



The Kentish Greensand Hills Brasted, Ide Hill, Toys Hill

Distance: 16½ km=10½ miles

moderate-to-easy walking

Region: Kent

Date written: 21-aug-2011

Author: Malinovka

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Refreshments: *The Woodman*, Ide Hill, Brasted

Last update: 5-oct-2021

Map: Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks) *but the maps in this guide should be sufficient*

Problems / changes? We depend on your feedback: feedback@fancyfreewalks.org

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Villages, woodland, hills, views

In Brief

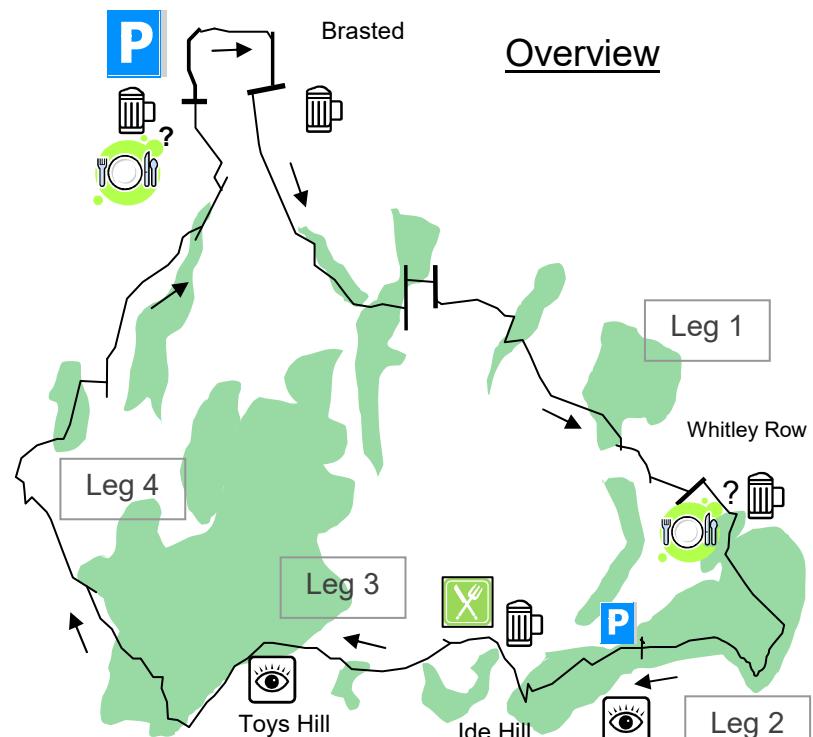
This walk is an excursion from a village near the North Downs to the edge of the Greensand and back, with terrific views over the Weald and beyond. The countryside is constantly varying and there are some unique places on the way to take refreshment.



There are a few patches of nettles, so shorts are not advisable, even though the council is doing good work in strimming them. Any sensible clothing should be fine but you will need boots in the wetter seasons in case of mud. You could certainly take a fit dog on this walk.



The walk begins at **Brasted church** and the *Stanhope Arms* pub, off the A25 road, postcode **TN16 1HZ**. Park in the large church car park, location: www.w3w.co/makes.these.equal. [Sep 2020: may be closed on a weekday]. There is also parking by the roadside. An alternative start is the **Stubbs Wood** car park just east of Ide Hill, postcode **TN14 6JA**, giving you a lunch break in Brasted. For more details, see at the end of this text (→ **Getting There**).

