



# Haywards Heath to Balcombe via Ardingly walk

An undulating High Weald walk with a contrasting section alongside Ardingly Reservoir

- Length**      **Main Walk:** 15¾ km (9.8 miles). Four hours walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.
- Circular Walk, from Balcombe:** 16¼ km (10.1 miles). Four hours 5 minutes walking time.
- Alternative Walk, finishing at Horsted Keynes:** 13¼ km (8.2 miles). Three hours 30 minutes walking time.
- Alternative Walk, via Little London:** 15 km (9.3 miles). Four hours walking time.

**OS Map**      Explorer 135. Haywards Heath, map reference TQ330246, is in West Sussex, 20 km N of Brighton.

**Toughness** 5 out of 10.

**Features**      Haywards Heath is a large commuter town and there is quite a lot of it to get through at the start of this walk, but the route is better in practice than suggested by the map (even more so if you take an unofficial but widely-used deviation across a private meadow). An undulating stretch across open ground and woodland typical of the High Weald eventually takes you across the **River Ouse**, along the dam wall of **Ardingly Reservoir** and up to the village of **Ardingly** for a pub lunch.

Near the start of the afternoon section you have an unusually close encounter with a leading independent school as the walk route takes you on a right of way through the grounds of **Ardingly College**. You cross over your outward route at the reservoir and join the “Winter Walk” part of the Balcombe Circular via Ardingly Reservoir walk (#22) for a long stretch along its northern side, although with a small variation as you approach Balcombe. After a tea stop in the village you can either complete the walk with a scenic loop around the other side of the railway, or simply follow the route of the Balcombe Circular walk (1–16) to the station.

**Walk Options**

A **Circular Walk** from Balcombe has been included for convenience, but of necessity much of its outward route has been taken from Walk 1–16 and the “Summer Walk” part of Walk #22.

Directions are also provided to the attractive village of **Horsted Keynes** (pronounced ‘canes’: see Walk Notes), strung out along a broad village green. The original version of this shorter but hillier **Alternative Walk** takes a direct route from the same lunch pub, but a new route has been added from another pub on the northern fringes of Ardingly.

The two routes combine in the hamlet of Highbrook and the ending is the reverse of the start of the Horsted Keynes Circular walk (#132), including a particularly scenic section alongside one of the oldest and most successful preservation railways in the country, the **Bluebell Railway**.

*There is very little overlap between the Circular and Alternative Walks and in effect they could be treated as separate walks.*

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**Additional Notes**

The original version of this walk was from Horsted Keynes to Balcombe, but the transport arrangements for this combination are particularly awkward (which is why a Balcombe to Horsted Keynes option has not been explicitly included, although you could link up the directions to make this walk). The Main Walk and Circular Walk have been retained, and one of the original routes from Horsted Keynes to Ardingly has been reversed to create the ending of the shorter Alternative Walk.

In 2019 the start of the Circular Walk was shortened to take advantage of a new public footpath south of Balcombe station.

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**Transport**

**Haywards Heath** is on the main Brighton line, with frequent Thameslink services from **St Pancras**, **Blackfriars** and **London Bridge**, plus Southern trains from **Victoria**. The journey time from London Bridge or Victoria is around 40-45 minutes. On the Thameslink route you can get cheap Super Off-Peak tickets from central and north London (Sat, Sun & BH), but these are not valid on Southern services. Buy a **return to Haywards Heath** for the walks starting there.

**Balcombe** is the stop before Haywards Heath, with a half-hourly Thameslink service (hourly on Sundays). Buy a **return to Balcombe** for the Circular Walk.

At the end of the Alternative Walks **Horsted Keynes** is served by Metrobus 270, which runs hourly (two-hourly Sun & BH) between Brighton, Haywards Heath and East Grinstead. The bus stops at the western end of the village green, and also at the Bluebell Railway station on weekends. It is quicker to travel back via Haywards Heath but it is useful to be able to return in either direction; the last service to Haywards Heath is at around 6pm (5pm Sun & BH), but there are one or two later services to East Grinstead (2020).

*A “Thameslink only” return ticket to Haywards Heath would not be accepted at East Grinstead and you would have to buy an extra single to East Croydon, where the two lines merge.*

If you want to abandon the walk after lunch in Ardingly or Little London, Metrobus 272 runs every two hours (Mon–Sat) to Haywards Heath in one direction and Three Bridges in the other.

If driving, Haywards Heath station car park costs £9.20 Mon–Fri, £5.30 Sat, £2.25 Sun & BH (2020). Balcombe station car park used to be free but now costs £2.70 Mon–Fri; roadside parking is available in the village. For the Alternative Walks you could park in Horsted Keynes (there are free car parks in the village and at the Bluebell Railway station) and take the 270 bus to Haywards Heath to start the walk.

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**Suggested Train** Take the train nearest to **10:15** from **Victoria** or **London Bridge** to **Haywards Heath** (or **Balcombe** for the Circular Walk).

