

CHARLES DICKENS

RED HILL ON THE 11TH SEPTEMBER 1852

This walk was launched by Charles Dickens Great, Great Grandson as Part of Open Heritage Weekend 2014 some 162 years after Charles Dickens Visit to the Philanthropic School, Red hill.



Introduction by
Christopher Whinney
(Charles Dickens great, great grandson)

Charles Dickens had many interests, including social reform, which is reflected in the characters and moral themes in his novels, and he believed in the role of the state to 'send boats to those who would be drowned'. The Philanthropic School in Redhill for reform of boys was a place that Dickens was very interested in visiting. Dickens wanted to find out how young boys could be transformed into law abiding, good citizens.

Red hill is the old spelling of the old town known as Red hill.

Charles Dickens quotations are taken from Boys to Mend in Household Words, Saturday 11th September 1852.

Although we have taken care with this walk, you undertake it entirely at your own risk. Some parts of the route are quite steep, though there will be stops at various points. The complete walk should take about 2 hours, but there is provision for cutting it short (see page 6). Wear comfortable/waterproofs, depending on the time of year, and walking shoes/trainers. Be prepared for some muddy paths on the second part of the walk, especially if has been raining.

START: OUTSIDE REDHILL RAILWAY STATION

Walk out of the Railway Station, and turn left. Cross the road at the pedestrian crossing just below the railway bridge.

You are now on Redstone Hill. Walk up the hill away from the pedestrian crossing until you see the steps in the wall on your right. Go up the steps, and you will be outside the Redstone Hill exit of the railway station. **See Map 1 at the back of this leaflet.**

When Charles Dickens visited the Philanthropic Farm School in 1852 he journeyed by train from London Bridge to what was then called Reigate Junction as Redhill hardly existed as a town. The main station entrance and exit was on the Redstone Hill side, not where the main entrance is now. This is where we start our walk.

WE WILL NOW START OUR JOURNEY IN DICKENS OWN WORDS

“Umbrellas to mend, and chairs to mend, and clocks to mend, are called in our street daily. Who shall count up the numbers of those same streets, whose voice of ignorance cries aloud as the voice of wisdom once did, and is as little regarded; who go to pieces for the want of mending and die unrepaired!”

Where in England is the public institution for the prevention of crime among the neglected class of youth to whom it is not second but first nature, who are born to nothing else and bred to nothing else.

People who sit with us in the carriages of the Brighton train wonder why a terminus must be built with a cover in the shape of an oven, and why it must bake batches of passengers in trains like cakes in tins. Now we are off and its cooler.

Here are market gardens, fields, hills, stations, woods, villages and wayside inns. Here is Redhill where the train stops and we get out.

There is a cluster of inns outside the station, and certain freeholders of East Surrey, warm with sun and politics, seek Coolness in beer outside the inns. They are a little noisy.

Walk out of the station yard and on your left you will see Home Cottage opened in 1854.



Photography by Ian Hunt

Uphill in front of you, you will see a large stone building which was the Reigate Junction Inn, erected in 1846 for railway passengers. The entrance to the Travelodge, is the old coach and horses entrance into the yard. The stables were demolished at the beginning of the Twentieth Century to make way for a car park. The building is made out of Greensand stone. Opposite you will see the Railway Cottages built for the railway workers.



Photography by Ian Hunt

Walk past the Travelodge car park on you right and through the gap in the fence that leads to Fenton Close. When Dickens walked up Redstone Hill he was surrounded by fields. This is how Dickens described Redstone Hill.

“Passing between hedges we begin to toil up hill. The distant song of the freeholders is drowned out by the nearer song of the thrush; and the dog roses that make a roadside garden of each hedge, put out hearts in good humour with the dog days. Every hedge is a garden, where did we ever see more wildflowers clustered together!

