

Brackwalks



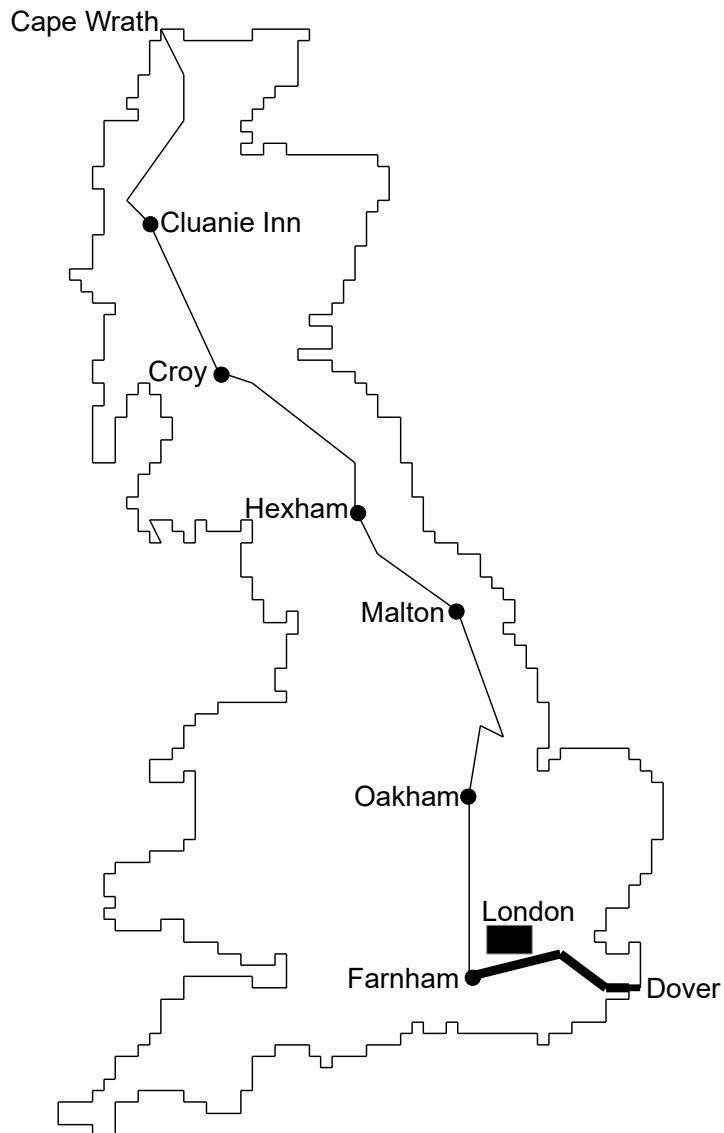
From FORELAND to CAPE

- an end to end walk across Britain from
South Foreland (Dover) to Cape Wrath

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Disclaimer: All details are given in good faith. However no activity can be completely hazard-free so undertaking any part of this route is done entirely at your own risk and I accept no responsibility for errors, loss or injury however caused.

Part 1 South Foreland to Farnham (132.3miles)



The lighthouse at South Foreland, marking the most south-easterly point of mainland Britain, is most sensibly reached from the large village of St Margaret's on Cliffe and as most people will opt to arrive by train, the description commences from Martin Mill Station. The lighthouse lies three miles north of Dover and from Dover the North Downs Way (NDW) is followed all the way to Farnham. At Dover, there's an immediate route choice on the NDW with the two routes joining north of Ashford. The shorter, more southerly route follows the south coast to Folkestone before turning inland and is the one described here; the more northerly route passes through Canterbury and is the route of choice to avoid cliff walking.

The North Downs Way loosely follows the line of the ridge of that name across the counties of Kent and Surrey; London lies to its north. Sometimes the NDW passes along the ridge base (or away from the ridge), sometimes it traverses near to the ridge top at an altitude of about 200metres (650ft) and sometimes it follows the historic pilgrimage route from Winchester to Canterbury which runs partway up the ridge so as to avoid both the exposed tops and wet valley bottoms; this Pilgrims Way is thought to have been in existence for at least 2500 years and passes through several charming villages where the pilgrims of old could, and today's travellers can, find accommodation. In addition, the ridge of the North Downs is not continuous and is intersected by quite a number of river valleys which need to be crossed. This all leads to a surprising amount of ascent and descent, some of which are short and sharp; in the latter stages of the NDW, the ridge is left after skirting round Guildford and the subsequent route is noticeably flatter.

The NDW starts by heading north-westwards towards Rochester but after crossing the River Medway turns south-of-west for the remainder of its journey to Farnham. While several large towns and sizeable villages of south-east England are reasonably close to the route, the NDW tends to skirt round them so only passes through the small towns of Wye, Otford and Merstham, with only the first offering accommodation.

The walking in Kent is practically all across the Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONB) forming the Kent Downs. While close to places of large population, the population of this AONB is relatively modest given its closeness to London. Essentially, the Kent Downs are an area of chalk downland where there's a chalk escarpment, grassland, much deciduous woodland, dry chalk valleys, heathland and open downland. Thus there is a variety of natural features that are used in the NDW route. It is also a farmed area although this aspect is less evident on the NDW.

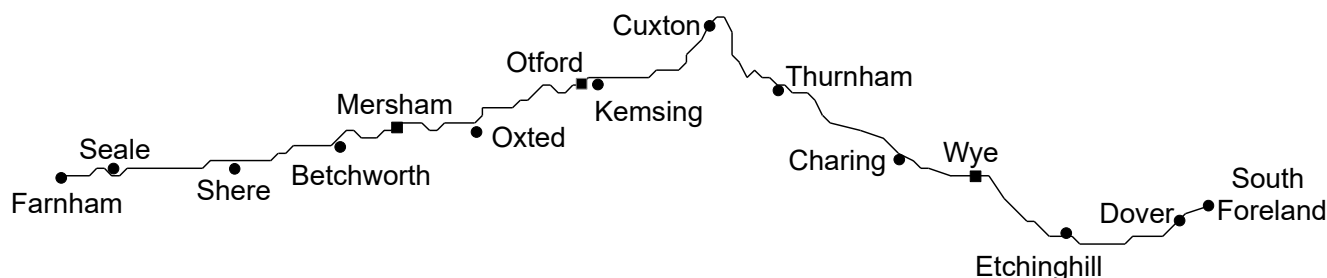
The NDW route through Surrey is almost entirely through the Surrey Hills AONB which like the Kent Downs is an area of chalk downland. It is one of the most heavily wooded of the AONBs (much of it natural) and this is reflected in the NDW route through the county. Much of the land forming the upper parts of the escarpment tops is owned by the National Trust or other conservation bodies who work to enhance and protect the landscape. Given the amount of woodland, there is less emphasis on farming with many people in the area commuting to work in London.

The trail planners have done their best with what they have but it's not the most satisfying of walks, as there's a definite feeling of the route manoeuvring round some fairly major roads and motorways. In addition, the amount of woodland means that often there's only trees to look at. However, open views when they arise are excellent and for lovers of literature, the route's association with Chaucer, Jane Austin and Dickens are a plus.

As you would expect, the NDW is mainly well-trodden and waymarked, although reports from participants stress the need to take maps. It is worth taking the Aurum Press's National Trail Guide for the North Downs Way by Neil Curtis and Jim Walker as this

contains the 1:25000 maps for the entire route from Dover to Farnham. It also contains information about the features encountered and interesting facts about the villages and towns passed through or nearby. However, the guide describes the NDW going eastwards whereas it is walked in the opposite direction if walking to Cape Wrath

On-route accommodation at suitable stopping points is surprisingly difficult to find and so stage endings here (and in other guides) tend to refer to an off-route location. Furthermore, the off-route walking to reach accommodation can often be more than half a mile, involving a steep descent from the ridge with a corresponding steep ascent first thing on the next day to rejoin the NDW. So, it is worth planning stopping points carefully and as this choice is a personal matter, the stage distances given relate *only* to the NDW route distance, although the distance to our off-route accommodation at a stage end is indicated. The National Trail web site displays the most up to date accommodation information <http://www.nationaltrail.co.uk/north-downs-way/plan>; however, there is more accommodation available than the listings reveal and for example, the B&Bs at Oxted, Shere and near Seale used on our walk are not displayed although revealed by a web search.



South Foreland to Farnham using
the North Downs Way from Dover

Stage 1: Martin Mill to South Foreland to Dover 6.5miles, ascent 468metres (1520ft), descent 529metres (1720ft). Explorer 138 (Dover); Landranger 179 (East Kent)

This is a short stage which assumes the morning is taken up travelling to Martin Mill Station. The coast is reached just beyond St Margaret's at Cliffe and here the route turns southwards towards Dover. On approaching South Foreland's lighthouse, the path turns to pass to its seaward side and reach the cliff top. This point marks the most south-easterly point of England and is the place to get a picture of yourself setting off. Thereafter the path follows close to the cliff top and there are plenty of views of the White Cliffs as well as Dover's dock area. At a visitor centre, the route starts to descend to Dover's promenade where there is a tasteful plaque inlaid on the ground to mark the start/finish of the NDW; again it's worthy of a picture. Dover town with its plentiful accommodation and shops is then just a short distance away.

