

Walk 22: Oldbury Hill/Ightham Mote

Beautiful ancient woodlands, pasture and orchards astride the Greensand Ridge. Tudor history and prehistory star on this longish circular walk, a quintessential Kentish ramble

How long? 2½ hours
6 miles (10km)

Public transport: Go Coach's bus 4 from Sevenoaks station (not running during pandemic). Short taxi ride from Sevenoaks, Bat and Ball or Kemsing stations. Parking: Oldbury Hill NT car park (free) off the A25 at Styants Bottom Lane

Start of walk: from car park
Steep slopes? Yes, three, but not long.

Walk highlights

Superb mixed woodland, forest ponds, Iron Age hillfort, Ightham Mote, lavender fields

Covered on Ordnance Survey Explorer 147 map
[Click here for GPX map \(OS\)](#)

THE WALK

Point 1-2 1km Leave the Oldbury Hill NT car park heading south on Styants Bottom Lane and immediately cross the A25 looking for a signed footpath leading south into the woods. It's nearly opposite but to the left (east) a bit. Continue through this beautiful woods past a series of ponds on a sandy path. Don't worry about the private property signs either side; the path is fine. Eventually climb large steps (difficult if you have dodgy knees) to reach the top of Raspit Hill, part of the Greensand Ridge, at Point 2.

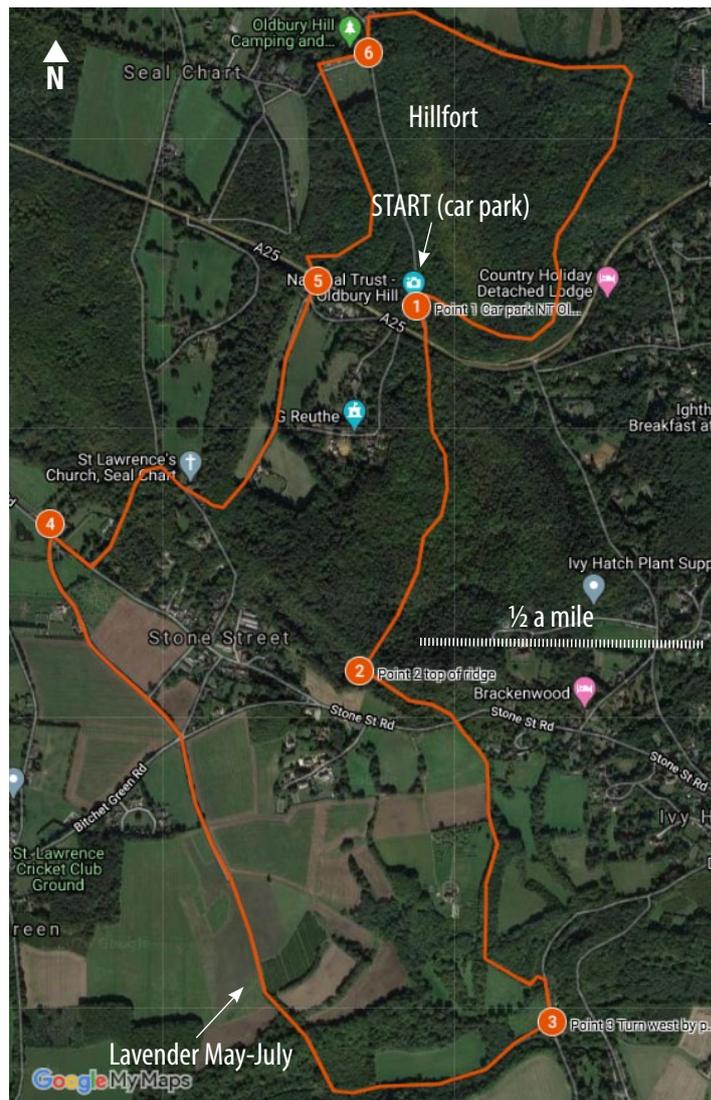
Point 2-3 1.5km Turn left (south east) at the top of the steps but stay close to the edge of the steep south-facing slope as the path starts to descend, curving back south. This path will take you all the way to Ightham Mote. Soon it crosses Stone Street Road then passes between woods, orchards and meadows, descending, before swinging more east to reach Mote Rd. Here, walk along the road southward towards Ightham Mote. But before reaching the Tudor manor (continue straight down

to take a peep if you haven't seen it before), look out for the sharp right turn by a pond, opposite an attractive cottage (Scatheswood House). This is Point 3.

Points 3-4 2.5km Walk up this track, passing the old hoppers' hut, heading west for 6-700 metres. Very good for butterflies, birds and wildlife this area. Just before you reach a decent-sized pond with a bench take the path uphill to the right (north). I think there are steps here because it's a bit steepish. Soon the path emerges into the open with a single fruit tree posing rather evocatively among grasses up ahead. Cresting the hill between May and the end of July, however, you'll be bowled over by lavender fields belonging to Mitchell and Peach. Skylarks and bees abound here – and it's the best place on the walk to stop off for a picnic. Continue across a country lane (Bitchet Green Lane) and then, after another 5-600 metres you reach Stone Street Road opposite a building that was the Padwell Arms, yet another sadly lost pub. This is Point 4.

Points 4-5 1.5km Turn right on Stone Street Road then after 100 metres take a footpath into woods on the left (northward) past a large old house with tennis court and all the trimmings. Continue through the wood uphill for, say, 150 metres before curving to the right and joining Church Rd. Here, turn right (south east) and walk past the lovely St Lawrence's Church to a footpath leading into more woods on the left. After a few metres take a path sharpish left heading north again, downhill. This emerges at Lower Frankfield into a pleasant area of pasture (all very horsey horsey) and continues, now as a track, all the way to the A25 and Point 5 at Crown Point.

Points 5-6 1km. Some blundering around in woods will now take place. Carefully cross the A25 aiming for a footpath to the left. Immediately turn right (north-east) on this path, downhill, then take the third path on your left (the first more major looking



path you come to). (Go any further and you'll be back at the car park you started from, which might be handy if you're not enjoying yourself.) Continue on this path heading north-west and look out for a field ahead. Follow the path along the western (left hand) edge of this field, actually a campsite (Oldbury Hill Camping Club), then turn right (heading east) along the northern edge of the field to meet the top end of Styants Bottom Lane (point 6).

Point 6-end 2km (This last bit is all in Oldbury Woods, site of the one of the largest Iron Age hilltop forts in the UK. It's best to use the GPX map for this section to pinpoint your location because woods can be hard to navigate.) Turn left on Styants Bottom Lane towards attractive houses and, behind them, an oast house. Take the second path off to the right, a wide path, heading uphill, eastward. Soon

you pass through sandstone holloway probably marking the edge of the ancient fort, occupied from the Stone Age right through to the Romans. The path twists to the south-east following the edge of the hillfort.

Off to the left through the trees you'll see Kemsing Down and the chalk escarpment of the North Downs. Keep going straight east, ignoring side paths for 800 metres or so (it would be useful to follow the [GPX map](#) here). Ignore also a path slanting to the left - stay on the signed bridleway. The view to the left will disappear as the woods deepen to the north and the fields end. Keep going east then at the second junction of paths turn sharp right on a bridle path. Follow this south – we're kind of circling the hillfort now, straight on all the way down to the A25 at which point you turn right (west) until you reach the car park. Phew.
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