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**Lunch** The most convenient lunch stop is the **Ardingly Inn** (01444-892214) in the centre of the village, 7 km from Haywards Heath. It has a back garden and serves food to 2pm (4pm Sun). Lighter fare is available nearby at the **Ardingly Café** (01444-891113; open to 4pm Mon–Sat; 1.30pm Sun) and the village bakery (Mon–Sat).

There is an alternative pub on the main road at the northern end of the village, in a cluster of houses called Little London. The **Gardeners Arms** (01444-892328) also has a nice garden and serves good food to 3pm (all day Sun). It is better placed for the new route to Horsted Keynes, since there is a long trudge back along the road to rejoin the main route to Balcombe.

*All these places will be extremely busy if there is an event at the Ardingly Showground.*

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**Tea** Except on Mondays, the suggested tea place on the main walk variations is the popular **Balcombe Tea Rooms** (01444-811777; open Tue–Sun to 4pm, may stay open later if called in advance). The alternative is the nearby **Half Moon Inn** (01444-811582), a community pub which serves tea and coffee all day as well as stronger fare. The station is a 7-8 minute walk along roads from the centre of Balcombe; longer if you take one of the more scenic routes to end the walk.

There are two friendly pubs in Horsted Keynes village at the end of the **Alternative Walks**, the **Crown Inn** (01825-791609) and the **Green Man** (01825-790656); both are normally open all day at weekends. Alternatively, you could catch the bus first and have tea while waiting for the train: there is a café in the large **Waitrose** next to Haywards Heath station, plus other refreshment options in and around the station.

*If you finish at the Bluebell Railway station the George V refreshment room on Platforms 3&4 is open "on busy days and weekends" according to the Station Guide, but you might have to buy a platform ticket to reach it.*

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**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** RH16 1DJ **Finish** RH17 6JQ

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

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**Version** Sep-20

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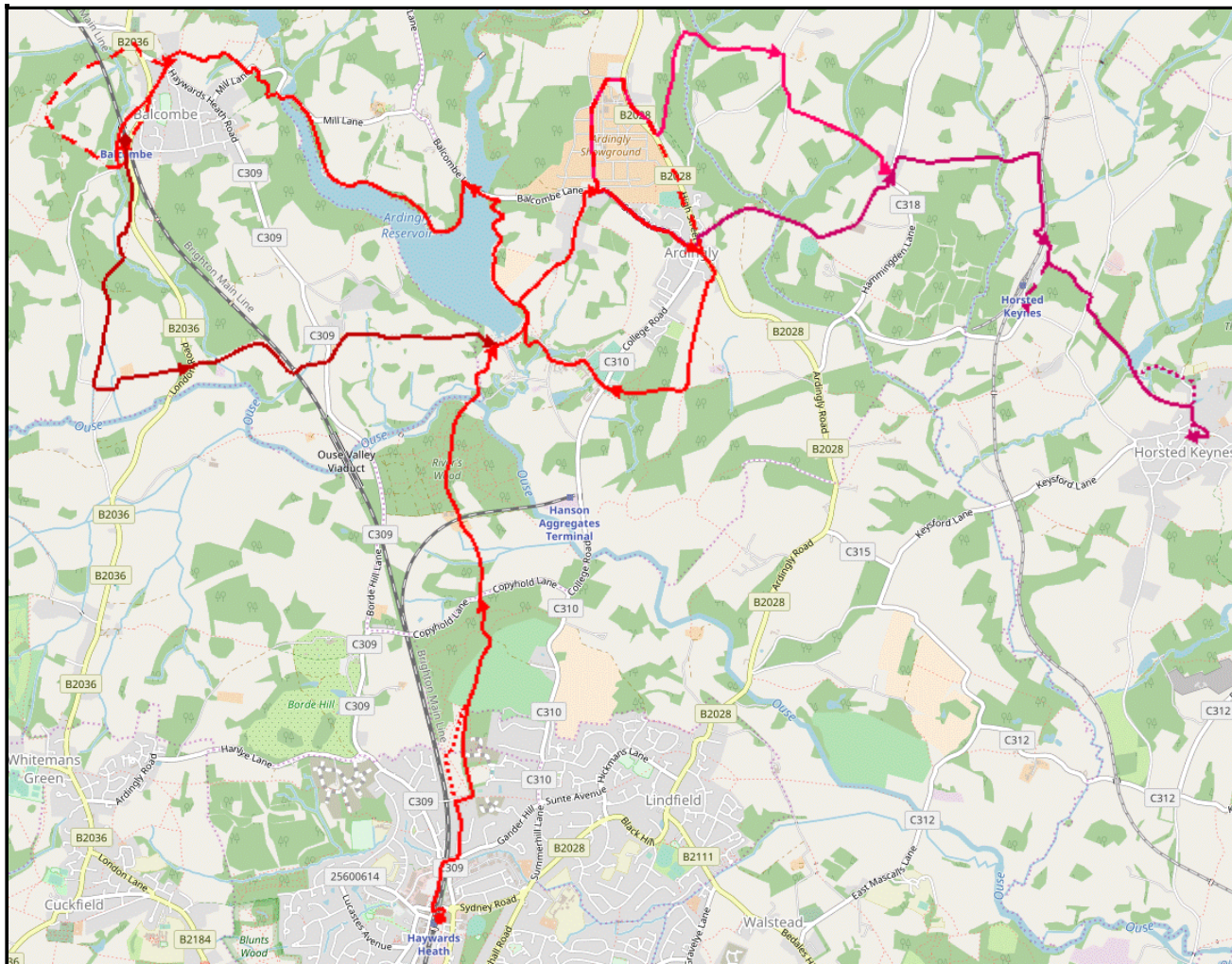
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## Walk Directions