Route: From the railway station at Martin Mill follow its approach road to a road junction. Take the road opposite signed to St Margaret's. After 0.4mile cross the Deal to Dover main road opposite right into Station Road. Follow the 'main' lane into St Margaret's at Cliffe (eating places). Continue through the village on the 'main' lane and as Bay Hill is approached, take the descending tarmac path (on the right) signed to The Pines Garden. This leads on to steps which descend to a road/track junction. Turn right along the track

and very shortly reach a fork. Branch left here to a cross-track. Turn left and keep to the track which shortly turns right. Shortly after passing to the right of a windmill, follow the directional sign left and follow the path as it passes to the left of South Foreland's lighthouse before turning right along the cliff top (3.3miles).

The well walked path follows the cliff top to a bowl-like depression called Langdon Hole which is crossed on the right; beyond, ascend before turning left towards the cliffs. There are a lot of paths here but keeping to the main high path will lead to a tarmac path which becomes an access road to a National Trust Visitor Centre & Tearoom. Follow the access road down to meet the public road; Dover Castle is prominent in the view ahead. Turn left for a few metres and then turn left down a tarmac footpath, signed as a cycle route to Dover Town Centre. Follow the descending path which crosses under a main road and continues to emerge on Athol Terrace (which is overshadowed by some serious looking cliffs). At the end of the street, continue into East Cliff (street) and reach a main road (the A20).

Cross using the pedestrian crossing to the wide path along the promenade and turn right. Continue until opposite the Royal Cinque Ports Yacht Club to find the inlaid start/finish plaque for the NDW. From here, follow the NDW sign pointing right and cross the road. Continue up a pedestrian way to the left of the yacht club and at the end keep straight ahead across a road into another pedestrian way which leads to an underpass of the A20. Through, proceed along another pedestrian way to a road junction. The stage finishes here and this junction is where the two arms of the NDW split. The route to Etchinghill turns left here along Queen Street but the centre of Dover (and the NDW route to Canterbury) lie ahead down King Street.

Stage2: Dover to Etchinghill 12.7miles, ascent 1022metres (3320ft), descent 855metres (2780ft). Explorer 138 (Dover) or NDW book; Landranger 179 (East Kent)

The route to Etchinghill has a surprising amount of ascent and descent. From Dover the NDW passes round the old fortifications perched on the hillside of its Western Heights. From here the NDW descends to the coast then makes for the cliff top which is followed down the coast towards Folkestone. Views in this direction are very much connected with the building and operation of the Channel Tunnel; there are a couple of places for refreshments along this section. Just before reaching the north-eastern edge of Folkestone, the route passes through a Battle of Britain Memorial with its impressive sitting statue of an airman looking out to sea in the centre of three rotor blades. Having reached Folkestone's fringe and completed two thirds of the stage's ascent, the NDW leaves the cliffs to go westwards around the northern end of Folkestone and the Channel Tunnel Terminal. It then turns its back on Folkestone by going more inland, north through a disused quarry area and then west, towards the village of Etchinghill whose only remaining facility is now a pub after its B&B closed its doors. B&Bs in this area are thin on the ground so the best option is to get a taxi from the village into Folkestone where there is accommodation.

Route: Pass down Queen Street and on meeting York Street, cross and turn left. Shortly, turn right into a pedestrian way which meets a road. Go straight on (left) ascending along Adrian Street. Just round the corner, turn left through bollards and very shortly left up steps. At the top, the path contours the hill anti-clockwise passing seats exhorting walkers to 'take a pew, enjoy the view'. The path skirts the (Napoleonic) Redoubt fortification before dropping down onto North Military Road. Follow this to the left to shortly reach a crossroad and turn right into Citadel Road. Shortly fork left into Western Close, a 'No

Through Road' and after a few metres turn off left on a descending path. There are a number of paths on the hillside, so be careful to take a left turn off the main path (to continue descending) and later take another left turn down steps in order to emerge at the end of Kings Ropewalk (street). Follow this street down turning first left into King Lear's Way and shortly meet Old Folkestone Road. Turn right and look for an underpass of the main A20 road on the left.

Beyond the underpass, the path veers right as it climbs Shakespeare Cliff; there are good views back to the White Cliffs and Dover. The well-trodden path continues to ascend onto Round Down (signed as keeping left of the fence); Samphire Hoe Country Park, created from the Channel Tunnel spoil, can be seen below. The path continues along the cliff top keeping company with the right fence until at Abbots Cliff the NDW swaps fence sides. Follow the left fence to a walkers' gate. Beyond, go half-right as directed to meet a gravel track (cycle route 2) and follow this left. The track passes to the right of a sound mirror, an acoustic early warning system developed from 1916 to detect enemy aircraft but rendered obsolete by radar.

The cycle track becomes a lane. Just before it emerges on a B-road ignore a lane off left but a few metres further on turn off half-left on a between-fences track. This soon becomes a path leading to the cliff top. The path continues along the edge in the company of a right fence with views of Folkestone's harbour area ahead. A caravan site is passed and shortly after the fencing finishes. Continue on the clear path and houses start to appear on the right. At an open area with benches, pass right of the seats to pick up the path on the opposite side and resume along the cliff edge. Keep going and the path runs parallel to Old Dover Road on the right and eventually reaches the car park of the Cliff Top Cafe. Pass through the car park exiting far left to pick up the path; the scrubland below is The Warren. The path keeps to the edge so keep left of open areas encountered. The path starts to diverge from the cliff top alongside right fencing to reach a concrete access drive.

Turn left briefly then right down a flight of steps labelled 'Danger Cliff Edge'. There's then an ascending flight before the path turns right along the cliff top. Shortly, an open area is reached and the NDW follows to the left of this area but having passed left of the mound, divert right to the Battle of Britain Memorial. Continue along the left side of the open area (with scrubland below on the left) to a walkers' gate and through continue alongside right fencing. With houses in sight, the NDW turns right with the fencing and the path shortly meets a B-road at a road junction (6.1 miles); the pub on the corner is the last chance to obtain refreshments on this stage.

Take the walkers' gate to the left of the lane opposite (Crete Road East) onto Dover Hill; Folkestone is prominent below on the left. The path follows the line of the road and re-emerges back onto Crete Road East just before a lane comes in on the left. Cross this side lane and a few metres further on, pass through a walkers' gate on the left and resume the path parallel and close to Crete Road East. After re-joining this lane follow it down to a main road. From the walkers' gate opposite right, go a quarter-right to pass a lone tree bush and come close to a walkers' gate on Crete Road West. Don't pass through but curve left (making for the left side of the mound of Round Hill) to reach a walkers' gate. Through, follow the line of the right boundary as it curves round Round Hill then leave it to descend along the slope edge. On nearing the road again the NDW parallels the road to shortly reach a walkers' gate. Through, the path curves left to circle Caesar's Camp earthworks (dating from Norman times) clockwise close to the slope top (and following the line of a right fence). Having passed a viewpoint column, take the descending track to re-meet Crete Road West.

Turn left on a path running parallel to this road on its left; the Channel Tunnel Terminal is soon below you. Just after a parking area, fork right to meet Danton Lane, a lane off Crete Road West. The NDW continues up steps opposite right and then immediately turns left along the field edge. Follow the field edge on a well-trodden path along the slope top (resisting stiles on the left) to a walkers' gate. Beyond, go a quarter-right and descend steps into disused Peene Quarry, now a country park. Cross the quarry on the obvious path which curves right and continue on a grassy track until directed off it a quarter-right to a walkers' gate. Turn left in the field entered along the field edge; the path parallels a lane on the left and after 280metres the path turns left to meet the lane.

Cross to the track opposite and follow it for half a mile to a walkers' gate on the left into a field. Follow the right boundary in this and the following field, following the edge in the latter for one and a quarter sides (although many NDW walkers appear to have cut straight across) to reach a stile into a further field. The path is now alongside the right fence which curves to reach the top of a combe (a steep narrow valley) on the left. Turn left to descend the combe on the obvious path which keeps to the bottom of the slope on the right. At the bottom of the combe, come to an entry into a field and take the path to its right. Follow the path which keeps just to the right of the field to a stile. From here, passing left of the visible pylon continuing in the same direction to come alongside a (brief) left fence to a bridge of a disused railway line.

Cross under the bridge and shortly beyond when a path is met, turn right through woodland into a field. Cross the field a quarter-right heading to the pylon lines visible on the left side of the field and just after passing under these reach a stile at a woodland corner. Over, the path soon reaches Coombe Farm's access lane which is followed right to a road. Although Etchinghill is a ¼mile to the right, it's better to turn right for a few metres then left through trees into a field. Follow the path along the right edge and then continue through a strip of wood. Beyond a walkers' gate, the path turns right and soon exits the wood. The path, still amongst vegetation, follows the line of a right fence to a field gate and through curve right following the line of the right fence, towards a radio station mast, to find a stile onto its access lane (Westfield Lane). The NDW continues opposite but for the centre of Etchinghill village turn right and follow the lane for just over half a mile.

Stage 3: Etchinghill to Charing 17.5miles, ascent 603metres (1960ft), descent 640metres (2080ft). Explorer 138 (Dover), 137 (Ashford) or NDW book; Landranger 189 (Ashford).

