

Canterbury to Littlebourne last checked	Sturry to Canterbury. last checked	Bekesbourne ending last checked	Ickham diversion last checked
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Canterbury Circular via Bekesbourne and Sturry

Ancient villages, churches and pubs in a classic Kent landscape

Length:	Canterbury Circular	22.7km (14.1 miles)
	Canterbury to Sturry	18.3km (11.4 miles)
	Bekesbourne to Canterbury	16.7km (10.4 miles)
	Bekesbourne to Sturry	12.3km (7.7 miles)
	Sturry Circular	13.9km (8.6 miles)
	Sturry Circular	
	+ ending in Canterbury	17.3km (10.7 miles)
	Bekesbourne Circular	17.9km (11.1 miles)
	Diversion to Ickham	Adds 1.2km (0.7 miles)

Toughness: 2 out of 10: almost no hills

Maps: Landranger 179, Explorer 150

Features

This is a beautiful walk through a quiet corner of Kent, taking in a series of ancient villages, each with a similarly ancient church, and passing a series of charming rural pubs. The village of Wickhambreaux in particular is so quintessentially English that it might be a film set.

The terrain is most flat, with only a few gentle hills, but there are still some good views just after Stodmarsh. There walk has a variety of landscapes, from woods to arable fields, and from a farm growing strawberries in polytunnels to fields with grazing cattle.

Originally a Bekesbourne Circular walk, with a Sturry Circular option added later, this walk has now been extended to allow starting and finishing at Canterbury, though with the two original circular options still included. The merits of the various starts and finishes are discussed in **Walk Options** overleaf.

There are good displays of wood anemones in the woods before and after Fordwich in late March and early April, and these overlap mid April with plentiful quantities of bluebells, which last till early May.

This walk is also a delight for lovers of ancient churches, with no less than four passed on the main walk, and a fifth if you take the diversion to Ickham. Note the immense 13th century tithe barn next to Littlebourne church, apparently originally attached to a monastery, and in Wickhambreaux church don't miss the Tiffany-style art nouveau stained glass window. Stodmarsh church, meanwhile, has a wonderful ancient simplicity, and tiny crosses supposedly carved by knights on their way to the Crusades on the frame of its main door.

Walk options

The main walk starts and finishes in Canterbury, including a walk through the historic centre of the city on the way out, and an exploration of its riverside area and back streets on the way back. You can either do the whole circular walk of **22.7km (14.1 miles)** or **end at Sturry**, a distance of **18.3km (11.4 miles)**. Just up the road from Sturry is pretty Fordwich, which has two attractive pubs.

- **Starting at Bekesbourne**: this isolated rural station makes a good place to start: you get straight into the most attractive section of the walk. But it only has a slow hourly train service. From here it is **12.3km (7.7 miles)** to Sturry (the prettiest section of the walk) or **16.7km (10.4 miles)** to Canterbury. *To start from Bekesbourne go to paragraph 31 on page 5.*

- **Sturry Circular**: this option takes you through all the best bits of the walk in an **13.9km (8.6 mile)** circuit. It includes some extra wood anemone woods in late March and early April which are not on the main walk. *To do this walk start with paragraph 100 on page 9.* From Fordwich, near the end of the walk, you then have the option of carrying on to **finish in Canterbury**, making a walk of **18.3km (11.4 miles)**.

- **Bekesbourne Circular**: the directions for the original Bekesbourne Circular walk of **17.9km (11.1 miles)** are still preserved in this document. Like the Sturry Circular walk, whose route it follows for a distance in the afternoon, this passes through some additional wood anemone woods in late March and early April, but then turns west through a large commercial apple farm, to Bekesbourne station. When it is open **The Barn at Woolton Farm** offers a possible drinks or tea stop towards the end of this walk (*see Tea overleaf*): otherwise there is no refreshment option after Fordwich, the pub near Bekesbourne station having closed years ago (though you could stop off at Canterbury East on the train home and have tea there). The station platform only has a very basic bus-stop style shelter, and there is nowhere particularly nice to wait in the vicinity. *To start from Bekesbourne go to paragraph 31 on page 5.*

Transport

Canterbury is best reached on the high speed trains from **St Pancras**, which take one hour and which serve **Canterbury West** station, the starting point for this walk. Cheaper trains run from **Victoria** or **Charing Cross/London Bridge**, taking from 1 hour 30 minutes to over 2 hours. The Charing Cross/London Bridge trains serve Canterbury West but some Victoria trains go to **Canterbury East**: directions are also provided to and from this station

Bekesbourne is the stop beyond Canterbury East on the railway line from Faversham to Dover, and is served by hourly trains, taking 1 hour 40 minutes. It has no high speed train connections.

Sturry is the stop beyond Canterbury West on the line from Ashford to Ramsgate, and is served by hourly trains from Charing Cross and London Bridge, taking 1hr 48 minutes. However, you can also reach Sturry in 1hr 16 minutes by taking a **high speed train** out of **St Pancras International**, changing at Ashford.

If you want to **start in Bekesbourne and finish in Sturry**, a day return to one should be accepted from the other, as both are one stop beyond Canterbury and both served by Southeastern.

