



Horsted Keynes, Lindfield

Distance: 19 km=12 miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

Date written: 1-may-2011

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Refreshments: The *Sloop*, Lindfield, HK

Last update: 23-oct-2022

Map: Explorer 135 (Ashdown Forest)

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

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Villages, hills, fields, woods, country town, heritage sites

In Brief

This is a wonderful day out in the extraordinarily varied Sussex countryside, visiting gentle open meadows with views and woodlands, criss-crossing the Bluebell Line and visiting a perfect country town with ample opportunity for refreshment.



There are a few avoidable patches of nettles but they might catch you unawares, especially when they proliferate in summer, so shorts are inadvisable. The route was completely dry when researched after a dry spell but, because this is a



Wealden walk and because of the distance, it is necessary to wear boots in the



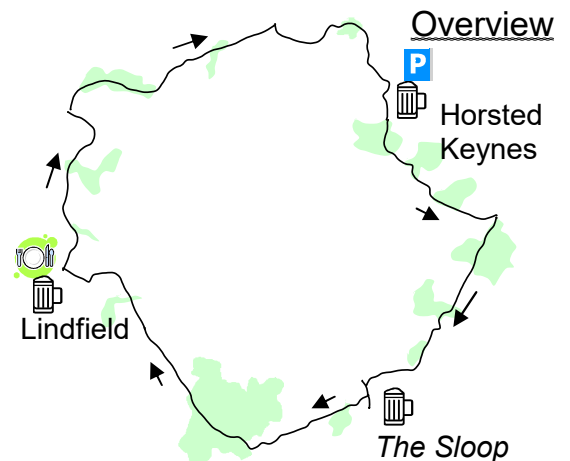
wetter seasons because of some muddy patches and some farmyard slurry. There are only one or two fields of livestock, so your dog could come too.

Good news! A footpath used on this route just after Lindfield at Leg 3, section [1](#), previously “closed due to dangerous surface condition”, is now perfectly clear. (It’s hard to see why it was ever closed.)

16-oct-2022: there is a ‘path closure’ due to an unsafe bridge, requiring just a little care in crossing.

18-oct-2016: the owner of the dogs at Fullingmill Farm, just after Lindfield, now keeps them chained up and the problem is resolved.

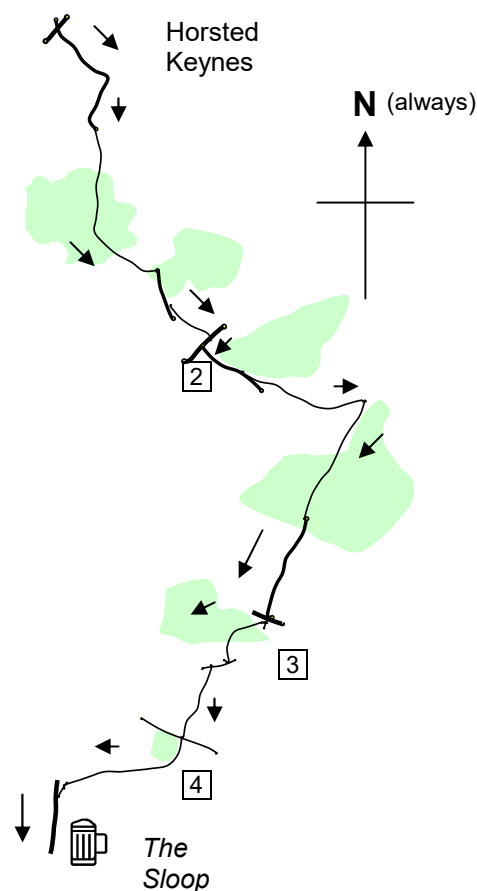
The walk begins in **Horsted Keynes** village, **postcode RH17 7AY**. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).



The Walk

Leg 1: Horsted Keynes to the Sloop 6½ km=4 miles

- 1 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.



- 2 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.

3 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.

