



# Hollingbourne Circular walk

A choice of ridge walks on the North Downs followed by a circuit around the grounds of Leeds Castle



**Length** **Main Walk:** 15½ km (9.6 miles). Three hours 45 minutes walking time. For the whole excursion including trains, sights and meals, allow at least 8 hours.

**Extended Walk 1, via Thurnham:** 21½ km<sup>†</sup> (13.3 miles). Five hours 30 minutes walking time.

**Extended Walk 2, via Hucking:** 20 km<sup>†</sup> (12.4 miles). Four hours 50 minutes walking time.

**Long Walk, with both extensions:** 26 km<sup>†</sup> (16.1 miles). Six hours 40 minutes walking time.

<sup>†</sup> Subtract 5½ km (3.4 miles; 1 hour 25 minutes) if omitting the Leeds Castle circuit.

**OS Map** Explorer 148. Hollingbourne, map reference TQ833551, is in Kent, 8 km **E** of Maidstone.

**Toughness** 4 out of 10 (7 for Extended Walk 1, 5 for Extended Walk 2, 9 for the Long Walk).

**Features** For much of the train journey you can see the North Downs ridge off to your left and from the station you are soon striding across vast farm fields to meet the **North Downs Way** (NDW) at the foot of this open downland ①. The **Main Walk** swings back towards Hollingbourne at this point, climbing the ridge and continuing along the southern edge of the Woodland Trust's **Hucking Estate**, an unexpected oasis of grassland and woodland in a landscape dominated by arable farming ②. It then drops back down the hillside to Upper Street, one of the three settlements which make up **Hollingbourne** village.

The walk concludes with a contrasting section on the other side of the village. After going through the deceptively peaceful **Hollingbourne Meadows** you have to suffer the constant roar of motorway traffic, high-speed trains thundering past and a dreary stretch alongside the busy A20. This dismal link route is the price you pay for some stunning views of a famous castle as you traverse its grounds on public rights of way.

Modestly describing itself as “the Loveliest Castle in the World”, the moated setting of **Leeds Castle** is certainly spectacular. Built by a Norman knight in 1119, it became a royal residence for 300 years in the Middle Ages, then a private home in Tudor times. Its last private owner was an American heiress who undertook extensive renovations and left it to a charitable trust in 1974. If you want to visit the castle buildings or deviate from the public footpaths you would need to buy an entrance ticket for £35 (2024), although this is effectively an annual pass as it allows unlimited repeat visits for a year.

### Walk Options

At the two points marked above you could extend the outward leg with an extra circuit:

① **Extension 1** joins the NDW in the opposite direction for a 6 km circuit via the small village of **Thurnham**. This goes out across a succession of sunken lanes and hollows in the hillside, climbs to some medieval castle ruins above the village and returns via parkland, field edges and paddocks.

② **Extension 2** makes a longer exploration of the attractive Hucking Estate. This 4½ km circuit goes out along grassy rides and woodland paths to the tiny hamlet of **Hucking** and loops back along a wide open valley.

The unsatisfactory nature of the link route to and from Leeds Castle means that this final leg will not be to everybody's taste. If you have done one (or both) of these extensions you could choose to go directly to the station from Upper Street, but the suggested shorter ending takes a different route to and through Hollingbourne Meadows before heading back via Eyhorne Street.

### Additional Note

The Thurnham and Hucking extensions were previously published as separate walks (#221 & #253). After several tweaks there was so much overlap between them that they have been combined here into a single walk plus optional extensions.

### Transport

There is an hourly off-peak service from London Victoria to Hollingbourne (on the London–Maidstone–Ashford line), taking about 1 hour 15 minutes.

There is a regular bus service to Maidstone along the A20 (Stagecoach 10X, not Sun), but only an infrequent weekday service (Nu-Venture 13) from Hollingbourne church through Eyhorne Street.

If driving, there is a very small free car park at Hollingbourne station.

### Suggested Train

Take the train nearest to **10:00** from **Victoria** to **Hollingbourne**.

### Lunch

The suggested lunch pub on the **Main Walk** (after 7½ km) would normally be the **Dirty Habit** (01622-880880) in **Upper Street** (Hollingbourne).




However, this pub is being renovated after a serious fire in October 2022 and its scheduled reopening date (currently Autumn 2024) has been put back several times. The alternative is less convenient as it requires a short detour down the A20 before entering the Leeds Castle grounds. The **Park Gate Inn** (01622-880985) is a Vintage Inns pub which normally serves food all day and has a large (though not quiet) beer garden.

There are earlier pubs on both of the **Extended Walks**. After 6 km on Ext ① the **Black Horse** (01622-737185) in **Thurnham** has a patio garden at the back and serves a good selection of *à la carte* and regular pub meals. After 8 km on Ext ② the **Hook & Hatchet Inn** (01622-880272) in **Hucking** has a particularly attractive garden and serves "simple and delicious" home-cooked food all day.

