

Winter walk last check	Summer walk last check		
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Balcombe Circular via Ardingly Reservoir

Length:	Winter Walk	16.2km (10 miles)
	Picnic only version	12.8km (7.9 miles)
	Summer Walk	19.5km (12.1 miles)

Toughness: 4 out of 10 for the **Winter Walk**, 7 out of 10 for the **Summer Walk**

Maps: OS Landranger 198, Explorer 135 (though a tiny portion of part one of the Summer Walk is on Explorer OL34 - formerly Explorer 134)

Features

Balcombe is a great place to walk – the one stop on the Brighton line that feels truly remote and rural. The moment you leave the station you are in a Wealden wonderland of hills, woods, pasture and hidden farms, with some pleasant views from time to time. These walks also feature Ardingly Reservoir, romantically set between steep hills.

“These walks” because this is in fact two walks - a **Winter Walk** and a **Summer Walk**, which intersect each other in two places (at the end of parts one and two) - see the more detailed descriptions below. This allows you to switch between them at these points – for example, doing part one of the summer walk, part two of the winter walk, and part three (and four) of the summer walk - or the morning of the summer walk and afternoon of the winter walk, and so forth.

Both walks are not just circular walks in that they start and end at the same station, but also because they actually circle around Balcombe, departing westwards from the village, and skirting round its southern side to return to the village from the east.

WINTER WALK (16.2km/10 miles)

This route is suggested for winter because it has a shorter afternoon and includes quite a bit of walking on quiet lanes and dry tracks, so avoiding the worst of the mud. Ardingly Reservoir is also particularly beautiful in low winter sunlight and the walk should enable you to get to the Balcombe Tea Rooms before they close at 4pm. *Instructions for this option start on page 3. If only doing this option (ie if **not** mixing winter and summer sections), you only need pages 1-6 of this document.*

PART ONE (2.1km/1.3 miles) follows a quiet and pretty lane from near Balcombe station. It gives a **shorter start** to the walk than part one of the Summer Walk.

PART TWO (6.7km/4.1 miles) takes you under **the Ouse Valley Viaduct** - a surprisingly impressive structure, completed 1841 for the London to Brighton Line - before climbing up to Ardingly reservoir and village.

PART THREE (7.4 km/4.6 miles) goes from Ardingly village **back down to the reservoir** and along its edge to Balcombe for tea.

- **Picnic only option** On the Winter Walk the pub stop is a bit of a dog's leg – that is, you have to go out and back by the same route to get to it. If you plan to have a **picnic**, there is no point in doing this, so you can simply stay on the path along the reservoir. This saves **3.4km (2.1 miles)**, making a total walk of **12.8km (7.9 miles)**. Directions for this option are in paragraph 39 on page 5. Another idea is to use this shortcut to get to The Balcombe Tea Rooms in time for a late lunch or high tea (they serve simple hot food such as lasagne and fry-ups).

SUMMER WALK (19.5km/12.1 miles)

The **Summer Walk** spends more time on footpaths and in fields, and as a result can be very muddy in January or February. This route is also much more hilly than the Winter Walk, especially in the afternoon where there are three big climbs and descents. Both the first section and the afternoon have a few **bluebell** woods in late April/early May. The National Trust tea room at Wakehurst Place provides a convenient tea stop half way through afternoon, so you don't have to rush to finish the walk on long spring and summer evenings. *Instructions for this walk start on page 7. If doing only this option (ie if **not** mixing summer and winter sections) you only need pages 1-3 and 7-12 of this document.*

PART ONE (4.5km/2.8 miles) does a hilly loop on **woodland paths and farm tracks** as an alternative to the all-tarmac route followed by part one of the winter walk

PART TWO (5.6km/3.5 miles) is a **higher level route** to Ardingly than its Winter Walk counterpart, which has some nice views down onto the reservoir in its latter stages.

PART THREE and FOUR (combined 9.3km/5.8 miles) follow the **High Weald Landscape Trail** from Ardingly village over hilly terrain to **Wakehurst Place**, owned by the National Trust, and home to Kew's "country garden" and the Millennium Seedbank. This is also a possible tea stop. From there you cross two more valleys to get back to Balcombe.

Transport

Balcombe is on the Brighton line, served twice hourly Mondays to Saturdays and hourly on Sundays by Thameslink trains from **St Pancras** and **London Bridge**. Catch the nearest train to **9.30am** from London Bridge to get to lunch in time. Note that the rear four carriages of the twelve carriage Thameslink trains do not fit on the southbound platform at Balcombe and the driver sometimes forgets to announce this fact. Be sure to move forward in time to disembark.

Lunch

The Ardingly Inn (01444 892 214), 8.8km (5.4 miles) into the Winter Walk and 10.1km (6.3 miles) into the Summer Walk, serves a basic menu, but with good quality and hearty portions.

