

## Beaconsfield Old Town - Windsor End Walk

40 minutes on pavements

*Start near the roundabout in front of the Reading Room, 10-12 Wycombe End, HP9 1ND:*

**The Reading Room** Beaconsfield Town Council used to meet here until the new council chambers were built in the New Town. This is now offices and occasional meeting rooms. *With your back to the Reading Room, face left and directly in front you will see some impressive stone gate posts. This is the entrance to:*

**Hall Place** A large imposing house built in 1736. In the early 1800s, it was an upmarket boys' school nicknamed 'Little House of Lords' as it attracted very aristocratic students. Remodelled in 1868, it became the Rectory and remained so until 1978 when a new, smaller Rectory was built in the garden. *Take the narrow lane on your left leading to the church and churchyard. On the right you will see the only Wealden hall house in Beaconsfield, now known as:*

**Capel House** Named after the Rector Richard Capel who died in 1500 leaving a small legacy towards building a parish hall. The overhanging first floor timbers are believed to be ships' timbers. Between 1869 and 1975 it became stabling for Hall Place, the new Rectory. The building is now two dwellings. *The short lane ends in the churchyard with the parish church on the left:*

**St Mary and All Saints Church** A church has stood here for centuries. The first vicar, William de Windsor, was appointed in 1210. Magdalen College, Oxford, purchased the right to appoint Rectors in 1707, providing income and status for their Fellows. The relationship between church and college remains today. Fellow Reverend Bowles, appointed in 1867, made substantial changes to the church from 1869 onwards, including rebuilding the tower and rehangng the eight bells, he was also instrumental in the building of the Old Church of England School and renovation of Hall Place. *Overlooking the churchyard and next to Capel House is:*

**Fitzwilliams Centre** Built in 1995 when the Reverend Mark Fitzwilliams was Rector. It replaced the Old Rectory (see 6) as a public meeting place and is used for parish and social meetings. *Continuing along from the Fitzwilliams Centre is an archway on the right leading to:*

**The Old Rectory** Built in 1534, this building was arranged around a courtyard and incorporated part of the nunnery which it replaced. The overhanging first-floor timber and plaster walls that are visible as well as the stone fireplaces and oak doors are over 450 years old. When Hall Place became the Rectory in 1868 this building fell into disrepair. The late Lord Burnham, Sir Edward Lawson (of Hall Barn), restored it in 1901 in memory of his wife, and it was restored again in 1974. The building was used for parish meetings and gatherings until the Fitzwilliams Centre was built (see 5). *Continuing still further along the lane until a T-junction ahead is:*

**Old Church of England School House (now the Masonic Centre)** In 1872, at the time of the Church and Hall Place renovations, there was a small National School in Factory Yard (see 34, *Wycombe End, Aylesbury End & Environs walk*), but it needed better facilities. A government grant and church funding financed the building of this larger public day school, which could accommodate 240 local children in mixed-age classes (Beaconsfield had mainly private middle-class boarding schools before this time). After the 1903 Education Act, the school became a Church of England school. By 1932 the older students had moved to a new secondary school west of Aylesbury End and in 1958 the younger students moved to a new school in Maxwell Road. This building then became the Beaconsfield Masonic Centre. *Walk with the churchyard on your left until you reach a car park.*

The town has two Charters, one for a town fair and another for a weekly market around the 'Four Ends.' The original town fair gained a Charter in 1269. It was held annually on Ascension Day and since 1863 continues on 10 May as the Charter Fair.

The original Tuesday Market Charter was authorised in 1255. The market operated under various Charters and took place on varying days until it all but disappeared during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. In 1982 it was revived to be held weekly on Tuesdays in the car park. *Turn right down Windsor End following the wall on the right, the boundary to Hall Barn. The Beaconsfield Rugby Club grounds are on your left. After about 150m you come to:*

**Oak Lodge** This gatehouse on the entrance drive to Hall Barn has an intricate wooden carved façade. The upper section was imported from Italy by the Ambassador of Persia, Sir Gore Ouseley, in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, when he bought Hall Barn from the Waller family. The lower section carvings from a Belgian convent were added in 1887.

**Hall Barn** (*Private residence, no access to the public*) The house was built in about 1675 by Edmund Waller. Initially Queen Anne in style, it was added to over the years but today the building is as originally designed. Many properties in the Old Town are still owned by the Hall Barn Estate. *Retrace your steps to the market car park, opposite is:*

**The Greyhound Pub (formally Ye Dogge)** A drovers' pub dating from the 17<sup>th</sup> century, it also catered for travellers. It is known that the King's Messengers journeying between Windsor and Boarstall, another royal residence near Brill, Bucks, would stop over here. Livestock was held behind the inn before going to market.

**Former Police Station, now the Magistrates' Court, Coroner's Court and Register Office** Dated 1870 on the stone plaque, one of only a few Victorian buildings in the Old Town. It was built on the site of the former maltings, which give their name to Malthouse Square, an Urban District Council housing development built in 1919 behind Windsor End. *Cross back over the road to the churchyard and walk north back towards the roundabout. On the left:*

**Waller's Tomb** In the churchyard, this impressive obelisk denotes the tomb of Edmund Waller (1606–1687), poet and parliamentarian who built Hall Barn. It was restored in 2006.

**The War Memorial** Erected in 1921 and initially sited where the roundabout is today, it was moved in the late 1930s to its present position, apparently to 'protect stray cyclists on moonless nights from cycling into it!' It is believed to be one of only two in the country to have a perpetual flame. *The walk finishes at the Reading Room past a jettied building on your left which dates from around 1600 (now an estate agent).*