



Eynsford Circular via Otford walk

A contrast between hidden valleys in the North Downs and the Darent Valley Path through three interesting villages.



Length	<p>Main Walk: 21½ km (13.4 miles). Five hours 30 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.</p> <p>Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham: 16 km (9.9 miles). Four hours walking time.</p> <p>Main Walk, with shorter afternoon: 18¾ km (11.7 miles). Four hours 30 minutes walking time.</p> <p>Short Walk, omitting Otford: 14 km (8.7 miles). Three hours 20 minutes walking time.</p> <p>Short Walk, with longer afternoon: 15¾ km (9.8 miles). Four hours walking time.</p>
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OS Maps Explorer 147 & (for a short section at the end) 162. Eynsford, map reference TQ535649, is in Kent, 10 km **N** of Sevenoaks.

Toughness 7 out of 10 (3–5 for the shorter options).

Features Some of this walk will be familiar from the two Book 1 walks which start in Otford, but most of it covers new ground. It starts along a country lane through the secluded Austin Lodge valley, climbing to the isolated settlement of Romney Street. It continues on an undulating section to a ridge with fine views of the **Darent Valley**, from where you descend into **Otford**, passing its scale model of the **Solar System**. The village has many interesting old buildings and the full route takes you past the ruins of **Otford Palace**, a rival to Hampton Court in Tudor times.

There are two possible routes back to **Eynsford**. The longer takes a similarly undulating route along the western side of the Darent valley, weaving in and out of the Otford to Eynsford walk (1-23) on its way to **Lullingstone Country Park**, an attractive landscape of chalk grassland and ancient woodland with an internationally important collection of veteran trees. This route also goes past **Eagle Heights**, one of the UK's largest **Bird of Prey** centres; admission (2023) is £12.95 but you might be able to see something of the afternoon flying display from the public footpath.

The shorter return route mostly follows the **Darent Valley Path**, passing **The Mount Vineyard** in the attractive Kent village of **Shoreham** and extensive **lavender** fields at **Castle Farm**. An attractive riverside stretch then leads to **Lullingstone Castle** (01322-862114), a historic manor house which can be visited (but with limited opening hours). Its grounds contain an unusual parish church (freely open to the public at all times) and a **World Garden** with plants from around the globe, open Thu-Sun from April to October; admission (2023) is £9.

A little further on the walk passes **Lullingstone Roman Villa** (01322-863467), which has two well-preserved mosaic floors and some early wall paintings dating back to AD 75. The site is managed by English Heritage and is open daily (weekends only in winter) to 6pm in summer, 5pm in October and 4pm in winter; standard admission (2023) is around £11 but varies by season.

The two afternoon routes combine on the way into Eynsford, where a detour into the village would let you visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle** (free entry), one of the earliest Norman stone castles.

Walk Options	<p>You can curtail the Main Walk in mid-afternoon by following the alternative directions to finish at Shoreham station (which is near all the other walk routes).</p> <p>Directions are also given for a Short Walk, going directly from Romney Street to Shoreham on the route of the original Otford Circular walk (1-43) and continuing with either of the afternoon routes.</p>
Additional Notes	<p>The longer and more varied afternoon route was added to the Main Walk in 2017. The original route along the Darent Valley Path has been retained as the 'shorter afternoon' option.</p>
Transport	<p>Eynsford is on the Blackfriars to Sevenoaks line, with a half-hourly stopping service taking 55 minutes. You can also take a fast train from Victoria or Charing Cross and change at Bromley South or Swanley for the Sevenoaks train. Shoreham and Otford are the next two stations down the line from Eynsford, so buy a return to one of these stations (rather than Eynsford) if you might want to finish there.</p> <p><i>If you have a Travelcard the Boundary Zone 6 station is St Mary Cray, but a London Freedom Pass is valid as far as Swanley (in TfL Zone 8).</i></p> <p>If you want to abandon the walk there is a very limited bus service (Mon-Sat) along the A225 between Sevenoaks and Swanley, but it will nearly</p>

always be better to head for the nearest station.

If driving, there is a small car park “free for rail users” at Eynsford station. There is also a small free car park in the village (near the return route, but nearly 1 km from the station).

Suggested Train Take the train nearest to **09:45** from **Blackfriars** (or **Victoria**) to **Eynsford** for the Main Walk. For the Short Walk, take the train nearest to **10:15**.

Lunch On the **Main Walk** the suggested place to stop for lunch is **Otford**, after 8½ km. There are two pubs in the village: **The Bull** (01959-580585) is a family-friendly Greene King pub in a historic building with a large beer garden; the alternative is a traditional village pub overlooking the pond, **The Woodman** (01959-522195). Another possibility is **The Olive Tree** in the **Hospices of Hope** charity shop (01959-524322), which describes itself as both a bistro and tearoom.

On the **Short Walk** there is a good choice of lunch places in **Shoreham**, after 7–8 km. The first places you come to are **The Samuel Palmer** (01959-525442), an up-market pub/restaurant on the site of Ye Olde George Inn; and a restaurant and a coffee shop at **The Mount Vineyard** (01959-524008; open Wed–Sun). In addition there are two equally good pubs at opposite ends of the village: the **Kings Arms** (01959-523100) on Church Street, open again after its fire in March 2022; and **The Crown** (01959-522903; food to 2pm Mon–Wed, 3pm Fri–Sun, closed Thu) at the northern end of Shoreham's High Street.

