

BALCOMBE VIA FOREST FARM

This walk can be linked with last months four mile walk Ardingly/Wakehurst.

The village of Balcombe lies in the beautiful landscape of Balcombe Forest with its fine beech trees and undulating countryside. It is difficult now to imagine the noise, dust and the feverish activity of the iron workers who lived and worked in this area so many years ago. Now all is peaceful and green.

Distance: 4 miles or 3 miles (6.4 or 4.8 kilometres)

Map reference: O.S. Explorer 135, 307310

There are various suitable parking spots in the village. There is a lay-by in the Haywards Heath Road behind the pub, the Half Moon Inn, or wayside spaces on the small green at the end of this road, but largest and easiest is the long, off [road lay-by](#) on the B2036 under the Parish Church of St. Mary (15th century tower) on the edge of the village.

From the lay-by under the church follow the main road southwards to the forked left hand turning. This will lead you to the Half Moon Inn.

From the front of the Inn follow the track which soon turns right and eventually comes to the cricket ground. Keep round the edge of it to the left to a fingerpost and on to a second post and kissing gate. Keep straight ahead keeping the hedge on the left to a third post, next to an oak tree, with a finger pointing downhill, ie to your right.

Ahead is a gate and stile beside it. Take special note of this when you get there as it is the point you will come to later in the walk if you choose the alternative path alongside the lake.

Now on the outward walk, continue ahead beyond the stile and gate to meet a cross track and another stile. Turn left and join the track to walk along by the lake which is an old hammerpond which in iron working days used the water power to hammer out the iron. Continue along the track for about a quarter of a mile and then look for a fingerpost on the left pointing to a gate and stile opposite.

Go into the field and keeping alongside the hedge on the left, look for a stile in the left corner leading into a field. From there look up straight ahead to farm buildings. When you reach three field gates close together, look to the right for a stile tucked in the corner, cross it and walk up this next field by the hedge to another stile at the top and cross over.

From this point you can shorten the four mile route. Having decided to use the shorter route, turn left. The path is well marked and passes Forest Farm in front of a stone-built house on your right and then joins another woodland path coming in from the right. Keep round to the left and follow the woodland path down to a gate. There is a stile on the right from which walkers using the longer way will emerge. Your further directions will be from the paragraph marked with two asterisks(**). Those wishing to use either of the longer routes from the last stile will notice inside the gateway to a private house on your right the track of a model railway.

Take the main track ahead and bearing slightly right which leads to a minor road. This is also a point to note as the Ardingly/Wakehurst walk (see * on map) emerges from the stile opposite. This can be used to form an even longer walk by linking the two walks together. However you must turn left for the four mile route and walk down this quiet road.

*** In about 400 yards look to the left for a stile and gate near a house on the left and enter the field. Walk forward as far as the corner of a fence and fingerpost then turn left to follow slightly to the right of the line of overhead wires to a fingerpost and stile leading into "Great Wood". Go forward a few paces to meet a wider path and bear left to follow the path to a footbridge and stile leading onto a lane by a gate.

(**) Go through the gate and continue down the lane to a crossing track. Turn right into the field. The fingerpost here is incorrect and too far to the right. The correct line of the path is diagonally across the field with the overhead wires pole on your right.

As you approach the pole, look ahead to a tall hedge. At the left hand end of this hedge is another fingerpost which points left. Walk to this fingerpost and then along the line of one or two large trees here to a stile leading into a wood. This path slopes gently down to a long wooden walk-way across a boggy area and comes to a wide firm track where you turn left.

Follow this bridleway for nearly half a mile. Look left for a wooden fingerpost indicating a path into woodland on your left. This bends to the right and comes to another walk-way. Notice the very rusty colour of the stream, a sign of iron. There is also a clear water spring here but is often covered with the lush undergrowth. At the end of the walk-way the path has several steep steps and continues upward passing a steep drop to the left.

You will soon reach a path off to the left. This is an alternative slightly longer path which winds through woodland and comes to the bank of the large lake you passed at the beginning of the walk. It emerges at the gate and stile you particularly noticed earlier. From there retrace your steps back to the Half Moon and on to the lay-by and car park.

It is shorter, however, and more suitable for those on the longest walk, to continue up the steep path to the top where you go through a kissing gate into a field. Continue ahead and pass close to Balcombe House on the right then straight on to an iron kissing gate into the lane where the Half Moon is round the corner to your right.

To complete the longest walk go back to the beginning of this one for instructions to finish the full circle at * from the Half Moon pub.