Next door is the **Ardingly Cafe** (01444 891 113), which serves sandwiches, salads, soups and light meals until 4.30pm Monday to Saturday and 3.30pm on Sundays and bank holidays.

The Gardeners Arms (01444 892328), is an alternative lunch option 8.9km (5.5 miles) into the Winter Walk or 10.2km (6.4 miles) into the Summer Walk. (***It is inconveniently sited for the Summer Walk afternoon, however and directions are only given to combine it with part three of the Winter Walk.***) This is an excellent pub, but is often fully booked at weekends, so you would do well to reserve a table in advance. It does have some outside tables, however, and some walkers have managed to get meals served at these without a reservation. The pub is reached by a diversion off the walk route - see paragraph 44 on page 5 or paragraph 137 on page 9 - which if you are doing part three of the Winter Walk only adds 280 metres to the walk length. *Note that the diversion goes along the edge of the **South of England Showground** (www.seas.org.uk): on days when there are events at this venue, the diversion and pub are probably best avoided.*

Picnic spots: There are many benches around Ardingly Reservoir. Part three of the Summer Walk also has some pleasant hillsides in its early stages.

Tea

The Balcombe Tea Rooms (01444 811 777) serve great doorstep slabs of homemade cake, as well as doing simple meals such as lasagne or fry-ups. This is the recommended tea stop for the winter walk if you can get there before they close at 4pm.

Wakehurst Place (01444 894066), 14.2km (8.8 miles) into the Summer Walk, has a self-service cafe, the **Seed Cafe**, and is the recommended tea stop for that walk. It is open until 5.30pm daily from 1 March to 31 October, and 4.15pm from 1 November to 28 February.

The **Half Moon Inn** in Balcombe is a possible tea stop for both walks. Newly refurbished, it is open all afternoon and now serves tea and (sometimes) cakes. After 6pm it offers hot food, including deserts.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Winter Walk (16.2km/10 miles)

PART ONE: Shorter start on the road (2.1km/1.3 miles)

1. From platform 2, the southbound platform at Balcombe station, cross the footbridge to platform 1.
2. At the foot of the stairs keep straight on for 20 metres to exit the platform through a gap in the fence. Continue on down the station approach road.
3. In 130 metres, where the station approach meets the main road, turn right down a footpath. Ignore a signposted path immediately to the left, but instead cross a stile, then a small field, and then a second stile 20 metres later.
4. Carry on down a path with steps (uneven and slippery when wet) for 70 metres to a road.
5. Go straight ahead on the tarmac road, past a house 30 metres ahead on the left. *You now stay on this quiet lane for 2 kilometres*, until you get to paragraph 11 opposite.
6. In slightly more detail: keep on uphill, in a sunken lane.
7. In 600 metres, near the top of the hill, ignore a signposted path diverging to the right. In 50 metres pass two houses on the right.
8. In 250 metres the trees end to the right and in another 120 metres also to the left, and you are in open fields with a view ahead. The road starts to descend. In 200 metres, just after passing a coppice to your right, you

get a glimpse of the Ouse Valley Viaduct in the valley to your left.

9. In 250 metres more you pass a house left. In 70 metres more, level with a pond to your left, ignore a signposted footpath up a concrete track to the right.
10. In another 220 metres the road turns hard left.
11. In 100 metres ignore a signposted footpath uphill to the left. In 15 metres more there is a signposted footpath downhill to the right along a field edge.
 - **To continue with part two of the Winter Walk**, passing under the Ouse Valley Viaduct, *turn right downhill* on the footpath, and continue with the the next section.
 - **To do part two of the Summer Walk**, a slightly more direct but more hilly route to Ardingly Reservoir, *keep straight on along the road*, and continue with paragraph 107 on page 8.

PART TWO: Under the Ouse Valley Viaduct: (6.7km/4.1 mi)

12. Carry on downhill on the right-hand edge of the field. In 250 metres you come to a road, where you turn right.
13. The road climbs up over a hill and down the other side. In 550 metres you come to a main road, the B2036.
14. Cross this with care, and turn left. In 10 metres turn right up a tarmac driveway to **Great Bentley Farm**.
15. In 450 metres the driveway passes black corrugated metal barns and in

another 250 metres curves right to cross a stream on a bridge with white metal railings.