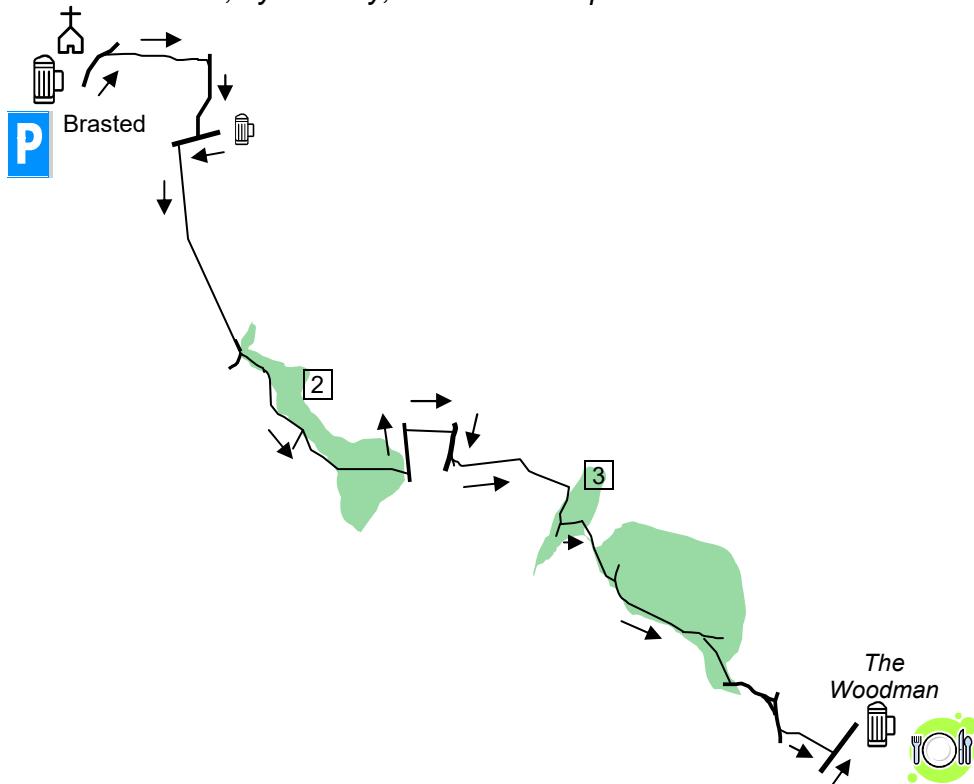


Overview

The Walk

Leg 1: Brasted to Whitley Row 5½ km=3½ miles

The pub and the church, where the walk begins, lie close together. St Martin's church stands on the site of an old Saxon church. It was rebuilt by the Victorians who retained the early English tower of about 1250. The church was badly damaged by a flying bomb in the last war. Of the pub, more at the end of the walk. Brasted, by the way, means "broad place".



- 1 Begin walking along the road with the church car park on your left but fork immediately **right** on a signed enclosed footpath next to a sign for *Tudor Rose*. At the end, go down steps to a lane and turn **right**. Follow the lane into the village, passing the the country's oldest builder R. Durtnell & Sons (*builders of Poundsbridge Manor in 1593 - see the "Speldhurst" walk in this series*) and going over the young River Darent on the way. On the left is the little green with a village sign depicting St Martin, the church and the River Darent, and a foodstore. *Nearly opposite is the White Hart, a rather brash place, not really a local.* Turn **right** on the main road through the village, passing various antique and art outlets. Just after a converted butcher's shop, turn **left** on the tarmac of Elliotts Lane, marked by a footpath sign, passing some quaint cottages and an oast. At the end of the tarmac, continue ahead on a footpath beside a fence. The path goes up steps, through a kissing gate and then on a more open fenced route between fields. After a while, you pass some houses. Continue ahead here on a tarmac track. Where the track curves right towards the buildings of Chartfield Farm, leave it by keeping straight on through a wooden barrier. Your narrow path runs under hazels close to a wild meadow on your right. Soon it takes you into the wood and through another sturdy wooden barrier. Immediately you reach a junction.
- 2 Ignore the path on the right and fork **left**, as the blue arrow, on a path, slightly uphill. Stay on this stony path, avoiding any small paths leading off into the wood on your right. On your left soon is an arboretum of tall conifers. Go past some cottages to a lane and turn **left**. In 200m, just after the lane begins to

descend, turn **right** on a bridleway. If you encounter a short muddy section shortly, rest assured that this is the only one on this walk. Later, a bridleway joins from the left. At the end, turn **right** on a road. In 80m, fork **left** onto a minor road, Penn Lane, and immediately turn **left** again by a metal gate onto a track. Fork a fraction **left** off the track and take a path straight ahead that runs between two fields, with a wire fence and the track immediately on your right. On your left you have a good view of the North Downs with Sandridge Church in the foreground. You reach a rounded corner with a line of beeches. Here, go down a shallow bank and turn immediately **right** at a yellow waymarker, so that you are walking inside the line of trees and bracken (and, in late spring, a host of bluebells).

