

History of King's Wood

We don't know how old King's Wood is but two surviving Bronze Age (2000-600BC) burial mounds in the wood suggest that there were once more open areas. It looks very different today from how it would have looked thousands, or even a hundred, years ago. Some occupants, such as lynx, elk, wildcat and brown bear died out thousands of years ago. Wolves were around longer, as it's known they scavenged the dead from the Battle of Hastings. Wild boar were hunted to extinction just a few hundred years ago and the red squirrel was removed by its grey cousin in the 1950s/60s.



Wild boar

King's Wood and adjoining woods exist because woodland was a valuable economic asset, and the soils were too low quality for agriculture. A few thousand years ago the wood would have been composed of native tree species such as oak, lime, ash, hornbeam and yew, with a rich understorey of shrubs. Man probably began changing the composition from an early time. Oak was favoured for its usefulness as a building material. Hazel was ideal for making hurdles and laths for wattle and daub walling. Allowing livestock into woods also changed the composition. Medieval kings who hunted in the wood included John, Edward I and Edward II although the name probably originates from Cyniges wudu the Anglo-Saxon name for King's Wood.

The first written account of King's Wood dates from 823 when Beornwulf, King of Mercia, gave Godmersham to

Christ-Church, and it still belonged to the priors at the time of the Domesday Book in 1085. William the Conqueror gave the main part of the wood to Battle Abbey. It is probable that the herd of fallow deer was introduced at this time to provide for the hunt. At the dissolution of the monasteries Elizabeth I granted the wood to her kinsman, Henry Carey, whose grandson sold it to Sir Thomas Finch of Eastwell in 1628. This family were the principal owners for almost 400 years.

From the late 18th century, native trees were replaced with sweet chestnut to supply the fast growing hop industry in Kent. In 1893 Lord Gerrard laid out a new planting of sweet chestnut, marked with hornbeam stubs and pollards, and this layout remains today. In coppicing, trees are cut to the ground to produce a number of new stems. In pollarding, the tree is cut above head height, usually to prevent livestock browsing the re-growth. A stub is in between, and was used as a boundary marker. As the hop industry began its decline in the early 20th century a new demand for sweet chestnut came from chestnut spile fencing.



Hop pickers at Chilham

The Forestry Commission was formed shortly after the First World War in response to a timber shortage. The Commission bought King's Wood in 1934/35 and accepted

the challenge of making us less reliant on imported timber. Sweet chestnut cants (compartments) were sold, to be cut, at auction in the Chequers Pub at Challock every year.

Fred Hams, a well known local woodsman, describes how during the Second World War the chestnut, some of which the Forestry Commission had grubbed up, was found to be essential in creating charcoal, for use in such things as gas masks and high explosives. The Ministry of Labour directed extra manpower (including girls) to the forest. Among these was a group of Hastings fishermen, whose boats had been converted for use as minesweepers. These fishermen must have looked unlikely figures in the forest as, for some while, they continued to wear their sea boots and Guernseys!



Sweet chestnut in flower



Workmen in the forest during wartime

Welcome

The Friends of King's Wood made a successful application to Awards for All for the publication of this leaflet. Our research showed that people enjoyed walking in King's Wood and wanted to explore with confidence some different routes that started from the villages. This leaflet has also given us an opportunity to include details of public transport, farm shops, Post Offices, pubs and other rural businesses around King's Wood.

The four circular walks range from the easiest, starting at Molash; Chilham and Godmersham are of middling difficulty with steep paths both up and downhill; and Boughton Lees the longest with steep inclines both up and down.

We suggest you start with the easiest walk if you are reasonably fit, or have young children with you. This walk starts at Molash and gives you different views of King's Wood whilst giving you confidence using the map and route instructions overleaf.

Friends of King's Wood
The Friends will help you to enjoy sights and sounds in King's Wood that you wouldn't expect, through our series of Walks & Events, and this leaflet.



