



Horsted Keynes to Sheffield Park

Hop On The Bluebell Line

Distance 11½ km=7 miles easy walking with a steam train ride

Region: West Sussex, East Sussex

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Refreshments: *The Sloop*, Sheffield Park station

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest) *but maps in this guide are sufficient*

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

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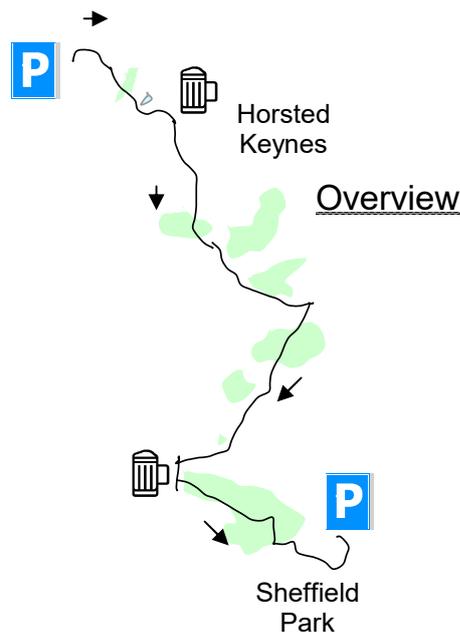
Meadows, woodland, steam railway

In Brief

This is a gentle stroll through amazingly varied Sussex countryside with a return by steam train. It begins either in **Horsted Keynes** railway station on the Bluebell line and ends in Sheffield Park station. Alternatively you can park at **Sheffield Park station (postcode TN22 3QL)** and take the ride first. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**). At the end of the walk, Sheffield Park Garden is nearby for a wonderful finish to the day.



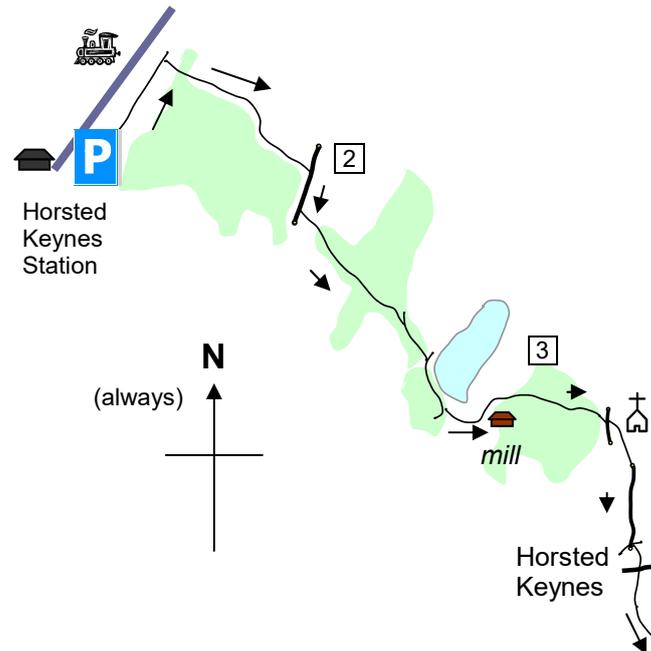
There are a few tiny patches of nettles that might catch you and just a few muddy patches that you may need to skip round. This walk should be fine for a dog with a lead and the Bluebell railway welcomes your dog but he will need his own ticket.



The Walk

Leg 1: Horsted Keynes Station to The Village 2 km=1 mile

- 1 If starting from the station entrance, turn **left** signposted *Car Park & Picnic Area*. Go north up the track between the railway on your left and the car park, passing the little memorial garden. At the top of the slope, at a *no through road* sign, turn **right** on a track. Go past a kissing gate onto a path running beside pastures, sometimes muddy, with woods on your right. Keep to this perimeter path, ignoring any stiles in the fence. At the end, go down some natural steps to a road. Turn **right** on the road.



- 2 In 80m, go **left** over a stile that can be side-stepped. Follow the narrow path under tall trees, past a 2-way fingerpost. The path leads down into woods. It straightens, winds a bit, gets narrower and goes over a brief muddy patch. At the bottom, go over an assembly of three two-plank bridges and turn **right** on a wider path at a 3-way fingerpost. The path runs beside the Mill Lake, much used by anglers. At a fingerpost, turn **left**. Soon you reach the cluster of venerable buildings at Horsted Keynes Mill, beginning with the half timbered barn, then the old mill and the beautiful mill house and garden.

