Cross the road with care and then continue along the street for approximately 100 metres. Just before Avebury Avenue you will see a footpath leading off to the left.

18. Take this path, then follow it along the riverbank. When you come to a bridge, walk straight on as the path leads you through an alleyway in the shadow of the Tonbridge telephone exchange.

19. As you pass the old exchange building, follow the river bank round and onto River Lawn. Feel free to stop at the delightful Nancy's tea rooms, otherwise continue across River Lawn and emerge onto Lawn Road.

20. Turn left into Avebury Avenue and then cross over with care, walking past Tonbridge Library and then turning right onto The High Street, before crossing Barden Road and walking uphill to the station, marking the end of your walk.

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When enjoying this walk, please remember to follow the countryside code:

Respect other people

Consider the local community and other people enjoying the outdoors

Park carefully so access to gateways and driveways are clear

Leave gates and property as you find them

Stay on footpaths but give way to others where it's narrow

Protect the natural environment

Leave no trace of your visit - take all your litter home

Don't have BBQs or fires

Keep dogs under effective control

Bag and bin your dog poo.

Enjoy the outdoors

Plan ahead, check what facilities are open, be prepared

Follow advice and local signs and obey social distancing measures