

"EIGHTEEN ACRE", AVERY'S WOOD AND POUNDSBRIDGE

Walk: 3¾ miles

Time: approx 1½ hours

Avery's Wood is most attractive, particularly in the springtime with sunlight filtering through the new leaves and masses of bluebells in April/May. Later in the walk, from the fields after Cooper's Lane, there is a beautiful view across the valley to Smarts Hill and Penshurst and, when corn is growing, skylarks can be heard singing overhead. The walk next passes through a small hamlet which once comprised of Hamsell Farm and which is at about the half way stage. There is a similar view across the valley from the next field and after this there is approximately ½ mile walk along the lane to Hickman's Farm to return via Avery's Wood and "The Eighteen Acre".

For a shortened version of this walk - approximately 2½ miles - see later.

1. With your back to the lych-gate outside the Church turn right and proceed along Penshurst Road, round the right hand bend and continue for just over 100yds when, at the end of the high hedge on the left is a sign stating "Public Footpath leading to Bullingstone Lane". Here, in the narrow gap is a metal gate incorporating the letters HHR on top, pass through this and continue the length of the path (WT76), past a path crossing and at the end you will arrive at a stile. Over this and across the field known as "The Eighteen Acre" and on reaching the other side you will come to a further stile. Cross this, and continue along the path with fences on both sides until at its end you meet Bullingstone Lane.

2. Turn right and, with "The Old Farmhouse" with a thatched barn on you right, continue for 100yds until you find on your left a pair of old timber framed semi-detached cottages, the second of which is "Holly Cottage". Between this and the next property, "Old Bullingstone" (it too with a thatched barn) is a "Public Footpath" finger post.

3. Follow this over the stile and down a narrow path and after 40yds the path divides - take the right hand fork (WT74). Down the steep slope and at the bottom you will find a wooden bridge with single handrail over a stream. Continue along this path (in spring the bluebells here are a picture) and after a while there is a steep up gradient. At the "top" it bends right and then a little further up when reaching the actual top it bends left. Along this, with an old metal agricultural fence along its left and a hedgerow on the right until you meet a stile, over this and diagonally to the right following the path through the field to the next stile, over this, and diagonally left across this second field to another stile in the corner with a pretty pond behind the hedge to its right. Over the stile and turn right and, with the pond on your right and another virtually dry one on your left after 50yds there is yet another stile with a lane and T junction on the other side.

People wishing a shorter walk - approximately 2½ miles in all - should return at this point.

4. Cross the lane and proceed ahead down Cooper's Lane, with "Little Hickman's" farm on your right, for about 250yds. Where the lane bends to the left there is an open gate on the right leading into a field. Follow the direction of the "Public Footpath" finger post diagonally through this and down to the right (SR470). Ahead is a beautiful view across the valley to Smarts Hill and to its right is Penshurst. Continue through the field - in summer, if corn is growing, listen to the skylarks - then through the gap and into the next field, bear slightly to the right to a gap in the hedge about one third of the way down with yet another stile. Cross this and continue, this time diagonally left, through this third field to a stile in the hedge with a lane on the other side. This is Cooper's Lane again.

Turn right and walk along the lane until after a short distance you will come upon a hamlet which at one time comprised principally of Hamsell Farm and its associated buildings.

You are now about half way through the walk.

5. Continue past the last house on the left, "The Sheiling" and, ignoring the footpath on the left running down beside it, proceed along the road for about 125yds when you will see on the right in the hedge a "Public Footpath" finger post and squeeze stile leading into a field. Take this path (SR469) and walk uphill by the hedge.

Note: Poundsbridge Church, a small attractive church still in use and with services held each month is only 175yds further along Cooper's Lane, and some walkers may wish to make a short detour to see it.

6. At the top of the field, again a lovely view over your shoulder, there is a metal gate leading into a lane. If you look straight across the lane, in the distance you can see the edge of Speldhurst village and some of the houses at the end of Southfields and Ferbies.

7. Turn right and proceed along the lane for about ½ mile until you come to Hickman's Farm on your left and immediately after, a pond. At the other end of the pond is a "Public Footpath" finger post and stile. You are back at the stile and road junction described at the end of paragraph 3 above, with Cooper's Lane now on your right.

8. Turn left over the stile and return by the outward route described in paragraphs 1 to 3 above.