





# Farningham Road to Eynsford walk

Ancient woodlands, low hills and riverside paths in the Darent valley.

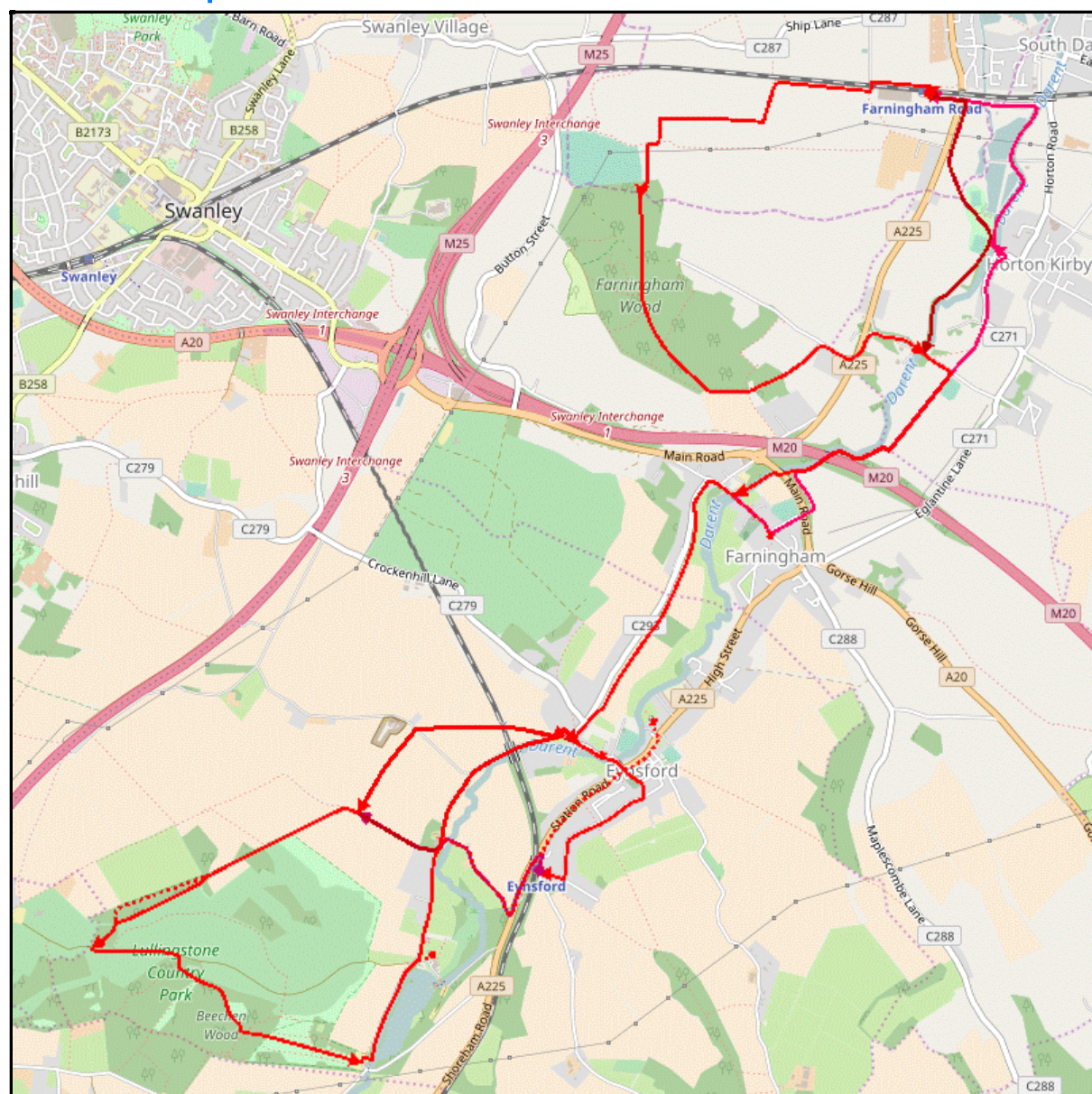
<b>Length</b>	<p><b>Main Walk:</b> 17½ km (10.9 miles). Four hours 25 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.</p> <p><b>Short Walk, omitting Lullingstone Park:</b> 13¼ km (8.2 miles). Three hours 15 minutes walking time.</p> <p><b>Circular Walk, from Farningham Road:</b> 11¼ km (7.0 miles). Two hours 40 minutes walking time.</p> <p><b>Alternative Circular Walk, from Eynsford:</b> 9¼ km (5.7 miles). Two hours 15 minutes walking time.</p>
<b>OS Maps</b>	Explorers 162 & 147. Farningham Road station (in Sutton-at-Hone), map reference TQ555694, is in Kent, 4 km <b>E</b> of Swanley.
<b>Toughness</b>	4 out of 10 (3 for the Short Walk, 2 for the Circular Walks).
<b>Features</b>	<p>The Darent Valley between Otford and Eynsford is covered by several SWC walks and this one extends the range northwards. It starts with a rather nondescript 2 km along field edges and farm tracks, but the scenery improves with a stretch through <a href="#">Farningham Woods Nature Reserve</a>, an ancient woodland containing a now rare native tree, the small-leaved lime. The reserve also includes some fields which are being restored to their original 'unimproved' condition in order to support orchids and other wild flowers.</p> <p>The morning section concludes with the first of several stretches along the <a href="#">Darent Valley Path</a>, with the riverside path leading directly into the beer garden of a pub in <a href="#">Farningham</a> (overlooking a unique and puzzling structure in the river). Its attractive High Street was once on the main London-to-Folkestone highway but all the through traffic now thunders past on the main roads you passed under on the approach to the village, the M20 and the A20.