The stage makes its way to the small village of Stowting (the pub may be open) and continues across Broad and Wye Downs passing the top of the Devil's Kneading Trough (a deep dip) into the small attractive town of Wye (accommodation and eating places) about eleven miles from Etchinghill. Many of the fingerposts in this stage and the remaining stages in Kent have a classy sculptured acorn on their top. It's a couple of miles beyond Wye to where the Canterbury loop of the NDW comes in and much of the remaining route to the historic small town of Charing is along the Pilgrims' Way, a route traditionally used by pilgrims on their way to Thomas Becket's shrine at Canterbury Cathedral. Charing (accommodation and eating places) is just off-route and, if there, it's worth viewing the quaint Archbishop's Palace. A plaque on the building says that both Henry VII and Henry VIII stayed there and it was subsequently 'given' to Henry VIII by Archbishop Cranmer.

Route: Having crossed Westfield Road, the NDW immediately turns left through a walkers' gate and runs along the mast's fencing. When the fencing ends the path curves right along field fencing into a field. Turn left along more mast fencing and at the field end

turn right to keep with the left fencing, following it down to Sandling Road. Go right briefly to where Staple Lane comes in on the left and take the walkers' gate opposite. The path parallels Staple Lane until the field corner when the path turns right to follow the left fence line uphill to a walkers' gate. Through turn left along the trodden path which gently diverges from the left fence to pass just right of a group of trees. Beyond, there's a splendid view (seat) forwards but the NDW turns right along a right fence. Keep with the path along the right fence line as it curves left then right. At the next fence turn (to the left), leave the fence to do a U-bend left down a dip turning right on reaching some trees to follow the tree line. Beyond, the grass track curves left to keep with the valley bottom and when it meets a track turn right. When the path leads into a field follow the right boundary in this and the next field to emerge on Farthing Common lane.

Cross and turn left on a grassy path which quickly diverges from the lane to emerge through a car parking area onto a B-road. The path continues opposite right running parallel to the B-road. After crossing a side road, the path continues parallel to the B-road for another ¼mile before turning left on a track along the hedge boundary to start the descent from the ridge. Cross a track opposite left and continue along a field right boundary. At the field end cross to the next field but then immediately swap field sides to descend along a left fence line. Keep forward to the field bottom, keeping right of the trees to find a stile leading very shortly onto steps to Curteis Lane. Go opposite left on a short path through to Whiteways Lane and turn right. Ignoring a lane off left reach the small village of Stowting. Just before the village pub (the Tiger Inn), the NDW is signed off left on a path close and parallel to the quiet lane. Judging from the state of the path and stiles, most walkers opt to stay on the lane and if so ignore a lane off right. If taking the path, turn left when it rejoins the lane. In both cases ignore a lane off left (signed to Monks Horton) and after a further ¼mile turn off right on a byway.

Follow the clear byway track to Canterbury Road. The byway continues opposite and offers some lovely open views. The byway track leads to a lane. Turn right here for about a third of a mile then turn off left to follow a wide track. Ignore a more minor track off left to continue on the main track and meet a lane. Turn left to meet a road, here turn right and after ¼mile, turn off left on a field path. Cross the field north-of-westwards and in the next field go along the left edge to enter a yard of Cold Blow Farm. The path keeps to the left of the yard and exits on a short farm track which enters a field (the gate on the left). A grass track along the right boundary ensues and beyond a walkers' gate an enclosed path is followed which emerges onto Broad Downs. Here continue straight on along the left edge and ignoring a gate off half-left into woodland, continue on the grass track along the line of the left fence; again there are good views and the deep valley passed on the left is the Devil's Kneading Trough. Just after this ignore the gate off left to stay with the left fence along the slope edge and reach a walkers' gate. Through continue by the left boundary then curve left into woodland, keeping to the main path to emerge on Coldharbour Lane.

Take the 'No Through Road' opposite left but almost immediately turn off left. A brief track leads into a field where the NDW follows the right fence line running along the slope edge of Wye Downs. After passing through a walkers' gate follow the grass path straight ahead. Either keep to the main path or take the semi-circular path off left to reach a seat commemorating both the Queen's Golden Jubilee and the centenary of the Wye Crown; the Crown (situated below) was cut into the chalk hillside by agricultural students in 1902 to celebrate the coronation of Edward VII. When the main path reaches a wood don't enter but turn right along the wood edge to reach a lane and turn left. After 250metres turn off half-left on a path through the wood out into a field. The NDW continues descending along the right field edge to reach a lane and the path continues on the track opposite. Keep

straight on along this and the track becomes a lane. When a road is met, take the access drive opposite left. Keep to the left to pass directly to the right of the old Wye College campus and turn left just before a field gate onto a gravel path beside allotments; Wye's church peeps through the trees. When a tarmac path is met follow it to the right through the church graveyard and emerge on a road (10.4miles).

Go down Church Street opposite (in the centre of Wye) and turn right into Bridge Street. Cross the Great Stour (river) then the level crossing and immediately after turn off left on Harville Road. After about 120metres, turn off right taking the right of the two tracks across a field. Cross the next (large) field on a well trodden path which leads to a fenced path. Follow this until, with the buildings of Perry Court Farm in sight ahead, the path turns right then soon turns left and meets an access track. Go straight on (right) and when very shortly a further access track is met, cross it to take the footpath opposite. Keep straight ahead on the path which passes through an orchard and emerges on the A28 (Canterbury Road). Cross through the field gap opposite left and turn left to follow the hedge for about 80metres then turn right on a clear cut-path across the field. When the path reaches a line of trees, turn left along the tree line and when the tree line turns right, the NDW turns right with it. Keep with the right field boundary until a walkers gate on the right gives access to Pilgrims Way (lane). Turn left and after 230metres ignore the track off right which marks the joining of the NDW route via Canterbury. Continue along the lane, ignoring turn-offs to meet Wye Road in Boughton Lees village. Turn right briefly then turn off left (or use the village green on the right) and shortly meet the A251 main road.

Cross and go left briefly then take a footpath off right which crosses the parkland of Eastwell Manor half-left to emerge on its access drive. The footpath continues opposite right going half-right across open ground to meet a fence which is then followed to the right. Ignore a walkers' gate off left to continue in the same direction by the left fence and at the end of the field meet a lane junction. Take the lane opposite and keeping straight ahead pass to the right of the remains of St Mary's Church, maintained by the 'Friends of Friendless Churches'. On meeting another lane, take the cut field path opposite which heads for trees but then passes them to their left before curving right into the woodland. When the short clear path through the wood emerges onto a farm track turn left and follow the wide track for 0.6mile before the NDW curves left (on a good path). Shortly, look out for a minor path off right onto a lane junction.

Take the lane opposite (Pilgrims Way) for 0.4mile ignoring turn-offs but then branch half-right from the lane onto a surfaced access drive which beyond continues as a good (byway) track close to the edge of woodland; this is still the Pilgrims Way. Just keep following the track to meet a lane and turn left. The lane soon curves left then almost immediately right and is then followed to a small triangular junction. Ignore the turn-off left to stay on the Pilgrims Way and reach the main road. The NDW turns left (pavement) for 50metres before turning off half-right on a track but continue on the main A252 road for a further 150metres before turning off left if visiting Charing (another 1/3mile).

Stage 4: Charing to Thurnham 12.2miles, ascent 486metres (1580ft), descent 474metres (1540ft). Explorer 137 (Ashford), 148 (Maidstone) or NDW book; Landranger 189 (Ashford), 188 (Maidstone).

The walk to Thurnham is in two distinct parts. From Charing to Hollingbourne (pub), extensive use is made of the Pilgrims Way, halfway up the ridge. It's a long straight byway or lane and is all easy walking through pleasant farmland surroundings with no prospect of getting lost. To promote the right atmosphere on this part, there's a bench with a life-size

wooden sculpture of a resting monk in contemplative mood with room for the odd walker or cyclist. Beyond Hollinbourne, paths take over as the route takes to the ridge and there are many sharp up and downs as the ridge is traversed.

Route: The Pilgrims Way track leaves the main A252 road to the left of Reeves Cottage and the clear track is followed to Hart Hill lane. Turn right for 60metres before turning off left to continue on the Pilgrims Way. Continue past Cobham Farm going straight on at the end of the buildings (not right). Keep to the well-defined main track (ignore a track off right) which continues through pleasant surroundings to meet Rayners Hill lane. The NDW continues on the lane opposite left which soon becomes a track after passing houses. When the track meets Hubbards Hill (road), follow the road left for 0.2 mile to the start of a left bend. Here, take a track off right but immediately turn left over a barrier. Follow the obvious Pilgrims Way track and when the surroundings become open on both sides, look for a chalk War Memorial cross in the hillside on the right. Continue on to meet an access lane and follow it to the left to meet Faversham Road.

Turn right and when the road shortly turns right, turn off left on the Pilgrims Way track. When the track emerges on a lane at a corner, go right. Ignore Flint Lane off right and later Marley Road off left then look out for the resident monk on his seat on the right. Beyond, the quiet lane continues to meet Stede Hill road at a cross-road. Continue on the Pilgrims Way straight across and follow the access lane for 0.2mile to a distinct right curve. Here go straight on (left) along a track to keep with the Pilgrims Way. After, ignore turn-offs left and right to go straight on in a north-of-west direction. Eventually, the track becomes metalled again and is followed in the same direction to emerge at a cross-road by Hollinbourne's pub, named The Dirty Habit (8.2miles).