**Tea** At the start of 2024 a new Community Interest Company opened the **Signal Box Café** at Hollingbourne station. It currently has limited opening hours (to 4pm on Tue/Wed/Fri & 2pm Sat) but they hope to extend these and also open a community shop.

About ten minutes before the station there are two pubs in **Eyhorne Street**. The **Windmill** (01622-889000) is an up-market pub/restaurant, while the **Sugar Loaves** (01622-880220) is a more traditional village pub. Both have back gardens away from the street.

There are several refreshment places inside the grounds of **Leeds Castle** but prominent notices state that walkers are not entitled to stray from the public footpaths. The staff are unlikely to object if you pause at one of the seasonal kiosks along the way, but you should ask for permission before attempting to visit the cafés or using the seating provided for castle visitors.

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**By Car** **Start** ME17 1TX

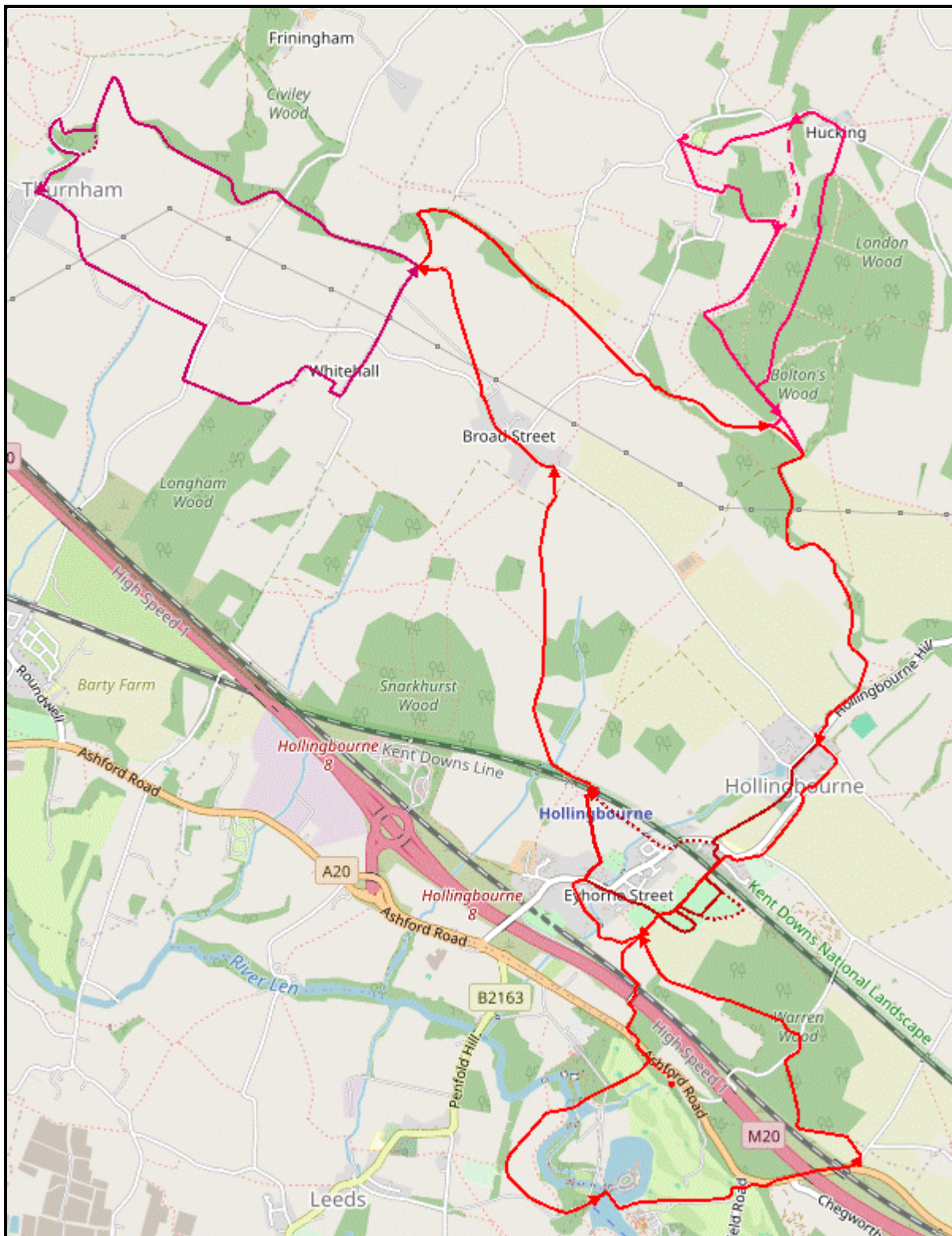
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**Version** May-24 [Sean](#)

