

Fawke, Bitchet and Seal Chart 8-mile circular walk



A circular walk through Knole Park, and the ancient woodlands and clearings of the Greensand Commons of Fawke, Bitchet and Seal Chart. Fawke boasts several mature, veteran trees, which support a variety of insects and fungi. Bitchet Common offers a wide range of trees, including yew, rowan, sweet chestnut, silver birch and oak. Woodland birds thrive here, including greater-spotted and green woodpeckers. Seal Chart Common provides an excellent view of the wider landscape and is frequented by flocks of chatty blue, great and long-tailed tits.

START LOCATION

Godden Green outside The Buck's Head
Post code: TN15 0JJ
National Grid reference: TQ 553 551
What3Words reference:
songs.allow.fever

Distance: 13Km (8 miles)

Difficulty: Some very steep hills and can be muddy in wet weather.

Walking time: 3-4 hours

ALTERNATIVE STARTS

Knole Park (National Trust)
One Tree Hill car park
Ightham Mote (National Trust)
Amhurst Inn off the A25



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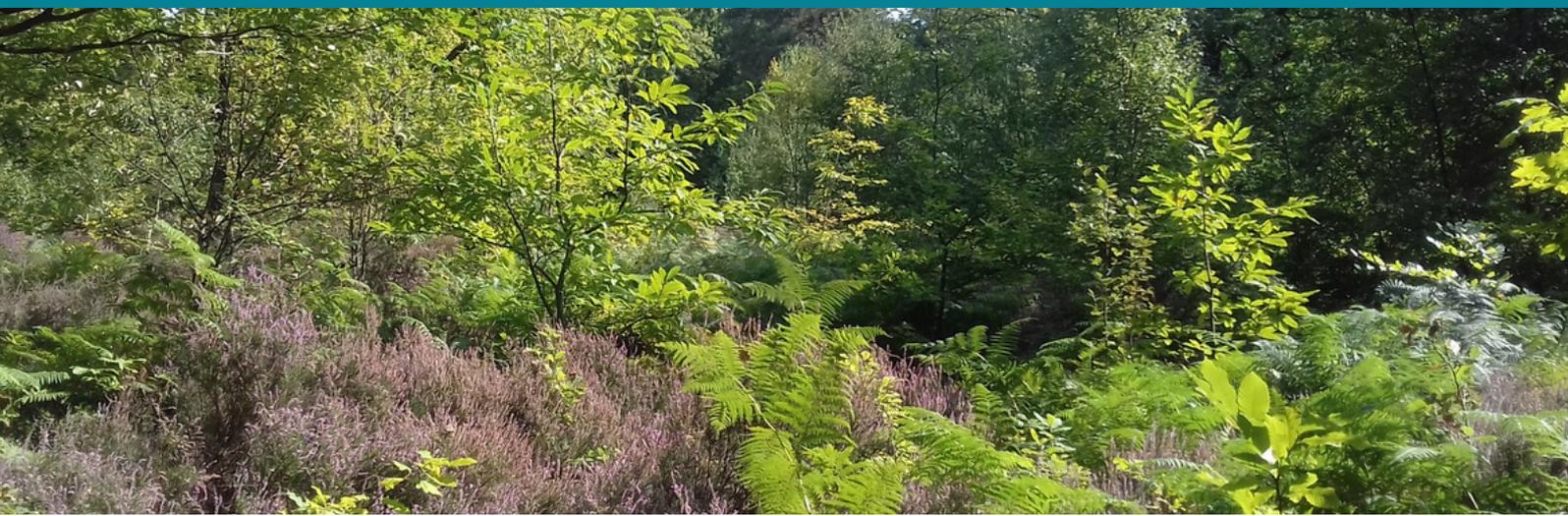
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By car – parking on road opposite The Bucks Head

By public transport – Route S4 bus (Go-Coach) from Sevenoaks Bus Station stops at the Buck's Head.

DIRECTIONS

1. Take the footpath that runs past the cottages to the right of the Bucks Head as you face it from the road. The cottages are called Golf Cottages and the path is signed to the Old Stables. Walk past the stables and turn left at the road/track. Follow the track to meet a road and turn right, sign posted Bridleway.

2. Follow the Bridleway past some cottages on your left and then turn right up a hill towards a gate into Knole Park.

On passing through the gate keep left and straight on up the hill following the edge of the forest to your left. At the top of the hill turn left, again following the edge of the forest to your left.

3. At the end of the forest, as you approach a clearing, turn left and follow the forest edge downhill, over a small stream and back up the other side. Follow the path down to a fence and a gate leaving Knole Park and onto Fawke Common.