16. 10 metres beyond the bridge turn left through a metal gate on a signposted footpath and down three concrete steps into a field. Keep to the right-hand edge of the field, soon picking up a car-wide raised bank that follows the field edge.
17. In 300 metres the field edge curves right, but you diverge from it to cross a wooden-railed footbridge in 80 metres.
18. On the far side of the bridge, veer half right to merge with the far edge of the field in 100 metres.
19. Follow the hedge for another 50 metres and then go left over a stile to the left of a wooden fieldgate. Go half right diagonally up across the next field to its far right-hand corner.
20. In 120 metres, when you get to the corner, cross a stile 20 metres to the right of a fieldgate and then another stile 10 metres after it. Keep uphill across the next field towards farm buildings.
21. In 70 metres pass through a kissing gate to the left of a metal fieldgate and carry on between a wooden-walled barn to the left and a farmhouse to the right.
22. In 30 metres, once you are level with the farmhouse, turn left up a farm track.
23. In 30 metres pass through a kissing gate into a field. A magnificent close-up view of the Ouse Valley Viaduct is now before you. Cross the field diagonally towards the left-hand end of the viaduct.
24. In 120 metres pass through a kissing gate and in 30 metres more another, to pass under the arches of the viaduct
25. Cross the field beyond the viaduct to pass through a kissing gate and turn right onto the road. Be careful of the fast traffic on this road. From the road you also get an excellent view backwards towards the viaduct.
26. Follow the road for 130 metres. Just after you have crossed a stone bridge, go left over a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate.

27. Keep to the left-hand side of the field beyond, following the stream and a line of alder trees to the left.
28. In 700 metres the fields end and you carry on down a track, still with the river to your left.

The **Ouse Valley Viaduct** was opened in 1841 for the London to Brighton Railway. A particularly spectacular view along its length through the hollow centres of the piers, which creates a surreal "belly of the whale" effect. Notice the way that it has a colonnade along its top and decorative towers at either end: this is because it was built in the early days of the railways when engineers were still a bit apologetic about imposing these structures on the countryside and tried to make them look artistic.

Today the viaduct still carries the main line to Brighton, but is a bit of a bottleneck. Having only two tracks, it is one factor (the others being the Balcombe and Clayton tunnels) which prevent the whole line being expanded to four tracks, as it is between Gatwick and East Croydon.

29. In 130 metres emerge into another field and keep on along its left-hand edge.
30. In another 100 metres turn left across a footbridge.
31. On the far side keep straight on to cross another footbridge in 60 metres.
32. Beyond this keep straight on up a steep hill on the right-hand edge of the field.
33. In 150 metres, three quarters of the way up the hill, turn right through a gap in the hedge marked by a two-armed footpath sign.
34. Once through the gap veer left across the far corner of the field to merge with its far edge and follow this uphill. *The building complex you can see on your right, is **Ardingly College**, a private school.*
35. In 170 metres pass through a metal kissing gate and keep straight on through an area of scrub.
36. In 60 metres turn right at a four-armed footpath sign and descend 40 metres to the dam of **Ardingly Reservoir**.

37. Walk along the length of the dam. At the far end pass through a kissing gate to the right of a wooden fieldgate and curve left on a fenced path through a wood.
38. Follow this path for 150 metres as it climbs a small hill and then curves down again towards the reservoir.
39. As the path leaves the wood and just before it comes to the side of the reservoir again, there is a signposted footpath over a stile to the right.
 - **If you are not planning to have a pub lunch**, then just stay on the path along the reservoir edge (*but see ** below*). This saves you **3.4km (2.1 miles)** off the walk and cuts out an up and back journey to Ardingly village. Simply follow the reservoir path for 1km until you come to a road, and resume directions in paragraph 52 on page 6. By this route, Balcombe is **5.9km (3.7 miles)** away.
 - ** The one part of the route you might care to do, just for the views of the reservoir, is the climb up to Townhouse Farm and down again, which only adds 350 metres or so to your route. To do this, stick with the walk directions in paragraph 42 below.
40. **Otherwise, to continue with the walk**, turn right over the stile and follow its field edge uphill.
41. In 100 metres pass through a gap in the hedge into the next field and keep climbing uphill across a much larger field.
42. In 250 metres, at the top of field and hill (turn around to see the **fine view** of the reservoir), pass through a gap in a hedge and you find yourself at a multiple track junction just in front of **Townhouse Farm**.
 - If doing the **picnic only option** described in paragraph 39 and only came up here for the views, *turn left* here and resume the directions in paragraph 48 opposite at the point marked [*].
43. Otherwise, go half right, passing to the right of the farmhouse. Follow this track as it curves right and left, passing increasingly large houses.
44. In 600 metres you come to a road T-junction with the church to the left. Go right here, up Street Lane.