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## Walk Directions

# Walk Map



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## Walk Options ( Main+ | Ext ① | Ext ② )

### M. Main Walk (15½ km)

- x. Extended Walk 1, via Thurnham (21½ km)
- xi. Extended Walk 1, omitting Leeds Castle (16 km)
- y. Extended Walk 2, via Huckling (20 km)
- yi. Extended Walk 2, omitting Leeds Castle (14½ km)

## z. Long Walk, with both extensions (26 km)

## zi. Long Walk, omitting Leeds Castle (20½ km)

# Walk Directions

## A. Hollingbourne Station to Broad Street (1¾ km)

1. Arriving from London on Platform 2, do not cross the footbridge to the main station exit but go through a gate by this bridge onto a new “public wayside path” going back alongside the tracks. Where this new path ends at a former crossing point (closed by Network Rail in 2019) continue in much the same direction along the field edge, ignoring another footpath across the field.  
*Be aware that the right of way across the farm fields in this section has not always been clearly marked out.*
2. In the field corner go through the tree boundary, crossing a ditch on a plank bridge and emerging into the bottom corner of a large irregularly-shaped field. Follow a faint path going diagonally up across it, heading **NNW** towards the left-hand end of the second clump of trees projecting into it, 250m away.
3. On reaching these trees bear right to head towards a couple of pine trees about 150m away, with the North Downs visible beyond. After going between (or skirting) them carry on alongside a wood. Halfway along ignore a footpath branching off to the left (not visible when last checked), but at the end of the wood bear slightly left across the field, aiming for the far corner of a wood 400m away and heading **N**.  
*Along the way you cross a field boundary and the visibility of the path might change (for better or worse).*
4. At the corner of the wood bear slightly right, aiming for the corner of a hedge 200m away. On reaching it bear right to go alongside it. Halfway along its length **turn left** through a gate in the hedge into a meadow. Turn half-right and follow a grassy path to another gate, which leads out onto a lane in the smallest part of **Hollingbourne**<sup>1</sup>, Broad Street.

## B. Broad Street to Coldharbour Lane (1¼ km)

5. Turn left and follow the lane (**Pilgrims Way**<sup>2</sup>) through the hamlet for 600m. **The turning off this lane is easy to miss.** After passing the last house ignore a double metal fieldgate on the right where the road bends left, but in a further 25m **turn right through a narrow gap in the hedge** (by a tree) into a large field.  
*A notice in this gap shows that the landowner has applied to divert the rights of way here to accommodate the layout of a new vineyard. The directions below attempt to follow the existing rights of way but the paths are no longer marked out.*
6. **Turn half-left** to head **NNW** across the field. In 125m the path goes under power lines at an oblique crossing with a horse track. You might find it easier to bear left onto this grassy track – it is the proposed new route – but the existing right of way carries on in the same direction across the field, climbing gently.
7. Your exit from this field is a gap on the left-hand field edge (with a path up the hillside directly behind it, the route of the Thurnham extension). The ‘correct’ route would be to go up to a stile on the far side of the field (where two rights of way cross) and only then turn left towards this point, but once you spot the exit it is tempting to veer left inside the field and head directly towards it.
8. At the field edge go up a low bank onto a fenced track (Coldharbour Lane). There is a waymarker post indicating that this is a byway, with a yellow arrow pointing back across the field to confirm the existing footpath.

*Unless you are doing Extension 1 (the Thurnham loop) **turn right** onto the byway and continue the directions at §E.*

### C. Coldharbour Lane to Thurnham (3 km)

9. For **Extension 1** go straight across the track and through the wooden gate ahead, joining the **North Downs Way**<sup>3</sup> (NDW). Follow the path up the hillside (Cat's Mount) and go through a small metal gate to continue up a flight of steps.
10. The path levels out and goes along the top of the wooded ridge for about 300m, then makes a long descent. At the bottom go past vehicle barriers and straight across a minor road (Coldblow Lane). Ignore a footpath off to the left to stay on the NDW, past another vehicle barrier.
11. After climbing gradually for 400m you come to a path junction and **fork left** with the NDW, down a long flight of steps and then along an undulating stretch. Eventually you go through a metal kissing gate to continue on a fenced path, with a field sloping up to the right and an open valley down to the left. In 200m the path drops down to cross the head of the valley.
12. Go through a metal kissing gate and follow a fenced grassy track back along the other side of the valley, still on the NDW and heading **S**. In 250m the path goes through another kissing gate into the corner of a wood, part of **White Horse Wood Country Park**<sup>4</sup>. Inside the wood there is a path on the right signposted to **Thurnham Castle**<sup>5</sup>.
  - The climb to the top of the hill is not the easiest and you could choose to bypass the (rather skimpy) castle ruins by simply continuing on the NDW for 150m to a lane (Castle Hill). If you take this short cut (saving 400m), resume the directions at [16].
13. For the full route **turn right** onto the signposted path, which goes up a long flight of steps. At the top of the steps continue through a squeeze gate, where - unless more steps have been added - you will have to scramble up a steep little path. If you then fork left at a Y-junction you will emerge onto the castle site by an information panel.
14. Go across a dip to another panel by the remaining section of castle wall. Bear right in front of the stonework and leave the site by the main visitor entrance, passing another information panel about the castle's history. A short path leads out to a lane (Castle Hill).
15. Unless you want to explore the main part of the country park (there is a pedestrian entrance opposite, just off to the right), **turn left** to go downhill on the lane. In 75m you pass another entrance next to the westward continuation of the NDW, with a fine view down to the countryside around Thurnham. After curving down to the left for a further 200m the lane turns sharply right at a hairpin bend, where the NDW emerges from the left.
16. Go downhill on the lane for 250m into the small village of **Thurnham**. At the crossroads with Pilgrims Way the **Black Horse** pub is ahead on your right.