To have the best choice of lunch pubs, aim to **start the walk** by around **10.30** if starting from **Canterbury West**. If starting from **Bekesbourne** you will probably have no choice but a train arriving at around **11.45**, but that is probably sufficient since this start is closest to the lunch pubs. For the **Sturry Circular** a **10.30** start to the walk gives you a bigger choice of lunch pubs, but an 11.30 start might well do.

Lunch

*The **Rose Inn** in **Wickhambreaux** was formerly one of the more charming pubs on this walk. It then became upmarket and rather expensive, and in April 2023 closed. It is not currently clear if there will be another tenant.*

That leaves as the most convenient lunch pub on this walk, the **Duke William** in **Ickham** (01227 721 308), a capacious pub, with a garden overlooking fields, which is reached by a small extra diversion that adds 1.2km (0.7 miles) to the walk route. It is 11km (6.8 miles) from Canterbury, 5km (3.1 miles) from Bekesbourne and 6.6km (4.1 miles) into the Sturry Circular. A large gastro pub, it is open all afternoon daily (to 7pm on Sundays) and serves food 12-3pm and 5-9pm Monday to Saturdays, and 12-5pm on Sundays and bank holidays.

Set in a tranquil spot in a pretty and tranquil village, the **Red Lion** in **Stodmarsh** (01227 721 339) was a very upmarket pub, but it closed in 2022 and was due to reopen in April 2023 as a pub offering "good traditional food". It is 13.4km (8.3 miles) from Canterbury, 7.4km (4.6 miles) from Bekesbourne, and 9km (5.6 miles) into the Sturry Circular.

The best **picnic spots** are probably on the green at Wickhambreaux (there is a nice bench) or in the churchyard at Stodmarsh.

Tea

Whether or not you are finishing the walk in Sturry, the two pubs in **Fordwich**, 17.7km (11 miles) from Canterbury, 11.7km (7.3 miles) from Bekesbourne, or 12.1km (7.5 miles) into the Sturry Circular, make excellent tea stops.

The more immediately obvious is the **Fordwich Arms** (01227 710 444) which has an attractive rear balcony and garden overlooking the tranquil River Stour. While it serves tea in proper pots, it does not do food between 2.30pm and 6pm, so you are forced back onto salty bar snacks. It is open Tuesday to Saturdays only, ie *not* Mondays or Sundays.

If you want a pudding with your tea, a better choice is the **George and Dragon** (01227 710 661) 120 metres down the road. It serves food all afternoon daily and is a cosy and friendly pub with comfortable seating and a pleasant garden.

Canterbury has myriad tea, pub and restaurant options, too many to list here, but the walk route brings you out next to **Patisserie Valerie**, open to 5.30pm daily. There are plenty of other options in the vicinity, particularly on the stretch of the high street leading towards the Westgate (ie on the way to Canterbury West station).

On the Bekesbourne ending, **The Barn at Woolton Farm** (01227 250151) has a cafe serving tea, coffee, cake, cider, wine, pizzas and salads, open Fridays, Saturdays, Sundays and bank holiday Mondays from April to October. Its website gives opening hours as to 11pm Friday to Saturday and 7pm Sunday and bank holiday Mondays, but whether this is for the cafe or other services, I am not sure.

WALK DIRECTIONS

To **start the walk from Bekesbourne**, go to paragraph 31 on page 5.

For the **Sturry Circular** walk go to paragraph 100 on page 9.

From **Canterbury East** station exit the station and cross a minor road to a footbridge, which takes you over the ring road to the city walls. At the end of the bridge turn left, down the steps. In 60 metres, just **before** a road, turn **sharp** right up a path into the park. In 20 metres **fork left** on a path that runs just to the right of houses overlooking the park. In 150 metres, at a corner of the park, turn left to exit the park. Ignore St Mary's Street straight ahead but instead turn right into what looks like a parking area but is in fact Marlowe Avenue. In 80 metres ignore St John's Lane to the left. In another 80 metres go straight on at a crossroads with a mini roundabout. In 70 metres you come to a pedestrianised shopping street. Follow the road around to the left (Rose Square) and then right again to resume your former direction. In another 100 metres you come to the High Street (not named here but obvious), where you turn left. In 100 metres turn right up the narrow Mercery Lane and pick up the directions in paragraph 5 below.