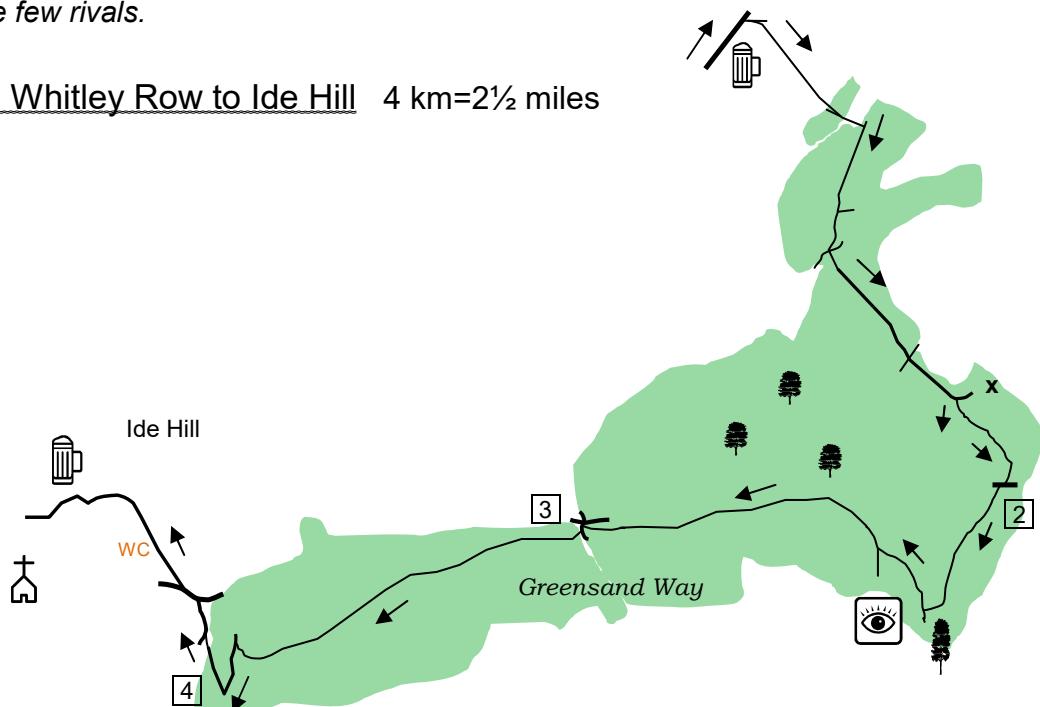
- 3** Go past an unneeded stile down a sunken path deep into Hill Water Bottom Wood. At the foot of the valley, the path goes over a stream by a bridge with a rail. After the bridge, turn **left** onto an ascending path. The path curves right with fields on each side, often bestrewn with wild flowers, and through more beeches. Go over a farm track and continue, this time on a grassy path between pines and birches. You come to a T-junction at the edge of the misnamed Willow Wood. Turn **right** here on a wide path. At a junction, ignore a footpath on the right and a track on the left and continue ahead on a gently rising path [June 2015: now greatly widened for forestry work: you need to watch out for large log-bearing vehicles; extending as far as the lane]. In 250m the path forks. Choose the **right** fork, the main track. Finally the path takes you out through a metal kissing gate to a lane. Turn **left** on the lane and in 100m, at a fork in the road, keep **right**. Just after you join a road from the left, turn **left** at a signpost next to a wooden gate onto a wide footpath. Shortly, where the drive bends left, keep straight ahead on an enclosed path. At a main road, turn **left**, quickly reaching *The Pheasant Plucker* pub / restaurant [Apr 2021: re-opening on the 12th, previously known as *The Woodman*].

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"Home-cooked food all day 8 days a week" was the proud boast of this iconic local at the time of writing (judging from the size of the car park, "place of pilgrimage" is a more apt description). "... a host of dishes, freshly prepared by our skilled chefs - all served in belt-loosening portions". You have only come a third of the way, so perhaps the belt should be kept tight at this stage. The range of beers is less exciting. But as a pleasant and jokily-named spot to stop at, sit in the large garden and listen to water and bird song, "the P.P." must have few rivals.