- **For lunch at the Ardingly Arms or the Ardingly Cafe**, stay on the road for 900 metres, to find the pub on the right in the centre of the village, with the cafe just beyond it. After lunch, to continue with the **Winter Walk** refer to paragraph 45 below. To switch to the afternoon of the **Summer Walk** see paragraph 139 on page 9.
- **For the lunch at the Gardeners Arms**, 20 metres after you have turned right onto Street Lane, just after a house to the left, turn left up a track marked Private: No Entry (marked as a right of way on the Ordnance Survey map). In 70 metres pass through a kissing gate and turn left before a chainlink metal fence (surrounding the South of England Showground) on a tarmac estate road. In 40 metres fork right, still with the fence to your right. In 500 metres turn half right with the road, still with the fence to your right. In 100 metres more when the fence turns hard right you can see the pub to the right. To get there either stay on the estate road you are on or take a narrower path along the fence. Either way you get to the public road, with the pub on the opposite side, in 200 metres. **After lunch** retrace your steps back to Street Lane and turn right on it, then 20 metres later, just before the church, turn left down Church Lane: resume the directions in paragraph 47 below.

PART THREE: Along Ardingly Reservoir (7.4km/4.6 miles)

45. Coming out of the **Ardingly Arms**, turn left to retrace your steps the 900 metres to the church.
46. Turn left down Church Lane, again retracing your steps, and ignoring drives forking off to the left.
47. In 600 metres you come back to **Townhouse Farm** and the four-armed footpath sign
48. Here veer right. [*] Pass to the left of the barn on a car-wide track. Follow this downhill as it curves left and right and left again.
49. In 150 metres the track ends. Ignore a field opening to the right and go straight ahead into a field, with a fine

- view of the reservoir below. Turn right down the field edge.
50. In 220 metres, at the bottom of the field, veer left through a gap past a redundant stile. Keep straight on downhill to cross another stile in 70 metres and turn right on the path along the reservoir.
 51. Follow the path along the reservoir for 450 metres until it suddenly curves right uphill to a kissing gate and a road
 52. Turn left on the road, following a path down its left-hand side. The road crosses an arm of the reservoir on a causeway.
 53. At the far end of the causeway, just before the road starts to climb a hill, turn left through a gate following a footpath sign, to resume the path along the reservoir once more.
 54. Stay on this path along the reservoir right to its end, a distance of 2km.
 55. The path ends when it slants uphill to a road. Turn left on the road, downhill.
 56. In 150 metres follow the road round to the left to cross the upper part of the reservoir.
 57. In 60 metres curve right with the road past some cottages. Ignore a footpath uphill to the left here.
 58. Instead, stay on the road, which in another 130 metres curves sharply left. 30 metres beyond the curve, **turn right up a footpath** (sign missing).
 59. The path climbs a steep slope for 30 metres and then crosses a stile into a field. Keep on along the right-hand edge of the field.
 60. In 100 metres cross a stile and descend 10 metres to cross a stream on a footbridge.
 61. Carry on along the bottom edge of the next field for 80 metres to pass through a metal kissing gate onto a road.
 62. Cross the road and go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a metal fieldgate into a field. Veer half left across the field.
 63. In 80 metres pass through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal fieldgate and across a footbridge. Carry straight on up the slope ahead, heading towards an oak tree on the horizon. (In winter, you may see a two-armed footpath sign beneath it).
 64. In 200 metres, when you get to the tree, turn left BEFORE the hedge, and follow it along the top of the ridge.
 65. In 100 metres, at the corner of the field, go through a metal kissing gate and on up a path between low trees.
 66. In 60 metres emerge onto a cricket pitch and veer half right across it.
 67. In 80 metres, at its far side, you emerge onto a tarmac lane and turn right uphill.
 68. In 180 metres pass to the right of a fieldgate and curve left up what is soon a tarmac lane into the village of **Balcombe**.
 69. In 40 metres, ignore a minor road to the left and keep straight on uphill.
 70. In 50 metres curve left with the lane for another 60 metres to the village centre and a four way road junction. The **Half Moon Inn** is to your right.
 71. Turn half right at the junction, signposted to Cuckfield and Railway Station (ignoring the road sharp right, which is signposted to London).
 72. In 60 metres you pass the **Balcombe Tea Rooms** on your right.
 73. Keep straight on down the road (or turn right if coming out of the tea rooms). In 150 metres, you come to the main road, the B2036.
 74. You can go left here to reach the station on the right in 350 metres, but a much nicer and not much longer route is to cross the B2036 and take the lane slanting downhill on the far side – Rocks Lane.
 75. In 300 metres you pass under a railway bridge (the station can be seen above you), and the road turns left.
 76. In another 300 metres, just before the lane curves sharp right to a house (a place you may recognise from the morning), turn left up a signposted footpath.
 77. Climb up the steps for 70 metres, cross the stile and the small field, then another stile and climb 10 metres to the road.
 78. Turn left and immediately fork left off the road up the station approach for 130 metres to platform two of **Balcombe station**, which is the platform you need if returning to London.

