

## Merstham to Epsom Downs (Tattenham Corner)

Londoners have always enjoyed day trips out to Reigate Hill and Epsom Downs. This walk joins these deservedly popular spots with some peaceful walking across heath and downland in between.

**Start:** Merstham Station

**Finish:** Tattenham Corner Station (or Epsom Downs Station; see below)

**Length:** 17¾ km (11 miles)

**Toughness:** 4 out of 10<sup>†</sup>

Two short cuts in the morning will shorten the walk by nearly 2 km, and three different endings are given which allow you to save a further 2½ to 4½ km. Two of these alternative endings can also be combined to make a short circular walk of 8½ km (5¼ miles) from Tattenham Corner.

**Transport:** There is a half-hourly service to Merstham from London Bridge (except on Sundays, when there is an hourly service from London Victoria). Tattenham Corner is on a branch which leaves the main line at Purley; its daytime service is from Charing Cross and London Bridge. East Croydon is the best place to make a connection if required.

All the stations on the Tattenham Corner line are in London Travelcard Zone 6, although Merstham is one stop beyond it. *For most journeys the best ticket will be a One-Day Travelcard covering Zone 6, plus a single from the Zone 6 boundary to Merstham.*

For some return destinations, Epsom Downs may be more convenient (the station is 2 km N of the finish and also in Zone 6), but the service from there is only hourly and there is no service on Sundays.

If driving, it may be more convenient to park in Purley or Coulsdon and take separate services to and from the start and destination stations.

**OS Explorer Map:** 146. Merstham, map reference TQ291533, is in Surrey, 3 km NE of Redhill.

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### Walk Notes

The walk starts along the North Downs Way and then climbs steadily through Gatton Park<sup>1</sup> and the National Trust's Nut Wood to some popular viewpoints above Reigate. The last of these, Colley Hill, is an excellent picnic

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<sup>†</sup> 3 out of 10 for the shorter variations; 1 out of 10 for the short Circular Walk.

<sup>1</sup> Gatton Park was landscaped by "Capability" Brown. It is only partly visible from the walk route, but is open to the public on the first Sunday of each month (Feb–Oct, 1-5pm).

spot. The walk then crosses the M25 motorway to the isolated village of Mogador for a pub lunch.

After lunch the way continues across Banstead Heath and Walton Downs to finish with panoramic views of the London skyline from Epsom Downs. You end by crossing the famous racecourse, so the full walk is probably best not attempted on Derby Day!

The M25 is close by but mostly out of sight (though alas usually audible). In compensation, the stretches across heath and downland make for very pleasant walking, and there are fine views at many points on the walk.

## Walk Options

M Main Walk.....	17¾ km
(A) Main Walk, with shorter ending .....	15¼ km
(B) Shorter Walk, finishing at Tadworth.....	13¼ km
(C) Circular Walk from Tattenham Corner.....	8½ km