Canterbury West to Bekesbourne **(6.7km/4.1 miles)**

1. From platform 2 at **Canterbury West**, the platform you arrive at if coming from London, cross to platform 1 to exit the station and turn right on the road.
2. In 200 metres, at a road T-junction, turn left.
3. In 120 metres you pass through the medieval **Westgate** and carry on up Canterbury's pedestrianised high street.
4. In 250 metres you cross a bridge over a small canal to the left. In another 100 metres ignore the pedestrianised Guildhall Street to the left. But in 80 metres more turn left up the narrow Mercery Lane.
5. In 100 metres turn right before the ornate gatehouse of **Canterbury Cathedral**, up the cobbled Burgate (a street).
6. In 250 metres Canterbury Lane, a car road, joins from the right. In 80 metres more cross the busy Canterbury ring road and carry on up Church Street
7. In 80 metres, at a T-junction in front of a medieval gatehouse, turn right and then in 20 metres turn left up a wide street with an old stone wall (**St Augustine's Abbey**) to your left.
8. In 200 metres merge with a main road at a roundabout and carry on up its left-hand side.
9. In 100 metres cross at the pedestrian lights to the right-hand side of the road.
10. In 200 metres, where the main road veers left and starts to climb, turn right down Spring Lane.
11. In 80 metres, where Spring Lane curves left, turn right down Pilgrim's Way, a narrow side lane.
12. In 130 metres, where the road veers left to a cul-du-sac, **ignore** a path straight ahead but **in five metres more veer left up a tarmac path**, with a green metal fence to your left and the cul-du-sac to your right.
13. Stay on this path as it passes houses and gardens to your right. In 250 metres you emerge onto a road and keep straight on up its right-hand side.
14. In 100 metres, at a T-junction, turn right across a railway bridge. Beyond it, curve left with the road with houses left and right.
15. In 450 metres, at the end of the road, carry on up a tarmac lane between tall hedges. (There is a view of the cathedral here if you turn around).
16. In 200 metres you pass through a farm (actually now a lighty industrial centre): beyond it carry straight on between open fields.
17. The way is now not in doubt. In 700 metres there is a line of trees to the right - ignore a track forking right here, as well as a minor path into the woods (*though in late March or early April there is a good display of **wood anemones** here*).
18. In 150 metres you are once again between open fields (an orchard to your right initially).
19. In 170 metres merge with a tarmac lane coming from the right.

20. In 300 metres pass through a hamlet (a former farm): in 100 metres, at the far end of this, keep straight on, ignoring a lane to the right.
21. In 300 metres the lane starts to descend under trees
22. In 450 metres merge with a busy road. **Take care** here. Despite this being the North Downs Way there is no footway.
23. In 50 metres ignore a lane to the right, but in 20 metres more keep straight on downhill at a roundabout into the village of **Patixbourne**.
24. In 200 metres, 50 metres after a half-timbered (white with black beams) house left, and 15 metres before a road right, **turn left** up a **well-hidden footpath** which starts at the end of the hedge of the half-timbered house.
25. In 100 metres the path emerges onto the right-hand side of an arable field: keep straight on along this.
26. In 180 metres, where the hedgerow/line of trees ends right, ignore a path joining from the right and keep straight on with a wire fence to your right.
27. In 50 metres more ignore a path across the field to your left.
28. In another 150 metres, where a hedge starts again on the right-hand side of the field, veer right through a metal kissing gate and go diagonally across the neighbouring field.
29. In 200 metres cross a stile to the right of a fieldgate. Ignore Old Palace Road to the right but instead go ahead across a brick bridge.
30. In 20 metres, on the far side of the bridge, turn left up a signposted footpath, with a stream to your left.
To continue with the walk, refer to paragraph 36 opposite.
31. In 200 metres you come to a road and turn right under the railway bridge.
32. 50 metres after the bridge, at a crossroads, turn left up School Lane. Take care on this road, which does have reasonably frequent traffic on it.
33. In 250 metres there is a field on your right. You can cross a stile into this, carry on diagonally across it, and then half way across turn left to a stile in the top left-hand corner (these are the rights of way in the field).....or you can simply stay on the road to reach the end of the field in another 200 metres.
34. Either way, just beyond the end of the field ignore a lane to the right to Bekesbourne church (Old Palace Road), but instead just after the bridge turn left up a signposted footpath, with a stream to your left.
35. In 30 metres pass through a metal gate into a field and keep on up its left-hand edge.
36. In 100 metres pass through a kissing gate and go through a tunnel under the railway line.
37. On the far side of the tunnel go through the left-hand of two kissing gates and go half left, diagonally across a field.
38. In 150 metres cross a stile and turn right along the bottom edge of a field. (*The Ordnance Survey map shows the right of way going further into the field and then turning right through the middle of it, but no path is obvious there and this route seems in regular use by walkers*).
39. In 100 metres you pass a windbreak hedge and there is an orchard to your left. In 100 metres more you pass another windbreak hedge and you are in open fields once again.
40. Keep straight on and in another 300 metres veer left with the path as it passes around a wood, with the remains of a chapel left. Beyond the chapel veer right to keep to the field edge.
41. In 100 metres cross a tarmac drive and pass to the right of a grey barn. Beyond this keep on down the right-hand edge of a large field, with a wire fence to the right.
42. The way is now not in doubt for 900 metres until you get to a road. Here

Bekesbourne to Littlebourne **(3.2km/2 miles*)**

** 2.5km/1.6 miles if continuing from the previous section*

31. From platform 2 at **Bekesbourne station** (the platform you arrive at from London or Canterbury), do **not** cross the footbridge, but exit the platform via a gate just next to the shelter and turn right down a concrete path.

keep straight ahead into the village of **Littlebourne**.

44. In 100 metres the village's attractive green opens up to your right, and in 150 metres you come to a main road. Cross this and carry on up Nargate Street, signposted to Ickham and Wickhambreaux.
45. In 170 metres, just past house number 21 on your left, turn left up a signposted tarmac path.
46. In 100 metres, with a sports field ahead to the left, turn right up a tarmac path crossroads.