Kent Wildlife Trust would like to say a special thank you to Adrian Wain, who kindly created these walks for local people to enjoy.



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4. Pass through the gate and take the path straight up the hill ignoring the path to the left. Follow the path, across a small ditch, ignoring paths left and right, up to a road.

5. On reaching the road the path continues immediately opposite. Follow this to the crossroads and carry straight on down Bitchet Green Road with Fawke House on your right and Fawke Farm on your left. Be careful as this road can be busy. Carry on along the road, downhill, until at the bottom, at a bend in the road, take a path to the right and then, soon after, a path to the left up-hill. You are now on Bitchet Common.

Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers have undertaken heathland restoration work in recent years on Bitchet Common as part of the Sevenoaks Greensand Commons Project.

This work has consisted of plant surveys and bracken, birch and holly clearance, which has allowed more light onto the commons to benefit heathland plants.

Visit the project webpage at www.kentwildlifetrust.org.uk/our-work/our-projects/sevenoaks-greensand-commons for further information about the management of Bitchet Common.

6. At a crossroads of paths, by a mature beech tree, carry straight on up the hill and follow the path until you meet a vehicle track. Turn left along the track going slightly downhill.

There are the remains of old chert quarries on your right. These were shallow excavations to extract the stone which was once used for road making. Chert is a very hard grey stone similar to flint.



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7. About 100m along the track, just before the track bends, take a narrow path off to the right and follow this path as it crosses an old bank (the edge of the Chert quarry) and bends down the hill to your right. On your left is an old sunken trackway.

8. At the bottom of the hill turn right and then, shortly after, left at a way marker post and follow the path up the hill. At a fork take the left path for a short distance to join a track and then turn left. Follow the track, ignoring paths on your right, until it joins a road.

9. Cross the road and take the bridleway opposite. After 200 meters, at the next path junction, turn left and go down the hill. There is a welcome memorial bench on your left just around the corner.

10. Carry on to the bottom of the hill and then straight on up the other side to the top and down the other side.

Follow the track to join another at a T junction. Turn left and follow the track for 700 meters to Mote Farm and Ightham Mote.

11. On reaching the road (Mote Road) turn right for a few meters and then left through a gate into the grounds of Ightham Mote. Follow the track round to the right, past the gift shop (no entry to the house here) and uphill to the car park. Turn left into the car park and continue with the café and toilets on your left.

Ightham Mote (owned by the National Trust) is a medieval moated manor house. It has been described as "the most complete small medieval manor house in the county".



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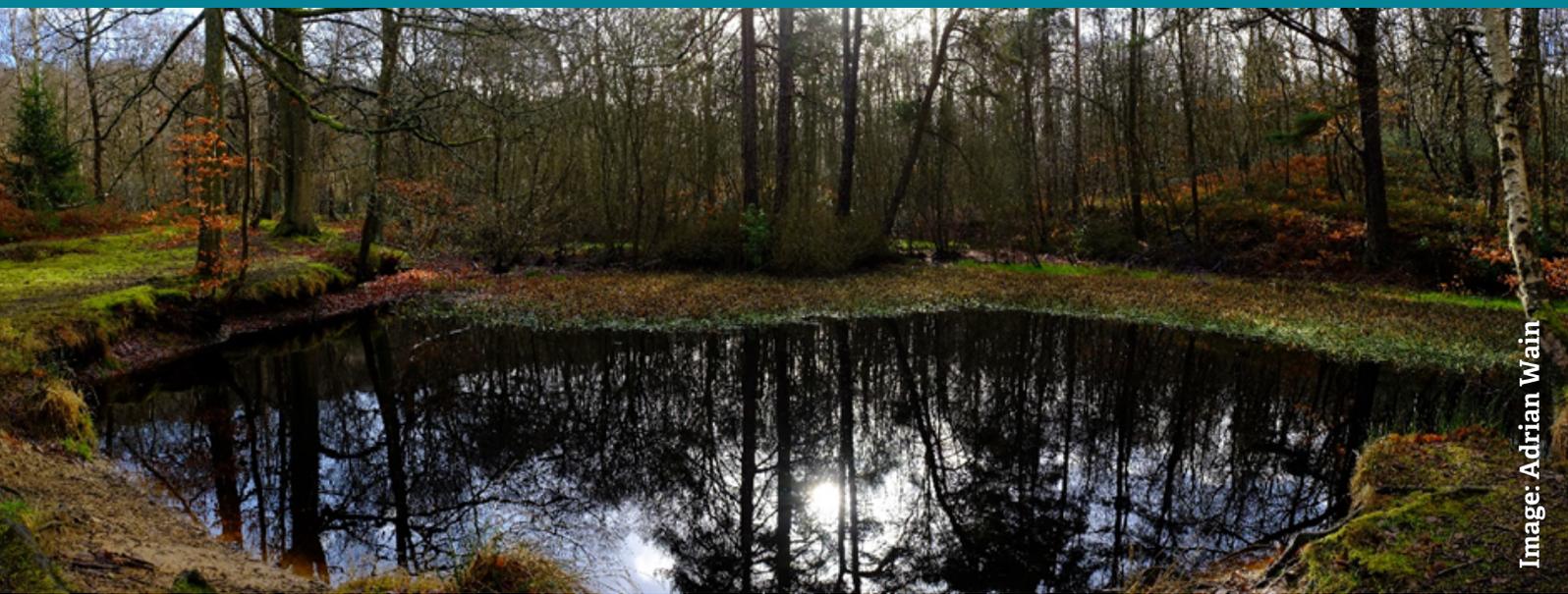