There used to be an even greater choice of pubs on this walk but the Fox & Hounds in Romney Street, the Crown in Otford and the Two Brewers in Shoreham have all closed.

Tea In **Eynsford** the Riverside Tea Room has permanently closed, so the suggested place is the **Plough Inn** (01322-862281) in its fine riverside location. A short detour along the main road would reveal several alternatives: **The Malt Shovel** (01322-862164), **The Five Bells** (01322-863135; open from 3pm weekdays, noon weekends) and the **Castle Hotel** (01322-633917).

Unless you divert into Shoreham there are no refreshment places between Otford and Eynsford on the longer afternoon route, but on the shorter route a convenient place for a mid-afternoon break is the **Lullingstone Café** in the Country Park Visitor Centre (01322-865995; open to 5pm summer, 4pm weekends & 3pm weekdays in winter).

If you finish in **Shoreham** the walk route goes past both the lunch pubs listed above, plus a couple of tearooms on its High Street: one at the **Shoreham Aircraft Museum** (01959-524416; open weekends to 4pm); and **The Honey Pot Café & Tea Rooms** (07546-696623; open to 4pm Fri–Sun). The **Coffee Box** at the vineyard is open weekends to 3pm and tea might also be available at the church on Sundays in August.

Help Us! After the walk, please leave a comment, it really helps. Thanks!

You can also upload photos to the   SWC Group on Flickr (upload your photos) and videos to  Youtube. This walk's tags are:

By Car**Start** DA4 0HP

Help

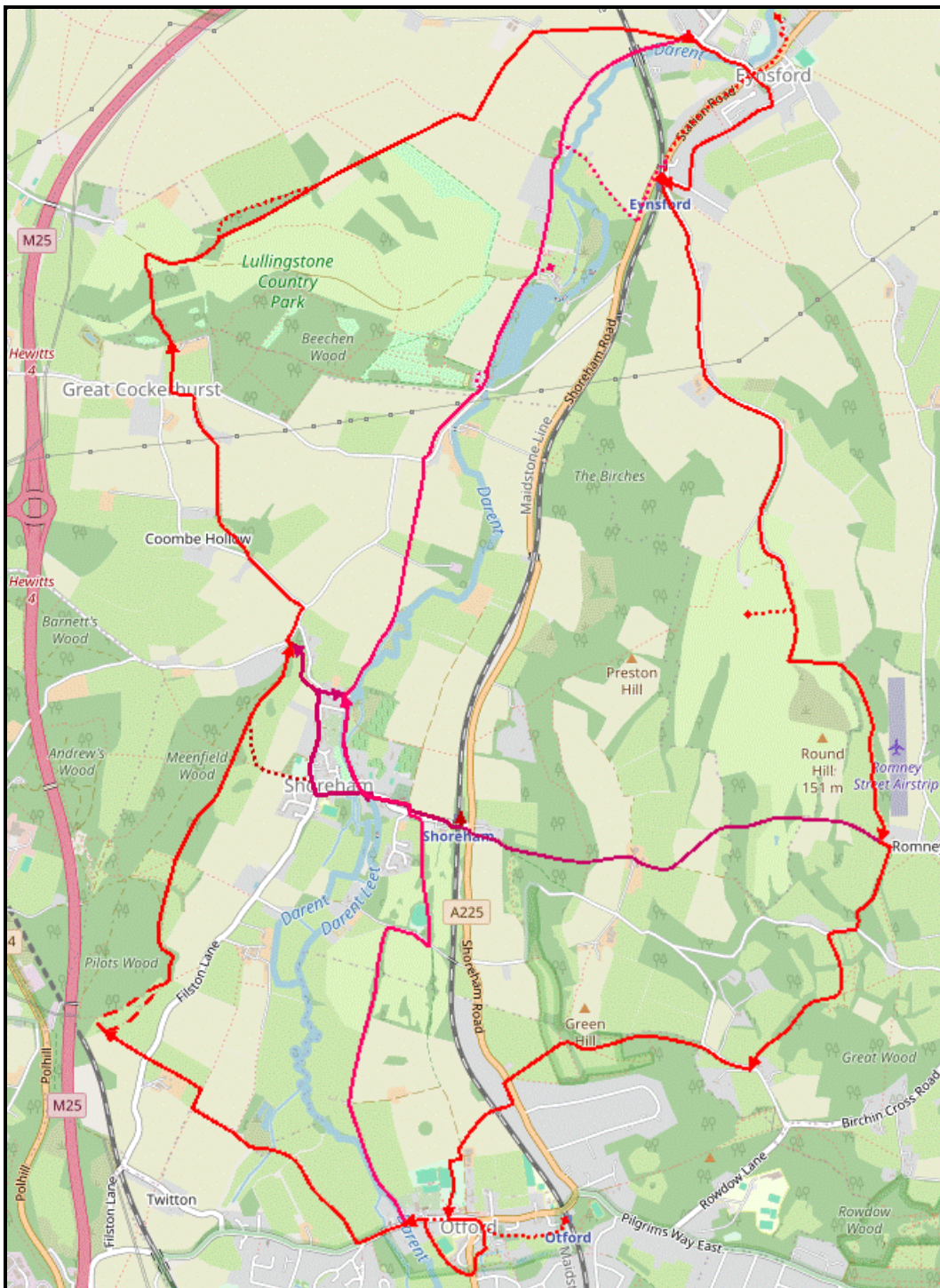
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VersionFeb-24 [Sean](#)