Turn right briefly then take steps up on the left and follow an ascending path up along the field edge close to the road. In the succeeding field, the NDW turns half-left to a waymark marking a good path round the bottom of a mound. Turn left on this path to a field gate. Through, the path makes for the diagonal field corner by first going half-right towards trees then following the tree edge to the left and finally taking a trodden path half-left to the top field corner. Through a walkers' gate there's a fenced track to guide the way. Beyond, the NDW follows the line of a right fence before passing through a field gate on the right and following the track beyond. The path crosses a grassy track beneath power lines then comes alongside a right fence and reaches a walkers' gate. Through, meet a good byway track and turn left briefly, then look for a path off the main track which is on the right. Steps lead out onto a trodden path along the hillside. There's an optional diversion right at a signpost to a viewpoint although the NDW continues straight on here to reach Broad Street Hill (lane).

The path continues opposite and at the top of the steps turn left and cross a stile into a field. Turn right and follow the right field boundary round as it makes a left and right turn. Just before the next turn branch off right on a brief path onto more Downs and follow the trodden contouring (north-westwards) path towards trees. On reaching the trees, pass through a walkers' gate and follow the main path through the trees and undergrowth; in particular ignore a path off right. When the path meets a track, turn left and follow the track out into more open surrounds. Here, look for a walkers' gate off right where the NDW leaves the track. Through, there's a short sharp ascent up to a walkers' gate hiding a steep flight of steps beyond. After the steps, the path ascends more gently but then contours before descending through woodland to Coldblow Lane.

The NDW continues opposite into Civiley Wood. Keep to the main well-defined path and after 0.2miles look for a left turn-off down many steps. Soon after, there are many steps

up. Further on, there is another flight of steps to descend after which the woodland is left for more open scenery and the path becomes enclosed by fencing and reaches a walkers' gate where the NDW turns left to descend from the ridge. The environs of the 12th century ruins of Thurnham Castle, part of the White Horse Wood Country Park, are entered with the NDW soon meeting Castle Hill (lane). The NDW continues up the lane to the right but for nearby accommodation (0.15miles) in Thurnham turn left and descend steeply.

Stage 5: Thurnham to Cuxton 13.8miles, ascent 560metres (1820ft), descent 695metres (2260ft). Explorer 148 (Maidstone) or NDW book; Landranger 178 (Thames Estuary).

For the first time in the NDW, there's an awareness of the proximity of major roads and motorways; this results in the NDW route dodging around so as to use suitable crossing points and there's a lot of hard surface underfoot. The first major road crossed is the A249 at Detling. Beyond the village, the route takes to the ridge before dropping to cross the A229 by an underpass and then using a path parallel and close to the main road. After, there's a long lane walk along the ridge top which passes The Robin Hood, a popular eating place which makes a good stop for a late lunch. The lane continues as a byway track turning northwards to the M2 motorway and then turns to follow the motorway until the M2's cycle/pedestrian lane across the River Medway can be taken; the bridge crossing is not memorable as bars restrict what can be seen although Rochester Castle can be glimpsed. Once over the Medway Bridge, the route has to cross under the motorway and then cross the A228 before the route surroundings become rural as it makes its way round Cuxton; there's an excellent B&B nearby at Lower Bush. The northern end of the Medway Bridge represents the most northerly point of the NDW and the nearest point to the centre of London; from here the route starts turning south-westwards to Wrotham.

Route: The NDW continues up Castle Hill lane for 1/8mile before turning off left on a path. After a short distance, at a marker post diverge from the right fence towards trees and from a couple of isolated trees, the path becomes more distinct as it heads towards a belt of trees. On reaching the trees, pass through a walkers' gate and up a steep flight of steps. At the top enter open access land and take the path along its right boundary towards trees; there are good open views here. The path turns left, starts to descend, leaves the open access area and continues to descend on a farm track along a field edge down to the Pilgrims Way (lane). Turn right to meet The Street in Detling (opposite the The Cock Horse) and turn right.

The Street turns left and 60metres beyond turn off right on a footbridge over the A249 dual carriageway. Having passed over the road, the footbridge path does a U-bend right turn then curves right to pass under the footbridge and re-meet Pilgrims Way lane; the A249 is just to the left. Turn right past Detling's houses and shortly after passing Harple Lane on the left, turn off right on a good byway track which follows close to the edge of woodland while ascending to the ridge. Shortly after a left turn, look for another turn-off left to continue fairly close to the wood edge, keeping straight on at junctions to follow the main track. When the track emerges at a road junction take Harp Farm Road opposite but shortly after it turns right, turn off at the double barriers on the left. Keep to the right of the yard area and pass to the right of the large shed to join a good track along the ridge which keeps close to the wood edge, first inside then just outside it. Ignore a path off so as to keep on the main track and pass left of a pylon. After a further 1/2mile the track turns left (south-westerly) deep into the wood as it starts a gentle then steep descent (aided by steps) to meet the Pilgrims Way which is now a byway. Turn right on this and it shortly turns left to soon reach a bridge over railway lines and over curves right to shortly reach a

lane and path junction. Go ahead on the lane (cycle route 17) and meet a lane with a petrol station opposite (drinks and sandwiches). Turn right on the lane which curves left to an underpass of the A229 (5.6miles).

Through, meet a lane and turn left briefly then turn right on a track. Follow the track, going straight on at a significant cross-track to reach a road junction. Cross to the 'No Entry' road opposite and almost immediately branch off it right and follow the gently ascending track northwards; most people choose to divert briefly left to look at the old stone burial chamber called Kit's Coty House and admire the open views. When the track emerges on Chatham Road, turn left. Pass under a footbridge and continue on Chatham Road to reach Salisbury Road off left. Cross Salisbury Road onto the A229 slip road footpath but after 80metres follow the path as it curves left to meet the continuation of Chatham Road. Turn left on this rising lane and when the lane ends it continues as a track; there's an unpleasant feeling of closeness to the traffic tearing by on the right. Ignore a good path off left to stay on the main path, but shortly after, turn off left on a north-of-west path through trees. On emerging into an open area, continue in the same direction; the Blue Bell Hill picnic site and car park is to the right. Keep on in the same direction and shortly reach and take a short passageway through trees. On emerging take a path half-right which turns right briefly to emerge on Common Road. Turn left on this country lane running along the ridge passing the popular Robin Hood (recommended) (8miles).

Beyond Burham Hill Farm, the lane continues as a good vehicle track and at a fork, branch right to turn northwards (left goes to Keeper's Lodge). Ignore left turn-offs and follow the byway which starts to descend towards the Medway Valley. When the main track turns left, carry straight on (northwards) along a lesser but good path. This soon leaves the foliage for a more open aspect and the M2 motorway bridge across the Medway is visible, as is the village of Cuxton across the river. The path continues close to a field edge and curves right to begin the final descent to near sea level. When the path meets a vehicle track, turn left. The track crosses a railway line, becomes a rough lane and reaches a T-junction. Turn left here, the lane runs close and parallel to the M2. After half a mile a T-junction is reached. Turn right, pass under both sections of the M2 and a few metres beyond turn left on a traffic free lane which leads on to the cycle/pedestrian lane of the M2 bridging the River Medway and a couple of railway lines; the traffic can be seen roaring past on the left while the river and Rochester can be glimpsed to the right.

At the end of bridge there's a fork. Branch right here (signed for Cuxton) and follow the cycle/walkers lane as it curves right and then left to meet the A228. Turn left as directed (pavement), cross over the M2 and just before a roundabout the pavement becomes a track which curves left leaving the A228. Follow this track, ignore a track coming in from the left and shortly after turn right on an underpass of the A228. Beyond, follow the tarmac track which loops back to the A228 and then follows it to the right for a few metres before turning right into Ranscombe Farm Reserve. Follow its access lane through and beyond the car park. The lane ascends and once out of the trees there are pleasant open views to the left. The drive turns half-left and 250metres beyond take the wide track off left; again there are open views, mainly on the left and the odd seat to enjoy them. The track starts to descend and turns left away from the trees through farmland. Keep straight on at a cross-track and head into trees where after ascending a few steps a path is met. Turn left to immediately cross a railway line and over, the track curves right becoming a path. Keep to the main path through trees and along the backs of houses on the western edge of Cuxton until emerging on Bush Road. Turn right for 50metres then turn off left on a cut path across a large field to Upper Bush Road. The route continues left but there's an excellent B&B close by, reached by taking the signed footpath right immediately before reaching Upper

Bush Road; the footpath emerges on Bush Road opposite the B&B.

Stage 6: Cuxton to Kemsing 13.4miles, ascent 695metres (2260ft), descent 505metres (1640ft). Explorer 148 (Maidstone), 147 (Sevenoaks) or NDW book; Landranger 178 (Thames Estuary), 188 (Maidstone).

There's a lot of (deciduous) woodland on this stage making it less memorable than the previous stage. The route continues its south-westerly journey mainly along the ridge to Trosley Country Park and the route passes close to its Visitor Centre (cafe). The route continues to Wrotham wriggling round its northern edge and beyond, the route turns more westwards with the Pilgrims Way followed until the NDW takes to the ridge. Kemsing marks the stage end because it has a good B&B but it's a long (½mile) steep descent on a byway to reach it. The small charming on-route town of Otford (chemist) just beyond Kemsing would appear to be a better option but unfortunately has no B&B accommodation.

