

SUSSEX HOSPICES TRAIL

PART 20:

HAYWARDS HEATH TO BALCOMBE



Challenging Terrain

6 Miles
Linear
3 hours

120519



Access Notes

1. The Weald is famous for its mud and after rain the trail can be heavy going, although in many places you will find side paths through the woods running adjacent to the main track.
2. You will need to negotiate a number of kissing gates, footbridges and low step barrier stiles, but no fence stiles.
3. There are some short sections of walking through quiet residential areas and there is one steep section of steps through a wood.
4. Dogs should have no problems on this walk but must be kept on leads when walking through the golf course and do take care with dogs when livestock are grazing in the fields.



A 6 mile linear walk from Haywards Heath rail station to Balcombe rail station in West Sussex, forming the 20th stretch of the Sussex Hospices Trail.

The route takes you through beautiful Sussex Weald countryside with impressive views and wildlife spotting opportunities around the tranquil Ardingly Reservoir. On route you will walk through mixed woodland, climb rolling hills and stroll alongside the 198 acre Ardingly Reservoir, also designated a Local Nature Reserve. In the distance you can admire the magnificent Ouse Valley Viaduct and the historic Ardingly College. The return leg can be completed with a single 5 minute train journey.

There are no facilities for the bulk of the walk, but you will find cafes and pubs in Haywards Heath and Balcombe, at the start and end of the walk. Ardingly Reservoir makes a good spot for a picnic, about half way along the walk.

The hospices of Sussex are dedicated to providing specialist end-of-life care. Friends of Sussex Hospices has worked with partners and supporters to create the Sussex Hospices Trail, a 200 mile long-distance path to support and raise awareness of the twelve hospice care providers that serve the adults and children of Sussex.

Getting there

The walk starts at Haywards Heath rail station and ends at Balcombe rail station. The two stations are connected by an hourly train service which is just a 5 minute journey. There are pay and display car parks at both stations. Haywards Heath daily parking rates are: Mon-Fri £7.50, Sat £4.50, Sun and Bank Holidays £1.00 (correct March 2016).

Approx. postcode for Haywards Heath station **RH16 1DJ**

Walk Sections

Go → 1 Start to Haywards Heath Golf Course

Standing with your back to the rail station, facing the Burrell Arms pub, cross the road and turn right along the pavement. Stay on this pavement as it bears left, walking along Mill Green Road, following the clearly signed 'Ardingly Reservoir' path. You will reach a T-junction at the end of Mill Green Road, with the railway bridge on your left. Swap over to the right-hand pavement, follow



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this into College Road for a few paces then cross (left) over College Road, to reach the entrance to Mid Sussex Timber. Turn right along the pavement of College Road for a few metres before turning left onto Wickham Way, a quiet private road but clearly signed as a public footpath.

(NOTE: If you are continuing from Trail Part 19, pick up the directions from this point). Take the steady climb up this road, with character houses on both sides. On reaching the end, turn right onto a quiet access road, Old Wickham Lane, and pass through pillar gates signed private road. Follow this for a short distance until reaching the entrance to Wickham Farm.

Turn left opposite the entrance to Wickham Farm, heading downhill through woods to reach a narrow footbridge over a small brook. Cross this and climb steadily uphill until you reach a metal gate. Pass through the metal gate, out of the woods, onto a gravel path and the perimeter edge of Haywards Heath Golf Course. NOTE: The next stretch crosses the golf course so please show respect to the golfers by allowing them to play their shots before you cross, keep dogs on leads and be aware of flying golf balls.

The golf club officially opened in 1922 but during World War II part of the course had to be ploughed up for agricultural use - by 1942, only 10 holes were still in play. German prisoners of war were employed to restore the course between 1946 and 1948.

Cross the gravel path onto the golf course, keeping the hedgerow on your right-hand side. Make your way steadily uphill. On reaching the top of the hill, bear slightly right following the path through a small copse and head gently downhill onto a gravel path with a clearly visible fingerpost.