Adder (Lee Brady)

We were formed as a pressure group to fight threatened developments in King's Wood and, when this became unnecessary, the Friends continued to encourage the enjoyment and pleasure of the forest and its natural environment. We take part in the scientific monitoring of animals such as adders and dormice; provide habitats including ponds, bat and owl boxes. We have themed walks about nightjars, mini beasts, deer etc. You can take part in kite flying, foraging or fungi gathering. So, why not join us by e-mailing enquiries@friendsofkingsswood.org or going to www.friendsofkingsswood.org

Wildlife

King's Wood, with its large blocks of conifer, beech and sweet chestnut and largely acid clay with flint soils, may not be the most diverse woodland for wildlife. However, due to its size, it is certainly of value to wildlife and the Forestry Commission has invested more time in recent years improving the wood for wildlife.

Possibly the most popular animal in the wood and quite likely to be seen, is the fallow deer. There are over 300 across the wood and surrounding woodlands. A much smaller mammal, which climbs among the shrubs and trees, is the common or hazel dormouse. We know that we have good numbers of dormice from regular recording since 2002. A very special bird of southern heathlands and recently cut coppice that breeds in the wood is the nightjar. It is difficult to spot, as it is brilliantly camouflaged and largely nocturnal. Its distinctive call, 'churring', gives it away. The wood is well populated by the stunning adder. Perhaps the most special butterfly is the white admiral. The caterpillar of this species feeds on honeysuckle and the butterfly can be seen around this plant in mid July. The wood ant is a common species and the long lines of workers foraging to and from the nest make a fascinating sight.



Dormouse

Some of the plants you are likely to see in the wood, depending on the season you visit, are wood sorrel, stitchwort, dogs mercury, wood anemone, wood sage, primrose, violet, heather and bluebell. The latter form spectacular carpets in the Spring. Please do not disturb wildlife or pick wild flowers.

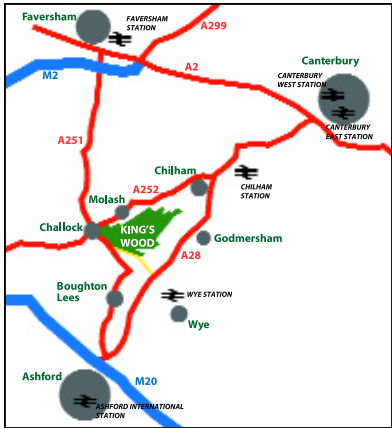
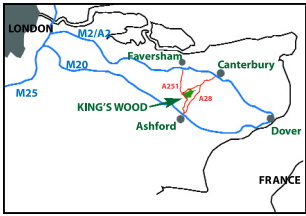


Nightjar



Fallow deer

Where is King's Wood?



Countryside Code

RESPECT, PROTECT, ENJOY

- Leave gates and property as you find them
- Protect plants and animals, and take your litter home
- Keep dogs under control
- Consider other people
- Inform others where you are going

Useful contacts



enquiries@friendsofkingsswood.org
☎07523 203458
www.friendsofkingsswood.org

kentishstour@kent.gov.uk
☎01233 813307
www.kentishstour.org.uk

www.forestry.gov.uk

info@stourvalleyarts.org.uk
☎01233 740040
www.stourvalleyarts.org.uk

North Downs Way
NATIONAL TRAIL

www.nationaltrail.co.uk/northdowns

For visitor information and accommodation:

Ashford Tourist Information Centre:

www.ashford.gov.uk ☎01233 330316

Canterbury Visitor Information Centre:

www.canterbury.co.uk ☎01227 378100

Faversham Tourist Information Centre:

www.faversham.org ☎01795 534542

Buses and Trains:

www.traveline.org.uk ☎0871 2002233

National Rail Enqs. ☎08457 484950

Nearest Accident and Emergency: William Harvey Hospital,
Kennington Road, Ashford TN24 0LZ ☎01233 633331.

