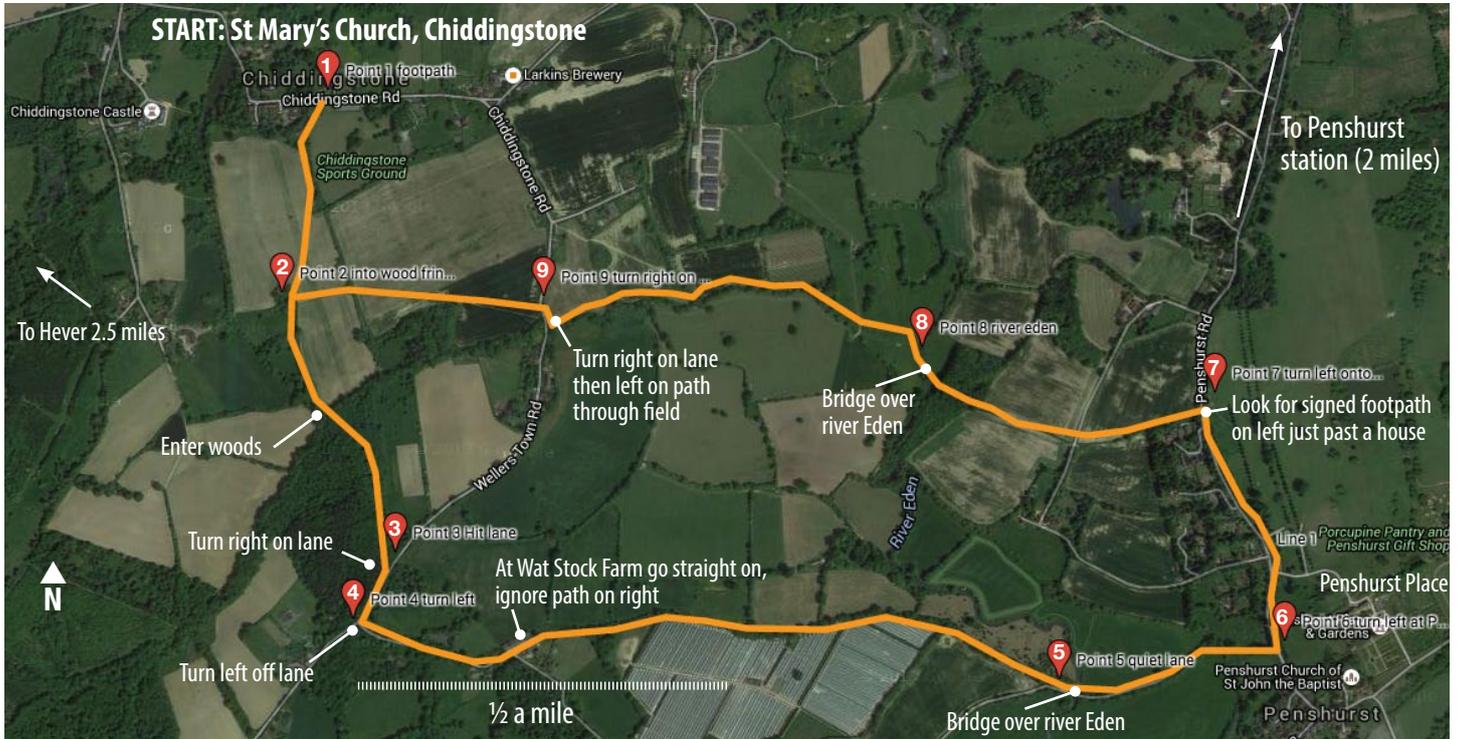


Walk 10: Chiddingstone circular

A Kent Weald walk with views back to Ide Hill and Greensand Ridge from quiet farmland. A lovely Tudor hamlet features, with a castle, views of Penshurst Place, a brilliant pub, and the Eden Valley Path



How long? 1.5 hours (4 miles/6km)

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

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

Refreshments: Castle Inn and cafe in Chiddingstone

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

Arrive at the Tudor hamlet of Chiddingstone, park by the church. Note the two footpaths; one marked 'Chiding-Stone' and the other 'sports fields'. Have a quick peep at the Chiding Stone, just 100 yards down the eponymous path. It's a lump of sandstone apparently once used as a seat of judgement, from where locals could be 'chided'. Geddit? Retrace your steps and take 'sports ground' path.

Point 1 (start)-2: 800m. Take the sports ground footpath across road from churchyard. This emerges from between trees into a field. Go downhill and follow the path as it enters the edge of woods and continue south on what is now the Eden Valley Path (EVP) (the path to your right is also the EVP, on its way to Hever). Note the path to the left crossing a field - your return route.

Point 2-3: 1km. Follow the EVP south, soon going slightly uphill through woods with interesting swampy ground on left. Marsh tits and cuckoos breed here and deer are often seen. Later you'll see high pines to the right and they you'll reach a lane. Turn right.

Point 3-4: 50m. Very soon, cross the lane then turn left (south east) off it, following the EVP on a public bridleway diagonally through a meadow then joining a track to a farm, passing ponds.

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 among trees and hedges soon with polytunnels on your right and a nice view to the left. The path descends to join a quiet lane, turn left, heading towards Penshurst Place (not visible yet).

Point 5-6: 800m. The lane goes over the River Eden, past trees and lovely water meadows then slightly uphill until you hit a busier road. You've arrived at Penshurst and you'll now leave the EVP.

Point 6-7: 600m. Turn left on road slightly uphill with Penshurst Place on your right as you walk. Take care - bad, fast cars. 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 stone 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 concrete bridge over the Eden and walk across field, aiming for a wonky stile on the left. Climb over the 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 turn right. Often cows in these fields.

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 enjoy a pint of Larkins at the superb Castle Inn.