### D. Thurnham to Coldharbour Lane (3 km)

17. Turn right out of the pub and keep ahead at the crossroads to head **E** on Pilgrims Way, taking care on this narrow sunken lane as there is no pavement. In 250m **turn right onto an easily-missed footpath**, going over a stile in the hedge. Turn half-left as indicated and follow a grassy path diagonally across a strip of parkland containing some fine trees.

18. On the far side go through a gate onto a short fenced path in front of a property, which leads out to a lane. Turn left onto the lane and in 250m continue past the buildings of Thurnham Keep Farm. Where the lane swings left, **keep ahead** on a fenced grassy path along the edge of a new vineyard. In the next corner the right of way continues round to the right, but if this looks overgrown you could nip through a gap in the hedge and walk along Water Lane instead.  
*The right of way used to go straight ahead through the Equestrian Centre opposite (Cobham Manor Livery) but has been diverted to bypass it on a more southerly route.*
19. If you have stayed inside the field, another narrow gap in the hedge after 300m gets you down to the road via a few steps. Cross Water Lane and go through a metal gate onto the signposted footpath opposite, parallel to a driveway and heading **ESE**. Follow a mown path along the right-hand edge of several meadows and paddocks for 300m, passing through gates along the way.
20. Eventually you go through a belt of trees into the corner of a large field divided into more paddocks. **Turn half-left** as indicated to cut across the field, heading **ENE**; you might have to negotiate some temporary fences along the way. Near the midpoint of the far side, a waymarker post directs you through a fence onto a narrow path going gently uphill through a belt of trees.
21. When level with the top of the field the path veers right and continues as a potentially overgrown tree-lined path; you are now back on the original footpath route. In 175m the path zig-zags right and left to skirt around an orchard and comes out onto a lane (Whitehall Road). Turn left and follow it past some disused farm buildings to a T-junction with Pilgrims Way.
22. Turn left briefly onto this road and almost immediately **veer right** onto a byway (Coldharbour Lane again), climbing gently towards the North Downs. At the end of the trees on your right you might recognise the large field as the one you crossed in §B. Keep ahead at the path crossing below Cat's Mount, rejoining the NDW but now in the opposite direction.

### E. Coldharbour Lane to Bolton's Wood (2½ km)

23. Follow the byway as it curves round to the left along the side of a hollow, then swings sharply round to the right to climb the other side. At the top of this straight section **fork right** off the byway where it turns left, as indicated by a NDW waymarker.
24. Follow this gently undulating woodland path for 600m, ignoring footpaths off to both sides halfway along. At the end of the trees go through a metal gate onto open downland above the hamlet of Broad Street. Keep ahead on a well-trodden grassy path for a further 600m to a tree boundary in front of a lane.  
*The OS map shows the NDW deviating from this path (at first below and then above it, presumably conforming to ancient field boundaries), but in practice most walkers take the suggested direct route.*
25. At the tree boundary veer left up to the top corner of the downland. Go over a stile and turn right to cross a sunken lane (Broad Street Hill) via a few steps on each side. Continue briefly along the NDW to reach a prominent three-way signpost and **turn left** onto the signposted **North Downs Way Link**, entering the **Hucking Estate**<sup>6</sup>.
26. In front of a Woodland Trust information panel turn right onto a horse ride, parallel to the NDW. In 75m go through a metal kissing gate on the left and continue across open grassland dotted with gorse bushes, staying near its right-hand edge.
27. In 300m you come to a life-size wooden sculpture of **The Shepherd**<sup>7</sup>, gazing out over the Weald at a fine **viewpoint**; there is an information panel about it a little further on. Bear slightly left across the grassland, which narrows where it goes between Bolton's Wood (on the left) and Forestall Wood.