Summer Walk (19.5km/12.1 mi)

PART ONE: Longer start on footpaths (4.5km/2.8 miles)

79. From platform 2, the southbound platform, at Balcombe station, cross the footbridge to platform 1.
80. At the foot of the stairs keep straight on for 20 metres to exit the platform through a gap in the fence. Continue on down the station approach road.
81. In 130 metres, where the station approach meets the main road, turn right down a footpath. Ignore a signposted path immediately to the left, but instead cross a stile, then a small field, and then a second stile 20 metres later.
82. Carry on down a path with steps (uneven and slippery when wet) for 70 metres to a road.
83. Keep straight ahead on the road, towards a house on the left in 30 metres. When you are level with the house, turn right up a signposted footpath into a narrow field. Keep on uphill on its right-hand edge.
84. In 50 metres go through a gate and carry on uphill on the right-hand edge of the field.
85. In 150 metres, at the top of the hill, go over a stile and carry on up the left-hand edge of the next field.
86. In 120 metres pass through a gap into the next field, and carry on up its left-hand edge as before. (Near the top of this field, notice three mobile phone masts to the right, rather poorly disguised as pine trees).
87. In 180 metres, at the top of the field, cross a stile to merge with an earth/gravel farm track and keep on uphill.
88. In 80 metres, just after passing a wood-sided shed to the right, turn left up a track following a footpath sign.
89. In 40 metres merge with a track from the right and keep on under an avenue of trees.
90. In 130 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign, curve left with the track past a pond and carry on between houses left and right.
91. In 120 metres curve right with the track between farm buildings and then beyond them curve left and then right again, out into open fields.
92. In 200 metres curve left with the track towards a line of trees, following a footpath sign.
93. In 140 metres, as you approach the line of trees, **leave the track** to keep to the left of a projecting stand of trees.
94. In 70 metres cross a stile and turn left onto a path that keeps just inside the line of trees.
95. In 150 metres cross a stile to emerge into an open field and in 40 metres cross another one. Beyond, keep on along the edge of the field, with a wood to your left.
96. Where the trees end in 40 metres keep straight on across an open field towards a clump of trees ahead.
97. In 200 metres, when you come level with the clump (which turns out to have a large pond in it), veer right diagonally across a field, heading for a metal gate into the wood on its far side. **Do NOT go towards a footpath sign that may be visible ahead at this point, on the end of a hedge 150 metres away.**
98. In 200 metres go through the gate and turn right along a gravel track. In 25 metres, at a two-armed footpath sign (currently rather concealed by vegetation), turn left up a path into the woods.
99. In 200 metres there is an field and wire fence to your left. Keep to the path along the fence, ignoring ways off.
100. In 400 metres you come to the end of the field. Here veer right along the edge of an open space with a house to the left, to pick up a track and in 40 metres more turn left downhill with it.
101. Stay on this track. In 180 metres it becomes tarmac and you pass farm buildings.
102. In 100 metres more, at a crossroads (a gravel track ahead), turn left uphill on a tarmac driveway.
103. In 30 metres the drive curves slightly right. In another 30 metres pass a black wood barn to the right and keep straight on along a gravel drive past a pond to your left.

- 104.** In 50 metres, at the end of the pond, ignore turnings left and right to keep on downhill on a track with an open field to your left.
- 105.** Stay on this track, ignoring ways off. In 700 metres you come to a T-junction with a road, with a pond ahead. Here turn right, downhill.
- 106.** In another 250 metres, the road turns left. In 80 metres ignore a signposted footpath uphill to the left. In 10 metres more, there is a footpath (currently not signposted) downhill to the right along a field edge.
- **To continue with part two of the Summer Walk**, *keep straight on* along the road and carry on with the directions in the next section
 - **To switch to part two of the Winter Walk** (passing under the Ouse Valley Viaduct), *turn right downhill* on the footpath, and refer to paragraph 12 on page 3.

PART TWO: Higher route to Ardingly (5.6km/3.5 miles)