</p> <p>The first part of the walk after lunch is along the side of the valley overlooking the ruins of <a href="#">Eynsford Castle</a>, one of the earliest Norman stone castles (which you could visit at the end of the walk; free entry). The route leads down to the outskirts of Eynsford, where the remainder of the walk has been fashioned from the two alternative endings of the <a href="#">Eynsford Circular walk</a> (#59).</p> <p>The high-level outward route goes past <a href="#">Eagle Heights</a>, one of the UK's largest <b>Bird of Prey</b> centres which is open daily to 5pm from March to October, 4pm on winter weekends. Admission (2018) is £9.95 but you might be able to see something of the afternoon flying displays from the public footpath. The walk then loops through <a href="#">Lullingstone Park</a>, an attractive landscape of chalk grassland and ancient woodland with an internationally important collection of veteran trees, where there is the opportunity for a mid-afternoon refreshment stop in its Visitor Centre.</p> <p>The low-level return route is essentially the same as the ending of the <a href="#">Otford to Eynsford walk</a> (1–23). Another attractive riverside stretch leads to <a href="#">Lullingstone Castle</a> (01322-862114); this historic manor house has limited opening hours but its grounds contain an unusual parish church (open to the public at all times) and a <b>World Garden</b> with plants from around the globe which is open Fri–Sun afternoons between Easter Saturday and end-October; admission (2018) is £9.</p>