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Walk Directions

Walk Map



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Walk Options (Main | Short)

M. Main Walk (21½ km)

- a. Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham (16 km)
- b. Main Walk, with shorter afternoon (18¾ km)
- c. Short Walk, omitting Otford (14 km)
- d. Short Walk, with longer afternoon (15¾ km)

Walk Directions

A. Eynsford Station to Romney Street (4¼ km)

1. Leave the station through its small car park and **turn sharp right** into Upper Austin Lodge Road, initially heading **S**. You will be following this winding country lane through a secluded valley for just over 2 km. Halfway along it dips down and passes Lower Austin Lodge Farm. In a further 1 km **fork left** (ignoring the “No Entry” sign) and follow the lane through the hamlet of **Upper Austin Lodge**.
2. Bear left in front of a block of garages onto a track, passing a new building and continuing between high hedges. On this 400m stretch (across an abandoned golf course) there is a side path off to the right signposted to the **Pilcher Monument**¹, about 300m away. On the main path you eventually come to a ‘Private’ notice and **turn left** in front of it, onto a path through a tree tunnel.
3. This rather gloomy path climbs steadily up the side of the valley, heading **E**. In 250m it goes past a broken stile and veers right. Go over another stile and follow the path for 1 km along the edge of the woodland on your left, at times just inside it.
4. At the end of this undulating section the path climbs to the top of the valley, with distant views of Canary Wharf and the City back over your right shoulder. After a level stretch of 100m, with a house behind the trees on your left, there is a stile on the left with a yellow footpath marker.
If you are doing the Short Walk (omitting Otford), go to §H.

B. Romney Street to Mount Farm (1¾ km)

5. For the **Main Walk** **turn left** and go over the stile onto a potentially muddy path between fences. In 60m **turn right** and go along a narrow bridleway for 200m, also between fences. At the end bear left onto a farm track coming in from the right. Do not go over a stile beside a large metal fieldgate into the field ahead but go through a smaller metal gate to its right, staying on the bridleway.
6. Follow the bridleway into a wood, soon going steeply downhill and then swinging round to the left. It comes out onto a narrow lane where you turn right, gently downhill between hedges. In 150m, at a slight right-hand bend, **turn left** through a side gate next to a wooden fieldgate onto a permissive path into **Magpie Bottom**².
7. In 200m go through another side gate in a belt of trees and **fork right** to stay on the valley floor. In a further 200m **veer right** to join a public footpath coming steeply down the bank on your left. Follow the grassy path towards a wood.
8. Go through a wooden gate into **Great Wood**, then steadily uphill on a clear woodland path. At the top go out through a small metal gate into a field. Follow the path through more gates to come to a minor road (Rowdown Lane) opposite the entrance to Mount Farm.

C. Mount Farm to Otford High Street (2½ km)

9. Turn right and go along this quiet lane for 300m. Where it turns right **keep ahead** through a metal kissing gate onto a broad track heading **W**, which soon goes into a strip of woodland. After 400m go through a metal gate into an open area, with views of Otford in the Darent valley below.
10. Inside the field **bear left** onto a grassy path going slightly downhill to the far corner. Leave the field by another metal gate and continue along the hillside, ignoring a stile on the right along the way. The path then goes downhill through some trees, swings left and emerges at the top of **Fackenden Down**².

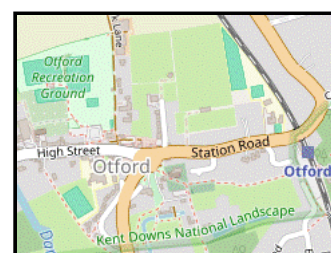
11. Go all the way down the hillside, at first on a broad grassy path between wire fences and then across a couple of wildflower meadows to reach the A225. Turn left and walk along the right-hand side of this busy road for 125m, **taking care as there is no pavement**. At "Stileways" **turn right** onto a signposted footpath to the left of its driveway. Follow this between garden fences to the railway line and cross the tracks carefully.
12. Go up to a new wooden gate and bear left as indicated to continue alongside a wire fence. At the far end go through a gate, across a farm track and through another gate to drop down onto a track between hedges. **Turn left** and go along this bridleway for 50m.
13. Opposite some stables **turn right** through a gap in the hedge into the corner of Otford's large recreation ground. Directly ahead there are four concrete pillars representing the sun and inner planets of the **Otford Solar System**³, with an information panel about the model ahead on the right.
14. Take any convenient route across the recreation ground to its large car park on the far side. Go through this to come out onto the High Street opposite the first of the village's two pubs and a possible lunch stop, **The Bull**.
While crossing the recreation ground you could try to find two more planets: Mars (a ground-level disc between two football pitches) and Jupiter (a pillar by the groundsman's hut on the left-hand boundary hedge).

D. Otford High Street to Millmead (1 • ¼ km)

If you do not want to try any of the other refreshment places and/or see more of the village, you could take the short cut in [16].