1 → 2 Haywards Heath Golf Course to Rivers Road Rail Bridge



At the fingerpost, take the footpath to the left leaving the golf

course behind and walking downhill through the woodland. At a yellow waymarker bear left, continuing through the wood with its carpet of bluebells, to reach a quiet country lane. Cross over the lane to a clearly visible fingerpost, follow this footpath downhill to reach a kissing gate.

Pass through the metal gate and keep ahead on the path passing a cottage on your right. Continue along the footpath through a small woodland until you reach another small footbridge and kissing gate which lead you over a stream and into a small field. Walk diagonally left across this first field (at about 10 o'clock) towards an obvious gap in the hedgerow. Enter into the second field, following the path up a steady gradient until you reach a kissing gate, adjacent to Rivers Farm property.

Go through the kissing gate, pass the farm on your left and cross the Rivers Road Rail Bridge to reach a wide, access track.

2 → 3 Rivers Road Rail Bridge to Ardingly Reservoir



Cross straight over the track to the fingerpost marker. Go ahead, along this footpath into woodland, River's Wood. Stay on this track all the way through the woods (following the High Weald yellow waymarkers). Emerging from the woods, you reach a kissing gate which leads into an open field.

Pass through this gate, walk diagonally right along the obvious worn path in the field to a wooden footbridge over the Sussex Ouse. Cross the footbridge into a second field where you can see a pumping station to the right. Keeping on the worn path, cross this field to another, smaller, wooden footbridge. This footbridge has wooden planks either side which need to be climbed over to cross. Once over the bridge, ignore the metal gate to the right, instead continue up a steep hill, keeping the wire fence to your right. Two thirds of the way up the hill you will see in the fence line, a clearly marked footpath on your right. Before you take this, look behind at this point and you will see the Ouse Valley Viaduct in the distance.

The viaduct was opened in July 1841. The 11 million bricks needed for its construction were shipped up the Ouse River from the Netherlands. It cost £38,500 to build, equivalent to about £3½ million in 2014. The structure is a Grade II listed building, still used today, with around 110 trains per day passing over it on the Brighton Main Line. It has been described as 'probably the most elegant viaduct in Britain'.

Follow the footpath sign right into a field and, keeping to the right-hand fence line, follow the field edge, with views of the impressive buildings of Ardingly College over to your right. At the end of the fence line, pass through a kissing gate and head sharply down hill for a short distance. At the end of

this footpath you will emerge at the southerly corner of the tranquil Ardingly Reservoir and the Ardingly Activity Centre.

The 198-acre Ardingly Reservoir is set in an Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty and is designated as a Local Nature Reserve. The reservoir is filled with water pumped from the River Ouse and supplies water to over 2 million consumers. It is home to a great number of bird species with two bird hides situated on the east bank and it is a popular fishing and watersports venue.

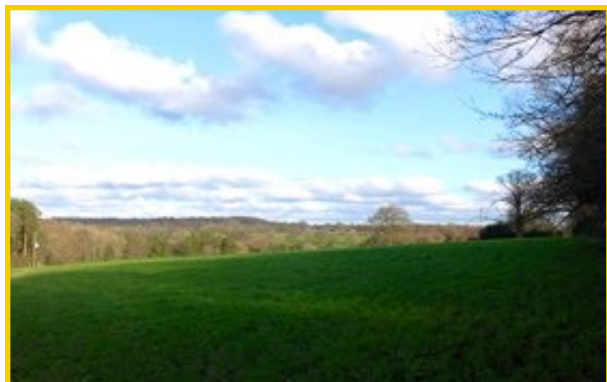
3 → 4 Ardingly Reservoir to Balcombe Lane Road Bridge



Continue along the path, over the dam wall of the reservoir (with the water to your left), to reach a wooden kissing gate. Pass through the kissing gate and bear left, following the path clearly marked 'kingfisher trail'. Follow this footpath, always keeping the reservoir on your left, until you reach a kissing gate. NOTE: there are a number of places along this path where you can stop for a picnic or just enjoy the lovely views over the water.

Pass through the kissing gate and turn left onto a pavement which runs alongside the Balcombe Lane Road Bridge over the reservoir. Cross the bridge, with magnificent views of the reservoir on both sides, and turn left at the end of the bridge, through a wooden gate and returning to the marked reservoir footpath.