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 (2018) is £7.90. There are several more possible refreshment places in Eynsford before the short climb through the village to its station.

<b>Walk Options</b>	<p>You can shorten the walk by 3¼ km by taking a more direct outward route, omitting the section through Farningham Wood. This makes for a very short morning but is worth considering if you miss a train and would have to start an hour late (or if you want to keep away from one of the regular motocross events at <a href="#">Canada Heights</a>). On a short winter's day you could cut out the afternoon loop through Lullingstone Park (but still taking in the Roman Villa and Eagle Heights), a <b>Short Walk</b> saving 4¼ km.</p> <p>As this walk's start and finish stations are on different lines directions are also given for two short <b>Circular Walks</b> (one from each station), more suitable perhaps as half-day walks with just one refreshment stop.</p>
<b>Transport</b>	<p>There is an hourly service from Victoria to Farningham Road station, taking 40 minutes. Eynsford is on a different line, with a half-hourly stopping service from Blackfriars. In practice a <b>return to Farningham Road</b> would almost certainly be accepted from Eynsford on the way back.</p> <p>Car drivers could park in Swanley and take separate services out and back. The station car park costs £6.70 Mon-Fri, £4.40 Sat, £1 Sun &amp; BH (2018); the council car parks in the town are free at weekends.</p>
<b>Suggested Train</b>	Take the train nearest to <b>10:15</b> from <b>Victoria</b> to <b>Farningham Road</b> , or an hour later for the shorter start.
<b>Lunch</b>	<p>The suggested place to stop for lunch is at one of the two large coaching inns in <b>Farningham</b>, after 6¾ km (3½ km on the shorter start). The obvious choice is the popular <a href="#">Lion Hotel</a> (01322-860621), which has an enviable location with a large beer garden overlooking the river. If you want to try a less crowded alternative the <a href="#">Pied Bull</a> (01322-862125) is a short distance away along the High Street (on the route of the Circular Walk). Both of these pubs serve a good selection of food all day.</p> <p>If you reach these pubs too early a short detour along Riverside (2 km beyond Farningham) would take you to the <a href="#">Plough</a> (01322-862281) in Eynsford; this also has a fine riverside location and serves food all day.</p> <p>There are also some later pubs on the Circular Walk (see below), but none at all on the Alternative Circular Walk until you reach the <b>Plough</b>. On this variation you could have a light lunch or afternoon tea at the <b>Lullingstone Café</b> in the Country Park Visitor Centre (see below).</p>
<b>Tea</b>	<p>On the <b>Main Walk</b> the suggested place to stop for mid-afternoon tea is the <b>Lullingstone Café</b> in the Country Park Visitor Centre (01322-865995; open to 4.30pm summer, 3.30pm winter). On the <b>Short Walk</b> (and the Main Walk, if you get there in time) the suggested place in <b>Eynsford</b> is the <a href="#">Riverside Tea Room</a> (01322-861551; open to 4.30pm weekdays &amp; 4pm at weekends, but may stay open later if called in advance). If you want stronger fare the walk route passes the <b>Plough</b> (see above), while a short detour along the main road would reveal the <b>Malt Shovel Inn</b> (01322-862164), the <b>Five Bells</b> (01322-863135) and the <b>Castle Hotel</b> (01322-863162).</p> <p>The <b>Circular Walk</b> passes two more pubs after Farningham, but these come too soon to be well placed for a separate tea stop and are not near the station. The <a href="#">Fighting Cocks</a> (01322-862299) in Horton Kirby is a family-friendly pub with a large beer garden stretching down to the river. In the final section the riverside route passes <b>The Bridges</b> (01322-860588), an old-fashioned pub on the outskirts of South Darent.</p>
<b>Help Us!</b>	After the walk, we would love to get your <a href="#">feedback</a>
<b>Photos</b>	<p>Upload your photos to the <a href="#">SWC Group</a> on <a href="#">Flickr</a>, and <a href="#">videos</a> to <a href="#">Youtube</a>. This walk's tags are:</p> <div style="display: flex; gap: 10px;"> <div style="border: 1px solid #d9534f; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> swcwalks</div> <div style="border: 1px solid #d9534f; border-radius: 10px; padding: 5px; display: inline-block;"> swcwalk291</div> </div>
<b>By Car</b>	<b>Start:</b> <a href="#">DA4 9JB</a> <b>Finish:</b> <a href="#">DA4 0HP</a>
<b>Help</b>	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Travelline SE (bus times): 0871 200 2233 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234
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# Walk Directions

## Walk Map



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

## Walk Options ( Main | Short | Both )

- M. Main Walk (17½ km)
  - i. Main Walk, with shorter start (14¼ km)
  - a. Short Walk, omitting Lullingstone Park (13¼ km)
  - ai. Short Walk, with shorter start (10 km)
  - b. Circular Walk, from Farningham Road (11¼ km)
  - c. Alternative Circular Walk, from Eynsford (9¼ km)

## Walk Directions

If you are doing the shorter start (omitting Farningham Wood), start at §3.

If you are doing the Alternative Circular Walk (from Eynsford), start at §9.

### 1. Farningham Road Station to Farningham Wood (2¼ km)

Arriving from London on Platform 2, do **not** cross the footbridge but leave on a nearby tarmac path heading **NE** through a belt of trees. This comes out into a large field overlooking the village of South Darenth, dominated by its prominent chimney<sup>1</sup> (a useful landmark). Ignore the two paths ahead and **turn sharp left** to go along the field edge, back past the station and heading **W**.

In 400m you come to a farm track and **turn left** to cross over the railway tracks. On the other side **turn right** onto a broad track and follow this gently downhill, alongside the railway. In 500m the track curves left and goes past Homefield Cottages into **Homefield Farm** (where you can disregard some off-putting "Private" notices: this is a right of way). Bear right through the large farmyard, go past a barn in the far corner and **turn right** onto another broad farm track, with a concrete footpath marker.

