

Last checked			
24 June 2017			
	Document last updated: 14 May 2018		
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Pulborough to Amberley

Length: 16.5km (10.2 miles)

Toughness: 5 out of 10: generally flat, but one big climb near the end.

Maps: Landranger map 197, Explorer map OL10 (formerly 121)

Features

Though it traverses similar territory and has the same South Downs finish, this walk has a quite different atmosphere to its sister walk Billingshurst to Amberley, also on this website. It first passes through the surprisingly quaint historic centre of Pulborough, tucked away on the edge of the modern village, and then climbs into a delightful area of gentle hills, which afford magnificent views of the downs to the south and the plains to the north.

After lunch in Nutbourne or Marehill, the route takes you along the edge of Pulborough Brooks, an unspoilt marshland area which is now an RSPB nature reserve. The RSPB visitor centre provides a possible tea stop. There is then a three kilometre section on a quiet road that at first passes through woodland, and then the hamlet of Rackham. By now the South Downs loom magnificently ahead, and you climb up onto them by a steep path (different from the one used for the Billingshurst to Amberley walk, incidentally) for a bravura finish with magnificent views of the Arun valley.

Walk options

There is a sister walk to this one on this website – **Billingshurst to Amberley** - which shares the same lunch stop and a small centre section, and has the same finish over the downs to Amberley. It is thus possible to do the morning of one and the afternoon of the other. The morning of the Billingshurst to Amberley walk is **9.3km (5.8 miles)** versus 5.4km (3.4 miles) for this walk, and its afternoon is **13.5km (8.4 miles)** versus 11.1km (6.8 miles) for this walk, taking in 2km more of the South Downs ridge than this walk.

You could also switch at the RSPB Pulborough Brooks Reserve Visitor Centre (paragraph 67 of this walk) to the **Pulborough Circular** walk on this website. Sections 11 and 12 of that walk describe a 4km (2.5 mile) walk back to Pulborough across the marshland of the Wild Brooks, making a total circular walk of **13.2km (8.2 miles)**.

Transport

Pulborough and Amberley are both on the Horsham-Littlehampton line, served by trains out of Victoria. Catch the nearest train to **10.10am** from Victoria. Buy a **day return to Amberley**. Note that the last train back from Amberley is at around 9.20pm, though after this there are options via Arundel.

Lunch and tea

Rising Sun, Nutbourne (01798 812191), 5.4km (3.4 miles) into the walk, is the recommended lunchtime pub. It serves food daily from 12pm to 2pm Monday to Saturday and 12pm to 3pm Sunday, and has an interesting menu with generally good portion sizes. It has both a cosy interior and a charming garden.

The White Horse, Marehill, (01798 872189), is a possible alternative lunch stop 1.4km (0.9 miles) beyond the Rising Sun. It is open all afternoon daily and as far as I am aware serves food all afternoon as well (but check). Though in a less romantic location than the Rising Sun (it is on a main road), it has a smart interior and a large garden at the rear, and has received good reports from walkers.

RSPB Visitors Centre, Pulborough Brooks, 9.2km (5.7 miles) into the walk, has a self-service tea room, with both inside seating and outside tables with a fine view over the flatlands of the Wild Brooks. It is open 10am to 4.30pm daily and also does light lunches from 12pm to 2.30pm. This is a possible late lunch or early tea stop

The **Riverside Tea Rooms** (07765 790 414) www.riversidetearooms.co.uk by Amberley station provide a charming riverside location for tea if you can get there before they close at 5pm daily.

An alternative tea room, slightly off the walk route (directions provided), and staying open till 5.30pm daily, is the friendly **Amberley Village Tea Room** (01798 839196) www.amberleyvillagetearoom.co.uk.

Otherwise, the friendly and atmospheric **Bridge Inn** (01798 831 619) across the road from the Riverside Tea Rooms and directly adjacent to Amberley station (though on the opposite side of the tracks from the station entrance: you have to go under the road bridge to find it) serves tea and coffee until at least 10.30pm, and meals from 6pm.

WALK DIRECTIONS

Pulborough station to Nutbourne (5.4km/3.4 miles)

1. Leave the station building and in 20 metres turn left along the right-hand edge of the car park, following a line of trees to your right.
2. In 20 metres, just past a bicycle shed on the right, veer right up a signposted footpath on the far side of a link fence, with a road parallel to your right.
3. In 100 metres, where the road veers right to an industrial estate, keep straight on up this path, now with vegetation to your right and the railway line to your left.
4. In 100 metres there is an open field to your right. In another 150 metres you come to a road, with a railway bridge to your left: here turn right into the old village centre of Pulborough.
5. In 250 metres, just after you pass the church to your right, cross the busy main road, the A29, and go straight ahead up Old Rectory Lane, passing the Chequers Hotel and Restaurant on your left.
6. In 40 metres, you get the first of many fine views of the South Downs to your right: later the walk will finish along the ridge you can see. Ignore a "PRIVATE ROAD" sign at this point, and keep straight on along the tarmac lane: this is a right of way.
7. In another 80 metres, ignore a signposted public footpath sign to the right, but note an interesting panel here about the history of Pulborough.
8. In a further 100 metres, where the road ends by a house called Dormers, keep straight on up a gravel pathway.
9. In 70 metres a tarmac drive from a house joins from the right: keep straight

on, along what is now a car-wide gravel driveway. 30 metres further on, **turn left up a tarmac path**, with a fenced garden to the right and Pulborough Bowling Club to the left.