## Shortening the Walk

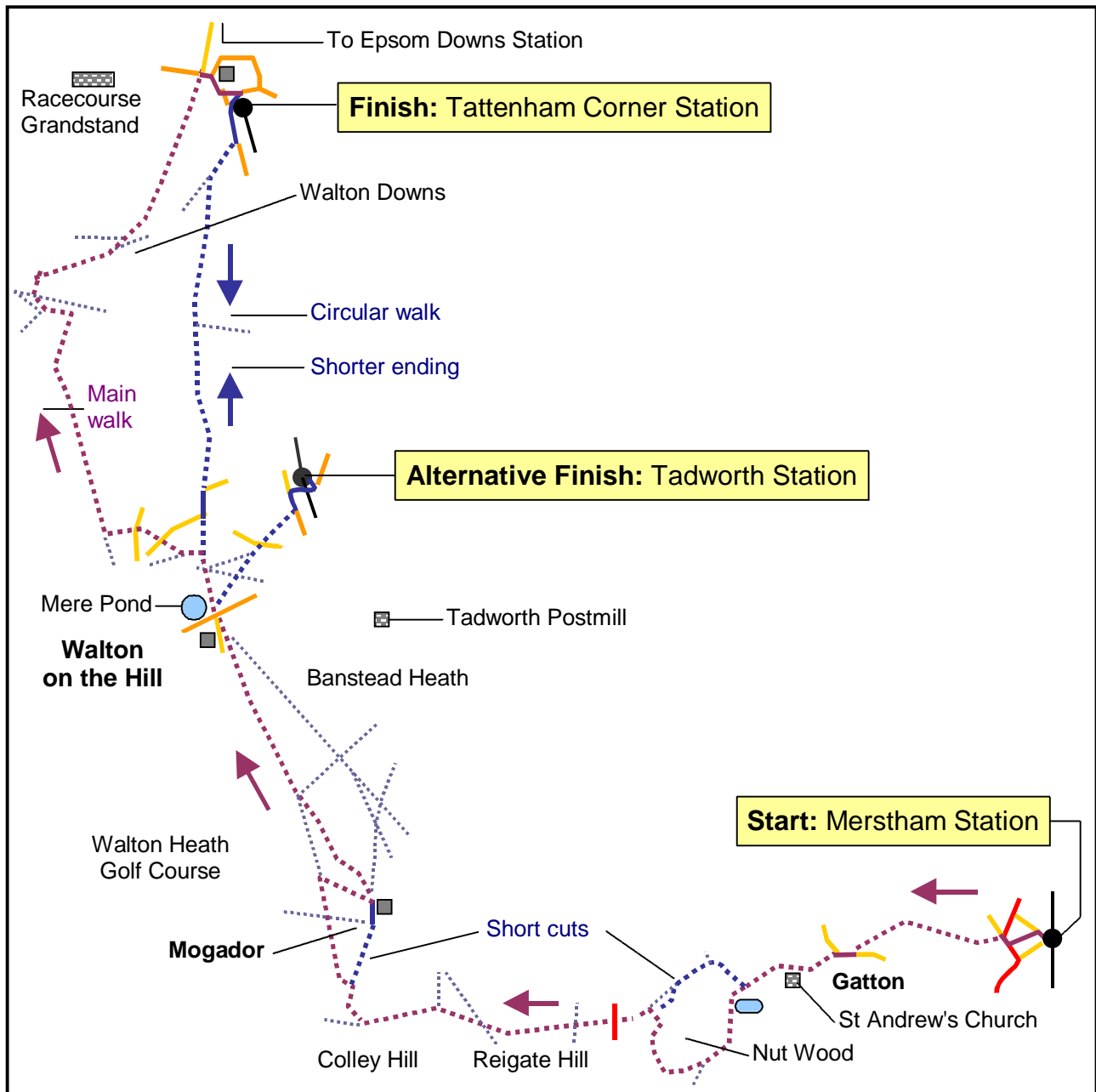
If you start the walk half an hour late, the morning short cuts described in the text will give you a chance to catch up anyone who started earlier. In the afternoon, three different endings are given so that you can shorten the whole walk by about 6 km in winter.

Mogador is not served by public transport, so you will need to call a taxi if you wish to finish the walk at lunchtime.

## Saturday Walkers' Club

For the Main Walk, take the train nearest to 10.00 from London Bridge to Merstham. For the Circular Walk, take the train nearest to 10.30 *from Charing Cross to Tattenham Corner*.

## Walk Map



## Walk Directions *(for the Circular Walk, start at [6])*

### [1] Merstham to Gatton (1¾ km)

Cross the railway footbridge to leave the station by the London-bound platform. Take the right-hand of the two roads leading away from the station forecourt and then almost immediately turn left into Station Road. Continue uphill for 100m to reach the A23 and turn right.

Cross the main road at the zebra crossing (there is a sandwich bar here for any last-minute supplies). Continue along the main road, but where it bends right by the Feathers Hotel, go straight ahead into Quality Street<sup>1</sup>. *In 20m*

**turn left at a North Downs Way (NDW) signpost** into an unmade-up lane, the entrance to Merstham Cricket Club. Bear right at the club's car park and continue on a path between fences, with the cricket pitch on your left. Go through a kissing gate onto Reigate Hill golf course and continue **↘** up a gentle slope, ignoring golfers' paths off to both sides.

Continue across the golf course for 600m, with views off to both sides from the ridge. After passing some trees on your left, the path bears left and crosses a tarmac driveway. **In 50m go through a kissing gate on your left** onto an enclosed path, still heading **↘**. In 300m, this path joins the driveway to a large house and 60m later meets a lane, where you turn half-left. In 40m you come to a T-junction with Rocky Lane. Turn right to go past the entrance to Paddock House on your left and enter Gatton Park<sup>2</sup> at North Lodge.

