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Billingshurst to Amberley

Length: 22.4km (14.5 miles)

Toughness: 6

Transport: Billingshurst and Amberley are both on the Horsham-Littlehampton line, served by trains out of Victoria. Note that Billingshurst has a short platform, and you need to be in the front four coaches when coming from London.

Suggested train: Catch the nearest train to 9.10am from Victoria. Buy a day return to Amberley

Maps: a tiny portion near the start of this walk is on Landranger map 198, but all the rest is on 197. If using Explorer maps, you need maps 121 and 134

Walk notes This walk is an illustration of the maxim that a pleasure deferred is a pleasure intensified. It starts in very gentle countryside, from where there are occasional glimpses of the South Downs as a thin line in the distance. Gradually throughout the day, you get closer and closer to them, and finally there is an exhilarating finish along their crest, with panoramic views of the Arun valley. But way before you get to them, just before lunch, there is a surprise area of High Weald-like territory of steep hills and hidden valleys. Early in the walk, there are some particularly fine bluebell and wood anemone woods, making this a good excursion for late April or early May. The length of the afternoon section 13.7km (8.5 miles) means this walk is not suitable for October to March.

Walk options This walk has a sister walk – Pulborough to Amberley - which shares the same lunch stop and a small centre section, and has the same finish over the Downs to Amberley. It is thus possible to do the morning of one and the afternoon of the other. The morning of the Pulborough to Amberley walk is 5.5km (3.4 miles) versus 9.7km (6 miles) for this walk, and its afternoon is 11.7km (7.3 miles) compared to 13.7km (8.5 miles) for this walk.

LUNCH AND TEA PLACES

Rising Sun, Nutbourne, details to be provided, 9.7 km (6 miles) into the walk, is the recommended lunchtime pub. It has a basic menu with some specials. *In the event of problems with this pub, see the Pulborough to Amberley walk for directions to The White Horse in Marehill 1.3km (0.8 miles) from this point.*

The Crown Inn (01903 742625) Storington, is a possible early tea stop at weekends in spring and summer, when the proprietor says he "usually stays open all afternoon": an ideal choice to refresh yourself before climbing on the Downs.

Houghton Bridge Tea Garden (01798 831 558) by Amberley station provides a charming riverside location for tea if you can get there before it shuts (5pm Monday to Saturday, 5.30pm Sunday). Otherwise, the friendly and atmospheric **Bridge Inn** (01798 831 619) across the road serves tea and coffee until at least 10.30pm

WALK DIRECTIONS

[1] From platform two at Billingshurst (the platform you arrive at from London), do NOT cross the footbridge, but *exit directly off the platform to turn left down Lower Station Road*, your direction 200 degrees.

In 100 metres, ignore Chestnut Road to your left, and in 160 metres cross Daux Avenue on the same side. 25 metres further on, opposite Natt's Lane to your right, *turn left through a rusted gate, following a footpath sign* onto a path (sometimes muddy and overgrown) with a wooden fence to the left and a wire fence to the right, your direction 120 degrees.

In April, you should see increasing numbers of wood anemones and bluebells as you walk through this wood. If the main path is muddy, there is a parallel path to the left for some of the way.

After 200 metres, cross a two-plank bridge. In another 200 metres, where the fence ends to the right and you come to a four way footpath sign, keep straight on, with an open field visible through the foliage to the left. In 120 metres, 5 metres after a minor path joins from the left, *fork right uphill at a three armed footpath sign*, your direction 120 degrees.

In 200 metres, just after the path bears left, go straight on across a crosspath, your direction 80 degrees. Stay on this path, which is now more or less level, ignoring ways off.

[!] *In 300 metres as you approach the edge of the wood to the right, ignore a large path to the right, but in another 10 metres, 10 metres before a two armed footpath sign, turn right onto a smaller path, with the wood edge a few metres to your left*, your direction 230 degrees. Almost immediately, you pass a fieldgate 10 metres to your left.

(If you miss this turning, you will come to a crosspath with no fewer than three sets of footpath signs: if you have got this far, retrace your steps!)

In 70 metres, the path starts to go gently downhill, still with the wood edge to your left, and 20 metres later you pass a two armed footpath sign. In a further 80 metres, you pass a (possibly seasonal) pond to your right.

