

SAMUEL PALMER TRAIL

IN THE “VALLEY of VISION”



Moonlight, a Landscape with Sheep

A circular trail around the village of Shoreham and its surrounding landscape in the heart of the delightful Darent Valley.

Walk in the footsteps of British artist Samuel Palmer in the company of the artist himself! He will accompany you on your walk via the audio guide, telling you all about his time in Shoreham and the paintings he made here, inspired by the beautiful Darent Valley.

USEFUL INFORMATION

Start/end point – the walk starts and ends at the Church of St Peter and St Paul in Shoreham.

Getting there – The Samuel Palmer Trail is best reached by train. There are direct services to Shoreham from both London and Sevenoaks. It is a 5 - 10 minute walk from the station to the church where the trail begins. Shoreham is also accessible by bus from Sevenoaks and Swanley. If you have to arrive by car, please use the Shoreham village car park in Filston Lane but please be aware there are limited spaces.

Distance – 5.3 miles / 8.5km and 1.7 miles / 2.8km for the shortcut. The trail is signposted with Samuel Palmer Trail waymarks.

Time – approximately 2.5 - 3 hours and there is an option to reduce the walk to 45 mins - 1 hour by taking a shortcut after stop point 6.

Accessibility – there are steps at three locations on the trail; (1) five steps (upwards) at stop point 8, (2) four steps (downwards) at stop point 12 and (3) two large steps (downwards) on the way down from Shoreham Cross. There are two sections of road walking between points 10 and 11 and between points 11 and 12 and one road to cross after stop point 8; please take extra care. There is one stile at Redmans Lane after stop point 10.

Terrain – there are some hard surfaced paths around Shoreham village but most of the walk is on unsurfaced paths that can be muddy in wet weather and can also be uneven under foot. Some of the route follows the Darent Valley Path.

Level – there are several climbs and descents (some steep) as the walk passes between the top and bottom of the valley.

Facilities – toilets are available at Lullingstone Country Park and Shoreham Village Hall.

Refreshments – available at the pubs and tea rooms in Shoreham village and also at the country park.

The audio visual guide that accompanies the trail, spoken in the voice of Samuel Palmer, is available free of charge on the Darent Valley Trails app. The app is available on the App Store and Google Play.

Walk and leaflet devised by Victoria Bathurst and Sarah Newman. Audio script written by Victoria Bathurst.



In a Shoreham Garden © Victoria and Albert Museum, London

The Samuel Palmer Trail is part of the Darent Valley Landscape Partnership Scheme, working throughout the Darent Valley to conserve the area's rich heritage landscapes and encourage people to enjoy, explore and connect to them. For more information visit www.darent-valley.org.uk



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Front cover image - Moonlight, a Landscape with Sheep c.1831-3; Samuel Palmer 1805-1881; Tate, Purchased 1922; Photo: © Tate, London, 2018; CC-BY-NC-ND 3.0 (Unported)

Samuel Palmer (1805 – 1881) was a British artist most celebrated for the work he produced while living in Shoreham in the Darent Valley in Kent.



Self-portrait © Ashmolean Museum, University of Oxford. WA1932.211 Samuel Palmer, 'Self-portrait'

Samuel Palmer moved to Shoreham from London in 1826 at the age of 21. Inspired by the work of visionary artist William Blake, Palmer was encouraged to leave convention behind, exploring pattern and design in new ways. He was inspired by the landscape in what he called his “valley of vision” and created intense and highly original paintings in response to it. This walk will introduce you to the beautiful landscape that Palmer loved. You will also have the chance to hear about his life and work as you move from place to place.

WALK DIRECTIONS

1. From Shoreham station, make your way down to the village. Turn right out of the station and walk down Station Road, passing the golf course on your left. Follow the road around to your right and you will see the church in the corner opposite the pub. There is no pavement from the station to the village so please take extra care when walking along the road edge.
2. From the church, turn right and walk down Church Street. Shortly after the pub on the corner, you will find Ivy Cottage on your right.
3. Continue down Church Street until you reach the bridge over the River Darent. Pause before the bridge at the junction with Darent Way.
4. Turn right along Darent Way (do not cross the bridge), following the Darent Valley Path. Walk towards a large white house (Water House) with a plaque on the left-hand side of the wall.
5. Follow the small lane to the left of Water House and pause at the green.
6. Follow the path along the River Darent until you come to a small bridge after about 300 metres. Cross this and follow the path uphill, pausing at the junction with a footpath to your right. (*A shortcut back to the start of the trail is available here by walking up Mill Lane then turning left onto High Street then left onto Church Street).
7. Continue along the Darent Valley Path by taking the footpath alongside the river. Follow this for just over 1km (0.6 miles) across three fields, until you get to a wooden bench at the top of a hill.
8. Keep following the footpath for about 300 metres until you come to a hop field with hop poles/supports in the foreground and lavender fields behind.
9. Take care crossing the road and go up the steps. Turn right and follow the path alongside the fields until you reach Lullingstone Country Park. Toilets and refreshments are available here (during opening hours).
10. Follow the footpath around to your left then uphill along the waymarked path to the top of the meadow. Take a break at the top of the hill to enjoy the view.
11. Continue on the path at the top left of the meadow through the woods (black markers). Dip down and cross an area with a meadow to your right and old railings to your left. Keep heading