## [2] Gatton to Reigate Hill (3 or 2 km)

200m along the tarmac road you come to a junction. You could make a short detour to St Andrew's Church (just visible up ahead, although it is usually locked) but the walk route is the rightmost exit, to the Car Park. Continue along the road past the car park and school buildings on the left and playing fields on the right. In 400m you reach a three-way junction with an outdoor sculpture<sup>3</sup> just visible in the field up ahead on your right.

**To take a more direct route to Reigate Hill, reducing the Main Walk by 1 km, go to [2b].**

### [2a] To Reigate Hill via Nut Wood (3 km)

At the three-way junction take the left fork, leaving the NDW. This bridleway goes downhill into trees, then back uphill, eventually becoming a wide path heading **↖** with fine views on both sides. Looking back from the top of the rise, you can just see the top of Gatton House behind some tall trees.

At this point the path bends to the right. Up ahead you can see a gate, but **30m before reaching it, bear right uphill on a track** past a National Trust sign on a gate to enter Nut Wood. Continue uphill, ignoring several paths off to the right. Later the track swings round to the right, still climbing though the trees. Soon after the path levels out it bends right past a small clearing and then comes to a path junction. **Turn left downhill** onto a wide path past a wooden gate into a hollow, then back uphill. Where a field appears on the right, cross a stile into it and head half-left uphill towards a bench to enjoy the view to the **SE** over Gatton Park.

Rejoin the path you left via another stile directly behind the bench and turn right. 50m along the path, you meet the NDW coming up to meet you from the opposite direction. **Turn sharp left here to rejoin the NDW.** The path initially heads **↖**, then swings round to the right and in 100m comes out

onto a small clearing. A path joins from the right and you bear left to meet Wray Lane.

*Continue the directions at [•] below.*

### [2b] To Reigate Hill *on the NDW* (2 km)

At the three-way junction take the right fork, staying on the NDW. There is an information panel about the sculpture and its poetry on your left. After passing a gate a wood appears on your right and in a further 200m the lane bends right at Lodge House and heads towards a road. ***Just before the house, however, turn left up a wide track into a wood.***

After climbing steadily for 400m the path forks. The left fork is the NDW, and leads to a viewpoint (although the right fork is a more direct route to Wray Lane). If staying on the NDW, you reach the viewpoint after 300m, meeting a path coming up the other side of the hill. Turn half-right here, and in 100m you meet the other path coming in from the right at a small clearing by Wray Lane.

[•] Cross Wray Lane with great care (traffic comes quickly up the hill from the left) to enter the National Trust's Reigate Hill car park opposite.

### [3] Reigate Hill to Colley Hill (2½ km)

From Reigate Hill car park, with its popular viewpoint on your left, pass just to the left of the refreshment kiosk and cross the A217 on a footbridge by a "Riders Please Dismount" sign. On the other side of the bridge, continue on the path, heading *w*.

In 300m continue ahead at a path crossing, passing some cottages on the left. You pass some phone masts on the right and Reigate Fort<sup>4</sup> and Memorial Glade<sup>5</sup> with its bench on the left. Eventually the path emerges onto open ground by what looks like a small circular temple<sup>6</sup>.

There are magnificent views to the *s* for the next 1 km. The main path curves away to the right here, but it is much more pleasant to walk along the grass ridge of Colley Hill (there is plenty of scope here for the very energetic to put in some extra hill walking).

400m after passing a prominent water tower away to the right, the contours of the ground lead you back towards the main path and you pass a National Trust sign to leave Colley Hill through a wooden gate.

### [4] Colley Hill to Mogador (2¼ or 1½ km)

Continue *w* along the bridleway, soon passing a wooden door with a footpath sign on your right. In 100m, just after passing a white-painted Coal Tax post<sup>7</sup> on your right, ***take a narrow unmarked path forking off to the right***, leaving the NDW. In 100m, this path meets a tarmac lane, ***where you***

**turn right.** Ignore lanes and paths off to both sides and continue  $\aleph$  to cross the M25.

*To take a more direct route to the pub, reducing the Main Walk by  $\frac{3}{4}$  km, go to [4b].*

[4a] To Mogador *via Banstead Heath* (2 $\frac{1}{4}$  km)

Immediately after crossing the M25, **take a bridleway on the left.** This runs parallel to the motorway for a short distance but soon swings off to the right. Walton Heath golf course<sup>8</sup> comes into view through the trees on your left. In 500m, after passing more Coal Tax posts, continue ahead at a path crossing by a Banstead Commons Conservators (BCC) information panel. In 350m the bridleway comes out onto Banstead Heath.

