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| Winter walk last check | Summer walk last check | Wakehurst shortcut last check | |
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Balcombe Circular via Ardingly Reservoir

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|-------------------|--|---------------------|
| Length: | Winter Walk | 16.2km (10 miles) |
| | Via Gardeners Arms and shortcut to Wakehurst Place | 15.4km (9.6 miles) |
| | Picnic only version | 12.8km (7.9 miles) |
| | Summer Walk | 19.5km (12.1 miles) |
| | Via Gardeners Arms and shortcut to Wakehurst Place | 16.7km (10.4 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). 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. There is also now the possibility on either walk for a shortcut to Wakehurst Place via the Gardener's Arms. More information on these options is overleaf.

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 most of the mud (though not all of it by any means). Ardingly Reservoir is also particularly beautiful in low winter sunlight. *Instructions for this option start on page 4. If only doing this option (ie if **not** mixing winter and summer sections), you only need pages 1-7 of this document, though for the Wakehurst Place option you also need pages 10-13.*

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 (or to the Gardener's Arms - see **lunch** overleaf).

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

- **Gardeners Arms and Wakehurst place option** If you plan to lunch at the Gardener's Arms, you can use the **link to Wakehurst Place** (see page 10) and then do stage four of the Summer Walk. This makes a walk of **15.4km (9.6 miles)**. *Note that the route to this pub 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 only option** On the Winter Walk you have to go out and back by the same route to get to the pub lunch options. 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.

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 7-13 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 (4.1km/2.5 miles) follows 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.

PART FOUR (5.3km/3.3 miles) takes you from Wakehurst Place across two more valleys to get back to Balcombe.

- **Gardeners Arms lunch option** This provides an alternative to lunching at the Ardingly Inn or Cafe, but it is **inconveniently sited for doing stage three of the walk** (it is possible with a bit of backtracking, but adds 2km/1.2 miles to the walk length). A better idea from this pub is to take the 1.2km (0.7 mile) **Link to Wakehurst Place** (see page 10, from where you can do stage four of the walk. Full directions for this are given in the text. Taking this route shortens the afternoon of the summer walk to 6.5km (4 miles), giving a total walk length of **16.7km (10.4 miles)**. *Note that the route to this pub 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.*

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, has been recently modernised and offers a food menu of pub favourites from 12pm to 3pm and 5-8pm Wednesday to Friday (with drinks available all afternoon), 12pm to 9pm on Saturday and 12pm to 7pm on Sunday. It is closed Monday and open for drinks only from 2-9pm on Tuesdays.

Next door is the **Ardingly Cafe** (01444 891 113), which serves sandwiches, salads, soups and light meals until 2.30pm Monday to Saturday and 2pm on Sundays.

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. 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 6 or paragraph 136 on page 10 - which if you are doing part three of the Winter Walk only adds 280 metres to the walk length. It is unfortunately inconveniently sited for stage three of the summer walk, but there is a short link by permissive paths to Wakehurst Place and so stage four of the summer walk (see paragraph 138 on page 10). *Note that the route to this pub 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.

Tea

The **Ardingly Activity Centre** by the dam on the Ardingly Reservoir has a seasonal cafe that serves hot drinks and snacks.

Wakehurst Place (01444 894066), 14.2km (8.8 miles) into the Summer Walk, (or 11.4km/7.1 miles if you take the shortcut from the Gardeners Arms to Wakehurst Place - see paragraph 138 on page 10), 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 Balcombe Tea Rooms seem unfortunately to have closed for good, but it is worth googling to see if they have been revived.

The **Half Moon Inn** in Balcombe is a possible tea stop for both walks. 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.
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 250 metres the road turns hard left.
11. In 100 metres ignore footpath uphill to the left (*formerly signposted, but not currently*). In 20 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, pass through a kissing gate 20 metres to the right of a fieldgate and then another kissing gate 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.

The **Ouse Valley Viaduct** was opened in 1841 for the London to Brighton Railway. A particularly spectacular view is 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.

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 through a kissing gate 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 fenced track, still with the river to your left.
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**. 40 metres to the left here is the Ardingly Activity Centre, which has a **seasonal cafe**.
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, continue

with the walk directions in the next paragraph.

40. **For a pub lunch or to see the view**, 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 you are doing the **picnic only option** described in paragraph 39 and only came up here for the view, *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 Inn 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 opposite. To switch to the afternoon of the **Summer Walk** see paragraph 147 on page 11.
 - **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, signposted as a footpath. In 70 metres pass through a 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 130 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 to continue with the winter walk**, 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. Or you can **switch to part four of the summer walk**, using the **1.2km link route to Wakehurst Place** outlined in the paragraphs 138-145 on pages 10-11.