*A water mill stood here as early as the 1100s but the Mill House you see here was built around 1450. The water wheel was **overshot**, an efficient way of feeding water forward over the top of the mill wheel from mill ponds running down from a lake in the village. It still milled flour in 1951 and is in working order to this day.*

- 3 Passing the mill house on your right, follow the path as it curves right, round the garden and goes gently uphill. In about 250m, you reach a lane by a 3-way fingerpost. Cross straight over the lane, up the very narrow gravel path *immediately* in front of *Spring Cottage*, to enter the churchyard of St Giles.

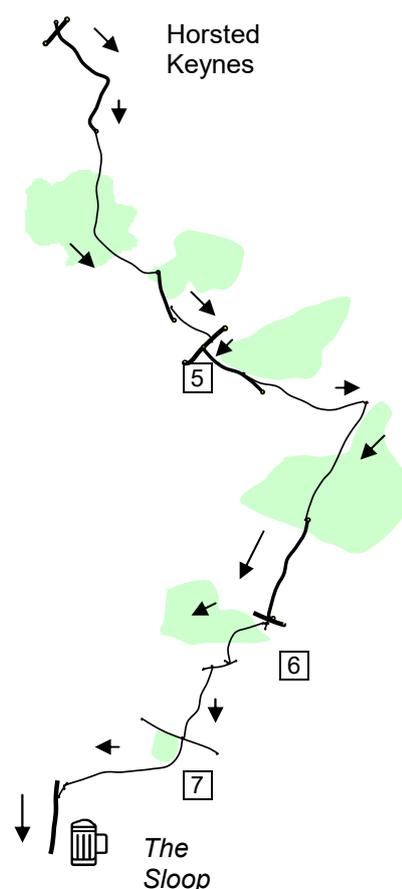
The church makes an immediate impression from its tall shingle spire and its lonely position at the foot of the old village. It is dedicated to St Giles, the "saint of the wounded knee". More detailed information will be found at

www.horstedkeynes.com (click "church history"). As the Midsussex site (www.midsussex.gov.uk) explains, the reason for the misalignment of the church east-west is that "the first church was built on a Pagan site where two ancient trackways crossed and it was originally aligned, as the Pagan temple would have been, to face the rising sun at the summer solstice". From the same source: inside the church there is a "brass of the 'headless lady' in the south wall of the of the nave and the little crusader figure of the north wall of the chancel, which dates back to the 13th century. On the opposite side of the chancel is a memorial plaque to the Pigotts – a famous iron-smelting family. Look down the names and [see] that Henry died in March 1715 but was not born until December 1715 – 9 months after his death!".

Turn **right** through the churchyard and exit by the main entrance into Church Lane and walk down the lane and up through the old village. At a junction at the top, keep ahead on a lane marked *no vehicles* to a major road with the small Green ahead. *On your left, slightly off the route, is the Green Man pub and, opposite it, the refurbished 250-year old Crown Inn, looking more like a medieval hall, which is exactly what it was.* Go across the Green and turn **left** before a chapel on a track signposted Sussex Border Path. *The Sussex Border Path (SBP) runs along the northern border of East and West Sussex from sea to sea, Rye to Emsworth. The section you are on runs between East and West Sussex down to the sea near Hove.*

Leg 2: Horsted Keynes to the Sloop 6½ km=4 miles

- 4 Just by the village green, take a track beside the old chapel signposted *Sussex Border Path*. *The Sussex Border Path (SBP) runs along the northern border of East and West Sussex from sea to sea, Rye to Emsworth. The section you are on runs between East and West Sussex down to the sea near Hove.* You will be following the SBP throughout this Leg. On meeting a lane at a bend, Wyatts Lane, keep straight ahead. The lane wheels sharp right and becomes a rough drive. As the drive curves right, ignore a footpath on the left. After the last house, ignore a footpath on the right and continue on a track. *This is a wonderful path through woodland, the surface lightly spongy and smooth so that you don't need to look at your feet.* There are several paths leading off, some sign-posted, all of which you need to avoid. Eventually the path goes over a stream and uphill and bends sharp **left**. In 80m, the route comes to a junction and turns sharp **right** on a tarmac lane, soon running between ferny banks. You are now in East Sussex. Soon the lane rises quite steeply and the land becomes more open with a field on your left. Here, take a **left** fork on a path across the grass beside the field. Soon you reach a road. Turn **right** on the road.