Route: Return to where the NDW emerges on Upper Bush Road and continue south-westwards along the lane for 210metres and then as the lane swings right, take the access drive straight ahead (left) to its end and turn left on the footpath continuation through trees. On emerging from the trees, follow the track round a field edge with trees to the right to reach a cut path on the left heading southwards towards North Wood. The path enters and passes through the wood curving right on emerging to follow a field fence. On entering the next field, go three-quarters right ascending to the next batch of woodland. Enter the wood, ascend steps and shortly beyond reach a T-junction. Turn right here and almost immediately ignore a path off left. Continue to follow the path south-westwards in Wingate Wood, a large deciduous wood. There's a small gap for overhead power lines and then it's back to the trees. Keep going and just after a path comes in on the left, the NDW curves right into a small slightly more open area. Ignore paths left and right here to go straight on as signed.

Eventually the path emerges into an open area and onto a cut path across it. Ignoring a path across it, go straight on and re-enter woodland. Follow the woodland path (ignoring paths coming in on the left) to an open area where a good track is met. Take the path opposite left into a field where the cut path is taken heading westwards towards the next tree encounter. The path through this patch of wood emerges onto a good track. Turn right briefly and then turn off left to take a trodden path south-of-west across an open area. Across, pass through a few trees then meet a byway track at a multi-way path and track junction. Turn left, southwards, along the excellent track. Just beyond a barrier preventing access to motor vehicles, there's a multi-way track junction. Turn left here and the byway quickly becomes Holly Hill lane which is followed southwards to meet a minor road.

Take the path opposite. It descends (south-west) close to the edge of Whitehorse Wood with a field on the left beyond. It returns to the wood edge after briefly emerging along the field edge but at its next field appearance, the path turns left to follow the descending hedge line, away from the wood and the ridge. At the field end, a more major track is met (our old friend the Pilgrim's Way) and here turn right. After a quarter of a mile keep right at a track fork and after another 160metres ignore a track off right so as to maintain a west-southwest direction. Ignoring all turn-offs, particularly a turn-off right up steps for the Wealdway trail, reach a track junction where there are a couple of houses. Turn right here on the ascending track signed for Trosley Country Park. The woodland track ascends the ridge and at the end of the climb take a walkers' gate off left and follow the woodland track through Great Wood. There are a lot of paths and tracks in the wood but at junctions keep

straight on along the main track in a south-of-west direction. Eventually the track crosses a track, curves right and drops via steps down to Vigo Hill lane (7miles). The NDW turns right up the lane but turn immediately right on the signed path if you want the Visitor Centre with its cafe (snacks plus drinks).

When Vigo Hill lane shortly reaches a road junction, turn left, pass a bus shelter on the left then turn left on a byway access track. Beyond the houses, the track continues as a clear woodland track which curves left to descend from the ridge and meet the Pilgrim's Way track, a byway at this point. Turn right and soon branch right on a path. The path runs parallel to the Pilgrim's Way which is now a lane just to the left. The path leads out of a wood into a field where the left field edge is followed and pleasant open views can be enjoyed. The lane is rejoined at the bottom of the field and is followed to another sign off right by a passing place. Again the path follows the left field edge with the lane on the other side of the hedge although it looks as if people have opted to use the lane. At the field end re-join the lane and carry on down it for 260metres and then turn off left over a stile and follow the enclosed path until it re-meets the lane. Turn left and shortly reach a roundabout with the A227 and A20. Just before the roundabout, take the pavement path on the left and continue left (pavement) along the A20 with its bridge over the M20 motorway.

Over the bridge, it's necessary to cross the A20 to take a track guarded by two small stone bollards. Follow the path to shortly reach a lane (the Pilgrim's Way) and turn right on this; it runs parallel to the M20 on the right but there's a pleasant recreation field to the left. The lane curves left, narrows and meets a more major road. Take the lane opposite (Pilgrim's Way) and when the main lane turns left continue straight on along a byway marked as 'Unsuitable for Motor Vehicles'. The track leaves Wrotham behind as it skirts field edges to reach Exedown Road which is crossed opposite right. The excellent track continues westwards but immediately before the next lane is met, turn right through a barrier and follow a path which crosses the field northwards then beyond ascends the slope in a north-westerly direction to a walkers' gate just left of the field corner. Through, there's a steep flight of steps through woodland to further ascend the ridge and reach a lane.

Turn right briefly then turn off left on a woodland track. The woodland gives way to a field edge which runs along the wood edge. When the wood ends, pass left through a field gap and continue westwards along the field edge curving right to a field and track junction. The NDW curves left into a field (sign) where it follows the right field edge (south-westwards). Keep straight ahead towards the field end to enter woodland and follow the path through the wood. When the path emerges into a field, turn right and follow the right edge. In the next field, diverge gently from the right fence line towards a farm shed and take the gate just to its right onto a track. The track passes left of a large barn to reach Cotman's Ash lane.

Turn left here for 130metres then turn off right to follow a woodland track. Just before a 'Private' field gate turn right through a walkers' access and follow the brief path beyond to a walkers' gate into a field. Turn left and follow the field edge to the field corner where the wood is re-entered. When the woodland path leads out into a field, follow the left edge in this and the succeeding field into another short section of woodland. The path turns left just before a field gate and shortly exits the wood into a field. Officially the NDW takes to the left boundary but people seem to have voted with their feet so go with the flow and take the trodden path half-left to a walkers' gate and through continue forwards briefly before turning right along the field edge. At the field end, keep ahead by the fence to pick up a good path through foliage. The path descends steps to a walkers gate and beyond

the path goes half-right (sign) on its final leg circling round the grounds of Otford Manor. Beyond, go straight on at a path junction and continue on a contouring path with pleasant views until a walkers' gate on the right heralds a return to woodland. The path shortly reaches the wood boundary and then curves left to follow or be close to the wood edge until the path emerges onto Shorehill Lane (13.3miles)

Turn left and after a brief distance the NDW swings right on the lane but if staying in Kemsing, take the bridleway off left here, signed as prohibiting motorised vehicles except for access.

Stage 7: Kemsing to Oxted 13.6miles, ascent 551metres (1790ft), descent 588metres (1910ft). Explorer 147 (Sevenoaks), 146 (Dorking) or NDW book; Landranger 188 (Maidstone), 187 (Dorking).

This is an easier stage than the preceding stage and it is also more scenically interesting arising from the field paths used which allow views of the surrounding countryside. After the path descends the ridge into Otford, there's a fair bit of road walking to get out of the town and over the M25. Then it's back onto the ridge and the route stays 'high' until there's a partial descent to cross the A-road to Westerham and a partial descent close to the stage end. Once on the ridge, the only village that the NDW goes close to is Knockholt Pound, a third of a mile away. A feature of many parts of the NDW is the provision of paths parallel to roads and this stage has many examples, although not all seem well walked indicating that some walkers prefer tarmac. While the middle sections of the stage see walkers close to Kent's border with Greater London, Surrey is entered in the final section. The pleasant town of Oxted is the obvious stopping point although some distance from the route; there's less descent to reach it than on other stages. The town has a good range of shops and eating places but is very much a commuting town with trains taking just 40 minutes into London.

Route: Follow Shorehill Lane for 80metres beyond the right bend then turn off left on a path which follows the left field edge. Continuing in the same direction, follow the trodden path across the next field so as to converge with the right fence at the field end. Pass through the walkers' gate here and follow the path beyond along a wood edge to Birchin Cross Road. Turn left to a triangular lane junction and cross the triangle to take the path opposite which follows the left field edge before plunging into Hillydeal Wood; there's a trig point to the right in the field indicating the NDW is close to the top of the ridge. There's a descent from the ridge through the wood aided by steps. As Otford is approached, the path becomes a between-houses passageway then becomes an access drive which emerges on Pilgrims Way East (road). Turn right and just before meeting the main A225 road turn left on the pavement which soon joins the main road, The A225 is now followed to a roundabout with the town duckpond in the centre. The main road bends left (to Sevenoaks a mere 3 miles away) but the NDW goes straight on passing to the right of the duckpond and keeping right enters Otford's High Street.

Continue along Otford's main street, cross the River Darent (on its way to the Thames) and after a further 1/3mile turn off left on Telston Lane. Keep to the 'major' road and pass a useful convenience store on the right. When the 'major' road swings right, go straight on. Follow the surfaced lane to its end and then carry straight on along its path continuation which crosses a railway line and shortly reaches a field. Take the south-of-west cut path through the field. Approaching its end, go straight ahead into a field junction gap under the power lines and take the (well-trodden) path half-left into and along a narrow strip of trees. The path emerges into the field on the right, follows the left boundary and then re-enters

foliage which shortly gives way on the right to a view of a large hotel. The path emerges on London Road and turns left. Cross London Road just before it meets the A224 road and turn right on the pavement along the main road. Just before crossing over the M25 motorway (in about ½mile), cross the main road to the opposite pavement and soon after reach a roundabout. Keep on the pavement as it curves left to take the first roundabout exit. Follow the B-road with its ringside view of the M25 to the left.

There's a footpath off right after 320metres but puzzlingly the NDW does not use this although it links well to the official NDW route and there's still a pavement on the B-road here. Instead the NDW continues along the road, passing a concrete track which crosses the road and 80metres beyond turns off right. The ascending field path follows the right field boundary and at the field corner turns left briefly before resuming northwards along the right boundary. When a clump of trees is met, the path leaves the field edge to follow the tree boundary. In the next field the official route again follows the tree boundary which performs a series of U-bends to the right. However, this seems untrodden and non-purists have clearly voted with their feet by cutting across the U-bends. However the third of these bends needs to be taken with the boundary path leading into the trees. Here the path swings right to shortly reach an open area. Turn left here along the tree boundary and ignore a walkers' gate on the left where the wood boundary turns right but very shortly after take a walkers' gate on the left into foliage. The path goes westwards to shortly emerge into a field. Turn left here briefly along the field edge to a walkers' gate (to the left of the field gate) and beyond turn right along the right field edge to meet Chevening Lane at the bottom of the field (4miles).

