



Trail Summary

Trail : SUSSTR0020
Activity : Walk
Type : Family
Author : Len Markham
Distance : 2.1 miles / 3.4 kms
Ascent : 184 feet / 56 metres
Location : TQ642101 / BN27 1QJ

Herstmonceux has had a certain Gallic charm ever since 1066, when the triumphant William the Conqueror raised his tattered standard at nearby Senlac Hill. For military services rendered, he conferred the local estates to one of his staunchest generals and there has been an imposing presence on the site ever since, the present moated pile, splendidly set among carefully maintained Elizabethan parklands and gardens, dating from the 15th century.

This charming and exciting walk begins in the shadow of a church that predates the castle by centuries. It leads on past the castle, whose tall ghost is said to beat a drum in a nightly tattoo on the battlements, through woodland margins and over meadows to the heart of an Observatory Science Centre, its copper topped domes looking like defunct escapees from the set of Doctor Who.

The trail has been taken from the book Kiddiwalks in East Sussex by Len Markham. It has been reproduced with the kind permission of the publisher, Countryside Books.



Trail Description

1. Go forward from the church for 60 yards and turn left to the gate. Go through and pass through a second gate to the right of the dome then go through a third gate left over a meadow, passing the castle to the left. Go through a fourth gate, following the bridleway sign, and climb up to a fifth gate opposite the domes. Keep going forward to the lane.
2. Walk to the left for 100 yards, passing the estate entrance.
3. Turn left, crossing a stile into woodland and following a footpath sign heading towards the domes. Veer right over the field to the corner.
4. Go left into the wood at the corner, following the arrow marker. Drop down by a fence line and cross a sleeper bridge over a ditch.
5. Bear left at the pale bench and weave left between two ponds, swinging right on a broad track. Continue forward, leaving the wood, to a gate.
6. Go left on a path over a field to the left of Herstmonceux Place.
7. Go through a gate left and swing right on a track (ignoring the footpath on the left). Continue to the lane.
8. Turn left along the lane back to the starting point.

Background Notes

Herstmonceux Castle was built in 1441 by Sir Rodger Fiennes in brick and became one of the great architectural spectacles of Sussex. One of Sir Rodger's descendants, Thomas, Lord Dacre, was executed on Tower Hill for the murder of a gamekeeper. The castle fell into a ruinous state and was abandoned in favour of Herstmonceux Place. Restoration took place beginning in 1912 by the castle's then owner, Colonel Claude Lowther, who raised battalions that became known as 'Lowther's Lambs' during the First World War. Lowther is commemorated in the church, a tablet recording that he found a ruin and left a palace. The building was requisitioned at the outbreak of the Second World War and then became the base for the Royal Greenwich Observatory. In 1993 it was bought by Dr Alfred Bader and given to his old university, Queens of Kingston, Ontario, Canada. It is now the Queens International Study Centre serving students from Canada and other countries.

The imposing Herstmonceux Place was built in 1778 on the site of a previous house. The property is now divided into flats.



Herstmonceux

All Saints' church has an interesting chapel, the Exquisite Dacre Memorial Tomb of 1534 taking pride of place. The church has a spire that is covered, in the Sussex fashion, in cedar shingles. These are much loved by boring woodpeckers, which you can observe in the churchyard.

Herstmonceux Castle has a tea room serving snacks and daily specials. The Observatory Science Centre also has a tea room. In Herstmonceux village is the Sundial Restaurant and Bistro - French inspired meals - and the Brewer's Arms - good bar snacks.

