



Eynsford Circular walk

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

Length

Main Walk: 21½ km (13.4 miles). Five hours 35 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 10 hours.

Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham: 15¾ km (9.8 miles). Four hours 5 minutes walking time.

Main Walk, with shorter afternoon: 18¾ km (11.7 miles). Four hours 40 minutes walking time.

Short Walk, omitting Otford: 14 km (8.7 miles). Three hours 30 minutes walking time.

Short Walk, with longer afternoon: 16 km (9.9 miles). Four hours 10 minutes walking time.

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 (4 for the Short Walk, 5 for the other three 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 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 which is open daily to 5pm from March to October, 4pm on winter weekends. Admission (2019) is £9.95 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** through the attractive Kent village of **Shoreham**, where **The Mount Vineyard** is usually open for tastings at weekends (it also has a restaurant). After passing extensive **lavender** fields at **Castle Farm** an attractive riverside stretch 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 (open to the public at all times) and a **World Garden** with plants from around the globe, open Fri–Sun afternoons between April and end-October; admission (2020) is £9.

A little further on **Lullingstone Roman Villa** (01322-863467) 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; admission (2020) is £9.

The two afternoon routes combine on the way into Eynsford, where a short 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 to Bromley South and change there 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>There is a very limited bus service through Eynsford, Shoreham and Otford (Go-Coach 2, Mon–Sat), but it will usually be quicker to head for the nearest station if you want to abandon the walk.</p> <p>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).</p>
Suggested Train	<p>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.</p>
Lunch	<p>On the Main Walk the suggested place to stop for lunch is Otford, after about 8½ km. The walk route joins the High Street opposite the Bull (01959-523198); the alternative is a traditional village pub overlooking the pond, the Woodman (01959-522195).</p> <p>On the Short Walk there are three pubs in the small village of Shoreham, after 7–8 km. In the order in which you pass them they are Ye Olde George Inn (01959-522017) and the Kings Arms (01959-523100) on Church Street, and the Crown (01959-522903) at the far end of the High Street.</p> <p><i>There used to be an even greater choice of pubs on this walk. The Fox & Hounds in Romney Street and the Crown in Otford have both closed, and the Two Brewers in Shoreham has become a weekend-only restaurant.</i></p>
Tea	<p>There are plenty of opportunities for refreshment in Eynsford, with the suggested place</p>



being the **Riverside Tea Room** (01322-861551; open to 4.30pm weekdays & 4pm weekends, but may stay open later if called in advance). If you get there too late or want stronger fare, the **Plough** (01322-862281) has a fine riverside location. A short detour along the main road will reveal the **Malt Shovel Inn** (01322-862164), the **Five Bells** (01322-863135) and the **Castle Hotel** (01322-863162).

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, 3.30pm winter).

If you finish in **Shoreham** the walk route goes past all the lunch pubs listed above, plus a couple of tearooms on its High Street: one at the **Shoreham Aircraft Museum** (01959-524416; open to 4.30pm on summer weekends); and the **Honey Pot Café & Tea Rooms** (07546-696623; open to 4.30pm Wed–Thu, 5pm Fri–Sun). Tea might also be available at the church on summer Sundays.

Help Us!

After the walk, we would love to get your feedback

You can 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

National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline SE (bus times): 0871 200 2233 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234