Turn right briefly (but continue if you want Knockholt Pound village) then turn off left into a field where the left edge is followed. Continue with a field to the right and woodland to the left until reaching a walkers' gate on the left. Through, follow the clear but winding woodland path to emerge into a field where walkers turn left to follow the left edge down to Sundridge Lane. Take the steps opposite and turn left along the field edge, shortly turning right at the bottom of the field to take the track along the left hedge. At the field end, go through a hedge gap (you are close to the top of the ridge here), swing left and then immediately right along a right field edge. Near the field end, turn right on a track (sign) along a left hedge. Keep going along the left boundary in a generally south-westish direction and as houses on a lane are approached, look for a left turn to a walkers' gate into a field. The path follows the right hedge, parallel to the lane eventually crossing Brasted Hill lane opposite left into a field where the path turns right to follow the right edge and emerge on a lane.

The path continues into the field opposite where the path follow the left edge, parallel to Hogtrough Hill lane to a walkers' gate. Through, turn right along the fence line into trees and almost immediately meet a path and turn left. Follow the winding path and through a walkers' gate meet a byway track and turn right. After 150metres, when the track turns sharp right, turn left through a walkers gate into a field and follow its right edge. Look for walkers' gates at the field end to access the succeeding field where the right field edge is again followed round two sides. At the end of the second side, keep straight ahead onto a short foliage track and just before it reaches a field gate, branch left to a walkers' gate into a field. Through, turn right to contour keeping to the left of the line of trees and bushes until a field gate beside a walkers' gate is reached. Beyond, follow the farm track through trees but shortly leave it for a path signed off left which soon reaches a field. Here the path descends a quarter-right (southwards) keeping to the left of the tree line to arrive at a walkers' gate in the bottom right corner. A woodland descent, aided by steps, leads once more into a field where the path turns right to contour the slope keeping left of the

vegetation. Keep ahead to dive back into the trees in which the path swings left to go southwards. When the path re-emerges in a field, turn right to follow the farm track along its right edge and part way down take an exit point on the right onto the main A233 road (8miles).

The NDW continues on The Avenue (lane) opposite. Follow this access drive westwards then north-of-west, ignoring turn-offs into upmarket houses. Just after the track becomes a surfaced lane, look for a commemorative NDW stone on the right marking the entry into Surrey. Continue on The Avenue to a lane fork (with a post box at the fork) and branch left on the more important lane (Chestnut Avenue) to meet a road after 0.6mile. Cross to the pavement opposite, turn left for a few metres to the B-road and take the footpath opposite which descends steps into a field, then turns right, along the field edge to run parallel with the B-road. Beyond the end of this field, the path becomes enclosed between a left fence and right vegetation. When the path comes close to the B-road on the right don't join it, but keep to the path straight on which leads into a field. Go left briefly along the field boundary but then turn half-right on a trodden path to a walkers' gate into woodland. Follow the clear path through the wood to emerge on White Lane.

The woodland path continues opposite right and when it reaches a path fork after 200metres (signpost), turn left to stay on the major path. The path descends on steps and with a road visible below turns right to run parallel with the B-road. When the path emerges on the B-road, cross to the pavement opposite and turn right to a roundabout. Do a hairpin left here into a car parking area and pass through the walkers' gate onto a byway track through Titsey Plantation. Keep to the main track southwards, ignoring side tracks through gates and after just less than ½mile leave the byway when a NDW sign off right is reached. Here, steps lead to a walkers' gate into a field. Turn right here and follow the path along the right field edge for two fields. At the end of the second field (TQ 390 543), the NDW turns right through a walkers' gate but for Oxted turn left on a well trodden path which crosses the M25; it's 1.5miles to Oxted's centre but much of this is on rural and urban footpaths (and there's excellent accommodation that's just over a mile from the NDW).

Stage 8: Oxted to Betchworth 15miles, ascent 742metres (2410ft), descent 809metres (2630ft). Explorer 146 (Dorking) or NDW book; Landranger 187 (Dorking).

This is quite a tough day both in terms of length and amount of ascent and descent involved. From Oxted the route is fairly close to the M25 and you may, like us, be moving faster than the queueing traffic. In fact, the line of the M25 is followed for much of this stage, only leaving it towards the end and one is very conscious of the motorways particularly up to the small pleasant town of Merstham (which makes a good lunch stop). Beyond, there's an interesting walk through the parkland of Gatton School followed by some good open walking on the ridge particularly around Colley Hill; the National Trust owns much of the land traversed around here. Betchworth is the only suitable stopping place for this stage but even here the nearest accommodation is a pub about 1½miles from the NDW (past the railway station then by fairly easy paths); starting from Oxted this would add well over 2½miles to the stage mileage. So opting to take a train from Betchworth to accommodation is probably a better option; trains go to Deepdene (Dorking) in one direction and Reigate and Redhill in the other.

Route: From the footpath junction of the NDW with the path down into Oxted, take the NDW through the walkers' gate and follow the short path out onto Oxted Downs. Cross this on the trodden contouring path, parallel with the M25 below left, to reach trees and a

path fork. Go left here (sign) descending by the right field edge to a walkers gate on the right which shortly leads down to Chalkpit Lane. Go right for 50metres then turn off left on a trodden path which shortly enters a field where the track/path along the right edge is followed. When the fencing turns sharp right, turn right with it (sign) ascending to a walkers gate (with a National Trust Oxted Downs sign). Through, ascend the right edge to a walkers' gate and beyond turn left along the contouring trodden path. Keep on the main path to reach a steep flight of steps on the right. At the top there are path branches and take the leftmost branch here which is the major path. Continue to a fork where the NDW is signed right and shortly after another fork is reached. Branch left here (right goes to Gangers Hill lane). The path now runs parallel to this lane and eventually emerges on it. Turn left and after 80metres turn off left on the more minor Tandridge Hill Lane but after a brief distance turn off a quarter-right on a path which parallels the lane. Eventually, a walkers' gate is reached and through the NDW, now a bridleway track, diverges from the lane to run westwards through Hanging Wood and re-emerge on Gangers Hill lane.

The path continues opposite as a woodland track going generally north-west. There are a number of paths in the wood, but the NDW occupies the major track. After a ¼mile the path curves left (sign) to go north-of-west and shortly reach a small open area. Beyond, the path briefly returns to the wood but soon runs along the edge of the wood as it descends to a lane. Turn right briefly then turn left (passing to the right of the cottage). Shortly, at a fork, ignore a descending track off half-left and continue straight on along the track which becomes a concrete access drive and starts to pass residences. On reaching a signed four-way path and track junction, turn off left on a path and re-emerge on the lane then cross it to the footpath opposite right (starting up steps). Follow the main path to shortly meet a more major track and turn right on this byway but after 160metres turn off left (sign) on a lesser field track going westwards to a bridge across the A22.

Over, follow the tarmac path but just before meeting a lane turn left on a path. After the path ascends a few steps, it turns left (sign) uphill and after further steps meets a more major path. Turn left here and just keep following the major path through the woodland as it swings from south-westwards to north-westwards. Just before emerging on Gravelly Hill lane turn left parallel to the lane, crossing the top of the grassy open down while enjoying the view from Caterham Viewpoint. Join the lane briefly before turning off left on cycle route 21 signed to Gatwick and Redhill. Follow the wide descending track to a track fork and branch right leaving the cycle route. Shortly after, at a path/track junction continue ahead half-left (sign). The path turns north-westwards and continues to emerge at a road junction.

Turn left along War Coppice Road and ignoring turn-offs meet a more major lane after just over ½mile. Take the 'No Through Road' lane opposite right and follow the lane. When it meets Pilgrims Lane just after a third of a mile, turn left, westwards. The lane becomes a track and just keep heading westwards ignoring all turn-offs. Just after passing left of Hill Top Farm's entry, fork briefly left of a lone tree to emerge on a lane. The NDW continues opposite right and when the path reaches an open area, the NDW leaves Pilgrims Lane by going half-left (sign). Follow the wide descending cut path across the field. After a short spell amongst trees, the path leads out into another field where the trodden path is again followed. The M23 starts to dominate the scenery and the path turns right to run parallel to it then turns left to an underpass. Immediately beyond, meet a track and turn left onto a gravel path. Shortly after, the path starts to pass residences and it emerges on Rockshaw Road. Turn right to meet the main A23 road, cross and turn right for 160metres to the lychgate (entrance) of St Katharine's Church.

Take the path half-left which keeps left of the church to an exit gate and continue forward down steps to Gatton Bottom lane. Cross and take the tarmac footpath off half-left which shortly leads to an imposing footbridge over the M25. Continue to meet Quality Street and turn left. The NDW turns first right into the access drive to Merstham Cricket Club but for food carry straight on for a few metres for Merstham's High Street (8.5miles). Keep to the right of the cricket club's parking area to enter a field and continue on the gravel path to the right of the cricket pitch. Beyond continue to follow the path as it makes its way across Reigate Hill Golf Club crossing tracks for the golfers as met. When the path becomes less distinct, press on in the same north-of-west direction to reach the golf club's access road. Go straight across here but the NDW path soon turns left through a walkers gate to take a path through a strip of woodland. After starting to pass signs of civilisation, the track meets an access drive. Turn left briefly, meet a surfaced access lane and turn left for a few metres to meet Rocky Lane.

