

CUT OUT
& KEEP

Birch Grove House

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In the footsteps of the Greats

A walk around Birch Grove House in Horsted Keynes,
once home to a British Prime Minister

WORDS: Ian Wright



Take this walk around Birch Grove House in Horsted Keynes and follow in the footsteps of some of the world's greatest leaders. The Grade II-listed house, which dates back to 1926, was once the family home of the former British prime minister Harold Macmillan where he hosted American president John F Kennedy for a night in June 1963 just five months before his assassination. JFK and Macmillan are said to have discussed the Cold War during the 24-hour visit, in which the American Secret Service closed the entire village. Chaos ensued over the stay by such an important dignitary – with an eight-year-old boy reportedly arrested for running around with a toy gun while security men stopped the local TVs from working and stationed themselves up trees.

Other prominent political visitors to the house during Macmillan's time as Prime Minister included French President Charles de Gaulle, US President Dwight D Eisenhower, Soviet Communist Party leader Nikita Khrushchev and India's first Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru. ▶



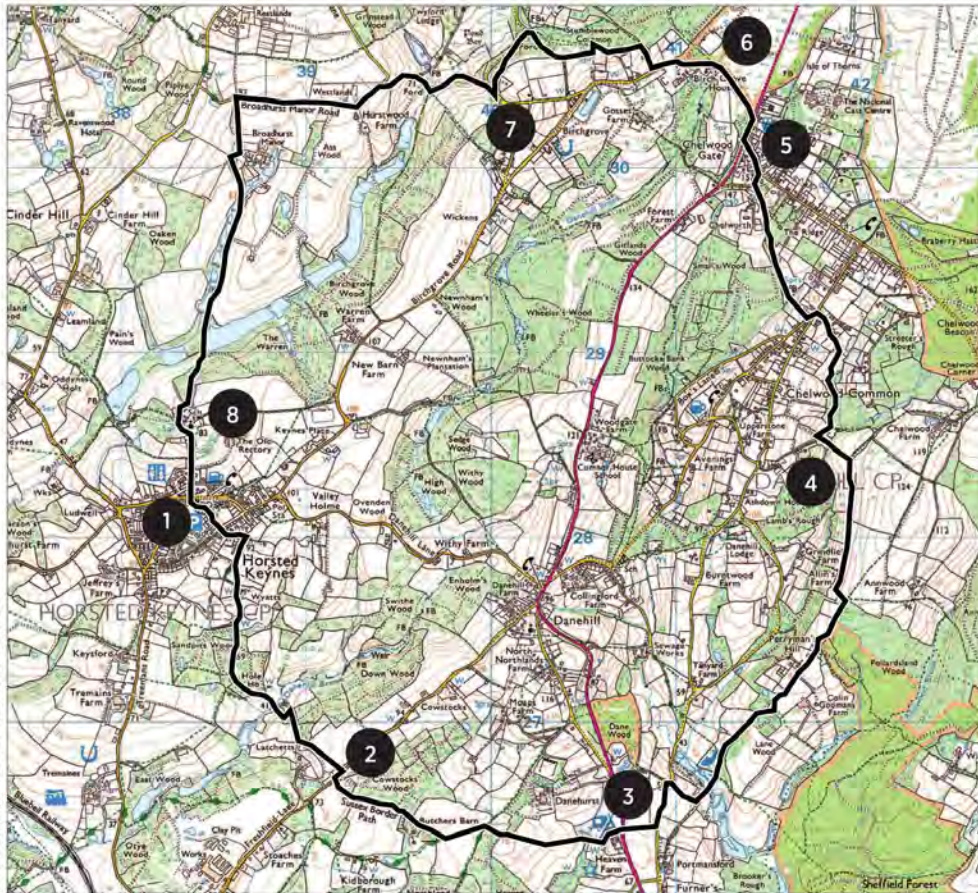
Harold Macmillan (right) and American President John F Kennedy at the Premier's Sussex home

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Membership starts from £2.50 per month and grants access to a comprehensive programme of guided walks and strolls. Non-members can take part in taster sessions. 01798 875073 (Monday to Wednesday 9am to 1pm). friendsofthesouthdowns.org.uk



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COMPASS POINTS

- Location:** Horsted Keynes.
- Distance:** Nine miles (15km).
- Terrain:** Uneven ground.
- Total ascent:** 1,180 ft (360 m).
- Where to park:** Horsted Keynes recreation ground.
- Grid reference:** TQ384282.
- Sat nav:** RH17 7AF
- What3Words:** ///apricot.access.rankings
- Map:** OS Explorer 135 *Ashdown Forest*
- Dog friendly:** Yes.
- Refreshments:** Heaven Farm or The Red Lion.

THE WALK

1: Start at Horsted Keynes village recreation ground car park. Turn right on to the Sussex Border Path and follow the path, passing Buckhurst Place on the left. Where roads to Wyatts and Milford Place diverge, continue along the access drive. At the end of the drive follow the path ahead through Sandpits Wood, down into the valley and up again, before turning left to meet an asphalt drive. Turn right and at the top of hill, take the unfenced path on the left to join Freshfield Lane at TQ392268.

2: Turn right and then left along the drive to Butcher's Barn. At the bottom of hill, fork left over the stile and follow along the edge of the righthand side of the field, swinging left. Just short of woodland, cross through the hedge gap. Walk along a broad path through woodland for 100 yards, then enter the field. Follow the field edge to the left, downhill along a broad path. On the left,

there is a Wellingtonia fir tree, which was planted to mark the Meridian Line. At bottom of the path continue to Heaven Farm. Follow a concrete track to join the A275, at TQ407264.

3: Cross the A275 and continue on the opposite side until you reach a lane. Turn left and follow the asphalt road to the sign for Frogmore Fishing Lakes. After 150 yards, turn left, pass a brown wooden fence and ponds, then cross some wooden boards to enter woodland. Continue for about 300 yards. Don't enter the drive to a house but take the path on the right with Colin Godmans Farm on the right. Exit the field, pass a large white house, then Perry Cottage, then fields on the left. Do not follow path into the open field but turn left and continue until TQ419284.

4: Turn left across some planks, cross a stile, and pass across the field into a wood. Cross the wooden bridge, go up steps and through a metal

gate. Turn right, pass a house on the left then turn left to head north through the narrow path. Continue until you reach the crossroads. Follow the road for Danehill. Turn right at Woodlands House. Cross the stile into a very narrow path which soon broadens. Pass a white house on the right then follow a narrow path through woodland to join a drive. Turn first right, then turn left to join a road leading to A275, then to the Red Lion pub at TQ41430.

5: Enter the wood opposite the pub, and head northwest for about 500 yards, before turning left to reach a road opposite the main entrance to Birch Grove House at TQ412307.

6: Join the road for about 200 yards then turn right to enter woodland. Follow the path for about 150 yards then turn left. Continue through the wood for about 600 yards then turn left to join road. Take the road for about 100 yards before taking a path on the left. This

goes uphill for about 400 yards before arriving at the junction of several roads at TQ401304.

7: Take the sharp right to follow a road with a FORD sign. Follow the road round a lefthand bend, then turn uphill. Continue past Hurstwood Farm to reach Broadhurst Manor Road. After about 500 yards, turn left, pass Broadhurst Manor and continue south for a little over a mile to reach Horsted Keynes church on left at TQ384286. The church contains a memorial to Harold and Lady Dorothy Macmillan.

8: Leave church and follow the road into Horsted Keynes back to the car park.

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