*Unless you are doing Extension 2 (the Hucking loop) **bear right** to continue on the NDW Link to the end of the grassland, and continue the directions at §I.*

## F. Bolton's Wood to Hucking Bank (1¾ km)

28. For **Extension 2** **bear left** to go alongside a wire fence in front of Bolton's Wood. In the corner of the grassland **turn left** through a metal kissing gate in the fence.  
*Part of the walk route follows the Hucking Estate's "Landscape Trail", but at the time of writing the Woodland Trust have only waymarked it in the reverse direction (so you might see green arrows on the back of their low marker posts).*
29. Follow a grassy path into Bolton's Wood. In 200m **turn right** at a path junction, staying on the Landscape Trail. Where the path swings right and comes out into a more open area, **take the left-hand** of two broad grassy rides, heading **NNE**.
30. In 350m you come to a path crossing with the second wooden sculpture, **The Living Log**<sup>7</sup>. Go straight ahead at this junction, into Smokes Wood. In a further 350m keep ahead again at the next path crossing (with a small tree in the centre), into Stubs Wood.
31. The woodland path swings left and right through a dip, then straightens out. It eventually bends right and you go out past a wooden barrier to leave the wood. **Turn left** (leaving the Landscape Trail) and follow a broad grassy track towards **Hucking** church, with a meadow and then a **Community Orchard** on the left (which you could wander around).
32. At the end of the track turn left onto a lane (Church Road), where **St Margaret's** church<sup>8</sup> is worth a quick visit, if open. Go along Church Road for 200m, with glimpses of the Isle of Grain 16 km away to the right. Shortly after the lane bends left and starts to descend, **fork left** onto a track going back into the Hucking Estate, through a wooden gate into the top corner of a valley.



## G. Hucking Bank to Hucking Valley (1½ • ½ km)

*The main route loops around the north-western corner of the estate where there is a pub (and the third wooden sculpture), but if you are not stopping at this pub you could take the short cut in [34].*

### 33. Main route (1½ km)

- Go straight ahead across the valley floor and up the other side, aiming for the right-hand end of the wood on the far side. Go around the right-hand side of these trees and along a broad strip of grassland, curving round to the left. At the end go through a gate on the left into the corner of a grassy plateau.
- Turn right** and make your way across the grassland towards the right-hand corner; slightly away from the edge there is another wooden sculpture, **The Tranchet Axe**<sup>7</sup>. To visit the pub go out through a gate in the corner and turn right onto a lane for the **Hook & Hatchet Inn**.
- To resume the walk, return to the plateau and go diagonally across it to the opposite corner. Ignore a gate leading out to a lane and go through another gate to its left. Continue on a potentially muddy path between a wood and a hedge, parallel to the lane on the right.
- Ignore another exit to the lane and stay on the woodland path, which zig-zags left and right. Soon after this second turning it goes down a short flight of wooden steps to a T-junction. **Turn right** and follow the path as it winds its way through Calves Wood, gradually turning more to the left.



- e. After a long straight stretch **keep right** to go downhill on a narrow path alongside a belt of trees. At the bottom go through a gate into a gap between two open valleys, where the short cut rejoins from the left.

### 34. Short cut (½ km)

**Turn left** and go along the side of the grassy bank, gradually dropping down towards the valley floor. The valley curves gently to the right and leads you towards a wide gap in the trees with a double fieldgate, where the main route rejoins from a path on the right.

## H. Hucking Valley to Bolton's Wood (1¼ km)

35. If the double fieldgate in the gap is unlocked the suggested route is to go through it and walk along the grassland in the centre of the valley, but you could also take the enclosed path on the left-hand side of the valley floor (which is a right of way and also part of the Landscape Trail).
- If you take the enclosed path you should go through a side gate into the grassland after 300m, as indicated by a waymarker for the Landscape Trail.
36. Either way, continue along the valley floor for a further 300m, gradually curving to the right and coming to the final wooden sculpture of **The Wild Boar Family**<sup>7</sup> in front of a fence. **Turn left** at the sculpture and go towards a gate in the corner of the valley, under a large tree.
37. Go through the gate and keep ahead on a long grassy path through Bolton's Wood, heading **SE**. Ignore side paths, including the one on the left you took at the start of this circuit. At the end of the wood go through a kissing gate and keep ahead across the open grassland.