Turn right and shortly at the right bend, turn off left up the drive of Gatton Park school following the main drive to a mini-roundabout where the NDW turns right (sign). The surfaced access road passes to the left of the church and then between school buildings and playing pitches. Just after the last school house on the left, ignore a turn off left and follow the main drive to a large isolated house on the left (0.4miles from church) where the NDW turns off left immediately before the house. Initially, the woodland track is parallel to the lane on the right but then leaves it by forking left at a track branch so as to plunge deeper into the wood. After the wood becomes more open, a fork is reached where the NDW branches right on the more major track. Shortly, with the track curving right ignore a track coming in from the left and then about 110metres later on ignore a track coming in from the right so as to curve left on the track towards a parking area. However, just before reaching the parking area branch left (sign) on a gravel path which almost immediately crosses Wray Lane. Follow the gravel path on the opposite side for a few metres to the access to the National Trust's Reigate Hill car park. Cross the car park to the refreshment kiosk.

The NDW leaves on a concrete track immediately to the left of the kiosk and within a few metres crosses the A217 on an elegant footbridge. Across, follow the main track for ¼mile to reach a rough (surfaced) lane. Turn left along the lane (south-of-west) passing the odd house on the left and open views to the right. The lane becomes a good track and enters the National Trust's Reigate Hill area. Eventually the track reaches a walkers' gate. Just through the gate, there's an excellent open view sweeping down from the North Downs which can be enjoyed from the circular Inglis Memorial; originally a drinking fountain for horses, it now houses some welcome under-cover seating. Keep to the excellent track along the top of Colley Hill and continue to enjoy the views.

Eventually, leave the the National Trust land via a walkers' gate to continue westwards through woodland. Ignore turn-offs to the right to stay on the main track and reach a rough surfaced drive. Turn left briefly to meet a track going off right and one going off left. Take the left track and follow the main descending track through woodland until a signpost is reached indicating a multi-way junction. Go right here and the path quickly becomes distinct close to the wood edge. The path continues for ⅔mile near to the wood edge to reach a cross-path. Here, ignore a signed path off left and right, and shortly after ignore a path coming in on the left. Continue for about another 50metres to a fork and leave the picket fence on the right by taking the left fork. Follow the track, sometimes a path for nearly ½mile, until it descends steps to a major track (named Buckland Lane) and turn right. After 240metres leave the track by turning off left (sign) on a descending path which after ¼mile meets a track. Turn left here on a path which becomes between-hedges and

reaches a walkers' gate. Through, go forward briefly then take a walkers gate on the right into trees. Follow the track through the strip of woodland and out onto a B-road (Pebblehill Road).

Turn left on this unpleasantly busy and fast road. After half a mile the NDW continues by turning right up the 'No Through Road' called The Combe. However, if calling a halt at Betchworth continue on the B-road for another 310metres to reach its railway station; there are footpaths to the accommodation on Old Reigate Road from here.

Stage 9: Betchworth to Shere 11.1miles, ascent 622metres (2020ft), descent 520metres (1690ft). Explorer 146 (Dorking), 145 (Guildford) or NDW book; Landranger 187 (Dorking).

It's quite a climb up to summit of Box Hill (of Jane Austen's Emma fame) where you will want a break at the National Trust's cafe. This is followed by a steep and long descent to the River Mole afterwards and on the day the famous stepping stones were covered in water so the footbridge to the north had to be used. Beyond the A24 there's an enjoyable section along the estate road winding through the Denbies Estate (vineyard growers) onto Ranmore Common. There's a lot of woodland to traverse after this. For a stage stop in the lovely touristy picturesque village of Shere, the NDW is left at Hollister Farm for a $\frac{2}{3}$ mile descent of 130metres (420ft) on a good track which passes under the A25.

Route: From Pebblehill Road turn up The Combe and soon fork left passing more houses. At the end of the access drive go ahead through a walkers' gate into woodland. Follow the main gradually rising path which alternates between short more open areas and woodland; be careful to ignore all paths and tracks off to the left. When the main path reaches rising steps on the left (TQ 199 514), take them (sign). After admiring the view at the top (seat) the path curves right through trees (south-of-west initially) and when a track is met after $\frac{1}{4}$ mile turn left. The track descends southwards but after 250metres comes to a (long) set of ascending steps off right. Leave the main track to take the steps (sign). At the top there's a path branch where the right fork is required. Follow the track westwards then when a picket fence is reached, turn left down a set of steps as indicated, turning right at the bottom (sign). Follow the woodland path going straight ahead, up a few steps, at a cross-path before curving half left. Encounter a few more steps before the path curves left to run parallel and close to Zig Zag Road on the right (so ignore paths off right which go to this road). Through a walkers' gate, emerge onto more open hillside but then it's back to the trees. Eventually, the path meets a more major track. Turn right here and almost immediately see the memorial from which there is a splendid viewpoint; the memorial is dedicated to the man who bought Box Hill for the nation in 1914. The map shows the NDW passing to the left of the memorial and trig point with the NDW path continuing beyond but after taking in the view, most walkers will want to divert to the National Trust's cafe which is a short distance left up Zig Zag Road.

Resuming on the NDW, the path starts to contour gently downwards but through a fence gap turns left to start a much sharper descent to the Mole Valley using sets of steps. Keep on the main descending path and near the bottom, there's a fork with left (straight on) taken to the river's stepping stones and right to the footbridge. Most walkers try for the stepping stones first and turn right on the riverside path to the footbridge when they are awash. After the stepping stones follow the path by the fence through a car park to the A24 (3miles) but if coming from the footbridge follow the path which curves left and joins the path from the stepping stones at the car park. Dorking lies a couple of miles to the left and there are nearby bus stops on the main road.

The A24 is a busy dual carriageway so the NDW turns right on its pavement for a ¼mile to white railings. Keep to the right of the railings, descend and turn left to an underpass. Beyond curve left to ascend to Westhumble Street. Cross and follow the A24 back. Fifty metres beyond where the NDW emerged on the main road turn right through gates onto a narrow surfaced access drive. The drive passes under a railway bridge and at its end continue straight ahead through a walkers' gate onto a good path. As usual, stay on the main path and at a cross-path go straight on (sign). When the path starts to curve left, ignore a path off right then immediately one off left (through a walkers' gate) so as to continue curving left on the main path. Very shortly after when a narrow lane is met turn right and ascend. Denbies Wine Estate is to the left but the vines can't be seen until the lane leaves the woods. After passing through a gate continue on the lane until a major track crosses the lane. Go right here and shortly at its end meet an access drive. Turn left briefly to meet a road at a sharp corner and go straight on (left) using the wide verge to avoid the tarmac. The lane crosses Ranmore Common and passes to the right of St Barnabas's church, which is a good place to pause (5.7miles).

Continue past the church to meet a road and take the grass track opposite right which diverges slowly from the road towards a house. Just before the house, pass through a walkers' gate and continue on the cut track initially along the right hedge. When it forks, go right as directed to keep by the right edge but shortly keep straight on at a fork so leaving the hedge and contour westwards towards trees on a cut track. Keep to the main woodland path which runs south-of-west so very shortly go straight on (as directed) at a multi-way track junction and also later (close to the wood edge) just after passing through a walkers' gap in wooden fencing across the path. Very shortly after this keep right on the major track at a fork. At the next major track junction where the NDW is crossed by a (staggered) bridleway, go forward to what appears to be a fork and take the left branch (so effectively going straight on). Eventually, the NDW curves left to run southwards and when it meets a more major track turn left (signpost). Through a walkers' gate branch right on the upper track (sign) onto the National Trust's White Down Lease. The track leaves the wood into a more open aspect on the left but it's soon back to the trees on the contouring path. Keep to the main path ignoring turn-offs and eventually the path turns towards Whitedown Lane on the right before curving right to it.

Take the woodland path opposite right which quickly curves left (so ignore the path on the right). There are a lot of paths in the wood but stay on the main best-surfaced path which heads generally westwards. At a significant path/track junction, go straight on, as indicated, towards a field gate. Through, go straight on through the pleasantly open land of the National Trust's White Down Lease. Here, as elsewhere, there are reminders of second world war fortifications. The clear track continues onto open Blatchford Down where the NDW track crosses a bridleway guarded by two walkers' gates then turns half-left onto a pleasant track. After crossing the down the track leaves the National Trust land by a gate to enter woodland and almost immediately ignore a bridleway off so as to carry straight on. Follow the clearly defined path to meet a stony track called Beggar's Lane.

Cross and beyond the track stays in woodland. Go straight on at a cross-path and keep on the main path to meet a track and turn left (sign). Very shortly meet another more major track (a drove road) and turn left (sign). The excellent wide track crosses a prominent bridleway after ½mile and later another signed but less distinct bridleway is crossed. Keep to the main track ignoring other turn-offs and just after a wooden barrier, a byway is met; going left will take you down to Shere but a later turn-off for this is recommended. The NDW continues opposite in woodland but after passing through a field gate keep straight ahead on the access track which passes substantial Hollister Farm. A few metres after

passing a post box on the right, the NDW turns sharp right but there's a bridleway off left which is the recommended turn off down to Shere.