Follow the track along the edges of several large fields for over 500m, heading **W**. At the end **turn left** in front of a hedge, then **turn right** at the next corner. Go along the field edge for just 60m, then **veer left** up a slope and go through a metal kissing gate. **Turn right** briefly onto a track, then **turn left** at a path junction to go uphill. **Canada Heights Motocross Circuit**<sup>2</sup> is off to your right, behind a fence.

At the top of the slope follow the track briefly round to the right in front of a wood, then **turn left** onto a clear path through the trees. In 60m go through a metal kissing gate into **Farningham Woods Nature Reserve**, with a yellow waymarker indicating that this is a public footpath.

### 2. Farningham Wood to Franks Lane (2¾ km)

Follow the footpath through the wood, heading **S**. In 200m it merges with a broad grassy track from the left. In a similar distance go straight across a byway flanked by a pair of wooden fieldgates into a more open part of the wood, with an information

panel about the Nature Reserve. There are many possible continuations but the simplest route is to follow the main path (shown as Footpath SD77 on the panel) for the next 1 km, initially heading **S** and gradually curving round to the left.

At first you go across a patch of heathland, passing a pond in the trees on your right. As you re-enter the woodland ignore side paths dropping down to the right and keep to the main path at all junctions, eventually heading **SE**. The path finally veers right down a short slope and you go through a wooden fieldgate to a major path junction at the edge of the wood. You should be at a viewpoint looking **S** across a large field to the M20 motorway, with the village of Farningham in the valley beyond.

Leave the wood through a wooden kissing gate and turn left to go all the way along the top of the field, heading **E** (or take a parallel path just inside the wood and exit at the end). In the field corner go up a few steps in a narrow gap in the hedge and over a stile into Little Folly Field. Go across it, slightly to the left, and over another stile into a small wood (The Folly). Follow the short woodland path, keeping right at a path junction and then veering round to the left.

The path leads to another viewpoint, this time looking **NE** across Great Folly Field towards South Darenth (and Farningham Road station). Go over a new stile just off to the right of a wooden fieldgate and across this large field; there is no clear path but aim slightly to the right of the chimney 2 km away. On the far side go over a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate, down a short track and past another fieldgate to Calfstock Lane. Turn right and follow this narrow lane downhill past several cottages to the A225.

Bear left onto a small patch of grassland and **cross the main road with great care** to continue on the footway opposite. At the first junction fork right into Franks Lane, taking care as there is no pavement. Keep right where another slip road joins from the main road, opposite some imposing iron gates on the driveway to Franks Hall. Follow the lane for a further 300m to a river bridge, where the shorter start joins from the **Darent Valley Path**<sup>3</sup> (DVP) on the left.

*Continue the directions at §4.*

### 3. Farningham Road Station to Franks Lane direct (1¾ km)

Arriving from London on Platform 2, cross the footbridge to the main exit and go down the station approach road to the A225. Cross this main road carefully and **turn right** onto a fenced path, screened by trees from the main road and with paddocks on the left. In 300m go past "The Topiary Centre" and **veer left** at a footpath signpost onto a surfaced path through **Hundred Year Wood**<sup>4</sup>.

*If you wish you can fork right at an information panel onto a longer route through this 'Community Woodland', rejoining the public footpath at the far end.*

For the main route, simply follow the straight path through the small wood. The longer route rejoins from the right in 200m and you continue down a short stretch of boardwalk and past a vehicle barrier into a recreation ground, **Westminster Field**.

If there is no sports activity the most direct route would be to bear right off the tarmac path in about 100m and stay near the right-hand edge of the field, but it is simpler to stay on the main path to the far side and veer right at a sports pavilion, joining the **Darent Valley Path**<sup>3</sup> (DVP) in front of the river and continuing through a small car park.

Both routes leads to gates (about 50m apart) in the hedge on the field's southern boundary, then grassy paths across a meadow. The two paths soon merge and lead to its far right-hand corner. Continue alongside a wooden fence in another meadow, then on a tree-lined stretch alongside the River Darent. You reach a minor road (Franks Lane) and turn left onto it, joining the main route.