In 220 metres, just after you cross another path, *pass through a gap in a wooden fence, by a big "Private Woods - No Horses" sign*. Two metres beyond this, *turn left at a two armed footpath sign, and pass through a rusted metal gate into an open field, to turn right along its edge*, your direction 220 degrees.

Follow this field edge, with a fine bluebell wood to your right in season, and in 150 metres pass into the next field, with a two armed footpath sign confirming your route. Keep on along the right hand edge of this field, and in 230 metres, where the wood ends, keep straight on across an open field, aiming to a gap just to the right of two trees, following a half hidden two armed footpath sign.

In 70 metres, *pass through a wooden fieldgate and turn right onto a tarmac lane*, your direction 280 degrees. In 100 metres, *you come to a T-junction with a larger road: cross this and turn left* along its pavement. In 130 metres this starts to curve right, and in another 100 metres, at the top of the hill, the pavement ends. Keep on along the right hand verge of the road, watching out for traffic.

In 180 metres, ignore an easily missed footpath sign to the right, pointing up a driveway to Longmead, and in 75

metres ignore another easily missed signposted footpath to the left into Fowler's Field.

In another 110 metres, *at the end of a garden of a house walled in red tiles on the right*, and level with a house called "Meadows" on the left, *turn right up a gravel/tarmac drive* (which should be a signposted footpath, but the sign had fallen over in April 2007), your direction 320 degrees.

In 15 metres, you pass a house called Marringdean Oak on your left, and keep straight on up the driveway. In 50 metres more, ignore driveway to the left and then one forking right to "Tall Trees" and keep straight on.

70 metres further on, where the driveway bends sharp right, keep straight on over a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate. Continue along the right hand edge of the field beyond, your direction west.

In 170 metres, pass through a double metal fieldgate onto a broad track, with a wood to the left, and in 120 metres pass through a metal fieldgate into a new field, and keep straight on along its right hand edge. But *in 50 metres, at a four armed footpath sign by a stile to the right, turn left across the field, your direction 200 degrees*.

In 70 metres, *cross a stile and two plank bridges into a wood*. In 180 metres, cross a plank bridge and a car wide track and keep straight on, following a two armed footpath sign (which had fallen over in April 2007).

In 40 metres cross a plank bridge and stile and carry on across an open field. In 60 metres, *go through a metal fieldgate, and turn left along a field edge, following a two armed footpath sign*, your direction 110 degrees.

In 60 metres, just before the end of the field, go right up its edge,

following a two armed footpath sign. In 110 metres at the far end of the field, cross a stile and a plank bridge, and turn left to cross another plank bridge in 5 metres, to continue along the left hand edge of a field, your direction now east.

In 220 metres, at the far end of the field, do not cross into the next field, but turn right up the edge of the one you are in, following a two armed footpath sign. In 100 metres, pass through a line of trees, to keep on along the field edge.

In another 130 metres, *cross a plank bridge and a stile, and cross a main road* (watch out for fast traffic), *to turn left along its broad verge*. There is another fine bluebell wood to your right. In 100 metres, at a road T-junction, *turn right up a signposted bridleway to your right [3]*.

Follow this bridleway, with a fenced-off wood to your right, and a field through the trees to the left. In 140 metres the wood ends and there is an open field to your right, still rather aggressively fenced off.

In 300 metres, you pass a pond to the left, and cross into the next field. Keep straight on, still with the fence to the right, up a long gentle hill.

In 300 metres, at the top of the hill, at a two-armed footpath sign, the path shifts slightly to the left so that there is now a line of trees between you and the field. In 50 metres, pass through a fieldgate and carry on down the right hand side of a field, your direction initially 200 degrees.

In 300 metres, pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field, and keep on along its right hand edge. In 120 metres, just after a pond on the right, you pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field, and continue as before.

In 110 metres, you exit the field by a metal fieldgate, and you come to farm buildings. Turn right here in front of a pond, at a three-armed footpath sign, and in 5 metres, at the end of the pond, go left on a signposted bridleway down the left hand edge of a field, which is fenced off to the right. In 150 metres, just before a metal fieldgate, turn left through a wooden fieldgate and right onto a tarmac lane.