## I. Bolton's Wood to Upper Street (2 km)

38. At the far end of the grassland leave the Hucking Estate through a wooden side gate. Turn right onto a potentially muddy byway and follow it for 125m to a NDW Link signpost and Woodland Trust information panel.
39. **Turn left** off the byway, going through a wooden gate and rejoining the main NDW. Follow a winding grassy path through a lightly wooded area, heading roughly **SE**. In 200m the path passes under power lines and later emerges onto open downland.  
*You might just be able to make out Leeds Castle, nestling in the trees 3 km ahead.*
40. Follow the NDW round to the left as indicated. In front of you there is a large wooded depression (Eden's Hole) and the NDW has to swing left to get around it, with a stretch along a fenced grassy track beside a huge farm field. The track eventually swings right to re-emerge onto the downs.
41. The NDW now descends gently for 250m; a potentially awkward little stretch through a copse can be bypassed by a well-trodden alternative path skirting around it to the right. The NDW then goes through a gate and levels off, curving round to the left. In 200m **turn right** at a footpath marker post onto a grassy path sloping down the hillside and continue through a copse at the bottom.
42. Go through a side gate beside a wooden fieldgate and then along the left-hand edge of a field, with a sunken lane (Hollingbourne Hill) down to your left. In 200m veer left as indicated to continue on a short narrow path above the lane. After joining the lane you soon come to a crossroads with Pilgrims Way, with the **Dirty Habit** pub at the top of Upper Street in the main part of **Hollingbourne**<sup>1</sup>.  
*If you are not doing the Castle loop, complete the directions at §O.*

## J. Upper Street to Hollingbourne Meadows (1½ km)

43. From the crossroads take the narrow lane heading **SE**, passing the pub's patio garden and main car park on your right. In 125m, at the end of the houses, **turn right** onto a fenced path to the left of a driveway, signposted as a footpath and leaving the NDW.
44. After passing some gardens the path zig-zags right and left and comes out onto a driveway, bringing you back to the road at a sharp bend. Instead of joining the road **veer left** onto a signposted footpath into the wide belt of trees alongside the road.
45. Go all the way along this path, about 300m. At the far end cross Greenway Court Road onto the roadside path opposite. After passing a school playground continue along the pavement of Eyhorne Street as it goes round a right-hand bend.
46. In 50m **turn left** into an easily-missed alleyway on the left, with a yellow footpath marker. Go straight across Culpeper Close onto a broad track, past a metal fieldgate and under a railway bridge into **Hollingbourne Meadows**<sup>11</sup>.

*These meadows are open access and walkers are encouraged to explore them, so there is no need to follow these directions exactly. Be aware that the layout of the mown paths and other features described might change in future.*



47. For a direct route, keep ahead along a broad grassy avenue lined with memorial trees, passing a grazing enclosure (Godfrey Field) on your right. At the end of the avenue go straight over the perimeter path and through a gap in a hedge.
48. Cross a ditch into a smaller second meadow and fork right onto a mown path curving round to its top right-hand corner. Do not go through the gap ahead into another meadow but **turn left** to go up the edge of a large field, with a hedge on your right.
49. At the top of the slope go through a gap into the corner of another small meadow with two mown paths ahead, with the full walk continuing along the left-hand path.  
*If you have changed your mind about doing the Castle loop, take the right-hand path across the meadow and complete the directions at §N.*

## K. Hollingbourne Meadows to the Great Water (2 km)

50. For the full walk take the left-hand path and continue along a broad grassy track between a fence and a hedge, ignoring a small metal gate with a yellow footpath marker on the left (the return route from Leeds Castle). Where the grassy track swings round to the right **keep ahead** on a narrow enclosed path, also with a yellow waymarker.
51. At the end of this short but potentially overgrown path go over a stile and follow a faint grassy path near the left-hand edge of a small field. In the top corner go over another stile to continue along the top of a field, with the high-speed railway (HS1) behind a hedge on your right.
52. Near the end of the field **go over a stile on the right** to cross both HS1 and the M20 motorway on footbridges. Follow the path through a small wood to the A20 and **turn left** onto the tarmac path running alongside it.
53. When you have a clear view in both directions in the next 175m **cross this busy main road with great care**. Continue along the grass verge to a signposted footpath into woodland, which is the continuation of the walk.
  - If you want to visit the **Park Gate Inn** carry on along the main road for a further 125m to the pub. Return the same way and turn left into the castle grounds.

*You should take care to follow these directions through the castle grounds, which are on rights of way. Leeds Castle Foundation charges for entry and you are not entitled to stray from the public footpaths.*

54. Go through an old gate onto a short woodland path leading to a golf course, where the right of way continues across two fairways. After emerging from the trees you should **ring the bell** to alert golfers playing from over the brow of the hill on the right.
55. After crossing the second fairway keep ahead through a copse. Continue across an estate road and go down a slope between rhododendrons to a tarmac path. *The main visitor entrance is 250m to the right along this tarmac path (signposted "Exit"). It is not a right of way but the staff could hardly object if you used it in order to buy an entry ticket to the castle.*



56. To continue the walk keep ahead alongside **Cedar Pond**, with a fine view of the castle beyond it. At the next path junction bear left past a large cedar tree and go through a kissing gate into parkland.
57. Bear right up a broad grassy path which passes to the right of a clump of trees, then curves left to head **SW** alongside a low fence. At the end of the fence keep left, with a line of trees on your right.
58. On the brow of the hill **bear left** to go downhill on another broad grassy path, heading **SE**. Shortly before this merges with a driveway coming in from the right, **fork left** to stay on the grassy path.
59. At the far end go up a short slope and out past a wooden gate onto the driveway. Bear left and follow it downhill to the **Great Water**, with a seasonal kiosk (the **Whistle Stop Café**) at the lakeside.