- 5 In about 50m, turn **left** on a tarmac drive marked as a footpath and also with a sign for *Butchers Barn*. When the drive reaches a junction, ignore a drive on the right leading to wooden *Keeper's Cottage* and continue ahead. Shortly, the drive goes over a stream. Immediately fork **left** on a footpath over a stile. The footpath goes along the right-hand side of a large meadow and keeps to the edge as it curves left. (You can avoid any dense bracken by keeping to the left of it on a very faint path.) As you approach the far corner, look out for a gap in the hedge on your right. Turn **right** here and **right** again, almost going back on yourself, and continue along the left-hand side of the next meadow. (The gap in the hedge was a shortcut to avoid a stile a little further along.) In the far corner, go over a stile and continue through Northland Wood. (The *keep out* message on the tree really means *private wood: please keep to the path*.) At the end of the wood, the path goes left-right round an enclosure and passes next to Northland Farm on your right. Continue ahead past a reedy pond and join the drive coming from the farm. Continue straight down the hard-surfaced drive to a lane, Ketches Lane.
- 6 Cross straight over the lane to a path directly opposite that leads into woods. In just 10m, turn **right** at a markerpost onto a path through the birches. Keep to the main path, avoiding all minor turnings off, for 250m where it comes out into a large field. Care! the next part need some concentration as waymarkers have been removed. Take a path dead straight ahead over the open field. You will notice a long shallow bank of wild flowers and shrubs straight ahead, which you reach in 70m, passing the left-hand end. Continue another 40m, crossing a very long narrow hay field. Now turn **right**, passing a clump of trees and bracken on your left. (It conceals a pond, although you can't normally see it.) In 40m, just after you pass the clump, veer **left** and take a faint path diagonally across the next field. Aim for a very obvious dense group of tall trees that you can see ahead at the edge of the field. In 150m or so you reach these trees, actually the beginning of a wood.
- 7 Keep to the **left** of the wood, going down the right-hand side of the next field with the wood on your right. In 150m, well before the corner, find a narrow path forking **right** down into the wood. It takes you under the Bluebell Railway (see note later) and through a large metal gate. Follow a narrow grassy space which widens into a meadow and here keep right. After another 50m, turn **right** at a fingerpost through a gap into a large pasture. You are back in West Sussex. Aim for the farm buildings of Freshfield Mill Farm in the opposite corner. (Depending on the livestock that may be in the field, some walkers keep to the right-hand perimeter.) Go over a bridge with rails across a ditch by a 2-way fingerpost in the middle of the pasture. Now head for a small wooden gate about 20m to the left of the corner of the farmyard enclosure. Go over a bridge, through another wooden gate and diagonally across the tiny grassy area by a barn, then diagonally across a small sheep meadow to a wooden gate in the corner, beside the driveway to the farm. You have reached a road, Sloop Lane. Turn **left** on the road, immediately going over a bridge across the River Ouse and then another over the old canal, reaching the *Sloop Inn* in Freshfield.

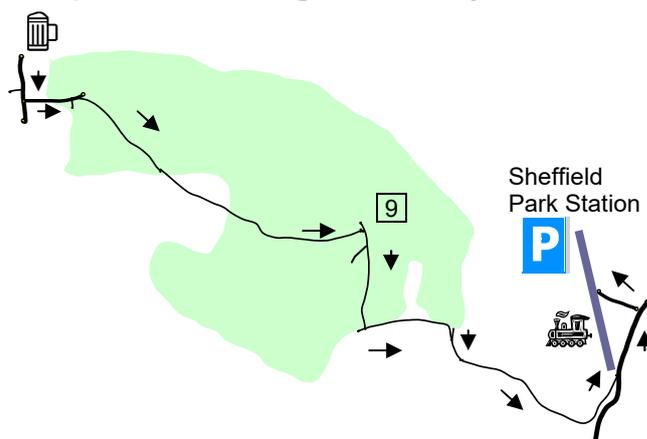


July 2015: the Sloop is re-opening after a heroic refurbishment exercise by the new owners. Working non-stop and finding constant new problems in the old building, they have now set an opening date of end-September 2015 which may slip a little. Beer will be Harveys plus three guests. Bar snacks will be available as well as more substantial meals.

The “Sloop” is named after a type of boat that used to sail the canal. The canal is the Sussex Ouse Navigation, which extended navigability upstream from Barcombe Mills to Upper Ryelands Bridge near Balcombe, completed in 1812. (See www.sxouse.org.uk/Version03 for more info.) The “Sloop” prides itself in being a typical country pub, serving real food and real ale. It also serves tea and coffee, a point worth remembering for people who always assume a pub-stop means taking on booze. You may have to share the bar with a crowd of colourful types and trippers from the Bluebell Railway who often spill out into the garden and the car parks. The space across the road opposite has a remnant of an old engine, whether agricultural or something to do with the canal is uncertain. The “Sloop” is open all day at weekends.

