



Farningham Road to Otford Walk

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



Length

Main Walk: 20 km (12.4 miles). Four hours 50 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8½ hours.

Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham: 16½ km (10.3 miles). Three hours 55 minutes walking time.

Short Walk, omitting Farningham Wood: 17¼ km (10.6 miles). Four hours 5 minutes walking time.

Short Walk, finishing in Shoreham: 13¾ km (8.5 miles). Three hours 10 minutes walking time.

Circular Walk, returning to Farningham Road: 14¼ km (8.9 miles). Three hours 15 minutes walking time.

Short Circular Walk, omitting Farningham Wood: 11¾ km (7.3 miles). Two hours 30 minutes walking time.

Alternative Circular Walk, omitting Eynsford loop: 10¾ km (6.7 miles). Two hours 25 minutes walking time.

OS Maps

Explorers 162 & 147. Farningham Road station (in Sutton-at-Hone), map reference TQ555694, is in Kent, 4 km **E** of Swanley.

Toughness

4-5 out of 10 (3-4 for the Short Walks, 1-2 for the Circular Walks).

Features

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 **Farningham Woods Nature Reserve**, 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 wildflowers. The morning section concludes with the first of several stretches along the waymarked **Darent Valley Path** (DVP), with the riverside path leading directly into the beer garden of a pub in **Farningham** (overlooking a unique and puzzling structure in the river).

There is then a choice of routes. For a greater choice of refreshment places (see Lunch below) one of them goes through the neighbouring village of **Eynsford** (which also gives you the opportunity to visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle**, one of the earliest Norman stone castles), but you could choose to stay on the DVP which takes a more attractive route along the hillside above the village. The two routes recombine to go past **Eagle Heights**, one of the UK's largest **Bird of Prey** centres; admission (2024) is £13.95 but you might be able to see something of the afternoon flying display from the public footpath.

The walk temporarily leaves the DVP to go around the perimeter of **Lullingstone Country Park** to a possible mid-afternoon refreshment stop at its Visitor Centre. From this point the walk essentially follows the route of the Shoreham Circular (Figure-of-8) walk (#289), passing through this attractive village. You can choose to finish the walk at **Shoreham** station or carry on to **Otford**, with the choice of a hillside route through two small nature reserves (**White Hill** and **Fackenden Down**) or a simpler route along the valley floor.

Motocross Events

*The route into Farningham Wood is along a public footpath which was officially diverted in 2020 to skirt around the motocross circuit at **Canada Heights**. However, the club have since extended the circuit to cross the new right of way, closing the path with a "Sorry for any inconvenience" notice when some events are taking place. Kent County Council are investigating the situation but it would be prudent to check the club's website and if necessary do the shorter start described below.*

Walk Options

The **Short Walk** takes a more direct route away from the station, saving 2¾ km by omitting the loop through Farningham Wood. This shorter start was originally included to help anyone who missed a train and was starting an hour behind the main group, but it also bypasses any potential problem at Canada Heights.

The two routes between Farningham and Eynsford have been utilised to make a **Circular Walk**. After doing this loop and retracing a riverside stretch from the outward route it returns to Farningham Road station via the village of **Horton Kirby**. You can combine this option with the shorter start, or simply omit the Eynsford loop.

A few minor short cuts and alternative routes are also mentioned in the directions.




Additional Notes	The original version of this walk went out as far as Lullingstone Country Park before looping back to finish in Eynsford, but with the closure of the tearoom in this village it made more sense to continue southwards to Shoreham or Otford. A Circular Walk option has been retained, but with its loop through the Country Park transferred to the morning section of a new Eynsford Circular via Farningham walk (#419).
Transport	<p>There is an hourly service from Victoria to Farningham Road station, taking 40 minutes. The three villages in the Darent valley are on the Blackfriars to Sevenoaks line, with a half-hourly stopping service; Otford also has hourly fast trains to Victoria (daily) and Charing Cross (Mon–Sat). On the way back you should buy a single from one of these other stations to Swanley (where the two lines diverge) to supplement a return to Farningham Road, although in practice that return ticket might be accepted from Eynsford.</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 in Farningham there is a bus service to Swanley from the stop outside the Lion Hotel (hourly Mon–Fri, two-hourly Sat). There is also a very limited service (Mon–Sat) along the A225 between Sevenoaks and Swanley.</p> <p>Car drivers could park in Swanley and take separate services out and back for the non-Circular Walks. The station car park costs around £8 Mon–Fri, £6 Sat, £3.50 Sun & BH (2024), but street parking nearby is possible at weekends.</p>
Suggested Train	Take the train nearest to 10:15 from Victoria to Farningham Road , or an hour later for the shorter start.
Lunch	<p>The natural place to stop for lunch is the popular Lion Hotel (01322-860621) in Farningham (after 6¾ km, or 4 km on the shorter start), if only because the walk route goes right through its riverside beer garden. If it is too crowded you can take the route along the High Street to the village's other pub, the Pied Bull (01322-862125).</p> <p>Continuing along this route provides even more choice as there are four pubs in the neighbouring village of Eynsford. In its centre there are the Castle Hotel (01322-633917) and the Five Bells (01322-863135; open from 3pm weekdays, noon weekends), closely followed by the Malt Shovel (01322-862164) on Station Road and the Plough Inn (01322-862281) on Riverside.</p> <p><i>The alternative route out of Farningham also passes The Chequers (01322-865222), but this small and quirky pub might be closed at lunchtime and/or not serving food.</i></p>
Tea	On the Main & Short Walks you could have a mid-afternoon refreshment break at the Lullingstone Café in the Country Park Visitor Centre (01322-865995; open to 5pm summer, 4pm weekends & 3pm weekdays in winter). There are also plenty of refreshment places in both Shoreham and Otford , familiar from other SWC walks.