Littlebourne to Wickhambreaux **(2km/1.2 mi)**

47. Follow this path, with a green metal fence to its left, for 250 metres to a road. Cross this and go through the wooden gate to the left of the lychgate into the churchyard. (The lychgate itself is usually locked.) *Note the immense 13th century **tithe barn** to the left of the church.*
48. In 60 metres veer **right** around the church on a grassy path, ignoring the more tempting concrete path forking left, which is a dead end.
49. Keep to the right-hand edge of the graveyard to exit it in its top right corner. (Ignore the kissing gate and instead pass through the gate 10 metres beyond it). Keep straight on along a grassy path which crosses a field diagonally between fences.
50. In 180 metres leave the field by a kissing gate at the right-hand end of a hedge and keep on along a fenced-in path.
51. In 80 metres pass through a kissing gate and turn right with the path, emerging parallel to a road in 60 metres.
52. In 30 metres cross a driveway and keep on through a kissing gate, with the hedge and road still to your right.
53. In 100 metres pass through another kissing gate and merge with the road.
 - For the diversion to the **Duke William** pub in **Ickham** turn to paragraph 173 on page 13. The pub is 0.7km/0.4 miles from this point, versus 0.9km/0.6 miles for the Rose Inn in Wickhambreaux (*currently closed*), and the

diversion adds 1.2 km (0.7 miles) to the walk length.

54. Otherwise, in 60 metres veer left up a track to The Mill House and Mill Lodge, but in 10 metres more veer left off it onto a signposted path into a field.
55. Keep to the path on the right-hand edge of this field. After 300 metres or so you can see **Wickhambreaux** church ahead, and in another 400 metres you enter its churchyard.
56. Keep straight along the right-hand edge of the churchyard for 80 metres to emerge onto the green of the village, with the **Rose Inn** (*currently closed*), a possible lunch stop, ahead on its far side.

Wickhambreaux to Stodmarsh **(2.2km/1.4 miles)**

57. Coming out of the pub turn right (or turn left in front of it if not stopping) and carry on up the road through the village.
58. In 100 metres fork right up Grove Road, signposted to Grove Ferry, Preston and Thanet.
59. In 200 metres, where the hedge to the left ends, turn half left through a kissing gate and carry on diagonally across a field.
60. In 130 metres, in the far corner of the field, pass through a kissing gate and keep straight on diagonally across a farmyard, and on up a farm track, with a hedge left and polytunnels (for growing raspberries and strawberries) to the right.
61. Stay on this track for 400 metres until the hedge on the left ends and you pass two large circular corrugated-metal tanks. Here, just before a hedge starts to the right, turn right up a track between polytunnels.
62. In 120 metres, just **before** another line of windbreak hedges, turn left, with the hedge now to your right and polytunnels left.
63. In 150 metres, just before a track to the left, turn right through a break in the windbreak hedge. Your onward route is slightly left out across the field beyond, aiming for a mini-pylon pole a little way to the right of the trees in its far left-hand corner.

However, if the path is not clear or the field is full of crops, you can turn left

along the field edge, with the windbreak hedge to your left, to come to a road and then go right on it until you reach a three way junction. Then resume the directions with the words in italics in the next paragraph.

64. In 400 metres, in the far corner of the field, cross over a three-way road junction and carry straight on in your former direction diagonally across another field **. (*If you came by the road route in the previous paragraph, at the three-way road junction, go half left across the field, following a footpath sign.*)

*(** Once again, you can avoid this field by staying on the road, and following it round to the left in 150 metres)*

65. In 250 metres, in the far corner of the field, turn left on a road. Ignore a dead-end fork to the right in 20 metres and instead curve left with the road.
66. In 100 metres you come to the sign for **Stodmarsh**. (*In medieval times there was a shallow sea to your right - the **Wantsum Channel** - which separated Kent from the Isle of Thanet, so the marsh was probably pretty extensive.*)
67. In another 100 metres you pass the charming old village church. Past it, curve left with the road, and in 100 metres you come to the **Red Lion**, a possible lunch stop, on the right.

Stodmarsh to Fordwich **(4.3km/2.7 miles)**

68. Carry on past the pub through the village and up the hill beyond on the road, a distance of 450 metres.
69. At the very top of the hill, as a break from what is otherwise quite a long road section, you can if you wish veer right over a stile marked by a footpath sign and carry on up the edge of a large field, coming back to the road at its far end in 800 metres. However, if conditions are muddy or if there are cattle in the field (which there often are), you can just stay on the road.
70. Just after the end of the field, where the field path crosses a stile and rejoins the road, you pass a house on the left and the road enters a wood. There are good **bluebells** in this wood in late April and early May and **wood anemones** from mid March to mid

April, but there are no rights of way shown on the map.

71. Staying on the road, in 200 metres there is a coppiced area on your right and in 300 metres you emerge from the wood, with fields now left and right.
72. In another 400 metres the road curves right to a three-way junction. There are two fieldgates opposite this junction. Pass through a kissing gate to the left of them and go diagonally across the field beyond, aiming a little to the left of a house in its far corner.
73. In 250 metres exit the field via a kissing gate about 50 metres uphill from the far right-hand corner of the field, cross a track and pass through another kissing gate, and carry on down a fenced strip between two fields.
74. In 150 metres cross a stile into a wood and keep on downhill.

