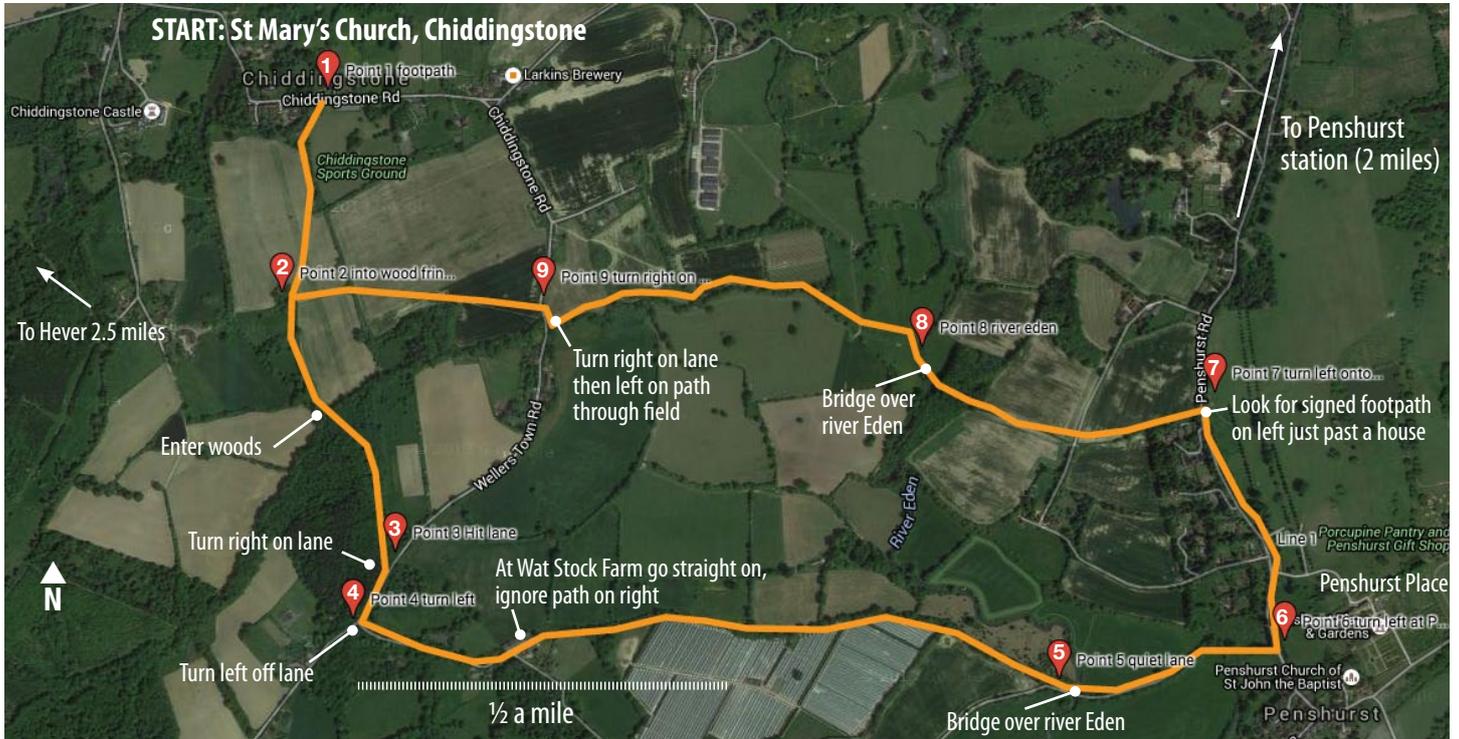


# Walk 10: Chiddingstone circular

A Kent Weald walk with views back to Ide Hill and Greensand Ridge from quiet farmland. Two great Tudor villages feature (although one's a hamlet really), as does the Eden Valley Path