Stage 10: Shere to Seale 11.3 miles, ascent 394 metres (1280ft), descent 520 metres (1690ft). Explorer 145 (Guildford) or NDW book; Landranger 187 (Dorking), 186 (Guildford).

It's a noticeable climb back up to the NDW from Shere. It's also a climb up to St Martha's Church, mostly in woodland and there's a feeling of the Downs finishing after the descent from the church. So the remainder of the stage has a quite different, lowland feel to it. The NDW passes just south of Guildford via Shalford Park and then a long track leads to Watts Art Gallery where there's a popular and good cafe. The route continues through Puttenham village and beyond, there's an excellent B&B less than ½ mile from the NDW on the road from Puttenham into Seale. However, it's only another five fairly-flat miles into Farnham so if you're feeling fit, you could finish the NDW in one stage.

Route: From the recommended NDW turn off to Shere, follow the access track north. After 50 metres ignore a track off left and after a further 160 metres as the main track curves left, go straight on along a good track to reach Combe Lane. Go right briefly and at the corner turn off left onto a wide woodland path which starts left of a dew pond and shortly crosses Staple Lane into a car parking area. At the back of the parking area take a track starting just left of the information boards. Follow the track, westwards, through woodland keeping to the main track and ignoring turn-offs. Thus ignore a bridleway off left after ⅓ mile and a path off left and right after a further ¼ mile. A woodland track goes off half-left after another 0.2 mile and thereafter follow the main track to emerge on the A25 road.

The area opposite is popular Albury Downs where there are many paths. Cross the road to the footpath opposite and follow it to meet a wide gravel track. Cross and immediately turn half-left (as signed) to cross a path in a few metres onto the NDW path (to the left of the acorn post). When the path meets a wide grassy track continue across it in the same direction to very shortly reach an open area with vegetation on the right. Briefly skirt just to the left of vegetation before continuing just right of straight ahead, westwards, across open ground to meet a stony track (TQ 043 491). Turn left along the track; there's woodland to the right but some welcome open views to the left. When the track becomes grassy keep along the path just to the left of the trees. Soon after a track joins from the left, turn off half-left (sign) on a path through woodland and keeping left at a path fork continue descending to arrive at White Lane.

The NDW continues opposite left turning left at the top of steps onto a path which parallels the lane. When a major track is met, turn left towards the lane but before meeting it turn right on a wide track (sign). This soon enters the large wood surrounding the much-visited church atop St Martha's Hill. The ascending path keeps south-westwards and soon crosses a good path. Keep to the main path and ignoring a (more minor) track off right almost immediately after meet a major track. Turn right here and ascend steadily westwards. Finally, emerge from the trees to find the church at the summit. The NDW officially passes to the right of the church and continues westwards descending on the main track which soon enters trees. Keep descending on the obvious track, ignoring tracks and paths off. Through a barrier an access drive is met which is crossed opposite right and the track then shortly emerges on Halfpenny Lane.

Turn left briefly and then at the corner turn right on a track marked as a 'Private Camp Site'. After a few metres leave the main track as the NDW takes a woodland path a

quarter-right. After 70metres ignore a path off left but a few metres further on turn off left; a bridleway goes straight on. The path continues unerringly westwards crossing a significant track on leaving the wood. Continue straight on westwards, on a farm track between fences then re-enter woodland. The track continues westwards and meets a more major track used as a farm access. Go left here to continue westwards and start to pass residences then come to a 4-way signed track junction. Here go straight on along a rough lane which meets Pilgrims Way (road). Turn left for ¼mile to the A281 (5.4miles); the centre of Guildford lies to the right.

Take the track opposite into Shalford Park, skip round the double access gates into a large open area and then head a quarter-left on a discernible path to reach a good continuation path between trees. Follow the now excellent path over a stream and through a meadow to an elegant arched bridge across the River Wey. Over, follow the river bank briefly with the river on your right but after passing a National Trust sign and then crossing a small brook, immediately turn up left on a footpath which becomes a rough lane. The lane improves after crossing the railway line ahead and Ferry Lane is followed out to meet the main A3100 road. Go right for 50metres then turn left into Sandy Lane.

Follow Sandy Lane for 180metres to a surfaced track off right which passes to the left of a house entry and shortly after becomes unsurfaced. The excellent track passes along field edges before passing through the edge of woodland but becomes more open as Piccard's Farm is approached. The track continues south-of-west through the farm buildings and then along the farm's surfaced access drive. Follow the drive when it turns left but after 100metres turn off right on a westwards track (sign). Shortly ignore a turn-off left to maintain a westwards direction and after a passage through trees, the track becomes a farm track along field edges. When the main track curves right don't follow it (it goes to a farm), instead follow the track going half-left briefly before it resumes westwards. Ignore track/path turn-offs to maintain a south-of-west direction. The track keeps close to a wood edge becoming a path then plunges deeper into the wood. When a potentially difficult path junction is reached where the NDW crosses a bridleway, go straight on westwards (assisted by a helpful arrow on a tree). When the path emerges from West Warren Wood, carry straight on along the track through and beyond the farm buildings. Just before the track emerges onto Down Lane, the Watts Gallery (featuring work by the painter and sculptor George Watts) with its cafe is passed and it's a good place for a late lunch (8.1miles).

Turn left on Down Lane for 50metres then turn off right on a narrow lane which passes under two bridges carrying main roads and just beyond the second bridge turn off half-left on a clear path which makes its way through trees. Keep to the main path and ignore turn offs. So, after ½mile ignore a track off left and almost immediately after ignore a good path off right, then a few metres further on ignore a track off left. If all has been negotiated successfully, the NDW track continues west-southwest. The track leaves the trees to pass (posh) houses and becomes an access drive; ignore turn-offs to continue straight on at all junctions. The drive curves right to run north-of-west; Puttenham Heath with its golf course is to the left. The drive turns westwards just before passing the Club House and continues down to meet a B-road with a pub restaurant opposite.

There's now quite a bit of road walking. Turn right for 150metres then turn off left along The Street signed for Puttenham. Follow The Street (westwards) through Puttenham village until there's a right bend where the road becomes Seale Lane. Here, go straight on along a 'No Through Road' (Lascombe Lane) but after 150metres at a lane branch, take the right fork. When the narrow lane ends it continues as a clear byway track (to the left of

the last house). Ignoring turn-offs, the byway track is followed to meet the end of Totford Lane with a bungalow opposite. The NDW turns left (briefly) but for the B&B turn right along the lane to meet Seale Lane.

Stage 11: Seale to Farnham 5.2miles, ascent 175metres (570ft), descent 182metres (590ft). Explorer 145 (Guildford) or NDW book: Landranger 186 (Guildford).

It's a straightforward and fairly flat westwards route from Seale to the NDW's finish on the busy A31 main road, not the most attractive of trail endings. The railway station is close by on the left and the stage is short so allowing time to travel home. Farnham's town centre is a shortish walk away to the right. As would be expected of a large bustling town it has all facilities including an outdoor shop (Break Free) and it is a good place to stock up if continuing on.

Route: Return to the NDW, pass the front of the bungalow then almost immediately turn right (sign). Follow the path through woodland until a track is met with a field beyond and turn right. A few metres further on at a track fork (in the trees) take the left branch. Follow this track through wooded heathland to meet a track and take the trodden path straight across to continue north-of-west to a walkers' gate into a field. Here, the (long) left boundary is followed to a walkers' gate. Through, there's a direction change as the path turns left along the edge of woodland but after 150metres, at a path junction, turn right (there's a helpful arrow on a tree); private notices from the Hampton Estate abound around here. Follow the track through woodland out onto Elstead Road. Go right briefly, then left into a field where a wide track along the right boundary is followed. At the end of the second field turn right (sign) onto a path which immediately turns left to pass along the south end of a belt of trees. The path continues beside a right fence/wall and keeping left of a car parking area reaches Binton Lane.

Go opposite left (to the left of the fence) and follow the enclosed path into trees and out onto a road. Turn left on Blighton Lane admiring the golf course on the left and the upmarket houses on the right. After passing the club house, the lane meets Sands Road and turn right here. After 0.4mile, there's a short path off left through woodland to Crooksbury Road. Turn left for 30metres then turn right on the first track encountered (sign) and follow this wide track into woodland to a sign where a bridleway is met. Turn right (as directed) through trees for 150metres to another sign. Here turn left up a couple of steps and follow the path through more trees then heathland before reaching a field where the right edge is followed; enjoy the open view on the left. At the field end, ignore a good path right in order to pass through a walkers' gate into an enclosed path through a short stretch of woodland which turns left just before emerging on a lane.

Turn right and descend fairly steeply to cross the River Wey, ignoring a 'No Through Road' off right. Beyond follow the 'major' road (ignoring a more minor lane off left at a sharp right bend) and 150metres beyond the bend turn off right on a (signed) path. Follow the excellent path through thin woodland to a walkers' gate and meet a track beyond. Turn left and ignoring all turn-offs left follow the main track inside the edge of woodland with a fence to the right. The track passes under the railway line and shortly emerges on an access drive. Turn left along the drive and the River Wey is soon visible on the right. Follow the drive now a lane called Snailsynch and eventually when the lane turns right with the A31 immediately ahead, turn left onto Darvills Lane (sign). The lane proceeds parallel to the main road until curving right to the A31. It then only remains to turn left as directed on the pedestrian/cycle track following it to the large road junction with a board on the left declaring the end of the NDW.