Version

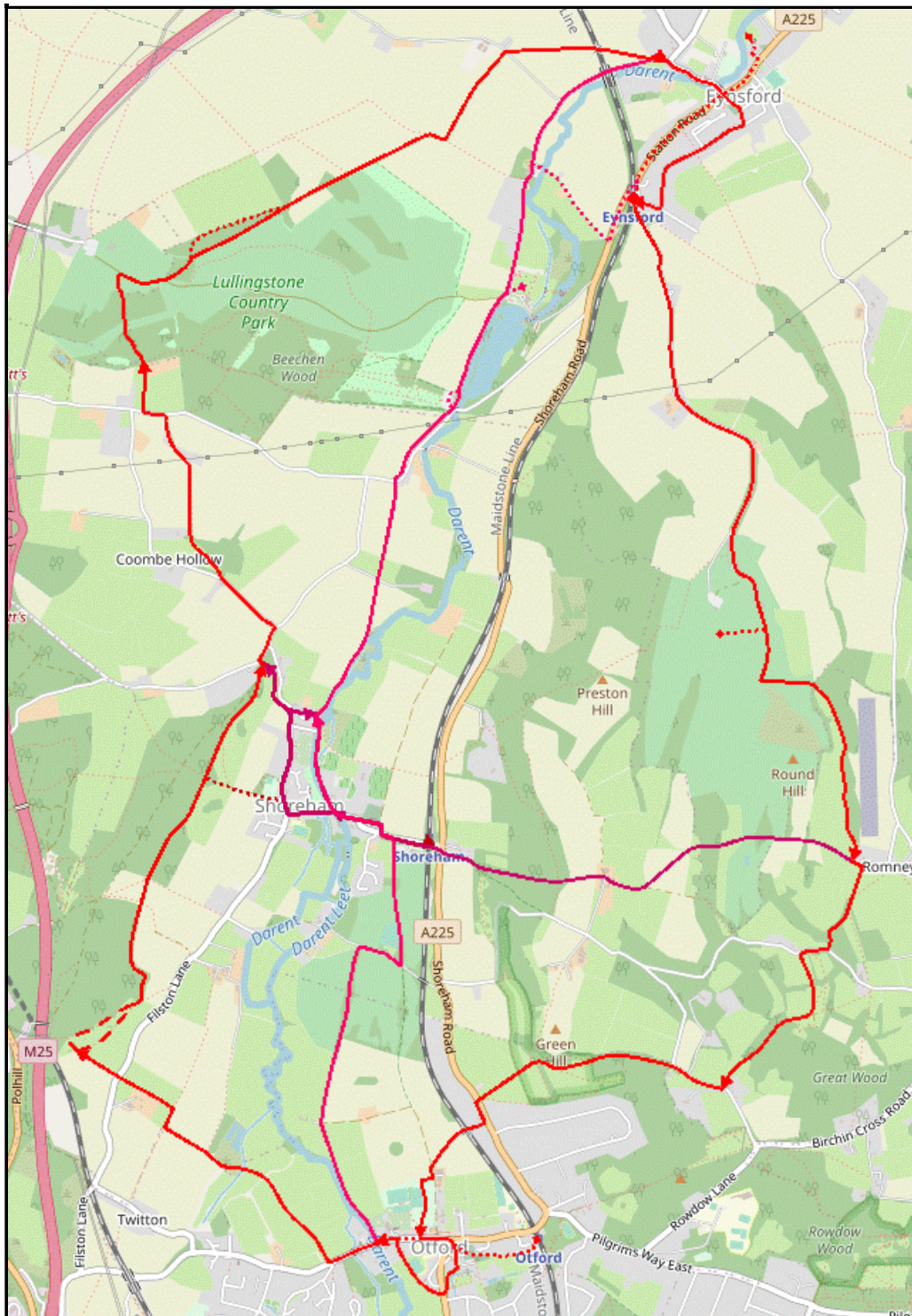
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Walk Directions

Walk Map



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Walk Options (Main | Short)

M. Main Walk (21½ km)

- a. Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham (15¾ km)
- b. Main Walk, with shorter afternoon (18¾ km)
- c. Short Walk, omitting Otford (14 km)
- d. Short Walk, with longer afternoon (16 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 a No Through Road, initially heading **S**. You will be following this winding country lane through the secluded Austin Lodge 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 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 (Rowdow Lane) opposite the entrance to Mount Farm.

C. Mount Farm to Otford High Street (2¼ 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, then **go over a stile on the right** into the corner of a large recreation ground.
 - The concrete pillars representing the sun and inner planets of the **Otford Solar System**³ model are in front of you, with an information panel up ahead by the hedge.

