



Pulborough Brooks

Distance: 5¾ km=3½ miles

easy walking

Region: West Sussex

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Refreshments: Pulborough Brooks, Pulborough

Map: Explorer 121 (Arundel) *but the map in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems, changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Woodland, high hills, views, water, wildlife

In Brief

Pulborough Brooks is a flood plain of the River Arun and its water meadows are a prime site, run by the RSPB, for viewing winter visitors, including ducks, geese and various waders, some very rare and causing excitement throughout the county. There are also dry-habitat birds such as firecrests, chiffchaffs, and ringed plovers. The site has a café and shop (neither requiring the entrance fee), plus various lookouts and nature trails. You will usually see a large flock of white doves that inhabit the roof of the building.

This walk makes use only of the public footpaths, beginning at the free car park. Visiting the site is optional, for an entrance fee, but highly recommended. During a cursory visit to the town, there is a pub for a refreshment break, **closed Mondays** (to enquire at the *Oddfellows Arms*, ring 01798-879733).

July 2026: This walk was compromised because of a “closed bridge” on the return leg from Pulborough. It seems to be clear now as the W.Sussex “Path Closures” website makes no mention of it.



Because the river floods in winter, you may prefer to reserve this walk for the dry seasons. At other times, you may need wellies to get around, picturesque though the landscape is. In the summer it is completely dry.

There are some sections with nettles and scratchy undergrowth, especially in high summer, so shorts are not recommended. The walk is ok for your dog too, but please note that there are some rare breeds of shy cattle grazing the water meadows.

The walk begins at the Pulborough Brooks car park, West Sussex, postcode **RH20 2EL**, www.w3w.co/loitering.enjoy.education. A small parking charge applies. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

The Walk

- 1 Starting in the car park of Pulborough Brooks RSPB Nature Reserve, at the end of the concrete, opposite a fingerpost and by a welcome sign for the *Wildart Trail*, take a footpath marked *church*. After some woodland, the path runs beside a wire fence and reaches a junction of grass paths. Turn **left** here. On your right is Wiggonholt Church, belonging to the little community of that name. The church is definitely worth a visit. (To access it, go straight ahead over a stile and turn **left**.)

Tiny Wiggonholt church is unusual in having no dedication. It is almost unchanged from when it was built in the 1100s. A doorway was added in the 1200s and some windows in the 1400s (not the glass of course which never survives so long). The interior is a single room (no chancel or aisles) and the church is built of rubble.

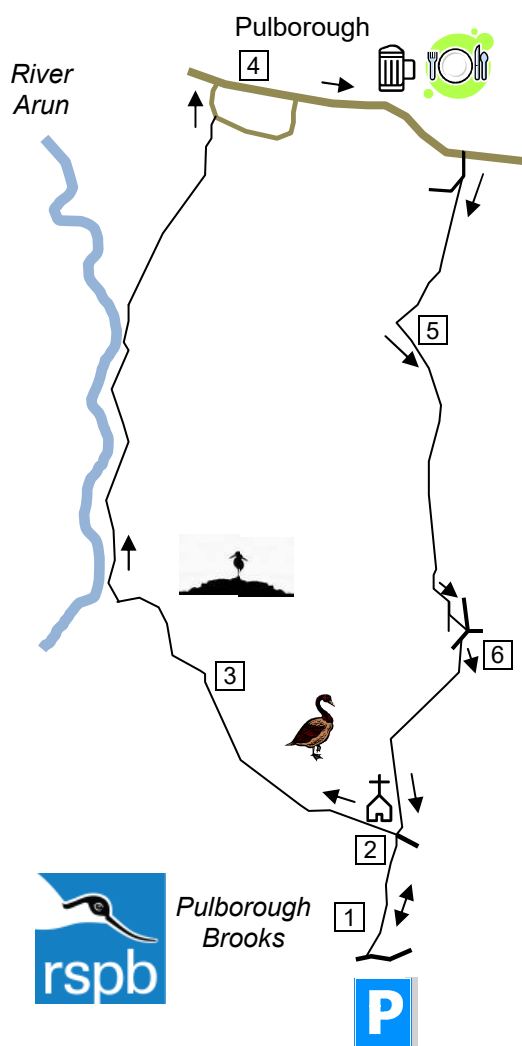
- 2 Continue past the church on your right, past a large wooden gate on your left and go through a small wooden gate ahead. **You are now in the RSPB nature reserve and you must stay on the footpath that traverses it.** At a crossing, go straight over through a wooden swing-gate. Go straight across this very pleasant meadow, cutting the right-hand corner, with great views of the South Downs to your left. At the other side, veer **right** past a fingerpost, go through a wooden swing-gate and straight ahead across the centre of the next meadow. At the other side, go through a wooden swing-gate and veer **left**, as indicated by a fingerpost. Yet another swing-gate takes you into suddenly out into the reedy wetlands. The town of Pulborough is stretched out ahead, with the square tower of St Mary's church perched on the hill to the left.