- 107.** Carry on along the road. In 150 metres where it turns sharp right downhill, go left up a tarmac drive towards a farm on the hill.
- 108.** In 70 metres curve round to the right on a driveway between the farmhouse to the right and barns to the left.
- 109.** Beyond the farm keep straight on along an earth and stone track.
- 110.** In 450 metres this brings you to a busy main road. Cross this with care, and carry on over a stile on a signposted footpath on the other side.
- 111.** Go straight on downhill across the field.
- 112.** In 100 metres exit from the bottom of the field up a broad funnel that veers right onto a track, following a two-armed footpath sign.
- 113.** In 60 metres turn left over a stream on a footbridge and keep on up the left-hand side of the field beyond, with a wood to your left.
- 114.** In 150 metres cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and carry on up the left-hand edge of the field as before.
- 115.** In 200 metres keep to the field edge as it curves right and steeply uphill around the top of the field. You soon come up parallel to the railway line, and keep on along the field edge, with the railway to the left.
- 116.** In 350 metres go left across a brick bridge over the railway line.
- 117.** Beyond the bridge follow a track. When this converges with the field edge in 90 metres, turn right across wooden footbridge over a ditch into the next field.
- 118.** Go straight on diagonally across the field, following the direction of the footpath sign. (On clear days, there are distant views of the South Downs to your right as you cross this field).
- 119.** In 130 metres pass through a gate (from where you get a good view of the **Ouse Valley Viaduct** to the right) and descend to a main road. Cross this with care and veer left up a tarmac driveway, following a footpath sign.
- 120.** In 40 metres you pass a lodge on your left. Carry on up the driveway past farm buildings to the left.
- 121.** In 150 metres pass through a metal fieldgate and the driveway becomes a gravel track.
- 122.** In another 30 metres at a T-junction level with a fine old house to the left (Stone Court), turn right down a concrete track, following a footpath sign.
- 123.** Follow this track downwards for 150 metres and then upwards again to pass half-timbered cottages to the right in 60 metres more.
- 124.** 100 metres beyond the cottages go through a wooden gate to the left of a metal fieldgate. Immediately beyond it, **cross a stile into the field to the left** and turn half right towards the right-hand end of a large clump of trees on the horizon.
- 125.** In 120 metres, when you get to the right-hand corner of the clump of trees (in fact a sizeable wood), cross a stile and keep on along the edge of the field, with the trees to your left.
- 126.** In 100 metres, where the tree boundary veers half left, keep straight on across the field.
- 127.** In 200 metres cross a stile and veer slightly left across the next field. (In winter, Ardingly Reservoir may now be visible through the trees to the left, and ahead on the hill you can see the

start of Ardingly village, your lunch stop.)

- 128.** In 180 metres more pass through a metal gate and into a wood. In 10 metres veer right across a slightly staggered crosspaths to cross a stile in 15 metres and emerge in 20 metres into an open space.
- 129.** Follow the grassy path down the edge of this space. In 70 metres cross a plank bridge over a ditch and fork left downhill for 70 metres to the dam of **Ardingly Reservoir**.
- 130.** Walk along the length of the dam. At the far end pass through a kissing gate to the right of a wooden fieldgate, curve left on a fenced path through a wood.
- 131.** Follow this path for 150 metres as it climbs a small hill and then curves down again towards the reservoir.
- 132.** As the path leaves the wooded area and just before it comes to the side of the reservoir again, there is a signposted footpath over a stile to the right.
- **If you are NOT planning to have a pub lunch** and are planning to do **part three of the Winter Walk** in the afternoon, then stay on the path along the reservoir edge here (*though see ** below*). This saves you **3.4km (2.1 miles)** off the walk and cuts out an up and back journey to Ardingly village. Simply follow the reservoir path for 1km until you come to a road, and resume directions in paragraph 52 on page 6. By this route, Balcombe is **5.9km (3.7 miles)** away. ** The one part of the route you might care to do, just for the views of the reservoir, is the climb up to Townhouse Farm and down again, which only adds 350 metres or so to your route. To do this, stick with the walk directions below for the time being.
- 133.** Otherwise, **to go to Ardingly village for lunch** (and continue with the **Summer Walk**), turn right over the stile and follow the field edge uphill.
- 134.** In 100 metres pass through a gap in the hedge into the next field and keep climbing uphill a much larger field.
- 135.** In 250 metres, at the top of field and hill (turn around to see the view of the reservoir), pass through a gap in a hedge to find yourself at a multiple

track junction just in front of **Townhouse Farm**.

- If doing the **pub-free option** for **part three** of the **Winter Walk**, described in paragraph 132, turn left here and continue with paragraph 48 on page 5 at the point marked [*****].
- 136.** Otherwise, go half right, passing to the right of the farmhouse. Follow this track as it curves right and left, passing increasingly large houses.
- 137.** In 600 metres you come to a road T-junction with the church to the left. Go right here, up Street Lane.
- **If you want to have lunch at the Gardeners Arms**, see paragraph 44 on page 5: but note that this pub is **inconveniently sited for the afternoon of the Summer Walk**: for this reason directions are only given to combine it with part three of the Winter Walk afternoon.
- 138.** Otherwise, stay on Street Lane and in 900 metres you come to **The Ardingly Inn** on the right-hand side of the road, with the **Ardingly Cafe** just beyond it.
- After lunch to continue with the **Summer Walk** refer to paragraph 139 below.
 - **To switch to the Winter Walk**, with its gentler ending along the Ardingly Reservoir, continue with paragraph 45 on page 5.
- PART THREE: Ardingly to Wakehurst Place (4.1km/2.5 mi)**
- 139.** Coming out of the **Ardingly Inn** go straight ahead. In 30 metres, at the main road, turn left, passing Hapsted Hall and its clock tower on the left almost immediately.
- 140.** In 70 metres, 30 metres before you reach the post office on the left, and opposite the white clapboard Holland House, **turn right up a tarmac lane** marked 'High Street 28-60 Even Nos only'.
- 141.** In 60 metres, where the lane curves left into a parking area, go straight ahead through rusted metal gate to the left of a metal fieldgate into a field, following a footpath sign. Veer slightly left across this field.
- 142.** In 90 metres pass between bushes for 10 metres to cross a stile, ignoring a path forking right into the wood. Keep

