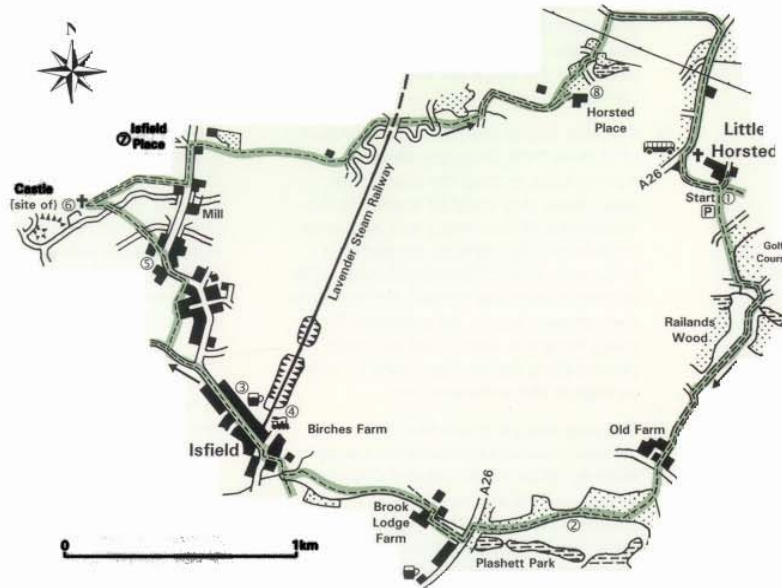




# "Two Churches with NO VILLAGES"

This walk links the churches of Little Horsted and Isfield, **two impressive Manor houses, a hunting park** and a Norman castle. Trying to find the original villages, however, is a much more difficult task.



**Length 6 Miles = 10 Kilometres**  
Approximately 4 hours – Grade 3

**START** – Little Horsted Church (O.S. Explorer 16 – NGR 471184)

**ACCESS** – Car – Car park adjacent to Little Horsted School (accessed off A26 Uckfield to Lewes Road)

Bus – 129 and 729

Train – Uckfield station (2 miles)

**PUBLIC TOILETS** – Nil

**REFRESHMENTS** – Pubs at Rose Hill and Isfield

**CAUTION** – There are two crossings of the A22 on this walk. Beware of golf balls on the East Sussex National Course.

6  
Miles



# "Two Churches with NO VILLAGES"

- In the Domesday Book (1086), there was a manor here of about 70 inhabitants in 15 families. By 1524 the village was down to 8 families. Today there is no sign of their houses and the "village" now seems to comprise the church, school and the East Sussex National Golf Course. So where did the village go? The answer comes later on this walk.
- The walk passes along the boundary bank of Plashett Park. Once, this was topped by a paling fence to keep the deer in the park, where they could be hunted by the Archbishop of Canterbury and his friends. Later in the 18th century the park was landscaped in the "Capability Brown" style. A chain of lakes was created and specimen trees planted around the landscape. The paling fence was demolished and trees planted along the boundary bank to form an edge to the landscaped park.
- The long, straight street lined with Victorian houses, represents the second move by Isfield village. Once the railway arrived in 1858, this new form of transport superceded the impassable winter roads (unsurfaced at this time) and the village migrated towards the new station, forming the linear village plan of today. Note the station hotel, built with the railway and now named "The Laughing Fish" – a unique name.

- The closure of the railway as part of the "Beeching cuts" left the line terminating at Uckfield. Today Isfield station and the track northwards have been restored as part of the Lavender Line steam railway.

- The older properties in this area mark the first move by Isfield village, resited on a hill overlooking the church and the river, but now above flood level

and with communications based on roads, not on the river. "The Old Farmhouse" represents a typical home of this period, comprising a medieval house with later Tudor chimney and tilehanging.

- Today, only the isolated church marks the first site of Isfield village. It was sited close to the transport route and drinking water supply formed by the River Ouse. A moated Norman motte and bailey castle guarded both the junction of the rivers Ouse and Uck and the crossing of the Ouse by the remains of the Lewes to London Roman road. The castle fell out of use by 1280 (although the moat was re-used as a fish pond) and today only the earthworks of the castle keep company with the church.
- Isfield Place can be seen over the fields from near the church. The house was home to the Shurley family, one of whom rose to prominence as "Esquier and Cofferer to Kyng Henry ye eyght".
- On returning towards Little Horsted, the former manor house of Horsted Place can be seen on the right, now used as a hotel. It was the successive owners of this house who caused the demise of the village. Gradually they bought up land for farming or hunting until about 60% of the parish was included in their estate, squeezing out the smaller landowners, to leave the church in the isolation it finds itself in today.

4  
Miles