Image: Adrian Wain

12. Walk past the café and turn left heading for the entrance office for the house at the left-hand boundary of the car park. Then turn right and head for the archway in the wall of the car park.

Go through the arch and continue along the road. Towards the end of the car park take a footpath on the left, down a steep hill with steps, back to Mote Road.

13. Turn right on the road and after 200 meters take the bridleway and follow it as it winds steeply up the hill until you meet a road. Take care with fast moving traffic and cross the road and continue following the bridleway up a very steep hill with deep steps.

At the top of the hill turn left along the fence line at the edge of an old sand quarry until the path meets the main path running along the ridge and then turn left at the blue way markers. After about 100m turn right at the next blue way marker and continue down a very steep hill with large steps.

Follow the sandy path through the woodland towards the A25. Near the A25 are a series of disused fishponds on your left.

The fishponds date back to at least the mid-19th Century. The image above shows the upper most pond, furthest from the A25.



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14. The path emerges from the wood at the busy A25 road. Turn left along the road on the grass verge past Reuthe's Garden and bear left, sign posted Crown Point and past The Amhurst Inn.

15. As the road bends to the right, turn left, signposted bridleway, beside Crown Point Cottage. Follow this for 500 meters to the end of the tarmac road. With a house on your left and garages on your right continue up the hill on the bridleway.

16. At the top of the ridge turn right for a short distance and join a road. Continue past St Lawrence school and church. As the road bends round to the right carry straight on, taking the bridleway along the top of the ridge through the woods. This is Seal Chart Common, part of the Greensand Commons.



Seal Chart and Redhill Wood consist of open woodland. Seal Chart is part of a designated Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI) and contains acidic sessile oak woodland of ancient origin, more typical of northern and western Britain.

Relict heathland communities and more recently-derived secondary woodland form a mosaic of habitats at the common.

An outstanding assemblage of fungi is present, numbering over 250 species and including several that are rare or scarce in Britain. Characteristic communities of insects and bryophytes (mosses and liverworts) also occur.

Kent Wildlife Trust volunteers have been cleared overgrown holly and invasive species such as birch and rhododendron to allow light and warmth into the woodland.



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17. Follow the main path along the ridge. The path here forms a “hollow way” where the path has been eroded over hundreds of years into a sunken track with steep banks on either side.

On the right-hand side of the hollow way there are the remains of enclosures (now visible as a low bank forming a square or rectangle) which were used to keep pigs.

There are alternative paths either side of the hollow way which can be followed if the hollow way is particularly muddy. However, keep the hollow way in sight and be careful not to miss the next turning.

18. Follow the hollow way path until you reach another blue way marker and then turn right and descend towards the A25.

19. At a fork in the path take the left fork and follow the path as it bends left and runs parallel with the A25 before turning left at a path junction and returning to the top of the ridge.

At the top of the ridge walk towards a junction of paths where they meet the road (Red Lane). Cross the road and continue to take the bridleway along the top of the ridge.

Again, the path here forms a hollow way and there is an alternative path on the left-hand side but be careful not to lose sight of the hollow way and don't descend off the side of the ridge.

20. Towards the end of the ridge start to descend past a wicket fence and some houses on your left and follow the path until you meet a road. Turn right and then almost immediately left and descend downhill to meet a road (Grove Road).

Turn left on the road and as the road bends to the left take the public footpath on the right through the golf course. Follow the way markers and take note of the warning signs. The path crosses the golf course and emerges in Godden Green where you started.



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