**How long?** 2 hours (4.5 miles/7km)

**Public transport:** Just about doable by getting train to Penshurst or Leigh (on Victoria-Tonbridge line), or Hildenborough (Charing Cross-Tonbridge line) then a cab (Hildenborough Taxis or Green Line cars) to Chiddingstone (or Penshurst village, two miles from station from where you can also start the walk, it being circular). The New Enterprise 232 bus runs from Edenbridge to Hever, Chiddingstone and Penshurst

**By car:** Best way from south east London is to drive through Beckenham, Keston, Biggin Hill, Brasted, Ide Hill then past Bough Beech reservoir (an excellent side excursion) to Chiddingstone. Seventy minutes' drive from Peckham, East Dulwich, Herne Hill; one hour from Crystal Palace.

**Parking:** easy, in Chiddingstone near church

**Start of walk:** footpath marked 'sports ground' next to path for 'Chiding-stone' a few metres east of the church on the south side of the road

**Steep slopes?** None

**Walk highlights:** Two authentic Tudor villages with big houses (Penshurst Place is where some of Wolf Hall was shot and was once owned by Henry VIII). Lovely, open, quiet countryside, some woods, good views, oast houses, the Chiding-Stone boulder, good birdwatching, Eden river, meadows and wildflowers.

Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map

**A**rrive at the Tudor hamlet of Chiddingstone, by the church. Note the wonderful old buildings and then the two footpaths; one marked 'Chiding-Stone' and the other 'sports fields'. Start by having a quick peep at the Chiding Stone, just 100 yards down the eponymous path. It's a lump of sandstone apparently used in ancient times as a seat of judgement, from where locals could be 'chided'. Geddit? True, allegedly. It's not exactly spectacular (if you want proper rocks go to Harrison's Rocks at Groombridge). Retrace your steps then take the other path marked 'sports ground'.

**Point 1 (start)-2: 800m.** Take the sports ground footpath across road from churchyard. This emerges from trees into a field. Go downhill and follow the path as it enters the edge of woods (note path on left – you'll be returning on this one) and joins the Eden Valley Path (EVP).

**Point 2-3: 1km.** Follow the EVP slightly uphill through woods with pines on the right and swampy ground to left until you reach a lane. Turn right.

**Point 3-4: 50m.** Very soon turn left off the lane, following the EVP on a public bridleway past a meadow.

**Point 4-5 2km.** Plough on down the EVP turning to the left past Wat Stock farm buildings; ignore major-looking path to right and follow track between farm buildings, and as it turns right after last building. Now you'll be walking on a low ridge line among trees and hedges with polytunnels on your right and a nice view ahead

and to the left. The path eventually descends to join a very quiet lane.

**Point 5-6: 800m.** Continue on the lane past trees and lovely water meadows, going over the river Eden then slightly uphill until you hit a busier road. You've arrived at Penshurst (turn right if you want the pub or a cafe) and you'll now leave the EVP at Point 6.

**Point 6-7: 600m.** Turn left on road slightly uphill with magnificent Penshurst Place on your right as you walk. Take care. Keep going up the road for a few hundred metres past houses then look out for the signed footpath up the embankment to the left just past a solitary house.

**Point 7-8: 1km.** Take the footpath up steps. Soon, lovely views to left and right open out as you walk past fields and a barn and descend through woods to the river Eden.

**Point 8-9: 1.5km.** Cross the bridge over the Eden and walk across fields, passing to the left of three oaks in the first field and climbing over a stile by a gate into the next, much larger, field. The path follows the right hand fringe of this field for quite a way. Then cross over a stile into a much smaller field which emerges on to a lane, where you'll be turning right.

**Point 9-Chiddingstone: 1km.** After 30m or so on the lane turn left on footpath and in the second field you'll join on to the path you headed down at the start of the walk. Turn right back up this path and return to Chiddingstone. Turn left and have a good look at the Tudor houses; the friendly cafe (shuts at 5pm) is in the courtyard. Walk a bit further and take a peek at Chiddingstone Castle, its attractive grounds and lake.

Adam McCulloch  
amac49@hotmail.co.uk