- 3 Your path goes straight ahead at first. It quickly veers left in the direction of the church and wheel left a little more to a long bank visible ahead. This is a dyke of the River Arun. When you reach it, go up the bank and turn **right** along the riverside. A small wooden gate takes you over a tributary. **There are paths down on your left close to the river if you wish to look out for the wildlife.** A glance back gives you fine view of the South Downs.



The River Arun may get its name from the British Celtic word "Arno" meaning "run", "go", or "flow". It rises in St Leonards Forest and flows down through Arundel* to the sea at Littlehampton*. The River Rother* flows into it just outside Pulborough. In the 1800s it was linked with the River Wey via the Wey-Arun Canal* enabling shipments direct from London to the south coast. (* See other walks in this series at all these locations.)*

After 600m or so, your path goes over a long wooden bridge with metal rails and up a bank to a 3-way fingerpost. Ahead of you are two paths leading to the town: take the **right**-hand path, the slightly narrower option. **The wispy**



grass here is home to numerous nesting larks in summer. Head for a line of weatherboard houses as your path goes by an unneeded wooden bridge. You arrive at a modern kissing-gate and your path twists left and right over a small bridge and up beside a garden fence to a residential road. Turn **left** and follow the road up to the main road in Pulborough. (You can also turn right on the less interesting residential road.) Turn **right** on the road.

*Pulborough is a large village built along a ridge and consequently long and narrow, with the church built on the highest point, near where an impressive castle once stood (now just an earthwork). The village was a vital centre in Roman times as it stood on the main highway, Stane Street, between Chichester and London. This walk does **not** do it justice at all and it is well worth exploring further (search for "Pulborough history walk").*



- 4 Continue through Pulborough, passing several interesting buildings, passing the *Oddfellows Arms*, going round a double bend. As the road straightens, opposite a sign for *Lakeside Lodge*, your route is **right*** at a footpath sign on a tarmac drive for Brookgate Farm. Having turned right on the footpath, go 50m and leave the drive as it turns right towards a house, to take a narrow path through trees straight ahead. A stile takes you into a large pasture. Keep straight on along the left-hand edge next to a ditch. At the other side, go through a modern kissing-gate, over a bridge* and through another kissing-gate. You are now back in Pulborough Brooks.

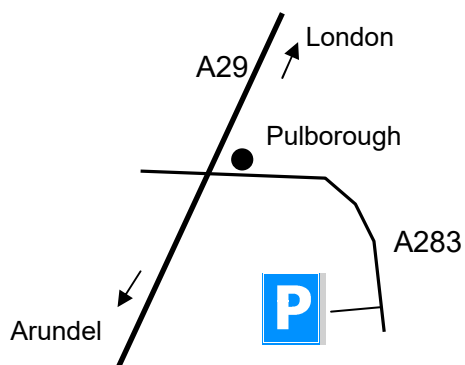
[*This footpath was marked as "closed" in July 2026 due to several broken and rotted pieces on the bridge; there's no longer a mention on the W.Sussex website, so we assume it's clear now; anyway, it may well be passable with caution on foot; feedback please!]

- 5 Follow the path along the left-hand edge of the water meadow and over a stile (or through a large wooden gate). Your path now runs through willows with a stream and the wetlands on your right, then between wild hedges. After nearly 400m, you emerge via a (usually open) large wooden gate or a stile, with a house ahead. After a wooden gate, you pass the house, *Banks Cottage*, on your left. *This fine old stone cottage with its steep slated roof is also a B&B.* Follow the edge of the garden, ignoring a private stile. Just before your path goes up a steep sandy bank, turn **left** by a fingerpost through a wooden swing-gate. *Don't miss this turning!* This sunken path takes you up steps to the head of a T-junction of tracks. Turn **right** as directed by a 2-arm fingerpost.

- 6 You pass a horse pasture on your left. Before the track curves right towards a metal gate, turn **left** at a 2-arm fingerpost and go through a modern kissing-gate into a meadow. Immediately keep **right**, going round a small fenced enclosure, and walk along the **right**-hand edge of the horse pasture. In the top right corner, go through a small metal gate into the next beautiful green pasture, still keeping to the right-hand edge. At the far end, go through a modern kissing-gate and veer a fraction left to go along the left-hand side of a narrow meadow. On your right are the few houses, farm and church that constitute the hamlet of Wiggonholt. Go through a wooden swing-gate under a large oak to a tarmac drive. Cross the drive, go over a stile to the left of a small wooden gate and keep straight ahead along a grassy path. Now retrace your outward journey, through trees and back to the car park where the walk began.

Getting there

By car: Pulborough is on the A29 trunk road but Pulborough Brooks are actually in the small village of Wiggonholt off the A283 just south east of the town.



By bus/train: Pulborough Railway Station is more than 1 km from the walk but there are frequent buses into the centre of Pulborough from where you can begin the walk, starting at section 4.

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