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

45. Coming out of the **Ardingly Inn or cafe**, 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 a green space (*a former barn: maybe something else will be built here*) on a 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 right 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** (*signposted, but only with a mossy stone at ground level*).
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 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.
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 through a small wood.
66. In 70 metres emerge onto a cricket pitch and veer half right across it, to leave it at a footpath post a third of the way along its right-hand edge.
67. You/ emerge onto a tarmac lane and carry straight on uphill on it.
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 (*though this sign was pointing too far to the left in October 2023 and currently could be taken to indicate the road to the left*), ignoring roads left and right which are both busier with traffic.
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 through a gate 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, initially on the right-hand edge of the field.
 85. In 180 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.
 87. In 200 metres, at the top of the field, cross a stile to merge with an earth/gravel farm track and keep on uphill.
 88. In 70 metres, just after passing a shed to the right, turn left up a tarmac track following a footpath arrow.
 89. In 30 metres merge with a tarmac drive 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 drive past a pond and carry on between houses left and right.
 91. In 130 metres curve right on a track between farm buildings and then beyond them curve left and then in 100 metres right again, out into fields.
 92. In 170 metres more curve left with the track towards a line of trees.
 93. In 120 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 a field and in 40 metres cross another one.
 96. Where the trees end in 40 metres keep straight on across an open field towards the right-hand edge of a clump of trees ahead.
 97. In 250 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.
 98. In 250 metres go through the gate and turn right along a gravel track. In 25 metres, at a footpath post, turn left up a path into the woods.
 99. In 250 metres there is an field and wire fence to your left.
 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 turn left downhill on a track in 50 metres.
 101. In 30 metres the track becomes tarmac. In 170 metres 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 wooden barn and a large Elizabethan house to the right, and keep straight on along a gravel drive past a pond to your left.
 104. In 60 metres, at the end of the pond, ignore turnings left and right to keep on downhill on a track with a 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 100 metres ignore a signposted footpath uphill to the left. In 20 metres more, there is a signposted footpath 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 4.
- 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 ignore a track to the right, but in 30 metres more 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 go through a gate on the other side marked by a footpath sign.
111. Go straight on downhill across the field.
112. In 100 metres exit from the bottom of the field up a broad track to the right, following a two-armed footpath sign.
113. In 80 metres turn left over a stream 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. In 100 metres you come up parallel to the railway line, and keep on along the field edge, with the railway to the left.
116. In 250 metres more 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. Veer very slightly left across the field. (On clear days, there are distant views of the South Downs to your right).
119. In 130 metres pass through a gate (from where you get a view of the **Ouse Valley Viaduct** in the valley 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. (*A sign here says "No Access to the Reservoir", but this is aimed at car traffic.*) Immediately beyond the lodge pass through a wooden gate to the right of a double fieldgate and carry on up the driveway (a public footpath) past farm buildings to the left.
121. In 170 metres pass through a metal fieldgate with a fine old house to the left (Stone Court), and turn right down a concrete track.
122. Follow this track downwards for 150 metres and then upwards again to pass half-timbered cottages to the right in 70 metres more.
123. 100 metres beyond the cottages your way is blocked by a metal fieldgate and a wooden gate marked "Private" to the left of it. **Cross the stile just to the left of the gate**, into a field, and head towards the right-hand end of a large clump of trees on the horizon.
124. In 150 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.
125. In 100 metres, where the tree boundary veers half left, keep straight on across the field.
126. In 200 metres cross a stile to the right of a fieldgate and veer slightly left across the next field. (In winter, Ardingly Reservoir may now be visible through the trees to the left.)
127. In 180 metres more pass through a metal gate into a wood. In 10 metres veer right to pass through a kissing gate in 30 metres and emerge in 20 metres more into an open space.
128. Follow the grassy path down the edge of this space. In 60 metres cross a plank bridge over a ditch and veer left downhill for 60 metres to the dam of **Ardingly Reservoir**. 40 metres to the left here is the Ardingly Activity Centre, which has a **seasonal cafe**.
129. 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.
130. Follow this path for 170 metres as it climbs a small hill and then curves down again towards the reservoir.
131. As the path leaves the wooded area and 50 metres 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.

- 132.** Otherwise, **to go to Ardingly village or the Gardeners Arms for lunch** (and to continue with the **Summer Walk**), turn right over the stile and follow the field edge uphill.
- 133.** In 100 metres pass through a gap in the hedge into the next field and keep climbing uphill a much larger field.
- 134.** 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 131, turn left here and continue with paragraph 48 on page 6 at the point marked [*].
- 135.** Otherwise, go half right, passing to the right of the farmhouse. Follow this track as it curves right and left, passing increasingly large houses.
- 136.** 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**, 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, signposted as a footpath. In 70 metres pass through a 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 130 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 to return to stage three of the summer walk** (adding 2km/1.2 miles to the walk length) retrace your steps back to Street Lane and turn *left* on it: resume the directions in paragraph 137 below. To do the **shortcut to Wakehurst Place**, see paragraph 138 below.

