

Walk 15: Westerham circular

A Greensand Ridge walk taking in superb woods, hidden valleys, Churchill's house at Chartwell and wonderful views out to the weald of Kent

How long? 5 miles (8km), 2½ hours

Public transport: 246 bus from Bromley North/South. Three bus routes from Sevenoaks station.

Parking: behind St Mary's church in Quebec Avenue car park or Quebec House car park just off A25 immediately east of the town.

Start of walk: Alley opposite Westerham Green (look for stone steps)

Steep slopes? Brief steep sections

Easy to navigate? Yes but wooded sections after point 7 can confuse

Walk highlights: View over Chartwell to the Kent Weald.

Views to Westerham. Superb trees, hidden valleys

Refreshments: Cafes/pubs at Westerham Green. NT cafe at Chartwell

THE WALK

POINT 1-2 350 metres Park in Westerham in the car park off Quebec Avenue (pay Mon-Sat). Make for the churchyard just beyond the car park. Walk up and past the graves and church and emerge on to Westerham Green. Cross the Green and cross the A25 from next to the bus shelter and traffic island and look for the steps up to a little alley opposite (next to Wood and Stone Floors the last time I checked).

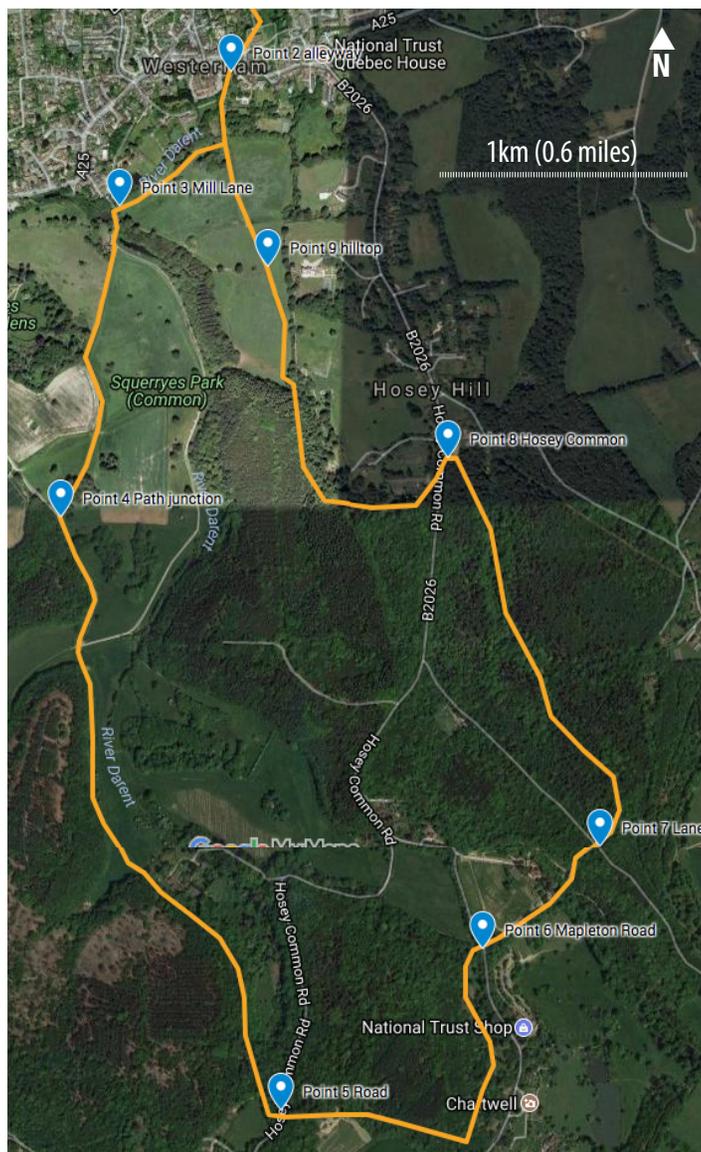
POINT 2-3 500 metres Walk down this old alleyway crossing the infant river Darent, emerging after 100 metres or so on an open grassy (and often incredibly muddy) space. Turn right (west) and walk for 200 or so metres parallel with the river until you reach Mill Lane Point

POINT 3-4 500 metres At Mill Lane turn left and walk past parking spaces and a house. By the house the path splits into two. The left hand path goes along the valley floor alongside the Darent, a lovely path too. The path we are taking, however, is the one straight on, uphill. Continue to the top of the hill, admiring the views. After about 500 metres, shortly after passing through a clump of trees, at a path junction, you reach a path junction.

POINT 4-5 2km Turn left at this junction. After 250 metres, still walking generally south, cross another path junction (which occurs at a point with a long meadow on

the right) and continue straight on with trees again on your right and the river Darent hidden on your left. After about 300 metres you pass another long meadow on the right, this time with an isolated and slightly spooky looking house at the far end (pictured below). After passing this meadow you pass behind another house and then walk uphill on the edge of woods. Continue for 600 metres, passing a field on your right, as the path begins to bend left (more easterly) and comes on to Hosey Common Rd.

POINT 5-6 1km At the road look for the path up Mariners Hill nearly opposite (still in woods). Cross with care, the road is a magnet for bad driving I've found. Continue uphill through the woods; keep the bridlepath on your left; our route doesn't take the main path – we're using the path on the right which soon runs next to a garden fence. Beyond the fence is a large house with generous gardens and a superb weald view. After the house, the path (the one on the right, remember, not the broader one though ends up in same place but you miss a great part of the walk) continues through woodland downhill. After about 100 metres look out for a path going back uphill on the left (north-ish), signposted Mariners Hill Loop. This is the turning point of the walk (from now on heading generally north). Also the start of the best bit. Take the Mariners Hill Loop path which soon flattens out and gives a great view over Chartwell House to the Weald beyond. There are giant douglas firs



(I think - big conifers anyway) to admire and gorse bushes at this point and a seat or two to admire the view. The loop path after, say, 350 metres, meets the standard Mariners Hill path we left earlier after crossing Hosey Common Road. Turn right (east), down towards the Chartwell car park.

POINT 6-7 400 metres. Cross Mapleton Rd. You are close to the National Trust cafe here at the far end of the car park. If you don't need a break continue on the signposted path opposite leading uphill with a fence on the left, passing another spectacular house on the hillside with suitably silly gardens. Back in woodland you reach a quiet lane called Hosey Common Lane.

POINT 7-8 1.5km Cross the lane and take the path opposite through what seems like ancient woodland signposted back to Westerham. At the first path junction keep left and keep an eye on the Westerham signs to ensure you stay on the most direct path. (If you are not sure - woods can be hard to navigate - if you follow

paths heading north/north-west you can't really go too far off route.) At the next junction follow the path branching right (I think also signed Westerham) which eventually comes out at Hosey Hill (where there's a car park - an alternative starting point for the walk).

POINT 8-9 1km Cross Hosey Common Rd but look left (south) rejoining the signposted footpath. The path now briefly heads south again through woods by the road before bending away to head back west then north. Soon you'll be walking below large conifers (pine and spruce of some kind I think). Very scenic in the snow when I last did it (pictured). After this, the path emerges from the woods with the conifers on your left. Continue straight on to walk next to the Darent river and back to Mill Lane or turn right, briefly steeply uphill, for the shortest route back to Westerham.

POINT 9-car park 900 metres At the top of the hill you can see Westerham ahead; just go straight on to re-enter the town from the alley. amac49@hotmail.co.uk

Returning to Westerham at Point 9