*NB. If you are not intending to stop at The Sportsman pub for lunch, you can simply continue along this path, keeping the golf course close by on your left. Pick up the directions to Walton on the Hill at [•] in Section [5] below.*

To visit the pub, **turn sharp right** and follow a grassy track a little way out from the trees on your right, heading  $\text{SE}$ . Continue in this direction for 500m, staying fairly close to the trees, until you come to a corner of the common where there is another BCC panel. Leave the common to join a lane heading  $\text{S}$  and The Sportsman pub is immediately on your left.

*After visiting the pub, continue the directions at [5] below.*

[4b] To Mogador *direct* (1 $\frac{1}{2}$  km)

After crossing the M25, continue ahead on the lane for 500m. Where it bends right by a Coal Tax post and a large pub sign, **turn left into a lane.** The Sportsman pub is on your right at the end of this cul-de-sac in 100m.

[5] Mogador to Walton on the Hill (2 $\frac{3}{4}$  km)

*NB. This section describes the most direct route to Walton on the Hill, but if you have a map and time is not an issue there are plenty of alternative ways across Banstead Heath, eg. heading  $\aleph$  to Tadworth Postmill and then  $\omega$  to Mere Pond.*

Turn right out of the pub to go back onto the common. Aim first for a wooden signpost 75m away, just to the right of an isolated tree. Do not take the path indicated, but continue ahead and **take the next grassy path veering left**, in roughly the same direction as the first one. The path heads for a Coal Tax post in the distance and later veers right in the direction of a church tower 2 $\frac{1}{2}$  km away, just visible over the top of the trees. The path threads its way through some gorse and drops down to a dip at the left-hand end of a bank of trees. On the other side, take the left fork uphill, aiming for the left-hand edge of a wood ahead of you, with the golf course getting closer behind a row of trees on your left. In this corner of the common you meet the path you left before heading off to the pub.

[ • ] Take the sandy bridleway alongside the golf course, heading **N** and later **NW**. The path goes in and out of trees and gorse bushes, staying close to the golf course, and in 1 km comes out onto Dorking Road.

Pass between some low wooden fences and cross this busy road carefully. On the other side of the road, take the footpath forking right off the driveway to some houses, initially heading **N**. Follow this path through a lightly wooded part of Banstead Heath for 500m, ignoring paths off to both sides, until you emerge at a clearing. The Blue Ball pub is on a quiet road to your left, and in another 100m the path meets Walton Street, with Café Chocolat just off to the left. Cross this road to Mere Pond opposite.

*To continue the full Main Walk, go to [7]. For a more direct route to Tattenham Corner, go to [9]. For the alternative ending at Tadworth Station, go to [10].*

### [6] Tattenham Corner to Walton on the Hill (3 km)

Leave the station past the ticket office, turn left on a minor road in front of a small car park and follow this road round to the left. In 100m, where the grassy knoll on your right ends, turn right on a minor road downhill. Epsom racecourse comes into view, with its Grandstand at the far end of the finishing straight. In 50m you pass a black gate blocking traffic and come out onto Epsom Lane North, where you turn left.

Go **s** on this road, passing Oaks Way on your left after 150m. *In a further 180m, cross the road carefully and go through a gap in the hedge on your right.* Go onto the bridleway heading **sw**, with an exercise track for racehorses running alongside it on your right. (Although it would have been more pleasant to have joined this track opposite Oaks Way, it is not a public right of way there as the "Racehorses Only" sign makes clear).

In 400m, where the field on your left ends, take a path on the left by a green wastepaper bin and head into a wood. Continue **s** on this bridleway, ignoring cross paths. After 400m, soon after merging with two paths from the right, the wood ends. The bridleway now continues in the same direction for 1 km, with paddocks and fields on the right and several attractive gardens on the left.

At Bridle Cottage the track meets Motts Hill Lane. Turn right onto the lane, still heading **s**. Where the lane bends right after 100m, take a footpath to the left of a house "Derry" to continue in the same direction. This narrow path goes uphill between hedges for 150m to the edge of a wood.

The footpath on the right is on the return route to Tattenham Corner, but unless you want to head straight back, take the tarmac lane half-left along the right-hand edge of the wood. In 100m you pass The Bell, a cosy pub off the beaten track, which may be serving simple meals. Continuing ahead on the

lane, the sound of a few hundred gulls mugging passers-by for food will lead you to Mere Pond on the edge of Walton on the Hill.

