



Billingshurst

Distance: 7¾ km=4¾ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 23-may-2019

Author: Sackboot

Refreshments: Billingshurst

Map: Explorer 134 (Horsham) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

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Country town, woodland, bluebells, birdsong, green pastures

In Brief

This walk takes you through the quiet woods and green meadows which lie to the east of this West Sussex town. Your adventure begins with a lazy loop around a large wood, well-known for its seasonal hues and birdsong. The long section is a succession of delightful oak glades and grass meadows. In 2019, a bridge along the route was closed, but this closure hardly detracted from the pleasures of this walk. The text is written in anticipation of a quick re-opening of the bridge (which is structurally sound), but with an easy walkaround. The final section into the town, at the time of writing, was an interesting experience in seeing a new “village” springing up, literally from the bare earth.

The town itself offers much by way of refreshment, with three pubs (to enquire at the *Six Bells*, ring 01403-782124). The historic church, on its high point above the town, leaves a final memory as you head back to the station or the parking spot.

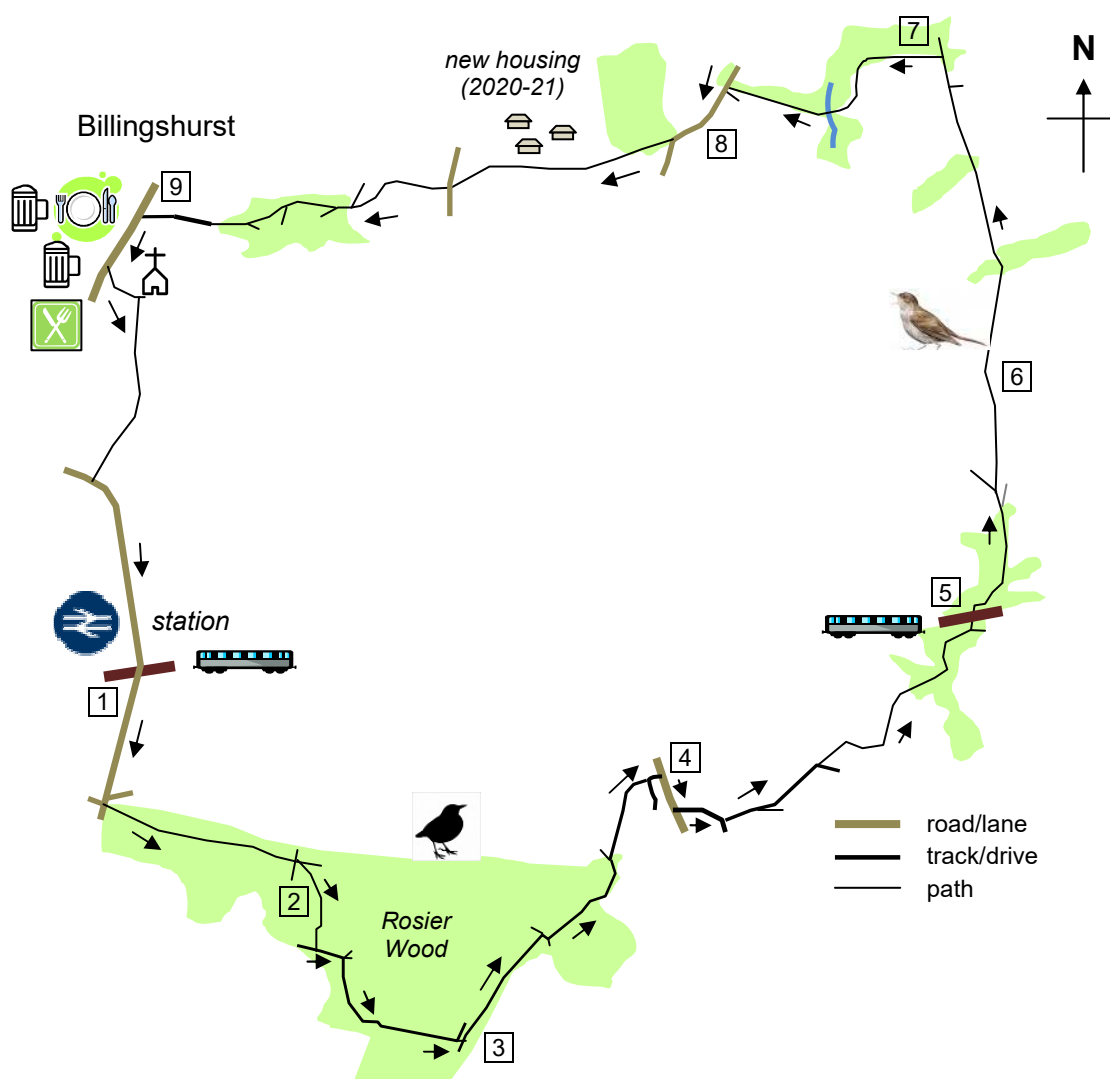
There were no nettles or brambles to speak of on this walk, so bare legs should not be a problem. At the time this walk was researched (end-May), paths were generally dry, making trainers or sensible shoes adequate, but there could be more mud along the woodland paths during a wet season. With no major roads (apart from in the town) and very little livestock, this walk should be ideal for your dog too.




