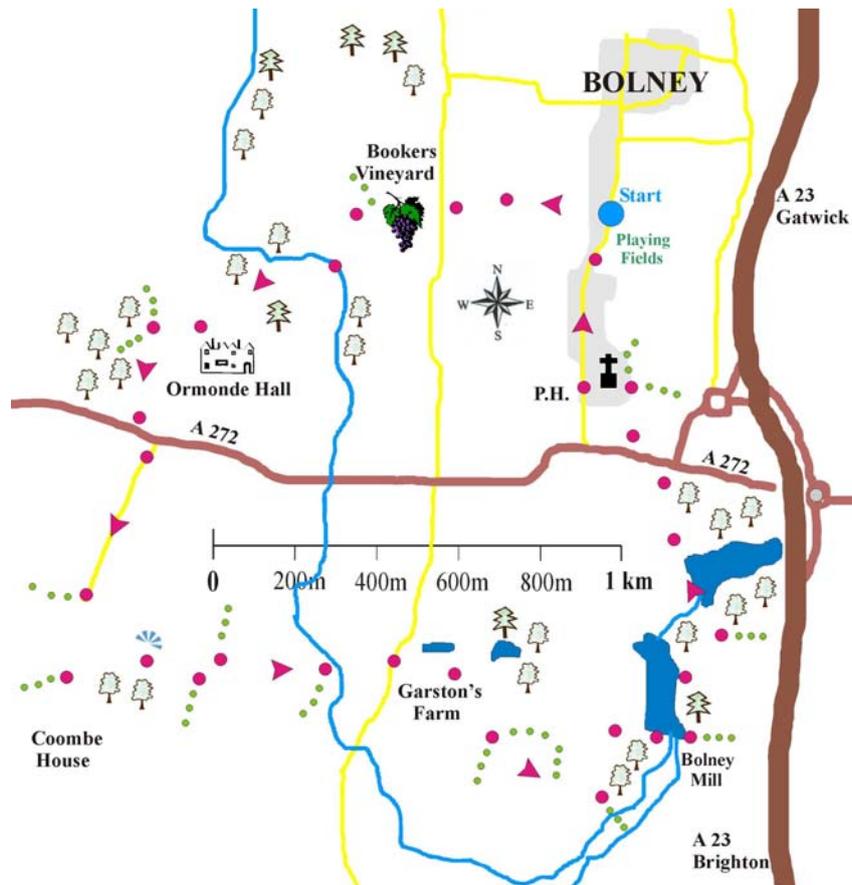


Bolney

- Start & Finish:** Public car park by the recreation ground in the main street of Bolney
- Distance:** 4 miles (6 kms) Allow 2 hours.
- Terrain:** A relatively level area of vines, orchards and mixed farmland with a delightful wooded section besides the mill ponds.
- Stile Count:** Six
- Toilets:** In the car park at Bolney, or see below.
- Refreshments:** The Eight Bells Inn opposite the church.



From the car park turn left, cross the road and head slightly downhill. In only 50m after passing the house called 'Leacroft' turn right to follow the footpath fingerpost between a hedge on your left and a high brick wall on your right.

Bolney takes its name from two Saxon words, meaning 'Bolla's Island'. It was probably high ground surrounded by marsh and dominated by the Bolla Tribe. During recent excavations under the main street Saxon road timbers were found suggesting this was an old route into St. Leonard's Forest to the north.

This path is pleasant and straight and in 400 m exits onto a tarmac road. Across the road there are two drives leading ahead. Take the left hand one and walk down between the vines.

This is Bookers Vineyard, established in 1972. The present 23 acres are planted with 9 varieties of grape – predominantly Pinot Noir, Chardonnay and

Pinot Gris. Winemaker Samantha Linter has won several prizes here in both national and international competitions and you are very welcome to call in to the new wine shop and taste some of Sam's recent vintages. Why not buy a bottle or two and pick them up later?

Continue the walk along the drive to the left of the main house. On passing the gateposts of Bookers Farmhouse ignore the path to the right and continue ahead to swing left in front of the house and cross a stile besides a wooden gate. Head diagonally down the small grassy field at the bottom of which you cross a stile and then a stone bridge over a small stream. Turn right into the next field. In the right hand corner look carefully for a gap in the hedge which leads to a stile into a large open field. Turn half left to cross the centre of the field and cross a stile in the far corner and then follow the hedgeline for a further 20m to exit over a stile, besides a fingerpost, onto a tarmac drive. Turn right along the drive. There is a delightful row of tall lime trees here, which don't quite hide the house to your left.