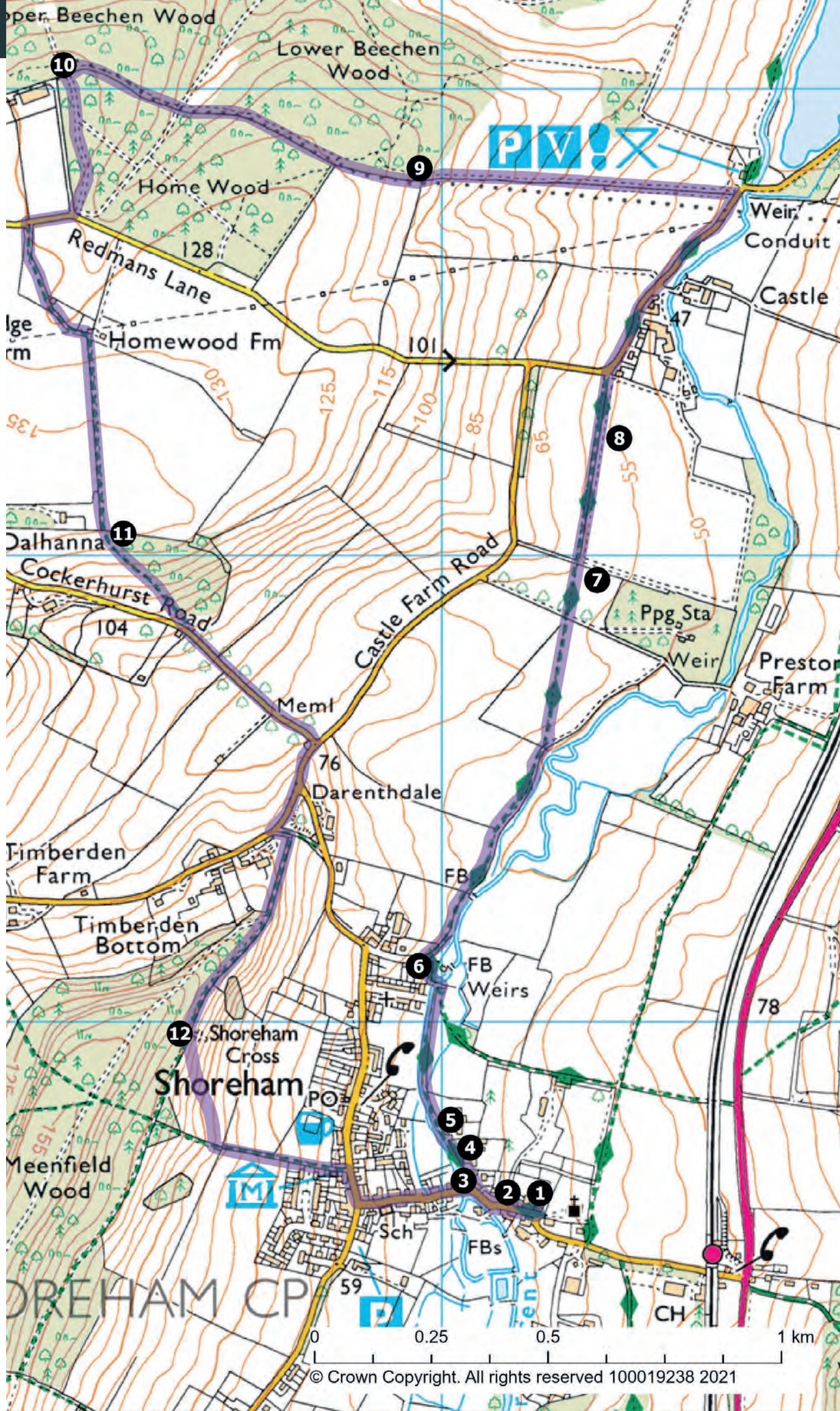


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- straight up the hill. Look out for ancient oaks on your right after about 20 metres.
12. Before getting to some agricultural buildings, take a sharp left turn along a path through a hazel grove. Follow this path until you come to a stile by a road (Redmans Lane).
 13. Take extra care when walking along the road and walk on the right hand side. Turn right after the stile along the road then after approximately 125 metres, take the first turning on your left down a driveway. Follow this and it will take you along a narrow path by a fence, soon opening up onto a field. Continue straight ahead with the hedge to your right and soon the path begins to go downhill.
 14. Pause on the hill and enjoy the amazing views over the Darent Valley, before taking the downhill path to join Cockerhurst Lane.
 15. Turn left onto Cockerhurst Lane and continue downhill. Take extra care when walking along the road. After 350 metres at the T junction with Castle Farm Road, turn right uphill and follow the road which soon becomes Shacklands Road. Continue uphill for a further 100 metres then take the footpath to your left.
 16. Continue along this path for about 15 minutes until you get to a gap in the hedge just above the Shoreham Cross (a chalk memorial etched into the hillside).
 17. From the Cross, take the diagonal path down the hill to your right, then turn left at the metal gate, through kissing gate then down the path between the hedgerows. When you emerge on to the High Street, turn right then turn left onto Church Street to return to the church or the station.

TRAIL STOPPING POINTS

- 1 Samuel Palmer arrived in Shoreham in 1826. He was a very spiritual person and enjoyed coming to the Church of St Peter and St Paul to worship. Churches and their spires featured often in his pictures and he saw the work of the divine in the natural world he loved so much. Like his mentor William Blake, Palmer pursued his vision rather than commercial success.
- 2 Palmer lodged for a short time here in Ivy Cottage when he first came to Shoreham. One of his early paintings is of the outside of the cottage in which his love of texture and foliage can be seen. He faithfully recorded all the architectural detail as well, with a few local inhabitants added for context.
- 3 Palmer made a drawing of this bridge. The remnants of the old packhorse bridge with its three arches is still apparent. The river was much broader and deeper in his day and he and his friends often bathed in it, whatever the weather!
- 4 Water House was the home of Samuel Palmer, his younger brother, their father and their nurse Mary Ward from 1828 until their departure in 1834. It was a plain red brick building in his time, with the current façade added later on. The family often had visits from members of Palmer's artistic brotherhood who called themselves "The Ancients". They enjoyed sitting by the fireside with a great pile of poetry books, drinking gunpowder tea!