#### L. The Great Water to Greenway Court Road (1½ km)

60. Go alongside the lake towards the **Gatehouse**, then round to the right between the lake and the moated castle. At the entrance to the Restaurant and other attractions **turn left** to stay alongside the moat, with increasingly fine views of the **Maiden's Tower** and other castle buildings.
61. Keep ahead past a "No Entry" sign onto the golf course (this is still a right of way), with an estate road on your right. Take care as you cross a golf fairway and continue on a broad tree-lined avenue. Just before a vehicle barrier at the edge of the grounds, **veer left** onto a path into the trees.
62. Follow this path past a golf green and up steps on the right to a lane (Broomfield Road), leaving the castle grounds. You will soon have to endure a fairly long stretch alongside the A20, but a footpath opposite might cut off a small part: cross the lane carefully and - if it is not too overgrown - follow this short path round the back of a golf tee and down the bank to the main road.
63. When you have a clear view in both directions **cross the A20 with great care** and turn right onto the tarmac path running alongside it. Continue alongside the busy road for 500m, passing under the M20 and HS1, then **turn left** to go a short distance along Greenway Court Road.

#### M. Greenway Court Road to Hollingbourne Meadows (2 km)

64. At the end of the pavement **turn left** again onto a footpath across a field, heading **NW** towards Warren Wood. At the trees bear left to continue along the field edge, with the wood on your right. At the end of the field go into the trees and follow a potentially muddy woodland path for 350m.

65. As you approach a lane there are signs of a new development and the onward route might not be clear, but make your way out to the lane (Hospital Road) and **turn right** onto it. You pass an isolated house on the left, then in 50m **turn left** onto a signposted footpath.
66. Once again you follow a clear woodland path for about 400m. After turning half-right and then back to the left this heads **W** in a fairly straight line. The path eventually leaves the wood past an old stile and you continue in the same direction along a field edge, at first with the wood on your right and later a tall hedge.
67. In the field corner keep ahead past a copse on the left to continue on a narrow fenced path beside a paddock. At the end go through the small metal gate you passed earlier. Cross over your outward route in **Hollingbourne Meadows**, then almost immediately **turn left** at a path crossing to head **SW** on a mown path near the edge of the meadow.

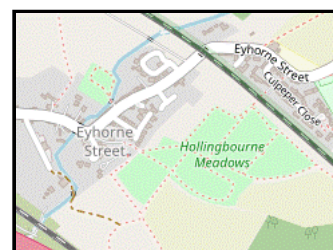
#### N. Hollingbourne Meadows to Hollingbourne Station (1 km)

68. Follow the mown path out through a wide gap in the hedge and turn right onto a farm track. This goes down a slope and swings right and left, crossing a stream. Go through a gate and follow the track to the right of some farm buildings. Keep right to continue on a driveway, soon passing the Village Hall and then a pub car park on the right.
69. The two refreshment places in Eyhorne Street are on the village street ahead, but you can access both of them from this car park. The beer garden for the **Windmill** pub/restaurant is straight ahead, and off to the right a sign for the **Sugar Loaves** pub leads to steps down into its car park.
70. To complete the walk take the signposted footpath on the north side of the main village street, between its two pubs (nearer the Sugar Loaves). Keep right to continue on an enclosed path to the right of Magnolia House. At the end go over a stile into the corner of a field and **turn half-left**.
71. In 75m go through a narrow gap in the tree boundary and **turn half-right**, climbing gently across a larger field and passing to the right of an isolated tree. At the top go over an awkward stile, across a farm track and through a gate onto a pathway leading down to the station, with its **Signal Box Café**. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

#### O. Upper Street to Hollingbourne Station (2½ km)

72. From the crossroads go down Upper Street, passing several fine old houses including **Hollingbourne Manor**<sup>9</sup> on the right at the bottom. Follow the street round to the left and turn right into Church Lane.
73. At the end of this short street go through its lychgate into the churchyard of **All Saints**<sup>10</sup>, which is worth a visit. Follow the surfaced path through the churchyard and across a field to come to Eyhorne Street by Hollingbourne Primary School.
  - Hollingbourne station is 600m away. If you want to go there directly, turn right onto the road. After passing under the railway bridge turn right again into the long station approach road.
74. To continue on the walk route, turn left onto Eyhorne Street, then **turn right** into Culpeper Close. Follow this street round to the left and in 50m **turn right** again onto a broad track. Go past a metal fieldgate and under a railway bridge into **Hollingbourne Meadows**<sup>11</sup>.