# Walk Map



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## Walk Options ( Alt. )

**M. Main Walk (15¾ km)**

- a. Circular Walk, from Balcombe (16¼ km)**
- b. Alternative Walk, finishing at Horsted Keynes (13¼ km)**
- c. Alternative Walk, via Little London (15 km)**

## Walk Directions

*If you are doing the Circular Walk (from Balcombe), start at 5C.*

### A. Haywards Heath Station to Copyhold Lane (2¾ km)

1. Go down steps at the London end of the platform to leave the station through its booking hall and bear left across its forecourt. Cross the road at the pedestrian traffic lights and go under the railway bridge. On the other side **turn right** by a mini-roundabout onto a cycleway heading **N** between a supermarket car park and the railway. At the end join Burrell Road and go up to a T-junction.
2. Turn right to go back under the railway. After passing a timber merchants **turn left** into Wickham Way, signposted as a pedestrian route to Ardingly Reservoir. Follow this quiet private road uphill past houses, later with trees on the right. At the top you come to a T-junction with another private road, with a metal gate ahead leading into a large meadow.
  - A “Keep Out” notice on this gate seems to be widely ignored by local dog-walkers. There are well-trodden paths down the left-hand side of the meadow, across a stream at the bottom and then up to the top right-hand corner to rejoin the public footpath on the edge of a golf course. If you take this unofficial route, resume the directions at [5].

3. Until the status of this meadow is clarified, however, the main route is to **turn right** at the T-junction onto another private road (which is also a right of way), going between brick pillars towards Wickham Farm. In 100m **turn left** at a footpath signpost near the entrance to the old house. Go downhill on a broad and potentially muddy tree-lined path, heading **N** again.
4. At the bottom of the slope go over a stream on a footbridge and continue in the same direction, gently uphill. You eventually emerge from the trees on the edge of a golf course, with a path from the meadow joining from the left.
5. Head **N** on the public footpath through the golf course, which you will be following for about 500m. Initially there is netting on your right protecting you from big hitters on a distant driving range, and shortly afterwards you need to take care when passing in front of a tee. After the path goes into some trees keep right as indicated and continue on the obvious path, passing a groundsman's hut along the way.
6. Eventually you come to a path T-junction with a three-way footpath signpost. **Turn left** into a wood, joining the **Sussex Ouse Valley Way**<sup>1</sup> (SOVW). Follow the path as it bends right, then fork left where a minor path branches off to the right.
7. The sunken path can become increasingly muddy but there are various drier alternatives to the side (keep the main path in sight to avoid being led astray onto other paths). The main path eventually bends left and leaves the wood through a metal kissing gate, emerging onto a minor road (Copyhold Lane) by the remains of a low embankment for the abandoned **Ouse Valley Railway**<sup>2</sup>.

## B. Copyhold Lane to Ardingly Reservoir (2 km)

8. Cross the lane and take the tree-lined footpath just off to the right, now on both the SOVW and the **High Weald Landscape Trail**<sup>3</sup> (HWLT). In 150m go through a gate, past a cottage and through a belt of trees. Keep ahead across a potentially boggy field and continue gently uphill on a tree-lined track.
9. At the top of the slope go through a gate and across a brick bridge over the single-track **Ardingly branch**<sup>4</sup> line. Keep ahead through a metal kissing gate into River's Wood, part of the extensive **Balcombe Estate**. Follow the waymarked HWLT through the wood for 800m, gradually curving to the right while always heading roughly **N**.
10. At the end of the wood go through a gate and bear right across a grassy area towards a substantial wooden footbridge. Cross the **River Ouse** on this bridge (leaving the SOVW, which turns left) and continue along the left-hand edge of another grassy area.
11. Go over a second footbridge and keep ahead up the right-hand edge of a field; as you gain height you will be able to see the **Ouse Valley Viaduct**<sup>5</sup>, just over 1 km away to the left. About two-thirds of the way up the field, **turn right** as indicated through a gap in the hedge and follow a grassy path through another field, gradually curving round to the left.  
*The massive building perched on a hill 600m away to the right is Ardingly College; the afternoon route to Balcombe passes through its grounds.*
12. In the far corner go through a kissing gate and keep ahead through a small area of scrubland (leaving the HWLT, which turns right). At the bottom **turn right** at a three-way footpath signpost, joining the Circular Walk route.  
*Continue the directions at §E.*

## C. Balcombe Station to London Road (2¾ km)

13. Arriving from London, cross the footbridge and go out through the station car park. Just before the access road meets the B2036 **veer right** onto a signposted footpath, then almost immediately **turn left** at a three-way signpost.
14. Follow this new public footpath through the trees, parallel to the main road and heading **S**. At the end of the wood continue on a broad grass verge alongside the road, passing the driveway to Kemps Farm on the other side.  
*You are now following part of Walk 1–16, in reverse.*