- 5 Palmer and his friends gained a bit of a reputation locally for dressing in gothic clothes, wandering about playing pranks on one another at night, singing loudly and swimming in the river at all hours. Palmer missed them when they returned to London and regretted that they could not share his wonder at the exquisite changing of the seasons in this "valley of vision".
- 6 During Palmer's time in Shoreham the paper industry grew from strength to strength. This mill house was once a huge complex of buildings processing rags delivered by train from London, turning the pulp into paper. The owner of the mill became wealthy and built The Mount on the proceeds. While Palmer depended on the paper produced for his painting, he never trusted modernity and was fearful of industrialisation and change.
- 7 Palmer wandered about the fields of the valley constantly observing, drawing and absorbing. He loved moonlight in particular, attempting to catch the glowing moonlit fields in many of his works. Rather than attempting to understand astronomy, he said he preferred to leave it all a wonderful mystery.
- 8 Palmer loved this enclosed landscape, protected by hills, framed by trees and all rounded into curves. To reproduce it he used a broad range of techniques from simple pencil sketches to pen and ink (black and sepia - a reddish-brown colour), watercolour, gouache (opaque watercolour), oil and tempera (using coloured pigments mixed with egg yolk). He experimented with distorting scale and, during this period, often magnified different elements of nature.
- 9 Dramatic cumulus clouds frequently featured in Palmer's work - "piled mountains of light" as he



called them. In this elevated spot, you might be able to glimpse one hovering on the horizon.

- 10 Lullingstone Park was a favourite place of Palmer's to draw. He imagined that pilgrims on their way to Canterbury might have passed by some of these ancient oaks in the woods. Search for a few near the path that are over 500 years old - true veteran trees that would definitely have been around in Palmer's day. Take time to enjoy the "barky furrows...the muscular belly...and the twisted sinews of this Lord of the Forest".

- 11 Samuel Palmer often painted harvest scenes, with wheat fields glowing in the evening sun, celebrating the fruitfulness of the earth, with the welcoming light of a nearby cottage somewhere in the painting. This view would have been one he loved, particularly in the autumn.
- 12 Take a seat and enjoy this panoramic view over the village of Shoreham, with Otford and Sevenoaks on the horizon to your right. The hill ahead of you was one that Palmer often climbed to reach what is still a beautiful wildflower meadow in summer called Magpie Bottom.