To report criminal activity or misuse of King's Wood contact
Kent Police ☎01622 690690.

This leaflet was funded
with a grant from



Images: Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership unless stated.
Editing: Alan Moultrie. Produced in association with KSCP, December 2010.
Designed by Clarity ☎01303 249501 www.clarity-consultancy.co.uk

FSC logo here please

King's Wood

Walks from
the villages

Explore & Enjoy



Four fantastic circular walks into King's Wood, starting from the villages of Molash, Chilham, Godmersham & Boughton Lees, featuring some of East Kent's outstanding views and scenery.



Countryside around King's Wood

The thin chalk soils on the slopes of the Stour Valley would have been farmed as pasture for sheep for thousands of years. With the advent of artificial fertilisers it became more profitable to turn these pastures into arable land. Since the early 1990s, where the land is marginal for arable crops, the Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership has helped farmers, through grant agreements, to return land to chalk grassland. On Godmersham Downs 'lynchets' - terraces formed to help cultivation of the steep sided Downs in medieval or earlier times - can be seen, proving that even in those days, crops were grown on some steep slopes.

On the better soils, orchards and hop gardens would have been prominent. Evidence of this can be seen today from shelterbelts of trees and oast houses. There are now no hop gardens in the immediate area around King's Wood but a few orchards still exist.

As well as the farmed landscape, the other dominant landscape feature around King's Wood is parkland. There are three major parkland estates - Chilham, Godmersham, and Eastwell.

Parkland Estates

Chilham Castle stands in a prominent position above the River Stour at the narrowest part of the valley. There has been a castle on the site since at least 709. For a fascinating account of its history visit Michael Peter's research on www.chilham-castle.co.uk. At its greatest, the medieval castle, built on the instructions of Odo, Bishop of Bayeux and Earl of Kent, covered eight acres. Today only the octagonal keep, with its rectangular extension, remains. Although the castle never saw any military action two of its owners were hung, drawn and quartered when they fell foul of the Crown! The present house, with 24 acres of gardens, was built in 1616 by Dudley Digges, on the site of the ancient castle, and bears its name. The park was extended tenfold by Thomas Colebrooke in 1733, who had bought the house and estate from the Digges family, to something close to its present day size of 320 acres.



Godmersham House was built in 1732 for Thomas Brodnax on the site of an older house, and was restored in the 1930s. The manor was owned from 1797-1852 by Edward Austen-Knight, brother of Jane Austen, who was a frequent visitor. Jane Austen supposedly used Godmersham Park and its inhabitants as a prototype for Mansfield Park. There is no doubt that the vicarage occupied by the Revd. Collins in *Pride and Prejudice* was based on the building a hundred yards from the church. At the top of the Downs, where the footpath meets the



Godmersham House (Martyn Adley)

North Downs Way, there was a brick deer leap, which enabled deer to leap into the park but hindered their return. This structure was restored in 2009. During the First World War, a huge airship hanger was gouged out of the base of a hill in the southern end of the park. Airships were moored here to prevent them being seen on the coastline. Below the hole was an underground dugout, which was to be a Second World War collecting point for resistance men on the run in the event of a German invasion. It provided shelter, food and water for 120 people.

Eastwell Manor Park Estate was created from 1589 by Sir Moyle Finch enclosing c.1600 acres of land. The original Manor House was built by Sir Thomas Moyle between 1540 - 1550, reputedly with the help of Richard Plantagenet or Richard of Eastwell, possibly Richard III's illegitimate son. This house was replaced in 1793 by George Finch Hatton, 9th Earl of Winchelsea. The present house, now an hotel, which you see as you descend through the fields, was built in 1926 in Jacobean style.

Villages

Molash is the smallest of the villages adjoining King's Wood, with only 91 homes and a population of 258. It derives its name from 'Speech ash', an ash tree from which speeches were delivered at assemblies. The yews in the churchyard are certified to be over 2000 years old. The village has a great old coaching inn, The George, from which the shortest of the walks starts.