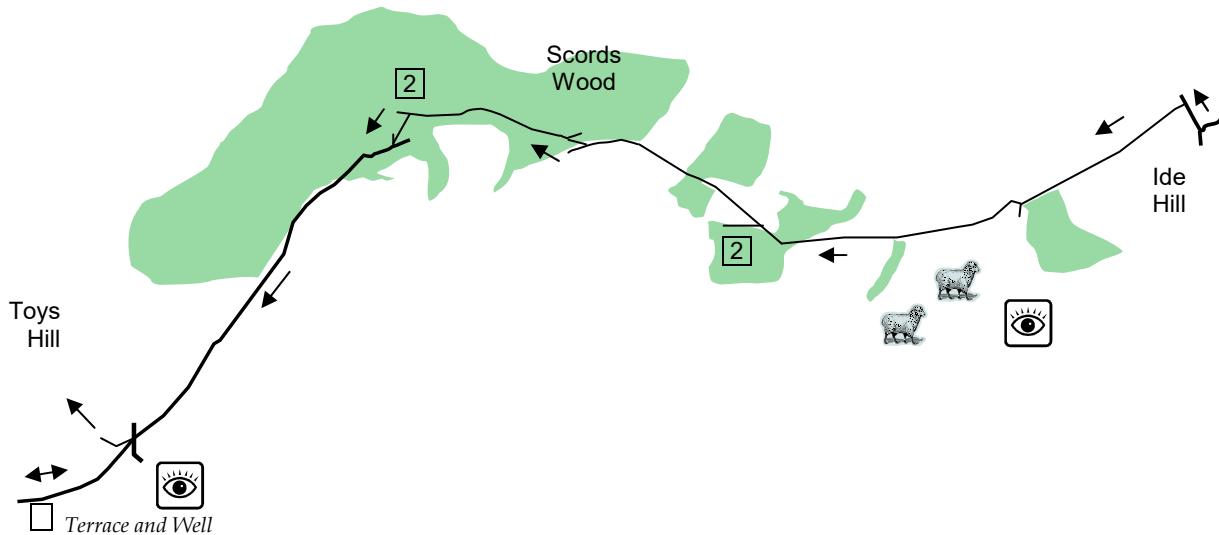
Leg 2: Whitley Row to Ide Hill 4 km=2½ miles



- 1** Continue past the pub and, immediately after it, turn **right** on a track and fork **right** to a metal gate. Go across the centre of a crop field and continue ahead on a track through woods. In 40m, veer **left** on a track. At a T-junction, turn **right** on another track. This pleasant area of heathland leads to a junction under pines. Keep straight ahead here on a track curving left uphill. At the top of a rise, keep ahead crossing a semi-tarmac track. You have a fence on your left and an old coppice on your right. Look out for a point in 140m where the coppice gives way to pines on the right and the track curves left. Here, turn **right** up a bank past a yellow waymarker. The narrow path winds through woods and eventually leads down to a road.
- 2** Cross the road, a bit to the right, through a metal barrier onto a wide path. Follow this popular looping walk through Brockhill Wood avoiding all turnings off. In 250m you reach a junction by a tall redwood. If the seasonal foliage allows, you have a terrific view here across the Kent Weald. Turn **right** as indicated by the yellow arrow, soon passing a bench where you should have an uninterrupted view. Continue on this is an splendid wide level path. Just after a wooden barrier, the Greensand Way, indicated by "GW" symbols, joins you from the left. You are indeed on one of the most remarkable parts of the Greensand Ridge. You pass another bench with fine views across to the Bough Beech lake. (*See the walk "Bough Beech and Weald Village" in this series.*) Avoid several other side paths until finally the path ends at a marker post. Veer **right** here to a lane near a road junction.
- 3** Go straight over the lane to the small Stubbs Wood car park opposite (an alternative start). Veer **left** across the car park to a noticeboard and continue onwards on a wide woodland path. This stretch of wooded hills is known as *Hanging Bank*. Soon the path forks at a post with a blue arrow. Take the **right** fork, the one indicated by the "GW" sign, up a short slope. You immediately reach another marker post with coloured arrows. Ignore all the arrows and keep straight ahead through Stubbs Wood, an area famed for bluebells in late spring, soon re-joining the GW. Your wide path narrows and winds a bit and there are several tempting turnings off that you need to avoid, then another bench with views. Soon you have a wooden fence on your left for 150m. 30m after the end of the fence you meet another wide path coming from the left. Turn **sharp left** here, almost reversing direction.
- 4** You reach a little green by a house with a post and blue arrows. Turn **sharp right** on a drive downhill. *On your left soon is the garden gate of the house "Pooh Corner" with the cut-outs of Pooh and Piglet (recalling the "Hartfield, East Sussex", walk in this series).* Join a lane and keep ahead to a T-junction. Turn **left** on the main road, cross carefully and, in 30m, and fork **right** on a minor road. Continue up the hill, soon reaching the village green of Ide Hill and, on your right, *The Cock* pub. By the green is the old well, also a war memorial. Across the green, the church of St Mary is worth a look.