- 137.** 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 148 overleaf.
 - **To switch to the Winter Walk**, with its gentler ending along the Ardingly Reservoir, continue with paragraph 45 on page 6.

LINK from Gardeners Arms to Wakehurst Place (1.2km/0.7 mi)

- 138.** Coming out of the Gardeners Arms, cross the main road with care and turn right along its far verge.
- 139.** In 150 metres turn left up a tarmac lane signposted as a public footpath, but **almost immediately**, in 10 metres, **turn right** through a wooden gate into a field, a permissive footpath.
- 140.** Immediately after the wooden gate, pass through a high gate in a deer fence and keep on along a field edge, with a curving brown metal fence left and the deer fence, road and newly planted saplings right.
- 141.** In 600 metres pass through another deer fence gate to cross a driveway with a gatehouse in 40 metres.
- 142.** Beyond the driveway walk straight ahead, with an earth bank to the left.
- 143.** In 60 metres, when the bank ends (or turns left), veer slightly left across a field towards a fieldgate in its corner.
- 144.** Pass through the fieldgate and turn right through a gap into the car park of Wakehurst Place.

- 145.** Walk straight ahead for 50 metres, passing a hedged enclosure on the left, then veer left to come in 70 metres to the pedestrian entrance to the Wakehurst Place shop and cafe.
- 146.** Coming out of the cafe, turn sharp left towards the near left-hand corner of the car park.
- 147.** In 60 metres, pass through a fieldgate in the corner (*marked "Staff Only" but you are just using it to return to the right of way on the drive beyond*) and turn right to pass in 15 metres through a high metal gate to the left of a cattle grid. Turn left on the tarmac drive beyond. *Continue with paragraph 177 on page 12.*

PART THREE: Ardingly to Wakehurst Place (4.1km/2.5 mi)

- 148.** Coming out of the **Ardingly Inn** or **cafe** go straight ahead. In 30 metres, at the main road, turn left, passing Hapsted Hall and its clock tower on the left almost immediately.
- 149.** 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'.
- 150.** In 60 metres 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.
- 151.** In 90 metres pass between bushes for 10 metres to pass a redundant stile. Ignore any apparent path forking right into the wood to veer left for 20 metres into a field. Keep on down its right-hand edge
- 152.** In 150 metres, at the bottom, pass between bushes and through a metal gate, and carry on downhill, with a wooden fence to your right.
- 153.** In 100 metres go through a wooden gate and veer right along the edge of a field, with the garden fence of a house to your right.
- 154.** In 70 metres, just past the end of the fence, at a three-armed footpath sign, **turn left** downhill.
- 155.** In 50 metres, at the bottom of the field, go into a wood and slant right downhill, with a barbed wire fence to your left.
- 156.** In 40 metres, follow the path as it turns half right away from the fence across the slope.
- 157.** In 60 metres at a T-junction with a wider earth path, turn left for 40 metres to cross a wooden footbridge, *ignoring a rather unhelpfully sited No Footpath sign on a tree just before it on the left. Despite this, you are on a public right of way.*
- 158.** At the end of the bridge pass through a metal gate and go up a slope. In 45 metres cross a stile to the left of a fieldgate to emerge into a field. Keep on uphill on the right-hand side of the field.
- 159.** 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 wire fence to your left.
- 160.** In 180 metres, at the top of the field, pass through double fieldgates. In 30 metres turn left up a gravel driveway past a house, which soon becomes a tarmac drive.
- 161.** Follow this drive, ignoring ways off, for 350 metres to a road. Turn right uphill on the road.
- 162.** In 200 metres ignore a metal fieldgate into a field to the left (opposite a track to the right to Ludwell House), but in another 15 metres **turn left** through a gap in the fence to the right of a fieldgate, following a footpath sign.
- 163.** Keep on down the right-hand side of the field on a broad fenced-off strip.
- 164.** In 200 metres pass through a metal fieldgate into the next field and keep on downhill with a hedge to your right.
- 165.** 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.
- 166.** 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.
- 167.** Veer slightly right with the well-defined path and descend through the wood.

