

Walk 2: Shoreham circular

An idyllic village set in a pastoral valley is the start and finish point of this walk with a trout stream, water meadows, hills and woodland

How long? 1½ hours/3.5 miles (5km)

Public transport: Thameslink and Southeastern trains run a regular service to Shoreham station (on the London Blackfriars to Sevenoaks line). Arriva Kent's 403 bus from Bluewater to Tunbridge Wells is hourly.

Parking: easy: car park in Filston Lane or park near station

Start of walk: footpath 80 metres west of Darent Valley golf club

Steep slopes? One short, quite steep uphill section. Moderately easy walk.

Kid friendly? The walk might be long for younger children but they'll love wading in the river at the war memorial and picnics in the meadows (best picnic spot at Point 4 on hillside).

Walk and local highlights

Delightful 15th-century village houses; the Water House, associated with early 19th century landscape painter Samuel Palmer of the Ancients fame; Shoreham Aircraft Museum, with tea shop attached, which has loads of exhibits from Battle of Britain aircraft and local stories concerning captured German aircrew being bought drinks in the pub; sparkling wine specialist Mount Vineyard (open on Sundays); Castle Farm shop and lavender fields nearby. Also the Darent river, hillside views, wild flower meadows, hedgerows, beech trees and old, flint and wooden houses and a great church dating from the 11th century. Four pubs too. Not bad for the 'most bombed village in England' during WW2. Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map

More info on Shoreham on loalkentwalks.wordpress.com and shorehamvillage.co.uk

THE WALK IN SHORT

Points 0-1: 150m. Leave Shoreham station and walk under bridge down Station Rd to footpath on left

Point 1-2: 550m. Follow footpath through trees, across golf fairways (take care) and by a cricket pitch to narrow lane

Point 2-3: 400m. Turn right down lane to Home Farm buildings

Point 3-3a: 60m. Continue past large garden pond to little bridge over stream

Point 3a-4: 800m. Walk over bridge then bear left along stream. Enter Water Lane and pass cottages, cross Filston Lane, then take farm track opposite uphill to hillside field

Point 4-5: 100m. Steepish climb, then, half way up hill, watch out for footpath in front of scenic bench

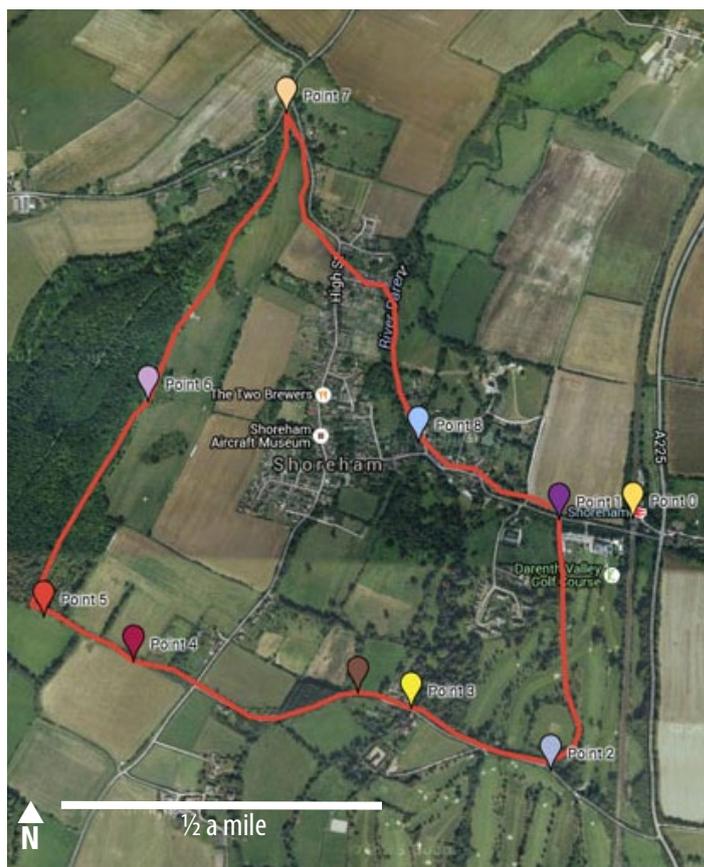
Point 5-6: 500m. Turn north (right) up footpath along side of valley. Walk straight on

Point 6-7: 800m. At path 'crossroads' continue straight on until you can see lane and barrier ahead (cottage on left)

Point 7-8: 800m. Take the path on the right along edge of field back towards village for 100m or so. When the path comes out on the High St, cross, then walk down Mill Lane nearly opposite. Cross river on bridge, then turn right and walk along river path to war memorial
Point 8: Half mile back to station or car. Turn left on Church St, past cottages to church (can cut through churchyard) and Ye Olde George

Take care on Station Road (especially with children) because there is no pavement. Soon after the golf club is the footpath on your left (**POINT 1**). Look out for some beautiful conifers (Lebanese cedar I think) astride the fairways.

The path will take you along the edge of a small cricket ground. Pass behind the little pavilion and you'll come across a tiny lane (**POINT 2**). Turn right here, downhill. After a converted oast house (**POINT 3**) is Home Farm and Mill Cottage, where the sound of gushing water will alert you to the presence of an impressive pond fed by the Darent river. Soon you arrive at a little iron bridge with wooden planking (**POINT 3A**). After crossing, take the left fork alongside the river, with a plantation of alder, beech, oak



Point 3a on a dull, but magical, autumn day

and maple trees on the right (this is Robin's Wood).

The path becomes Water Lane and moves up hill past a couple of beautiful cottages (16th century Kennel Cottage is the first, on the right) with suitably cute gardens. Now, cross Filston Lane and head up the farm track opposite. This leads uphill towards a large grassy hillside with woods on the right (**POINT 4**). This hill is reasonably steep (great for sledging in winter) so take your time, the views are superb. Opposite is the eastern valley hillside, stretching from the escarpment at Kemsing north towards Dartford. To the south is

Otford, Sevenoaks, Knole Park and the greensand ridge's reverse slope.

Take the footpath bearing right (**POINT 5**) and head north, high on the valley hillside through yew, birch and beech. You'll pass above the huge chalk cross cut in to the hill side to commemorate the village's war losses. (A short cut back to the village is available at **POINT 6**.) Continue to Shacklands Rd (**POINT 7**). Here, follow the path (the one on the edge of the field, not the sunken path in the gully) to the right. Turn off the High St on to Mill Lane past old cottages on the left down to the river, cross the bridge, turn right and walk along the paved footpath by the river into the centre of the village. To the left is the Mount Vineyard.

Ahead of you is Shoreham War Memorial (now set hopefully to include the name of Pte Thomas Highgate, a local 19 year old, who was the first soldier to be executed for desertion in the first world war, in September 1914) and the medieval bridge, where children can wade in the river (**POINT 8**).

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