



Shoreham, Kent: a pub walk

Distance: 8 km=5 miles

easy walking with one modest climb

Region: Kent

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Refreshments: Shoreham, Otford

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Villages, woodland, river, views, pubs

In Brief

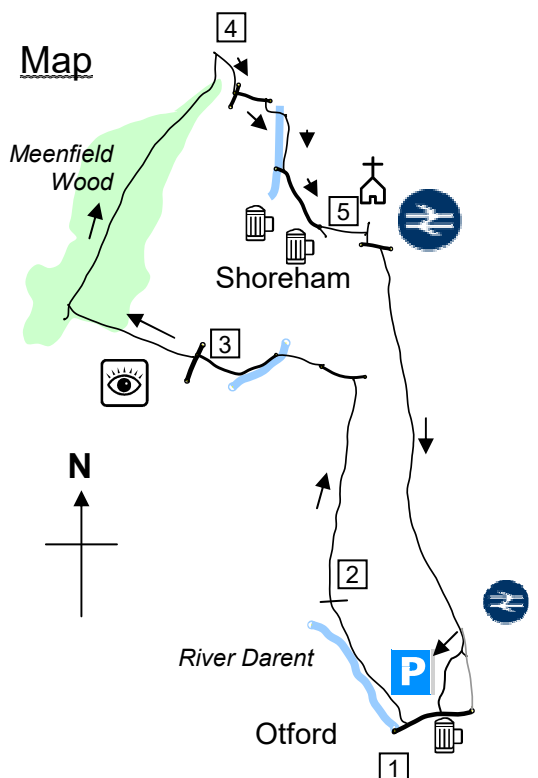
Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) was a painter who lived in Shoreham and portrayed the village in his landscape paintings. The inn named after him, renamed in 2021 from the *Olde George*, is a true “locals’ pub” dedicated to real ales and the traditional atmosphere. The regular beer festival offers 15 different beers, together with live music. The inn is open all day and food is on offer lunchtime and evenings, although the landlady once undertook to serve it out-of-hours to groups using this site. There is a pub in Otford* and two other pubs in Shoreham and the village is worth exploring, for the Aircraft Museum and for its attractive buildings. (*2021: you must book for the Bull.)

This walk follows the Darent Valley Path, takes you uphill a bit for a wonderful view and to exercise your legs just a little and returns after the pub by a more direct route.



There are no nettles so shorts are fine. Any strong shoes are adequate and your dog is welcomed at the *Samuel Palmer*.

The walk begins at the main car park in Otford, Kent (postcode **TN14 5PG**, grid ref TQ525595) opposite the *Bull* pub. This car park is free on Sun and Bank Holidays (2015-19) but pay-and-display other days (£2 all day Sat). There is a good free car park in Shoreham, behind the village school, plus kerbside parking. Shoreham Station is only 200m from the walk. Otford Station (on the main line) is 500m from this walk. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

- 1 From the car park in Otford, turn **right** along the main road. Pass the *Old Parsonage* on the left, then the medieval timber-framed *Pickmoss*. Soon after, at a sign for the *Darent Valley Path*, turn **right** beside the River Darent. Go past the Mill House and a converted oast house and, at the end of the drive, keep right on a narrow enclosed path, with views on your left across the river to gardens with topiary. Go through a swing-gate into a meadow and continue ahead on a grassy path that runs along the left-hand side of the meadow. *Shoreham Cross is visible on the hill ahead to the left*. Go through a metal kissing gate into the next meadow and continue similarly, with a wire fence on your left. At the far end, go through another kissing gate and straight over a track, ignoring the signed footpath right.
- 2 Go through a kissing gate and keep ahead along the right-hand side of a large meadow, avoiding a faint path that runs diagonally across its centre (a villagers' rather dubious shortcut). In the far corner, go through a kissing gate onto a path through woodland. Soon the path becomes enclosed, still with trees shielding it, zigzags and eventually reaches a tarmac lane. Turn **left** on the lane, gently downhill, ignoring a track to its left signposted *The Quadrangle*. Pass a converted oast and the *Old Mill House* on your left. The lane crosses a stream by a small stone weir. It then passes several small houses, becomes a track and runs by a wild meadow on your right. It crosses the Darent by a footbridge at a beauty spot with a bench. Fork **left**, as indicated by the yellow arrow, staying next to the river. The track becomes a tarmac lane again near a house and runs gently uphill, meeting a road at the top. Cross the road to a signposted stony track, almost immediately opposite, a fraction to the left, thus leaving, for now, the Darent Valley Path.
- 3 Keep on to the end of the track, avoiding a gate on your left, to go ahead through a metal gate (the stile is overgrown). Continue uphill along the right-hand side of an open meadow. This beautiful meadow allows open access to visitors and, as you progress, offers fine views behind you to Otford and beyond to the Greensand hills. Ignore a gate and footpath on the right, go past a bench, which provides a welcome rest to take in the view, and continue all the way to the top, where in late summer there are plenteous brambles for the picking. Go over a stile and turn **right** on a track into Meenfield Wood. This fine woodland is carpeted with bluebells in spring beneath the oaks and chestnut trees. Now you are on an austere woodland avenue, with irrelevant footpaths leading off left and right. This wide stony path begins to descend and after a while is joined by a footpath coming from the right. You soon reach a metal one-bar barrier and a junction of paths.
- 4 Go sharp **right** through a kissing gate near a metal gate into a rather ragged meadow. Keep to the left-hand side and, at the bottom, go through a kissing gate and follow a permissive enclosed path down through a wooden gate to a road. On your right here is the *Crown* pub, a good but quiet alternative to the other Shoreham pubs. However, the route is straight over the road to a cul-de-sac lane opposite. Continue down the lane, passing some fine, if rather cornily named, cottages. Ignore a footpath left and, just before the gate for *Mill House*, turn **right** onto a fenced footpath which leads you left over the river and right again on the opposite bank. You are back on the Darent Valley Path. On the other side of the river are a series of houses with attractive river terraces and gazebos. The path soon passes a meadowbank on the right and reaches the drive to *Water House* on your left, where the