Chilham is the largest and most well known of the villages, mainly because of its picturesque village centre consisting of half-timbered Tudor houses from around the 1500s. The gates of Chilham Castle are on one side of The Square providing the basic feudal layout of a cluster of houses around a market square. The red brick houses are much older than they look. Two hundred years ago the status symbol was a 'modern brick' facade on old Tudor timber-and-plaster (Tom Reed, 1992).

Godmersham is a very sparsely populated parish with the centre being The Street just off the A28. The village school closed in 1946 and the shop/post office in 1982 and it has been dry, no pub, for a very long time. In the past, most workers were employed by the Godmersham Estate.

Boughton Lees is the centre of the parish of Boughton Aluph where cricket has been played for over 200 years. Boughton is derived from the Anglo-Saxon word *Boc*, meaning beech tree, which is where our word 'book' comes from. *Alupthi* was the name of the owner of the manor in 1215.

Challock, pronounced Chollock, is old English (*cealf locan*, 833 AD) for calf enclosure, calves being large standing stones, some of which were used for the foundation of the church. The village has an annual Goose Fair in September, which is very popular.



Chilham



White admiral
(John Bogle)

Walk 1 - Molash - Deep in the woods with the chalk and chestnut

Difficulty:- 3.3 miles (5.25 kms) 1 short steep incline, 2 barriers, 1 gate.
Time:- 1.5 hours (no stops).
Bus:- No frequent service.
Start and parking:- The George Inn, Molash. The publican says "You can use the car park if you use the pub" (please ☎ 01233 740323). There is some parking just off the A252 Molash, by the War Memorial triangle.
Food stop:- The George Inn.

Key:- L = Left; R = Right; Ride = Forest Road; RoW = Right of Way/Footpath

Start at footpath (opp. Church Lane, Molash) with George Inn on your right A. Cross 2 fields and enter King's Wood (KW) via stile. Look left whilst crossing the fields to a typical Kentish scene of an old cherry orchard around the farm buildings. Behind them are a few oast house cowls above the trees and, as a backdrop, Perry Wood on the small hill.

Take steep path downhill. L after 20 metres, opposite a large hole/pit, to the bottom of the valley B. The path goes through some hornbeam/hazel woodland. **At the bottom of the slope join a grassy ride, go left, leaving the public footpath. (If you missed L turn you will reach a small pond).** L again, into Cutlers Valley, through/over 2 bar gate **C.** Walk straight ahead past path to right t.

Look out for marjoram, wild basil, perforate St John's Wort, wild parsnip, spindle, wild privet and deadly nightshade. Adders (snakes) are often seen in this ride (forest road), so take care. The Forestry Commission (FC) and Kentish Stour Countryside Partnership (KSCP) widened this ride by felling conifers in 2004-06 to open up the valley. **R at ride (forest road) up into woods through/over 2 bar gate D.**

R at cross rides, just before brow of hill E. R at 2nd cross rides on to path F, straight ahead ignoring any small side paths. R at wide cross rides downhill G. The "Ring" sculpture is to your left and a large trumpet shaped sculpture further down to your right.

L at pond H. Look for sculptures suspended in the trees to your right called "Super Kingdom". **Straight ahead to gated stile and RoW sign I. R at Oathill Farm to tarmac/cement road - Pound Lane J. Cross A252 at village green/War Memorial triangle turn to R K. Cross A252 again at the George Inn.**

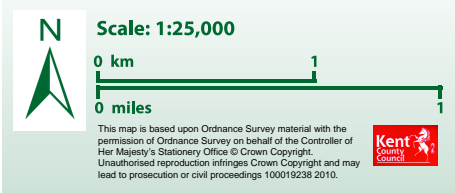
Walk 4 - Boughton Lees/ Challock - The Long One

Difficulty:- 8 miles (12.8 kms) 1 very steep path uphill, 1 very steep lane downhill, 8 stiles, 6 kissing gates, 1 gate.
Time:- 4 hrs (no stops).
Bus:- 666 Monday to Saturday (Ashford/Faversham).
Start and parking:- Around the village green, Boughton Lees. Please park considerably.
Food stop:- Picnic in King's Wood – no toilets. Challock Lees. Halfway House - play area. The Chequers.