- 168.** In 200 metres cross a stream on a wooden footbridge. Beyond it, slant right uphill on a clear path.
- 169.** In 150 metres there is a field to the left. In 120 metres more you come to a T-junction with a track. Here go right.
- 170.** 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.
- 171.** 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/driveway, where you go left uphill.
- 172.** In 80 metres turn left at a two-armed footpath sign, to go uphill on a side path in a gully.
- 173.** 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.
- 174.** **Cross this road with care**, and turn left along the far verge. In 250 metres turn right into **Wakehurst Place** ("Deliveries and staff entrance" but this is a public footpath).
- 175.** Keep on down the tarmac drive. In 200 metres you come to a cattle grid.
- The Wakehurst Place shop and **Seed Cafe** is to your left here: to reach it turn left just after the cattle grid through a high metal gate and then in 15 metres left through a fieldgate into the car park. After the gate, the entrance walkway to the shop and cafe complex is 60 metres to your right. **After tea** retrace your steps to the cattle grid and turn left on the tarmac driveway. Continue with the directions in paragraph 177 below.

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

- 176.** To continue the walk, carry on across the cattle grid and down the tarmac drive.
- 177.** In 150 metres ignore tarmac paths to the left and right. Immediately there is a sign saying "No visitor access to Wakehurst from this point", but this is a public right of way, so keep straight on down the tarmac drive.
- 178.** In 40 metres where the drive forks, take the right fork marked "Pondfield Cottages" and "Wakehurst Farmhouse". Keep on down the drive, which soon veers right, with a hedge and later a wall to the left.
- 179.** In 130 metres pass a sign saying "No Access to Gardens this way" (*which is factually inaccurate, but legally correct: see paragraph 184*). Keep straight on, still with the wall to your left.
- 180.** In 50 metres more ignore a turning to Wakehurst Farm left, and keep on downhill, now on gravel drive.
- 181.** In 45 metres more, where the gravel drive turns right to some houses, go straight on through a gate and on down the right-hand edge of a field, following a footpath sign.
- 182.** In 100 metres, where the hedge ends, keep on downhill across a large field.
- 183.** In 400 metres, at the bottom of the hill, pass through a gate to leave the field
- 184.** You are now in the gardens of Wakehurst Place (*the factually inaccurate part of the sign in paragraph 179*), 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.
- 185.** In 100 metres cross a gravel path and carry on through a high kissing gate in 25 metres.
- 186.** Beyond this, you are outside Wakehurst Place gardens. Carry on down a footpath in a gully. In 70 metres this crosses duckboards for 50 metres over a boggy stretch, and 60 metres after the end of this you cross a stream on a footbridge.
- 187.** Beyond this follow the path uphill and then down again to another footbridge in 150 metres, and yet another in 30 metres.
- 188.** You now climb steeply uphill on a narrow path (through fine **bluebell** woods in season), which curves from side to side up the hill.
- 189.** 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.
- 190.** In 150 metres, when you get to the field corner, turn right uphill, following the field edge.
 - 191.** A long climb ensues. At the top, in 400 metres, pass to the left of a high fence for 40 metres to come to a stile. Cross this and turn right on a road. In 10 metres turn left off it again up a gravel track.
 - 192.** In 170 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. The village of Balcombe is in view on the far side of the valley.
 - 193.** 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.
 - 194.** In 200 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.
 - 195.** In 220 metres cross a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and turn left downhill on a concrete farm road.
 - 196.** Stay on this road, ignoring all ways off. In 300 metres it becomes tarmac and in 120 metres it comes down to a lake.
 - 197.** 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.
 - 198.** Veer half left across this field (or half right from your former direction on the road, if you prefer).
 - 199.** 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.
 - 200.** In 200 metres, when you get to the tree, turn left **before** the hedge, and follow it along the top of the field.
 - 201.** In 100 metres, at the corner of the field, go through a metal kissing gate and on up a path into a small wood.
 - 202.** In 70 metres you emerge onto a cricket pitch and turn half right to leave it at a footpath post a third of the way along its right-hand edge.
 - 203.** Beyond the cricket pitch, carry straight ahead uphill on a tarmac track.
 - 204.** In 180 metres pass to the right of a fieldgate and curve left up what is now a tarmac lane into the village of **Balcombe**.
 - 205.** In 40 metres ignore a minor road to the left and keep straight on uphill.
 - 206.** 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.
 - 207.** Turn half right at the junction, signposted to Cuckfield and Railway Station (*though this sign was pointing too far to the left in October 2023 and currently could be taken to indicate the road to the left*), ignoring roads left and right which are both busier with traffic.
 - 208.** In 60 metres you pass the **Balcombe Tea Rooms** on your right.
 - 209.** 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.
 - 210.** 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.
 - 211.** In 300 metres you pass under a railway bridge (the station can be seen above you), and the road turns to the left.
 - 212.** 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.
 - 213.** Climb up the steps for 70 metres, cross the stile and the small field, then another stile and climb 10 metres to the road.
 - 214.** Turn left and immediately fork left off the road up the station approach for 130 metres to come to platform one of **Balcombe station**, which is the platform you need if returning to London.