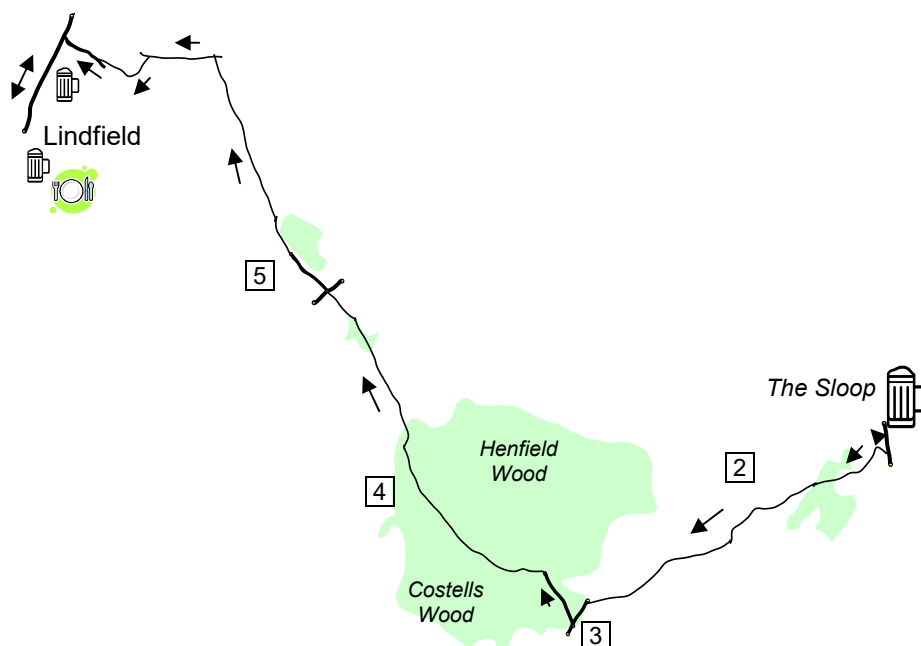
4 Keep to the **left** of the wood, going down the right-hand side of the next field with the wood on your right. In 150m, well before the corner, find a narrow path forking **right** down into the wood. It takes you under the Bluebell Railway (*see note later*) and through a large metal gate. Follow 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.

2016: the Sloop is now open again after a heroic refurbishment exercise by the new owners who worked non-stop, finding constant new problems in the old building. Beer is Harveys plus three guests. Bar snacks are 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 2: The Sloop to Lindfield 5½ km=3½ miles



- 1 Continue for 60m on the road from the pub, skip the entrance to *Bacons Farm* and immediately turn **right** on a signposted footpath with a sign for *Ham House*. At the start of a fence on the left, go **left** over a stile. Note that you have joined the *Sussex Ouse Valley Way* which you will be following through to *Lindfield*.

The Sussex Ouse Valley Way is a 42-mile long-distance footpath which closely follows the route of the Sussex River Ouse. It starts at the Ouse's source in Lower Beeding, West Sussex, where it's still a little stream. It then passes through many villages and towns including Slaugham (see the "Warninglid" walk in this series), Handcross, Staplefield, and Lewes. It terminates at Seaford on the English Channel, where it joins the Vanguard Way.

Keep to the right in a small meadow and, after the corner, at a 3-way fingerpost, turn **right**. The path runs beside a wooden fence (overgrown with bracken in summer), then through a wood. Go ahead for 70m, then veer **right** up a bank to a 2-way fingerpost and through a (usually open) wooden gate. Keep **left** up the side of a weed-strewn high meadow for nearly 100m, then veer **right** across the centre, heading for a modern kissing gate at the top. *It is worth here looking back at the view.* After the gate, follow the very wide path through woods, then up a grassy slope beside a house and turn **right** on a tarmac drive. After the drive passes *Nash House*, ignore some private steps on the right and, immediately after, go **right** up a slope into a field.

- 2 Follow a path diagonally across the centre of the field. *On the left you have good view of the South Downs.* Your footpath now runs through a gap in a hedge, along the left-hand side of a smaller field and, after 40m, **left** through the hedge at a fingerpost. It now takes you through trees, past a small pond, through a wooden swing gate and across the centre of another meadow. In the corner, go through a small wooden gate on a footpath between hedges. The route continues with a wooden gate, a grassy path and a low stile by a wooden gate. You are now on a shingle drive coming from a house *Yew Trees*. Veer **left** on the drive to join a tarmac drive ahead. This is the rather scattered modern village of *Scaynes Hill*, its centre 600m away and of little use.