You now stay on this lane for 900 metres, until you come to a road T-junction. In more detail: in 150 metres, you pass Jessamine Cottage to your right, and ignore footpaths left and right. In 180 metres, you pass cottages left and right, and in 150 metres more, you pass a grey barn to the right, and ignore a bridleway to the left 10 metres after it. In 200 metres, you pass Gaywood Farm to your left, and in a further 180 metres you come to the road T-junction

[4] Go right at the T-junction, uphill, your direction 330 degrees. In 40 metres, turn left at an easily missed footpath sign (in the hedge to your right) to cross a stile hidden by an elder bush to the right of a metal fieldgate. Head straight uphill, to the top of the ridge, your direction 260 degrees.

In 150 metres, at the top of the hill, stop to enjoy the panoramic view behind you (this is a nice **picnic** spot), and then carry straight on across a stile. In 50 metres cross another stile, and carry straight on for 20 metres to a tarmac driveway in front of a house. Go right uphill on this driveway, following a footpath sign.

In 30 metres, where the drive curves right, go straight on through wooden fieldgate, following a footpath sign. Keep to the field edge, with a fine view of the South Downs (where you will end up this afternoon) to your left. In

30 metres, cross another stile into an area of young elder trees. Follow a path around the contour of the hill, watching out for the large badger/rabbit holes, crossing another stile in 100 metres.

In 150 metres, cross a stile into an open field (though there is sometimes an electric cattle fence here). Bear slightly left here, away from the edge of the field to your right, heading just to the right of a farm on the hill ahead, your direction 230 degrees. As you cross this field, notice the strange castle-like house visible to your right.

In 140 metres, cross a stile to exit the field, and turn left down the edge of the next field, as indicated by a two-armed footpath sign, your direction 200 degrees. You soon skirt a wooded hollow to your left.

[!] In 100 metres, pass to the left of a corrugated grey barn (NOT the right, as seems more obvious). Though rather overgrown, this is the correct route, as a broken down stile confirms. There is another in a further 25 metres further, next to the barn. Keep straight on from this second stile, and descend steeply for 10 metres to a three-armed footpath sign.**[5]**

Here, go straight on steeply downhill, your direction 150 degrees. The way is initially not clear as it is blocked by an area of gorse, but closer inspection will show a gap through this. Beyond this, bear slightly left, heading for a footpath sign and stile some 30 metres to the right of the bottom left hand corner of the field.

In 100 metres, cross this stile and keep straight on uphill, your direction south. In 60 metres, at the top of the hill, cross another stile. In 10 metres, turn left onto a concrete farm road and then in 5 metres right again along the top of a parking area to pick up your former direction (190 degrees) on

a path with a hedge to the right and a fenced-off field to the left. In 100 metres, the field fence ends, and you *carry on through a lightly wooded area*, contouring the hill.

Keep to the path. In 200 metres, you pass a two armed footpath sign. In another 40 metres, *at a three-armed footpath sign, keep straight on into a plantation of new trees*, ignoring a path downhill to the left. Veer right for 10 metres and then left again to follow the right hand edge of the plantation, with a fence to your left and a line of trees to your right, your direction still 190 degrees.

In 160 metres, *cross a stile and keep straight on downhill across the middle of an open field*, your direction 190 degrees. In 200 metres, cross a stile and keep on down the right hand side of a field. In 100 metres, follow the path as it descends into a little gully, and in 30 metres *cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate to leave the field, and curve left downhill on a sunken car wide path*, your direction 170 degrees.

In 150 metres, *merge with a tarmac lane*, and in another 30 metres, *at a T-junction go right*, your direction west. In 30 metres *at another T-junction, turn left downhill* into the village of **Nutbourne**. The recommended lunchtime pub, the **Rising Sun**, is 100 metres further down the hill on the right. **[6]**

Coming out of the pub, turn right to *resume your former direction*. In 45 metres, just after Holly Tree Cottage on the right, *turn left up a signposted footpath*, your direction 110 degrees. In 30 metres, cross a stile, and in 10 metres turn right along a field edge, following a footpath sign. In 40 metres, *turn left across a stile and carry straight on across a field*, your direction 80 degrees.

In 135 metres, *at the far end of the field*, ignore a stile ahead and *turn right along its edge*, following a footpath sign. In 160 metres, cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate, and in 10 metres another. *Keep to the right hand edge of the next field, and in 130 metres, cross a stile down to a road. Turn left for 5 metres, and then right up a signposted footpath*, climbing steps up a bank, and on a fenced path between gardens. Follow this path when it turns right and then left again.