13. Take any convenient route across the recreation ground to a car park on the far side. Go through this to come out onto Otford's High Street opposite the first of the village's two pubs, the **Bull**.

D. Around Otford (1 km)

14. Unless you want to cut out the short loop around this village, **turn left** onto the High Street (or right if coming out of the pub).
- To skip most of this section you can go along the High Street in the opposite direction for 150m; the main route joins from Pickmoss Lane on the left. If you take this short cut, resume the directions at [20].
15. On the full walk you pass the **Hospices of Hope** tearoom on the right, opposite a bridleway. You soon come to a large roundabout encircling the **village pond**⁴, with the **Pond View Café** and the **Woodman** pub on your left.
16. Make your way to the far side of the pond where there are two footpath signs, with the left-hand path leading to the parish church of **St Bartholomew**⁵.
- If you want to visit the church its entrance is a set of modern doors on the north side.
 - If you want to abandon the walk and return from **Otford station** (500m away), take the left-hand path going past the south side of the church. Continue along the left-hand side of the churchyard and then an enclosed path to the station car park. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.
17. To continue the walk **take the right-hand path** away from the pond, heading **S**. 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.
18. **Turn right** to go past the ruined north-west tower and an information panel about the palace. Follow the tarmac path to the far corner of Palace Field and continue past a small parade of shops.
19. Cross the A225 at a traffic island and take the footpath opposite, alongside extensive water meadows. This eventually leads into Pickmoss Lane and back to the High Street, where you turn left.
20. Head **W** along the High Street, passing the timber-framed **Pickmoss**⁸ on your left. In 100m there is a signpost pointing right for the **Darent Valley Path**⁹ (DVP).
- 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 High Street to Polhill Bank (2¼ km)

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

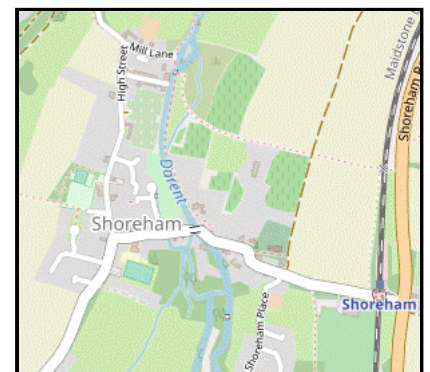
21. Continue along the High Street (which becomes Pilgrims Way West) for a further 250m, crossing several branches of the River Darent and passing **Broughton Manor**¹⁰ on the left. Just past a bus shelter (and a Solar System pillar representing the planet Uranus) **turn right** onto a signposted public footpath, going through a metal gate into a meadow.
22. 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.
23. 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 a neglected orchard.
24. **Turn right** past a metal fieldgate, briefly going along the edge of a large field. In 100m **turn left** through a wooden kissing gate, leaving the Walk 1–23 route and heading **NW** again. Follow the footpath alongside the orchard and underneath power lines.
25. 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 to continue on the footpath opposite, climbing steadily. In 250m go through a wooden kissing gate onto **Polhill Bank**².

F. Polhill Bank to Darentdale (2½ km)

26. You will be leaving this small nature reserve in its right-hand corner. There are grassy paths along both its top and bottom edges, so you can either:
- Turn right and go along the lower path, or
 - Climb steeply up the hillside in front of you (with fine views from a bench at the top) and then descend gently on the upper path.
27. 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**. This meanders along the bottom edge of this open access wood, passing a picnic table at a left-hand bend.
28. After a right-hand bend the path straightens out to head **N**, climbing gently with a field behind the fence on your right. Where the main path bears slightly left away from the fence and starts to climb more steeply, **veer right** onto an **easily-missed narrow path** to stay alongside the fence. Follow this side path to the edge of the wood, still climbing gently.
29. Leave the wood via a stile and **keep ahead** on a level course across a steeply-sloping field, ignoring a grassy path sloping down to the right. On the far side go through a metal kissing gate to the right of a fieldgate onto a broad woodland path, rejoining the Walk 1–23 route. After a while there are views on the right of Shoreham in the Darent valley below, and in 600m you come to a path crossing by a sign for **Meenfield Wood** and an information panel.
- If you are finishing in Shoreham you could head directly for the village by descending the (potentially slippery) flight of steps on your right and go all the way down the hillside, 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 1 km), turn right onto Shoreham's High Street and continue the directions at [32] in §G.
30. For the main route **keep ahead** at the path crossing, in 200m passing above an enclosure containing the **Shoreham Cross**¹¹. In 300m the path merges with a track from the left and you continue along a straight tree-lined path for a further 200m. 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)