- 3 Before reaching a road, turn very sharp **right** onto another tarmac drive signposted to *Costells* and three other properties. After nearly 200m, passing a large house over on your right, you reach a large wooden gate: go through a swing gate next to it and veer **left** on a drive for *Costells*. Keep straight ahead past the entrance to the house and, as the drive curves left towards a garage, leave it to continue straight ahead on a perfectly beautiful tree-lined avenue. At the end, at a junction, avoid a narrow path right into trees but veer **right** at a 3-way fingerpost onto a footpath coming from the left. You are now following a long path under wires in a straight clearing through *Costells Wood*. After nearly 400m, you arrive at a junction of paths with a memorial bench on your left and a descending slope ahead.
- 4 Avoid the first narrow path on your right but take a path a **fraction right** into the trees, thus leaving the wires. The path winds deep into woodland. At a 3-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead, avoiding a footpath left. The path soon goes over a bridge, through a modern kissing gate and runs across the centre of a horse pasture. At the far side, go over a rickety stile through bracken on a path across the left-hand part of a meadow. At the end of the path, go round a metal gate. 20m later, before a house ahead, fork **right** at a fingerpost through a hedge, by a garage. Cross a drive, go over a stile and across an atmospheric sheep meadow dominated by large oak trees. The path ends at a gap between posts, down to a wide tarmac drive. Cross the drive, go through a small gap and proceed diagonally **right** across a crop field on a clear path. On the other side, cross a road, *East Mascalls Lane*, and take a tarmac drive opposite.
- 5 [In 2022 there was a 'footpath closure' sign relating to an 'unsafe bridge', the second bridge you cross here; however, walkers found the bridge passable, stepping very carefully over the few rotten cross-planks.] Where the drive ends at a gate to a property, keep ahead on a footpath beside a wood on your right. The path goes over a wooden bridge, through a small wood by a fence and over a sturdy bridge on a path between hedges. Turn **right** to join a concrete farm track and keep straight on across a concrete bridge that has a steel barrier, continuing between fields. *Lindfield church spire is now visible on your left*. You soon reach a junction of paths in front of a gate into a farm. Turn **left**. Soon, at a fingerpost, where the official footpath turns right, **leave** it by taking an unsigned path straight ahead, crossing a meadow in the direction of some new houses, a popular short cut for local families and dog walkers. At the other side, turn **right** through a wooden swing gate onto a sunken path between fences. Keep straight ahead on *Brushes Lane* which comes out to the main road in *Lindfield*, next to the *Bent Arms* pub. The route is **right** on the road but most of the town is to the left and a stroll down to the pond and back is absolutely essential if you do not know the town.

