

## AVERY'S WOOD, POUNDSBRIDGE AND THE SPOTTED DOG

Walk: 5 miles

Time: approx 2½ 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 Smart's Hill and Peshurst 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".

**1.** With your back to the lych-gate outside the Church turn right and proceed along Peshurst 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. Towards 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.

**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 Smart's Hill and to its right is Peshurst. 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.

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.

**5.** Immediately after the house on the left, "The Sheiling" is a Public Footpath finger post indicating a footpath on the left running down beside the house. Take this and after 150yds at the bottom there is a stile. Cross this and follow the path curving right and left and then across the field until on the far side you reach a path by the river (River Medway). Turn right, cross the stile in the corner of the field and follow the path by the side of the river through the next field, then passing over another stile/through a gate until after about 150yds there is a metal bridge across the river.

**6.** Cross the bridge and keeping to the left of the field continue for 100yds until you arrive at a metal gate with a stile beside it. Take the cart track behind these for 200yds, passing a small pond on the way (People familiar with the area for a while will remember an old cottage "Wildboars" on the right here which was demolished some years back but its overgrown garden remains behind the overgrown hedges). At the end the track opens out and curves round to the left and enters the farmyard of "Nashes Farm". Go into the farmyard with barns on the right and farmhouse on the left until you reach the barn facing you at the other end where the track curves to the right out of the farmyard. Follow this with fields on both sides, and ignoring a footpath on the left continue for 250yds until there is another footpath on the left immediately before a cottage. Take this and continue up the side of the field for 100yds until you reach a stile and a road behind. (B2188 Fordcombe to Peshurst).

**7.** Cross the road, turn left and after only a few yards on the right are a few steps. Up these steps and over the stile on the left and, following the path curving to the right, continue up through the steep field. At the top is a further stile, behind which a short path leading to a road (Smart's Hill). Turn right and on your left is a car park and 50yds up on the right is the "Spotted Dog".

**8.** Return by the same route until you cross the metal bridge in **5** above. Rather than turning right to follow the outward journey back, proceed straight ahead across the field and after about 100yds you reach a ditch and hedge

and, with these on your left continue following the path in this same field for a further 150yds until you reach a gate at the end. Through this and turning right follow the path diagonally across the field passing oak trees in the middle until in the far corner is a stile and gate. Past these and up the cart track with Poundsbridge Church on your right until after 50yds there is a road (Coopers Lane). Turn right and proceed along the road for 250yds until on the left in the hedge is a Public Footpath finger post and squeeze stile leading into a field. Take this path (SR469) and walk uphill by the hedge.

**9.** 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.

**10.** 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.

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