

Walk 25: Cudham chalk paths

A network of quiet paths and lanes a mile north of the North Downs escarpment is a great way to explore an old landscape of ancient woods, dry valleys, meadows and hedgerows

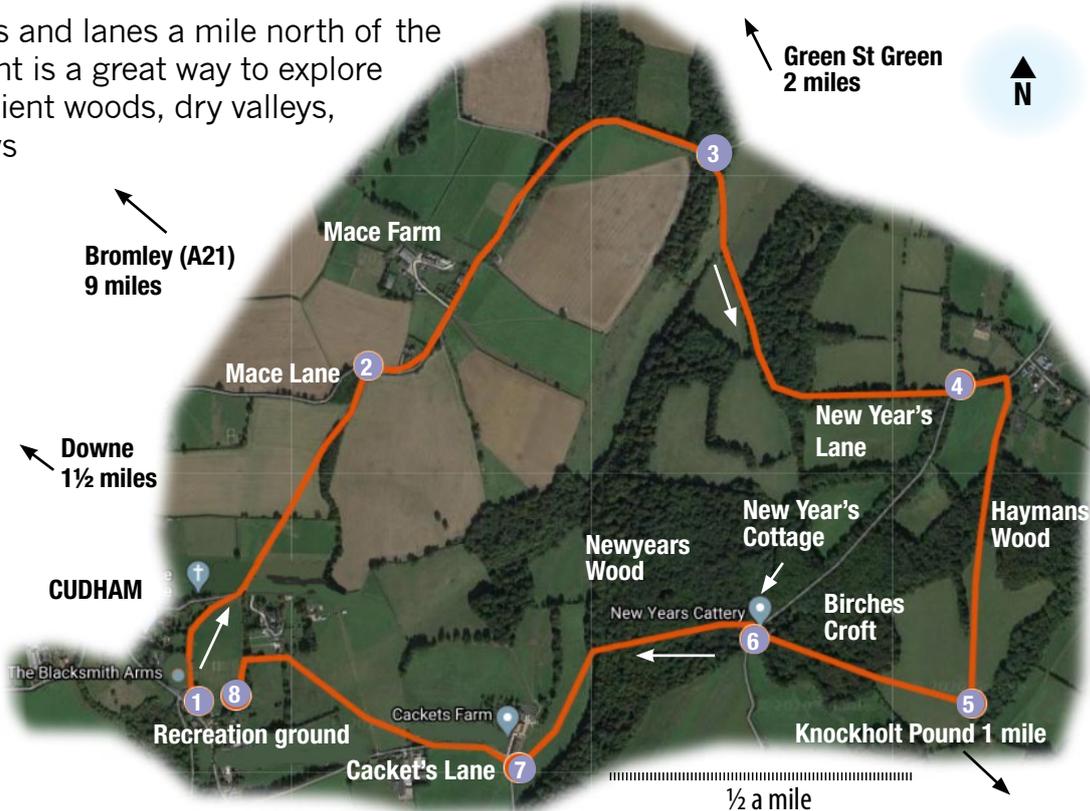
How long? 1.5 hours
4 miles (6km)

Public transport: Infrequent R5/R10 bus service from Orpington station. Knockholt station about 2.5 miles.

Parking/start of walk: Cudham recreation ground
Steep slopes? None, several stiles

Pub: Blacksmiths Arms, Cudham
Distance from SE London: 13 miles (40mins by car)
Highlights: Superb church at Cudham, otherwise just rolling countryside

See OS Explorer 147 map
[Click here for GPX map](#)



THE WALK

Point 1-2 (about 1km)

Park at Cudham recreation ground free car park off Cudham Lane South. Head north, following the perimeter of the cricket ground, passing behind the Blacksmith Arms pub then behind the church graveyard to reach a black gate in the far north-east corner. Go through the gate, cross a driveway for Rectory House and continue on the path heading north-east across fields divided by a metal gate. After about 600 metres the path enters a strip of woodland then emerges on to Mace Lane (point 2).

Point 2-3 (1.3km)

Follow almost-car free Mace Lane east then north-east watching out for a wide variety of small birds in the hedgerows, as well as sloe and various berries. Soon after Mace Farm houses the lane becomes a chalk path. Continue north-east. After about 300 metres note the path on the right that cuts across the broad field. This is a short cut, if you prefer the open to the trees, and brings you out very near point 3. If you prefer

the woods (as on the GPX tracks), stay on the path as it curves east then south-east still in trees. Note (but don't take) a broad path off to the left. This is point 3.

Point 3-4 (1.1km)

Ignore the path off to the left and continue south-east as the path descends into a dry valley between meadows. After reaching the foot of the shallow valley the route ascends through woodland with a view of pasture on the right. At the top turn left (east) at a path T-junction past a sign for Norstead Manor Farm. (The path on the right here is a short cut to point 6 if you wanted – the AllTrails GPX clearly shows you how). After heading east for 500 metres or so you reach New Years Lane (point 4).

Point 4-5 (1.1km)

Turn left (east) on New Years Lane, soon called Washneys Rd, for about 150 metres until you see a signed footpath to the right heading south. Join this path which passes through a metal gate and follow into a grassy field then, to the left, enter Hayman's Wood over a stile by a pit. This is a working wood with some tree-felling and muddy tracks. This bit

doesn't last long. Cross over a stile and a track and you soon emerge in a lovely field (after going over another stile) with a distant view of the Knockholt Pound mobile phone masts (that's not why it's lovely though!). Continue in this field (sometimes with sheep in it) due south for several hundred metres, then just before it goes more sharply downhill cross a high stile into a field on the right and see woods about 600m away (this is point 5).

Point 5-6 (650m)

Walk west across the pasture aiming for the corner of field and woods (the path is not always discernible) - the metal gate we are aiming for is initially hidden, but is obvious once you've walked 100 metres or so, and will get you into lovely ancient woodland (called Birches Croft - nice name). After 500 metres you emerge via a gate on to New Years Lane once again, close to distinctive New Year's Cottage, a cattery. This is point 6.

Point 6-7 (900m)

New Year Cottage, which houses a cattery and lots of nice flowers, is a very unusual building for the

area: low slung with a verandah and, for me, a hint of New Mexico. But that might just be me. Anyway, cross the quiet lane and take the path on the left, a bridleway, heading south-west back towards Cudham through Newyear woods. After 350 metres or so the path descends to enter another grassy dry valley (actually one we saw earlier). Cross the valley floor (or walk south on the edge of it, it doesn't matter - you come to the same place), cross a stile or two and head south past Cacket's Farm to meet Cacket's Lane and point 7.

Point 7-8 (900m)

Cacket's Lane is quiet too but because it links Cudham with Knockholt Pound it's a wee bit busier than the other lanes encountered. Turn right (west) on Cacket's Lane and after 500 metres take the footpath on the right (north of west) which will take you all the way back across pasture and by lovely pines and a rambling old house back to Cudham recreation ground. If you're lucky there will be cricket and the odd Spitfire from nearby Biggin Hill overhead.
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