Walk 8: Shoreham/Otford 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.

The Walk In Short
Leave Shoreham station and walk under bridge down Station Rd, past golf club entrance and car park to footpath on left.

Point 1-2: 800m. Follow Darent Valley footpath through trees, across golf fairways (take care) and by a cricket pitch to narrow lane.

Point 2-3: 1.5km. Cross lane, continue on Darent Valley path to Otford, passing recreation ground and village car park.

Point 3-4: 300m. Turn right on High St then right again by river on footpath heading north parallel with previous path.

Point 4-5: 800m. Continue on path across fields, river disappears to your left, hidden by vegetation.

Point 5-6: 900m. Go straight over path ‘crossroads’ and enter ‘tree tunnel’ which takes you through part of the golf course to lane.

Point 6-7: 300m. On reaching lane turn left.

Point 7-8: 800m. Continue on path across fields, river disappears to your left, hidden by vegetation.

Point 8-9: 500m. Cross lane and walk up rough farm track opposite, stay on path up right hand side of large field on steep valley side until you see a bench ahead. (Points 9A and 9B are on a parallel path at the top of the hill, in quiet, atmospheric Meenfield wood, indicated by blue line on map).

Point 9-9C: 1.3km. Turn right along path on side of hill just before bench and stay on this path above white cross, all the way towards junction with Shacklands Rd.

Point 9C-10: 500m. Before Shacklands Rd, turn right on path along edge of field back towards village.

Point 10-11-12: 800m: Reach 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 (alternatively follow blue route on map; ie, walk straight on after bridge, then curve round the back of the vineyard and the church). From war memorial, explore village, or turn left to return to station (go through churchyard for slight short cut)

Ye Olde George pub is opposite church but there are other pubs, too. Aircraft museum is on the High St side of Shoreham.

This is a superb walk particularly if you like to see beautiful old cottages and houses along with countryside. There are loads of wonderful, unshowy, old buildings from the medieval era onward in Shoreham and Otford so add on extra time if you aren’t familiar with the villages. The ruins of what was once the Archbishop’s Palace in Otford, which fell victim to Cardinal Wolsey’s rise to power under Henry VIII and the decline of Archbishop Warham’s influence, is particularly interesting to see.

Shoreham is the prettier of the villages, but Otford is very intriguing with its nooks and crannies, especially the area around the old palace, but also with its to-scale solar system model, which makes a decent walk in itself.

The River Darent at Otford is a good place for spotting kingfishers, which are probably disturbed a bit less here than around Shoreham and Eynsford, but there are no guarantees; populations of the bird vary from year to year. The river nearly disappeared in the 1980s-90s as extraction from bore holes and a run of dryish years reduced it to a trickle. The river is managed a bit better these days, and it’s a lot healthier in wildlife terms. It rises on the greensand ridge south east of Westerham (see Walks 15 and 21) and disappears into the Thames near Dartford after joining forces with the River Cray.

The walk is easy to extend further; to the west to Meenfield, Pilot and Andrews woods; to the east to Romney St (Walk 5) and Fackenden Down (Walk 18). Kemsing, round the corner from Otford at the base of the escarpment also makes an interesting extension, along footpaths used for time immemorial through curiously untamed vegetation behind the station.