If you finish in **Shoreham** there are 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.

If you do the full walk there are two tearooms opposite each other on **Otford's** High Street: **The Olive Tree** (01959-524322; open to 4pm Mon-Sat, 3.30pm Sun) in the **Hospices of Hope** charity shop; and **Sally's Cake Emporium** (01959-928447; open to around 4pm Tue-Sun). There are also two pubs on the High Street, **The Bull** (01959-580585) and **The Woodman** (01959-522195), although at the time of writing the latter is advertised as being for sale.

The Pond View Café overlooking the village pond closed at the end of 2023.

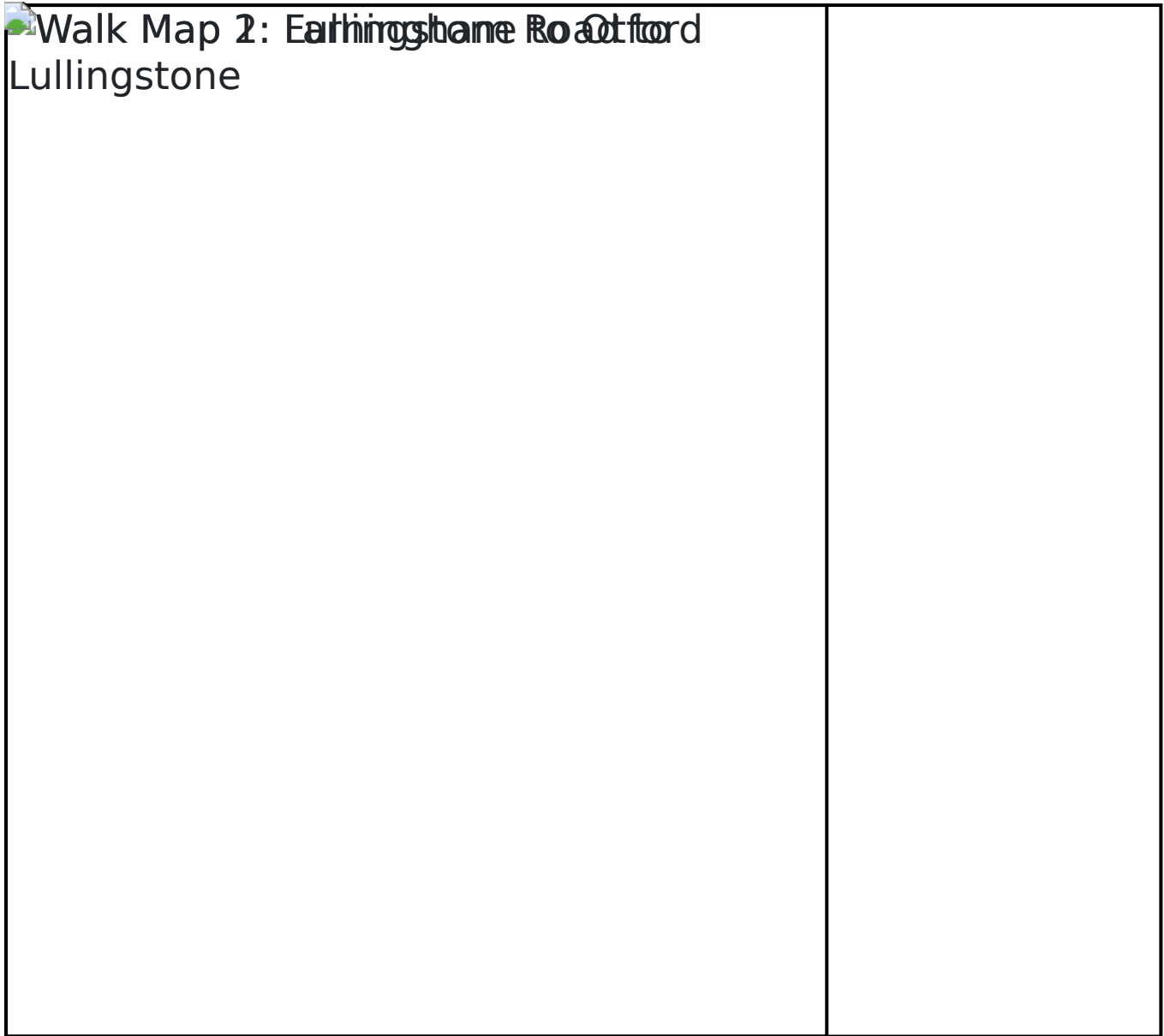
Towards the end of the **Circular Walks** the suggested place is the **Fighting Cocks** (01322-862299) in **Horton Kirby**, a family-friendly pub/restaurant with a large beer garden stretching down to the river. However, as the station is still 1½ km away you would need to allow 20-25 minutes to reach it.

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	Finish
Help	National Rail: 03457 48 49 50 • Traveline (bus times): 0871 200 22 33 (12p/min) • TFL (London) : 0343 222 1234	
Version	Mar-25 Sean	
Copyright	© Saturday Walkers Club. All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only. www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml	

Walk Directions

Walk Maps



All maps © OpenStreetMap contributors

Walk Options (Main+Short | Circ.)