15. Main route (1 km)

- a. If coming out of The Bull, **turn right** to head **E** along the High Street. You pass **The Olive Tree** bistro and tearoom on the right (at the back of the **Hospices of Hope** charity shop), opposite **Sally's Cake Emporium**.
- b. The High Street ends at a large roundabout encircling the **village pond**⁴, with the **Pond View Café** and **The Woodman** pub ahead on your left. Make your way to the far side of the pond, where there are two footpath signs.
- c. Unless you want to visit the parish church of **St Bartholomew**⁵ (via the set of modern doors on its north side) **take the right-hand path** away from the pond, heading **S**.
 - If you want to abandon the walk and return from **Otford station** (500m away), take the left-hand path past the south side of the church and head **E** through the churchyard, with a high brick wall on your left. At the far end go through a wooden gate and follow the enclosed path to the station car park. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.
- d. After passing Chantry Cottage on the left and the elegant **Holmesdale**⁶ off to the right you come to a row of cottages built into the walls of the old **Otford Palace**⁷. **Turn right** to go past the ruined north-west tower and an information panel about the palace.
- e. Follow the tarmac path to the far corner of Palace Field and continue past a small parade of shops. Cross the A225 at a traffic island and take the footpath opposite, alongside extensive water meadows.
- f. The path eventually leads into Pickmoss Lane and back to the High Street, where you turn left. In 75m you pass the timber-framed **Pickmoss**⁸ on the left where the road narrows. A little further on there is a signpost for the **Darent Valley Path**⁹ (DVP), with one arm pointing ahead and the other to the right, along the driveway to Millmead and several other properties.



16. Short cut (¼ km)

If coming out of The Bull, **turn left** to head **W** along the High Street. In 200m you pass the timber-framed **Pickmoss**⁸ on the left where the road narrows. A little further on there is a signpost for the **Darent Valley Path**⁹ (DVP), with one arm pointing ahead and the other to the right, along the driveway to Millmead and several other properties.

If you are doing the shorter afternoon route (which for the most part follows the DVP through Shoreham and back to Eynsford), go to §M.

E. Otford (Millmead) to Polhill Bank (2¼ km)

For the next 1½ km (and intermittently thereafter) you will be following the Walk 1-23 route.

17. Continue along the High Street (which becomes Pilgrims Way West) for a further 250m, crossing several branches of the River Darent and passing **Broughton Manor**¹⁰ on the left. Just past a bus shelter (and a Solar System pillar representing the planet Uranus) **turn right** onto a signposted public footpath, going through a metal gate into a meadow.
18. For the next 1¼ km you will be heading **NW** on this footpath towards the oast houses of Sepham Farm, initially across the meadow and then on enclosed paths. In 750m the path swerves left and right and crosses a brook on a concrete slab; keep right as indicated to stay on the public footpath.
19. In a further 200m ignore a footpath off to the right (which leads to a Solar System pillar representing the minor planet Pluto). Continue on a broad grassy track towards the farm buildings, which comes to a T-junction in front of an enclosure.
20. **Turn right** onto another broad grassy track between fences. In 100m **turn left** onto a narrow path with a footpath waymarker, leaving the Walk 1-23 route and heading **NW** again. Follow the path alongside several enclosures, passing the farm buildings off to the left.
21. At the far end **take great care** as the path comes out directly onto a narrow winding lane with limited visibility for drivers. Cross Filston Lane carefully and go up a few steps onto the continuation of the footpath, climbing steadily. In 250m go through a wooden kissing gate onto **Polhill Bank**².

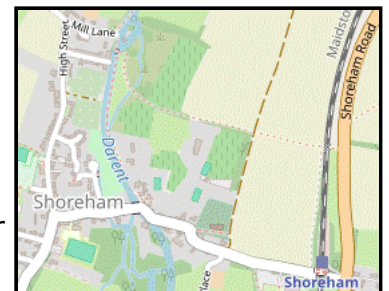
F. Polhill Bank to Darentdale (2½ km)

22. You will be leaving this small nature reserve in its right-hand corner, and there are grassy paths along both its top and bottom edges. For the best views, climb steeply up the hillside in front of you to the bench at the top and then descend gently on the upper path; alternatively, simply turn right onto the lower path.
23. The two paths merge at the far end where you leave the reserve through a wooden kissing gate. Go down a slope towards a second gate but **turn left before reaching it** onto an unmarked path into **Pilots Wood**.
24. The path meanders along the bottom edge of the wood, passing a picnic table as it curves left. After a right-hand bend the path straightens out to head **N**, climbing gently with a field behind the fence on your right.
25. **The next turning is easy to miss**. Where the main path bears slightly left away from the fence and before it starts to climb more steeply, **veer right** onto a side path to stay alongside the fence. Follow this narrow path to the edge of the wood, still climbing gently.
26. Leave the wood via a stile and **keep ahead** on a grassy path across a steeply-sloping field. On the far side go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a fieldgate onto a broad woodland path, briefly rejoining the Walk 1-23 route. After a while there are views on the right of Shoreham in the Darent valley below.