Ide Hill goes back to Saxon times and the name has changed over time from "Edith's Hill". None of the sources say who Edith was: whether a matriarch in her own right or wife of a chieftain or aristocrat is unclear. The Victorian church has a magnificent chancel and a stone carved pulpit. Known for its unusual spire, it is the highest (geographically speaking) in Kent. "The Cock" is a friendly 15th-century village inn with two bars and tables at the front from where you can observe the serene life of the village. There are Greene King ales and some traditional food including game pie and quiche (although on Sundays you may only get salad-type meals). It closes at 2.30, or 3 at weekends.

Leg 3: Ide Hill to Toys Hill 2 km=1½ miles

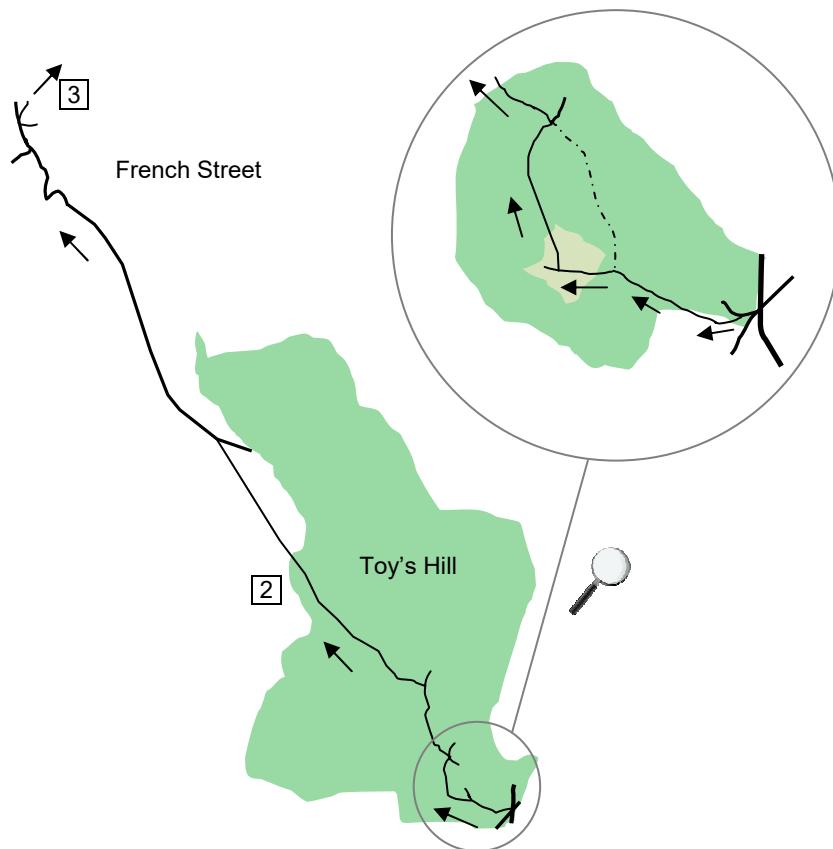


- 1 From the small roundabout at the other end of the green, turn **right** on a road and, in 20m, turn **left** on a tarmac footpath. Continue through a metal kissing gate onto a grassy path and thence out into a wonderful open meadow with terrific views ahead. Keep along the left-hand edge downhill. As you descend, ignore a metal kissing gate on the left and continue on a stony track along the left-hand side of a sheep pasture. Keep straight ahead downhill, past another superfluous metal kissing gate. Cross the meadow passing under wires and, on reaching the corner, continue along its right-hand side. The path leads down through a small metal gate and over a stream by a concrete bridge, followed by another small metal gate.
- 2 Keep your direction up the centre of the meadow, avoiding a path that forks left along the perimeter. Pass to the right of a grove of tree stumps (now sprouting nicely and fenced off), over a stile beside a metal farm gate, and continue straight ahead towards some posts by the tree line. Veer **left** here along the edge of the meadow. There is shortly a bench from where you can admire the views of the South Downs. Immediately after the bench, veer **right** through a chain stile into the woods uphill, passing a National Trust sign for *Toys Hill*. You promptly join a path coming from the right, running under hazel and holly trees of part of Scords Wood. *Scords Wood was badly damaged in the 1987 hurricane and is being allowed to regenerate naturally.* In 180m, just after passing a house on your left, the fence on your left curves away. Fork **left** here beside the fence on a narrower path. (*Don't miss this turn!*)
- 3 At the end of the path, veer left on a wide path and, almost immediately, veer **right** on a drive. Follow the drive, now more of a lane, ignoring some footpath signs and passing some of the exquisite properties of Toys Hill including an oast. You finally reach a crossroads in the village. There is a tiny grassy knoll here with a circular seat.