M. Main Walk (20 km)

- i. Main Walk, with valley ending (18¾ km)
 - a. Main Walk, finishing in Shoreham (16½ km)
 - b. Short Walk, omitting Farningham Wood (17¼ km)
- bi. Short Walk, with valley ending (16 km)
 - c. Short Walk, finishing in Shoreham (13¾ km)
 - d. Circular Walk, returning to Farningham Road (14¼ km)
 - e. Short Circular Walk, omitting Farningham Wood (11¾ km)
 - f. Alternative Circular Walk, omitting Eynsford loop (10¾ km)

Walk Directions

If you are doing a Short Walk (omitting Farningham Wood), start at §C.

A. Farningham Road Station to Farningham Wood (2¼ km)

1. 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 above the village of South Darenth, dominated by its prominent **chimney**¹ (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**.
2. In 400m go through a new metal kissing gate and **turn left** to cross over the railway tracks. On the other side **turn right** onto a broad track going between the railway and polytunnels for 500m. After descending gently it curves left, goes past Homefield Cottages and enters **Homefield Farm**.
3. Bear right to go diagonally across the large farmyard, as directed. In the far corner **turn right** onto another broad farm track, with a footpath waymarker. Follow the long straight track between more polytunnels for 500m, heading **W**. About 75m before the end, **turn left** as indicated onto another broad track between polytunnels. Go up to the farm boundary and **turn right** onto its perimeter track, heading **W** again.
4. Go along this track for 150m, passing another farm track on the right halfway along, then **veer left** up a slope. Go through a metal kissing gate and almost immediately **turn right** at a waymarker post onto a path through a belt of trees. Go along this path for 50m and then **turn left** at a footpath junction to go uphill on a broad path, with the **Canada Heights**² **Motocross Circuit** off to your right.
5. 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**.

B. Farningham Wood to Franks Lane Bridge (2¾ km)

6. Follow the footpath through the wood, heading **S** and later broadening out into a grassy strip. Go straight across a byway flanked by metal fieldgates into a more open part of the wood, with an information panel on the left about the Nature Reserve.
7. There are many possible routes but the simplest is to follow the main path ahead (shown as Footpath SD77 on the panel) for the next 1 km. At first you go across a patch of heathland, passing a pond in the trees on your right. As you re-enter woodland ignore side paths dropping down to the right and keep to the main path, gradually curving left to head **SE**.
8. The path finally drops down and comes to a recently-cleared area at the southern edge of the wood (with a view across a large field to Farningham in the Darent valley, and the M20 motorway snaking through the landscape). Leave the wood through a wooden kissing gate and turn left to go all the way along the top of the field, heading **E**.
9. In the field corner bear left through a narrow gap and go over a stile at the top of a small bank. Go across **Little Folly Field**, slightly to the left, then over another stile into a small wood known as **The Folly**. Follow the woodland path through it, keeping right at a path junction and then swinging left to come to another viewpoint.
10. Go over a stile to the right of a wooden fieldgate into **Great Folly Field**, with a new wooden bench inviting you to "rest awhile and feast your eyes". As you go down across this field aim slightly to the right of the chimney and railway viaduct in South Darenth, 2 km away: the exit is by a metal fieldgate about 50m to the left of a more prominent wooden fieldgate.

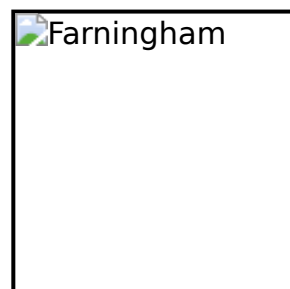
11. Go over a stile to the left of this metal fieldgate and down a short track. Squeeze past another fieldgate and turn right to go down Calfstock Lane to the A225. Veer left onto a small patch of grassland and **cross the main road carefully** to continue on the footway opposite, briefly heading back towards Farningham Road station.
12. At the first junction fork right into Franks Lane, **taking care as there is no pavement** and more traffic than you might expect. Keep right where another slip road joins from the main road. Follow the lane for a further 300m to a bridge across the **River Darent**, where you join the **Darent Valley Path**³ (DVP).
Continue the directions at §D.

C. Farningham Road Station to Franks Lane Bridge *direct* (2¼ km)

13. Arriving from London on Platform 2, cross the footbridge to the main exit and go down the station approach road to a crossroads. **Cross the A225 carefully** and carry on down Station Road. Just before a bridge over the **River Darent** **turn right** onto the **Darent Valley Path**³ (DVP), heading away from **South Darenth Viaduct**⁴.
14. Follow the riverside path for 750m, passing the access gates to **Horton Kirby Lakes** on your right halfway along. The path comes out into a recreation ground, **Westminster Field**. Keep left to stay near the river.
 - In about 50m you could detour through a pleasant grassy area alongside the river with a few benches; there is a gate at both ends.
15. Go past a sports pavilion and along the field edge, passing a small car park on your left. In the corner of the recreation ground go through a wooden kissing gate and continue on a clear path; initially through some scrubland, then back alongside the river on a tree-lined stretch. At the end turn left onto a minor road (Franks Lane), joining the main route.