27. In 600m **keep ahead** at a path crossing by a sign for **Meenfield Wood** (leaving the Walk 1-23 route, which has to negotiate a potentially slippery flight of steps at the top of this path into Shoreham). In a further 200m you reach a small enclosure on the right with an information panel about the **Shoreham Cross**¹¹ on the hillside below, and benches to enjoy the view.
- If you are finishing in Shoreham you could head for the village by taking a new footpath slanting back down the hillside from this enclosure. This merges with the main path into the village, at first between hedges and then along a narrow tree-lined track (The Landway) past a recreation ground. If you take this short cut (saving 750m), turn right onto the High Street and resume the directions at [30] in §G.
28. For the main route carry on past the Shoreham Cross on the broad path. In 300m it merges with a track from the left and you continue along a straight tree-lined path for a further 200m, passing the large Darent House up on the left. At the end of the path there is a minor road (Shacklands Road) just off to the left.
- If you are doing the Main Walk (returning to Eynsford), go to §K.*

G. Darentdale to Shoreham Station (1¾ km)

29. To finish the walk in Shoreham **turn right** (away from the road). Go through a metal kissing gate and follow a line of wooden posts curving round the edge of the field, gently downhill. At the end go through another kissing gate and along an enclosed footpath to come out onto the High Street, opposite Mill Lane. Turn right onto the road through the village, soon passing **The Crown** on the left.
30. In a further 400m the tearoom for the **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² is up a track on the right (The Landway). Carry on along the High Street, soon passing the **Honey Pot Café** on the left.
31. At the next junction **turn left** into Church Street, in 175m passing the **Kings Arms**¹³ on the right. After crossing the River Darent stay on Church Street as it swings right, alongside a branch of the river.
32. Shortly after the road has curved round to the left and started to climb, there is a driveway on the left leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ (which has a restaurant and a coffee shop). At the top of the slope the road turns sharply right by **The Samuel Palmer** pub/restaurant.
33. Although you could stay on this street (now Station Road), the suggested route is to go through the lychgate ahead. Follow the tree-lined path past the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**¹⁵, which is well worth visiting. At the far end go out through a wooden swing gate and turn right to go along the edge of a large field.
34. In the field corner **veer left** onto a new permissive path alongside the boundary hedge, parallel to Station Road. In the next corner rejoin the road to go under the railway bridge and **turn left up steps** to the station forecourt. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

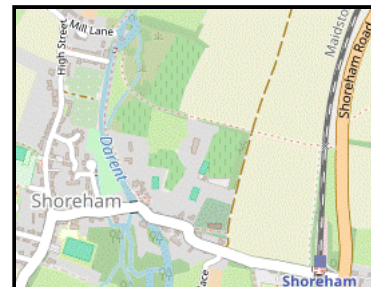


H. Romney Street to Shoreham Bridge (3 km)

This section follows the Walk 1-43 route.

35. For the **Short Walk turn right**, away from the stile. Follow a broad grassy path through the field, passing to the right of a clump of trees in a crater and going downhill. On the far side of the field go over a stile and across a track into the top of a meadow. Go down its right-hand side to the bottom corner, along a path between tall hedges (crossing the old golf course) and then steeply up the other side of the valley.

36. At the top go over a stile onto a path through a small wood. On the far side bear left to cut across the corner of a field, heading **SW**, and continue in much the same direction across the next field on a broad path. At the far end turn half-right onto a farm track which goes through a dip and back up into Dunstall Farm. Go more or less straight on through the muddy farmyard, veering to the right of a barn on the far side.
37. Continue in the same direction across a field. On the far side go down into a wood, soon crossing a path to descend a long flight of earth steps. In a further 350m the path merges with a bridleway coming in from the left, which leads out to the A225.
38. Cross this main road carefully (slightly to the right) and go down Station Road. After passing under the railway bridge by Shoreham station **veer right** into a large field and take a new permissive path along its edge, parallel to the road.
39. In the next corner follow the field edge briefly round to the right, joining the **Darent Valley Path**⁹ (DVP), then **turn left** through a kissing gate in a low flint wall into the churchyard, the starting point of the **Samuel Palmer Trail**¹⁶ (SPT). Follow the tree-lined path past the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**¹⁵, which is well worth visiting.
40. Go out through its lychgate, with **The Samuel Palmer** pub/restaurant opposite. Follow the road (now Church Street) gently downhill, passing a driveway leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ (which has a restaurant and a coffee shop) on the right. At the bottom the road bends right to run alongside a branch of the River Darent for a short distance.
- If you are doing the longer afternoon route, go to §j.*



I. Shoreham Bridge to Mill Lane (1 • ½ km)

If you do not want to visit any of the other refreshment places in the village you can take the more attractive riverside route in [42].

41. Main route (1 km)

- Follow Church Street across the river (leaving the DVP & SPT) to come to the **Kings Arms**¹³ on the left. At the T-junction at the top **turn right** onto the High Street.
- The **Honey Pot Café** is on the right and a little further on the small **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² (which has a tearoom) is on the left.
- The Crown** is on the right near the end of the village. In a further 100m **turn right** down Mill Lane, back towards the river.
- In 125m (where the lane turns half-right towards the entrance to Mill House) **bear left** onto a footpath, rejoining the waymarked routes.

42. Riverside route (½ km)

- Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darenth Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁷ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁸ and follow the tree-lined riverside path.
- After passing a few properties the vineyard is visible off to the right, beyond an orchard. At the far end cross the river on a footbridge and follow the path alongside the garden fence for Mill House.
- Shortly after passing its entrance, ignore Mill Lane up to the left and **turn right** at a footpath signpost to continue on the DVP & SPT.

Continue the directions at §N.

J. Shoreham Bridge to Darenthdale (1¼ km)

If you do not want to visit any of the other refreshment places in the village you can take the more attractive riverside route in [44].

43. Main route

- a. Follow Church Street across the river (leaving the DVP & SPT) to come to the **Kings Arms**¹³ on the left. At the T-junction at the top **turn right** onto the High Street.
- b. The **Honey Pot Café** is on the right and a little further on the small **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² (which has a tearoom) is on the left.
- c. **The Crown** is on the right near the end of the village. In a further 100m **turn left** off the road onto the footpath opposite Mill Lane.