### 4. Franks Lane to Farningham (village) (1¾ km)

*You will be following the waymarked DVP through Farningham and on to Eynsford.*

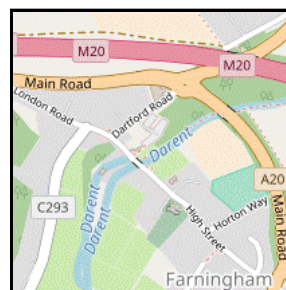
Cross the river and head east along Franks Lane for 200m, ignoring a footpath off to the left along the way. At a pair of footpaths in front of Horton Kirby Cricket Club **turn right** through a wooden kissing gate onto a long straight path between fences, passing the cricket pitch on your left and **Franks Hall**<sup>5</sup> away to the right. Eventually the path goes through another kissing gate and zig-zags right and left to continue alongside the River Darent.

You now simply follow this attractive riverside path into Farningham, passing under two main roads: the M20 and later the A20. After the second road bridge the path crosses the river on a footbridge and shortly afterwards leads into the beer garden of the first of the village's two pubs, the **Lion Hotel**.

An information panel in the garden describes what is known about the unusual structure spanning the river opposite the pub, the **Farningham Cattle Screen**<sup>6</sup>, while the prominent weatherboarded building up ahead is **Farningham Water Mill**<sup>7</sup>.

*There is a nice spot on the other side of the river for a picnic, directly opposite the beer garden. Directions to the alternative lunch pub (300m away) are in the next section.*

*If you are doing the Circular Walk back to Farningham Road, go to §7.*



### 5. Farningham to Lullingstone Lane (2 km)

Unless you want to visit the alternative lunch pub (or explore the village), go up to the road from the Lion Hotel and **turn right** onto Farningham's High Street.

- Detour to the Pied Bull (+600m)

To detour through the village **turn left** onto the High Street, crossing the river and passing the parish church of **Ss Peter & Paul**<sup>8</sup> (or detour through the churchyard; there is another gate further along). The **Pied Bull** is on the right, just after a bridleway (Horton Way) on the left. Return the same way, crossing back over the river.

Go up the High Street for 200m, passing Dartford Road on the right, then **turn left** into Sparepenny Lane<sup>9</sup>. In a further 200m, shortly after the lane levels out and bends slightly left, **turn left** through a gap in the hedge. Go through a wooden kissing gate and turn right onto a permissive path running along the top of a large field, parallel to the lane.

You now continue like this for 1¼ km, along the top of several large fields and through a small patch of open-access woodland in the middle. Towards the end of this stretch you can see the ruins of **Eynsford Castle** in the Darent valley below. At the end of the last field go through another gate to return to Sparepenny Lane and follow it downhill to a T-junction on the outskirts of Eynsford. Unless you want to visit the late lunch pub (or cut the walk short), **turn right** into Lullingstone Lane.

- **Detour to the Plough (+400m)**

To detour into Eynsford **turn left** into Riverside. The **Plough** is on the left in 200m, where the lane goes alongside the River Darent. To resume the walk, return the same way and keep ahead at the road junction, into Lullingstone Lane.

*Or to cut the walk short and go directly to Eynsford station, pick up the directions in §14.*

From the road junction follow Lullingstone Lane for 100m as it curves around water meadows dotted with trees on the left. Just before the lane bends back to the right, a footpath sign indicates that the DVP veers up the bank on your right into a field.

*If you are doing the Main Walk (via Lullingstone Park), go to §10.*

## 6. **Short Loop via the Roman Villa & Eagle Heights (3 km)**

For the **Short Walk** leave the DVP (the footpath on the right is your return route) and simply continue along Lullingstone Lane for a further 1 km: under **Eynsford Railway Viaduct**<sup>10</sup>, past a turning on the right for Eagle Heights and eventually passing a large shed housing **Lullingstone Roman Villa**.

Before reaching the first cottage on the lane **turn right** up steps in the wooded bank, signposted as the DVP again. At the end of the trees continue up the left-hand side of a large field for 400m, where there is a hedge stretching across the field. **Turn right** at a footpath junction in front of the hedge, staying on the DVP. Go alongside the hedge and continue in the same direction across a field where it turns left, passing **Eagle Heights** off to your left.