10. In 70 metres you come out onto a sports ground, with a clubhouse and car park to your left. Veer right diagonally across the sports ground, heading for its far right-hand corner, and passing just to the left of some cricket nets, your direction 60 degrees.
11. In 250 metres, as you approach the far corner, you will see that there is a school just beyond it: aim to the right of this (ie about 50 metres to the right of the corner): here cross the road running along the far edge of the sports ground and go up a side road, Link Lane.
12. In 170 metres, just as a green space ends to your right, and opposite a road called Spinney North to your right, turn left up a gap between houses.
13. In 70 metres the tarmac lane ends at a fieldgate. The onward route is to pass around the fieldgate and carry on up a path between trees/bushes: but in summer this can be overgrown with nettles. At such times you can keep to the tarmac path that runs just to the right of the bushes, with houses to the right. But in 120 metres, where this tarmac path turns hard right alongside a wire fence, veer left to return to the path between bushes, now a bridleway under trees, heading gently uphill.
14. In 220 metres (if you followed the path from the gate) or 100 metres (if you veered onto the bridleway from the tarmac path) pass through a fieldgate and keep straight on, ignoring a signposted bridleway to the left.
15. In another 70 metres merge with two car-wide gravel tracks and keep on uphill, with plant nurseries to your right.
16. In 60 metres more, just past the last of the nurseries, turn right at a track T-junction marked by a three-armed footpath sign.
17. In 200 metres, where the track curves left, keep straight on up an earth path between fences, with more plant nurseries to your right and an open field to your left.
18. In 150 metres pass through a wooden gate, and keep straight on, still between fences, with open fields to left and right. There is an improving view of the South Downs to the right as you climb up this section.
19. In 200 metres you come to a road: cross this and carry on up a car-wide bridleway.
20. In 300 metres, you come to a tarmac drive in front of a house: turn left onto this and follow the green fence as it curves round to the right and then to the left. The tarmac drive becomes concrete and goes slightly downhill.
21. In 60 metres, just before the track turns left over a cattle grid, go through a metal gate to the right of the cattle grid and keep straight on along the field edge.
22. In 20 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign, veer right, and in 15 metres more cross a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate (currently missing), and go through a gap (a gate here is also missing) into a field. Veer right, gently uphill along the field edge.
23. In 130 metres, at the top of the field, go right across a stile (there are good views both south and north from this stile) and then veer left across a field corner to cross another stile to the left of a metal fieldgate in 15 metres. Keep on up the left-hand edge of this field.
24. In 220 metres, where a line of scrub ends, turn left through a metal fieldgate, and then go diagonally across the next field, aiming for a point about 100 metres to the left of a telecoms mast you see on the hill ahead, your direction 40 degrees.
25. In 100 metres, as you come over the crest of the hill, you can see a footpath sign ahead, 20 metres to the right of a tree hidden in the fold of the hill.
26. It is not until you come right up to this sign, 120 metres later, that you see the stile next to it. Cross this and follow a fence up across the next field.
27. In 200 metres, in the far corner of the field, cross a stile to the left of double metal fieldgates and descend the bank to a tarmac road.
28. Cross the road, and go straight on up the gravel driveway of Redfold Farm, a public footpath, though not signposted as such currently.
29. In 160 metres veer right off the driveway to cross a stile to the right of a wooden fieldgate and carry on downhill on a car-wide shelf. Your ultimate

destination is a gate 200 metres away at the bottom edge of this field, which is hidden by bushes initially.

30. Pass through this gate, cross a stile 10 metres beyond it, and keep straight on uphill, your direction south.
31. In 100 metres, at the top of the hill, cross another stile. Cross a concrete farm road, and go along the top of a parking area to pick up your former direction (190 degrees) on a path with a hedge to the right and a fenced-off field to the left.
32. In 100 metres the field fence ends, and you carry on through a relatively open area, contouring the hill.
33. In 200 metres you pass a two-armed footpath sign and keep on into a more thickly wooded area. In another 60 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign, keep straight on, ignoring a path downhill to the left, to skirt in 10 metres round to the right of a plantation of new trees. Keep on along its right-hand edge on a broad path, with a wire fence to the left.
34. In 200 metres cross a stile and keep straight on downhill across a field.
35. In another 250 metres cross a stile and keep on down the right-hand side of the next field.
36. In 100 metres follow the path as it descends into a little gully, and in 40 metres pass through a kissing gate to the left of a wooden fieldgate and curve left downhill on a sunken track.
37. In 150 metres merge with a tarmac driveway, and in another 40 metres, at a T-junction go right. In 40 metres, at another T-junction, turn left downhill into the village of **Nutbourne**. The recommended lunchtime pub, the **Rising Sun**, is 100 metres further down the hill on the right.