44. Riverside route

- a. Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darenth Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁷ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁸ and follow the tree-lined riverside path.
- b. After passing a few properties the vineyard is visible off to the right, beyond an orchard. At the far end cross the river on a footbridge and follow the path alongside the garden fence for Mill House.
- c. After passing its entrance leave the DVP & SPT (a footpath off to the right) and go up Mill Lane to its T-junction with the High Street. Cross the road carefully onto the footpath opposite.

45. Follow the enclosed footpath alongside the main road. In 100m go through a metal kissing gate and turn right to follow a line of wooden posts curving round the edge of a large field, climbing steadily. At the top go through another kissing gate and keep ahead on a short track through a belt of trees, where the longer route from Otford joins from a path on the left.

K. Darenthdale to Upper Beechen Wood (2 km)

For the next 1½ km you will be following the Walk 1-23 route.

46. Go past a vehicle barrier onto Shacklands Road and turn right to go downhill, **taking care as there is no pavement**. You will be turning left at the second road junction, into Cockerhurst Road.
- Just before this junction, up a few steps in the bank on the left, there is a curious **memorial stone**¹⁹ which is worth a look.
47. Go along the tree-lined Cockerhurst Road for 350m, through a small dip and then steadily uphill. Opposite the first house on the left (Coombe Vale) **turn right** through a gap in the trees onto a signposted footpath, which winds through a scrubby area and then broadens out to continue climbing between a wire fence and shrubs.
48. At the top follow the path round to the right and go over an old stile to head **N** along the left-hand edge of a large field, towards the buildings of Homewood Farm. On the far side bear left onto a narrow path beside a wooden fence and continue along the farm's concrete driveway to a narrow road with high hedges (Redmans Lane).
49. **Turn left** onto the lane (leaving the Walk 1-23 route), **taking care as there is no pavement**. In 100m **turn right** up steps in the bank onto a signposted footpath along the left-hand edge of a field, then past farm sheds. At the end go through a metal gate into **Upper Beechen Wood**, part of **Lullingstone Country Park**²⁰. Almost immediately you come to a path crossing with a wooden signpost.

L. Upper Beechen Wood to Eynsford (Riverside) (3¾ km)

Most of this section follows the waymarked Lullingstone Loop (and in some places also a horse route) on part of a clockwise circuit around this country park.

50. For the suggested route **keep ahead** at the crosspaths, initially following a black arrow waymarker for the **Lullingstone Loop** (LL). The woodland path winds downhill for 200m, turning right at a marker post near the bottom to come to a golf fairway. Cross this carefully, watching out for **golfers playing from left to right**. Head for a gap in the trees opposite and continue on a path climbing gently through a copse.
51. At the top keep to the left of a golf green and follow a line of tall trees to meet a surfaced path by a footpath signpost. **Turn right** onto the path, now also on a horse route (blue arrows). Follow it round a left-hand bend to the corner of a small wood. **Veer left** as indicated onto a path through the trees and keep ahead at a path crossing in the middle of the wood.
52. On the far side you come to a golfers' track with a long narrow strip of woodland ahead. The suggested route is to **take the right-hand path** into the trees, staying on the LL.
 - If it does not look too muddy you could take the parallel horse route along the left-hand side of the wood, but it gets slightly more road noise from the M25 (in a cutting 1 km away).

Near the start of this strip of woodland both routes pass some ancient oak trees; one on its right-hand edge is thought to be the oldest in the park.
53. The two routes rejoin at the far end where they come out into the corner of a field. Go along its left-hand edge and then a track going through a dip in a wooded area. At the end of the trees leave the horse route (which branches off to the right) to continue climbing on a broad grassy strip between fields.
54. On the brow of the hill there is a bench inviting you to "Rest here a while" by an isolated tree, the **Hart Dyke Sycamore**²⁴. On the far side you pass an information panel for the **Lullingstone Tree Acrostic**²⁵ at the start of a line of young trees.
55. Follow the path through a belt of trees and **turn right** downhill along the field edge for 75m. After passing the end of a hedge **turn left** to go alongside it, leaving the LL and finally joining the Darent Valley Path (DVP). Where the hedge turns left keep ahead across the field, passing **Eagle Heights** off to your left.

If your walk coincides with a flying display you might see eagles and other exotic large birds overhead. They are not supposed to attack walkers who stay on the public footpath.
56. Go across the centre's access road and through a gap in the fence opposite. Take the footpath sloping downhill across more large fields, heading towards Eynsford in the valley below and crossing the railway tracks near the left-hand end of **Eynsford Viaduct**²⁶.
57. The path eventually drops down to a minor road. Bear left onto Lullingstone Lane, which curves around a water meadow dotted with trees. At the road junction with Sparepenny Lane keep ahead on Riverside.

Complete the directions at §O.

M. Otford (Millmead) to Shoreham (Mill Lane) (3½ km)

58. **Turn right** off the High Street onto the driveway, joining the DVP as it runs alongside an old mill-stream. At the far end keep right, taking the path with a waymarker post past allotments and continuing through a wooden swing gate into a meadow.
59. Follow a grassy path alongside the tree-lined river for 300m, then go through a metal kissing gate to continue alongside a fence. Go through more kissing gates by the entrance to Lower Barn Farm and head **N** for a further 1 km, at first along the right-hand edge of a field and then on an enclosed path through a golf course.