15. On the verge ahead there is a footpath signpost pointing slightly to the right, but you have to go a little further along to find the gap in the hedge. Follow this narrow path around the edge of a copse and out into the top corner of a large field. **Turn right** to go down a broad grassy strip on the field margin. *The signposted right of way is to go straight ahead for 75m and then turn half-right down across the field, but it appears that everyone follows the simpler route around the edge.*
16. After about 250m along the field margin, where you are going alongside the bottom of the field, **veer right** through a metal kissing gate into Pilstye Wood. Go across a stream on a wooden footbridge and continue uphill for 200m on a broad path, heading **SW**.
17. About 50m before a woodland track up ahead, **fork left** at a footpath signpost and go up to a junction of tracks. Go straight ahead across one track and bear left, still climbing and soon passing an impressive rock outcrop on the right.
18. The track curves right and comes out into the open, where you keep ahead along a broad grassy strip between fields. As you go over the brow of the hill and start to descend you should be able to glimpse the **Ouse Valley Viaduct**<sup>5</sup>, 2 km ahead on the left.
19. Where the grassy strip curves right towards a house **keep ahead** briefly along the field edge, then **go over a stile on the right** by a pole carrying power cables. Go down a few steps, across a small field and through a gate. Continue downhill between fields and turn left onto a lane. *You soon leave the Walk 1–16 route, a footpath off to the right of the lane. The remainder of the morning section is the same as the “Higher Route to Ardingly” in Walk #22.*
20. Where the lane turns sharply right, **fork left** onto a signposted bridleway to Pilstye Farm. Follow this farm track up and round to the right past the farmhouse and outbuildings, then simply head **E** along it for 500m to reach London Road, the B2036 again.

#### D. London Road to Ardingly Reservoir (2½ km)

21. Cross the main road carefully and take the footpath opposite, going through a metal gate into a field. Follow a faint grassy path straight ahead, leading to a farm track going half-right into the trees at the bottom of the field. At the end of this short track veer left to cross a stream on a wide bridge (or the footbridge to its right).
22. Make your way across a potentially boggy area and **bear left** to go up the edge of two large fields. At the top follow the field edge round to the right, parallel to the main railway line on your left.
23. About 100m before the end of the field, **turn left** to cross the railway on a brick bridge and continue on a track across the next field. This gradually approaches a hedge where you **turn half-right** by a footpath sign, crossing a ditch on a plank bridge. Bear slightly left across the next field to a stile in the trees on the far side. Go over this and down a bank to a road (Stonehall Lane).
24. Cross the road carefully, turn left and immediately fork right into a private driveway (which is also a public footpath), passing a couple of stone pillars and a lodge. 200m from the road, **turn right** onto a concrete track, heading **E**. There are two impressive houses here, **Stone Hall** at the corner and then **Balcombe Place**<sup>6</sup> off to the left.
25. The drive goes across a small dip and past a few cottages on the right, then comes to a couple of metal fieldgates with a wooden side gate between them. As indicated by a footpath waymarker, the right of way is through the side gate and then over a stile just beyond it into the field on the left (you could simply go through the fieldgate on the left if it is not locked).
26. Follow a faint grassy path slightly to the left of your previous direction, aiming for the right-hand end of a copse. Go over a stile in the hedge here and continue alongside the copse. At the end of the trees keep ahead across the field to a stile in the hedge on the far side.
27. Go over the stile into the next field and follow a faint grassy path slightly to the left, with the reservoir visible beyond the trees on your left. Near the bottom corner go through a gate and follow a path half-right through a belt of trees, then over a stile. Go through a small area of scrubland and keep ahead at a three-way footpath signpost, joining the Main Walk route.

## E. The Reservoir to Ardingly (Street Lane) (1½ km)

28. Go down a short slope to a corner of **Ardingly Reservoir**<sup>7</sup>, with the Activity Centre (which has a small café) on your left. Walk along the dam wall and continue through a gate into a copse. Unless you want to make an out-and-back detour down the signposted path to a bird hide on the edge of the water, follow the main path through the copse.

*The afternoon route to Balcombe repeats this short stretch through the copse.*

29. Immediately after emerging from the copse, **turn right** at a three-way signpost and go over a stile into a field. Go up its right-hand side, through a gap in the corner, and then straight across a larger field, still climbing. At the top, with Townhouse Farm on your left, go across a junction of tracks (slightly to the right) onto a lane, initially heading **NE**.

30. The lane soon curves left and you follow it past houses for 500m, ignoring ways off. Eventually you come to a churchyard on your left; if you visit the church of **St Peter**<sup>8</sup> you can leave via its lychgate further up the lane. At the end of Church Lane turn right, into Street Lane. Almost immediately there is a private road off to the left, signposted as a public footpath.