D. Franks Lane Bridge to Farningham (Lion Hotel) (1¾ km)

16. Cross the river on the road bridge 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.
17. The DVP continues as a long straight path between fences, passing the cricket pitch on the left and with a glimpse of **Franks Hall**⁵ away to the right, through a gap in the trees. The path eventually zig-zags right and left to continue alongside the **River Darent**.
18. You now simply follow this attractive riverside path into Farningham, passing under two main roads: the M20 and later the A20. At the second road bridge the path crosses the river on a footbridge to continue on the other side.
19. The path leads directly into the beer garden of the **Lion Hotel**⁶, where there is an information panel on the riverbank describing what is known about the ornate **Farningham Cattle Screen**⁷. The prominent weatherboarded building on the other side of the High Street is **Farningham Mill**⁸.
 - There is a designated picnic area on the other side of the river. If you want a break and have brought your own provisions, cross the road bridge and turn left through a gate into this pleasant grassy enclosure with benches.



If you are doing the Alternative Circular Walk back to Farningham Road station (omitting the Eynsford loop), go to §L.

E. The Lion Hotel to Eynsford (Riverside) (2¼ • 1¾ km)

If you are not planning to visit any of the other pubs in Farningham or Eynsford you could take the shorter and more attractive hillside route in [21], staying on the DVP.

20. Route via Eynsford High Street (2¼ km)

- a. Go out onto the High Street and **turn left** to cross the river on the road bridge, with a fine view of the Cattle Screen. Carry on along the High Street for a further 200m, passing the parish church of **Ss Peter and Paul**⁹.
 - If you wish you could detour through its churchyard and exit through another gate at the far end.
- b. You then pass Farningham's other pub on the right, the **Pied Bull**. Go past its car park and **turn right** into Cinder Path, signposted as a footpath. At the end of this short alleyway keep ahead on Oliver Crescent.
- c. After passing a small green **bear left** in front of a large triangular green onto a signposted footpath. Follow this short tarmac path and then a cul-de-sac (Till Avenue) alongside the green to the A225 and turn right onto its pavement.
- d. You have to walk most of the way into Eynsford on this main road, but in 75m you can get some respite from the traffic by **veering right** through a wooden gate onto a signposted footpath; this goes along a strip of grassland parallel to the road for 300m, with a hedge on the right.
 - There are several gaps in the hedge if you want to detour through the adjoining Millfield Meadow.
- e. At the end of the meadow you have to put up with the traffic for 500m, passing a row of cottages, a primary school and the Baptist Church (all on the right-hand side of the road) before you reach a lane signposted to the Village Hall, opposite the **Castle Hotel**.
 - If you want to visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle** (which is only 125m away) go down this lane. It zig-zags right and left and a broad wooden bridge takes you through a gap in the curtain wall. After exploring the site return to the High Street.
- f. Carry on along the left-hand side of the High Street, passing the **Five Bells** pub. At a road junction you pass the War Memorial, a commemorative **water fountain**¹⁰ and then a **Lucy Box**¹¹ on the pavement. In a further 150m the churchyard of **St Martin of Tours**¹² is on your left, by a pedestrian crossing.
 - If you want to curtail the walk and return from **Eynsford station** (800m away) simply carry on along the A225, soon passing the **Malt Shovel** pub. After a long steady climb the station approach road is on the left, just before the A225 goes under a railway bridge. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.
- g. Use the pedestrian crossing to continue briefly on the other side of the main road, then **turn right** into the lane opposite the church (Riverside). You pass the (closed) Riverside Tea Room and cross the River Darent on a narrow road bridge by a ford (with refuges to avoid the traffic if necessary).
- h. On an attractive stretch alongside the river you pass the last of the village's pubs, the **Plough Inn**. Follow the lane for a further 250m, later curving away from the river. This brings you to a road junction with Sparepenny Lane¹³ to the right and the onward route to Shoreham & Otford ahead on Lullingstone Lane.

If you are doing a Circular Walk back to Farningham Road station, go to §M.

21. Route via Sparepenny Lane (1¾ km)

- a. From outside the Lion Hotel go uphill on the High Street, passing **The Chequers** pub at the junction with Dartford Road. In a further 75m **turn left** into Sparepenny Lane¹³. In 200m, just before a 'national speed limit' sign, **turn left** onto a signposted footpath. Go down a few steps and through a wooden kissing gate into the top corner of a large field.
- b. Follow this permissive footpath parallel to the lane for 1¾ km, mostly along the top of large fields but with a short interlude through the top of **Nine Hole Wood**¹⁴.
Towards the end you can see the ruins of Eynsford Castle in the Darent valley below.

- c. In the far corner of the last field return to Sparepenny Lane via a gate. Follow the lane downhill to a T-junction on the outskirts of Eynsford, with Riverside to the left and the onward route to Shoreham & Otford along Lullingstone Lane to the right.

If you are doing a Circular Walk back to Farningham Road station, go to §N.