Key:- L = Left; NDW = North Downs Way; R = Right; Ride = Forest Road; RoW = Right of Way/Footpath.

Start by walking along Pilgrims Way to right of Flying Horse, Boughton Lees A. The shelterbelts (rows of poplar and alder trees) and hazel hedges protect orchards from adverse weather but most of the orchards have now gone. **Continue past Malthouse Cottages and lane on left, and as road curves to right go L between high hedges and iron T shaped barrier onto North Downs Way (NDW) B.** There is now more variety in the hedgerows with field maple, spindle, dog rose, and wayfaring tree. Look for plums that were often planted among hedges to provide fruit. The KSCP have helped to plant many new hedges in this area.

Pass through kissing gate straight ahead in field alongside All Saints Church C. Through gate and across lane to second stile (gate also opens). Go over third stile/gate and straight ahead on footpath across field to other side of valley. Straight ahead to path between ancient hedgerows. Kissing gate to White Hill Road. Straight across with care to Soakham Farm Road D. Soakham originates from Anglo-Saxon meaning "Dispute Valley".



Deadly nightshade



Skylark



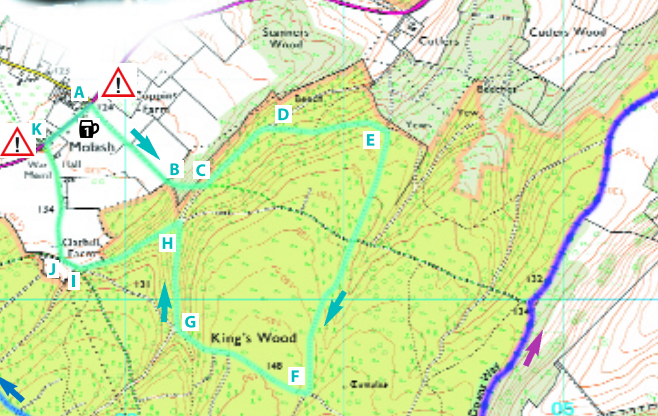
Whitebeam

Through Soakham Farm gate/stile to path, up the escarpment Soakham Downs, into King's Wood. Look and listen for the skylark. They have declined in recent years but they are still noticeable, especially from February to June, when they spiral upwards from arable fields, hover, and then spiral down, singing all the time. Typical chalk downland plants on the bank, are marjoram, wild basil, salad burnet and rock rose. Whitebeam, a tree found naturally on mainly chalky soils, shades the path. The underside of the leaves is where the tree gets its name from. Primroses and cowslips are seen in the Spring. After taking a sharp left turn, and towards the top, you will find a seat, almost hidden, on your right, sculptured into the chalk. This is a great place for a rest and snack.

On reaching the summit and entering the wood enjoy carpets of bluebells from mid April to early May. **L at crossing in paths over stile into very large field and go straight across E.** Enjoy the great views across the Stour Valley to the sea on your left. **Continue on this path into the next smaller Jackets Field following the yellow RoW signs.** A Bronze Age (2000-600 BC) long barrow is situated in the woodland to your left. **Half way across take R hand footpath across Jackets Field to kissing gate back into King's Wood F.**

Follow the winding path through densely planted fir trees. Straight across ride (forest road) to RoW sign through deciduous woodland to next ride. R then immediately L at RoW sign onto ride G. Left at slightly staggered crossing of rides RoW sign H.

Work took place in 2008 to widen this ride, removing coniferous trees but leaving some splendid Scots pine further along the ride. Widening rides allows more light into the wood so encouraging more wildflowers and invertebrates such as butterflies.



