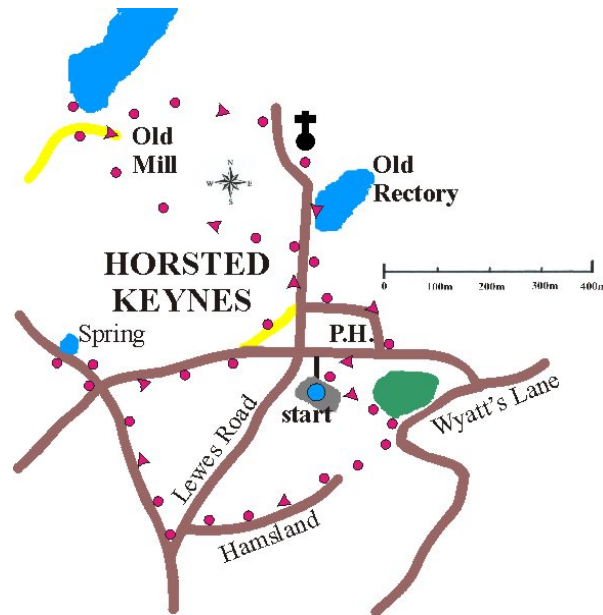


HORSTED KEYNES VILLAGE

Time: It will take about 1¾ hours and does involve a couple of steep hills – so take it gently and enjoy the village.

Starting Point: Our stroll starts from the free car park near the Post Office, just besides the Royal British Legion Club in the centre of the village.



From the car park walk back towards the entrance and turn immediately right past the old chapel following the Sussex Border Path to walk down the narrow lane past the rear entrance to Bay Tree Cottage.

Horsted Keynes was known in Saxon times simply as 'Horsted' – a place where horses are kept. After The Conquest the manor passed into the hands of a great Norman baron - Ralph de Cahaigues, who had fought with William at Hastings – and the village became 'Horsted de Cahaigues'. The anglicised version of the baron's name was pronounced "canes" and this is how the village name should still be said.

Continue walking to pass the cricket ground on your left and tennis courts on the right and reach the corner of Wyatt's Lane, opposite Buckhurst Place. Turn right at this point to follow the footpath along the track of Bonfire Lane.

As the path leads out onto Hamsland continue straight ahead along this suburban road to its T-junction with Lewes Road. You must now turn briefly left past the pillar-mounted letterbox and then in 20 m turn right along Sugar Lane. Go past Jeffries and Boxes Lane to reach the crossroads besides Ludwell Grange. Continue ahead down Waterbury Hill at this point and in 75m reach Ludwell Spring.

This natural chalybeate spring was renowned as a cure for 'the plague' as early as the 1300's and was visited by pilgrims during the Great Plague of 1666. It has been nicely restored by three local volunteers.

After visiting the spring retrace your steps uphill and at the crossroads turn left and walk towards the centre of the village keeping to the right hand side of the road. In 300m, on reaching Leighton Road on your left cross carefully over the road and follow the sign towards 'School & Church' and in a further 100m turn left down Church Lane.

It was near here, on 24th May 1888, that one of the first 'traffic' accidents occurred when an elderly couple from the village were tragically killed by a horse drawn carriage.

Approaching the bottom of the dip, immediately after passing a house called 'Timbers', look carefully for a fingerpost on the left indicating a narrow footpath between two houses. Turn left and follow this path down through a very pleasant meadow.

In the early part of the last century the church clock away to your right, became a great visitor attraction. Every three hours it would play a series of tunes – including 'Abide with me' and 'Rule Britannia'!

Eventually enter the woods and pass a small pond to your right; go through a kissing gate and, 150m after this, follow the fingerpost straight ahead as the footpath crosses a steep farm track. On crossing the little rise ahead emerge at a four-fingered post on a broad track. Cross straight over here to admire the lake to your right. If you are not disturbing the anglers this is a nice place to rest a moment and relax in this tranquil spot.

Now retrace your steps to the four-fingered post and turn left along the broad drive towards The Old Mill House. Walk to the left of the beautiful garden and buildings pausing to look at the mill wheel on the side of the mill itself.

There has been a water mill here for nearly a thousand years although the present Mill House was only built as recently as 1450! The overshot water wheel was fed from a series of millponds running down from Broadhurst Lake near the church and it was still in commercial use up to 1951, producing flour for the local bakers. The wheel you see is still lovingly maintained in working order by its present owner.

Continue now as the path narrows slightly and begins to climb. At the top of the hill, on reaching the tarmac road which marks the route of the West Sussex Border Path, cross straight over towards the shingled spire of the church. Walk up the narrow gravel path in front of Spring Cottage to emerge into the churchyard of St Giles.

Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, is buried here and his family grave is on the far side of the church, easily spotted by a three-sided, well-trimmed hedge.

This beautiful church is unusual in two immediately visible ways; firstly it sits below the modern centre of the village and secondly its alignment is distinctly offset from the usual east-west line. The explanation for both would appear to be that the first Christian church was built here on a Pagan site where two ancient trackways crossed and that it was originally aligned, as the Pagan temple would have been, to face the rising sun at the summer solstice.

Inside there is a wealth of treasures to explore. Look for the brass of the 'headless lady' in the south wall of the nave and the little Crusader figure in 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 you'll see that Henry died in March 1715 but was not born until December 1715 – 9 months after his death!

On leaving the church head south down the delightful rose-lined path and pass under the wrought iron archway to reach Church Lane. Continue ahead past 'High Trees' going slightly downhill. At the bottom of the dip on your left, clearly visible across the lovely lake is the Old Rectory with its resident swans.

Now retrace your steps up the hill and at the first road junction (where there is a welcome bench) turn left continuing to follow Church Lane. This soon brings you out onto The Green where a right turn leads to the welcoming sight of The Green Man. The Post Office and car park are a little further along on the other side of the road.

Your visit to this most delightful village can be made into a full day out by visiting the Bluebell Railway at Horsted Keynes Station, which is just 1½ miles away. There is a picnic area there and, of course, the opportunity to ride on one of the many steam trains on the longest section of working steam railway in the country. Call 01825-722370 for their automated timetable.

This walk was researched and written for Mid Sussex District Council by Footprints of Sussex who lead local guided walks throughout the year. www.footprintsofsussex.co.uk

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