F. Riverside to the Lullingstone Park Visitor Centre (4 km)

22. Go along Lullingstone Lane for 100m, curving around a water meadow dotted with trees. After passing a small business centre **veer right** up the bank at a footpath sign, staying on the DVP. Follow a path slanting up across a field, gradually moving away from the lane.
23. 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.
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.
24. After passing the Bird of Prey centre off to the right the footpath carries on alongside the hedge. On the far side of the field **turn right** up the hillside at a footpath T-junction, temporarily leaving the DVP. After going up the side of the field for 75m **veer left** through the belt of trees at a path junction, with a black arrow waymarker for the **Lullingstone Loop** (LL).
25. Continue on a broad grassy strip between two large fields, passing an information panel for the **Lullingstone Tree Acrostic**¹⁵ at the start of a line of young trees. 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**¹⁶.
26. The path now goes gently downhill towards a lightly wooded area on the edge of **Lullingstone Park**¹⁷. As you enter the trees **veer left** at a little triangle of paths onto a long straight grassy track between hedges, heading **SE** with the park's golf course off to your right. You have now left the LL and joined a horse route (waymarked with blue arrows) around the perimeter of the park.
27. The track goes gently downhill for 600m, then swings round to the right. After a fairly steep little drop it levels off and there are views of **Lullingstone Castle**¹⁸, its gatehouse and the church in its private grounds off to your left. The track then climbs gently and comes to a stony track where you keep ahead as indicated, staying on the horse route and now with a belt of trees on your left.
28. In 100m you pass a golf green and then **bear left** to follow the horse route through a gap in the trees. On the other side it merges with another grassy track as it curves back to the right. You are now on a broad grassy strip alongside the top of a large farm field, with glimpses of Lullingstone Castle's fishing lake beyond the tree-lined River Darent in the valley below.
29. In 75m **fork right** at a Y-junction, leaving the horse route. Follow the mown path gently uphill for 225m, with views across the golf course in the valley to your right. After passing a small children's play area off to your left **veer left** through a gap in the trees to skirt around the top of a wood, keeping close to the trees on your left and heading **S**.
30. You have now joined the end of a children's Discovery Trail (red arrows). The path gradually curves round to the left and descends, eventually emerging onto a broad grassy slope. Keep left to go down the slope and make your way through the car park at the bottom to the **Lullingstone Park Visitor Centre**, which has a **café** if you want a mid-afternoon refreshment stop.

G. The Visitor Centre to Shoreham (Mill Lane) (2 km)

The rest of the Main Walk, through Shoreham and on to Otford, is the same as Walk #289.

31. The suggested route to resume the walk is to go past a children's play area beside the café to the river behind the main building. Turn right onto the riverside path (rejoining the DVP), soon passing a wooden **sculpture**¹⁹ by a footbridge over the river and coming out onto Castle Road.
 - More simply you could follow the car park's short access drive out to the road.
32. Just past the car park entrance go through a wooden kissing gate onto a signposted permissive footpath, a broad path parallel to Castle Road. There is a large lavender field beyond the fence on your right and in 250m a wide gap in the hedge on your left.
 - You could detour through this gap and go across the road into Castle Farm, whose **Hop Shop** sells local farm produce and snacks.
33. At the end of the permissive path go down a few steps and cross the road carefully (slightly to the left) to pick up the continuation of the DVP, a broad path between farm fields (with hops on the left and more lavender fields behind them).
34. Follow this well-defined path across several fields, going through a line of poplars and over an access road along the way, to the corner of a field in front of a line of trees.
35. Go through a wooden kissing gate and continue along a fenced path, with glimpses of the river behind the trees. After another gate a tree-lined stretch alongside the river leads to Mill Lane on the outskirts of Shoreham.

If you are doing the valley ending, go to §K.

H. Mill Lane to Shoreham Station (1½ • 1 km)

If you are not planning to visit any of the refreshment places on Shoreham's High Street you could take the more attractive riverside route in [37].

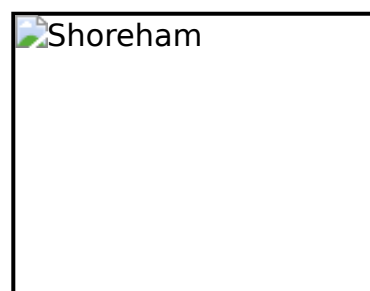
36. Main route

- a. Bear right to go up Mill Lane. At the top **turn left** onto Shoreham's High Street to come to the first of the village's three pubs, **The Crown**.
- b. In a further 400m the tearoom for the **Shoreham Aircraft Museum**²⁰ is up a track on the right (The Landway). Carry on along the High Street, soon passing the **Honey Pot Café** on the left.
- c. At the next junction **turn left** into Church Street, in 175m passing the **Kings Arms**²¹ on the right. After crossing the River Darent stay on Church Street as it swings right, alongside a branch of the river.

37. Riverside route (–½ km)

- a. Bear left to go past the entrance to Mill House onto a path alongside its garden fence. At the end turn left to cross the River Darent on a footbridge. Ignore a footpath straight ahead and **turn right** onto the riverside path, passing an orchard on the left with a vineyard beyond it.
- b. In 400m the path leads into a short cul-de-sac (Darenth Way), with **Water House**²² on the left. Go past the **War Memorial**²³ and road bridge to continue in the same direction on Church Street, with a branch of the river on your right.

38. Shortly after Church Street has curved round to the left and started to climb, there is a driveway on the left leading to **The Mount Vineyard**²⁴ (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.



39. 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**²⁵, 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.
40. In the corner **veer left** onto a new permissive path alongside the boundary hedge, parallel to Station Road and leaving the DVP. In the next corner rejoin the road to go under the railway bridge. Unless you are finishing the walk here, follow Station Road up to its T-junction with the A225.