- on downhill on the right-hand edge of a field.
143. In 150 metres, at the bottom, cross another stile and carry on downhill, with a wooden fence to your right.
 144. In 100 metres go through a metal gate and turn right along the edge of a field, with the garden fence of a house to your right.
 145. In 70 metres, just past the end of the fence, at a three-armed footpath sign, **turn left** downhill.
 146. In 50 metres, at the bottom of the field, pass a two-armed footpath sign and go into a wood with a barbed wire fence to your left.
 147. In 30 metres, follow the path as it turns half right away from the fence across the slope.
 148. In 60 metres at a T-junction with a wider earth path, turn left for 40 metres to cross a wooden footbridge.
 149. Beyond the bridge pass through a metal gate and go up a grass slope for 30 metres to emerge into a field. Keep on uphill on the right-hand side of the field.
 150. In 130 metres cross a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate, and in another 150 metres cross another stile to the right of a metal fieldgate. Carry on uphill, now on the left-hand side of the field, with a barbed wire fence (somewhat decayed) to your left.
 151. In 180 metres, at the top of the field, cross a stile to the left of the left-hand of two fieldgates. In 20 metres keep to the right of a brick building up a gravel track.
 152. In 170 metres ignore a track sharp right at a footpath signpost and continue uphill on a section of track under trees, with a high bank to the right.
 153. The track curves slowly left and in 160 metres comes to a road. Turn right uphill on the road.
 154. In 200 metres ignore a metal fieldgate to the left, opposite a track to the right to Ludwell House, but in another 10 metres **turn left** through another fieldgate, following a footpath sign.
 155. Keep on down the right-hand side of the field.
 156. In 200 metres pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field and keep on downhill with a hedge to your right.
 157. In 50 metres, where the field boundary turns sharp right, keep straight on downhill towards the **middle** of wood, heading for a point just below a house on the hill ahead.
 158. In 200 metres or so, as you get closer to this wood, you can see that a spur of it projects out into the field, which turns out to contain a large hollow, a pond in winter. Keep just to the left of this and in 80 metres, in a corner in the tree boundary, pass through a gap (once occupied by a wooden gate) into the wood.
 159. Veer slightly right with the well-defined path and descend through the wood.
 160. In 160 metres cross a stream on a wooden footbridge. Beyond it, slant right uphill on a clear path.
 161. In 100 metres there is an open field to the left. In 80 metres more you come to a T-junction with an earth car-wide track. Here go right.
 162. In 30 metres leave the track, which curves right downhill (marked Private) and keep straight on along a path which soon has rhododendrum bushes either side, and later some **bluebells** in season.
 163. Stay on this path for 1km until it starts to go decisively downhill. 100 metres after this point you come to a crossroads with a track, where you go left, uphill on a car-wide track.
 164. In 80 metres turn left at a two-armed footpath sign, to go uphill on a side path in a gully.
 165. In 100 metres, just before a fieldgate, turn right uphill at another two-armed footpath sign. In 200 metres you come up between two houses to a main road.
 166. **Cross this road with care**, and turn left along the far verge. In 220 metres turn right into **Wakehurst Place** ("Staff and Deliveries Only" but this is a public footpath).
 167. Keep on down the tarmac drive. In 200 metres you come to a cattle grid.
 - The Wakehurst Place **visitors centre** and **Seed Cafe**, the recommended tea stop, is to your left here: to reach it turn left just before or after the cattle grid into

the car park. Once in the car park veer left and then in 60 metres turn right up a fenced walkway to get to the visitor centre in another 60 metres. The cafe is on the right-hand side of the centre and you can reach it without paying the entrance fee to the site. Retrace your steps to the tarmac drive and cattle grid after tea and continue with the directions below.