Wide ride with Scots pine



Lime kilns, Eastwell Park



Wood anemone

Continue straight ahead on main ride to where 4 rides meet at a staggered cross ride (ie R then immediately L) I. When fields are on your R and at a sharp bend to the L go straight across to yellow RoW sign and a footpath into woodland J. Emerge into field K. Keep to L side until you see a stile beside a bungalow diagonally opposite L. Footpath to A251 cross road with great care to pavement. R to Halfway House. Return to Blind Lane M. Or L then R to footpath and go diagonally R across cricket field to Blind Lane and L passing The Chequers M. Take L in to Church Lane N.

At end of Church Lane either go straight ahead to farm road O or L into Churchyard. The 13th century church of St Cosmas & Damian on the site of the old village of Challock, is nearly a mile from the centre of the present village. The most likely explanation for the shift of the village is the 1589 grant of power to the Eastwell Estate to 'empark'. This closed the road from Eastwell to Challock diverting traffic to what is now the A251. The church has some lovely murals from the 1950s and a new one from a celebration of the Millennium, with many villagers depicted. The church is normally kept locked. To arrange entry see the Challock Parish Council website. **Opposite the south entrance to the Church turn R take path over stile into field and walk straight ahead to join farm road on brow O.** For a description of the Eastwell Manor Park Estate, which you are now walking through, see Countryside around King's Wood (overleaf). Looking back, towards the Downs, notice the old lime kilns in the hillside.

Straight ahead on footpath through fields to stile P. Go across estate road to opposite stile. Please do not walk down the estate road. Take footpath to top of field Q. Follow field edge to stile and NDW sign R. Go L diagonally down field to estate road and kissing gate S. Cross drive to R to another kissing gate. Head across field to barn shaped Church (St Christopher's) and kissing gate T. Cross A251 with great care to Boughton Lees.



Key	
	Selected bus stops
	Steep incline
	Hazard
	Walk 1
	Walk 2
	Walk 3
	Walk 4
	Car park
	Toilet
	North Downs Way
	Public footpath
	Public bridleway
	Restricted byway
	Byway Open to All Traffic
	Access land

PUBS		SHOPS	
1. George Inn, Molash CT4 8HE ☎01233 740323		7. Chilham Post Office CT4 8BX ☎01227 733894	
2. Woolpack Inn, Chilham CT4 8DL ☎01227 730351		8. Chilham Shop CT4 8DX ☎01227 730348	
3. White Horse Inn, Chilham CT4 8BY ☎01227 730355		9. Badgers Hill Farm, Chilham CT4 8BW ☎01227 730573	
4. Halfway House, Challock TN25 4BB ☎01233 740258		10. Shelly's Tea Rooms, Chilham CT4 8BY ☎01227 730303	
5. Chequers, Challock TN25 4BS ☎01233 740672		11. Perry Court Farm Shop TN25 4ES ☎01233 812302	
6. Flying Horse, Boughton Lees TN25 4HH ☎01233 620914		12. Challock Barn Shop TN25 4BJ ☎01233 740237	
		13. Challock Post Office TN25 4BP ☎01233 740313	
	HOTEL, BAR & RESTAURANT	Eastwell Manor, Boughton Lees TN25 4HR ☎01233 213000	

Walk 2 - Chilham - Magnificent Mansions and Majestic Trees

Difficulty:- 4 miles (6.25km) 1 steep path uphill, 1 steep path downhill, 2 stiles, 3 gates.
Time:- 2 hours (no stops).
Bus:- 652 Monday to Saturday (Ashford/Canterbury).
Train:- Chilham Railway Station.
Start and parking:- Chilham Village Car Park, Taylors Hill, off A252, with Public Toilets.
Food stop:- Chilham.

Key:- L = Left; NDW = North Downs Way; R = Right.