*If you are doing an Alternative Walk to Horsted Keynes, go to SK for the route through Ardingly village, or SL for the route via Little London.*

## F. Street Lane to Ardingly High Street (1 • 2½ km)

*If you want to visit the alternative lunch pub in Little London, follow the route in [32].*

### 31. Main route (1 km)

Ignore the footpath and go all the way along Street Lane into the centre of the village. The **Ardingly Inn** is between the village bakery and the **Ardingly Café**, just before the junction with College Road and the B2028.

### 32. Route via Little London (2½ km)

- a. **Turn left** off Street Lane into the short private road. At the end go through a wooden side gate and turn left onto a wide tarmac driveway, which you will be following around **Ardingly Showground**. The drive soon turns half-right to head **N**, with views across a valley on the left containing an arm of the reservoir (not visible).
- b. In 500m turn half-right at a three-way footpath signpost to stay alongside the perimeter fence. In 200m ignore another footpath off to the right by an entrance to the showground. The main driveway soon turns half-right again and you follow it out via a wooden side gate to the B2028, directly opposite the **Gardeners Arms**.
- c. Turn left out of the pub to head **S** on the B2028. You could simply walk along the pavement for 1½ km into the centre of Ardingly, but there are a couple of places where you can move away from the road: in 250m you can veer left into a long lay-by which curves back to the main road; and in 900m you can go through a gate on the other side of the road and along the edge of a recreation ground for 150m.
- d. In the centre of the village the B2028 comes to a junction with College Road and Street Lane, rejoining the main route via the Ardingly Inn.

## G. Ardingly High Street to College Road (1¾ km)

33. From the major road junction in the centre of Ardingly head **SE** on the B2028, signposted to Lindfield and Haywards Heath. In 200m, shortly after passing Ardings Close on the left, **turn right** into a driveway, signposted as a public footpath and joining the **High Weald Landscape Trail**<sup>3</sup> (HWLT). At the end of the drive veer right to go round the back of a house, then left onto an enclosed path.

34. At the end of the path go over a stile; you will be heading **S** across three large fields for the next 750m. Go along the left-hand edge of the first field, then straight across the second (crossing a concrete track in the middle). In the third field bear slightly left, aiming for the left-hand end of a hedge projecting into the field 250m away. Go through a gap here into a fourth field.

35. Go along the left-hand edge of this field for just 75m, then **turn right** at a four-way footpath signpost onto a grassy path across the field, heading **W**. On the far side go over a stile beside a metal fieldgate and follow the potentially muddy main path through Standgrove Wood. At the end of the wood keep left through a parking area to reach a road (College Road again).

## H. College Road to The Causeway (2¼ km)

36. Cross the road carefully and take the main entrance into **Ardingly College**<sup>9</sup>, signposted as a public bridleway. Stay on the main drive through the school grounds: after passing the South Quad in front of the imposing main building it turns left and goes past some more school buildings; keep right and follow it down a slope.
37. At a three-way junction keep ahead and follow the drive as it curves to the right past a large pond, with an attractive house (Great Saucelands) on the far side. The drive bends left in front of the house and goes across a small wooded valley. Shortly before a fieldgate across the drive, **turn left** as indicated onto a woodland path.
38. At the end of this short path go over a stile and **turn right** (leaving the HWLT), climbing a grassy slope onto the dam wall of **Ardingly Reservoir** again. Veer right at the top and repeat your morning route through a copse, with another chance to visit the bird hide.
39. This time, ignore footpaths on the right after emerging from the copse and simply continue along the perimeter path for 1 km. At the end turn left onto a lane and follow it across the causeway separating two parts of the reservoir.

## I. The Causeway to Balcombe (village) (3½ km)

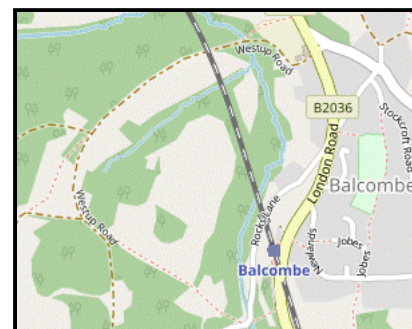
40. On the far side of the causeway **turn left** through a gate and follow another section of the perimeter path for 2 km, again with the reservoir on your left. The final section is through a wood where the path climbs gently and comes out onto Mill Lane.
41. Turn left and follow the lane downhill, then round to the left, again crossing a causeway. Shortly after the lane passes Balcombe Mill and curves to the right, **turn left** at a footpath sign to go up a long flight of steps (with a stone seat “for the enjoyment of walkers” along the way).
42. At the top go through a wooden kissing gate into a field and bear right towards a three-way signpost. Go through a gate here into a small wood, initially heading N. In 75m the bridleway turns left; later it narrows, curves back round to the right and emerges from the wood on Mill Lane again.
43. Turn left onto the lane and follow it round to the left (note the cautionary sign at the track leading to Woodward's Farm). 50m after this left turn, **go over a stile in the hedge on the right**. Go down across a field to find a gap in the trees on the far side. Cross a stream on a wooden footbridge and **turn left** to go up the side of a field.
44. In the top corner bear left and go through a gate onto a short path through trees to a cricket pitch. Turn right to go around the side of the playing area for 100m, then veer right through a gap in the hedge. Turn right onto a track and follow it gently uphill between hedges, in 200m going past a wooden fieldgate and round to the left.
45. In 75m turn half-left again, passing the **Balcombe Stores** and the **Half Moon Inn** (a possible refreshment stop) on your right. If you arrive before 4pm the suggested tea place is the **Balcombe Tea Rooms**: bear right at the road junction and go across Haywards Heath Road into Bramble Hill, where the tearoom is one of the first houses on the right.

