

## Beaconsfield Old Town - London End Walk

30 minutes on pavements

*Start at the Reading Room, 10-12 Wycombe End, HP9 1ND*

*Turn right, cross over the road (Windsor End), on the corner is:*

**The (Royal) Saracens Head** There are records of an inn on this site from 1242 and its name may be dated from when Richard, Earl of Cornwall, came back from the Crusades. The building was originally timber framed with a jettied upper floor. The massive dragon beam, which held up the upper floor, can be seen on the right as you enter the pub from London End. It and the many joists fitting into it once supported the corners of balconies overlooking the 'High Street'. These balconies were considered unsafe and removed in the early 1890s. Mock Tudor beams were added externally to cover the perceived boring 1545 façade. The addition of 'Royal' to the name appeared around 1887 when the inn was described as 'patronised by Royalty'. *A short walk east along the south side of London End was the once popular Puffins Tea Rooms at number 14, carry on and just beyond, at number 18, is:*

**The Old Post Office** A Georgian fronted building. Once a home for two surgeons, it later became the Post Office between 1890 and 1910, one of several sites for the Post Office in the Old Town. *Continuing along London End to:*

**Metropolitan House/ Burkes Lodge (right) and House (left)** This rendered building with its distinctive windows and a big central coach entrance was the Crown Inn, before being divided into two genteel houses in the mid-18<sup>th</sup> century. The coach entrance once led to a courtyard and stabling. The renowned highwayman, Claude Duval, frequented this inn. A man of charisma and charm, he had many women admirers who were distraught when he was hanged at Tyburn in 1670. The Old Mulberry House to the left of The Crown provided stabling and stored coach equipment. It is now a restaurant. *Continue east along the south side, passing:*

**Wendover House** Marked by oak bollards to the front, this is a beautiful 16<sup>th</sup> century timber-framed house, to which was added an 18<sup>th</sup> century façade and later a Victorian bow window. In 1840 it housed a girls' school, but by 1854 it was home to a wealthy local surgeon, Harding Rees. *Beyond this building are shops and offices until:*

**17<sup>th</sup> Century Timber Framed Cottages** The cottage walls were probably built initially of wattle and daub panels, which were replaced in the 1800s by brickwork. These are the smallest houses in Beaconsfield Old Town. *Walk further east until you reach a small drive. As you walk, look out for the carved oriental lions on each wooden divide between the shops. The origin of the lions is unknown. The small drive provided access to what were garage workshops and the Millbarn GP surgery. In 2020 these were replaced by terraced cottages and an office block. The surgery moved in 2022 to new shared premises along the A40. In the next short parade is:*

**The Old Swan or Old White Swan pub**, not to be confused with the original Swan Inn at Number 1 London End, this inn is believed to have been built at the end of the 16<sup>th</sup> century. Look through the archway just beyond The Old Swan and you will see Dunlop's motor repairs, in business here since 1998. In the 1930s, it was the site of the Old Town Service Station, serving the new motor trade.

**The White Horse** The original thatched inn on this site burnt down in 1893. Unwilling to lose his licence, the landlord continued to sell drinks from the burnt-out ruins until the new premises behind were opened in 1900. Hence the building is set back from London End. *To the left of the White Horse a short lane used to lead to:*

**The site of the Old Tower Windmill** Built in 1811 but badly damaged by storms, the windmill lost its vanes

by 1898 and was just a stump until its demolition in 1980. *Walk to the end of London End. Off the roundabout opposite is a narrow road called Minerva Way, which leads to:*

**Wilton Park** Originally one of the great estates of Beaconsfield. Owned for many years by the Du Pre Family, the White House, an 18<sup>th</sup> century Palladian-style mansion, was taken over by the War Office just before WWII. The site was used as a listening centre, gaining intelligence from prisoners of war. The White House was demolished in 1967 and replaced with a collection of buildings, including an early warning tower. Post war, the Army Language School and reconciliation meeting place was based here. Today the site is being redeveloped to provide houses. *Retrace your steps back along Minerva Way to London End to walk along the other side of the road. On the right is:*

**London End House** This set of buildings was once Bull Farm and the Bull Inn. The coaching arch is still very evident. London End House was built across the front of the farm and inn during the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Today, at the back of the furniture shop, are two adjoined barns which date from the 15<sup>th</sup> century. A shop addition west of the courtyard was built in 2020. *Continuing along London End you approach:*

**45 London End** Now Knights furniture store, this was built on the site of the Chequers Inn, which closed in 1768, becoming the Poor House until 1836. A wooden building to the rear was a men's dormitory housing 24 men. Between 1910 and 1921 the then new Victorian building became The Children's Convalescent Home. Poor children from London and refugees from Belgium recuperated here during WWI. The Home moved to White Barn on Station Road (next to Davenies School, now a garage) in 1921. *Further along the north side of London End is:*

**Kings Head House, 15/17 London End** The Former Kings Head Inn is known to have been on this site in 1507. A downpipe can be seen bearing the initials RRE 1714, dating from when Richard Rutt the Elder, owner of The Kings Head and The Saracens Head at this time, re-fronted the building. There is also a sundial. At its peak, The Kings Head had six stables and a ballroom. It ceased to be an inn in 1776 and is now offices. *Walk to the corner of London End and Shepherds Lane. Here you will find Number 1 London End, now a shop:*

**No 1 London End Wall Paintings** Buildings Number 1–13 London End were once the Swan Inn, one of the largest coaching inns in Beaconsfield. Wall paintings were discovered here during renovations in 1966, dating back to 1622, when Edmund Waller's mother, Ann Waller, owned the building. The Swan Inn closed in 1700 and became five shops. The wall paintings are now preserved in Aylesbury Museum. *Carefully cross the zebra crossings on London End and Windsor End, back to the Reading Room and the start of the walk.*