Start at the A252 Chilham Car Park. L onto A252 pavement A. L Dane Street B. Enjoy the architecture of the small settlement at Dane Street. Each April there is a carpet of wood anemone.

R at big beech tree and fork in path towards summit C. Cross the NDW to stile L of deer leap D. The wall prevented deer from returning to the Forest. **Foot path diagonally R across field to stile and second field follow yellow markers downhill. Through gate and continue downhill to point where farm tracks meet E.** For a description of Godmersham Park see Countryside around King's Wood (overleaf). Towards the bottom of track is the Deer Lodge where the Park's Deer Keeper lived. **L farm track to stile/gate, continue straight ahead.**

Along the lower path, on the right, there is abundant mistletoe. Chilham is a mistletoe "hot spot" probably because of the narrowness of the valley creating a slightly damper environment. Mistletoe is semi-parasitic, living partly off host trees such as apple, poplar and lime. **Gate – please close, continue straight ahead.**

Corner of lane (Mountain Street), continue downhill/straight ahead F. Mountain Street's name is probably derived from the family of de Opmanton (1348) and was once the main road between Ashford and Canterbury. It was also known as "the road of a Thousand and One Toads" (Pilgrimage to Canterbury, H Fearon, 1956), sadly this is no longer the case. For information about Chilham Castle see Countryside around King's Wood (overleaf). **Turn L into School Lane, Chilham G. Note the Elephant House to the left. R at end of School Lane into Chilham Square H. Exit Square via Taylors Hill down to A252 and public car park I.**

Walk 3 - Godmersham - Land of Godmaer

Difficulty:- 5.1 miles (8.25 kms) 1 steep path uphill, 1 steep path downhill, 2 stiles, 3 gates.
Time:- 2.5 hrs (no stops).
Bus:- 652 Monday to Saturday (Ashford/Canterbury).
Start and parking:- Next to the church.
Food stop:- Chilham or Perry Court Farm Shop.

Key:- L = Left; NDW = North Downs Way; R = Right.

Start with Godmersham Church (at your back) L to main road A28 Bilting A. R with great care towards Ashford using pavement (1 mile) B1. R at last house (opposite Home Farm) onto ancient track up escarpment to King's Wood (KW). This hedged ancient drove road to the Downs has over 30 trees, shrubs, and climbers lining it.

L at top of footpath to point where paths cross B2 and go R onto North Downs Way (NDW) C. The pits on the left are probably old chalk pits used for making lime. Most of the woodland along the path is either sweet chestnut coppice or beech. On the right-hand side is a secret valley once used for Airships. On the left, after a public footpath to the left, are some magical hornbeam stubs, originally used as boundary markers.

R at stile alongside deer leap D. The wall prevented deer from returning to the Forest. **Footpath diagonally R across field to stile and in second field follow yellow markers downhill.** You now come to a fantastic view of the Stour Valley. For a description of Godmersham Park see Countryside around King's Wood (overleaf). Across the valley, on Temple Hill is a white folly, said to be a place where Jane Austen enjoyed writing. **Through gate and farm track down hill to point where farm tracks meet E.**

Go straight ahead on track between hedges to gate F. R diagonally across field to arched gateway and gate for walkers G. In late summer/early autumn look out for fairy ring champignon mushrooms on the grassy path. **L to river Stour to admire views H.** The River Stour, from its source in Lenham to its mouth in Sandwich, is 58 miles. In the clear water cushions of the white flowered river water crowfoot can be seen. Nearby, women felons were drowned, in the river's Ordeal Pit.

R retrace steps back towards arched gateway I. Bear L alongside Godmersham Park wall. L to Godmersham Church. The parish of Godmersham originates from a Saxon farmstead belonging to 'Godmaer'. Jane Austen's brother, Edward Knight lived at Godmersham Park and the east window of St Lawrence Church is dedicated to him. His old nurse, who looked after all his children, lies under the ancient yews in the churchyard of St Lawrence Church.



River Stour (Martyn Adley)