PART FOUR: Wakehurst Place to Balcombe (5.3km/3.3 miles)

- 168.** To continue the walk, carry on across the cattle grid and down the tarmac drive.
- 169.** In 100 metres ignore tarmac paths to the left. Immediately there is a sign saying "No Access to Garden Visitors Beyond This Point", but this is a public right of way, so keep straight on down the tarmac drive regardless.
- 170.** In 30 metres where the drive forks, take the right fork marked "Pondfield Cottage" and "Footpath to Forest Ridge". Keep on down the drive, which soon veers right, with a hedge and later a wall to the left.
- 171.** In 120 metres pass a sign saying "No Access to Gardens This Way" (*which is factually inaccurate, but legally correct: see paragraph 176*). Keep straight on, now with a wood fence to your right.
- 172.** In 40 metres more, ignore a turning to Wakehurst Farm left, and keep on downhill, now on gravel drive.
- 173.** In 40 metres more, where the gravel drive turns right to some houses, go straight on down the right-hand edge of a field, following a footpath sign.
- 174.** In 100 metres, where the fence ends, keep on downhill across open fields.
- 175.** In 400 metres, at the bottom of the hill, pass through a gate to leave the field
- 176.** You are now in the gardens of Wakehurst Place (*the factually inaccurate part of the sign in paragraph 171*), but it is of course illegal to do anything but cross them on the footpath, which is as follows:
10 metres beyond the gate ignore a path to the right, but in 5 metres fork right following a public footpath sign downhill on a path which curves gently to the right.
- 177.** In 100 metres cross a gravel path and carry on through a high kissing gate in 20 metres.
- 178.** Beyond this, you are outside Wakehurst Place gardens. Carry on down a footpath in a gully. In 60 metres, this crosses duckboards for 40 metres over a boggy stretch, and 40 metres after the end of this you cross a stream on a footbridge.
- 179.** Beyond this follow the path uphill and then down again to another footbridge in 100 metres, and yet another in 30 metres.
- 180.** You now climb steeply uphill on a narrow path (through fine **bluebell** woods in season), which curves from side to side up the hill.
- 181.** In 200 metres, just before you come out into a field, turn left through a wooden gate and keep straight on along the bottom edge of a field.
- 182.** In 120 metres, when you get to the field corner, turn right uphill, following the field edge.
- 183.** A long climb ensues. At the top, in 400 metres, cross a stile and turn right on a road. In 10 metres turn left off it again up a gravel track to Forest Farm.
- 184.** In 120 metres, where the track turns hard right, with a brick-pillared entrance to a house to your left, **go straight ahead** into the field ahead. Keep downhill, with the field boundary to your left.
- 185.** In 300 metres go through a metal gate into the next field and turn half left, roughly down its middle, heading for the right-hand end of a wood on the far side.
- 186.** In 180 metres exit the field over a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and turn right along the top edge of the next field.
- 187.** In 250 metres cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and turn left downhill on a concrete farm road.
- 188.** Stay on this road, ignoring all ways off. In 300 metres it becomes tarmac and in 100 metres it comes down to a lake.
- 189.** Follow the road alongside the lake. In 120 metres, at its far end, pass over a weir and 10 metres further on, at a four-armed footpath sign, go right through a kissing gate to the right of a metal fieldgate.

- 190.** Veer half left across this field (or half right from your former direction on the road, if you prefer).
- 191.** In 80 metres pass through a metal kissing gate to the left of a metal fieldgate and across a footbridge. Carry straight on up the slope ahead, heading towards an oak tree on the horizon.
- 192.** In 200 metres, when you get to the tree, turn left **before** the hedge, and follow it along the top of the field.
- 193.** In 100 metres, at the corner of the field, go through a metal kissing gate and on up a path between low trees.
- 194.** In 60 metres you emerge onto a cricket pitch and turn half right to leave it at a footpath sign halfway along its right-hand edge. You emerge onto a tarmac track and go straight ahead uphill.
- 195.** In 180 metres pass through a metal kissing gate to the right of a fieldgate and curve left up what is now a tarmac lane into the village of **Balcombe**.
- 196.** In 40 metres ignore a minor road to the left and keep straight on uphill.
- 197.** In 50 metres curve left with the lane for another 60 metres to the village centre and a four way road junction. The **Half Moon Inn** is to your right.
- 198.** Turn half right at the junction, signposted to Cuckfield and Railway Station (ignoring the road sharp right, which is signposted to London).
- 199.** In 60 metres you pass the **Balcombe Tea Rooms** on your right.
- 200.** Keep straight on down the road (or turn right if coming out of the tea rooms). In 150 metres, you come to the main road, the B2036.
- 201.** You can go left here to reach the station on the right in 350 metres, but a much nicer and not much longer route is to cross the B2036 and take the lane slanting downhill on the far side – Rocks Lane.
- 202.** In 300 metres you pass under a railway bridge (the station can be seen above you), and the road turns to the left.
- 203.** In another 300 metres, just before the lane curves sharp right to a house (a place you may recognise from the morning), turn left up a signposted footpath.
- 204.** Climb up the steps for 70 metres, cross the stile and the small field, then another stile and climb 10 metres to the road.
- 205.** Turn left and immediately fork left off the road up the station approach for 130 metres to come to platform two of **Balcombe station**, which is the platform you need if returning to London.