## J. Balcombe (village) to the Station (1 • 2 • ½ km)

*The main route to Balcombe station in [46] is the same as the end of Walk 1–16. If you have plenty of time you could take the more scenic route in [47], an arc around the hill on the other side of the railway line. If you are in a hurry to catch a train, take the direct route in [48].*

### 46. Main route (1 km)

- a. Turn right out of the tearoom and go down Bramble Hill to its junction with the B2036. **Cross this busy road carefully** and continue on Rocks Lane, which goes downhill past a few cottages.
- b. The lane goes under the railway after 300m. In a further 300m, just before a track branches off to the left and the lane bends right, **turn left** at a footpath sign.





- c. Go up a flight of stone steps, across a strip of grass and then up more steps to return to the B2036 by the entrance to Balcombe station. Turn left and go through its small car park. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

#### 47. Scenic route (2 km)

- a. Make your way to the road junction in front of the Half Moon pub and turn into Haywards Heath Road, heading **NW**. At the end of a small green continue briefly along the B2036 for about 50m, then **cross this busy road carefully** onto a signposted footpath.
- b. Step over a low wooden fence to go down the left-hand side of a slope and continue downhill on a broad woodland path. At the bottom the path swings left and comes out onto a lane. Turn right and follow it across the railway.
- c. The lane continues between a field and a wood. In 400m ignore a footpath branching off to the right as the lane curves round to the left. In a further 250m **fork left** at a three-way junction onto an unsurfaced track. *The final part of this section is the same as the start of Walk 1–16, in reverse.*
- d. Soon after passing a shed **bear left** into a field, going over a stile to the right of a wooden fieldgate. Follow a grassy path heading **SE**, steadily downhill across several fields and crossing a few stiles along the way (and with a thinly-disguised phone mast away to your left).
- e. At the bottom go out through a new metal side gate and turn left briefly onto a lane. Just after a track branches off to the right and the lane bends left, **turn right** at a footpath sign.
- f. Go up a flight of stone steps, across a strip of grass and then up more steps to return to the B2036 by the entrance to Balcombe station. Turn left and go through its small car park. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

#### 48. Direct route (½ km)

Turn right out of the tearoom and go down Bramble Hill to its junction with the B2036. Turn left and go along the main road for 350m to come to the station entrance. Go down a few steps on the right and over the footbridge to Platform 1 for trains to London.

#### K. Street Lane to Highbrook *direct* (2¾ km)

49. Ignore the footpath and go all the way along Street Lane into the centre of the village. The **Ardingly Inn** is between the village bakery and the **Ardingly Café**, just before the junction with College Road and the B2028.
50. Take the short link road directly opposite the pub onto Ardingly's High Street (the B2028), heading **N**. In about 100m, opposite Holland House (#29), **turn right** into a short lane signposted to 28-60 High Street.
51. At the end go through an old kissing gate next to a fieldgate and take a faint grassy path across a field (slightly to the left), soon starting a long descent into a valley. Go over a stile in a belt of trees and continue down the right-hand edge of the next field. In the bottom corner go over another stile and follow the path between a wood and a garden fence.
52. At the start of an open area **fork right** at a three-way footpath signpost, then keep ahead at another signpost, ignoring a footpath off to the right. Go along the right-hand side of a grassy strip, gently downhill towards a wood. Go into these trees and across a stream, then uphill on a narrow path at the edge of the wood.
53. At the top of the wood go through an old gate and keep ahead along a broad grassy path, soon alongside a young hedge between wire fences. Follow the path as it turns half-left, going through a metal fieldgate and now with fences on both sides.
54. At the far end go through another fieldgate and continue past a modern barn on your left. Briefly join a tarmac driveway, then opposite a large new house **turn left** as indicated. Cross a ditch and go along the left-hand side of a field towards the spire of Highbrook church.
55. In the corner veer left to go over a partly-concealed stile into the corner of a grassy enclosure in front of a house. Go diagonally across it to the opposite corner and over another stile. Turn left and go out onto a minor road (Hammingden Lane) at a bend. Keep ahead through the hamlet of **Highbrook**, soon joining the other route from a footpath by stables on the left.  
*Continue the directions at §N.*