31. 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 Shoreham's High Street, opposite Mill Lane. Turn right to go along the High Street, soon passing the **Crown** and 300m later the **Two Brewers** restaurant.
32. In a further 100m the tearoom for the **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² is up a track on the right (The Landway); the **Honey Pot Café** is a little further along the High Street, on the left. At the next junction **turn left** into Church Street, in 175m passing the **Kings Arms**¹³.
33. After crossing the River Darent stay on Church Street as it turns right to go alongside a branch of the river, then curves round to the left and uphill. Halfway up the slope you pass a driveway leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ on the left and come to **Ye Olde George Inn** at the top.
34. You could follow the street (now Station Road) round to the right and all the way to the station, but 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) and out through a wooden swing gate at the far end.
35. **Turn right** and go along the field edge. The right of way leads out past a fieldgate to Station Road where you would turn left, but locals seem to prefer an unofficial path inside the field, squeezing past a vehicle barrier to leave in the next corner. Either way, follow the road under the railway bridge and **turn left up steps** to the station forecourt. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

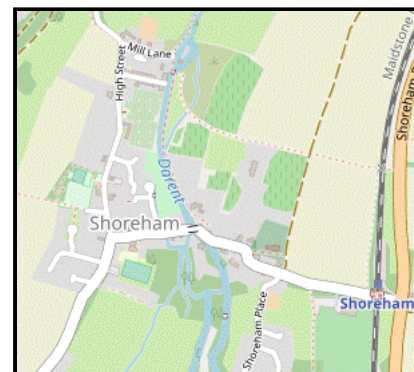


H. Romney Street to Shoreham Bridge (3 km)

This section follows the Walk 1–43 route.

36. 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.
37. 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.
38. 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.
39. Cross this main road carefully, slightly to the right, and go down Station Road, passing under the railway bridge. Shortly after the entrance to Darent Valley Golf Club you join the **Darent Valley Path**⁹ (DVP), coming into Station Road from a footpath on the left. In a further 75m *turn right* at the next DVP waymarker, going up a slope into the corner of a large field.
40. Go along the left-hand field edge for just 50m, then *turn left* through a kissing gate in a low flint wall into the churchyard. Follow the tree-lined path past the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**¹⁵ (which is well worth visiting).
41. Go out through the lychgate to return to the road (now Church Street), with **Ye Olde George Inn** opposite. Follow it gently downhill, passing a driveway leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ on the right. At the bottom it 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 or ½ km)

For a choice of more pubs and tearooms, take the main route through the village. If you do not want to visit any of these places you can take the more attractive riverside route.

42. Main route (1 km)

- a. Follow the road across the river (leaving the DVP) to come to the **Kings Arms**¹³ on the left. At the top of Church Street *turn right* onto Shoreham's High Street, where the **Honey Pot Café** is on the right.
- b. A little further on the small **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² (which has a tearoom) is on the left and the **Two Brewers** restaurant on the right. The **Crown** is at the far end of the village.
- c. Continue for 100m past the last pub and *turn right* down Mill Lane. In 125m (where it turns half-right towards the entrance to Mill House) *bear left* off the lane onto a footpath, rejoining the DVP.

43. Riverside route (½ km)

- a. Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darent Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁶ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁷ and follow the attractive riverside path, later with an orchard on your right.
- b. 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.