*This woodland is coppiced sweet chestnut and gives an idea what medieval woods must have looked like, when this kind of tree management was widespread. **Wood anemones** grow throughout the wood in late March and early April, followed by **bluebells** from mid April to early May.*

75. In 40 metres you merge with a track along the valley bottom. Keep along this track, potentially muddy in winter, through woodland in various states of coppicing (*ie some bits taller than others and so bits possibly recently logged*), and with the track later narrowing to a path.
76. In 900 metres you pass a redundant stile and emerge into a slightly more open area (saplings were planted here some years ago but they are now getting quite large), with reed beds to your right, and, later, glimpses of the River Stour wetlands to your right.
77. Ignore ways off and in 600 metres you come to a kissing gate, with a view of the houses of **Fordwich** ahead. Pass through this gate and keep on along a fenced-in path to another kissing gate.
78. Beyond the second kissing gate carry on down a path with houses left. In 50 metres you pass a brick building with a large canopy porch on your left.
- **If you do are doing the Bokesbourne ending and do NOT want to visit Fordwich or stop**

for tea there, you can turn *left* up an earth path just before this building and follow the directions in paragraph 138 on page 11.

For all other routes and options, continue straight ahead,

- 79.** In 80 metres you emerge onto a road and turn right down it for 20 metres to see the **Fordwich Arms**, a possible tea stop, ahead of you.

- **To continue the circular walk to Bekesbourne** come out of the Fordwich Arms after tea and refer to the paragraph 135 on page 11.

- 80.** **To finish the walk in Sturry or Canterbury** and for the **George & Dragon**, an alternative tea stop, turn left in front of the Fordwich Arms (or turn right, if coming out of the Fordwich Arms after tea).

- 81.** In 40 metres you come to the corner of a busier road: keep straight ahead down this, heading roughly west.

- 82.** In 70 metres turn right with the road, passing the **George and Dragon** on the corner to your right.

- **To end the walk at Sturry station** carry on down the road across two bridges over the river. In another 350 metres turn right at a T-junction with the A28. The station is in 270 metres, with the platform for London accessed through a gate on the left-hand side of the road, just before the level crossing.
- **To continue to Canterbury** refer to the next section.

Fordwich to Canterbury **(5 km/3.1 miles)**

The route below initially follows a cycle path rather than a footpath: but it seems to be little used by cyclists and a footpath, the Stour Valley Walk, later joins it in any case.

- 83.** Turn left just **before** the bridge onto a marked cycle path and follow this through pleasant watermeadows.

- 84.** In 600 metres the path goes into the woods. **Take care** here of any cyclists, who may not be expecting to find pedestrians here.

- 85.** The path at first curves this way and that, but later is straighter. In 800 metres, after a long straight climb

uphill and just before the path curves right, the Stour Valley Walk footpath joins from the left.

- 86.** Staying on the cycle path, in another 500 metres you pass a large pond (used by anglers) on your left

- 87.** In another 150 metres, 50 metres after the end of the pond, the track forks. The Stour Valley Way forks left but if there are no cycles on the cycle path the right hand fork is easier.

- 88.** In 180 metres more the two routes come together again as parallel tracks. Here you do need to take the **right-hand track**, the surfaced cycle path.

- 89.** This path is at first level, then turns downhill, levelling out again, before descending again. In 400 metres you come to buildings and the path runs between metal fences.

- 90.** In 80 metres you emerge onto a residential road, where you turn left. **Almost immediately curve right** with the road (leaving the cycle route which carries on straight ahead).

- 91.** Keep straight on down this road for 200 metres to a main road. Turn left along this for 100 metres to cross the road at the traffic lights and go down a side road, Barton Mill Road, 20 metres beyond them.

- 92.** In 120 metres, where the road turns right in front of former mill buildings converted into flats, **keep straight on** to enter a courtyard to the left of the former mill buildings, following a not very obvious yellow arrow on top of a bollard.

- 93.** In 50 metres turn left on the river for 10 metres, and then right across the river on a black metal bridge.

- 94.** Turn left on the far side along a path along the **River Stour**, with flats to your right.

- 95.** In just over 500 metres the path goes under a main road bridge. In another 100 metres turn left across the river on a footbridge and then right on the far bank.

- 96.** Stay on the river path, passing another footbridge in 150 metres, then with a car park to your left in another 60 metres.

- 97.** In 200 metres more you come out onto a road with the Miller's Arms pub on the opposite corner.

- **To go direct to Canterbury West station** at this point without having tea, saving 600 metres off the walk (*500 metres to the station versus 1.1 by the main walk route*), **turn right** here, crossing a bridge. In 100 metres turn right onto The Causway, crossing a side channel. In 30 metres, just beyond the channel, turn left up a tarmac path along the edge of a small park. In 100 metres cross a footbridge and turn right along the riverside on its far side. In 50 metres cross a main road with care and turn right on its far side. In 50 metres turn left past an old level crossing gate into a housing development. Keep straight on for 60 metres on a gravel drive, then carry on up a road. In 50 metres more fork left up a pedestrianised side road to emerge in 30 metres on another road. Turn right up this to the main road 40 metres away: Canterbury West station is just to the left across the road.

98. Otherwise, **for tea and to see more of the historic the centre of Canterbury**, or for **Canterbury East station**, cross the road, passing to the right of the Miller's Arms.