Leg 3: The Sloop to Sheffield Park Station 3 km=2 miles

- 8] Continue along the road for 100m and turn **left** on a driveway marked as a footpath through gates leading to the oddly-named *Bacon Wish*. Go past a large wooden gate and soon, at a junction, keep ahead, a fraction **right**, on a narrower path through a rather dark woodland of birches and conifers, still following the footpath sign. After the wood, go into a meadow used by campers and keep straight ahead across the centre. Ignore a footpath right, thus leaving the SBP, and follow a line of young trees to a small wooden gate into woodland. You are in East Sussex once again. You are now in a wild forested area with coppices, scattered birch and chestnut trees. After some distance you will see a T-junction ahead. Fork **right** before it onto a side path and turn **right** at the T-junction. In 30m, fork **left**.



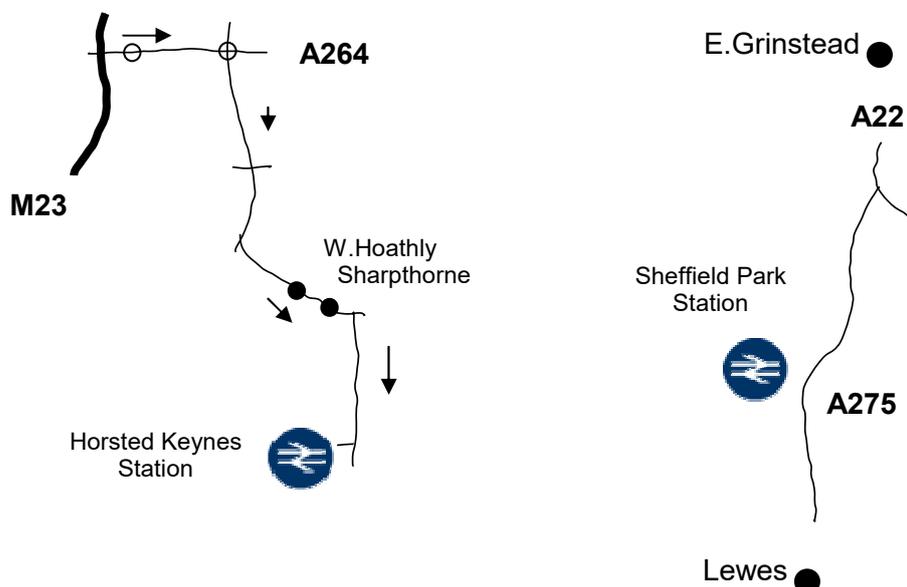
- 9] The path descends through beautiful Wapsbourne Wood. On emerging, go through a small wooden gate and over a bridge and turn **left** along the edge of a field. Out of the wood, turn **left** and continue in the same direction to a stile in the far corner. Here, go over a stile and through a swing-gate and merge with a gravel track coming from *Keepers Cottage*. Veer **left** on the track, going past, on your right, the magnificent historic timbered *Wapsbourne Farm House*. The track becomes a concrete drive and soon follows a linden avenue towards the main road. Just before the main road, turn **left** on a permissive path along the edge of the field, parallel to the main road. The path reaches its end down steps to the main road. Cross the road and turn **left** on it, soon arriving at Sheffield Park station on the left, just before a bridge. The station has a restaurant and buffet. You can follow signs here for a worth-while trip to nearby Sheffield Park Garden, less than 1km away.



Sheffield Park Garden is a wonderful 107-ha (265-acre) landscape garden, belonging to the National Trust, laid out in the 1700s in typical natural style by “Capability” Brown (no less) and developed in the early 1900s by its owner Arthur G. Soames. At the centre is a dramatic centrepiece of four lakes. Different vivid seasonal colours make this an unforgettable place at all times of the year.

Getting there

By car: if coming from London or Brighton, one way is via exit **10** of the **M23**. Turn onto the **A264 east**, signposted *E. Grinstead*. In about 2 miles=3½ km, turn **right** at the **second** roundabout, signposted *Turner’s Hill*. A mile after Turner’s Hill the road forks. Take the **left** fork signposted *West Hoathly and Sharpthorne*. Pass through both villages and, just after Sharpthorne, turn **right** at a rather hidden signpost marked *Horsted Keynes, Bluebell Railway* onto Horsted Lane. Look out for signs for the Bluebell Railway. Park in the station car park. For a start in Sheffield Park, the station is on the **A275** 15km=9 miles north of Lewes and 16km=10 miles south of East Grinstead.



By bus/train: there are dedicated buses: check the Bluebell Railway website www.bluebell-railway.com, click on *directions*.

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