Continue the directions at §N.

J. Shoreham Bridge to Darentdale (1¼ km)

For a choice of more pubs and tearooms, take the main route through the village. If you do not want to visit any of these places you can take the more attractive riverside route.

44. Main route

- a. Follow the road across the river (leaving the DVP) to come to the **Kings Arms**¹³ on the left. At the top of Church Street **turn right** onto Shoreham's High Street, where the **Honey Pot Café** is on the right.
- b. A little further on the small **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**¹² (which has a tearoom) is on the left and the **Two Brewers** restaurant on the right. The **Crown** is at the far end of the village.
- c. Continue for 100m past the last pub and **turn left** off the road at its junction with Mill Lane, onto a raised footpath.

45. Riverside route

- a. Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darent Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁶ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁷ and follow the attractive riverside path, later with an orchard on your right.
 - b. At the far end cross the river on a footbridge and follow the path alongside the garden fence for Mill House. After passing its entrance leave the DVP (a footpath off to the right) and go up Mill Lane to its T-junction with Shoreham's High Street. Cross the main road carefully onto a raised footpath opposite.
46. 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. Darentdale to Upper Beechen Wood (2 km)

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

47. 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**¹⁸ which is worth a look.
48. 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.
49. 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).
50. **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 of the path go through a metal gate – easier than the rather daunting step ladder – into **Upper Beechen Wood**, part of **Lullingstone Park**¹⁹. Almost immediately you come to a path crossing with a wooden signpost.

L. Upper Beechen Wood to Eynsford (Riverside) (4 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.

51. 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.

52. 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.
53. On the far side you come to a golfers' track with several paths into the wood opposite. The suggested continuation is **the right-hand path** past wooden barriers, staying on the LL.
- Alternatively you could take the horse route on the left, along the other side of a narrow strip of woodland; the two routes rejoin at the far end, 600m away. Riders are directed along a short detour at the start to bypass a potentially hazardous old oak tree; walkers can take the original path, past wooden barriers.
54. The suggested route stays near the right-hand edge of the woodland and goes past another ancient oak tree on the edge of the golf course (possibly the oldest tree in the park). At the far end leave the wood past wooden barriers, merging with the horse route from the left.
55. Keep ahead along a broad grassy strip on the left-hand side of a field, then on a track going through a dip and up the other side. Near the top leave the horse route (which branches off to the right) to continue on a grassy strip between two large fields.
56. On the far side go 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.*
57. 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 Railway Viaduct**²³.
58. The path eventually drops down to a minor road (Lullingstone Lane) in front of water meadows, dotted with trees. Turn left onto the lane, which curves round to the right and leads into Riverside at its junction with Sparepenny Lane.
- Complete the directions at §O.*

M. Otford High Street to Shoreham (Mill Lane) (3¾ km)

59. **Turn right** onto the signposted DVP, the driveway to Millmead and several other properties. At the end of the drive take the path to the right of "The Chalet", past allotments and through a wooden swing gate into a meadow.
60. Follow a grassy path alongside the 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.
61. At a major path junction go through wooden barriers and **turn right** onto a tarmac lane. 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, its station is 200m off to the right.
62. Turn left briefly onto the road, then in 75m **turn right** up a slope into the corner of a large field. Go along the left-hand field edge for just 50m, then **turn left** through a kissing gate in a low flint wall into the churchyard. Follow the tree-lined path past the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**¹⁵ (which is well worth visiting).
63. Go out through the lychgate to return to the road (now Church Street), with **Ye Olde George Inn** opposite. Follow it gently downhill, passing a driveway leading to **The Mount Vineyard**¹⁴ on the right. At the bottom it bends right to run alongside a branch of the River Darent for a short distance.
64. Do not cross the river on the road bridge but keep ahead on Darent Way, passing the **War Memorial**¹⁶ on the riverbank. Pass to the left of **Water House**¹⁷ and follow the attractive riverside path, later with an orchard on your right.

65. 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.

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

66. 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.