Toys Hill is named after a family in the middle ages. In the past, this hilly country subsisted on pig farming, charcoal burning and quarrying. A large area to the north of the village is owned by the National Trust and is a site of special scientific interest (SSSI) because of its abundant wildlife.

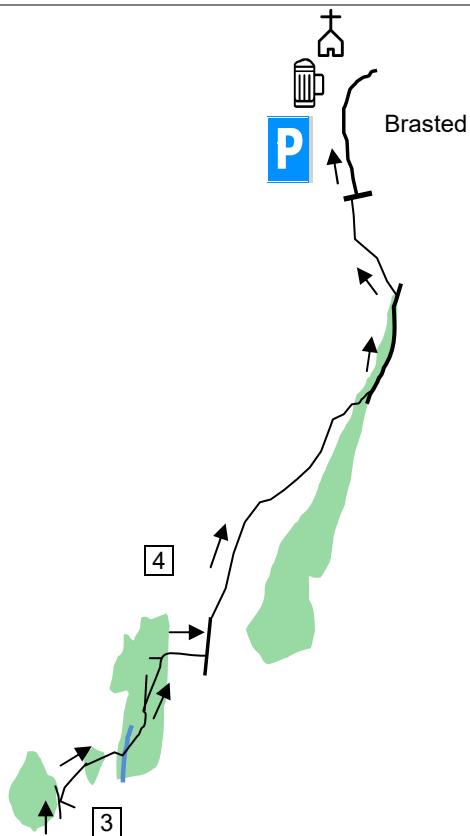
It is worth making a brief diversion up Puddledock Lane from here, past some picturesque cottages, to the Terrace and Well where there is another excellent view. *This terrace was donated by Octavia Hill, the indefatigable social reformer, great champion of open spaces and co-founder of the National Trust.*

Leg 4: Toys Hill to Brasted 5½ km=3½ miles



- [1] From the crossroads in Toys Hill, cross straight over and turn **right** by a marked bridleway and footpath sign leading up into woodland by a National Trust sign. Immediately keep straight ahead on the footpath between two posts, up shallow steps. Shortly, at the top of a rise, turn **left** into a level grassy area popular with young families. (You can stay in the main path - dotted line on the map above - but this route is more interesting.) Pass a memorial tree and turn **right** at a marker post and orange arrow past another commemorative tree. The path goes up through hollies to a memorial stone table with a toposcope which was obviously built when there were no trees in the neighbourhood. Continue on the narrow path which bends sharp right to meet a junction of paths. Turn sharp **left** at the junction on a clear wide path, ignoring the darker path ahead that goes uphill into woods. Stay on the winding sandy path with birch woods on both sides. In 200m, at the top of a slope, you come to an oak and beech intimately conjoined. Fork **left** here, going past another blue "GW" symbol. On your right now is a newly coppice area. Stay on the Greensand Way at all times, soon steeply down, avoiding several turnings off. You pass another National Trust sign, indicating a farewell to Toys Hill.
- [2] Your path runs by a high wire fence on the left, becomes a track with a pasture on your right and merges with a track coming from the left and later a drive coming from the right. This hedged drive offers opportunities for blackberrying in late summer. Finally you arrive at Frenchstreet Farm and Stables with its two oasts. The drive curves, zigzags tightly left-right uphill and is joined by a drive coming from the left. As you pass cottages, avoid a left turn, thus leaving the Greensand Way. Just after a black-and-white timbered *April Cottage*, you encounter two footpaths on the **right**. Take the **left-hand** of these two footpaths, with a wire fence on your right.