60. At a major path junction go past a metal fieldgate and **turn right** onto a driveway. At the next path crossing in 250m, **turn left** onto a path and head **N** again for a further 700m, passing a cricket pitch on your left and continuing across the golf course. The path eventually comes out onto Station Road on the outskirts of Shoreham.
 - If you want to abandon the walk, Shoreham station is 200m off to the right.
61. Turn left briefly onto the road, then in 75m **turn right** up a slope into the corner of a large field. Go along the field edge for just 50m, then **turn left** through a kissing gate in a low flint wall into the churchyard, the starting point of the **Samuel Palmer Trail**¹⁶ (SPT). Follow the tree-lined path past the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**¹⁵, which is well worth visiting.
62. Go out through its lychgate, with **The Samuel Palmer** pub/restaurant opposite. Follow the road (now Church Street) gently downhill, passing a driveway leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ (which has a restaurant and a coffee shop) on the right. At the bottom the road bends right to run alongside a branch of the River Darent for a short distance.
63. Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darenth Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁷ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁸ and follow the tree-lined riverside path.
64. After passing a few properties the vineyard is visible off to the right, beyond an orchard. At the far end cross the river on a footbridge and follow the path alongside the garden fence for Mill House. Shortly after passing its entrance, ignore Mill Lane up to the left and **turn right** at a footpath signpost to continue on the DVP & SPT.

N. Mill Lane to Eynsford (Riverside) (4¼ km)

65. Go along the footpath, with a mill stream and then the river on your right. In 150m go through a wooden kissing gate and continue on a fenced path along the right-hand edge of several fields. The path leads into the corner of another field and bears left to go diagonally across it, towards the centre of a line of poplars 400m away.
66. Go across an access road, up a slope and through the line of trees to continue on a broad grassy path, later with a hop field on your right. The path comes out onto a lane (Castle Road) at a bend. Cross the road carefully (slightly to the left) and go up a few steps onto a permissive path running alongside it, with a large lavender field beyond the fence on your left. In 250m there is a wide gap in the hedge on your right.
 - You could detour through this gap and go across the road into Castle Farm, whose **Hop Shop** sells local farm produce and snacks.
67. At the end of the permissive path go through a gate to return to Castle Road by the entrance to **Lullingstone Country Park**²⁰, where you will be leaving the SPT but continuing on the DVP. The straightforward route is to keep ahead through a kissing gate onto the riverside path, passing a wooden **sculpture**²¹ by a footbridge over the river.
 - If you want to break for refreshment **veer left** instead into the car park and go round to the right to the **Visitor Centre**, which has a **café**. Afterwards, make your way round a children's playground and turn left onto the riverside path.

The rest of the walk essentially follows the Walk 1-23 route.
68. Continue along this tree-lined path for 600m, with glimpses of a large fishing lake beyond the river on your right. At the far end go through a small parking area and keep ahead on a tarmac lane to reach the imposing entrance to **Lullingstone Castle** on the right.
 - It is worth detouring through the **Tudor Gatehouse**²² to visit the unusual parish church of **St Botolph**²³. This "Church on the Lawn" is open to the public at all times, even though you might have to unhook a chain before walking across the manor house's private lawn to reach it.

69. To resume the walk continue along the lane past the grounds of Lullingstone Castle (with its **World Garden** behind a high brick wall). In 700m the DVP goes up steps on the left to join the longer afternoon route into Eynsford, but you continue along the lane to come to a large shed on the left housing **Lullingstone Roman Villa**.
70. Unless you want to cut out the last part of the walk, ignore a private road off to the right and continue along Lullingstone Lane.
- To go directly to **Eynsford station** (1¼ km away) without passing any refreshment places, **turn right** onto this private road (which is also a public footpath), crossing the river on a bridge. At the end of the road turn left onto the narrow path alongside the A225. After going under the railway bridge cross the main road carefully and turn sharp right up the station approach road. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.
71. For the main route carry on along Lullingstone Lane for a further 1 km, with the river meandering away in the valley on your right. You pass a turning on the left for Eagle Heights and later go under **Eynsford Viaduct**²⁶.
72. In 250m the DVP rejoins from a footpath on the left and the lane curves around a water meadow dotted with trees. At the road junction with Sparepenny Lane keep ahead on Riverside.

O. Riverside to Eynsford Station (1½ km)

73. In 150m Riverside justifies its name by going right alongside the river. On this attractive stretch you soon come to the **Plough Inn**, the suggested tea place.
74. Carry on along Riverside, crossing the River Darent on a narrow road bridge by a ford (with refuges to avoid the traffic if necessary). You pass the (closed) Riverside Tea Room and come to a T-junction with the A225, with the church of **St Martin of Tours**²⁷ opposite.

*Follow the directions below if you want to visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle**.*

75. Detour to Eynsford Castle (+800m)

- Turn left onto the main road (away from the station) to go through the village. In 250m you pass the **Five Bells** pub on your right, then the **Castle Hotel**.
- Turn left into the lane opposite the hotel, signposted to the Village Hall. The lane zig-zags right and left and a broad wooden bridge takes you through a gap in the curtain wall into the site. Return the same way.

76. The suggested route to the station is a quiet route away from the main road. Take a tarmac path up the left-hand side of the churchyard to an exit in its top corner. Bear right across a small parking area and go up a short alleyway (with vehicle barriers at both ends) to a residential street.
77. Turn right and follow this quiet street (Pollyhaugh, later St Martins Drive) for 700m, climbing steadily. At the far end turn right and go down Eynsford Rise to the station. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.