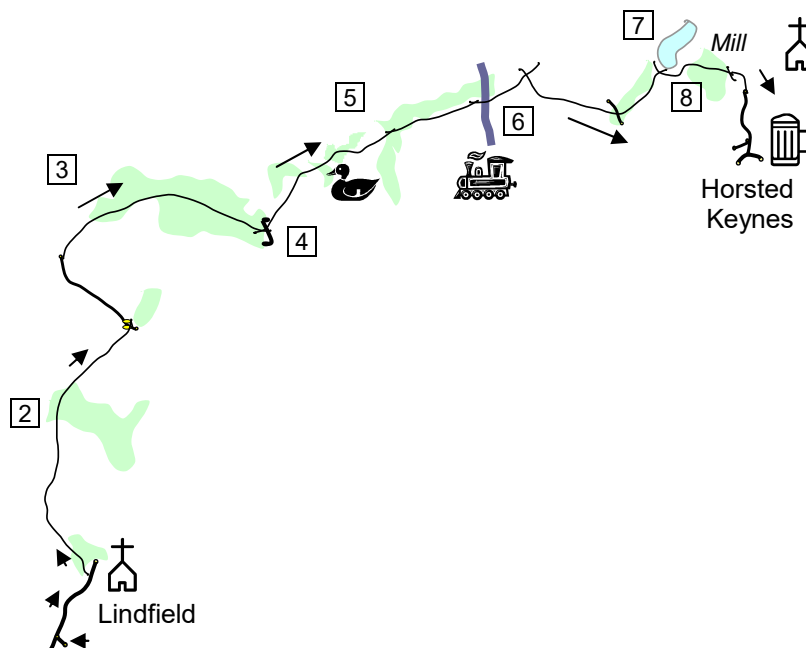


There is nowhere quite like Lindfield, except possibly for some towns in Kent and the Cotswolds. The town can show its pedigree from a Saxon charter of 765 AD relating to the granting of lands for the building of a church, possibly at the site of All Saints' church, since mention is made in the copy of a certain "lendenfelda". In medieval times Lindfield was recognised in 1343 by King Edward III by a royal charter granting the town permission to hold a market every Thursday and two annual week-long fairs. The fairs continued for centuries and the summer fair became one of the largest sheep auctions in Sussex. The wealth from wool is clear from the opulence of the timbered buildings, but wealth came also from agriculture and, thanks to the nearby River Ouse, from iron working.



The raised pavement on the east side takes you past Malling Priory (1730), the Red Lion pub, the Toll House (2018: vacant for rent) now, the old butchers and finally the pond. If you come back on the other side, you pass the Co-op (the only chain outlet in Lindfield), the Stand Up Inn (a small place with a truly stunning selection of real ales), the Manor House and the fabulous timbered Barnlands. Finally you return to the **Bent Arms** pub and hotel which has a big garden. It serves huge portions and the Ploughmans is much talked about. Next to it is Paolino's Italian restaurant.

Leg 3: Lindfield to Horsted Keynes 7 km=4½ miles



- 1 Going north up the High Street, you come to All Saints Church which is unusual and well worth visiting, with its elaborate decoration, open transepts, short nave and copious stained glass [2018: closed and fenced off due to extensive interior rebuilding]. Continue on the road, ignoring a footpath on the left, and follow the S-bend. On your right now is the finest building in Lindfield, aptly named *Old Place*, a timber-framed, gabled building dating from the late 1500s (although the site is even older), then *Lindfield House*. Just as the pavement ends, go left on Spring Lane. After a terrace of white cottages, follow the track past bungalows. Go through a (unnecessary) dark modern kissing gate, then between meadows on a starkly white wide track. A line of trees to your left and a clump of earth to the right mark an embankment of the Ouse Valley railway line between Haywards Heath and Uckfield; construction began in 1866 but stopped after 9 months and the line was never finished. After passing the huge round cow shed, at the old buildings of Fullingmill Farm, veer **left** around a shed and go between it and the farm cottage. The dogs here used to cause a rumpus but Alison, the owner, now keep a close watch on them. Descend on a track (2018: undergoing clearance and resurfacing), veering a fraction right, to find and cross a large wooden bridge across the River Ouse.
- 2 Follow the winding path through open woodland scrub (once pleasant and fringed with green, now unfortunately infested with balsam: be careful not to pick up any seeds on your clothes!). As you approach open fields, continue along the right-hand side of the field on the left. Near a bungalow on the right, switch to a wide grassy path running between brambles. You reach a lane by a group of houses, *Buxshall*. Turn **left** on the lane. In about 400m, the lane bends right. As you approach Hill House Farm, at a 3-way fingerpost,

fork **right**, avoiding the concrete drive left. Immediately, at the first house, go **left** on their entrance drive, keeping the house and garden on your right.