41. Finishing at Shoreham Station

- **Turn left up steps** to the station forecourt. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

I. Shoreham Station to Fackenden Down (1½ • 2 km)

42. Cross the main road with great care and take the track to the right of the house opposite, signposted as a public bridleway and climbing gently. Shortly after the track bends right ignore a signposted footpath off to the left and continue briefly along the bridleway.
43. In 50m there are **easily missed** paths off to each side of the broad grassy path going straight up the hill ahead (which is not the route). The main route is the unmarked path on the right, a permissive path through **White Hill Nature Reserve**²⁶.
If access through this small nature reserve is not possible (eg. during conservation work), take the alternative route in [45] along rights of way.

44. Main route

- Turn right** onto the narrow path along the hillside, going through a belt of trees after 125m to continue along a broad grassy strip. After a further 200m the path curves left in front of a field and goes up the edge of the nature reserve.
- At the top make your way out past a vehicle barrier and turn right onto Fackenden Lane. Where the road turns sharply right after 175m, **go through a squeeze gate** to the left of a metal fieldgate onto **Fackenden Down**²⁷.
- The straightforward route is to follow the broad grassy strip between hedges running along the bottom of this nature reserve for 500m, going over a slight rise along the way. Eventually you meet a broad grassy path between fences coming down from the left (the alternative route) and **turn right**.
 - For better views you could venture up the hillside at the entrance to Fackenden Down; there is a narrow permissive path along the top of this nature reserve which also leads into the alternative route.

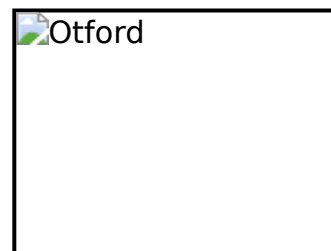
45. Alternative route (+½ km)

- Turn left** onto the continuation of the bridleway (with a ground-level concrete marker) and follow it up the wooded **White Hill** for 400m, climbing quite steeply in places. At the top turn left onto Fackenden Lane.
- In 250m **turn right** into the driveway to Warren Farm, signposted as a public footpath. Go over a stile to the right of a fieldgate and follow the long straight drive past farm buildings.
- At the end of the drive go through a metal kissing gate (just off to the right) to follow a grassy path across a field, heading **SSW** towards a wooden fieldgate by the left-hand end of a line of trees.
- Go through this fieldgate (or a side gate) to continue in much the same direction through another field, slanting slightly downhill. The grassy path stays just above the bushes and small trees dotted around the bottom of the field and leads to another kissing gate near the bottom corner.

- e. Go through this gate onto a woodland path, slightly to the left. The path gradually approaches a wire fence on the right and after going alongside it for a short distance you emerge onto open access land by a wooden bench at a viewpoint overlooking Otford.
- f. From the bench go straight downhill on a broad grassy path between wire fences and keep ahead at a crosspaths, where the main route joins from the right.

J. Fackenden Down to Otford Station (2 km)

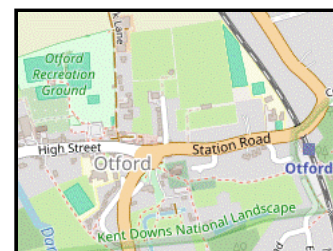
46. Go through a gate in the hedge and follow the broad grassy path downhill across a couple of wildflower meadows to the A225. Turn left and walk along the right-hand side of this busy road for 125m, **taking care as there is no pavement**. At "Stileways" **turn right** onto a signposted footpath to the left of its driveway. Follow this between garden fences to the railway line and cross the tracks carefully.
47. 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.
48. 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**²⁸, with an information panel about the model ahead on the right.
49. 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 one of the village's pubs, **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).
50. Turn left onto the High Street. In 50m you pass **Sally's Cake Emporium** on the left, with **The Olive Tree** bistro and tearoom at the back of the **Hospices of Hope** charity shop opposite.
51. To complete the walk follow the High Street up to a large roundabout encircling the **village pond**²⁹. In the past there were other refreshment places here and **The Woodman** might still be open, but the café and another pub have both closed.
52. Make your way to a footpath signpost on the far side of the pond, with the left-hand footpath leading to the parish church of **St Bartholomew**³⁰.
 - If you want to visit the church, use the set of modern doors on its north side.
 - A short out-and-back detour along the right-hand footpath would take you to the ruins of **Otford Palace**³¹.
53. To complete the walk, take the left-hand footpath 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.



K. Mill Lane to Otford Station direct (3¾ km)

54. Bear left to go past the entrance to Mill House onto a path alongside its garden fence. At the end turn left to cross the River Darent on a footbridge. Ignore a footpath straight ahead and **turn right** onto the riverside path, passing an orchard on the left with a vineyard beyond it.