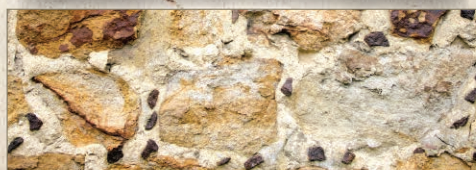
There is a very California of honeysuckle. There are clumps of mallow, blossoming on hillocks beside every gate that leads into cornfields ; there are yellow stars of ranunculus and crimson poppy blossoms, and the delicate peaked hats of which bindweed is ostensibly the maker. There are helmets of foxglove for the same community. There are also the well known little yellow ‘shoes and stockings’. There is veronica, there are the pink blossoms of wild geranium and the red lychnis blossoms; there is lucerne and there is an odd orchid here and there. There is agrimony; there are ambitions daisies, lengthening their stalks that they may show their heads above the grass, there are tiny blue clusters of mouse ear, there is fern in abundance; and there are the elegant grass blossoms that would wave were there a breath of wind.

They are as still as painted grass blossoms, because there is no breath of wind; the sun shines steadily out of a deep blue sky, between the high banks and the hedges, down in the dusty lane.”



This is Dickens yellow star of ranunculus

Walk upto the top of Fenton Close and turn left into Fenton Road and back on to Redstone Hill. Continue up the Hill where you will pass a road called Redstone Manor. The original manor was demolished in the 1930's. A coach house made of local stone has survived from the old Manor down a track between two houses, further up the hill.



Photography by Ian Hunt

See Map 2 at the end of this leaflet.

Continue up the hill. Using the traffic islands, cross with care, Redstone Hollow. Walk towards the bus stop and up the steps and onto the public footpath into the trees. You are now walking where John Linnell, a Victorian Landscape artist built his house and garden. He had just completed his house the year before Dickens visit. His sons James and William Linnell were also landscape artists and he built Hillsbrow on the top of Redstone Hill for William and Redstone South for James in Philanthropic Road. The Linnell estate was sold as a mineral extraction opportunity in 1923 and you will see a large hollow with town houses below you, where John Linnell's house once stood. John Linnell's *Reapers at Noon Day Rest* is in the Tate Britain gallery in London.

The footpath ends with steps down into Woodside Way. Walk towards the junction and turn left up hill, into Sylvan Way.

At the top of the hill between two garages you will see a panoramic view of Redhill and St John's Church with its 185 foot steeple (added in 1895).

As you come round the corner to the end of Sylvan Way, you will see the last building on the right is "Ye Olde Cottage". This was the lodge and coach house to James Linnell's property. Now carefully cross the junction, to the pavement on the other side of the road, following the hedge to the entrance of Redstone Cemetery. Now read the following words by Dickens.

"Obedient to the signpost which directs us to the right if we desire to find the Philanthropic Farm School at Redhill we take the appointed turning thinking as we go how beautiful the blessed earth and sky, and is this really the world so ugly to us last night with its courts and alleys, and its vice and misery, and its ragged scholars, in whose minds the wild flowers have been trampled down, and nothing left but baleful weeds and poisons."

Walk past the cemetery's second set of gates, and you will see a large house behind a low wall on your left. This is Tudor House, home to the chaplain in charge of the Royal Philanthropic School. On arrival at the great door of this house Dickens said;



Photography by Ian Stronge

"A pleasant rustic house by the hillside with roses shining in the hot sun, around its windows! Through a flower garden we come to the door; and keeping out the dog, obtain admittance to the dwelling of the chaplain. While we wait in the drawing room, the dog, who has coursed round the house, plunging among the roses, makes a triumphant entry through the open window, and looks at us for applause."

John Roque's map of Surrey shows a farm house on this site in 1768. Tudor House is a 17th century timber farmhouse with a Victorian front added to it.

The Philanthropic Society was founded in London in 1788 and started working with deserted and vagrant children in St George's in the Fields.

The society wanted to expand its operations, and as a result of the expansion of the railway, was able to move to Redhill in 1849. Prince Albert, Consort to Queen Victoria, laid the foundation stone of the school, which consisted of a chapel, dormitories, workshops and small farms, where the boys could learn practical skills.



Photography by Ian Stronge

"The number of boys now at Redhill is a little over a hundred and the number of acres on the farm is about a hundred and thirty. The boys vary in age from ten or eleven to eighteen, and they vary also in the terms on which they have been admitted. Some of the youngest are children, who have been sentenced to transportation and recommended by the directors of government prisons as more fit to be kindly taught than hastily punished. They are compelled to stay...

