

Walk 19: Fackenden Down

Superb Darent Valley views; protected chalk grassland with great biodiversity

How long? 4 miles 90 mins Public transport: Direct train from Peckham Rye/Sevenoaks Parking: Shoreham station Start of walk: Shoreham station or big layby off A225 Steep slopes? Yes! Pub: Olde George, Shoreham (500 metres down Station Road, by the church) Dogs: on the lead for half Pushchairs: wouldn't work – Knole or Lullingstone best

See GPX track for real-time navigation from gpsies (tap bottom icon on left for live location)

THE WALK

Point 0-1: 750 metres. Walk up the footpath just south (nearly opposite) of Shoreham station off the A225. At a fork in the path keep right then after a few metres take the right-hand path that runs south along the line of the hill (White Hill), which runs through open woodland with dotted yews to Fackenden Lane.

Point 1-2: 180 metres. Pass under a metal bar (there to stop vehicles). Walk down the lane until you see a stile/gate on the left with a path beyond. Join the path.

Point 2-3: 530 metres. Continue south. The path passes between hedgerows rich with berries in autumn and wild flowers in spring. Good for birdwatching.

Point 3-4: 380 metres. Fackenden Down. Turn left (east) steeply uphill on a path between wire fences (protecting the SSSI) aiming for a seat near the top of the hill. Continue past the seat and past a stile/gate on the left and a memorial seat donated by Denis and Pamela Leigh. Admire the views behind you over. Look out for a kissing gate on the left after which the path passes uphill through a field guarded by a solitary young oak, then enters a wooded fringe through another gate.

Point 4-5: 380 metres. Follow the path east through the woody fringe high on Fackenden Down until reaching quiet Rowdown Lane.

Point 5-6: 300 metres. Turn right (south east) on Rowdown Lane and just before the Granary take the footpath heading east.

Point 6-7: 620 metres. Turn up this

footpath just before the Granary, passing through sheep-grazed fields and soon entering Great Wood. On leaving the wood you have arrived at another SSSI: Magpie Bottom. Look for path on the left along the valley floor (but note path ahead – steep but with great view of the valley, and beyond, an alternative route to Romney Street as in Walk 5).

Point 7-8: 320 metres. Walk along valley floor until reach farm buildings and quiet country lane, called Magpie Bottom.

Point 8-9: 90 metres. Turn right (east) uphill on country lane for short distance until path on the left in trees – the SR28.

Point 9-10: 420 metres. Follow this path uphill through woods then along a field until Romney Street hamlet where you'll see buildings behind a wall (a grass airstrip too).

Point 10-11: 550 metres. At Romney Street turn left on path heading west. Emerge to a lovely view towards London. Follow the path across fields/grassland, down a sleep slope back into the valley. This is a disused golf course. The path passes between hedges (overhead too) at the foot of the valley.

Point 11-12: 1.1km. Follow path steeply uphill through SSSI (chalk grassland) to woods called Austin Spring. Follow path out of woods then diagonally across two fields and on to a farm track leading up to Dunstall Farm.

Point 12-13: 1km. At Dunstall Farm turn right, by a roundhouse for cattle, then immediately left, following the path over a field into Dunstall Woods. Walk down the steep steps through this stunning wood back to Shoreham station (pubs down the road).

amac49@hotmail.co.uk