55. In 400m the path leads into a short cul-de-sac (Darenth Way), with **Water House**²² on the left. Go past the **War Memorial**²³ and road bridge to continue in the same direction on Church Street, with a branch of the river on your right.
56. Shortly after Church Street has curved round to the left and started to climb, there is a driveway on the left leading to **The Mount Vineyard**²⁴ (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.
57. 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**²⁵, 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.
 - If you want to finish at Shoreham station (300m away), veer left in the corner onto a new permissive path alongside the boundary hedge, parallel to Station Road and leaving the DVP. 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.
58. To continue the walk to Otford, go down a slope in the field corner and **turn left** onto Station road. In 75m **turn right** onto a signposted footpath, shortly before the entrance to The Darenth Golf Club. You will essentially be heading **S** on this path all the way to Otford, 2¼ km away.
59. For the first 1¼ km the path goes through the golf course. For much of the way it is a tree-lined path shielded from the players, but after 350m you need to take care as it crosses a fairway, with golfers playing from the left. The path then skirts around the left-hand side of a cricket pitch and a little further on comes to a tarmac driveway.
60. The DVP turns right but for the shortest route into Otford **go straight ahead** onto the tree-lined bridleway opposite, still with the golf course on both sides. At the end of the course the bridleway continues between hedges for a further 700m, with fields on both sides and eventually passing Park Farm Stables on the left.
61. Unless you want to switch to the longer ending through Otford's large recreation ground, carry on along the bridleway to reach its High Street. If you want to stop for refreshment before heading to the station (600m away to the left) there are three places nearby: **Sally's Cake Emporium** is on the left, **The Olive Tree** bistro and tearoom is at the back of the **Hospices of Hope** charity shop opposite and **The Bull** pub is 50m off to the right.
62. To complete the walk follow the High Street up to a large roundabout encircling the **village pond**²⁹. In the past there were other refreshment places here and **The Woodman** might still be open, but the café and another pub have both closed.
63. Make your way to a footpath signpost on the far side of the pond, with the left-hand footpath leading to the parish church of **St Bartholomew**³⁰.
 - If you want to visit the church, use the set of modern doors on its north side.
 - A short out-and-back detour along the right-hand footpath would take you to the ruins of **Otford Palace**³¹.
64. To complete the walk, take the left-hand footpath 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.



L. The Lion Hotel to Franks Lane via Farningham High Street (2 km)

65. Go out onto the High Street and **turn left** to cross the river on the road bridge, with a fine view of the Cattle Screen. Carry on along the High Street for a further 200m, passing the parish church of **Ss Peter and Paul**⁹.
- If you wish you could detour through its churchyard and exit through another gate at the far end.
66. Unless you want to visit the **Pied Bull** (ahead on the right), then just before the pub **turn left** into Horton Way, signposted as a bridleway. At the end of this lane continue on a path going under the A20 into a large field. **Turn left** onto a footpath just inside the tree boundary, which leads to the Darent Valley Path on one of its riverside stretches.
- If instead you take a grassy path around the field edge there are gaps which would let you reach the DVP.
67. However you get there, turn right onto the riverside path and retrace your outward route along the DVP, initially alongside the river and ending with the long straight stretch leading to Franks Lane.
- Complete the directions at §O.*

M. Riverside to Franks Lane via Sparepenny Lane (3½ km)

68. **Turn right** into Sparepenny Lane, joining the DVP (in the opposite direction). Follow the lane uphill for 200m, passing Crockenhill Lane on the left halfway along. At the entrance to Furlongs Farm **go through a gate** with a footpath signpost and down a few steps into the top corner of a large farm field, with the ruins of **Eynsford Castle** visible in the valley below.
69. Follow this permissive footpath parallel to the lane for 1¼ km, mostly along the top of large fields but with a short interlude through the top of **Nine Hole Wood**¹⁴.
- Towards the end you might be able to glimpse Farningham's church tower in the valley ahead.*
70. In the far corner of the last field return to Sparepenny Lane via a gate and a few steps. Turn right and follow the road downhill into the village. At a T-junction turn right to go down Farningham's narrow High Street, passing **The Chequers** pub at its junction with Dartford Road.
71. Before reaching the bridge over the River Darent **veer left** into the beer garden of the **Lion Hotel**. Go through the inn's garden and retrace your outward route along the DVP, initially alongside the river and ending with the long straight stretch leading to Franks Lane.
- Complete the directions at §O.*

N. Riverside to Franks Lane via Eynsford High Street (3¾ km)

72. **Turn left** into Riverside, leaving the DVP. In 250m you come to the first of the possible pub stops in this village (the **Plough Inn**) on an attractive stretch alongside the river.
73. 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 Eynsford's High Street to the left and Station Road to the right. Use the pedestrian crossing opposite an entrance into the churchyard of **St Martin of Tours**¹².
- If you want to curtail the walk and return from **Eynsford station** (800m away) turn right onto the A225, soon passing the **Malt Shovel** pub. After a long steady climb the station approach road is on the left, just before the A225 goes under a railway bridge. Cross the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

74. Turn left onto the main road to go through the village. In 150m you pass a **Lucy Box**¹¹ on the pavement near the village sign, followed by the War Memorial at a road junction. In the next 100m there are two more refreshment places on the right, the **Five Bells** pub and the **Castle Hotel** (opposite a lane signposted to the Village Hall).
- If you want to visit the ruins of **Eynsford Castle** (which is only 125m away) go down this lane. It zig-zags right and left and a broad wooden bridge takes you through a gap in the curtain wall. After exploring the site return to the High Street.
75. To resume the walk carry on along the High Street for 500m, passing the Baptist Church, a primary school and a row of cottages (all on the left-hand side of the road). Shortly after passing Mill Lane you can get some respite from the traffic by **veering left** through a wooden gate onto a signposted footpath; this goes along a strip of grassland parallel to the road for 300m, with a hedge on the left.
- There are several gaps in the hedge if you want to detour through the adjoining Millfield Meadow.
76. After returning to the main road for a final 75m **turn left** into Oliver Crescent, then **immediately fork right** into Till Avenue. Follow this back street and then a tarmac path to the far corner of a large triangular green, then bear right onto the continuation of Oliver Crescent.
77. At the end of this cul-de-sac keep ahead on an alleyway (Cinder Path) into Farningham. Turn left onto its High Street to come to a possible refreshment stop on the left-hand side of the road, the **Pied Bull** pub.
78. Unless you want to visit the church of **Ss Peter and Paul**⁹ (100m further along the High Street), then just after the pub **turn right** into Horton Way, signposted as a bridleway. At the end of this lane continue on a path going under the A20 into a large field. **Turn left** onto a footpath just inside the tree boundary, which leads to the Darent Valley Path on one of its riverside stretches.
- If instead you take a grassy path around the field edge there are gaps which would let you reach the DVP.
79. However you get there, turn right onto the riverside path and retrace your outward route along the DVP, initially alongside the river and ending with the long straight stretch leading to Franks Lane.

