

CIRCULAR WALK FROM CROCKENHILL VILLAGE HALL

Walk downhill from the Village Hall.

At the end of Broadway cross the road and go up Old Chapel Road by the Chequers Pub.

Take footpath SD179 on the right about half way up Old Chapel Road.

Cross the road to Darns Hill.

(1) DARNs HILL OLD BURYING GROUND

This dates back to at least the 1690s shortly after Baptists were granted freedom to worship in 1689.

It was used by the Baptists from a wide area, at a time when there were no Anglican or Baptist churches in Crockenhill. Over 200 people are known to have been buried here.

The small semi-detached cottages just beyond the Burying Ground are dated 1822 (see plaque - TD Thomas Dyke).

They are a rare example of Georgian farm labourers' cottages and belonged to the Hart Dyke Lullingstone estate.



VIEWPOINT A (SD331)

Pause just after the cottages to look towards London. The outline of Shooters Hill is prominent and the high rise buildings of Canary Wharf. The line of trees across the field behind Darns Hill cottages marks border between Kent and Greater London (London Borough of Bromley). You can follow this line, roughly lying north/south, with your eye. Further along your route the line of trees crosses the track and runs to your left.



VIEWPOINT B (LBB199)

With the line of trees to your left, look towards London again and this time the City of London distinctive buildings (Shard e.g.) can be seen on a clear day.

At the start of the tree line you cross from Kent into the London Borough of Bromley. This area is called Shelmore.

SHELMORE) Shel (shell) + mere (boundary) - The gravelly soil here is full of fossil shells - and several ancient parish boundaries meet (Crockenhill, once part of Eynsford Parish, St. Mary Cray, and Lullingstone).

(2) BEECH TREE

Just after the track (SD336) bends left, there is a huge oak tree, and further along in isolation a huge beech tree. These were pollarded as boundary markers and are shown on a map of 1802. A pollard tree had its branches cut off three to four metres above the ground. This prolonged the life of the tree by rejuvenating it, and these trees are over 500 years old. New branches grew from below the cut to give a new supply of timber, but the trunk grew thicker and thicker as it aged.



left: The oak tree and line form Kent County boundary. Here seen from the Kent side, beyond is the London Borough of Bromley. right: The pollard boundary beech near The Gables.

(3) DALTONS ROAD COAL POST



Look on the corner bank to The Gables for the coal post. These were placed all round Greater London, and because Crockenhill was border country there are 5 in the village (all listed buildings). The inscription gives the date of the Victorian Act of Parliament of 1861 which imposed a tax on coal crossing the line to London which was to be used to improve London's infrastructure. Money was used towards building the embankments in central London under which new sewers could run.

Cross Daltons Road onto track SD203.

VIEWPOINT C (SD203)

Although the walk has been on level ground it is high-up and forms the plateau of the North Downs. As you walk towards the M25 where the view opens up looking to your left there is a panoramic view over the Thames Valley into Essex. On a clear day the superstructure of Queen Elizabeth bridge at Dartford is visible. In the nearest woodland are tall trees showing above the canopy. These are Wellingtonias or Giant Sequoias planted in Victorian times in the grounds of a then new-build Highcroft Hall.



Go under the M25 underpass and turn right onto SD202, which follows a line of poplars towards Park Gate. At the end of the last field go through a gate. The path here cuts through the garden of Park Gate House, a substantial eighteenth century house. At the end is a gate in the fence onto a track (SD206). Turn right and at the end enter Lullingstone Park.

PARK GATE ENTRANCE TO LULLINGSTONE PARK

Lullingstone Park is an ancient deer park, dating back to at least the time of Henry VIII, but probably earlier. The restored Victorian deer fence can be seen by the entrance to the car park. The deer escaped from the park during the Second World War.

THE LODGE (toilets / refreshment if open)

At the lower end of The Lodge walk along the edge of the Pitch and Putt, keeping inside the white posts marking the gold course.

The pitch and putt area is dotted with ancient oak pollards. Pollards standing in grassland was typical habitat in parkland. The owner could harvest the branches above the reach of the deer, while the deer would have pasture with shade in the summer and shelter in the winter.



At the end of the Pitch and Putt follow the path through the trees to the bridlepath, which crosses the golf course between holes 16 and 17. Make your way round the 16th hole, if no golfers are around to the track leading to the Workmen's enclosure.

(4) OAK BY THE WORKMEN'S ENCLOSURE

By hole 15 behind the Workmen's enclosure is an oak pollard over 10 metres in diameter (the third largest in Kent), which has been proved to be over 1000 years' old.

The plantations were part of the the late 1940s post-war effort to become less reliant on imported timber. They have not done well, partly due to poor soil and partly to squirrel damage.



Make your way back along the track and follow it to where it meets another track and turn right. Look for a faint path off on the left which leads to another oak pollard

(5) THE SENTRY-BOX OAK OFF CENTRAL TRACK

Locally known as the sentry-box oak, this hollow oak shows how veteran trees can survive if the bark and a few tree rings are healthy.



Return to the central path walking uphill to the left, until you reach the car park and exit onto the track on the right (SD206). This follows Lullingstone Park fence.

(6) DEER FENCE THROUGH TREES BY TRACK OUTSIDE THE PARK (FOOTPATH 206)

Look at the largest trees which have encompassed the Victorian deer fence within their growth.



Follow the track until you reach kissing gate into field (SD203) and walk towards the M25 until you reach the underpass.