Go across the Bird of Prey 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 the viaduct. The path eventually drops down to Lullingstone Lane where you turn left, retracing your outward route. In 100m keep ahead at the junction with Sparepenny Lane, leaving the DVP.

*Complete the directions at §14.*

## 7. **Farningham to Westminster Field (3 km)**

From the Lion Hotel you could simply retrace your steps back to Franks Lane, but the suggested route starts with a short loop around the village. Go up to Farningham's High Street and **turn left** onto it, crossing over the river and passing the parish church of **Ss Peter & Paul**<sup>8</sup> (or detour through the churchyard; there is another gate further along). Just before the **Pied Bull** pub **turn left** into Horton Way, signposted as a bridleway.

At the end of this short lane continue on a path going under the A20, then **turn left** along the field edge to return to the River Darent. Turn right onto the riverside path and now retrace the rest of your outward route back to Franks Lane: under the M20, then zig-zagging away from the river onto a long straight path between fences.

Go straight across Franks Lane to continue on the footpath opposite, leaving your outward route (and the DVP). In 150m another footpath merges from the left. Go through a metal kissing gate and a belt of trees and turn left to continue along the edge of a large field. In the next corner keep ahead on a lane (The Street) and follow this through the village of Horton Kirby, in 150m passing a possible refreshment stop on your left, the **Fighting Cocks** pub.

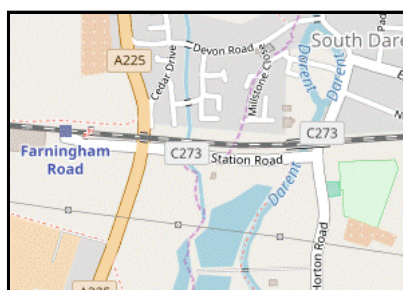
In a further 250m, where The Street turns right by the village sign, **turn sharp left** onto a short lane, signposted as a footpath. Go past a new housing development and across the River Darent into a recreation ground, **Westminster Field**.

## 8. **Westminster Field to Farningham Road Station (1½ or 1 km)**

*If you are in a hurry to catch one of the hourly trains you can take the reverse of the shorter start in §8b, but the suggested route is along another stretch of the DVP. The riverside route includes the striking sight of a high railway viaduct towering over an old-fashioned pub, and if you have time to spare you could also wander into South Darent.*

- a. **Riverside route (1½ km)**

For the suggested route **turn right** to go along the edge of the field (or through the fenced-off riverside area if you prefer; there is a gate at both ends). In the corner of the recreation ground go over a stile and follow the riverside path for 750m, passing the access gates to **Horton Kirby Lakes** on your left halfway along.



The path comes out near the bottom of Station Road in front of **South Darenth Railway Viaduct**<sup>11</sup>, with **The Bridges**<sup>12</sup> pub just across the river as a possible refreshment stop (but still 700m from the station). The village of South Darenth is along the road under the viaduct, but to complete the walk go all the way up Station Road, crossing over the A225 along the way. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

**b. Direct route (1 km)**

For the shorter route take the tarmac path to the right of a sports pavilion, curving gently round to the left to head **NW** across the field. On the far side follow the path past a vehicle barrier and up a short stretch of boardwalk into **Hundred Year Wood**<sup>4</sup>. Unless you want to detour through this 'Community Woodland', simply follow the straight path through the small wood.

At the far end bear right onto a fenced path, screened by trees from the A225 and with stables on the right. The path ends at a crossroads where you cross the main road carefully and go up the approach road to the station. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

**9. Eynsford Station to Hulberry Hill (1¾ km)**

Turn left out of the station and go down to the A225. **Turn sharp left** onto the main road, going under the railway bridge. You have 400m of slightly awkward walking along a grass verge, and at some point you need to carefully cross over this main road. Just past the end of a lay-by on the left **turn right** onto a farm track, signposted as a footpath. Follow this track for 600m, past Newbarn Farm and a cottage.

After crossing the River Darent turn left onto a lane in front of a large shed housing **Lullingstone Roman Villa**. Before reaching the first cottage on the lane **turn right** up steps in the wooded bank, briefly joining the **Darent Valley Path**<sup>3</sup> (DVP). At the end of the trees continue up the left-hand side of a large field. In 400m **keep ahead** at a footpath junction in front of a hedge stretching across the field, leaving the DVP and joining the Main Walk route.