Nutbourne to Marehill **(1.4km/0.9 miles)**

38. Coming out of the pub, turn right (or keep straight on past it if you are not stopping).
39. In 70 metres ignore a footpath to the left, but in another 70 metres, 10 metres after a red phone box to the right, go right through a wooden gate to the left of a driveway with a double wooden fieldgate, with a light brown brick and stone house to the left and a darker red one set back a bit to the right.
40. Pass between wooden fences to cross a stile in 40 metres. Here ignore tracks straight ahead and to the left, and instead veer right towards farm buildings.
41. In 40 metres carry on through the concrete farmyard, with farm buildings to your right.
42. In 70 metres pass through a metal gate to the left of a double metal fieldgate, and continue up an earth track across a field.
43. In 70 metres veer right along the field edge towards a three-armed footpath sign 30 metres away. Past this sign, keep on up the right-hand edge of the field.
44. In 120 metres cross a stile into the next field. **The exit from this field is not at all obvious.** Veer very slightly left across it to the top edge and cross into the trees. Behind the first row of trees there is a path: **turn left along this.** (**Do not cross the stile** in the fence on the far side of the path.)
45. You immediately find yourself in a slight cutting. In 50 metres, at the top of this cutting, climb a short slope and go straight on diagonally across the field, heading for a stile in its far corner, which you reach in 90 metres.
46. Cross this stile and veer right along the right-hand edge of the next field to cross a stile to the right in 40 metres. Ignore the path to the right and gate to the left and follow the path into a wood.
47. This curves left in 25 metres and passes a creosoted wooden building to the left. In another 30 metres, keep straight on with the garden of a house to your left.
48. In 100 metres you find yourself at the entrance to the house's square-cobbled driveway. Turn right on this and then almost immediately turn left down a tarmac road.
49. Follow this road all the way downhill, ignoring ways off, until you come to the main road, the A283. **The White Horse** pub is on the right, a possible lunchstop.

Marehill to the RSPB Visitor **Centre (2.4km/1.5 miles)**

50. From the White Horse, cross the A283, and turn right along its far side.

51. In 130 metres, opposite a driveway to Holme Manor right, turn left down a tarmac driveway following a footpath sign.
 52. In 80 metres, where the driveway curves right to a house, go straight ahead along a signposted footpath.
 53. In 150 metres cross a stile, and keep to the left-hand edge of the field beyond. You are now on the marshland RSPB reserve of **Pulborough Brooks**.
 54. There is a stream to your left, hidden behind a bank. Converge with the bank and in 170 metres cross the stream on a footbridge, passing through a gate at its far end
 55. In 100 metres more cross a stile to the right of a wooden fieldgate and keep straight on.
 56. In 300 metres pass under trees and in 100 metres more cross a stile to the right of a fieldgate to emerge into the open once more.
 57. In another 200 metres you pass an isolated house and bungalow to the left, and cross a stile to the right of a metal fieldgate. Curve left around the garden fence of these properties.
 58. In 60 metres, at the end of the garden, pass through a gap in the bushes and keep straight on uphill.
 59. In 30 metres ignore a rough track uphill to the right and go left over a stile following a footpath sign onto a path between earth banks.
 60. In 70 metres go up some steps and at a T-junction turn right onto a car wide track, following a footpath sign.
 61. In 80 metres go left across a stile to the left of a metal fieldgate and turn right along the field edge.
 62. In 80 metres more pass through a gate and keep on up the field edge.
 63. In 200 metres pass through a gate and veer left along a broad grassy strip, with a field boundary to your right and a wooden fence left, towards a red-tiled house (part hidden by trees in summer).
 64. In 200 metres, at the end of this strip, pass through a kissing gate and veer right to cross a tarmac driveway in 10 metres. On the far side, the wooden gate takes you to **Wigginholt church**, which is worth a visit, but **your onward route** is across a stile to the left of the gate.
 65. Beyond the stile, turn half left between wire fences.
 66. In 120 metres, where the fence to the right ends, keep straight on uphill on a broad grassy path. In 130 metres, the path is enclosed by trees once more.
 67. In another 120 metres you come to a car park. Go right for 40 metres to the **RSPB Pulborough Brooks Nature Reserve Visitor Centre**, a possible tea stop.
- RSPB Visitor Centre to the top of the downs (4.4km/2.7 mi)**
68. **If not stopping for tea**, 15 metres to the left of the visitor centre entrance you see a track going straight ahead from the end of the car park. Take a footpath forking left at the start of this this.
- If coming out of the tea room** this path is ahead right, at the edge of the car park.
69. In 15 metres, at a crosspaths, turn right. In another 15 metres this path starts to go downhill, with heathland visible through the pines to your left and deciduous trees to your right.
 70. In 150 metres, at a three-armed footpath sign, merge with a car wide track to keep along the valley floor. Keep on this track, ignoring all ways off, for 500 metres, until you come to a road T-junction.
 71. Go straight ahead across this junction, up a road signposted to Rackham, a quiet (though not traffic-free) woodland road. This is the start of a 3km road section, and you basically keep straight on along this road until you reach the main road at the very foot of the South Downs (paragraph 76 overleaf).
 72. In more detail: In 600 metres, you pass Sparright Farm to your right, and the Round House (which really is round) to your left.
 73. In another 400 metres you cross a stream and there is the stone wall of the Parham House estate to the left. In 400 metres more you pass the formal entrance to the estate.
 74. In 100 metres, ignore a road to the right to Greatham and Coldwaltham. In 170 metres more you pass a chapel-like building to your right (actually an old school).