FOOTPATH 203

The extensive poly-tunnels belong to Hugh Lowe Farm, which is one of the largest independent berry growers in the UK, and has been a family-run business since 1893.

M25 UNDERPASS

The section of the M25 between Swanley and Sevenoaks was built in the early 1980s and was the last link in London's orbital route.

On the far side of the underpass turn right along the concrete track which runs parallel to the M25.

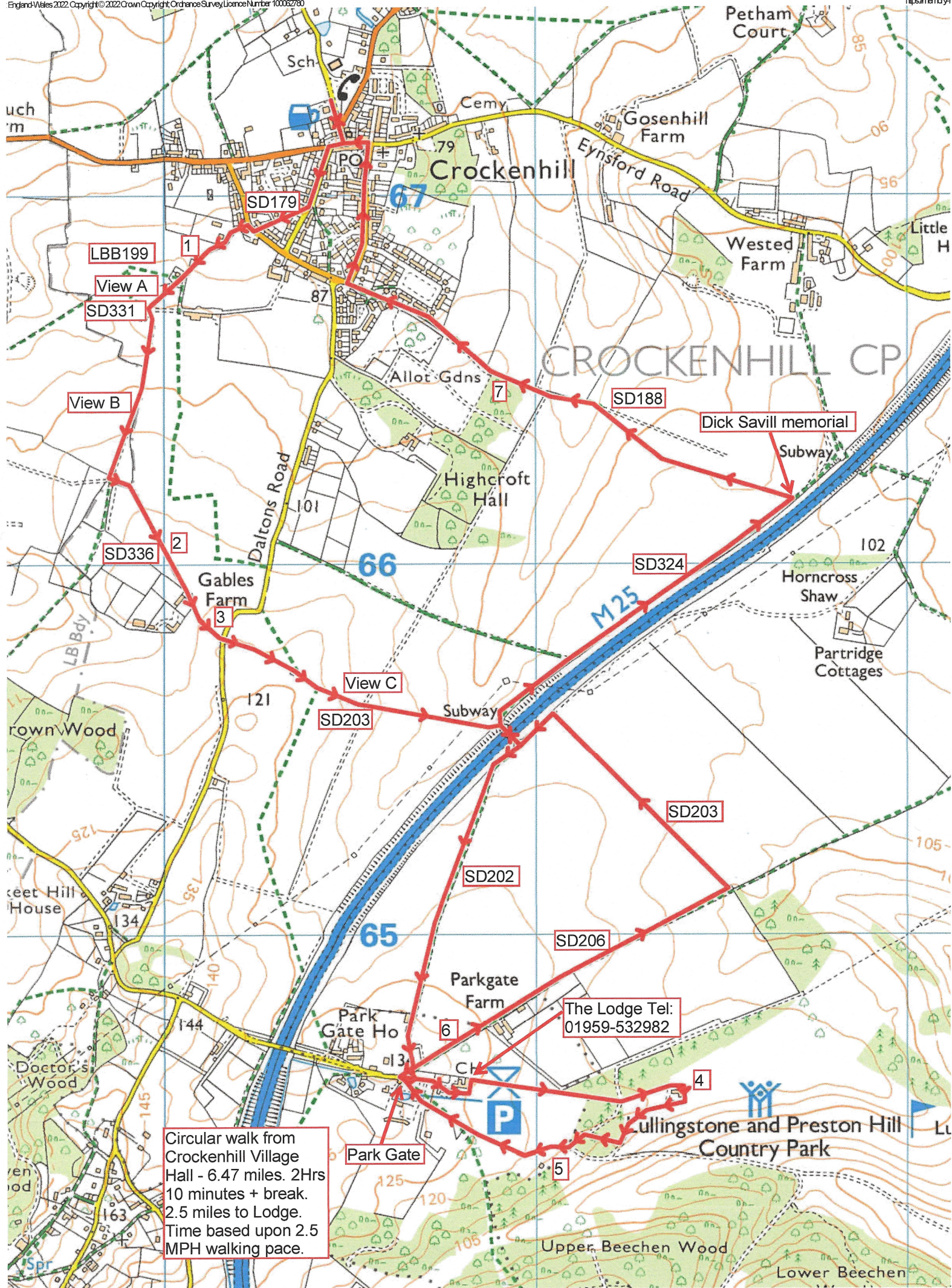
This farm track (SD324) on the west side was designated as a footpath after pressure from the local Rights of Way Group, led by Dick Savill. It has been dubbed Savill Row, and a memorial stone to Dick can be seen at the junction with footpath SD188 taken to return to Crockenhill.

(7) HARVESTFIELD PARK (by SD 188)

At the end of a downhill field walk, the land rises - look out for the hedgerow on the left. This encloses the public open space of Harvestfield Park. There is a stile into this as an alternative route back to the village. Dartford Priory used to own the land and it was called Harvestfield even in the reign of the Tudor King, Henry VIII. The hedgerow has a high number of species and is ancient.



At the far end of the footpath SD203 or the Park you enter Harvestway. At the junction with Church Road, cross and pick up the concrete footpath (SD185 between 2 bungalows). Follow the line of this through Barnfield to Old Chapel Road. Turn right and walk down the road to The Chequers. You are now back in the centre of Crockenhill.



Circular walk from Crockenhill Village Hall - 6.47 miles. 2Hrs 10 minutes + break. 2.5 miles to Lodge. Time based upon 2.5 MPH walking pace.

The Lodge Tel: 01959-532982

Lullingstone and Preston Hill Country Park