The boys at Redhill are taught if possible, to think and act on honest kindly principles. Responsibilities are placed upon their shoulders, they are even trusted out of sight and are as it were prisoners on parole, living where there are no bars to break, no walls to climb. Dispersed about the grounds are houses, containing dormitories, washing rooms, and other chambers, a forge, a carpenters shop, a cottage for the farm balliff, a dairy, cowsheds, piggeries and other buildings.

In one part a new home is being built to contain new dormitories and increase accommodation for boys on the farm, and elsewhere a new blacksmith's shop is being built. All such opportunities are used for giving to those boys to whom the knowledge will be valuable – boys who will soon be emigrants – some particular experience in bricks and mortar...

Here are the boys under the burning sun extremely busy with their long forks tossing up the hay. On this the hottest day, cut grass, may I suppose be dried in half an hour, but I will not venture an opinion, lest I be laughed at, even by this very little boy of ten years old. He is a newcomer from prison in Liverpool, he never made hay before.

Dickens – ‘What did you make?’

Boy ‘Nothin’

Dickens ‘What had you been doing?’

Boy ‘Walking the streets’.

Dickens ‘Nothing else?’

Boy ‘I went to school’.

“That is the old story, the school and the street, the street getting the better of the school; a great deal learned in the Street; very little learned in the school’.

Four boys out of five are rescued by the Royal Philanthropic School. The fifth very often takes advantage of the unwall'd grounds and unbarred windows to escape. Those who escape are invariably re-taken. The other four boys do well and live as honest men.”

The Farm School continued until its closure in 1988. The site of the school was bought by the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) for residential accommodation.

A few original dormitory buildings from the 1850s survive. The chapel was damaged by a bomb in 1944 and then demolished in 1988, only the porch remains. There is also a small burial ground containing a founder member of the Royal Philanthropic School who was also an MP, namely Henry Charles Richard, and staff from the school are also buried there.

(FOR A SHORTER WALK retrace your steps to the cemetery and turn left down Philanthropic road, turn left at the junction and walk under the railway bridge. Continue ahead under the next railway bridge and follow the pavement round to the right. This will take you to the main road. Continue on the pavement to the right and this will take you back to Redhill town centre and the railway station.)

Just past the Tudor House, cross the railway bridge into a small housing estate. This will take you to brick pillars at the junction of Harts Piece Road. Turn left and walk past the school grounds, continue along the hedge until you reach a bridge over a brook. Turn immediately left into the greenspace and follow the footpath alongside the brook. Eventually you will walk past a small orchard and pond on your right and will come to a steel kissing gate. Go through the kissing gate and follow the path ahead. Walk through the gap in the trees and into a plantation of small oak trees. At the public footpath sign walk between two fence posts up through two fenced fields. Cross a stile, and look over to your right where you will see the remnants of farm machinery and the remains of one of the Philanthropic School farm buildings and continue right along Brook Road.



Photography by Ian Stronge



Photography by Ian Stronge

If you look to your left you will see the outline of Redstone Hill, which is part of the Greensand Ridge. Further east you will see Nutfield Priory. Turn round and retrace your steps to the orchard. Walk into the orchard and past the pond on your right. Turn right at the top of the slope and continue along the road past the health centre.

The original Royal Earlswood asylum buildings are on your left. The building was opened in 1855, although extensions continued to be added.

Follow the road to the right and exit via the lodge house gates. You will see the greenspace on your right that you walked through earlier.



The new Asylum for Idiots at Earlswood Common, Redhill, 1854



Photography by Ian Stronge. 2014

Keep walking ahead past the allotments on your left. Continue ahead at the junction with Brambletye Park Road. If you take the public footpath on the left this will take you to Earlswood railway station, where you can catch a train back to Redhill. Continue walking ahead on the pavement until you reach a bus stop where you can catch a 435 bus to Redhill town centre.

Alternatively, keep walking ahead and cross the road with care. Continue walking along Earlsbrook Road (see MAP 4 at the end of the leaflet). Where the road meets Hooley Lane, cross over and walk under the railway bridge, and right along Brook Road. You will come out on the main road that is the A23. Continue on the pavement to your right and this will take you back to the town centre and Redhill railway station.

FINISH



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