O. Franks Lane to Farningham Road Station (2 km)

80. Go straight across Franks Lane onto the footpath opposite, leaving the DVP. In 150m another footpath merges from the left. Go through a metal kissing gate and a belt of trees into a large field and **turn left** along its edge, ignoring another fenced path straight ahead.
81. In the field corner go out onto a lane at a bend (with Rays Hill to the right). Keep ahead (on The Street) to go through the village of Horton Kirby. In 150m you come to the last refreshment place before the station on the left-hand side of the road, the **Fighting Cocks** pub/restaurant.
82. To complete the walk carry on along The Street. Where it swings right by the village sign after 250m, **turn sharp left** onto a short lane, signposted as a footpath. Go past the back of the properties in Millen Court and cross the River Darent into a recreation ground, **Westminster Field**.

83. Pass to the right of the sports pavilion and take the surfaced path heading **NW** along an avenue of young cherry trees. On the far side go past a vehicle barrier and follow the path up a slope, soon passing an information panel for **100 Year Wood**³². Unless you want to detour through it, simply follow the fenced path alongside this small community woodland, climbing gently.
84. At the top bear right in front of the A225 onto a tarmac path, passing the entrance to "The Topiary Centre" and then stables and paddocks on the right. At the junction with Station Road **cross the A225 carefully** and go up the approach road to the station. Platform 1 on the near side is 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. **South Darent Viaduct** was built in 1859-60, with ten high brick arches spanning Horton Road and the River Darent. Like the similar railway viaduct at Eynsford, its appearance has been marred by the use of poorly-matched bricks for repairs.
5. **Franks Hall** is a large Elizabethan country house, completed in 1591. The estate declined in the 19thC and it had multiple owners in the 20thC, most recently as a business headquarters.
6. The **Lion Hotel** was originally a coaching inn. Farningham's High Street was on the main London-to-Folkestone highway, but the A20 and M20 now take all the through traffic away from the village.
7. The **Farningham Cattle Screen** was once thought to have been the remains of a medieval bridge, or an 18thC 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.
8. **Farningham Mill** was built in the late 18thC. In 2013 the water mill and surrounding properties were converted into a residential estate.
9. **Ss Peter and Paul, Farningham** dates from the 13thC; the tower was added about a century later and enlarged in the 19thC. It contains a painted alabaster monument of 1597 to Antony Roper, the grandson of Sir Thomas More. Unusually for an Anglican church, the 15thC font depicts the Seven Sacraments of the Roman Catholic church.
10. The glazed brick **water fountain** was erected in 1902 to commemorate the coronation of King Edward VII. It was restored by the Parish Council in 2023 in time for the coronation of King Charles III, although it is not in working order as there was no drinkable water supply.
11. A **Lucy Box** is the name given to a type of electrical junction box from the Victorian period, originally made by the Lucy Foundry in Oxford. Many were used to control the supply to tram and trolley bus networks, but this one (manufactured by Hardy & Padmore) would have distributed the supply to neighbouring buildings.
12. **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.
13. The name **Sparepenny Lane** implies this was a private toll road which was cheaper than the main turnpike.
14. **Nine Hole Wood** was gifted to the Woodland Trust in 1997. This open-access woodland was originally part of a 9-hole golf course.

15. 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.
16. 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.
17. **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".
18. **Lullingstone Castle** is a historic manor house which has been owned by the Hart Dyke family since the 15thC. Its **Tudor Gatehouse** was one of the earliest all-brick buildings in Britain.
19. The wooden **fish sculpture** was unveiled in 2004 "to celebrate the restoration of the River Darent".
20. 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.
21. 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.
22. **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.
23. The **War Memorial** in Darenth Way is inscribed *Remember as you look at the cross on the hill those who gave their lives for their country 1914-1919*.
24. **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.
25. **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.
26. **White Hill Nature Reserve** is one of 36 sites in the UK managed by Butterfly Conservation. An observation on its web site ("...frequented by dog walkers") implies that this small area of scrub and chalk grassland is open access but there is no information panel at the site to confirm this.
27. **Fackenden Down** is a Local Nature Reserve managed by the Kent Wildlife Trust. This area of chalk grassland supports many varieties of orchid.
28. 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.
29. **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.
30. **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.
31. **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.
32. **100 Year Wood** was planted in 1994 to commemorate the centenary of Horton Kirby & South Darenth Parish Council.

» [Last updated: March 31, 2025](#)

© [Saturday Walkers Club](#). All Rights Reserved. No commercial use. No copying. No derivatives. Free with attribution for one time non-commercial use only.
www.walkingclub.org.uk/site/license.shtml

saturdaywalkers@walkingclub.org.uk

No warranty, use at your own risk!

[Saturday Walkers Club](#) © 2025