The walk begins at **Billingshurst railway station**, or by the road side off **Station Road**, Billingshurst, e.g. near postcode **RH14 9RB**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

Billingshurst ("wooded hill of Billa's people") has a town crest showing a Roman legionnaire. (It really is a small town – not a village.) This refers to Stane Street, the Roman road which links London and Chichester and bisects the parish. (See the "Slinfold" and "Bignor" walks on this site, amongst many others.) Over twenty timber-framed buildings survive in the town and many more in the parish: one of them, now a chemist, has been a shop since the 1600s. Property was well distributed amongst yeoman farmers, brewers, millers, blacksmiths and wheelwrights of the town, with no big landowner to dominate. However, the "King" is honoured in two out of the three pub names, a prompt reinstatement after the Restoration. There were two windmills in the 1800s, one in Mill Lane which mysteriously burnt down on Guy Fawkes night in 1852 and Hammonds Mill which suffered fatal gale damage in 1906.



- 1 Beginning at Billingshurst railway station, follow the main road out of town, passing Tesco on your right. In nearly 300m you reach a road junction. Opposite a little triangular green and a traditional signpost, turn **left** through an old metal gate onto a signed footpath. Your path runs between wire fences and over a thick 2-plank bridge. After 400m or so on this path, you reach a crossing with a 4-way fingerpost. Go straight over the crossing but, *immediately* after, turn **right** on an unmarked path through Rosier Wood.

 **2** This section is attractive at all times, but especially in late spring when the bluebells form a dense carpet; these woods are also notable for birdsong. After 200m you approach a T-junction the edge of the wood with a meadow visible ahead. Turn **left** here for just 70m to reach a junction of paths. Avoid two minor paths that lead off to your left and instead turn **right** staying on the main path. The path gradually curls round leftwards, passing two murky ponds on your right. After 350m, you reach the edge of the wood again where your path suddenly bends left. **Leave** the path here, walk straight ahead over an earth bank and turn **left** on a clear peripheral woodland path. You are once again on an official footpath.

3 After 300m, passing another shadowy pond, you reach a 3-way fingerpost. Turn **right** here and, 15m later, turn **left** at a second fingerpost, thus regaining your original direction. Continue ahead for another 150m, avoiding a narrow path on your right, until you meet a large metal gate revealing a lawn and a tennis court. Avoid a narrow path that branches off left into a clearing and stay on the main track between hedges. Follow the track as it curves right and slip past a large metal gate to reach a driveway leading to the main A272 road.

4 Turn **right** on the road using the grass verge and, in 50m, turn **left** on a lane signed to *Fewhurst Farm*. Just before a house, keep **left** on a driveway, ignoring a footpath that forks right shortly after. As the drive bends right, keep straight on over the grass, as directed, and through a wooden gate – a perfect spot to slow the pace to take in the picturesque scene. Turn **right** at another signpost on a grass path beside a ranch fence revealing the ancient buildings of the farm. Veer **left**, as directed, on a path under trees. The path runs through a woodland clearing and across a stream, curving first left, then right at successive signposts. At the next fingerpost, keep **left** to go under the railway.

5 The path, which is bedecked with ramsons in early summer, takes you through a large metal gate and onwards under more great mature trees. As the path leads over a stone bridge, keep ahead, staying under trees to avoid paths branching off. You reach an unsymmetrical 4-way fingerpost by a large metal gate. Go through the gate and keep **left**. (Because the first path is rather overgrown, it may be best to fork **right** and turn immediately **left**. The idea is to avoid the large cattle pasture on your right. The cattle rarely stray into the narrower meadow which runs parallel to it – this is your route.) Keep to the right-hand edge of this long narrow field-of-grass, paying no attention to a fingerpost over to your left which leads to a footbridge.