67. Go across an access road, up a slope and through the line of trees to continue on a broad grassy path between fields. You pass a hop field on your right and 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.

68. At the end of the permissive path go through a gate to return to Castle Road by the entrance to **Lullingstone Park**¹⁹, where you will be going along an attractive riverside path. The straightforward route is to keep ahead through a kissing gate onto this path (passing a footbridge over the river where there is a wooden **sculpture**²⁰).

- If you want to break for refreshment **veer left** instead into the car park and go round to the right to find the **Lullingstone Café** in the Country Park Visitor Centre. 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.

69. Continue along this tree-lined path for 600m, with the river on your right and glimpses of a large fishing lake beyond it. At the far end go through a small parking area and keep ahead on a tarmac lane to come to the imposing **Tudor Gatehouse**²¹ of **Lullingstone Castle**.

- It is well worth detouring through the Gatehouse entrance to visit the unusual parish church of **St Botolph**²². This “Church on the Lawn” is open to the public at all times, even though you might have to unhook a chain and walk across the private lawn of Lullingstone Castle to reach it.

70. To resume the walk continue along the lane past the grounds of Lullingstone Castle (including its World Garden), still heading **N**. In 700m you pass a large shed on the left housing **Lullingstone Roman Villa** (and temporarily leave the DVP, which branches off just before then to take a higher route into Eynsford).

If you want to cut out the last part of the walk and head directly to the station (1¼ km away) without going past any refreshment places, follow the directions below.

71. Short Cut to Eynsford Station

- Turn right by the Roman Villa onto a private road (which is also a public footpath), crossing the river on a bridge. At the end of the road turn left onto the tarmac path alongside the A225, go under the railway bridge and turn sharp right up the station approach road. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

72. For the main route continue along Lullingstone Lane, following the course of the river. The lane passes under **Eynsford Railway Viaduct**²³ and 250m later the DVP rejoins from a footpath on the left. After curving around some water meadows the lane leads into Riverside at its junction with Sparepenny Lane.

O. Riverside to Eynsford Station (1½ km)

73. At the road junction leave the DVP (which continues up Sparepenny Lane) and keep ahead onto Riverside. In 150m the lane goes alongside the River Darent before crossing it on a narrow bridge by a ford. The two suggested refreshment places are on this street: the **Plough** inn before the bridge, and the **Riverside Tea Room** immediately afterwards.

At the T-junction with the A225 the shortest route to the station is along the main road to the right, but follow the directions below if you want to visit the ruins of Eynsford Castle.

74. Detour to Eynsford Castle (+800m)

- Turn left onto the main road (away from the station) to go through the centre of the village, passing the **Five Bells** pub on your right. Opposite the **Castle Hotel**, turn left into a tarmac lane signposted to the Village Hall and follow it round to the right to find the Castle car park and ruins. Return the same way.



75. The suggested route to the station is a quiet route away from the main road. Go over the zebra crossing and into the churchyard of **St Martin of Tours**²⁴. Follow the path past the left-hand side of the church and leave the churchyard in the top left-hand corner. Bear right across a small parking area and continue up a short alleyway (with vehicle barriers at both ends) to a residential street, Pollyhaugh.
76. Turn right and follow this quiet street (which becomes St Martins Drive) for 700m, climbing steadily. At the far end turn right and go down Eynsford Rise to reach the station. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

Walk Notes

1. **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.
2. **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 being 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 it 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 **War Memorial** in Darent Way is inscribed *Remember as you look at the hill those who gave their lives for their country 1914-1919*.
17. **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.
18. 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.
19. **Lullingstone 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 I and as a result Shoreham was dubbed "the most heavily bombed village in Britain".
20. The wooden **fish sculpture** was unveiled in 2004 "to celebrate the restoration of the River Darent".
21. The **Tudor Gatehouse of Lullingstone Castle** was one of the earliest all-brick buildings in Britain.
22. **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.
23. **Eynsford Railway Viaduct** was built in 1862 to take the line 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.
24. **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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