

Walk 4: Ide Hill circular

Glorious woodland that inspired National Trust founder Octavia Hill in Churchill's Chartwell neighbourhood; wonderful views, and a superb NT garden lend this stroll rich atmosphere

How long? 1½ hrs/3.5 miles

Public transport: Nearest rail access is Sevenoaks station from where it is 15 minutes by taxi (about £15) to Ide Hill. There is an infrequent bus service from Sevenoaks station to Ide Hill – the 404, operated by Go.

Parking: easy, by the church (the highest in Kent at 216m)

Start of walk: footpath next to church

Steep slopes? Quite hilly but nothing too arduous

Muddy? One of the worst walks for mud in winter, especially Scords wood/Toys Hill

Walk highlights

Great 'garden of England views' from one of Kent's highest villages; **Emmetts Gardens**; National Trust-managed woodland with fabulous bluebell displays, blossom and foxglove glades in spring. Combine with a visit to **Chartwell**, Churchill's house and gardens and Westerham; **Emmetts Gardens**, **Bough Beech** nature reserve; and **Westerham**. **The Cock Inn** is a fine pub in the village and so is **The White Hart** at nearby Brasted (which is where the Biggin Hill pilots used to go during the Battle of Britain). Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map



Between point 1 and 2, looking south

THE WALK IN SHORT

Points 0-1: 650m. Join NT footpath marked to right of church and walk downhill, past shetland pony pasture on right. Doesn't matter which path you take at fork (choice is straight on or fork right - they both end up on same path; just go downhill). Note great tree for climbing by a little glade (if take right fork). If you've taken the straight-on fork you'll pass close to the Octavia Hill memorial seat off to the left which has a great view. Either way, when you hit a path further down the hill, **turn right** and follow it curving to the right (north west), past a spring (muddy) then out of the woods and alongside a field on left with barbed wire fence uphill to point 1. This is actually the Greensand Way, but you are going east to west on it; not west to east as they yellow arrows might indicate.

Point 1-2: 650m. At top of field with barbed wire fence you reach a path junction. Here we turn left, heading away from village descending into a valley (the right turn, uphill, goes back to Ide Hill). Cross a little stream on a bridge and climb up other side of valley to Scords wood and point 2

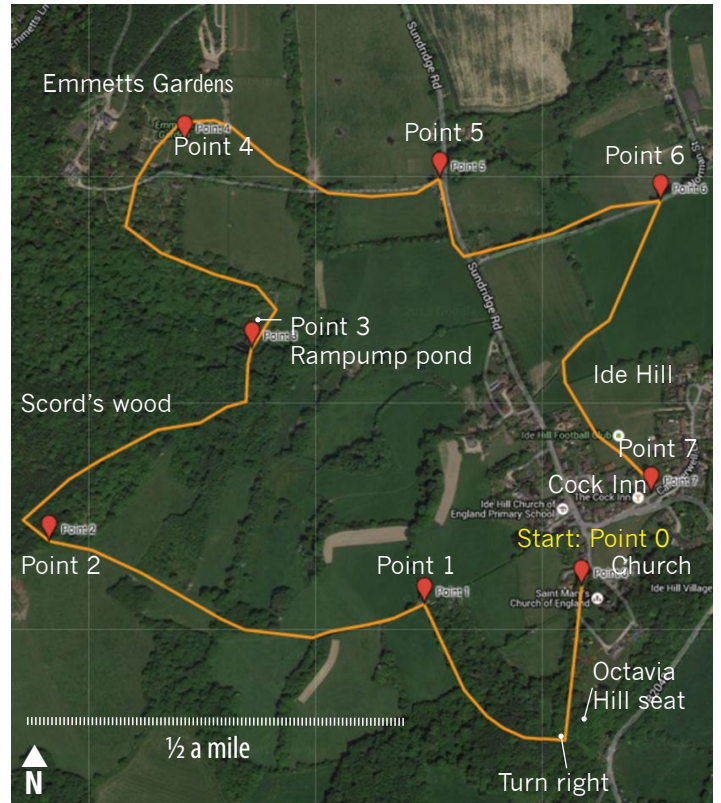
Point 2-3: 650m. Enter woods past NT sign for Toys Hill and follow path uphill for 50m so then, at a junction, take the path sharp right (the Toys Hill red route). Follow this path down steps and various twists and turns. Keep right at the next junction of paths and eventually walk past a large pond (point 3).

Point 3-4 600m. Continue on the path doubling back uphill behind the pond, (then ignoring any path off to the left), to the entrance of Emmetts gardens (towards top of hill). Great views here. Enter gardens and follow signs for tea room. Once you hit the main path within the garden, turn right until you see an ornamental pond and rose garden on your right. Walk into this garden

Point 4-5: 470m. Just past pond leave Emmetts by a little gate and walk into large meadow with great view to the north east.



Scord's wood bluebells



Join the footpath/lane heading downhill on your right by either going through the white gate directly to your right or walking diagonally across the meadow to the wooden gate in the right hand corner, which you'll probably have to climb over. Go down lane, past tiny cricket pitch and meet Sundridge Rd **Point 5-6:** 470m. Turn right up Sundridge Rd – take care, cars are frequent and road is

narrow – for 150m then turn left down much quieter Norman St. After 320m take 'hidden' footpath on right through gap in hedge **Point 6-7:** 600m. Follow path diagonally through large field, then into a second field. Exit this field by turning left to stile into a playing field. Walk through playing field past playground and to left of large hut to re-enter Ide Hill from behind the Cock Inn

The Toy's Hill/Ide Hill areas were among the first to be protected by the National Trust, largely through the work of Victorian social reformer Octavia Hill. There is a seat dedicated to her with a great view on the wooded hillside between Point 0 and 1 on the map.

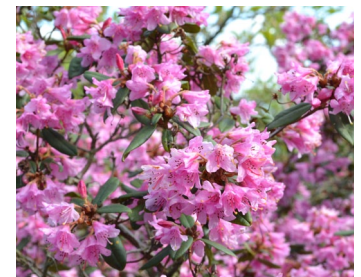
Like the One Tree Hill walks I've detailed, this walk is on the Greensand Ridge (a sandstone escarpment parallel with the main North Downs chalk escarpment to the north). Walks along the ridge tend to be more wooded than the chalk walks. At Scords wood, huge damage was done by the 1987 storm, as at Knole Park, but the wood has regenerated and the NT is leaving some of Scords to itself, to see how the process pans out naturally. In the past there was much coppicing and pollarding of trees here, which is still obvious.

The bluebells on Emmett's southern bank are among the most photographed in England. The house at Emmetts was owned by Frederic Lubbock, brother of John, friend of Charles Darwin. Look out for the 110ft Wellingtonia tree.

If you stay at Emmetts for any time, the right thing to do is to pay at the main entrance or cafe.

A superb walk in dry periods but very muddy in winter.

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Emmetts Gardens azaleas (point 4)