4 → 5 Balcombe Lane Road Bridge to Balcombe Village



Continue to follow the path around the perimeter of the reservoir, ignoring any footpath signs to your right. The reservoir will begin to narrow as you walk towards the northerly end of the water, eventually reaching waymarker '6' and a wooded section

of the footpath.

Passing the waymarker, continue on the footpath through the woodland known as 'Great Wood', bearing right up a short incline to reach a wooden gate and a minor road. Go through the gate and head left down the road, being careful of cars as there is no pavement at this point. The road crosses over the most northerly part of the reservoir, passing Balcombe Mill on your left, a pretty grade II listed building. A few metres past the Mill, opposite the end cottage on your right, take the signposted footpath to your left and climb steeply (up steps) through woodland until reaching a wooden kissing gate and an open field.

Pass through the gate into the field and bear right. Still climbing steadily up hill, follow the tree line, (ignoring the footpath signposted to the right). On reaching the corner of the field, cross into a second field following a signposted bridleway and an obvious pathway, heading diagonally across the field to a metal gate.

5 → 6 Balcombe Village to End



Pass through the gate and walk along the short path between residential houses and a hedge. Step over a stile at the end of the path, to face the main road. Cross the road and turn left, following the pavement until you reach Oldlands Avenue. Turn right down Oldlands Avenue and walk along this quiet residential road on the outskirts of Balcombe.

Balcombe is a small village with traditional farming roots and now is a popular London commuter village, being conveniently located between Brighton and London and nearby Gatwick Airport. Balcombe stretches from the famous Ouse viaduct in the South up to the forest ridges in the north and west. In more recent years it has made the headlines as the village that provided considerable local opposition to the exploration and possible fracking for oil. As a result, Balcombe has emerged as a focus of opposition to fracking in the Weald Basin of southeast England.

Ignoring the residential roads off to the right, continue along Oldlands Avenue until it becomes Newlands. The road bends around to the right. Head down Newlands (on the left-hand pavement), until you reach a junction in the pavement (recognisable by a small green, a bench and a lay-by for parking). Turn left and after a few paces the pavement brings you out onto the main road. Cross the road and walk the short distance to the clearly signposted Balcombe rail station, marking the end of Part 20 of the Sussex Hospices Trail.

Disclaimer

This walking route was walked and checked at the time of writing. We have taken care to make sure all our walks are safe for walkers of a reasonable level of experience and fitness. However, like all outdoor activities, walking carries a degree of risk and we accept no responsibility for any loss or damage to personal effects, personal accident, injury or public liability whilst following this walk. We cannot be held responsible for any inaccuracies that result from changes to the routes that occur over time. Please let us know of any changes to the routes so that we can correct the information.

Walking Safety

For your safety and comfort we recommend that you take the following with you on your walk: bottled water, snacks, a waterproof jacket, waterproof/sturdy boots, a woolly hat and fleece (in winter and cold weather), a fully-charged mobile phone, a whistle, a compass and a map of the area. Check the weather forecast before you leave, carry appropriate clothing and do not set out in fog or mist as these conditions can seriously affect your ability to navigate the route. Take particular care on cliff/mountain paths where steep drops can present a particular hazard. Some routes include sections along roads – take care to avoid any traffic at these points. Around farmland take care with children and dogs, particularly around machinery and livestock. If you are walking on the coast make sure

We hope you have enjoyed walking this stretch of the Sussex Hospices Trail. Hospices deliver their services for free but such care is not cheap and they largely depend on funds raised from their local communities. We would be very grateful if you would consider making a donation either to your local hospice, wherever that may be, or to the Friends of Sussex Hospices in order to support these invaluable services.

To donate £5 to the Friends of Sussex Hospices text SHTRI6 £5 to 70070

Friends of Sussex Hospices, Registered Charity No. 1089306

<http://www.friendsofsussexhospices.org.uk/how-you-can-help/donations>

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The creation of this stretch of the trail was possible thanks to the kind donation from Michael and Alison Brown.

To read more about the sponsors of this Trail visit hospicetrail.co.uk