painter Samuel Palmer lived from 1828. Shortly you reach the road with the road bridge on your right. Welcome to Shoreham!



The name "Shoreham" means "settlement by a steep slope". It is well known for its Aircraft Museum here in the village and the annual Duck Race on the River Darent. Shoreham has at least three pubs. The Kings Arms, just over the bridge on the right, has a small window showing the "Jolly Ostler" who would have served you in past times. Walkers report a warm welcome.



Avoid the bridge on the right and continue down the road beside the river. At a bend by a small cascade you pass a house at the corner opposite, optimistically called *Waterfall Cottage*. A little further along you reach on your right the *Samuel Palmer* inn (see the beginning of this guide).

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After refreshment, do not follow the road as it bends right round the pub but instead continue straight ahead through the wooden porch into the churchyard of Shoreham Church which is definitely worth a visit.

The Church of St Peter and St Paul is of Norman origin. You enter the church by the huge 15th-century wooden porch and, on entering, are immediately struck by the width and brightness inside. This is enhanced by the wide arches between the nave and the generous south aisle. Hanging brass chandeliers have real candles which donate their own special light to evening services. Notable features are the pre-Reformation rood screen, the high open wagon roof, the two chapels and the "Tavern Clock". The picture on the west wall is by Charles West Cope RA and depicts the return of V. L. Cameron from his 1872 expedition to find David Livingstone; Cameron crossed tropical Africa from east to west, the first European to do so.

Follow the immaculate yew-lined brick path until you come out to a field via a wooden swing gate. Turn **right** along the edge and, in 20m, continue past a large metal gate to the main road and turn **left**. In 70m, turn **right** at a signpost onto a footpath. This straight enclosed path soon goes over a track, across a green in a more open area and becomes fenced again. Go past a metal swing-gate, along the left-hand side of a cricket pitch and onto another fenced path with golf links on both sides. Your route soon crosses a junction of lanes and tracks and follows an enclosed path again, going over two tracks, then beside a fence with a meadow on the left. Keep ahead on a track until at a 3-arm fingerpost, another wide track joins you from the right. In a further 250m, you pass a footpath on the left with steps. Just after this, go **right** through a gap into a meadow where the Otford (honestly unmissable) scale model of the solar system is displayed. *The scale of the model is 1:4,595,700,000 (i.e. 1mm = 4,595.7km). The outer planets are in the fields and roads beyond. It claims to be the largest scale model in the world but for "world" read "UK" since there are much bigger and better ones (Val d'Anniviers in Switzerland, for example).* Turn **left** around the side of the playing fields and, at the bottom near the playground, go through a small wooden gate and back into the car park.

Getting there

By car: if coming from the south or west, the easiest way is via the M25 near Sevenoaks. Take the A21 south and, at the first exit, follow directions to *Riverhead*. At the roundabout with the steepled church ahead, turn **left** and immediately turn **right** onto the A25 (signposted *Maidstone*). At the first traffic lights, filter **left** at a sign for Otford. On reaching the village, turn **left** at the roundabout and in 170m (180 yards) turn **right** into the large free car park.

By train: regular service to Shoreham Station from London Blackfriars.