*Continue the directions at §11.*

**10. Lullingstone Lane to Hulberry Hill (1¾ km)**

For the Main Walk **turn right** onto this footpath, staying on the DVP. Follow a path slanting up across the field, gradually moving away from the lane. In 300m cross the railway tracks carefully and continue in the same direction across a larger field, still climbing. On the far side go through a gap in the hedge and across the corner of the next field to a lane, the access road for **Eagle Heights**.

Cross the lane and continue on the footpath opposite, aiming for the left-hand end of a hedge 300m away and passing the Bird of Prey centre off to the right. Keep ahead alongside the hedge to the far side of the field and **turn right**, uphill.

**11. Hulberry Hill to Castle Drive (1¾ km)**

*You will be following some of the waymarked trails through Lullingstone Park in this part of the walk, initially the Lullingstone Loop in an anti-clockwise direction around the country park's northern perimeter.*

From the hedge go up the field edge for 75m and **veer left** at another footpath junction onto a short path through the belt of trees, following the Lullingstone Loop (black arrows) as well as a public footpath. Continue on a broad grassy strip between two large fields, passing an isolated tree along the way. On the far side of the field keep ahead on a track between hedges, now also on a horse route (blue arrows) just inside the boundary of **Lullingstone Park**<sup>13</sup> (and its golf course).

The track goes through a dip and climbs back into a more wooded area. Where it forks you can take either route; both soon emerge from the trees near the corner of a field (the left-hand fork by a veteran sweet chestnut tree). Keep ahead along the right-hand edge of the field to come to the start of a long strip of woodland, where again the path forks. The suggested continuation is to **take the left-hand path** into the trees, still following the Lullingstone Loop.

*The horse route on the right is an alternative: the two routes go along opposite sides of the wood and rejoin at the far end, 600m away (riders are directed along a short detour at the end to bypass a potentially hazardous old oak tree; walkers can continue along the original right-hand path, past wooden barriers).*

The Lullingstone Loop stays near the left-hand edge of the wood and passes another ancient oak tree towards the end (possibly the oldest tree in the park). At the far end all the routes come out onto a golfers' track which you go straight across into a small wood (slightly to the right from the Lullingstone Loop). In 200m the woodland path emerges from the trees onto a surfaced track, the route of an old driveway through the park to Lullingstone Castle.

**12. Castle Drive to Lullingstone Park Visitor Centre (1¾ km)**

**Turn sharp left** onto this driveway, leaving the Lullingstone Loop. The drive curves around the wood, going gently downhill. In 100m **bear right** off the surfaced track onto a chalky track going straight downhill into a valley (still following the horse route), with a tall hedge on your left and golf fairways down to your right.

The track gradually approaches **Upper Beechen Wood** on the right. After going alongside it for a short distance **turn right** at a marker post, joining a children's Discovery Trail (red arrows) and a Woodland Walk (white arrows). The woodland path passes "Wild Wire" (a zip-wire contraption) on the right and climbs gently. Go past a metal fieldgate on the right (the continuation of the Woodland Walk) and follow the main path down to the left.

At the bottom of the slope go straight across a small open valley onto a path climbing past a metal fieldgate ("No Horses") into **Lower Beechen Wood**. In this part of the Discovery Trail there are several little detours to children's activity areas. Soon after passing one marked "High Flyer" **turn left** at a path junction, following a signpost to the Visitor Centre Car Park.

The path eventually leaves the wood through a wooden fieldgate by some "Mega Beasts", emerging onto the top of a stretch of open downland with fine views across the Darent Valley; Eynsford and its prominent railway viaduct are about 2 km off to the left. Go straight ahead down the grassy slope for 500m to come to the car park and **Visitor Centre**, where you can break for refreshments in its café.

### 13. The Visitor Centre to Eynsford (Riverside) (2½ km)

*The rest of the walk essentially follows the Walk 1–23 route.*

Make your way round a children's playground on the north side of the Visitor Centre and **turn left** onto the riverside path, rejoining the DVP. Continue along this attractive tree-lined path for 600m, heading **N** with the River Darent 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**<sup>14</sup> of **Lullingstone Castle**; it is well worth detouring through its entrance to visit the unusual parish church of **St Botolph**<sup>15</sup>.