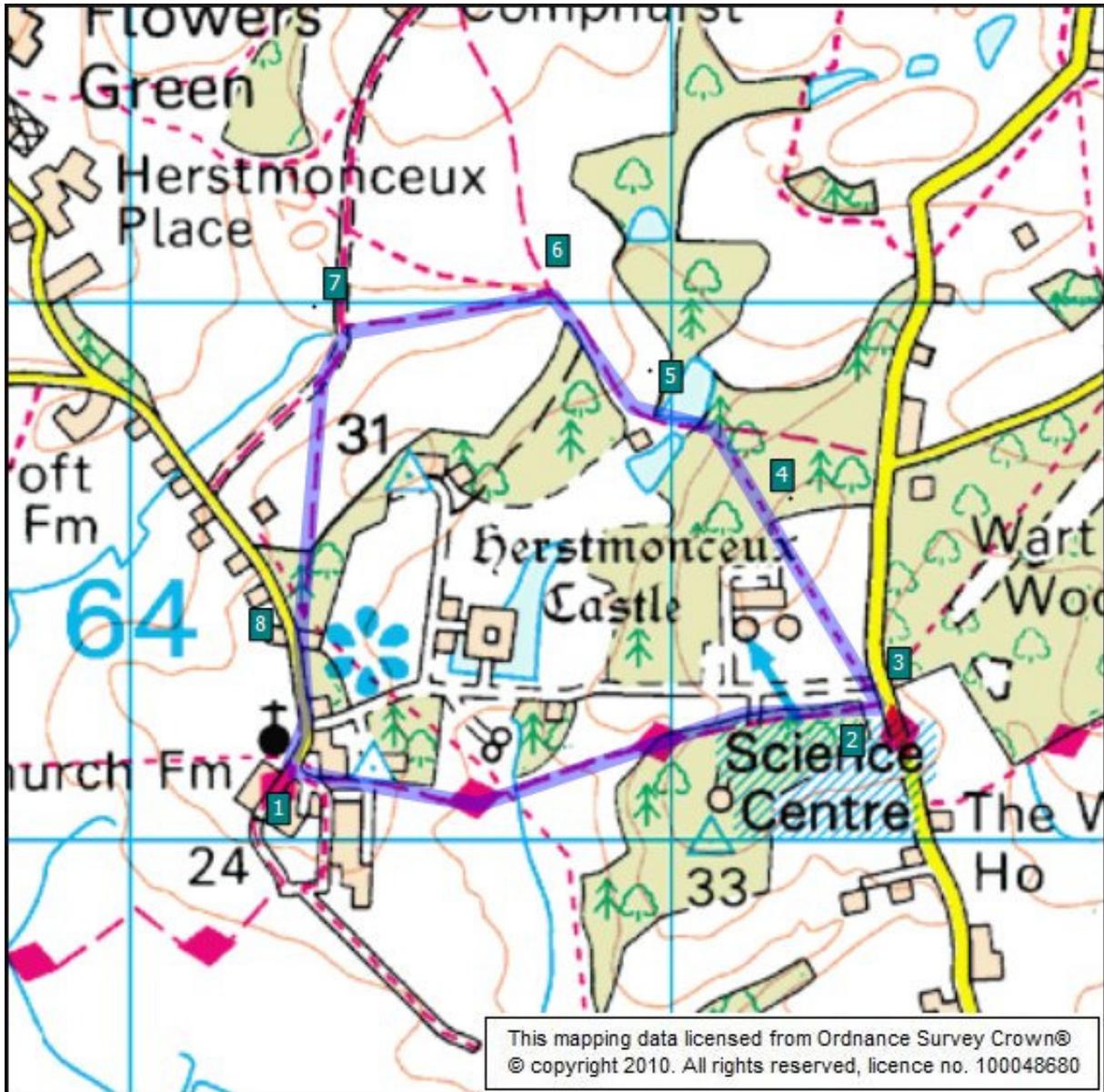
Herstmonceux Castle

Take a short detour at point 2 on the walk and go left into the grounds of Herstmonceux Castle and the Observatory Science Centre. The science centre is immediately right; the castle is further on down the drive. The castle can only be visited as part of a guided tour available from Sunday to Friday. The grounds are open from April until October, attractions including flower gardens, a visitor centre, a nature trail, a children's woodland play area and a gift shop. Telephone: 01323 833816.

Observatory Science Centre

The science centre is the former home of the Greenwich Royal Observatory. Its astronomy-themed Discovery Centre has exhibits, daily science shows and telescope tours. Open daily (weekends only in January and December). Telephone: 01323 832731.

Trail Map



Location

The start of the walk is nearly 2 miles south-east of Herstmonceux village down a dead-end road. Herstmonceux is around 3 miles north-east of Hailsham on the A271. From the eastern end of the village, turn off southwards (no signpost) on Chapel Row (leading to Church Road) and continue along the lane for about 1.75 miles until it stops near the church. Park on the verge outside All Saints' Church.