- **The recommended route** here is to veer right immediately into the riverside park (*if it is closed, see below*). Cross three weirs on bridges and then take the path that curves right to the corner of the park, ignoring the one that keeps to the river's edge. In 100 metres exit the park through gates and go half left across a dead end road to continue on a broad tarmac path into another park. In 150 metres you come to a road with the Marlowe Theatre to your right. Turn left on the road beyond, crossing the river on a bridge, and then in 70 metres, at a crossroads, go right into Best Lane. Continue with the directions in paragraph 99 opposite.
- **If the riverside park is closed**, keep straight on up the road to the right of the Miller's Arms. In 70 metres ignore Mill Lane left (but note the fine view of the cathedral you get by looking up it) and instead keep on up a pedestrianised street ahead. In 100 metres, at the far end of this street, turn left (noting the fine medieval building to the right): again there is a fine

cathedral view. In 60 metres, at a crossroads go right. In 70 metres go straight ahead at another crossroads into Best Lane. Continue with the directions below.

- 99.** After 130 metres on Best Lane you come to the High Street. **Patisserie Valerie** is on the right. There are many other tea options in the vicinity, particularly on the way to Canterbury West station.

You now have a choice:

- **For Canterbury West station go right** (if coming from Best Lane) into the High Street. In 300 metres you pass the Westgate. Ignore the road to the right immediately beyond the gate, but in 120 metres turn right to find the station on the left in 200 metres.
- **For Canterbury East station go left** (if coming from Best Lane) into the High Street. In 100 metres ignore Guildhall Street, a pedestrianised shopping street to the left, but in 80 metres more, level with the narrow Mercery Street left (with its view of the cathedral gatehouse), and with Hotel Chocolat on the right-hand corner, **turn right** up St Margaret's Street (named here but the sign is not obvious from this angle). In 200 metres cross a staggered crossroads to go straight on up Castle Street. In 100 metres ignore St John's Lane on the left, but in another 80 metres, with St Mary's Lane left, fork half left across a small park. In 100 metres carry on up Worthgate Place. In 120 metres, just before a main road, turn left into a park. Take the right-hand of the two paths to climb up steps onto the city wall and then turn right across a footbridge over the ring road to reach Canterbury East station on the far side.

Sturry to Littlebourne **(4.8km/3 miles)**

*This is the start of the **Sturry Circular walk**.*

- 100.** Coming off the train from London at Sturry station, go back up the platform to exit the station. Turn left across the station forecourt and then left again on the main road across the level crossing.

101. In 120 metres the road curves right. In another 150 metres turn left up a side road, signposted to Fordwich.
102. In 350 metres the road crosses a narrow stone bridge and you enter **Fordwich** ("Britain's smallest town"). In 50 metres the road crosses another stone bridge over the **River Stour**.
103. Stay on the road past the **George & Dragon** pub, turning left with it just beyond the pub.
104. In another 70 metres, where the main road (High Street) turns right, keep on down King Street, a less busy road.
105. In 40 metres the **Fordwich Arms** is on your left with the church beyond it. Just beyond the pub turn right with the road, ignoring a minor lane straight ahead.
106. In 20 metres, where the road comes to a dead end, go left up School Lane, a tarmac alleyway.
107. In 60 metres, just past a brick building with a large canopy porch on your right, turn right up an earth path between fences.
108. In 40 metres emerge onto a concrete area in front of garages and keep straight ahead up what looks like a dead end between houses.
109. In 60 metres, where the concrete ends, turn half left up a grassy car wide strip between two tall garden hedges (the house on the right is Haylands) to pass in 40 metres through a kissing gate into a field.
110. Keep straight uphill on the edge of the field, to pass through another kissing gate in 40 metres.
111. Beyond this kissing gate, ignore paths left and right and instead go half left into a field and diagonally across it
112. In 100 metres, in the far corner of the field, cross a stile and carry on up a path into the wood, which in 20 metres climbs a short bank.
113. At the top of the bank, at a T-junction, go left for 5 metres and then half right, on a narrow path through young trees. (*This was a grassy field when this walk was first created in 2013, but has been left to grow wild.*)
114. In 150 metres, in the far corner of the former field, carry on uphill on a path to the left of a pasture field, with a wood to your left (*with **bluebells** in **late April/early May***) and a wire fence to your right.
115. In 150 metres, where the field ends, carry on uphill through a wood.
116. In 60 metres, near the top of the hill, the path forks, the right fork going to a stile in 15 metres and the left fork to a gate in 30 metres. **It does not matter which you take**, as both bring you out onto the playing fields.
117. Cross the playing fields, aiming to the right of the brick pavillion on their far side.
118. In 200 metres, when you get to the pavillion, the official path crosses a not very visible stile in the hedge just to the right and rear of the pavillion, and then crosses a tarmac driveway and passes through a gap in the hedge to come to a road. But a more obvious way to get to the road is to climb the bank at the right-hand edge of the hedge and pass through a gap there.
119. Either way, turn left on the road, passing a white bungalow on the right.
120. In 40 metres, just before another (brick) bungalow, turn sharp right through a metal gate down a bridleway into the woods.
121. In 150 metres ignore a turning to the left to keep straight on downhill on a path that follows the bottom of a slight valley. *This next section can be **very muddy** in winter. The woods here are coppiced sweet chestnut, and give an idea of what a medieval wood might have looked like, when most woodland was managed in this way. There are more **bluebells** in this wood and **wood anemones** in late March and the first half of April.*
122. In 300 metres, at a T-junction, ignore a track right which leads in 80 metres or so to a field, and instead veer half left on a broad bridleway. (This section can, alas, be **very boggy**.)
123. In 100 metres the bridleway curves left. In another 250 metres, with an area of younger growth trees ahead, **go right** downhill at a footpath post.
124. In 130 metres emerge into a field and keep on up its left-hand edge.
125. In another 100 metres veer left out of the field following an arrow on a post, up a path into the woods that fairly soon becomes a track (*more **wood***

anemones here in season, and also some bluebells).