*These meadows are open access and walkers are encouraged to explore them, so there is no need to follow these directions exactly. Be aware that the layout of the mown paths and other features described might change in future.*



75. For the suggested route through the first meadow, **turn left** onto a mown path parallel to the railway line. In 100m **turn right** to go down the central avenue, lined with memorial trees. Turn right again at the far end to go back along the other side of the meadow. In 100m **turn left** through a gap in the hedge and cross a ditch into a smaller second meadow.
- For a shorter route you could simply go straight ahead on entering the meadow. After going along a broad grassy avenue (also lined with memorial trees) keep ahead into the second meadow.
  - For a longer route you could go all the way around the perimeter of the first meadow, ignoring the central avenue.
76. For the suggested route through the second meadow, **fork left** to go all the way around its perimeter to the top right-hand corner.
- For a shorter route you could fork right on entering the meadow to go directly to this corner.
77. Go straight ahead through a gap in the hedge to continue along the left-hand side of a third meadow. In the corner you join a public footpath coming in from the right and skirt around a gate to leave Hollingbourne Meadows. In 60m keep ahead where a driveway comes in from a large house off to the left. This leads out to a road (Eyhorne Street) at its junction with Hasteds.
78. Continue in the same direction on Eyhorne Street, soon crossing a stream and going through another part of **Hollingbourne**<sup>1</sup>. There are two refreshment places on the left-hand side in the next 150m, the **Sugar Loaves** pub followed by the **Windmill** pub/restaurant.
79. To complete the walk take the signposted footpath on the north side of the main village street, between its two pubs (nearer the Sugar Loaves). Keep right to continue on an enclosed path to the right of Magnolia House. At the end go over a stile into the corner of a field and **turn half-left**.
80. In 75m go through a narrow gap in the tree boundary and **turn half-right**, climbing gently across a larger field and passing to the right of an isolated tree. At the top go over an awkward stile, across a farm track and through a gate onto a pathway leading down to the station, with its **Signal Box Café**. Platform 1 on the near side is for trains to London.

## Walk Notes

1. **Hollingbourne** is made up of three settlements, with the main part (around the church) being called **Upper Street** to distinguish it from **Eyhorne Street** (near the station) and **Broad Street** (on Pilgrims Way). The village is a conservation area and contains many historic properties.
2. **Pilgrims Way** is a 192 km route between Winchester and Canterbury, although there is no real evidence that it was used by medieval pilgrims to the shrine of Thomas Becket. The name was added to OS maps by a 19<sup>th</sup>C surveyor after the legend was embellished by Hilaire Belloc and other writers. Much of the route actually follows an ancient trackway on the southern slopes of the North Downs, linking the narrowest part of the English Channel to the sacred sites of Stonehenge and Avebury.
3. The **North Downs Way** runs for 246 km along the length of the North Downs (with two sections at its eastern end), from Farnham in Surrey to Dover in Kent.
4. **White Horse Wood Country Park** was established by Kent County Council as a Millennium site in 2000.
5. **Thurnham Castle** is a typical motte and bailey castle dating from the 12<sup>th</sup>C. The large motte (artificial mound) is still visible but the only remaining stonework is on one side of the bailey (courtyard) wall.

6. The **Hucking Estate** was bought by the Woodland Trust in 1997. They have gradually been reversing the changes to the landscape brought about by modern farming practices, restoring large areas of woodland and chalk grassland.
7. **The Shepherd, The Living Log, The Tranchet Axe** and **The Wild Boar Family** were designed and carved in 2012 by two local artists, Nick Speakman and Rob Dyer. They were commissioned by the Woodland Trust to illustrate the Hucking Estate's habitat and heritage.
8. **St Margaret, Hucking** dates from the 12<sup>th</sup>C, but it was substantially rebuilt in 1878 and there are few traces of the medieval church.
9. **Hollingbourne Manor** is an Elizabethan manor house dating from the late 16<sup>th</sup>C.
10. **All Saints, Hollingbourne** dates from the 14<sup>th</sup>C, with several later extensions. It contains numerous monuments to the Culpeper family (at one time owners of Leeds Castle and Hollingbourne Manor), notably a fine marble sculpture (1638) by Edward Marshall in the **Culpeper Chapel** of Lady Elizabeth on her tomb chest; the mythological creature at her feet is a **theow**, her maternal family's heraldic beast.
11. **Hollingbourne Meadows** were bought by a local trust in 2004 to protect the village from "inappropriate or insensitive use". A large area to the east of Eyhorne Street is managed as a wildlife haven with broad grassy paths to encourage use by walkers.

» *Last updated: May 28, 2024*

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