The Blue Ball pub, 100m ahead on Deans Lane on the other side of the main road, is a possible lunch stop. For others, turn right at the pond and walk up Walton Street (the Fox and Hounds is about 300m up this road on the right-hand side).

#### [7] Walton on the Hill to Walton Downs (3 km)

With Mere Pond on your left, head  $\text{N}$  away from the road and almost immediately take the right fork at the sign for Withybed Corner. In 300m this lane passes The Bell pub and in another 100m leaves the wood past a gate. Turn left here at a signpost in the direction of Ebbisham Lane, but **after 100m along this footpath cross a stile on the right** to head  $\text{NW}$  down another footpath.

After 150m go over a stile and cross Motts Hill Lane to continue in the same direction past some paddocks. In 200m cross Ebbisham Lane and go over another stile. Continue ahead through this narrow field, with a row of trees on your left. At the end of the field, cross a stile to meet a sunken track and turn right. Continue gently downhill on this bridleway for 1½ km, heading  $\text{NW}$ , until you pass a house (Nohome Farm) on the left.

After passing the house, follow the path round to the left, ignoring a gap in the bank of trees on the right after 60m. In 250m ignore a bridleway off to the left signposted to Walton Road, but **20m further on take a narrow path uphill into the trees on the right**. In 150m this path curves to the right and emerges from the wood onto Walton Downs at a six-way junction of paths.

#### [8] Walton Downs to Tattenham Corner (2½ km)

At the six-way path junction cross the track used for exercising horses and go straight ahead onto a tarmac path, heading  $\text{NE}$ . Later, this bridleway goes into the trees as it climbs steadily out of the valley. Where the downs come into view again on the right and the main path veers left, **take the narrow path slightly to the right which leads back into the trees**. In another 80m, just after a second break in the trees, **fork left up a path between a gap in the trees**, heading  $\text{NE}$ . In 40m this path merges with a wider track from the left and you continue ahead in the same direction.

In 600m, at the top of a slight incline, you suddenly emerge onto the back straight of Epsom racecourse, with fine views of NW London ahead. Cross the racetrack and continue downhill on the well-marked track to the other side of the course. There should be a wide choice of refreshment stalls here, including the kiosk in the car park on the other side of Tattenham Corner

Road in front of you. The large Tattenham Corner pub is to the right of this car park, on the other side of Tattenham Crescent.

*To extend the walk to the alternative return station at Epsom Downs, go to [11].*

To return to Tattenham Corner station, follow Tattenham Corner Road as it curves round to the right, alongside the racecourse<sup>9</sup>. After crossing the stretch of track where the shorter races start, take the path on the left as it cuts across the grass to meet the B2221 (the other arm of Tattenham Crescent). The station is on the other side of this road.

### [9] Walton on the Hill to Tattenham Corner *direct* (3 km)

With Mere Pond on your left, head  $\text{N}$  away from the road and almost immediately take the right fork at the sign for Withybed Corner. In 300m this lane passes The Bell pub and in another 100m leaves the wood past a gate. Ignore the footpath to the left and bear right down a narrow path, heading  $\text{N}$ .

In 150m the footpath meets a lane and you continue ahead in the same direction. In 100m, just after the lane curves round to the right, *take a sign-posted bridleway on the left* alongside Bridle Cottage. Follow this track  $\text{N}$  for 1 km, with fields and paddocks on the left and houses and gardens on the right.

Where the houses end, ignore a footpath off to the right and continue ahead into a wood. Fork right at a white board with information about horse riding and in another 25m fork right again. Ignore more paths to both sides, and continue  $\text{N}$  for about 400m until the path emerges from the wood onto Walton Downs.

Turn half-right onto a wide path heading  $\text{NE}$ , with an exercise track for racehorses running alongside it on your left. In 400m the path curves to the left by a "Racehorses Only" sign. In theory you should pass through the hedge here onto Epsom Lane North and turn left uphill; take great care crossing the road as there is no pavement on the near side. (If there are no racehorses about, it would obviously be nicer to continue on the path up to the top of the rise before crossing the road).

At the top of the rise Oaks Way is on your right, and 150m further on there is a minor road off to the right with a black gate blocking traffic. To go directly to Tattenham Corner Station, turn right here past the gate; go left at the top and follow this minor road round to the right. The station entrance is then on your right, while Café Dubon is in the parade of shops on the other side of the main road up ahead.