126. In 350 metres the track curves left and then right to come to a minor road. Cross it and go through a metal car-blocking barrier 10 metres to your right, to carry down a broad path between hedges, with a solar farm to its right.
127. In 200 metres pass to the left of a metal fieldgate and keep straight on down a part tarmac, part gravel lane.
128. After 650 metres on the lane you pass a house on the left
129. In 200 metres more, where the lane turns hard left, fork right up a side path, and in 10 metres fork left again to emerge into a field.
130. Keep straight on down the right-hand edge of the field, following a chainlink fence.
131. In 120 metres you have house gardens to your immediate left and a new housing estate over the fence right.
132. In another 150 metres a tarmac path starts. In 100 metres this widens into a driveway and in another 150 metres it comes to a road.
133. Cross the road and keep on down a tarmac footpath, with houses left and a hedge and sports field right.
134. In 150 metres, where the sports field ends, you come to a tarmac path crossroad. Turn left here.

You now follow the directions from paragraph 47 on page 6.

Fordwich to Bekesbourne **(6.2km/3.9 miles)**

*This is the original **Bekesbourne Circular** ending of the walk. Note that there are no tea options at Bekesbourne and the station is not a comfortable place to wait for long periods. Trains are only hourly, so if doing this route, time your departure from Fordwich carefully, allowing 2-2.5 miles per hour walking time, depending on how fast your pace is.*

135. Coming out of the Fordwich Arms and go straight ahead up the dead-end road by which you entered the village, or from the George & Dragon retrace your steps up the road to the Fordwich Arms and turn right beyond it up the dead-end road.

136. In 20 metres, where the road ends, go left up School Lane, a tarmac alleyway.
137. In 50 metres, just past the building with a large canopy porch on your right, turn right up an earth path between fences.
138. In 50 metres emerge onto a concrete area in front of garages and keep straight ahead up what looks like a dead end between houses.
139. In 60 metres, where the concrete ends at a T-junction, turn half left up a grassy car wide strip between two tall garden hedges (the house on the right is Haylands) to pass in 40 metres through a kissing gate into a field.
140. Keep straight uphill on the edge of the field, to pass through another kissing gate in 40 metres.
141. Beyond this kissing gate, there are paths left and right. *The right of way is neither of these, but goes half left over a stile and then diagonally across the field ahead. But this stile in 2021 was getting overgrown with brambles and so does not look to be in regular use. As an alternative, turn left along the path along the bottom of the field. In 80 metres, just after the end of the field, turn right up a path initially under trees and then on the field edge.*
142. In 100 metres, in the far corner of the field (*cross a stile if coming from the right of way across the field and...*) carry on up a path into the wood, which in 20 metres climbs a short bank.
143. At the top of the bank, at a T-junction, go left for 5 metres and then half right, on a narrow path through young trees. (*This was a grassy field when this walk was first created in 2013, but has been left to grow wild.*)
144. In 150 metres, in the far corner of the former field, carry on uphill on a path to the left of a pasture field, with a wood to your left (*with bluebells in late April/early May*) and a wire fence to your right.
145. In 150 metres, where the field ends, carry on uphill through a wood.
146. In 60 metres, near the top of the hill, the path forks, the right fork going to a stile in 15 metres and the left fork to a gate in 30 metres. **It does not matter which you take**, as both bring you out onto the playing fields.