In 50 metres, there is an open field to the left. *In 50 metres more, cross a stile into an open field and veer left between ash trees 30 metres away. Beyond the ash trees, pass to the right of a water trough, and walk straight ahead along the contour of the hill*, your direction 170 degrees, ignoring a faint path that seems to head for the stream to the left.

In 170 metres, *at a three-armed footpath sign in mid field, turn right across a stile and head uphill*, your direction 280 degrees. In 250 metres, *cross a stile to the right of a wooden fieldgate*. In 20 metres, *just beyond a house called "Horsecroft Tanners", turn left up an unsignposted footpath, between a high wooden fence left and a tall beech hedge to the right*, your direction 210 degrees.

in 100 metres, *cross a car-wide earth track and keep straight on along a signposted footpath down the right hand edge of a wood*, ignoring a path forming to the left in the wood. In 130 metres, *cross a broken stile to exit the wood*, and keep to the right hand edge of a field. *In 70 metres, go right through a metal fieldgate, and cross the corner of the next field to a stile and a road in 50 metres, your direction 280 degrees.*

Cross the road and turn left on it (take care on this road, as traffic comes

quite fast). In 150 metres, *you cross a stream, and in 20 metres more turn right across a stile following a footpath signpost into a wooded area by the stream. In 120 metres, cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and keep straight ahead, with the stream still to your right. (In early spring you can see a rare colony of wild daffodils in the wood beyond the stream).*

In 80 metres, cross the stream on a plank bridge and go left, following a footpath sign, with the stream now to your left. In 50 metres, pass a redundant stile and keep straight on between thorn bushes to your left and fence to your right. In 40 metres, cross a wooden footbridge, and just beyond it a plank footbridge, and carry on uphill into a wood.

In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, go through a gate and onto a golf course (watching out for flying balls), following a signpost and aiming to the left of a silver birch 100 metres ahead, your direction 220 degrees. (A two-armed footpath by the birch tree confirms your route). Beyond this, cross the next fairway to a gate in 80 metres.

Beyond the gate, veer left on a signposted footpath. In 130 metres, *cross a stile to the left of a wooden fieldgate and turn left onto a tarmac road. In 380 metres, keep straight on across the car park of the golf club. In 140 metres, at the end of the car park, keep straight on down a tarmac driveway. In a further 150 metres, despite a "PRIVATE DRIVE" sign, go on through a wooden gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate, and keep on along the driveway (which is a public bridleway).*

In another 400 metres, you come to a farm. Pass a barn to your left and brick building to your right, and then go through a wooden fieldgate in 20 metres. Ignore a track coming in from

the left and keep straight on. In another 80 metres, with a small lake visible to the right, pass through a gate to the right of a wooden fieldgate, and turn right onto a tarmac lane, your direction 250 degrees. [7]

In 20 metres, the road crosses a stream. 20 metres further on ignore a signposted path to the right and keep on along the lane. In 80 metres, you pass Waterfall Cottage on your left, and go into a cutting. In 260 metres, where the lane curves sharp right, ignore a car wide track to the left, but go straight ahead up a signposted footpath into a wood.

In 100 metres, pass through a wooden gate. 5 metres later, at a three-armed footpath sign, ignore a path to the right, and carry straight on. In a further 50 metres, curve left with the path alongside a practice racecourse, following a footpath sign. In 120 metres, turn left along the field edge, as indicated by a footpath sign, and follow the field edge round to the right in 70 metres.

[!] *In 350 metres, where a line of scrub ends left, and an arable field ends to the right, and level with the last jump of the race course, and the tanks of a farm visible on the hill through the trees to the left (though possibly not in summer), and at a three-armed footpath sign (well hidden by trees!), turn right uphill, your direction 210 degrees. **It is essential you get this turning right, as the green grassy area beyond this point is the runway of a gliding club,** and if you walk on it, you may find gliders or light aircraft trying to land on top of you.*

In 60 metres, beyond the racecourse jump, pick up a hedgeless field boundary and keep straight on. Follow this, without deviating left. A wind sock soon comes into view that you can use as an aiming point.

In 700 metres, at the very far end of the airfield, turn left down a path separated by a fence from the airfield, which passes behind cross-shaped sheds in which the gliders are kept. Follow this through various turns for 250 metres to a stile. Cross this, and walk to the main road, the A283, 50 metres away. Cross this busy road with great care as traffic comes fast along it, and turn left along its far verge.