For other refreshment options, continue  $\text{N}$  on Epsom Lane North across Tattenham Crescent. As the road swings left<sup>9</sup>, the Tattenham Corner pub is straight ahead on the other arm of Tattenham Crescent. The Downs Lunch

Box refreshment kiosk is in the car park up ahead, and in fine weather there should be a good choice of refreshment stalls in the area.

*To extend the walk to the alternative return station at Epsom Downs, go to [11].*

#### [10] Walton on the Hill to Tadworth (1 km)

With Mere Pond on your left, head  $\text{N}$  away from the main road. Where the lane forks by the sign for Withybed Corner, take a bridleway off to the right. Follow this wide path  $\text{NE}$  through the trees for 400m, ignoring cross paths, until you emerge at a small clearing. Leave the common on a track which comes out onto a road opposite Spindlewoods. Cross over the road and turn right, then *in 30m turn half-left down a tarmac path*. Follow this path downhill between walls until it comes out onto Station Approach Road by a small parade of shops. Turn left and follow the road round to the right at a junction. The entrance to Tadworth Station is on your left just around the next corner; follow the path downhill to the platform.

*NB. London-bound trains are actually heading away from the city at this point.*

#### [11] Tattenham Corner to Epsom Downs Station (2 km)

Go past the Downs Lunch Box kiosk and car park, and walk  $\text{N}$  alongside Old London Road for  $\frac{3}{4}$  km (crossing over the road at some point). Before the road meets a large roundabout, bear left to cross both Grandstand Road and the B284, aiming for Longdown Lane South which turns off the B284 just  $\text{W}$  of the roundabout. Walk  $\text{N}$  alongside this road for 400m and turn right into Bunbury Way. Epsom Downs Station is a further  $\frac{3}{4}$  km away, at the end of this minor road.

## Lunch and tea places

The recommended lunchtime pub on the Main Walk is The Sportsman at Mogador, which has a large garden and serves excellent home-cooked food. It is advisable to phone ahead, particularly when the weather is too poor to sit outside, as there is not much space inside. Later on in the walk, there is a wider choice of pubs in Walton on the Hill; these are the options for lunch on the Circular Walk. The Fox and Hounds is a good choice but is a little way off the route, up Walton Street.

As well as the pub and kiosk at Tattenham Corner, there is usually a good choice of refreshment stalls serving visitors to Epsom Downs. If you decide to finish the walk in Tadworth, note that there are no refreshment places near this station, so choose one of the places in Walton on the Hill.

## Mogador

The Sportsman Mogador Road, 01737-246655

## **Walton on the Hill**

**The Blue Ball Deans Lane, 01737-812168**

**Fox and Hounds Walton Street, 01737-819001**

**Café Chocolat (closes 4pm) 156 Walton Street, 01737-814171**

## **Epsom Downs (Tattenham Corner)**

**Tattenham Corner Beefeater Tattenham Crescent, 01737-351454**

**The Downs Lunch Box kiosk for tea and light refreshments**

**Café Dubon small café/bakery/fish & chips, just past the station**

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<sup>1</sup> Quality Street contains some wonderful old houses, an unexpected survival in such urban surroundings. It is well worth a short detour.

<sup>2</sup> Gatton House and its estate were built up by Sir Jeremiah Colman, of mustard fame. The house is now part of the Royal Alexandra & Albert School. Unfortunately, the house and its landscaped park are only partly visible from the rights of way which cross the grounds.

<sup>3</sup> The Millennium Stones are inscribed with extracts from poems which invite the traveller to "stop, rest and reflect" at this point on the Pilgrims' Way.

<sup>4</sup> Reigate Fort was part of a chain of forts built to defend London at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup>c, but the idea was soon abandoned. It has recently been opened up by the National Trust and you can wander around the site and read its history from the information panels.

<sup>5</sup> Memorial Glade marks the crash site of an American WW2 bomber.

<sup>6</sup> This is the Inglis Folly, donated to the borough 100 years ago by a Lt Col Inglis.

<sup>7</sup> A levy on coal was brought in to help pay for the rebuilding of London after the Great Fire of 1666. It was originally collected in the Port of London, but with the growth of road and rail transport, these cast iron posts were erected in the 1860s to mark the taxation boundary. There are several on the walk route.

<sup>8</sup> Walton Heath has been the venue for several major golf tournaments, including the 1981 Ryder Cup.

<sup>9</sup> This is the part of the course where the suffragette Emily Davison was killed when she threw herself under the king's horse in the 1913 Derby.