75. In 250 metres ignore Rackham Road to the right signposted to Amberley
- **If you don't fancy the climb up onto the downs** you can take this very pleasant road to the right. It takes you to the village of Amberley in 2.3km, with some fine views of the downs en route: once in the village, turn left just beyond the **Black Horse** pub, passing the **Amberley Tea Rooms** on your left in 120 metres and coming to the main road in another 230 metres. Turn right along the main road for 1.3km to get to Amberley station). Or see the bullet-pointed section in paragraph 86 for a prettier, longer way to the station from the Amberley Tea Rooms.
76. Otherwise, keep straight on at the junction in the previous paragraph. The road now climbs in stages until in 700 metres you come to the summit, with the downs now looming magnificently ahead. Descend the final 200 metres to the main B2139.
77. Turn left along the verge of this road (taking **great care** of the traffic, as the verge is very narrow).
78. In 60 metres **cross the road with care** (note that there is a blind hill to the right) to go through a wooden gate up a signposted footpath (though the signpost may be hidden by vegetation in summer).
79. For 100 metres you climb through scrub and then for 250 metres through trees to a gate. Beyond this you are on the open hillside, with fine views behind, climbing steeply uphill.
80. In another 200 metres or so the gradient starts to ease and the path curves right. In another 300 metres you come to the the top of the **South Downs**.
- Top of the downs to Amberley station (2.9km/1.8 miles)**
81. Your onward route is now to the right, along the line of the ridge. You can go through a gate ahead and turn right on the South Downs Way, a clear path between fences, **but for better views to the north**, ignore the gate and turn right over a stile to walk along the crest of the downs (an open access area), with the South Downs Way to your left.
82. Either way in 900 metres you come to a gate (a gate on the SDW, if you have taken that route, or a gate at the end of the open access area which lets you back onto the SDW). Beyond these gates keep on the South Downs Way as it descends more steeply.
83. In 350 metres, on a shoulder of the hill where a track joins from the left, keep straight on.
84. In 70 metres more, at a three-armed footpath post **veer right off the track** to take a path between fences, following the South Downs Way signpost.
85. In 250 metres pass through a gate and in 80 metres more descend to a road, where you go right.
86. Follow the road around to the left and in 80 metres you come to a fork.
- To detour to the **Amberley Village Tea Room**, turn right at this fork, on a road going steeply downhill. In 400 metres cross a main road. and carry on up the lane into the village, to find the tea room in 230 metres on the right. **After tea**, return to the main road and turn right, and follow it for 1.3km to Amberley station: **this adds 1.1km** to the walk.
- It is also possible to come out of the tea room and walk straight ahead (west) down the very pretty Church Street, and out past Amberley Castle, across the railway line and out onto the water meadows beyond. On the far side of these you find the River Arun and can turn left along it to reach the station. It is 3.2km to station by this route, **adding 2.9km (1.8 miles)** to the walk.
87. Alternatively **to keep on the main walk route** keep straight on at the fork in paragraph 86 on a road that follows the line of the ridge.
88. In 600 metres this brings you down to a main road, the B2139. Cross it with care and go left along the pavement.
89. In 250 metres follow the road as it curves right and in 150 metres, just before the railway bridge, you see the entrance to the **Amberley station** on your left. At the station, cross the footbridge for London-bound trains.
- For **tea**, keep on under the railway bridge. 40 metres beyond it, the **Bridge Inn** is on your left, and 20 metres further on the **Riverside Tea Rooms** are on your right.