- 147.** Cross the playing fields, aiming to the right of the brick pavillion on the far side.
- 148.** In 200 metres, when you get to the pavillion, the official path crosses a not very visible stile in the hedge just to the right and rear of the pavillion, and then crosses a tarmac driveway and passes through a gap in the hedge to come to a road. But a more obvious way to get to the road is to climb the bank at the right-hand edge of the hedge and pass through a gap there.
- 149.** Either way, turn left on the road, passing a white bungalow on the right.
- 150.** In 40 metres, just before another (brick) bungalow, turn sharp right through a metal gate down a bridleway into the woods.
- 151.** In 150 metres ignore a turning to the left to keep straight on downhill on a path that follows the bottom of a slight valley. *This next section can be **very muddy** in winter. There are more **bluebells** in this wood and **wood anemones** in late March and the first half of April.*
- 152.** In 300 metres, at a T-junction, ignore a track right which leads in 80 metres or so to a field, and veer half left on a broad bridleway. (This section can, alas, be **very boggy**.)
- 153.** In 100 metres the bridleway curves left. In another 250 metres, with an area of younger growth trees ahead, **go right** downhill at a footpath post.
- 154.** In 130 metres emerge into a field and keep on up its left-hand edge.
- 155.** In another 100 metres veer left out of the field following an arrow on a post, up a path into the woods that fairly soon becomes a track. *(A particularly fine display of **wood anemones** here in season, and also some **bluebells**.)*
- 156.** In 350 metres the track curves left and then right to come to a minor road. Cross it and go through a metal car-blocking barrier 10 metres to your right, to carry down a broad path between hedges, with a solar farm to its right.
- 157.** In 200 metres pass to the left of a metal fieldgate and keep straight on down a part tarmac, part gravel lane.
- 158.** Stay on this lane until in 350 metres you pass a large telecommunications mast on your left (somewhat hidden by trees in summer so that you may not notice it until you are level with it). In another 40 metres **turn right** up a path between field hedges.
- 159.** Keep straight on this path. In 400 metres pass into a wood (more coppiced chestnut) and in 500 metres more you come to a main road.
- 160. Cross the main road with care,** paying particular attention to a **blind bend** to your right. On its far side turn right along the verge and then in 40 metres turn left up a driveway (initially concrete and then tarmac), a signposted footpath.
- 161.** You now follow this track for 1km to the major farm complex of Woolton Farm.
In more detail: in 100 metres go straight on at a junction and in another 100 metres ignore a fork to a house to the left. In a further 130 metres pass around a gate to the right of a barn and then carry on uphill between orchards and polytunnels. In another 600 metres veer left with the track in front of the brick farmhouse of **Woolton Farm** to come to the large tarmac farmyard in 100 metres.
- 162. The Barn at Woolton Farm,** a possible refreshment stop is to your left here, but to continue the walk **veer right** on entering the farmyard to pass between brick and wood barns right and a large blue metal barn to the left.
- 163.** In 130 metres, where the barns end, there is a tall hedge ahead. Pass around the right-hand end of this and turn half left across the grassy space beyond, to pass in 25 metres more through a footpath gate.
- 164.** Veer very slightly left across the rough field beyond, diverging from a line of trees to the right.
- 165.** In 100 metres cross a not very obvious stile in the far corner of the field. Beyond it, keep straight on, joining a track between polytunnels in 30 metres and following it uphill.
- 166.** In 130 metres you come to a corner made by two high windbreak hedges. Turn right just **before** these, with a windbreak hedge now to your left.
- 167.** In 200 metres, where the field ends, carry on up a path into the field corner, which in 20 metres becomes a fenced-in path under trees.

- 168.** In 150 metres merge with a part gravel, part tarmac driveway and carry on uphill past houses.
- 169.** In 230 metres, at a T-junction, go left on a road, Bekesbourne Hill.
- 170.** In 170 metres, just where more modern houses give way to older ones, turn right up an **easily missed footpath** just beyond a hedge. *(The house to the left at the start of this footpath was a pub when this walk was first created, but there is no sign of that now.)*
- 171.** In 60 metres cross a driveway (leading to a parking area to the right) and keep on downhill.
- 172.** In 50 metres, just past a red house, turn left along a concrete path leading to **Bekesbourne station**. Cross the footbridge for trains to London.

Diversion to the Duke William in Ickham

*This option, which goes to an **alternative lunch pub**, starts in paragraph 53 on page 6. It is 0.7km (0.4 miles) to the pub from the start of the diversion and it adds 1.2km (0.7 miles) to the walk length.*

- 173.** 60 metres after you rejoin the road in paragraph 53, you pass a white-boarded former mill building on your right. Just beyond this turn right up a gravel tarmac drive, passing through a fieldgate and across a mill race in 10 metres.
- 174.** In another 10 metres cross a stream on a footbridge next to stepping stones, and in 10 metres more carry on up a path between hedges.
- 175.** In 80 metres pass through a kissing gate and keep on across a field, aiming for a point 30 metres to the left of two oak trees on its far side.
- 176.** In 70 metres pass through a hedge and cross a footbridge over a stream. Veer slightly left across the next field.
- 177.** In 70 metres pass through another kissing gate. Keep straight on across a large field, aiming for a lone tree about 50 metres to the right of some oast houses (buildings with conical roofs formerly used for drying hops).
- 178.** In 250 metres, on the far side of the field, you pass the lone tree and veer left directly towards the oast houses.

(Note the charming designs on their wind vanes).

- 179.** In 100 metres pass to the left of the oast houses down a concrete path. In 80 metres more turn left on the road to find the **Duke William** pub on the left in 30 metres.
- 180.** Coming out of the pub turn right on the road. In 60 metres, turn left up the path to the church.
- 181.** In 70 metres do **not** enter the churchyard (unless you want to see the church), but instead **turn right** just before its fence up a grassy strip, turning left in 30 metres to follow an enclosed path.
- 182.** In 60 metres you come out into a field and keep straight on down its left-hand edge following a line of trees, ignoring a path diagonally to the right across the field.
- 183.** In another 600 metres you pass to the right of a house and carry on down its concrete driveway for 40 metres to a road.
- 184.** Turn left on the road. In 60 metres the road crosses a river (the **Little Stour**).
- 185.** In 25 metres more ignore a path over a stile to the right, but in a further 20 metres fork **left** across a stile into a field, keeping on down the left-hand edge of the field beyond.
- 186.** In 250 metres cross a stile and turn left on a road.
- 187.** In another 120 metres, at a T-junction in front of a thatched cottage, go left.
- 188.** In 120 metres more you come to the centre of **Wickhambreaux**, with the **Rose Inn** (*currently closed*) on your right.
- 189.** Carry on up the road past the pub, passing fine houses left and right.

Continue with paragraph 58 on page 6.