*The "Church on the Lawn" is open to the public at all times, even though you may have to unhook a chain and walk across the private lawn of Lullingstone Castle to reach it.*

To resume the walk continue along the lane past the grounds, 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 head directly to the station (1¼ km away), 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 A225, go under the railway bridge and turn sharp right up the station approach road. Note that there are no more refreshment places on this short cut.*

For the main route continue along Lullingstone Lane, following the course of the river. The lane passes under **Eynsford Railway Viaduct**<sup>10</sup> and 250m later the DVP rejoins from a footpath on the left. You now briefly retrace part of the Main Walk as you follow the lane round to the right. In 100m keep ahead at its junction with Sparepenny Lane, leaving the DVP.

### 14. Riverside to Eynsford Station (1½ km)

Follow the lane (now Riverside) into Eynsford. In 150m it goes right 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, follow the directions below if you want to visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle**.

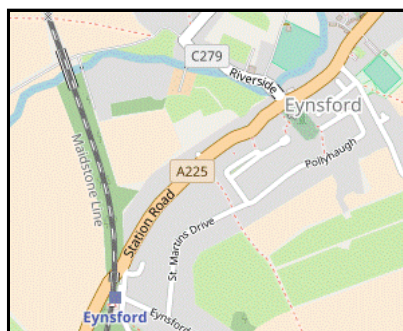
- **Detour to Eynsford Castle (+800m)**

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.

*From the junction with Riverside you could simply stay on the Walk 1–23 route, going up the main road to the station. The directions below are for a slightly longer but quieter route.*

For the suggested route cross the A225 at the pedestrian lights and go into the churchyard of **St Martin of Tours**<sup>16</sup>. 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.

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. The prominent **chimney** (originally attached to a boiler house) was built in 1881 during a major expansion of **Horton Kirby Paper Mill**, which operated from 1820 to 2003. The chimney has listed building status and was retained in the new housing development.
2. **Canada Heights** acquired its name in World War I when Canadian troops were stationed on this low hill. The Sidcup Motorcycle Club hold regular **motocross** events at this circuit, mainly on Sundays.
3. 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.
4. **Hundred Year Wood** was planted in 1994 to commemorate the centenary of Horton Kirby & South Darent Parish Council.
5. **Franks Hall** is a large Elizabethan country house, completed in 1591. The estate declined in the 19<sup>th</sup>C and it had multiple owners in the 20<sup>th</sup>C, most recently as a business headquarters.
6. The **Farningham Cattle Screen** was once thought to have been the remains of a medieval bridge, or an 18<sup>th</sup>C folly. It is not known why such an ornate structure was built simply to prevent cattle from straying downstream while crossing the ford. It was restored by the Parish Council in 2008/9.
7. **Farningham Water Mill** was built in the late 18<sup>th</sup>C. In 2014 the mill and surrounding properties were converted into a residential estate.
8. **Ss Peter & Paul, Farningham** dates from the 13<sup>th</sup>C; the tower was added about a century later and enlarged in the 19<sup>th</sup>C. It contains a painted alabaster monument of 1597 to Antony

Roper, the grandson of Sir Thomas More. Unusually for an Anglican church, the 15<sup>th</sup>C font depicts the Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic church.

9. The name **Sparepenny Lane** implies that this was once a private toll road which was cheaper than the main turnpike.
10. **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.
11. **South Darent Railway Viaduct** was built in 1859-60, with ten high brick arches spanning Horton Road and the River Darent. Like the similar viaduct at Eynsford, its appearance has been marred by the use of poorly-matched bricks for repairs.
12. Although next to a river crossing and almost underneath the railway viaduct, **The Bridges** is actually named after its owner (Wayne Bridges), a former heavyweight wrestling champion.
13. **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 II and as a result the neighbouring village of Shoreham was dubbed "the most heavily bombed village in Britain".
14. The **Tudor Gatehouse of Lullingstone Castle** was one of the earliest all-brick buildings in Britain.
15. **St Botolph, Lullingstone** dates from the 14<sup>th</sup>C 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 14<sup>th</sup>C.
16. **St Martin of Tours, Eynsford** was built by one of William the Conqueror's knights in the 11<sup>th</sup>C on the site of a Saxon church. It has retained its Norman ground plan with apsidal chancel.

» *Last updated: June 1, 2018*

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