(For the **Crown Inn**, a possible early tea stop, stay on this road for 200 metres)

Otherwise, to continue the walk, *in 30 metres, turn right up Clay Lane. [8]* You now follow this minor road for 1km to a T-junction with another main road, the B2139. Despite linking these two busy roads, this lane doesn't have much traffic, and the occasional vehicles using it generally drive slowly: but watch out for ones coming faster, and keep to the road verge. As you walk, you have a fine view of the Downs, at last close up.

At the B2139, turn right along the verge. In 50 metres, just past a house, cross the road, taking particular care of traffic to the right, which is hidden by a hedge at one point. Go up the driveway of the house, and through a wooden gate 10 metres ahead, signposted as a public bridleway, and pick up a track along the right hand side of the field beyond.

In 350 metres, exit the field at its far end, and turn left on a car-wide track, following the public bridleway sign, your direction 120 degrees. In 70 metres, just before a metal fieldgate, fork right uphill, still following the public bridleway sign, your direction 140 degrees,.

At first there is a gloomy pinewood to your left, though there is natural

woodland to your right. Further up, there is natural woodland both sides, an interesting reminder that the Downs were all wooded in their natural state. Follow the bridleway as it curves right up through the wood, until *in 700 metres, near the top of the hill and just after a sharp left turn in the path, you exit the wood through a fieldgate.*

Keep on up the left hand side of the field beyond for 45 metres until the field edge veers left, and then keep straight on across the field for 30 metres to another gate. Beyond it, carry straight on uphill, following a footpath sign. In 40 metres, you come to Kithurst Hill car park. Ignore a road slanting back downhill, and keep straight on through double metal fieldgates, 20 metres ahead. Beyond these, turn right onto a car-wide track, the South Downs Way, your direction due west. [9]

You can now follow the South Downs Way for the remainder of the walk (it goes all the way to the main road, the B2139, that leads to Amberley station), but note the diversion indicated below by [] which also gives you the fine view to the north that you may feel you now deserve after your climb.*

For the moment, stay on the South Downs Way, and content yourself with the panoramic view to the south, which on clear days includes the sea. In 650 metres, after a long gentle climb, *you enter a wood, and in 100 metres, you emerge from its far side. Ignore a fork to the left here and keep straight on along the South Downs Way.*

[*] *In another 100 metres, fork right, through a kissing gate onto the Springhead Estate, a new open access area. Walk forward for 30 metres to two thorn trees, and then curve left to follow the crest of the ridge.*

Carry on along the ridge, at last enjoying the fine views worthy of your climb. In 550 metres the ridge starts to descend, opening up a **magnificent view of the Arun River and its floodplain** below. This is a good place for a **picnic tea**.

In another 150 metres, *cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate*, and carry on directly parallel to the South Downs Way with a barbed wire and electric fence to your left. In 30 metres, *pass to the left of a hummock*.

*Just beyond the hummock, if you want, you can cross the stile ahead and stay on the access land for another 800 metres, rejoining the South Downs Way through the kissing gate at the point marked [**] below.*

Otherwise, *turn left through the gate just beyond the hummock, and then turn right to rejoin the South Downs Way*. On the next section of the path, look left for a **fine view of Arundel Castle**, roughly to the south west, which at this time of day should be a silhouette against the edge of the downs.

*In 800 metres, ignore a kissing gate to the right [**] to go through a wooden fieldgate and carry on downhill more*

steeply. In 380 metres, at the bottom of the hill, where a track joins from the left, keep straight on through a gate to the right of double metal fieldgates. In 50 metres, *at a three-armed footpath post, veer right off the track to take a path between fences, following the South Downs Way signpost*.

In 270 metres, pass through a gate and in 80 metres more *descend to a road, where you go right, downhill*. Follow the road around to the left, and in 80 metres, *at a fork, ignore a road going downhill to the right, to carry straight on, your direction 240 degrees*.

In 500 metres, this brings you down to a main road, the B2139. Cross it with care and go left along the pavement. In 220 metres follow the road as it curves right, and in 150 metres, *just before the railway bridge, you see the entrance to the **Amberley station** on your left*. At the station, cross the footbridge for London-bound trains,

For tea, keep on under the railway bridge. 40 metres beyond it, the **Bridge Inn** is on your left, and 20 metres further on the **Houghton Bridge Riverside Tea Gardens** are on your right.