## L. Street Lane to Hook Lane (3¼ km)

56. **Turn left** off Street Lane into the short private road. At the end go through a wooden side gate and turn left onto a wide tarmac driveway, which you will be following around **Ardingly Showground**. The drive soon turns half-right to head **N**, with views across a valley on the left containing an arm of the reservoir (not visible).
57. In 500m turn half-right at a three-way footpath signpost to stay alongside the perimeter fence. In 200m ignore another footpath off to the right by an entrance to the showground. The main driveway soon turns half-right again and you follow it out via a wooden side gate to the B2028, directly opposite the **Gardeners Arms**.
58. Turn left out of the pub to head **S** on the B2028. In 250m you can move away from the main road by veering left into a long lay-by. Shortly after this rejoins the road **turn left** onto a signposted bridleway, going around a makeshift vehicle barrier onto a grassy path between hedges. Follow the path round to the left to head **N**, potentially becoming muddier as it gradually descends the wooded hillside.
59. In 500m there is an open field sloping down to the right and the path climbs gently. In 300m there is a wooden fence across the field and the path joins a track coming through a gap in the trees on the left. There is a faint grassy path down the small triangular field on the right, but a blue waymarker indicates that the right of way carries straight on.
60. To stay on the right of way you should keep ahead to a three-way footpath signpost and then **turn sharp right**, almost doubling back, but the path straight down the field is a tempting short cut. Either way, go into the trees at the bottom of the field to continue on a clear path sloping down the hillside, heading **SE** (and briefly back on another section of the HWLT).
61. At the bottom cross a stream on a wooden footbridge and follow the path up through the wood and out into a large field. Bear left and follow a broad grassy path heading **E**. At the top of the field go through a wide gap and continue along a farm track with a hedge on your left, which leads to a minor road (Hook Lane).

## M. Hook Lane to Highbrook (1¼ km)

62. Turn right and go along this narrow lane carefully for 250m, heading **S**. Where the lane bends right **fork left** onto a farm track, signposted as a public footpath. In 150m **fork left** off the HWLT at a three-way footpath signpost, towards Holly Farm.
63. After passing a house on the right do not simply follow the broad track ahead into a dip but **veer left** through a signposted gap in the hedge. Go over a stile and **turn right** to go down the field edge (directly towards Highbrook's church spire on the horizon, 750m away).
64. In the bottom corner of the field veer right and left to continue along the right-hand edge of another large field, underneath power lines. In the next corner go over a stile into a wood. Follow a potentially muddy path down a bank and cross a stream on a wooden footbridge into another sloping field.
65. Make your way steeply uphill to its top right-hand corner, more or less following the power lines. Go out through a fieldgate onto a farm track curving left past some rather dilapidated farm buildings, then stables. At the end go over a stile to the right of a double metal fieldgate and turn left onto a minor road (Hammingden Lane) heading **N** through the hamlet of **Highbrook**.

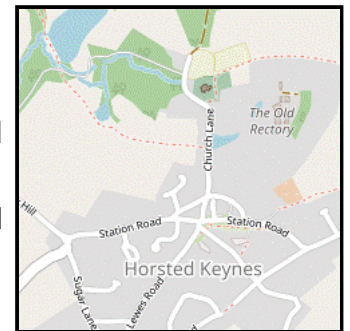
## N. Highbrook to Leamland Bridge (2 km)

66. In front of the lychgate for **All Saints**<sup>10</sup> church **turn right** onto a broad track, signposted as a footpath and immediately going past an unusual building on the right, **Highbrook Smokery**<sup>11</sup>. Keep left alongside the churchyard and continue between hedges for 300m, heading **E** with fine views ahead as you gently descend into a valley.
67. The track eventually opens out and you continue near the left-hand edge of two large fields, still downhill. At the bottom go through a metal fieldgate onto a path through a small wood, curving round to the right. After crossing a wooden footbridge over a stream go up earth steps and leave the wood over a stile. Follow a grassy path slightly to the left across a field, climbing steadily.

68. At the top go over a stile in the fence and keep ahead, skirting the corner of a horse training area on your left. Go over another stile in the trees on the far side to come out in front of a level crossing over the single-track **Bluebell Railway**<sup>12</sup>. Do not cross the track but **turn right** onto a footpath running along the railway embankment, with fine views on both sides.
69. In 500m you can see Leamland Bridge over the railway ahead, but you have to take a circuitous route to reach it: over a stile on the right and through a small plantation, round to the left along a short enclosed path and then up a track curving round to the right. At the top turn left to go over the bridge, with a view of **Horsted Keynes station**<sup>13</sup> off to the right.