These limes form a beautiful avenue and in July the heady fragrance of their flowers attracts many bees making the trees important in honey production. The grand house behind is Ormonde Hall, shown on early maps as a simple farmhouse dating back to the 15th cent. The Horsham Stone roof sits atop the original building, which has clearly been much enlarged and restored. It is now a delightful private residence.

On reaching the next tarmac drive turn left, heading south and continue down to the A 272. Crossing very carefully, turn left then immediately right down a road leading to Coombe House. Pass Purvey's Farm and walk ahead through the gates of the private road to the top of the rise. Just before the large house turn left to follow a footpath fingerpost leading along the top edge of a field.

To your left there is now a pleasant view of the walk you have covered so far. The main road almost forms a clear line between the Low & High Wealds with their quite different geologies - as clay gives way to sand and the vegetation changes from tall, strong trees to the smaller bushes of holly, rhododendron and hawthorn.

The path makes a detour around the wooded pond to the corner of the field where there is a large gate. Turn left and follow the hedge on your right. In a further 100m ignore the first fingerpost right and walk on for another 20m to the next fingerpost and here turn right through a metal gate. You should now be in a field with a large electricity pylon. Walk between the hedge and the pylon and cross a solid stile into the next field. Pass through a gate and cross over the stream, then continue ahead to another gate onto the public road. Cross straight over and walk up the concrete drive leading to Garston's Farm. Enter the farmyard and, after passing through the next metal gate, turn immediately right to walk past the beautifully proportioned, tile-hung farmhouse and the timber-framed granary.

The substantial main building is an architectural delight, although its external appearance gives no clue as to its true history. At its centre is a 22-foot medieval hall built in the 1400's and still very much intact. Around and above this the house was extended in Elizabethan times with the 'modern' staircase only being added later in the 1650's. The granary you pass besides the house is perhaps most noticeable for the medieval door on the upper story. This 16th cent. nail-studded door probably came from the old house and still retains its original iron handle.

On joining a gravel drive, swing left to follow it through the hedgeline. Follow this obvious track ahead, ignoring all crossing paths to reach the converted barn at the

southern end of a line of tall trees. In front of the barn - before the trees - turn left and follow their line northwards. At the T-junction of paths turn right to pass besides the lake.

**This is the lower of the two original Bolney Mill Ponds and a watermill stood here throughout the 1700's. In 1903 the renowned Sussex historian, E.V. Lucas, stood here and remarked: -
" The reverberation of the sound of the eight bells of Bolney coming off the water is peculiarly striking". Today much of this beauty is sadly lost to the noise of the motorcar on the A23.**

At the corner of the lake turn left to follow the footpath heading north again. After 300m, at the T-junction of paths in the woods, take the left turn to pass between the upper and lower lakes.

At various times, the reed beds here are home to Swans, Canada Geese, Coot and occasionally a visiting Cormorant coming up from the coast. Sit quietly and watch awhile.

The broad and pleasant track leads out of the wood back to the A272. Cross carefully to the nursery side and turn left along the pavement. In 50 m follow the first metal footpath sign to the right, which leads up a tarmac drive to the church. At the top of the drive take the path into the churchyard.

The 11th century church of Mary Magdalene is well worth a visit. John Bolney built the tower in 1536 and it now houses a very rare full peel of eight bells. Together the eight bells weigh just over 3 tons. To the left of the door beneath the tower is an inscription in the stone reading "This stepl is 66 foot". Look also for a scratch sundial at chest height in the south wall of the nave, just where it narrows into the chancel. A stick placed in the centre hole would form a simple sundial giving the time for the next mass or bell ringing. On this south side of the graveyard you will also see the strange 'Barrel Graves' dating back to the 1600's. No other church in England has so many of these unique and extraordinary features.

After visiting the church continue along the path and at the fork keep left to cross a millstone in the path just before the splendid lychgate. A second millstone is crossed before the steps lead down to the main street and the welcoming sight of the Eight Bells Inn. Turn right from here past Walnut & Well Cottage, home to 16th. century charcoal burners, and a five minute stroll will return you to the recreation ground car park.

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

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