6 You come through a large metal gate into a field of tall grass where in the nearby trees nightingales can be heard. After a majestic oak, your path runs along the right-hand side of a larger meadow, passing another signpost and power lines. A wooden gate and a strip of woodland lead you over a bridge with rails. Immediately after the bridge, keep **left** to walk along a wide grass strip. After another wooden gate and a woodland strip, you are walking beside a field of shrubbery on your left. At a 3-way fingerpost, ignore a footpath on your right and continue 25m to reach a fingerpost on your left by a small metal gate.

At the time of writing, this path was marked “closed”. The problem is a bridge over the stream. According to a local man, the bridge is sound except that most of the slats are missing, making it dangerous and completely impassable. He

says the stream is easily fordable in dry weather. Fortunately, the author had detailed notes from an earlier expedition and these are in the next numbered section, in anticipation of a prompt re-opening. *Please let us know!* There is a perfectly good circumvention which adds 800m to the length and it follows directly here **in colour**.

If the path is closed: Ignore the footpath on the right and stay on the bridleway through more woodland and along a green path beside a hedge. A large rusty metal gate leads to a road. Turn **left** on the road and follow it for over 400m (crossing that troublesome stream) to a road junction. Turn **left** on Wooddale Lane. This attractive quiet lane passes a pond on your right and a redbrick house. After 500m in total, you will see on your left a large metal gate with a sign for *Duckmoor Farmhouse*. Continue on the lane: you have re-joined the main route. **Skip the next numbered section.**

7 If the path is open: Turn **left** through the small metal gate. Your path runs along the right-hand side of a shrubby meadow, passing through a fringe of the woodland on your right. At the far right-hand corner, turn sharp **left** along the bottom of the meadow. (Some walkers cut this corner using a branching path.) The path goes through bushes and curves right to a sturdy bridge across a stream. After the bridge, your path runs beside a meadow on your left and finally comes out to a tarmac lane beside the entrance to *Duckmoor Farmhouse*. Turn **left** on the lane.

8 Stay on the lane as it bends right. Just after it bends left, go **right** at a signpost on a narrow path under trees. Your path crosses under power lines and runs beside a ranch fence and a wild meadow.

Here we look ahead one or two years from the time of writing (May 2019) and bring imagination to the fore (excuse the liberty!). The terrain is in flux and the author simply followed the temporary fencing along the footpath which had been preserved with care.

Soon on your right is a quite splendid new landscaped development of executive homes, built by *Devine Homes*. Your path crosses straight over a wide residential road linking the "village" with a similar development on your left. At a fingerpost, your path, veers left and runs beside more houses to reach a fingerpost in trees where another path meets you from the right. Go straight ahead through a small wooden gate and take the **right** fork, keeping straight on, ignoring all turnings, to reach a residential lane. Keep straight ahead to a T-junction and cross over to a wide tarmac footpath, leading to the main road in Billingshurst.

9 Turn **left** on the main road through this small town. *The Kings Head on your right, an old coaching inn, is now a rugby/soccer pub with a fitting atmosphere.*



At a major junction with the A272 road, your route is a **left** fork, up a ragged flagstone path leading to the church. However it is worth continuing a short distance further to the town's best-known and prettiest pub, the *Six Bells*, a timbered building offset away from the road in a garden.



This Grade II-listed pub dates from the 1500s but it was originally a farmhouse, called "Taintland" and was only made into a pub in Victorian times. The Six Bells is the only house in the parish with a continuous overhang. The pub is open – for the various H&B brews at least – virtually all day every day.



The adjacent building is another historic inn, the "King's Arms", built in the 1600s and much appreciated by no lesser figure than William Cobbett (1763–1835) of "Rural Rides" who had a good meal there and thought it "a very pretty place".

At the top of the flagstone path, turn **left** to reach the historic church.

St Mary's church was built in the 1100s. The Victorian clock is modelled on Big Ben, but the church's best-known feature is the "wagon roof" (a half-cylinder shape) dating from the 1400s.

Go round the church on the right and turn **right** on a solid path through the churchyard. The path runs beside a pleasant green strip which provides safe adventure for children. Keep ahead as the strip widens and take a path beside a brick wall on your left. Follow this path all the way to Station Road. Turn **left** on the road, using the footway, to reach the station where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Billingshurst lies on the A29 (Dorking to Bognor road). When you reach large roundabout just before the town, leave the A29 by simply keeping straight on into the town.

By bus/train: start the walk at Billingshurst railway station (regular service from London (Victoria), Horsham etc.

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