## O. Leamland Bridge to Horsted Keynes (village) (2¼ km)

70. On the other side of the bridge veer right through a small parking area. Follow the track to the top of a sloping field used as a picnic area.
- At weekends the 270 bus calls at the station. If you want to cut the walk short (or take a closer look at the heritage railway), go down the slope and past the right-hand side of the visitors' car park onto a short access road leading to the station buildings. The bus stop is at the far end of the station approach road.
71. To finish in the village follow the track round to the left at the top of the slope. Go through a metal kissing gate onto an enclosed path heading **E** alongside Leamland Wood. At the end go down an earth bank and turn right onto a minor road. In 100m **go over a stile on the left** into a strip of grassland dotted with trees.
72. Follow a grassy path through this semi-open area and continue on a woodland path going downhill for 350m, ignoring ways off. At the bottom of the wood **turn right** at a three-way footpath signpost onto a grassy path. This curves gently to the left around **Mill Lake**<sup>14</sup> and comes to a path crossing.
- If you want to detour to St Giles church, turn left and follow the path past the picturesque Old Mill House and up through a wood to the village school and church. After visiting the church, go along Church Lane into the main part of the village and complete the directions at [74].
73. For the most direct route into the village, keep ahead on a signposted footpath and follow this narrow path through the trees, heading **SE** and ignoring ways off. In 150m you pass a pond on your left and continue on a fenced grassy path along the valley floor, between paddocks and a meadow. At the far end go out between houses and **turn right** onto Church Lane (away from the church, up on the left).
74. Follow the lane uphill, passing the imposing gates to the Old Rectory on the left. At a road junction the suggested route is to follow Church Lane round to the left to come out onto the long village green in **Horsted Keynes**<sup>15</sup> opposite the **Crown Inn**<sup>16</sup>, with the village stores off to the left.
- Alternatively, you can go straight ahead up the steep little path. If you want to go straight to the bus stop for Haywards Heath it is off to the right, but at the top you should veer left as indicated (to a safer crossing point) to reach it.
75. To complete the walk turn right (or left if leaving the Crown) and go along the green, passing the **Green Man** and the stop for buses to East Grinstead on the right. Buses for Haywards Heath leave from a stop just beyond the road junction at the western end of the green.



*At Haywards Heath alight at the **Perrymount Rd/Stn** stop, just past a roundabout and opposite a large Waitrose store. Cross Perrymount Road at the roundabout and go past the store (which has a café) on your left to reach the station entrance.*

## Walk Notes

- The **Sussex Ouse Valley Way** runs for 68 km, closely following the course of the River Ouse from its source in Lower Beeding to Seaford.
- The **Ouse Valley Railway** was a 'spoiler' operation by the **London, Brighton & South Coast Railway**, which wanted to keep rivals out of its territory. It would have linked the Brighton line to St Leonards (near Hastings) via Uckfield and Hailsham. Shortly after work began in 1866 the collapse of the bank financing its construction led to the project being abandoned.
- The **High Weald Landscape Trail** runs for 145 km across the length of the High Weald, mostly near its northern edge, from Horsham in West Sussex to Rye.



4. The **Ardingly branch** connected the Bluebell line with the Brighton main line at Haywards Heath. The intermediate station at Ardingly (2 km south of the village, on College Road) was popular with ramblers and often the destination for special trains. The short section from the Brighton line to its old goods yard is still used by freight trains.
5. The **Ouse Valley Viaduct** (seen to better effect on Walk #22) was opened in 1841 and carries the Brighton main line 450m across this wide valley, 29m above the river. Its 37 brick arches are topped with a stone balustrade and four classical pavilions, making it one of the most elegant railway structures in Britain.
6. The imposing **Balcombe Place** was built in 1865 and is now a care home. It was originally the home of Lord Denman, then the Headquarters of the Women's Land Army in WWII. The Jacobean **Stone Hall** was its dower-house (one set apart for a widow, usually on her late husband's estate).
7. The 198-acre **Ardingly Reservoir** is a popular venue for fishing and watersports such as sailing, canoeing and windsurfing.
8. **St Peter, Ardingly** dates from around 1330, with the tower added in the early 15<sup>th</sup>C. The village later developed around the main road to the east, leaving the church on the outskirts.
9. **Ardingly College** is a fee-paying independent school, catering for around 750 pupils from 2½ to 18. It was founded by Canon Nathaniel Woodward in Shoreham-by-Sea in 1858 and moved to these new buildings in 1870 (with an inaugural sermon from "Soapy Sam" Wilberforce). Now one of a group of Woodward Schools, it retains a strong Anglo-Catholic tradition.
10. **All Saints, Highbrook** was built in 1884, mainly using local sandstone. The tower contains a clock and **carillon** which plays tunes on the church bells at noon, 3pm and 6pm.
11. **Highbrook Smokery** was built around 1780 to preserve meat from pigs brought into the Weald to feed on acorns in autumn. The building was restored in 2009.
12. The **Bluebell Railway** began operating a steam railway between Sheffield Park and Horsted Keynes in 1960, just two years after British Rail closed the line from East Grinstead to Lewes. In 1994 it was extended north as far as Kingscote, and after a major project to clear a cutting of landfill waste the link to East Grinstead was eventually restored in 2013.
13. **Horsted Keynes Station** has been re-created as it was when part of the Southern Railway network in 1935. It is surprisingly large for a sleepy country station on a secondary line, some way from the village it was built to serve. There is a £2.50 admission charge for non-travellers when trains are running, rather more than the 1d platform ticket in 1935.
14. **Mill Lake** is one of a series of lakes created to supply water for the local mills. It is now a popular fishing pond.
15. The name **Horsted** means 'a place where horses are kept'. The Saxon manor was given to the Norman knight Ralf de Cahaignes by William the Conqueror. The anglicized version of his name changed over the centuries to **Keynes** but the pronunciation stayed as *canes*, not *keens*.
16. The **Crown Inn** was seriously damaged by fire after being struck by lightning in 2003, and was closed for six years.

» *Last updated: September 11, 2020*

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