3 This narrow, sometimes overgrown, path goes down through holly. It then goes through a swing-gate into a horse pasture. Go down the right-hand side of the pasture and through a modern kissing-gate into woodland. Your path goes over a 3-plank bridge with a rail and up through some brooding pines. It quickly wheels left on a level course. In 40m you come to a fork. Choose the **right**-hand path, leading uphill. The narrow path widens considerably and runs straight, gently uphill. Where the fence on the left ends, ignore a footpath left and continue on the path that curves right into the open. Go over a stile (which is just squeezable past) and along the right-hand side of a pasture towards a small timbered building which turns out to be the top storey of the house *Piper's Green*. Go through a wooden swing-gate to a lane and turn **left**.



4 The lane, Pipers Lane, becomes a track, a byway, which you need to follow for nearly 1 km. [Oct 2021: Pipers Lane is currently chewed up by vehicle tracks, making it muddy and difficult to walk down. Judging by the new fence, some kind of building work must be in progress. We hope the work will be finished soon.] As you go, avoid a stile and yellow arrow on the left, always staying on the main track. Eventually you arrive at a drive by the iron gates and gatehouse to *Foxwold*. Continue to a road and turn **left**. You pass a junction with a lane on the right and then a drive on the left. Soon, opposite a "40 mph" reminder roadsing, turn **left** on a footpath up some steps and along the left-hand side of a field. At the far side, go down steps, between fences, beside gardens, over a drive and down to the main road in Brasted. Cross it carefully, turn **right** and then **left** on Church Road. Follow this lane, past houses, over the gurgling infant Darent and past Mill Farm, soon arriving at the church and pub where the walk began.

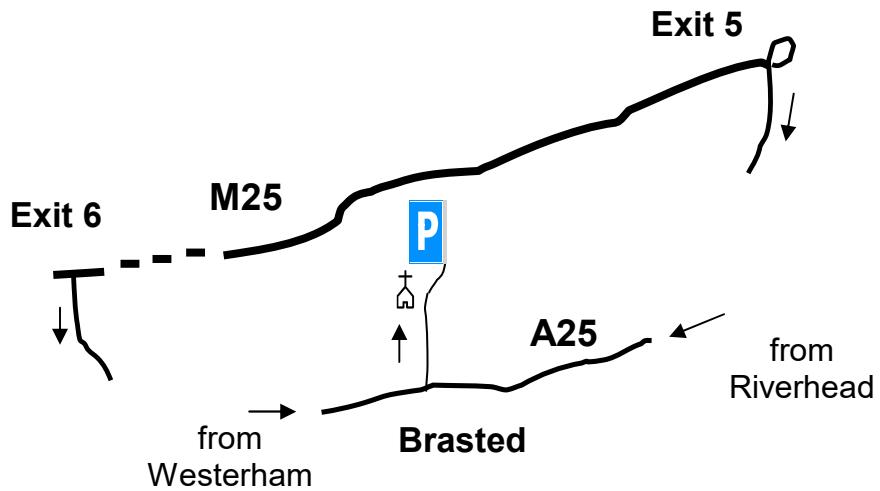
In 2021 the "Stanhope Arms" is "closed for refurbishment, opening soon".

The "Stanhope Arms" is a highly-rated traditional pub which has recently turned itself into a major eatery with a comprehensive menu catering for all appetites. As well as the garden, there is a patio with one large table that can accommodate a merry crowd of a dozen or so. It is open all day Sunday (otherwise closed 3.30 – 6pm) but bear in mind that food is not served in the afternoon or, if Sunday, after 5pm. Beer is Greene King, including Olde Trip. A bright and cheery place to finish the day.



Getting there

By car: Brasted is on the A25. From the M25, join the A25 via Riverhead (if coming from the east) or from Oxted and Westerham (if coming from the west). Go up Church Road and park by the road side, in front of the pub or, better, in the church car park.



The alternative Stubbs Wood car park is in Wheatsheaf Hill, near Ide Hill, at the corner of Nightingale Lane.

By bus/train: bus 401 from Sevenoaks to Brasted runs every 2 hours. Check the timetables.

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