Walk Notes

- Percy Pilcher** (1867-1899) was a British aviation pioneer who tested his Hawk glider in the area in the 1890s. He also designed and built a powered triplane but was fatally injured when his glider crashed and it was never flown.
- Magpie Bottom, Fackenden Down** and **Polhill Bank** are Local Nature Reserves managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust. These areas of chalk grassland support many varieties of orchid.

3. The **Otford Solar System** is a scale model showing the relative position of the sun and planets at the start of the millennium. The pillars representing the outer planets are scattered around the village, the furthest over 1 km away at the 1:5 billion scale used.
4. **Otford Pond** is one of many protected structures in the village, which has led to claims that its duckhouse is Britain's smallest listed building.
5. **St Bartholomew, Otford** dates from the 11thC; construction began in 1060 with the tower added in around 1185. It contains a large marble memorial to Charles and David Polhill, descendants of Oliver Cromwell.
6. **Holmesdale** was converted to a pair of semi-detached homes in the 1720s. The original property was built in the 1600s and its large width suggests that it might have had some industrial purpose.
7. **Otford Palace** was created by Archbishop Warham in 1514, a year before Cardinal Wolsey (his rival and successor as Lord Chancellor) began the construction of Hampton Court Palace. Both were subsequently taken over by Henry VIII but Otford (in its unfavourable marshy location) fell into ruins while Hampton Court expanded into a major royal palace.
8. **Pickmoss** resembles a genuine medieval hall house but is actually the result of an extensive refurbishment in the 1950s. A small Elizabethan house and a pair of unrelated cottages were amalgamated and a typical Elizabethan frontage added to give the appearance of a single large property.
9. The **Darent Valley Path** follows the course of the river for 31 km, from Sevenoaks (near its source in the Greensand Hills) to the River Thames at Dartford.
10. The 16thC **Broughton Manor** was originally a Crown property housing part of the retinue at Otford Palace.
11. The **Shoreham Cross** was cut into the chalk hillside above the village in 1920, to commemorate those who lost their lives in World War I.
12. The **Shoreham Aircraft Museum** was founded by volunteers in 1978 and holds donated items and aviation relics from the crash sites of local British and German aircraft in World War II.
13. The **Kings Arms** still has its **ostler box**, a shelter at the front of the pub for the person who used to attend to horses at coaching inns.
14. **The Mount Vineyard** was planted in 2004 and produced its first harvest in 2008. Eight grape varieties are now grown on the 10 acre site, producing award-winning red, white, rosé and sparkling wines.
15. **Ss Peter and Paul, Shoreham** dates from Norman times and has many interesting features, all described in an informative Visitor's Guide. They include an outstanding wooden rood screen spanning the width of the building and some fine stained glass windows, including one by the Pre-Raphaelite artist Burne-Jones.
16. The **Samuel Palmer Trail** is an 8½ km circular walk around Shoreham and Lullingstone Park, exploring the landscapes of this "valley of vision" painted by the artist. A free audio-visual guide is available from the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme.
17. The **War Memorial** in Darent Way is inscribed *Remember as you look at the cross on the hill those who gave their lives for their country 1914-1919.*
18. **Water House** is associated with **Samuel Palmer** (1805-1881), one of the group of artists influenced by William Blake who called themselves *The Ancients*. He lived in the village from 1826 to 1835, for some of the time with his father (also called Samuel) who had rented Water House.
19. The **memorial stone** was erected in 1928 by a local Catholic woman (Miss Maud Berkeley) in memory of her late father, Dr E J G Berkeley; she also erected a large crucifix but this was vandalised and later removed to a monastery. The inscription *Behold therefore I will allure her and will lead her into the Wilderness and there I will speak to her heart* is from Hosea 2:14.
20. **Lullingstone Country Park** was a medieval deer park in the estate of Lullingstone Castle. Some of its veteran trees (notably oak, hornbeam, beech and sweet chestnut) are over 500 years old. The park was used as a decoy airfield in World War II and as a result Shoreham was dubbed "the most heavily bombed village in Britain".

21. The wooden **fish sculpture** was unveiled in 2004 “to celebrate the restoration of the River Darent”.
22. The **Tudor Gatehouse of Lullingstone Castle** was one of the earliest all-brick buildings in Britain.
23. **St Botolph, Lullingstone** dates from the 14thC and contains some impressive memorials to ancestors of the Hart Dyke family, the owners of Lullingstone Castle. It also has an elaborately carved wooden rood screen and some particularly fine stained glass windows, the oldest dating back to the 14thC.
24. The **Hart Dyke Sycamore** was planted in 1871 by the owners of Lullingstone Castle to celebrate the birth of their son and heir, Percival Hart Dyke.
25. The **Lullingstone Tree Acrostic** is one of the **Queen's Green Canopy** projects commemorating Her Majesty's Platinum Jubilee in 2022. The first letters of the 13 tree names spell out SAVE THE PLANET.
26. **Eynsford Viaduct** was built in 1862 to take the railway over the Darent valley, with nine high brick arches and a stone parapet. In the past some repairs have been made with poorly-matched bricks and it has been given listed building status to maintain its original appearance.
27. **St Martin of Tours, Eynsford** was built by one of William the Conqueror's knights in the 11thC on the site of a Saxon church. It has retained its Norman ground plan with apsidal chancel.

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