- 3 This is an agreeable grassy path, taking you through a wooden gate with extensive views left where Ardingly College can clearly be seen. The footpath enters a wood of oak and beech and crosses a farm track. It now enters an area of taller thin beeches, where it forks **right** in accordance with the signpost. The path now is straight and a real delight to walk, with a bank on the right, then on both sides. Eventually you reach the road. Cross the road to a signposted footpath, slightly right, by a daintily-named house *Bluebell View*.
- 4 The path goes round the house and turns **right** over a stile (*careful: rickety!*) in the fence. Your route is clearly marked down the centre of a spruce plantation towards a gap in the hedge ahead. *The tip of the spire of Horsted Keynes church is now visible, giving you a view of your final destination.* The path now goes diagonally across the next field to a gap in the hedge. *This field was planted as a vineyard (2018): look for a wide gap so you don't disturb the vines.* Turn **right** on a concrete drive to Goddenwick Farm. As you pass the first wooden building, fork **left** at the signpost on a grassy path, between a field of donkeys on the left and a duckpond on the right. The path bends right at a fingerpost, goes over a two-plank bridge and turns left, now following the boundary of a smallholding, with hens visible, on the right. When you emerge from the wood through an unusual gate-stile, turn **left** down the edge of a large ragged meadow. In 80m, under a large oak, your path wheels **right** along a shallow bank that separates two fields, following a line of oaks.
- 5 In 60m, turn **left** through a gap and take a diagonal path down towards a large metal gate visible in the hedgerow where you find a large new fingerpost. Go through the gate and cross a clearing. *The clearing may be a little soggy even during a dry period because of its natural supply of spring water, but you can easily get around it, for example by going over the tree roots on the right.* On the other side of the clearing, on the **right**, is a stout bridge over a stream. Cross the bridge and continue along the left-hand side of a meadow, through a small wrought iron gate and up the left-hand side of the next meadow. Now veer **right**, to go through a large metal gate and over a stile by another metal gate. Immediately ignore a path on the right and continue up the left-hand side of a field. Cross a bridge over the Bluebell Railway.

The Bluebell Railway is one of many heritage lines in Britain. It runs on a part of the old East Grinstead-Lewes line that was axed in the 1950s and is operated by volunteers. It runs from Kingscote to Sheffield Park with a stop at Horsted Keynes but by the time you read this it may have been extended north to East Grinstead. The company maintains a large number of steam locomotives as well as the stations and lines with all their original paraphernalia, decorations and advertisements. As you may imagine, the railway has made star appearances in films and TV. Another walk in this series "Hop On The Bluebell Line" goes between two stations.

- 6 Continue through a metal gate onto a rough track (*care! deep slurry*) and onwards into the cheerful clutter of Little Oddynes Farm. In the middle of the farm, opposite a tractor shed, turn **right** on a wide path between the cottage (on your right) and a brick shed. Go straight ahead down a path between fields and, in less than 100m, at a fingerpost, go **left** over a stile, then diagonally across a large meadow down to a metal gate which will shortly be visible near a road on the far side. Go over the stile [*Oct 2022: care! broken*] and turn **right** on the road. 30m after a brick bridge

across a stream, turn **left** on a footpath by a black barn. Keep on the track next to woodland on your left.

- 7 The track runs down to the picturesque Mill Lake, much used by local anglers. At a 4-way fingerpost, keep straight ahead beside the lake and continue towards a house, actually a cluster of venerable buildings at Horsted Keynes Mill. Keep left here on a wide grassy path, passing the half timbered barn, 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.*

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

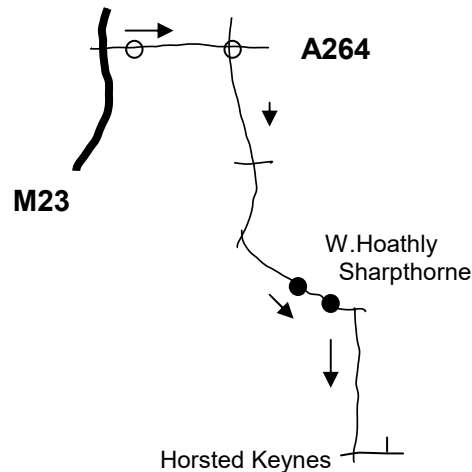
The church makes an immediate impression from its tall shingle spire and its lonely position at the foot of the old village. It is dedicated to St Giles, the “saint of the wounded knee”. More detailed information will be found at www.horstedkeynes.com (click “church history”). As the Midsussex site (www.midsussex.gov.uk) 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 where the walk began. *For final refreshment, on your left 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.*



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 for *Horsted Keynes* onto Horsted Lane. Follow it all the way to Horsted Keynes. At a 3-way signposted junction at the start of the village, turn **left** to reach the main green in ¼ mile. Park in the free car park next to the old chapel and clubhouse.



By bus/train: Metrobus 270 from Haywards Heath or East Grinstead. Check the timetables.

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